Office of University Police
State University of New York
System Administration, SUNY Plaza, Albany NY

Review of University Police
Department:
College at Oneonta

JULY 2014
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

A review of the University Police Department at the College of Oneonta was conducted through the State University of New York, System Administration, Office of University Police on May 27, 2014. The charge to the committee was to review community relations and, specifically, allegations of bias policing and racial profiling. Using a "timeline" provided by Chief Chambers, the team reviewed various elements of department operations and several major events that have impacted policing at the College.

Key Findings

Mission. The Department’s mission meets University and campus expectations.

Outreach. Community policing efforts should be extended in a number of ways through programs presented to the campus community and strategic planning.

Anti-Police Bias Policy (Preventing Biased Based Profiling and the Perception of Bias based Policing). At this time the department is in final drafting of a bias police policy and community comments have been solicited. This should be issued by the start of the fall semester. Additionally, the team reviewed the various allegations presented and could find no finding for bias for the on-campus complaints.

Data Collection. The department is in the process of acquiring software that will allow for the collection of data on arrests, car stops, uses of force, and field stops. This will be used for future reviews on police activity and dealing with allegations of citizen complaints. These should all be made available to the community.

Community Focus Groups. In keeping with the focus on community policing, we suggest that the department initiate a series of focus groups each semester with campus stakeholders that would allow for the review of satisfaction with police services and campus crime issues.

Police Advisory Committee. The review team supports the creation of a working advisory committee, which would be composed of faculty, staff, and students, to allow for the airing of issues and the sharing of ideas to improve department services and campus safety.
Independent Review Committee. The purpose of the committee would be to review the department’s review of citizen complaints and provide policy advice on operations and training and campus climate.

Police Annual Report. This report would be prepared by the Chief every summer to inform the campus on department operations.

Complaint Process. At this time, the Department has several ways by which citizens may make complaints regarding police activities. These include processes managed by the department as well as several external offices. The department should review their current procedures and insure that a number of “best practices” be implemented including a formal response to the complainant.

Diversity in the Department. Efforts to diversify the Police Departments at all levels will continue under existing civil service laws and collective bargaining agreements. The Office of University Police at System Administration will begin discussions with the New York State Department of Civil Service on this issue.
I. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

This review of the University Police Department at the College of Oneonta was conducted upon the request Dr. Steven Perry, Vice President of Student Affairs, and Chief of Police, Daniel Chambers. The review team was comprised of the following:


Michael Bailey, MS, Chief of Police, State University of New York at Purchase, (Utica Police Department, ret.).

Leslie Kachurek, MS, MA, MBA, Chief of Police, State University of New York at Alfred, (Niagara Falls Police Department, ret.)

J. Frank Wiley, BA, Chief of Police, University at Albany

The charge to the committee was to review community relations and, specifically, allegations of bias policing and racial profiling.

II. REVIEW FORMAT

On May 27, 2014, a day-long meeting was held with Chief Chambers and Vice President Perry. During the afternoon, we were joined by President Nancy Kleniewski, Chief Dennis Naylor of the Oneonta City Police, and Director Tom Kelly, Hartwick College. Before and during the campus visit, a number of department documents and policies were reviewed.

Using a “timeline” provided by Chief Chambers, the team reviewed various aspects of department operations and several major events that have impacted policing at the College. The former included “the Black List” incident of September 1992 whereby African American students were searched for hand wounds by State and local police based on a list provided by campus officials. The list was created in response to an off-campus attempted sexual assault.

In summer 2013, the issue of bias policing in the Oneonta area emerged when a member of the Africana and Latino Studies Department was arrested for a variety of charges based on a bench warrant for a vehicle and traffic violation.

During this past semester, there were several student forums about police bias in the Oneonta community. Concurrently, several complaints of bias policing were filed by the local chapter of
the NAACP and several students. In addition, a study published from data collected by the Department of Education found that the campus had a high rate of enforcement for drug violations. In response to this, faculty members from various academic departments prepared a paper which reported that this enforcement model has a negative impact by creating an atmosphere of tension and mistrust.

III. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The University Police Department provides a wide range of services to the campus community. In addition to Chief Chambers, the department consists of four supervisors, 12 university police officers and six dispatchers. The Director of Emergency Management is also located in the police organization.

The department received accreditation from the Bureau for Municipal Police, New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services which means that department policies meet or exceed professional state law enforcement standards in over 130 policy areas.

The Department was the first in the SUNY system to adopt digital “body cameras” for patrol officers which allows video recordings of officer-citizen/suspect interactions. This allows for administrative review when officer’s actions are questioned.

IV. DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTION ITEMS

The following consists of a number of observations and recommendations that can form the basis for the department’s strategic plan in addressing police-community issues.

The Mission of the Department

Consistent with the University-wide mission of providing quality services to the campus community and upholding Constitutional rights, the mission of the Department is to protect life and property and to conduct its activities and treat all person in a lawful, fair, equitable, and evenhanded manner without regard to race, color, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, political affiliation, or personal interest. This mission meets University and campus expectations.

Community Policing

While the community policing philosophy has been around for a number of years, the extent of police officer and community interaction varies from campus to campus. During our review it
was clear that the department has made efforts to interact with the campus community. Programs that are offered upon request include RAD (Rape Aggression Defense), alcohol and drug prevention, and personal safety.

Community policing efforts should be extended in a number of ways both through programs presented to the campus community and strategic planning. We suggest that officer initiated activities be encouraged.

**Anti-Police Bias Policy (Preventing Biased Based Profiling and the Perception of Bias based Policing).**

At this time the department is in final drafting of a bias police policy and community comments have been solicited. The final version will be published in the departmental manual and form the basis for administrative reviews of activity and training.

Additionally, the team reviewed the various allegations in a sample of cases and could find no finding for bias or unprofessional behavior.

**Data Collection**

The department is in the process of acquiring software that will allow for the collection of data on arrests, car stops, uses of force, and field stops. This will be used for future reviews on police activity and dealing with allegations of citizen complaints. Department review of citizen complaints should be compiled demographically and made public via the department’s web page and annual report.

**Community Focus Groups**

In keeping with the focus on community policing, we suggest that the department initiate a series of focus groups each semester with campus stakeholders that would allow for the review of satisfaction with police services and campus crime issues.

**Police Advisory Committee**

The review team supports the creation of a working advisory committee, which would be composed of faculty, staff, and students, to allow for the airing of issues and the sharing of ideas to improve department services and campus safety. It could also provide assistance with
measuring “campus climate” with regards to police services. It is recommended that this group be appointed either by the President or the Vice President for Student Affairs with the Chief of Police or a senior lieutenant servicing as an ex-officio member.

**Independent Review Committee**

The purpose of the committee would be to review citizen complaints and provide policy advice on operations and training and campus climate. While the actual investigation of complaints would remain with the department under prevailing state and civil service rules, the committee could be briefed on allegations, investigative outcomes, and operational changes that emerge from these complaints.

**Police Annual Report**

This report would be prepared by the Chief every summer to inform the campus on department operations, personnel achievements, personal safety issues, and the outcomes of both the Advisory and Independent Review Committee. This information should also be presented on the department website.

**Complaint Process**

At this time, the Department has several ways by which citizens may make complaints regarding police activities. These include processes managed by the department as well as several external offices. As outlined by Chief Wiley, the department should review their current procedures and insure that the following guidelines are met for citizen complaints:

- All complaints should be in writing and maintained statistically
- The process should allow complaints by mail, in person, or on-line.
- All paper complaint forms should come with a self-address stamped envelope; on-line forms should have a respondent e-address.
- Literature detailing the complaint process should be available on-line as well as placed in well-traveled public areas throughout the jurisdiction.
- All literature should also provide information concerning how to complain to outside agencies, like the ACLU, NAACP, or Inspector General.
- All in-person complaints should be accepted by a supervisor who explains the complaint process who then forwards it to the person responsible for investigating citizen complaints.
• A final determination of the complaint (founded, unfounded, remedy) should be sent in writing to the person or party making the complaint.

Diversity in the Department

Efforts to diversify the Police Departments at all levels will continue under existing civil service laws and collective bargaining agreements. The Office of University Police at System Administration will begin discussions with the New York State Department of Civil Service and other stakeholders on the creation of a Police Cadet Program, which would allow departments to recruit underrepresented populations. Additionally a number of University-wide efforts are underway to stabilize the workforce through a police pension plan that is currently in force for most police departments in New York State. This has been identified by the Commissioner and the SUNY Chiefs Association as the main reason for officer turnover whereby trained officers transfer to other municipal and state departments with a retirement benefit.

Conclusion

The recommendations and views contained in this report reflect the professional views of the review team and are presented for the sole use of the State University of New York at Oneonta. The team hopes that these recommendations will assist in improving police community relations with all facets of the Oneonta campus and general community. Comments or questions should be directed to the Office of University Police, University Plaza, Broadway, Albany, New York 12246 at 518.320.1600 or at bruce.mcbride@suny.edu.

July 21, 2014

Albany, New York