

October 4, 2021

To: Southwestern Community College District Executive Leadership Team

From: Al Abdallah, Chief Operating Officer, Urban League of San Diego County

Re: Phase 1 Report on Community Based Policing Model

This is the first of four reports that will recap the work that began in May 2021 in which the Urban League of San Diego County (ULSDC) was contracted to provide consulting services to the Southwestern Community College District (SCCD) in its efforts to design a community centered policing model that incorporates as its primary tenets; diversity, equity, inclusion and community engagement practices as the foundation of Campus Police Operations.

These reports will be submitted to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) at the end of September 2021, December 2021, March 2022 and the final report will be provided at the end of June 2022.

The task of changing the image and culture of the Campus Police has been a collaborative effort. Dr. Kelly Hall and Chief Marco Bareno have been influential in providing insight to the ULSDC on the workings of the SCCD and which groups have been most adversely affected during interactions with the Campus Police.

It was agreed that we would divide our work into four phases. Those phases being **Policies, Procedures and Practices, Building Community Relationships, Campus Police Image and Brand and a Final Evaluation** with recommendations to achieve the objectives outlined in phases one, two and three by September 2022.

A review of the Policies, Procedures and Practices revealed that the Police Operations was designed to adhere to the Peace Officer's Standards and Training (POST) guidelines which law enforcement personnel at all levels of government are trained to adhere to. There is not much that we can do to amend the POST guidelines.

Although these guidelines are the standard for policing in America, they don't fully address the need to embrace and incorporate 21st Century Community Based Policing which is the model of policing that is the objective.

This model of policing was created in 2014 as a result of a taskforce by the Obama Administration that has six pillars as its recommendations. Those pillars are as follows:

- Build Trust and Legitimacy – Foster Trust and don't act as if we occupy an area
- Policy Oversight – Align policies with community values
- Technology and Social Media - Embrace technology and utilize social media platforms to communicate with the community that is being served
- Community Policing and Crime Reduction – Prioritize community engagement
- Officer Training and Education – Invest in training
- Officer Safety – Cultivate the well-being of Officers

The taskforce also had five recommendations on Procedural Justice and Implicit Bias that are listed below:

- Be Fair in Processes
- Be Transparent in Action
- Opportunity for a Voice – People want to be heard
- Be Impartial in Decision Making – People should be treated the same
- Decrease Tension and Increase Trust – Officers should apologize when mistakes are made

After a few strategy sessions, Dr. Hall, Chief Bareno and I agreed that a plan of action was needed to engage stakeholders who have at some point had interactions with the Campus Police. Identifying and obtaining input from those stakeholders are critical to the success of this project.

The stakeholders identified were the Police Officers, Students, Faculty, Police Advisory Committee, Staff, Administrators, Community Members and the Employee Affinity Groups.

To obtain the empirical data that we needed to make informed decisions and establish a baseline of how to proceed, a Campus Police survey was developed and administered to the stakeholders and the survey yielded 2,433 responses (2,019 were students and 414 were non-students).

The Key Takeaways from the data is listed below:

- When thinking about their overall experience on campus, 76% of employees and 50% of the students who answered the survey are satisfied with the Campus Police. There is very little dissatisfaction overall
- When asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the Campus Police on five metrics, employees expressed the most satisfaction with working together with the campus community and respecting individuals' rights
- Students expressed the most satisfaction with the Campus Police when it comes to respecting individuals' rights, followed closely by preventing crime, working together with the campus community and enforcing parking rules
- Satisfaction with the Campus Police tends to be lower among both employees and students when it comes to using a level of force that is appropriate for the situation. However, this is not because dissatisfaction is high – rather, substantial portions of both segments are unable to answer the question. This indicates they don't know enough about the Campus Police on this metric to make an assessment
- Trust in the Campus Police is relatively high among both employees and students, and marginally higher than their trust in police generally
- 79% of employees and 57% of students who responded to the survey believe, "Campus Police Officers are respectful to people like me"

- Most employees say the Department's building on campus gives them a very positive impression of the Campus Police. The Department's name, "Southwestern College Police Department" is a stand-out with both employees and students
- The officers' uniforms, emblems on Campus Police vehicles and signs around campus also yielded positive responses among employees and students
- The Department's website lags behind, not because people have a negative impression of it, but because more folks simply don't know enough about the website to make an evaluation

After a review of the survey results, it was decided that hosting focus groups with each stakeholder group would allow us to drill down even further on the data.

The focus group meetings have been scheduled as follows:

9/8/21 – Police Officers **(already conducted)**
 9/20/21 – Students **(already conducted)**
 10/5/21 – Faculty
 10/21/21 – Police Advisory Committee
 11/3/21- Staff
 11/19/21 – Administrators
 12/3/21 – Community Members
 12/16/21 – Employee Affinity Groups

The size of each focus group was set at seven to ten individuals. The focus group participants will spend two hours in a forum discussing not only the survey results, but their feelings about the Campus Police and how the police can be more effective and seen as a friend and not a foe.

Our focus group meeting with the Police Officers was held on 9/8/21 and six officers were in attendance.

We addressed the Mission Statement of the Department (the Mission Statement was re-created with an emphasis on the community) and whether the officers truly embraced it. Given that many of the officers are from the community and attended Southwestern Community College, the Mission Statement resonated with them.

We addressed the fact that the majority of the survey responses were positive, but there are certain groups on campus (although small in number) that do not have positive views of the Campus Police. The 2019 parking lot incident that was captured on video and went viral was discussed in detail. The officers were afforded an opportunity to share their views on the incident from a law enforcement perspective and I shared with them the perspective of a community member/leader and how the two views are not in alignment regardless of POST guidelines. Community Based Policing with de-escalation at the forefront must be utilized in all interactions.

Officers felt that many individuals do not know what they do and why they do it. I shared that officers have a duty to educate any member of a stakeholder group because they bear the greater burden.

They are seen as being in charge. They wear the uniform, enforce the laws and thus must be held to a higher standard. They must initiate interactions with stakeholders to decrease tension and increase trust.

Officers felt that stakeholders don't understand that de-escalation is paramount and de-escalation training is conducted four to six hours per year. Officers want to "go home" and don't want to fight.

I stated that Interpersonal Communication Skills is paramount in all interactions and that both officers and stakeholders must see each other as human beings. In a sense, we have dehumanized each other and forgotten that all of us want the same thing – a positive interaction that doesn't end in an altercation or worse.

Officers felt that improved relationships are the key to changing the narrative in the country that law enforcement officers are "bad guys." More interaction with stakeholders such as having lunch, a cup of coffee, a kiosk on campus with an officer present to answer general questions, utilizing Student Affairs when possible as that will reduce potential negative interactions, etc.

Officers felt supported by leadership, but support from the community was sometimes positive or neutral.

This is an area where we can have a "quick win." Coffee and/or lunch with a cop which many law enforcement agencies have embraced is something that can be done immediately. Simply having an officer sit with students, faculty, staff, etc. in the lunchroom and talk as a person and not from a law enforcement perspective eases fears and builds relationships which is the key to 21st Century Community Based Policing.

Our focus group meeting with the Students was held on 9/20/21 and 18 individuals were in attendance.

Several of the individuals that attended had not been invited, but saw the meeting taking place, heard from a friend that the meeting was taking place and simply walked into the meeting. That was a very positive development.

The meeting was very productive and emotional. The majority of the students were first year students, but there were some student leaders present. Just as we did with the Police Officers, we began the meeting informing all in attendance that this was open forum and they did not need to worry about what was shared.

One student in particular shared that she felt "profiled" by Campus Police because of the way she looks and dresses. She stated that an incident at the National City Campus in which she was asked, "are you a student?" has given her a poor impression of the police and she stated that "cops are not good."

Other themes that came out of the meeting were no transparency with police, no trust, not enough diversity, police must reflect us, immigrants are scared, we need communication and community, etc.

After allowing the students to share their feelings, Chief Bareno and I began to answer questions, address their fears and assured them that the police are not their enemies and are not there to harm them. I was quite surprised by the feelings of the students because it was the polar opposite of the data from the survey. Survey or no survey, their feelings are valid.

My takeaway from the meeting with the students is that they do not want to be scared. They want the officers to say hello to them to make them feel welcome. They want to be able to ask officers questions and develop relationships with them. They want to see the officers out of uniform and as people. As I stated earlier, we have dehumanized each other and in a sense have created a “siege or us against them” mentality. We must get out of our silos and interact with each other not only when there’s an issue, but when nothing of consequence is occurring.

The students had several requests as a result of the meeting which I have listed below:

- No uniforms when interacting with students
- Officers should attend community events with students
- Officers must address the fears that the students have and work with them to eliminate those fears
- Officers must work with the students to reduce their anxiety when police sedans are patrolling the campus
- Officer safety must not supersede the rights of students. We must consider both sides

Despite the content received from the students, I felt that the meeting was extremely productive. Although scheduled for two hours, we could have easily gone three hours due to the number of questions being posed.

I see an opportunity to create police ambassadors with the student leaders. Many of them want to contribute to the paradigm shift in law enforcement and if given the chance, they can be advocates and do more than any committee or panel. They can influence their friends, family and community.

As a result of our exchanges, I asked the President of the ASO and the VP of EDI to reach out to me for further discussions on how we can best implement the 21st Century Community Based Policing Model that we’re seeking.

They would like to attend future meetings with leadership and be a voice in the room. Future meetings with students and affinity groups will be included in the Phase 2 report.