

Dear Colleagues,

Over the last few days, some members of our community, including victims and families, have reached out to Virginia Tech about the recent discovery of Seung-Hui Cho's mental health records. I wanted to take a moment to answer some questions about the discovery of the records and our ongoing efforts to make them public.

Let me assure that it has been Virginia Tech's strong desire for Cho's mental health records to be made public as soon as legally possible. Though the University is the custodian, medical records are protected by state laws even after death. In this case, only Cho's estate has the authority to release the records without court intervention. At our request, the Virginia Attorney General's office has sought authorization from Cho's estate to make the records public. We strongly believe it is everyone's best interest that the records be fully disclosed, and we have communicated this directly to the attorney for Cho's estate, Bernard DiMuro. We hope that sunshine into these records can illuminate some missing and important information about Cho in the fall of 2005.

It goes without saying that we were greatly disappointed to learn that, over the last three years, the records were discovered to be in the possession of the former director of the counseling center, Dr. Robert Miller. That Dr. Miller immediately returned the records to the University is to his credit. But that he had them at all is troubling. Dr. Miller's removal of these records was unauthorized and is in opposition to standard university policy and operating procedures.

The university became aware of the discovery of Cho's records on Thursday, July 16, after Dr. Miller's attorney informed the Virginia Attorney General's office. Dr. Miller returned the records to Cook Counseling Center on Thursday afternoon. I was out of the office, but I was informed on Thursday about the discovery.

Because Dr. Miller's attorney was unavailable on Friday, the attorneys for all appropriate parties met via conference call on the morning of Monday, July 19 to determine the appropriate and legally correct course of action. During this call, Virginia Tech made clear our strong desire for the records to be made public. However, as noted above, it became clear that permission from Cho's estate was required. After this meeting, the Virginia State Police was notified in accordance with provisions of an outstanding search warrant for the records. The Governor's Office was also notified on Monday of the discovery. The Governor made public this information on Wednesday morning, and we all await the approval of Cho's estate.

As you may have read in press reports on Thursday, July 23, Dr. Miller's attorney stated that upon Miller's departure from the counseling center in early 2006, he inadvertently mixed these records and those of several other students with personal papers. The statement went on to say that the records remained in his possession unbeknownst to him and not shared with anyone until they were returned to the Cook Counseling Center and subsequently turned over to the State Police.

In light of these events, it is important for the community to know that, in contrast to the practice in 2005, the Cook Counseling Center records are currently maintained in electronic form only. The center has kept records of appointments electronically since 1998 and transitioned to the use of full electronic records in the fall of 2006. All hard copy files are kept in a secure central facility at Virginia Tech. In accordance with Va. State Code and university policy, all student mental health records are destroyed 10 years following the last contact with a student.

I know that all of us in the Virginia Tech community are hopeful that the discovery of these long missing records might fill an important hole in the investigation and panel review and provide greater understanding of this horrible and tragic loss of life.

Sincerely yours,

Charles W. Steger

President