

Module One

College Case Triage

D·PREP
SAFETY DIVISION

TRAINING
OUTPOST

Case Details

Campus police received a complaint regarding a threat to blow up a building on campus made on the social media app Fizz. Campus police contacted the social media app. Fizz provided the information that the post was allegedly made by Klaus Hargreeves, "I wish we actually did something to spur up the board of trustees into divesting instead doing our performative liberal arts thing. Let's blow up a building or something." Of note, the college has several students engaged in protests and encampments on campus related to the Gaza/Israeli conflict. Hargreeves denies any involvement with any of these protests or groups.

Hargreeves was transported to the campus police department and then taken into custody by local police officers, where he was charged and remained the night in jail. Upon release, two roommates picked him up, and he described the night as "very difficult," joking that he had spent the time "in the hole." He is a second-year student, studying sociology and has a girlfriend at a local college who has been supportive during this time. Hargreeves has no student conduct history and a 3.5 GPA. He drinks occasionally with friends and played Lacrosse in high school but not at college due to a shoulder injury.

He signed some documents to give the police access to his phone and generally expressed defensiveness and surprise that this statement resulted in him being in trouble. After spending the night in jail, he began to rethink the seriousness of what had occurred.

What are some of the primary risks you see in this case?

There is a risk that the threat posted on Fizz was leakage related to a planned attack on a college building. Klaus could have been part of a larger group of students wanting to carry out an attack on the campus as part of a Free Palestine protest. Another risk could be students seeing his post and taking the underlying advice to do something more serious on campus beyond creating an encampment. The arrest process could cause Klaus to become angry with school authorities. There is also the risk of him engaging in self-harm if the story gets out and he feels isolated or harassed for the threat or is unable to complete his coursework.

What type of assessment(s) would be best in this scenario (psychological, triage, violence risk, threat assessment)?

The most pressing need is for a threat assessment to make a judgement about the likelihood of him acting on the threat made through Fizz. A triage assessment would be useful to look at the breadth of the issues at hand prior to conducting a fuller violence risk and threat assessment. There does not appear to be a reason to conduct any type of psychological assessment at this time.

Would you characterize the threats as transient or substantive in nature? What questions would you need to ask to help with this appraisal?

It would seem the threat, at face value and based on his initial interview statements, is transient in nature. The threat appears to be a trolling comment, adding to the existing tensions on campus related to the encampment. Further exploration is needed to understand the context of why he made the threat (e.g., upset at the encampments, dared to do it by a friend, frustration at the disruption of the protest, trolling to escalate the conflict, desire to see the violence escalate.) Gathering more information about the motivation and nature of the threat will help support this hypothesis.

Would you consider this case behavior as more hunting or howling?

This case has more of a howling quality as it lacks specifics or details needed to carry out the attack (from the police interview with Klaus). While there were some deceptive qualities in the nature of making the threat on an anonymous social media platform, it is unlikely Klaus would use this method to share a threat, given how easy it would be to identify him with a request or subpoena since he shared his email to register.

Would this case be better understood as having an affective or targeted violence motivation?

Given the initial hypothesis that this is a transient threat related to trolling, the desire for violence does not seem central to the case. If the threat is determined to be leakage related to a larger attack plan or made to incite violence, then there may be an increased risk of targeted violence.

Using the metaphor example of “touching all the parts of the elephant,” what parts of this case should we include to gain a better context?

A better understanding of Klaus’ history of study, relationships, social connections, past conduct behavior or incidents of threats, trolling behavior, or other challenges with authority would be indicated. Talking with his family and other supportive adults would also provide a better understanding of his social supports and any past behavior of concern he may have engaged in. Understanding his relationship with his roommates would also be helpful, given they picked him up from the police station. It would also be useful to assess the current state of off-campus criminal charges as they are running parallel to the on-campus process.

What supports might be useful to explore for this case?

In the immediate aftermath of the threat and arrest, a central question in the assessment is how to monitor the student on campus while pending on- and off-campus conduct processes move forward. On-campus supports might include meetings with a member of the BIT/CARE team as well as referrals to counseling, academic support, and case management. Legal advocacy, if available through community support, may also be helpful as Klaus navigates the off-campus legal process. His girlfriend and friends are other supports that should be strengthened following the threat.

How might you have handled the case differently?

The process of moving from an initial triage assessment to a threat assessment with Klaus is standard in the field. There could be an argument that the arrest may have gone beyond what would normally happen, but much of this was out of the hands of the decision makers at the college due to the escalated political conflicts occurring in the state and nation.

What other facts would help complete an assessment and engage in risk mitigation planning?

More details about the context of the threat and the motivation for making it would assist in developing a plan moving forward. Further exploration of social supports and ways the college can strengthen these while Klaus is processing the on-campus student conduct response as well as the off-campus criminal response.

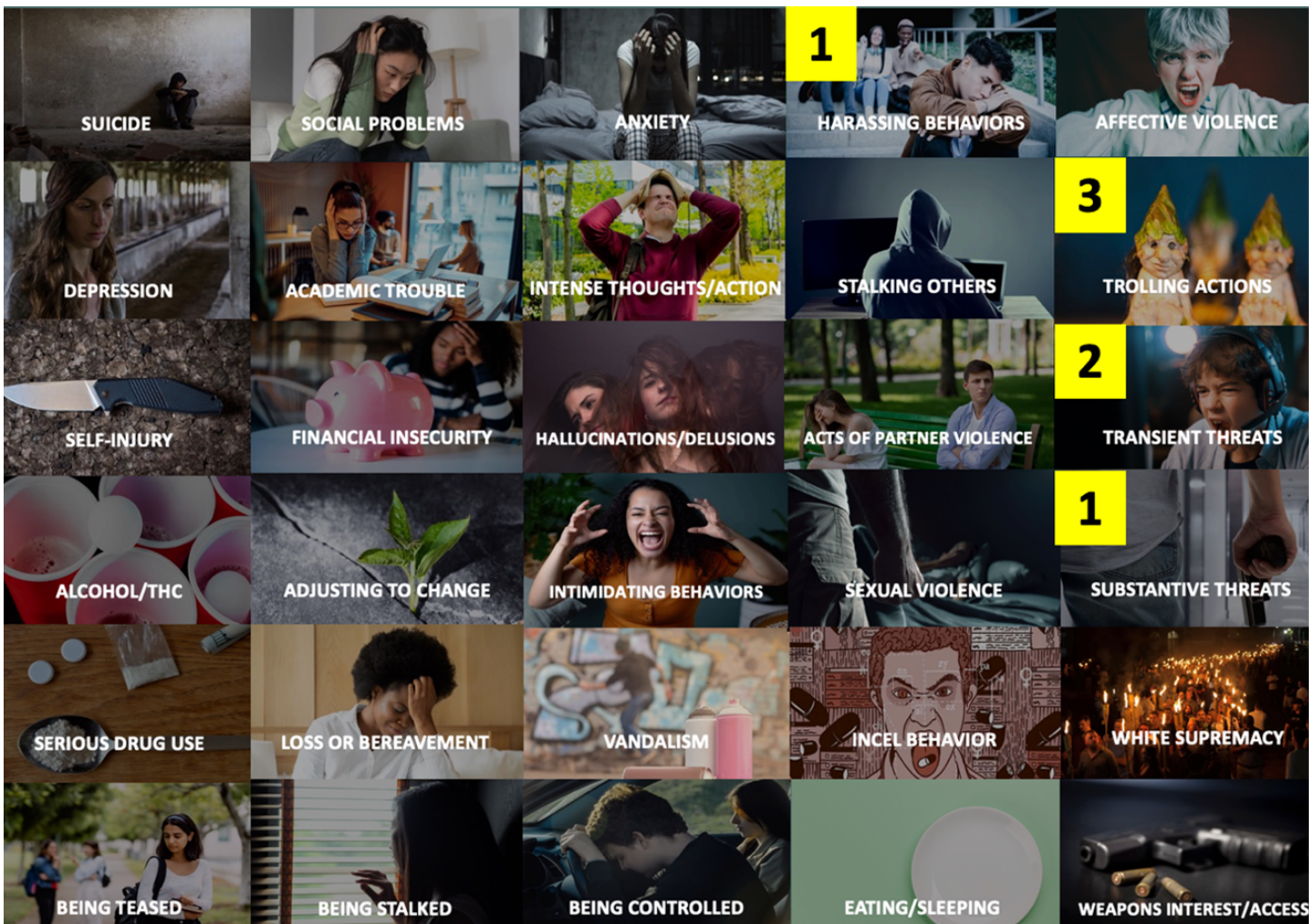
While you consider risk or escalation factors on one side of the see-saw, what might be some supportive, stabilizing, or protective factors on the other side?

Klaus's family, friends, girlfriends, and roommates seem to be the primary supports available to him at this point. Exploring additional supports that might be helpful, such as counseling or advocacy support for the criminal case, may be useful as well.

What general level of risk would you assign to the case (low, moderate, high)?

This case would be assigned a moderate level of risk pending a deeper exploration of the motivation for the threats and the intent behind them. The risk level is elevated in the case due to the pending on-campus conduct processes and off-campus criminal charges.

Pathways Scoring HIGH



Pathways Interventions

TITLE IX/CONDUCT

Harassing Behaviors¹

- Identify the range of behaviors and parties involved
- Consider the conduct process to address their behaviors
- Consider Title IX/EEO involvement
- Offer both parties referrals to counseling support

Trolling Actions

- Use the progressive disciplinary policy through conduct
- Consider a no-contact order
- Consider suspension or a short-term leave, with BIT/CARE involvement
- Facilitate a meeting with conduct, parents/emergency contact, and police, with BIT/CARE involvement
- Set clear limits, boundaries and follow up processes

POLICE/CONDUCT

Transient Threats

- Gather information on the nature of the threats and any plan
- Set clear conduct limits and monitor for compliance
- Consider parental/emergency contact or emergency contact notification

Substantive Threats

- Explore stressors and identify escalation triggers
- Connect the individual to supports and resources
- Consider the conduct process to address their behaviors

Summary from Pathways

Given the high level of risk and the nature of the initial threat, a full violence risk assessment should be conducted following the pathways triage assessment. Parental involvement is recommended under FERPA's emergency notification clauses. More details about the nature of the threat should be gathered, along with examining the motivation of the threat (e.g., stressors or other driving factors).

Limits around future behaviors (e.g., similar threats) should be in place if he is able to remain on campus. Identify potential targets of the threat (assuming it is more transient and trolling in nature), such as students who are protesting to take risk-mitigating actions. A facilitated meeting with the student, parents, Dean of Students, BIT/CARE team member, student conduct, and on-campus police may be useful to ensure appropriate steps are being taken to evaluate the threat and develop a risk mitigation plan.

¹ This item is scored and raises some checklist questions related to harassing behaviors tied to Title IX matters. This is not part of this case so these recommendations would not apply.