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Stun gun plan advances

Regents to hear proposal to arm campus safety officers

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Iowa City Press-Citizen

Iowa's three public universities are moving forward with a plan to arm campus safety officers with stun guns.

A proposal to equip University of Iowa, Iowa State University and University of Northern Iowa public safety officers with Air Taser-brand stun guns was made this fall at each of the schools.

While UI officials confirmed Monday the proposal will go to the Iowa state Board of Regents at some point, they would not reveal further details. The regents are the governing body of the three public universities.

"I am not sure when we will be presenting the proposal to the Regents, and I cannot have any public comment until that time," UI President [Mary Sue Coleman](#) said in an e-mail. "Many campus groups reviewed and supported the proposal. I have all that information that will assist me when I submit the docket materials to the Regents."

The Air Taser-brand stun guns are considered less-than-lethal. The weapon uses compressed nitrogen to shoot two small probes up to 21 feet at a speed of 135 feet per second. When the probes make contact with the target, the taser transmits electrical pulses along the wires connecting the probe to the gun. The result is an instant loss of a person's ability to control their body movement and perform coordinated actions. A person will feel dazed and off balance for a few seconds or a few minutes and then normal functions return.

University Relations Director Steve Parrott said Coleman will not say whether she supports the proposal until she addresses the regents, which is standard procedure.

Regent David Fisher said Monday the proposal likely will come up at one of the board's next two meetings in January or March. When it does, Fisher said he would not be opposed to arming campus safety officers with stun guns if administrators and campus groups support the measure. But hand guns, he said, are out of the question.

UI, ISU and UNI have been working together this fall to gauge campus opinions of the proposal and prepare officer training.

"If the proposal is successful, we want to make sure we're providing the same training and similar use-of-force policies," said Dave Zarifis, UNI director of public safety.

UI Student Government President Nick Klenske said that although UISG overwhelmingly supports the measure, he remains wary of giving public safety officers new weapons.

"(Coleman) got input from all over the university, but I still have personal concerns about it," he said. "I do not support it. (UI director of public safety) Chuck Green made a convincing case in his presentation, but there was not an authority to give the opposite side. I'm worried about that."

Green did not return phone calls seeking comment Monday.

At UI, the Staff Council also overwhelmingly supported the measure along with UISG, but the Faculty Senate had a divided 24-18 vote in favor of the proposal.

At UNI, student and staff groups voted for the measure, and faculty groups voted against it.

At ISU, students voted for the proposal, faculty voted against it and the Professional & Scientific Staff haven't voiced their opinion.



Stun-gun idea should be debated by March

December 13, 2001

IOWA CITY - The Iowa Board of Regents will likely consider a proposal to arm public university security officers with stun guns in January or March, a board member said.

Regent David Fisher said the proposal is likely to come up at a board meeting in January or March. Fisher said he is not opposed to the idea if administrators and campus groups support it.

University of Iowa President Mary Sue Coleman said she would not discuss her opinion on the proposal until she submits information to the Regents.

"I am not sure when we will be presenting the proposal to the Regents, and I cannot have any public comment until that time," Coleman said. "Many campus groups reviewed and supported the proposal. I have all that information that will assist me when I submit the docket materials to the Regents."

The Air Taser-brand stun guns have been recommended for use by security officers on the campuses of Iowa State University, University of Iowa and the University of Northern Iowa. The stun guns are not considered lethal weapons. They use compressed nitrogen to shoot two small probes into an assailant from a distance of up to 21 feet. The probes transmit electrical pulses, dazing the subject for several minutes.

The University of Iowa Student Government and the staff council supported the idea. The faculty senate was divided, but supported the stun guns 24-18.

At UNI, students and staff groups voted in favor, while the faculty opposed the idea.

Iowa State University students voted for the proposal, faculty voted against it. Professional and scientific staff have not voiced an opinion.