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‘Professionalism and Service to the Community’

For Interim Police Chief James Brock, connection is key — connecting with students and with the campus community, and also with the police officers and employees who work under his direction.

Brock has charted a new course for the department, and five months into his position he’s already seeing results.

“We’ve made enhancements to a number of areas in just a few months, including standardizing and formalizing many existing processes related to assignments, hiring and discipline as well as to our Field Training Officer program,” he said.

“These new processes will help identify where additional training is needed and will surface potential areas and behavior the leadership needs to address before they become problematic.”

It has also been a priority for Brock to complete the implementation of the in-car mobile audio video and body-worn camera project which was recently put into operation. “We are creating greater accountability within the department and setting clear expectations for responsible behavior both on and off duty.”

Brock also has instituted an open-door policy that encourages members of the department to meet with him to share their concerns and suggestions with the hope of continuing to make improvements.

Because it's all about relationships.

A point Brock has reiterated with officers since coming to UC Santa Barbara is the importance of creating relationships with students and building trust between the student body and the department. "It's about opening lines of communications," he noted. "The students here are brilliant and bring diverse and valuable perspectives. They have learned to ask direct and challenging questions, and as law enforcement professionals, we need to be respectful and we need to be prepared to explain our actions and the policies behind them. We have to be okay with students asking us why we're doing what we're doing. We have to be able to have a dialogue, which means we also have to listen and to make sure we hear the members of the community. This doesn't always lead to complete agreement, but it is important in creating understanding."

Brock has spent his first several months meeting with students and student groups from across campus. He has met with the leadership of Students Against Sexual Assault, and the department has joined with Santa Barbara Standing Together to End Sexual Assault, a partnership aimed at working together toward providing the best and most effective assistance to sexual assault survivors and their significant others in Santa Barbara County.

He has also met A.S. President Alison Sir, Internal Vice President Alli Adam and others to solicit their input on what the police department is doing right, and what they could be doing better. Brock says they are working to open dialogue between the UCPD and A.S. and are exploring a possible forum to allow students to share ideas and concerns. And the focus isn't only on procedures. "They have offered important feedback regarding students' expectations and have also advised us on strategies related to using social media, including the launching of our Instagram account, which is a first for us," Brock said.

Under his guidance, the department is enhancing its relationship with the Division of Student Affairs, collaborating as partners. "We're working directly with many offices on providing assistance and services to students," he explained. "As chief, I think it is important to participate as an active member in many of the UC Santa Barbara student services groups, also giving them an opportunity to share their concerns with law enforcement as it presents itself here and throughout the nation."

Opportunities abound for connecting with students in a variety of ways, he noted, and he is open to all of them.

For example, he'd like to develop a program that would connect police officers with student organizations, including fraternities and sororities, at the beginning of each academic year to discuss issues related to campus safety. "Meeting people in a non-threatening, non-law enforcement situation to have conversations and share ideas about ways to improve safety on our campus can positively impact the relationship between the department and the community it serves," he said.

"Students come from all over the world to attend UC Santa Barbara and many of them have had different experiences with law enforcement, and unfortunately many of these experiences aren't positive," Brock continued. "As public servants, we are expected to be perfect all the time, and the reality of it is that the men and women doing this work are asked to make decisions in situations that are frequently out of control or volatile or confused. Our goal is to make the right call 100% of the time, but that is a lofty goal and will require us to continuously review our actions and procedures, and learn from the times when things do not work out as intended."

Brock is focused on strengthening the department's commitment to community-based policing that he believes may have shifted a bit following the Isla Vista tragedy five years ago. "This is a close-knit organization and the officers, like the rest of the community, were deeply impacted," he said. "And I think, not surprisingly, the department felt an urgency to increase its tactical training, especially in light of what has happened around the country since then."

As part of that commitment and in hopes of assuring the department and its officers operate at the highest level possible, Brock has created a Professional Standards Support Division within the police department that is responsible for developing and regulating policies and procedures. Operated by a lieutenant and a sergeant, the division oversees research, staff recruiting, performance management, business services and internal affairs, and conducts background investigations. Under Brock's guidance, the department has been conducting a comprehensive review of its procedures and implementing industry best practices.

"I've set clear expectations on acceptable performance, with an emphasis on providing exemplary community service," he said. "It's about following policy and procedure to maintain the highest standards of professionalism and service to the

community.”

He emphasized that while the department must be prepared to respond to any situation, he wants to make sure it remains fixed on its core mission: serving the campus community and creating a safe and welcoming environment for all. To that end, he has expanded the department’s Community Outreach Unit (COU) to include two additional officers and a sergeant. As its name implies, the COU brings students and police officers together on campus in a non-law enforcement capacity to create opportunities for communication, collaboration and education.

“The men and women of the department are a dedicated, hardworking group of people,” Brock said. “Their sole objective is to help make UC Santa Barbara a place where the students, faculty and staff can work, learn and thrive.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.