

Designing University Police Units— *Areas of Consideration*

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University policing is a relatively new and exciting field within the law enforcement profession. However, because it has existed in a somewhat closed and separated environment, this particular and peculiar aspect of law enforcement has remained a mystery to the profession at large.

Law enforcement officials everywhere acknowledge that we do not exist in a vacuum: however the needs and influences on police agencies in their communities can be discerned as distinct and separate from neighboring communities. It is feasible for purposes of this article to examine law enforcement service to a university community, overlooking the minor differences and focusing on the common influencing factors. In this way a greater understanding of university policing may be realized.

The typical university campus lends itself to such exploration, for it differs extensively from city, county, and other district jurisdictions. On the other hand, although there are minor peculiarities from campus to campus, there are significant similarities within academic institutions that greatly influence the law enforcement function and consequently the organization designed to carry out that function. These similar factors include the historical influence, with the university's former functional needs, and the contemporary influence in terms of setting, philosophical positions, and relationships with contingent po-

lice agencies, as well as the mission of campus policing units and budget constraints.

Historical Influence

University policing is a unique form of law enforcement with many attributes of municipal policing, plus additional considerations that are totally alien and often disturbing to traditional law officers.

In the past 10 years, university police have broken out of the traditional "college security" mold. Prior to the tumultuous sixties, the campus cop was generally a retired municipal or county policeman seeking to supplement his retirement income with the pittance paid to the security man of that era. He was often overweight,

carried a huge ring of keys, and even sometimes accused of having some voyeuristic tendencies. His primary function was door rattling by night and parking citation writing by day.

With the civil rights movement of the late 1950's and the antiwar activists of the early to mid-1960's came a new era on the campuses, not only for university policing but for the university community as a whole. As a reaction to the widespread unrest, many students and faculty members on university campuses lost the special esteem in which society had held them. State after State passed strong campus disruption legislation. To provide the service college administrators needed to enforce the new laws, university police forces across the country doubled, tripled, and even quadrupled. This new breed of university police-

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man was younger, tougher, and often more educated than his predecessors. Thus, university policing moved out of the realm of facility security and into the field of law enforcement.

As the tide of dissent ebbed in the late sixties, a partial reaction to some of the excesses of riot suppression took place. Some overreaction to student agitation had occurred on the part of city, county, and State officers who were called in to augment the campus forces. Most campus administrators, acting in sympathy with their student bodies, or as a means to placate them, ordered a very low profile campus policing approach. University officers were put into blazers and unmarked cars, with primary emphasis on community relations. The classical hierarchical organization was discarded in favor of various experimental "re-

sponsive" organizational styles. The sidearm was hidden or in some cases taken away, as was the nightstick.

However, with the 1970's came rising crime rates and a new generation of students who were more interested in getting into the business world than in getting out of Vietnam. This new clientele was notably unhappy when they were mugged, robbed, or assaulted and their stereo tape decks and CB radios were "ripped off." They raised a hue and cry to astonished administrators, demanding that the university protect them—with real police!

Since most universities were still reluctant to call in municipal or county agencies, the logical alternative was to develop on-campus policing capabilities. Off came the blazer, and back came the emergency lights for cruisers, the sidearms, and the nightsticks.

Also returning were the traditional organizational table of components and the typical policing style found in cities near campuses. And while the university officers went from door rattlers to riot squads, from invisible community relations experts to law enforcement officers, they developed a unique peer relationship with the campus population which has lightened the involvement of the campus police in the university lifestyle.

Contemporary Influences

There are several factors which currently influence the organizational design of university police forces. Some of these parallel considerations in municipal policing, while many are unique to the campus environment. For instance, the constant state of flux found on many campuses is not simply a symptom of turnover in student population; it is more of a university change, as an idea and ideal is discussed, encouraged, and processed as a part of the business of education.

One of the major factors to be considered in the organization of a campus police force is the setting of the university itself. This includes not only the geographic layout of the campus, but also the demographic makeup of the surrounding area. A different organizational thrust is necessary in protecting an urban campus as compared to a suburban or rural one. The employees of the urban campus are concerned with building security and the potential of being in a high crime district. There is also a parking problem commonly due to lack of space and the burden of having to patrol and control large blocks of



A university police officer instructs students on the various security devices.

parked vehicles. Additionally, especially in urban campuses, there is the relatively new concept of "comm-university," that is, the university existing as an integral rather than a separate part of the community. Co-existent with this philosophy is an openness and outreach on the part of campus administrators to encourage use of university facilities by members of the surrounding community. The negative result of this positive program is that some of those coming on campus have crime rather than education as their goal.

Until a century ago the neighborhood in which many urban universities were situated was middle class and residential. In the ensuing years, many of these neighborhoods have undergone socio-economic change, and the campuses find themselves an enclave of prosperity in the midst of deprivation. This situation not only tends to elevate the larcenous crime rate, but also fosters a "town vs. gown" resentment that manifests itself in assaultive crimes on and around the campus.

The suburban or rural campus is usually in the wide open spaces that

present a very different set of problems. It is, for instance, impossible to adequately light an entire rural campus, thus providing several areas that, while they may be frequented by campus "lovers," are also favorite haunts of the assaulter or robber. Demographically, the urban university presents the greatest law enforcement challenge. Even if the campus is located in a "low" crime area, the mere facts of population and commodity density will be a lure for criminal elements, and the organization will have to react accordingly.

Other contemporary influences on the organization of campus police forces depend upon the philosophies of the administration, the faculty, and the students.

While public university police are empowered by State, county, or local police agencies in their law enforcement duties, it would be unrealistic to suppose that college administrators do not have a great influence on the design of their campus police forces. The exterior exponent of administrative philosophy is usually to whom the executive officer of the campus force reports. On a more liberal campus,

one may find the campus police reporting to the dean of students or the student affairs division on one level or another. This represents a "students' rights" orientation. Where a conservative attitude is encouraged, the police often report to the vice president for business affairs or executive vice president. This approach is indicative of a "student responsibility" orientation. It must be noted, however, that a campus administration may well be liberal in some areas and still be conservative in its response to university policing.

On many campuses, the vote of the faculty senate is tantamount to an act of legislature. The faculty influence on the design of the police organization is disproportionate to their *apparent* authority. Education is the prime product and service delivered by the university, and the faculty is the prime vehicle for the delivery of that service. The faculty therefore are the movers and shakers without actually being in the formal power structure.

Campus police must be prepared for outright hostility on the part of some faculty. There are a few in the academic profession who clearly resent the presence of police (professional or not) on campus. This does not represent the "pigs-off-campus" attitude of the sixties, but more of an earnest desire by the faculty that the academic environment not be polluted with any constraining influences which might stifle academic freedoms.

On any campus of appreciable size, the university police are dealing with two student factions—the informal and the formal. The informal is made up of the bulk of students—the commuters and a large percentage of the dormitory residents. These students are generally pro-police, yet are conspicuously silent about it.

Then there are the formal student body representatives. They might be called the student senate, the univer-



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sity forum, or by some other such name. This group is highly vocal and tries very hard to represent every special interest group on campus. Even though they constitute a minority, on paper they "represent" the entire student body and are a power which must be considered. Thus, the feeling of the student body toward the university police is clearly ambivalent.

What also must be taken into consideration is the relationship of the campus police with contingent law enforcement agencies, an influencing factor that is probably the most complex legally. It becomes difficult to speak of in specifics, not necessarily on a local level, but when trying to deal or explain on a multi-State basis. Included in this factor is the relationship with the commissioning agency, which may be the city, county, or State in which the campus is located. This becomes even more complicated when the college is a State institution with some campuses in a municipality and some in a county. However, with such cases, most States have worked out their own expedient methods of handling these relationships.

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A definite design influence may come from the commissioning agent, if he places certain restrictions or demands on the university police operation through holding the commission by which the university police function. Also to be considered is the matter of mutual aid. The amount of aid required of other agencies is predicated by how self-sufficient or isolated the university force wants to be or is ordered to be by the university administration. This may involve utilizing specialized functions of other

agencies, such as laboratory and criminalistic facilities, or requesting (or rendering) patrol aid during peak load periods. The less dependent a campus force wants to be, the more specialized and complex its organizational design must be.

As in any organization, the amount of money available has a great deal to do with shaping the design of a university police agency. As in a municipal police department, the university police present annually, or biannually in some cases, a justification for their budget requests to the administration. The major difference in a campus setting is that the persons making some of the budget decisions are also budget recipients. This means that deans and department heads must set priorities and may find that the funding of a research laboratory has a higher priority than police equipment for the current year. This vying for budget dollars is another faculty resentment aspect.

The budget factor too is a major determinant in the caliber of personnel that the campus force can recruit. If an administration wants skilled professional university law enforcement officers, it must provide attractive salaries to recruit and keep such people. Fortunately, most universities have recognized this and the overall quality of university policing is increasing proportionally. Where salary levels are set by law, many universities have increased the attractiveness of the fringe benefits package with such items as free tuition, additional pay for educational attainment, etc.

The mission of a campus police force is dependent on the type or "style" of policing the university force will offer. The style could range from the "College Joe" good guy approach, through the *en loco parentis* protective type, all the way to the legalistic enforce-the-law-regardless style.

The implication in the good guy

approach is an abundance of understanding which allows the students or faculty to do their own thing without fear of hinderance from the police. The *en loco parentis* method dates back to the pre-1950's when colleges and all their agents acted as substitute parents, protecting and defending the naive student. And indeed, in many States they were mandated by law to do so. This attitude did much to fan the flames of town vs. gown animosity when students were referred to the dean of students for offenses that meant jail for nonstudents. The legalistic or hard approach, while legally correct, can lead to a breakdown in viable communications within the campus community.

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For the most part, however, it appears that university policing of today has adopted a judicious stance that has chosen the best from all of these worlds and is developing a new and palatable style of its own. And, the future of university policing is wide open in the truest possible sense. There are few, if any, of the growth restraints found in traditional law enforcement. We are not bound to "the way it's always been," because we are just now making our traditions. Add to this the environment of change and innovation in which campus police exist and there is the potential for constant responsive growth of function and responsibility. Because of this, it is easy to envision a future in which university police serve as a model agency to test and perfect new equipment, ideas, and methods of law enforcement.

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