



DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE

STUDENT AFFAIRS | THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Annual Report 2011-2012

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Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT)

The University Of Utah's Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) continues to focus on keeping the University of Utah community safe while connecting distressed students to available campus and community support services. As BIT continues to evolve and refine its purpose and procedures, there still remain four primary functions:

1. Information Gathering
2. Threat Assessment
3. Intervention
4. Advocacy

These four functions are imperative elements to carry out the mission of BIT which is to keep faculty, staff and students of University of Utah safe.

Information Gathering:

Investigations of violent tragedies on other university campus in the United States have revealed that in violent cases, multiple campus departments had pieces of information about perpetrators concerning behaviors, before they acted out violently. However there was no one person or department who knew all the pieces of the information (Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008).

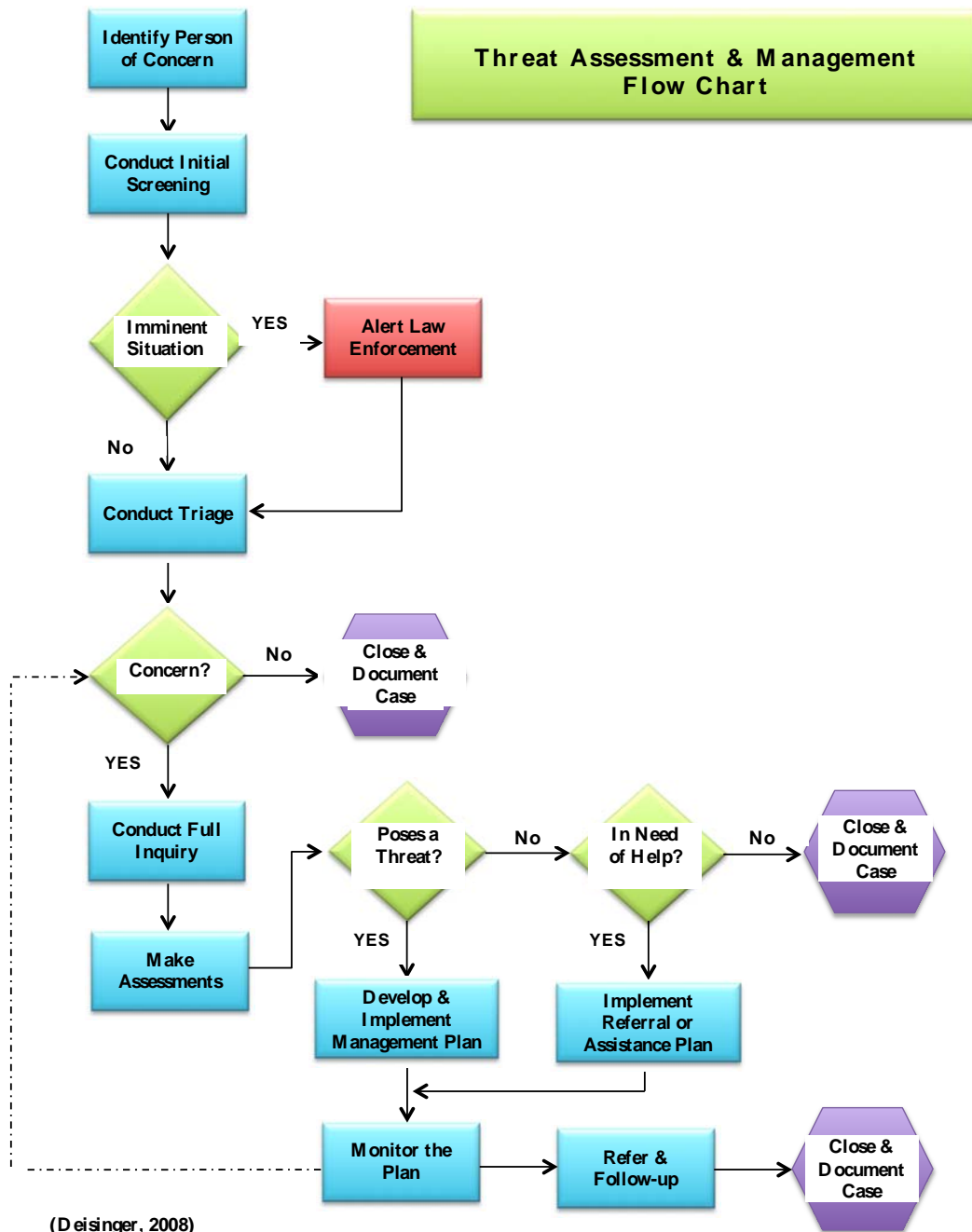
The Behavioral Intervention Team helps address this information "gap" and acts as an informational hub where behavioral concerns are received and then documented in an on-line database called ADVOCATE. This secure site is accessible to other members of the BIT where they can read and add to a behavioral file. Information about a concerning behaviors are reported through a variety of sources including faculty, staff, students, friends and family members. Concerned members of the campus community can relay their information through phone calls, emails, in-person or anonymous reports. Reports of concerning behaviors are then investigated for additional facts and insight to help determine the level of risk the behavior poses.

Best practices when seeking information about a concerning student include:

1. Interview student of concern.
2. Interview other witnesses or those impacted by the concerning behavior
3. Contact professors of the student of concern to see if any concerning behaviors have been observed in the classroom or in a student's academic performance.
4. Criminal background check
5. Review social media accounts such as Facebook
6. Student's parent or emergency contact

Risk /Threat Assessment Procedures:

After receiving information about concerning behavior BIT follows the procedural flowchart below:



RISK LEVELS OF BEHAVIOR

BIT uses a three-tier classification to help determine the risk level a behavior may pose:

1. Concerning Behaviors
2. Disruptive Behaviors
3. Threatening Behaviors

The level of risk helps to prioritize cases, and influences the range of interventions BIT chooses to employ. The following list provides examples of behaviors that may fit into these three criteria:

1. Concerning Behaviors:

- Sudden, significant drop in academic performance
- Exhibits visible changes in appearance (poor hygiene, noticeable weight loss/gain,)
- Exhibits symptoms of depression and/or anxiety
- Exhibits extreme mood swings
- Becomes preoccupied with death or suicide
- Engages in substance abuse/dependency
- Displays paranoia or distrust
- Isolates self from others

2. Disruptive Behaviors:

- Excessive use of faculty or staff's time and resources
- Erratic or unusual behaviors (paranoia, hallucinations, uncontrollable crying)
- Sends intrusive emails/text messages to faculty, staff, or students
- Intimidates or bullies faculty, staff, or students
- Aggressively "takes over" a classroom setting

3. Threatening Behaviors:

- Indicates intent or plan to harm self
- Provokes physical altercations with others
- Assaults (physically or sexually) another individual
- Shows or brandishes a weapon
- Expresses intent to physically harm or kill someone

INTERVENTIONS

BIT can use a variety of methods to intervene with a student of concern. Interventions are typically multi-layered and serve to diffuse a threatening situation and discover what support services are appropriate to best help the student. The decision of how to intervene is based upon information obtained and the risk assessment of the behavior.

In most cases the student of concern is requested to meet with the Ryan Randall, Annie Christensen or Lori McDonald. This face-to-face meeting provides an opportunity to gather more information which is vital to help determine the level of risk a student's behavior poses and what interventions would be most effective to decrease threatening behaviors.

Additional interventions may include:

- A referral to the Counseling Center or community mental health provider
- Academic advising
- Medical treatment
- A referral to the Chief Conduct Officer for student code violations
- A report to the University or Salt Lake Police Departments

ADVOCACY

In addition to threat assessment, BIT spends a significant amount of time connecting distressed students to campus support services and assisting them in navigating academic policies and procedures. Ryan's background as a clinical social worker has provided a strong ethical commitment to "do no harm" while intervening with students, and a person-centered approach to intervention decisions.

Many students have returned to Ryan's office, after being connected to support services, reporting on the success in their academic goals and expressing appreciation for the concern shown for them. Additionally, several parents have expressed gratitude for the concern and help the Office of the Dean of Students has given to their child.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION TEAM MEMBERS

There are currently 12 University members serving on the BIT. With the exception to the Behavioral Intervention Specialist, BIT members volunteer their time while balancing their regular University full-time responsibilities. This multi-disciplinary team brings a vast knowledge base, specialized skills, and expertise which are used to assess the risk level of reported behavior and determine what interventions to employ. The expertise of each team member has made significant contributions to the successful resolutions to the cases brought to the team this year.

This well-balanced team has worked in a cohesive and efficient manner throughout the past year. All members have a strong dedication to help students be successful in their academic experience at the University and value the need to keep others safe. Although the team faces many sobering and difficult situations, they are able to find balance through support of one-another and humor when appropriate. The tradition of holding an annual "BIT Breakfast" gives the team a chance to

enjoy each other's company outside of the work environment and to be recognized for their dedication to the team.

Current BIT members:

Campus Police:

Arb Nordgran - Lieutenant

Center for Disability Services:

Scott McAward, PhD - Director

Dean of Students

Annie Christensen, PhD - Dean of Students

Lori McDonald - Associate Dean of Students

Ryan Randall - Behavioral Intervention Specialist

Allison Frost - Program Manager

Faculty Representative:

Karen Paisley - Associate Dean, College of Health

Housing and Residential Education:

Barb Remsburg - Director

Lindy Nielsen - Assistant Director

International Center:

Chalimar Swain - Associate Director

Legal Counsel:

Robert Payne - Associate General Counsel

University Counseling Center:

Lois Huebner, PhD - Clinical Director

DUTY OF BIT MEMBERS

The responsibilities of BIT team members include assembling weekly to review students of concern and make preliminary and proactive plans for intervention or threat assessment. In cases where information or concerns rise to a level that require immediate action, the protocol of the Office of the Dean of Students is to hold a “Student of Concern Meeting” rather than wait for the next scheduled BIT meeting. Each BIT member utilizes their professional skills and knowledge in evaluating risk and determining which intervention(s) to utilize with a student of concern.

Training for BIT Members

On-going training to improve assessment and interventions skills remains a high priority for BIT. Using current local and national data, as well as best practices for methods of intervention are imperative to keep the campus safe.

In November 2011 Dr. Gene Deisinger, a nationally recognized expert on threat assessment, provided a 1 1/2 day training to members of BIT. This training focused on skill development for recognizing and assessing behaviors that could indicate a potential threat. Dr. Deisinger used several of his own cases he had worked on at Virginia Tech and had the team re-work these cases using our threat assessment protocols to determine our potential course of action. Dr. Deisinger also updated the team on current trends, assessment tools, and threat assessment theory – which we have continued to use since the training. BIT members reported feeling the training was very helpful in improving assessment skills, and reaffirming the importance of the individual roles they play on the team.

In addition to the team training, Ryan Randall was fortunate to meet individually with Dr. Deisinger. This coaching session was extremely valuable for the development of Ryan’s administrative responsibilities, management techniques, policy standards, and procedural strategies. Ryan came away from this training with a greater vision of the future of BIT, and a stronger professional connection with Dr. Deisinger.

In August 2011, Ryan Randall attended the annual Threat Management Conference presented by the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP) held at The Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim California. This 4 day training addressed a wide range of threat assessment skills including; the nature of stalking behaviors, psychological profiles of a criminal mind, violence prevention, detection and evaluation.

In addition to attending the workshops, Ryan was able to make connections with members from other university threat assessment teams, including the Chiefs of Police from Boise and Duke Universities. These connections have provided useful insight into the trends and practices of what other university threat assessment teams are doing across the nation.

OUTREACH AND TRAININGS

In order to intervene effectively, it is very important that the campus community becomes more aware that the Behavioral Intervention Team exists and how to utilize this resource.

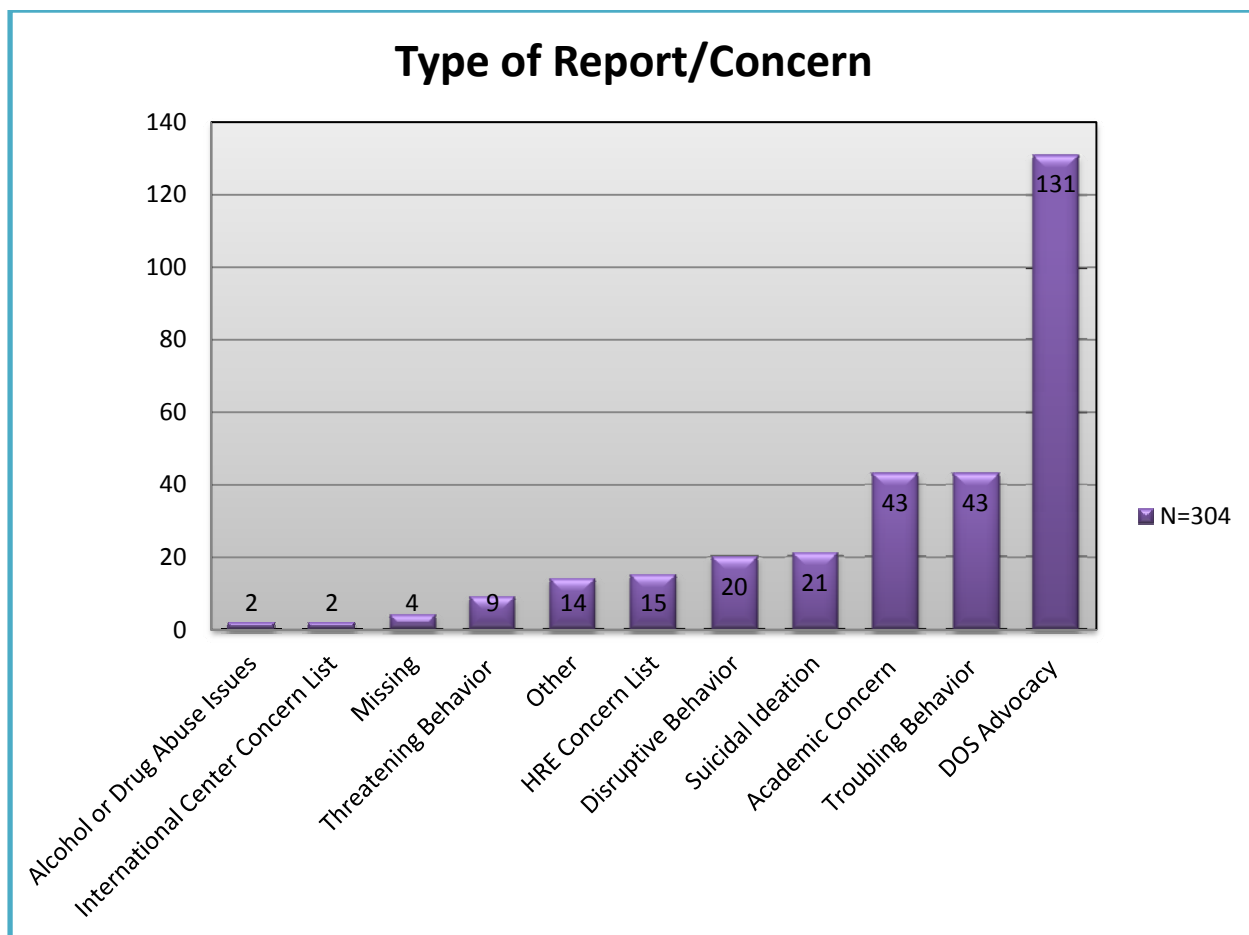
Ryan Randall has made outreach and training a strong priority in his development of BIT.

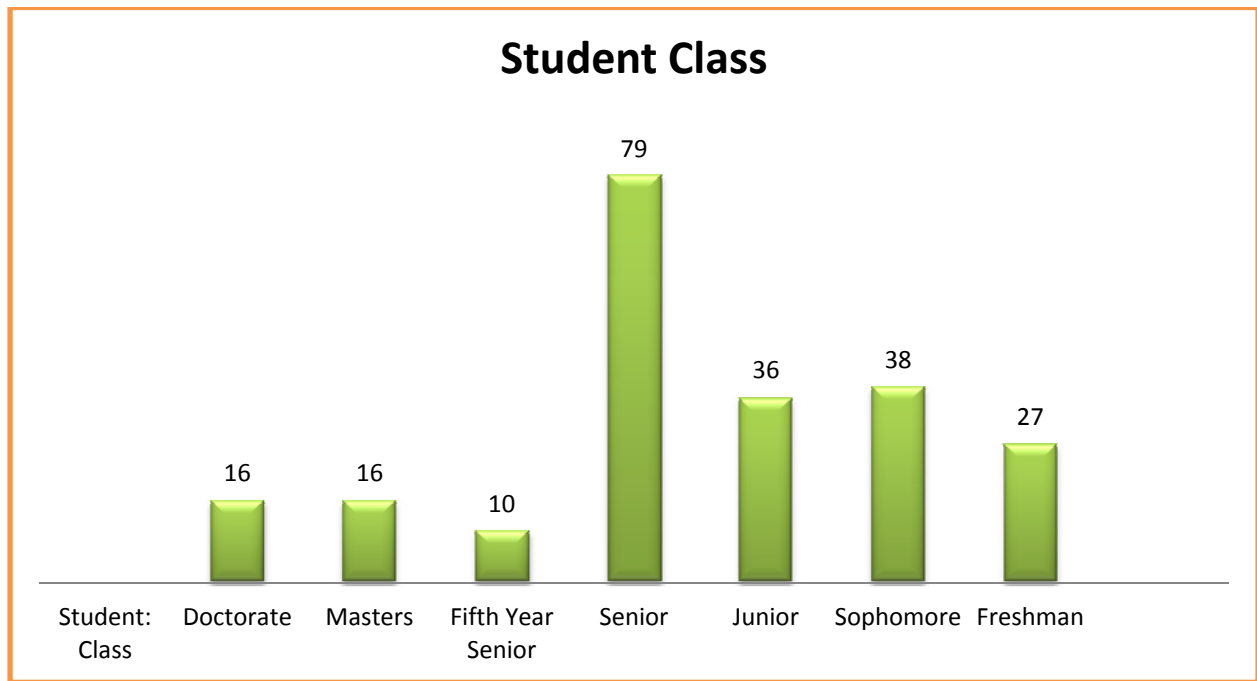
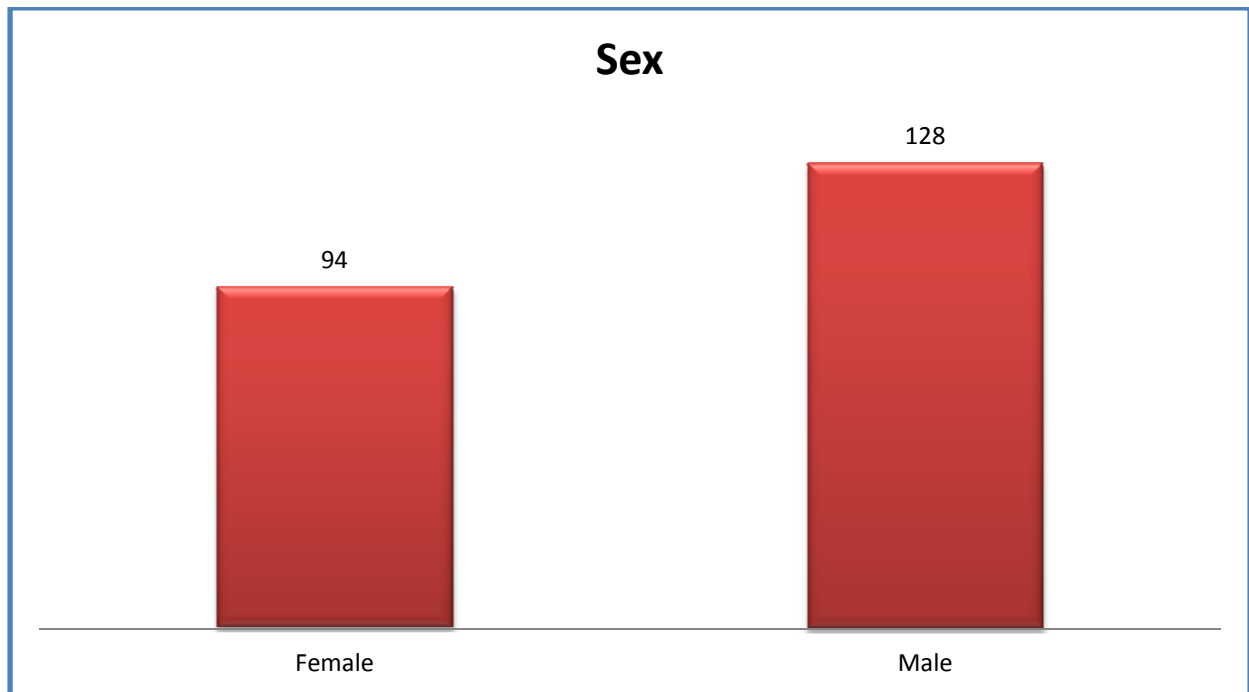
During the course of the year Ryan performed a total of 21 outreach sessions, totaling over 26 hours with over 577 campus members reached. A wide variety of academic departments, administrative offices and student support services received training on many topics ranging from threat assessment to effective conflict management skills.

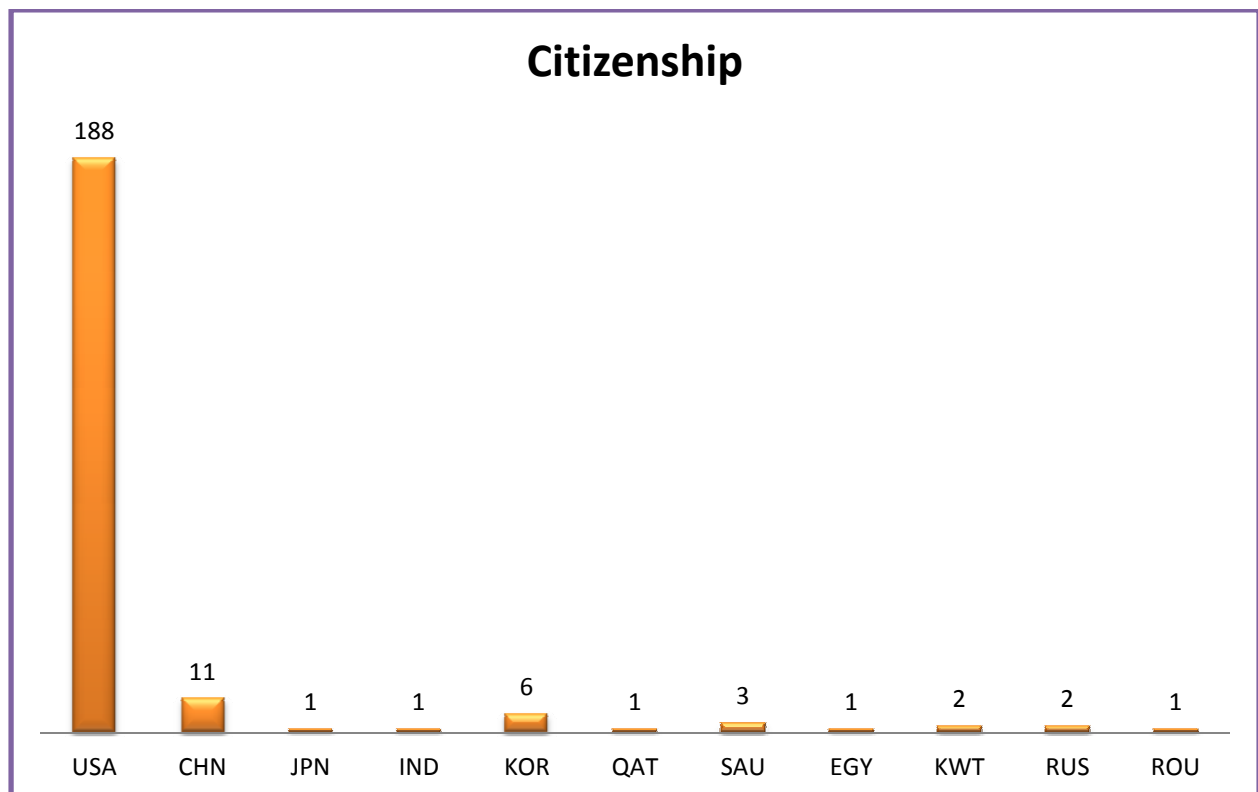
One of the most enjoyable outreach activities was visiting several of University of Utah satellite campuses. Betsy Oswald from Continuing Education accompanied Annie Christensen and Ryan Randall to the Bountiful, Murray, and Sandy campuses where we were able to work with the site manager and provide basic training on campus safety and how they can access the services of BIT. Annie also provided the site managers with her cell phone information so they could reach her in the evening hours when most of their centers are open.

BIT Data and Statistics

The following information was compiled from ADVOCATE files July 1, 2011- June 30, 2012:







References:

Deisinger, G, Randazzo, M, O'Neill, D, & Savage, J. (2008). *The handbook for campus threat assessment & management teams*. Massachusetts: Applied Risk Management.