



REIMAGINING CAMPUS SAFETY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

RECOMMENDATIONS

MARGOLIS HEALY AND ASSOCIATES, LLC,

APRIL, 2023





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SUMMARY

Introduction and Overview

The University of Rochester (UR) retained Margolis Healy to perform a comprehensive review of the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and related campus safety and security policies and practices to ensure the University is providing effective, unbiased, and equitable campus safety services. This review was timely given that the former DPS executive leader had retired, and the University is preparing to launch a national search for the department's next leader. This assessment included a comprehensive review of several major functional areas in the department, ranging from basic security operations to the department's understanding and implementation of initiatives and practices that are both bias-free and inclusive of the tremendous diversity of thought, backgrounds, and lived experiences at UR.

To conduct this assessment, Margolis Healy conducted off-site research, two on-site visits, and additional virtual interviews with a wide range of UR constituents, including members representing various ranks in the Department of Public Safety. During this review, the Margolis Healy team examined DPS's security operations, and several related core areas, including community policing and engagement with the campus community, role, mission, and strategy, multiple key directives and policies, and the University's approach to DPS oversight. Additionally, the team hosted and facilitated listening sessions to gather information related to how campus members experience safety and security at UR. During the review, Margolis Healy identified five major themes and supporting recommendations for

further strengthening UR's approach to campus safety, security, and policing. We believe these key takeaways can serve as a roadmap as the newly appointed leader undertakes the critical mission of transforming several aspects of the University's campus safety program.

General Observations

Based on this review, we acknowledge that DPS members are committed to fulfilling the department's mission, including "protecting people at the University, and fostering beneficial community relations." As with any external assessment, we identified opportunities for the department and University to strengthen certain practices. For example, as we address below, the University should prioritize the selection process for a permanent director of public safety, address climate issues within the department, and develop a formal strategy guiding engagement with the campus community. While many of these opportunities are critical and urgent, they should not detract from our sincere belief that the University of Rochester benefits from a dedicated and committed Public Safety staff.

We identified the major themes for this review by cross-referencing information from the one-on-one and small group interviews and listening sessions with challenges we identified during our assessment of policies, procedures, and practices. We describe each of these points and all of our recommendations below.

Key Findings

1. The University should initiate the process of hiring a new Director of Public Safety

Currently, the Interim Chief has served in the role of director since August of 2021. An interim position, by definition, is temporary and intended for an intervening period. Our work assessing campus safety agencies across the county, including the placement of interim leaders, informs our opinion that institutions should limit the time it relies on interim leadership, especially when the institution expects any level of departmental transformation. While the interim comes from within DPS ranks and understands the operation, a permanent director will stabilize the department and embark on the transformations recommended in this Report. We believe the interim has performed admirably, but is admittedly reluctant to implement significant change. Essentially, DPS





has idled for nearly a year, surviving day-by-day without a clear vision for the future. A change in leadership often energizes organizations with the opportunity to redefine its mission, strengthen operations, and invigorate the organization. In short, permanent leadership is necessary to bring DPS forward and remain contemporary.

2. The University needs to address climate issues within DPS

Many DPS members reported that they do not believe campus departments view them as equal partners. Most officers described department morale as the lowest it has ever been, manifesting in the way officers present themselves and socialize amongst one another. Officers presented as emotionally exhausted and discouraged with the campus culture. Several front-line officers believe faculty contempt of DPS greatly influences students' opinions about them.

This perception was palpable throughout the department. While most officers who work at the Medical Center shared that they feel valued in their roles, even those in leadership positions shared their perception that campus members on the River Campus do not value the department. Several interviewees described efforts to make themselves inconspicuous as part of their day-to-day routines, and their perception that the University community expects them to be invisible. One high-ranking member described DPS as "low paid, and not respected."

3. The Public Safety Review Board (PSRB)

We applaud the University for implementing the PSRB in 2016. The Board's charter and membership meets evolving practices in police and campus safety. During the review, we found that the University has not been consistent

with meetings, meeting minutes, required reports, and general proactivity. Finally, it was apparent that DPS has not recently provided reports to the Board, as required by the Board charge. We make several recommendations to recharge the Board, consider expanding the Board, and clarifying roles and responsibilities.

4. The University Should Consider Additional Candor Regarding the Arming Decision

Given the apparent lack of clarity, both within the general campus community and in DPS, regarding the decisions the University made regarding arming in 2017, we believe the University should publicly re-state its position regarding arming, its intentions regarding maintaining and reinforcing bias-free and respectful campus safety practices, and the results of this assessment.

5. DPS Needs a Robust Community Engagement Strategy

DPS's Community Engagement efforts have expanded the Department's social media presence and developed a level of collaboration with the University of Rochester student government. DPS has expanded its social media presence through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. However, the department has no identifiable strategy for guiding their engagement initiatives, including how it will leverage social media to contribute to community safety.

We commend DPS for establishing a Community Resource Officer position but again concerned that the department does not have a formal, consensus-based strategy for engaging with the campus community. A strategy that seeks input from all levels of DPS and the campus community should guide community engagement and outreach. Additionally, DPS needs to ensure department-wide participation, as appropriate, in these efforts. DPS leadership should encourage participation in community events and identify opportunities to collaborate with the campus community in the development of problem-solving strategies. In addition, DPS should seek opportunities to establish a stronger working relationship with the offices that serve the multicultural, international, and LGBTQI+ communities.

Conclusion

As noted in the beginning of this Summary, we recognize the complexity of tackling the many opportunities that have arisen during the course of this review. We do believe, however, that the University should immediately address the most critical gaps. Overall, we believe this engagement exemplifies a commitment by University leadership to strengthen and expand campus safety operations.

MASTER RECOMMENDATION LIST

Role, Mission, and Strategy

1. Engage in an inclusive strategic planning process that should culminate with a new mission statement.
2. Clarify the role for armed officers, and especially sergeants, on the Eastman and River campuses.
3. Use call and other response data to inform the deployment strategy.
4. Reconsider the current practice of only hiring non-sworn officers.

Organizational Climate

5. Schedule a mandatory meeting of all DPS personnel with the Executive Vice President for Administration and Finance to improve communication, increase role clarity, demonstrate support, and enhance the dialogue between the Administration and the Department.
6. The new leader of DPS should use the climate assessment results to address the climate and culture challenges.
7. Representatives of the University's senior leadership team should periodically meet with the Department to show support and open lines of communication.
8. Identify resiliency, mindfulness, and mental health programming specific to first responders to meet the wellness and emotional needs of DPS members.
9. Conduct exit interviews of employees who leave or retire from the Department.
10. Consider using The Culturally Effective Organizations Framework²⁰ to assess DPS effectiveness as an organization and service provider. This tool recognizes that becoming more culturally effective is an adaptive process that takes time. Results from this high-level baseline assessment can inform DPS's quality improvement efforts around organizational and cultural effectiveness.

Differential Response Program

11. DPS should increase the number of non-sworn staff to respond to non-police-related matters. Determining the organization's structure is within the chief's immediate purview.
12. DPS and its campus partners should engage in a community-driven, collaborative process to formulate a new public safety strategy that leverages the right resources to address safety and security needs in reimagining campus safety.

²⁰New Hampshire Equity Collective, Culturally Effective Organizations Work Group www.equitynh.org for information email: equitynh@gmail.com

13. DPS should engage University leadership on shifting lockouts in academic buildings and residential housing to facilities or another non-enforcement campus group.
14. Expand the Counselor in Residence Program (CIR)² and River Campus Medical Emergency Response Team (MERT) programs. With additional funding, collaboration, and more robust implementation these programs could shift the culture and mindset of what “safety” means for students on the River/Eastman campuses beyond physical security to include a multi-dimensional construct encompassing physical, emotional, and psychological dimensions.

Written Directives

15. Ensure the “Duty to Intervene” Policy clearly empowers officers of any rank and seniority to intervene when observing misconduct.
16. Expand the current “Duty to Intervene” policy to include expectations for non-sworn members.
17. Add a stipulation that members of the department provide warning, verbal or otherwise, to a subject, if feasible, prior to the application of any force, including deadly force.
18. Describe in policy the expectation that members exhaust all reasonable options prior to resorting to deadly force.
19. Ensure relevant use of force policies and training include accepted de-escalation techniques and strategies.
20. Review the wording in policy prohibiting members from applying pressure with the neck of a subject. While this guidance is within best practices, the department should consider enhancing the authorization and definition of such techniques.
21. Provide exceptions to the requirement that officers involved in a use of force incident complete all necessary documentation prior to the end of their tour of duty. Exceptions can include if the officer is unavailable due to injury, ongoing medical care, or subsequent use of force investigation.
22. DPS should ensure the annual review of the Vehicular Pursuit Policy includes determining if changes to the prohibition of vehicle pursuits, or affirmation of the policy are necessary.
23. Implement a foot pursuit policy addressing conditions under which the department supports an officer’s decision to engage in a foot pursuit, to include officer authority to engage in foot pursuits.

²Brigid Cahill, PhD; Felicia Reed-Watt, LCSW-R University Counseling Center CCNY 2022 (PowerPoint)

24. Provide training to all department personnel on the elements of the Processing and Temporary Detention policy at least biennially.
25. Ensure that the policy mandated inspections which occur daily of the processing room encompass all areas authorized for temporary detention.
26. Expand departmental policy to include guidance for the transportation of detainees to additional long-term detention facilities, or other criminal justice facilities beyond the Monroe County Sheriff's Office.
27. Add a stipulation that officers inspect the transporting vehicle for illegal items prior to, and upon completion of any search.
28. As state laws allow, consider additional screening of applicants by polygraph examination, or other trust verification examination. Only certified operators of the chosen deception method should conduct such an examination.
29. Periodically review the Field Training Program to ensure adherence to best practices, and to evaluate program effectiveness. The department can also consider eliciting feedback from recruits to ensure program effectiveness.
30. Consider the use of external assessment centers for the administration of tests, and/or performance tasks in evaluation of promotional candidates.
31. Evaluate the process for promotion of management personnel to ensure that the current process is fitting department needs.
32. Ensure the policy provides consistent affirmation of the department's commitment to accepting and investigating all complaints appropriately.
33. Ensure the policy contains inclusive language by describing each type of complaint with appropriate language. Policy should avoid descriptors such as "low-level" when describing performance behaviors.
34. Assign complainant follow up duties to a specific position.
35. Implement a Predictive Employee Early Warning System to identify officers who are most likely to need department intervention, including remedial training, counseling, or corrective action.
36. Consider referring for external investigation all Internal Affairs Investigations of a criminal nature.
37. Ensure all members receive training in dealing with those experiencing a mental health crisis at least annually.

Transparency

38. Gather gender identity, race, and ethnicity demographics for motor vehicle stops, arrests, and uses of force. Share the demographic breakdowns in publicly available department reports, published monthly and shared on the department website.
39. Continue to broaden the information shared on the department website.
40. Continue to highlight the department's transparency initiatives using a variety of social media platforms.

Approach to DPS Advisory

41. Reinvigorate the PSRB, update its charge, and require adherence to the Board's charge, especially related to public reporting, meeting minutes, and on-going exploration of best practices in campus safety.
42. Review models in use at other institutions to inform the future charge for the PSRB.
43. Review past PSRB reports to ensure the University has sufficiently followed-up on proposals and commitments.
44. Expand the membership of the Board by including representatives of traditionally underserved communities and faculty members with expertise in related areas.
45. Initiate a process whereby campus members can present proposals, concerns, or other information to the Board.
46. Consider opening Board meetings to members of the campus and wider community.

Accountability

47. Include a statement on the departmental website stating that all complaints, including anonymous ones are accepted.
48. Ensure all who conduct internal affairs investigations receive specialized training.
49. Complete an annual Internal Affairs summary and make it publicly available on the agency website.
50. Adopt an early warning policy³ and consider the use of performance tracking software. While we do not endorse any product, we provide examples of commercially available products for illustrative purposes only: [Guardian Tracking by Vector Solutions](#) and [BlueTeam/IAPro by CI Technologies](#).⁴

³In 1981, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recommended that all police agencies create an early-warning system (EWS) to identify problem officers, who exhibit most of the patterns of improper behavior and about whom the majority of complaints are received. An EWS is a police management database tool designed to identify officers whose behavior is problematic and to provide a form of intervention to correct that behavior.

⁴Walker, S., Alpert, G. P., & Kenney, D. J. (2000). Early Warning Systems for Police: Concept, History, and Issues. *Police Quarterly*, 3(2), 132–152. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611100003002001>

51. Install Mobile Video Recorders in all patrol cars.
52. Adopt the use of body worn cameras.

Equitable & Bias-Free Campus Safety Services

53. Continue to work with the Office of Equity & Inclusion and other University leadership to identify top priorities in the area of inclusion, diversity, and supporting and promoting the safety and wellness of diverse communities.
54. Develop an annual report on the department's efforts to promote equitable and bias-free policing.
55. Update DPS Policy 402 to clarify that DPS will investigate all biased enforcement complaints in addition to a potential "parallel" investigation by the University's Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI), where so indicated. Expand DPS Policy 402 to address profiling based on a person's "perceived" race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or socio-economic status.
56. Engage community partners (student government, Interfraternity Council, Faculty Senate, etc...) to collaborate in updating DPS Policies and in the development of bias-related training and the co-production of an adult learning environment.
57. Provide initial and recurring training to all officers that send a clear, consistent, and emphatic message that prohibits bias-based profiling and other forms of discriminatory policing. Training should comply with current standards and practices within the law enforcement industry to include:
 - a. Relevant legal and ethical standards
 - b. Unconscious and implicit bias
 - c. Procedural justice and police legitimacy
 - d. The negative impacts of profiling on public safety and crime prevention
58. Provide training to supervisors and commanders on detecting and responding to bias-based profiling and other forms of discriminatory policing.
59. Include community members from groups that have expressed high levels of distrust of police in officer training.
60. Focus on educating the UR community on procedures for students to file complaints of sex discrimination, harassment, and assault. The University must emphasize where and to whom to report violations; understanding the anatomy of a Title IX investigation; and the roles of DPS and the Title IX coordinator.

Collaboration with Key Campus Partners

61. The DPS leadership team must work to listen intentionally to community members when they raise concerns that challenge standing policies and procedures, especially when those concerns confront traditional campus policing approaches and protocols.
62. Engage key stakeholders to assist in identifying approaches to improve intra-departmental communication.
63. After appropriate orientation and understanding of scope and role, involve the command staff and sergeants in community meetings, campus committees, and key partner staff meetings to foster broader participation and understanding of community needs, interpersonal relationships, and problem-solving opportunities.
64. Create a workgroup that includes representatives from key partners such as Campus Life, the Counseling Center, offices working in the DEI space, and others to hear their input and expectations and build consensus around problem-solving approaches.

Community Policing and Campus Engagement

65. Develop a well-designed community-centered, data-driven community engagement strategy that reaches out to the campus community in meaningful ways.
66. Develop a social media strategy.
67. Routinely schedule open forums to solicit feedback on identified community engagement metrics.
68. Train line officers and supervisors in crime prevention programming, community policing, and cultural competency.
69. Include staff from all levels of the DPS in crime prevention and community engagement programming.
70. Encourage department wide participation in community events while offering officers opportunities to develop programs that directly educate the students and community about DPS. Involve community members in discussing policing tactics and designing problem-solving strategies.



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