

**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

---

---

**Campus Law Enforcement and Public Relations**

---

---

**A Leadership White Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Required for Graduation from the  
Leadership Command College**

---

---

**By  
Marisa Saccio**

**Alamo Colleges Police Department  
San Antonio, Texas  
June 2018**

## **ABSTRACT**

Law enforcement today faces challenges that are not new to this profession but are now advertised almost immediately on social media sites. This is true especially if the interaction with law enforcement is newsworthy. This brings a new dynamic to law enforcement and the relationships between officers, the people, and the communities the officers serve. Public relations practiced by campus law enforcement will help bring the officers into the campus community officers serve and create a positive rapport.

As a peace officer, campus law enforcement has a new community every semester of students. An officer confident in public relations can relate to these young people who spend a great deal of time on their cell phones and on social media sites. Using these social media sites to law enforcement's advantage, many agencies have created online web pages, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages that post public relations interactions in a more positive light. Officers should receive public relations training to aid in the confidence of those conversations officers will have with the students, faculty/staff, and visitors to campus. Public relations is about perception. Campus law enforcement officers can use every interaction as a public relations tool to uniquely reach their population.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction . . . . .	1
Position . . . . .	3
Counter Position . . . . .	5
Recommendation . . . . .	9
References . . . . .	12

## INTRODUCTION

Campus law enforcement today has evolved to a degree that this profession is a leadership role within the campus community and surrounding city community. This role begins from the patrol officer to the department administration. Patrol officers are who the campus and city communities see first. This starts the public relationship between the people on the campus and city communities served. Patrol officers are the most important factor since they are the most remembered by the campus and city communities. Good public relations involve far more than saying, it involves physically being a contributing member to the campus and city communities. The police themselves are the most important factor in determining public attitudes (Gourley, 1954).

Campus law enforcement must begin to rebuild the public perceptions of the recent media publications that have painted this profession in a negative light. This brings campus law enforcement back to the basics. Sir Robert Peel created the nine principles of policing; in 1829, British Parliament passed the Metropolitan Police Act, creating what is today known as the early police officers (Zacharias, 2009). The nine principles of policing, although created in 1829, are still the guidelines that law enforcement base policy and procedures in law enforcement organizations.

Campus law enforcement can begin to lessen this divide between campus police and the communities they serve with community policing and public relations. The U.S. Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) (2014) defines community policing as "a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem solving techniques to

proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime” (p. 1). Community partnerships, organizational transformation, and problem solving are the three key components of community policing (COPS, 2014). Community partnerships bring the police officer back to the community as an aid of the citizens to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in police. Organizational transformation provides support for community partnerships and problem solving by aligning organizational management and structure. Problem solving will identify the problems and begin the process of developing and evaluating responses that will be effective (COPS, 2014).

Public relations are similar to community policing, but the definition is broader. Public relations is defined by Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary (1999) as “the business of inducing the public to have understanding for and goodwill toward a person, firm, or institution” (as cited in Hunter, Barker & Mayhall, 2004, p. 29). Campus law enforcement can enhance interactions with community policing involvement within the campus and city communities. Public relations will help build the trust in campus law enforcement by bringing the police into the community with activities that will promote a positive image of campus law enforcement professionals and the police department. These activities can include safety and awareness presentations, summer camp presentations for on campus youth summer programs, and safety tips on social media. Campus law enforcement as peace officers should practice public relations daily to bring peace to the campuses and communities served.

## **POSITION**

All campus law enforcement officers should be trained in public relations.

Officers are trained at the police academy in constitutional and state laws, non-lethal and lethal weapons, hand to hand combat, investigations of motor vehicle crashes, and crisis intervention, to name a few (Alamo Area Regional Law Enforcement Academy, 2018). Yet, there is minimal training in public relations. Public relations are the foundation of all interactions with the campus law enforcement officer and their campus communities. Officers engage in campus patrols through the interior campus buildings, exterior parking lots, and in the common areas. Through this engagement, this is the perfect opportunity for the campus police officers to begin building good rapport between students, faculty, staff, administrators, and visitors to the campus. Most officers already have the desire to serve. Public relations training will aid the officers in those daily interactions by improving the skill set to make those interactions a positive experience.

Public relations training in law enforcement will benefit campus law enforcement by bringing a more skilled officer into the community it is sworn to protect. Gray (2015) stated that “failure to train” is one of the most commonly listed complaints by plaintiffs in civil suits against law enforcement (para. 3). That being said, this should raise the concern for agency administrators to step up the training program and add more public relations training for officers on all levels, beginning with the first line patrol officer. Everything officers do is public relations. This starts with the new police officer training with a supervisor or field training officer (FTO). The training would provide an ownership to the department’s values and mission. Values and mission are just words

to new officers, it is up to the training program and each role model FTO to teach the new officers that the values and mission of the department are the goal of the agency. Law enforcement all are one in public relations, and rank is not a factor to the community and public. The uniforms are all the same. Law enforcement officers are public relations officers and need the skills and training to maintain standards of the agency and assist in the community perception of the officers. Public relations is perception and perception is in the eye of the beholder. Officers must receive training in public relations to bridge the gap between the campus, local, city and county communities and people that officers serve.

Willis (2014) stated, "Police departments are now in a time where we can no longer use the phrase 'No Comment' without the media news coverage saying that the department is covering something up" (para. 3). This is one of the many disadvantages of not providing officers with public relations training and not providing the skills to answer those tough questions when officers approached on patrol. Willis (2014) states using the phrase, "No comment by the police opens the door for politicians, special interest groups, self-appointed experts and anyone else with an agenda to make comment. Their comments however, are usually based on rumor, innuendo, speculation, and emotions—not the facts" (para. 10). Campus law enforcement officers are role models and leaders on a college campus, and there is an obligation and responsibility to the students, staff, faculty, and visitors to the campuses. Every semester, there are new students who are enrolled, and most have never been away from their families for extended periods of time. These new students begin to look at their teachers, campus police, campus administrators, guidance counselors, and

advisors, faculty, and staff to assist in their growth as a college student. These interactions can be critical if a negative interaction takes place. This negative interaction can shape the relationship between campus police and the campus community to a degree that there is no trust between the student and campus police. Once that trust is broken, it is hard to get back. That negative interaction can be avoided if campus police officers receive the adequate training to know how to respond with tact and using skills through the public relations training to relate to the campus community with respect and trust for the police. Willis (2014) states, "Relationships between the police and the community need to be based on courage, character and integrity and developed through dialogue, discussion, debate, and education" (para. 18)

### **COUNTER POSITION**

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) (2018) states that "all law enforcement must attend mandatory training based on the most current training cycle" (para. 1). This training can be costly and is required every two years for continuing education requirements and to maintain a peace officer certificate and license. Based on the departments training budget the administration has to determine what training must be received by each officer to maintain certifications and licenses for officers. In most cases, the training that is not required by TCOLE will not be approved in the training budget. Other options discussed are option for the officer to pay for these training classes without assistance from the department. Many officers then face the dilemma of making a choice between what is provided by the agency to maintain certifications and licenses at no additional cost to the officer or paying for the training class as part of their own leadership development. Campus law enforcement officers



will most likely choose to receive the training provided by the agency because their personal finances will not allow for the expense from their salaries. So this choice puts training that is important, yet may be costly, out of the equation for the campus law enforcement officers. Campus police departments are also faced with the dilemma of providing training that will greatly benefit their officers in their leadership roles but tight training budgets allow for only a few officers to attend the additional training. Unfortunately, in some cases, public relations training falls into this category. Most agencies only have one public information officer (PIO) for any questions. This response does not aid in building the relationship between the campus police officers and their campus community.

But there is hope in sight. Field training coordinators (FTC) or training sergeants have some options in bringing training that is not in the budget to these officers with grant funded training. Alamo Area Regional Law Enforcement Academy (2018) receives grant money and, on occasion, will announce free training for police officers in their training catalog. FTC's and training sergeants must keep training catalogs for reference to have the information available for officers to attend this free training that is grant funded. In some cases, a training class will be offered at no cost, based on enrollment and attendance if the class is new and AARLEA is assessing interest from the police officers to attend this training. In many cases, the training class will be offered at no cost for two or three months while completing the assessments of those officers who have attended the training class and completed evaluations on the training class. This time frame could allow for a good amount of officers to attend the training at no cost and be able to expand and grow in the leadership role as police officers on

campus without increasing the training budget for departments. It is a law enforcement officer's duty to learn about and understand the people officers interact with and their culture (Bergin, 2015). Public relations training is a great start.

Law enforcement is a profession of service. Campus law enforcement officers have the opportunity to interact with the people the officers serve daily. A positive experience with the campus officers is the beginning of creating a relationship of trust. The officer must be able to establish the trust of police officers in the community while remaining professional. Officers throughout their career will experience both the positive and negative side of humanity. In one shift an officer can be thanked for their service, then later completely disrespected for completing their duty as an officer. An officer may begin to develop an emotional guard to protect themselves (Tooley, Linkenbach, Lande & Lande, 2009). This emotional armor keeps campus law enforcement officers unsure of how to feel about the public and how the public feels about them. Most officers feel the public they serve do not respect the badge and have primarily negative perceptions of officers (Tooley et al., 2009).

So the barrier to better relationships between campus police officers and the campus community can be brought down by public relations training. Public relations has many forms for campus police officers. Public relations and community policing can help change the relationships between campus law enforcement officers and the campus community. Every encounter or interaction with the community officers serve is an opportunity for public relations. Community policing aids in building trust toward officers also. An event such as "Coffee with a Cop" has been held on college campuses to humanize the campus police officers. Other forms of public relations are making

presentations on campus for safety awareness, alcohol awareness, and other presentations requested by the campus community. Campus police officers will give presentations to surrounding elementary schools. Officers will visit the classrooms and give students a chance to see police officers from the community who care for youth and their families. Many of these youths will remember that officer as a familiar face. Some police departments have implemented mentorship programs for officers and youths to begin building that relationship at a younger age (Lambertz & Erbentraut, 2017).

Public relations can also be implemented by campus law enforcement agencies creating Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram web pages for another form to reach the youth of the communities. The communities that officers serve respond to social media. Burger (2013) stated that “you can’t measure the quality of your department by your social media presence, but you can change your community’s perception of your department” (para. 1). Social media gets the attention of the communities in a form that is easily accessible with technology and maintains a professional relationship for campus officers.

Community policing inspires cooperation without diminishing the importance of discipline. Community policing is the Golden Rule with a badge pinned on it; community policing is people (Wetzel, 2012). As peace officers, it is the most important duty to live leadership by being a great role model to the people and community in which officers serve every day.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Campus law enforcement is a rewarding career. Every day, officers have an opportunity to interact with the community through a public relations relationship, and it should be practiced daily. Public relations helps bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community officers serve. Public relations training should be offered to all officers, beginning with patrol officers and going up to the administrative level. Patrol officers have the unique ability to engage with the community in many forms. A positive public relations interaction could be simply saying “hello” while patrolling the college campus.

If officers receive public relations training, those officers will begin to have confidence in positive interactions with the community. Some advantages are that the community, the students, faculty/staff, and visitors, will recognize officers as familiar faces, not officers they have only met through a negative experience. Officers will learn how to remain professional with these positive interactions and keep the relationship respectful and courteous. These are the building blocks for a relationship of trust between the police officers and the community.

Campus police officers could be at a disadvantage if not provided public relations training. This training would teach officers the skills needed to create a positive interaction with the community. Communication skills will also help the officers to remain professional in those positive interaction opportunities. But communication skills must be practiced. The more public relations practice, the better the officer will be at the positive interaction opportunity.

Although public relations training can be a costly expense, the benefits far outweigh the costs. The good publicity for the police department cannot be quantified from a relationship of trust. Trust will overcome the negative stigma the media has placed on law enforcement officers over the past few months. Building a relationship of community and respect with the people officers serve brings police officers appreciation from the people. Only the re-building of trust and communication will close the gap that has been detrimental to a relationship with police.

Campus law enforcement officers are fortunate to be surrounded by an educational environment. Campus communities include many instructors and professors who have years of education in public relations and communications. Training classes offered by colleagues may be an option. Another option is training offered at no cost and sponsored by grants for law enforcement continuing education. Law enforcement academies, on occasion, offer training classes at no cost for officers to assist in assessing the training classes to determine the need to local law enforcement. Officers receive the training at no cost and complete an evaluation for assessment.

Once public relations training is received by officers, putting the training into practice is the next step. Campus law enforcement officers can make presentations to the college community on safety on campus, shots fired on campus, and other awareness training. These presentations will bring the officer to the classroom teaching the campus community about safety while on campus. These presentations will help officers' perfect public speaking. Public speaking can be a positive experience if the officers become comfortable making the presentations.

Public relations training for officers will begin to heal a relationship one officer at a time with the community. Media has had many stories that aid in the stigma on law enforcement. The only way to bridge the gap is to change the story. Officers engaging in the community with a positive experience humanizes this profession, and law enforcement will only benefit from a trusting relationship with the community law enforcement serve.

## REFERENCES

Alamo Area Regional Law Enforcement Academy. (2018). *2018 training catalog*.

Retrieved from <http://www.aacog.com/DocumentCenter/View/48302/AARLEA-2018-TRAINING-CALENDAR---FOR-PUBLICATION>

Bergin, E. P. (2015, September). Remembering why we police. *Police Chief*, 82(9).

Retrieved from <http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/>

Burger, L. (2013, May). 4 ways social media can help police departments. *Police One*.

Retrieved from <http://www.policeone.com/social-media-for-cops/articles/6250205-4-ways-social-media-can-help-police-departments/>

Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). (2014). *Community policing defined*.

Retrieved from <https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/vets-to-cops/e030917193-CP-Defined.pdf>

Gourley, G. D. (1954, January). Police public relations. *New Goals in Police Management*, 291, 135-142. Retrieved from

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/000271625429100118>

Gray, M. B. (2015, November). Is law enforcement training affective enough? *The*

*Police Chief*, 82(11). Retrieved from <http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/is-law-enforcement-training-affective-enough/>

Hunter, R. D., Barker, T., & Mayhall, P. D. (2004). *Police-community relations and the administration of justice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Lambertz, K. A., & Erbenraut, J. (2017, December 6). The simple strategies that could fundamentally change how communities view their police. *Huffington Post*.

Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/17/community-policing-police-trust\\_n\\_6607766.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/17/community-policing-police-trust_n_6607766.html)

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement. (2018). *Training requirements*. Retrieved from <http://tcole.texas.gov/content/training-requirements>

Tooley, M., Linkenbach, J., Lande, B. J., & Lande, G. M. (2009, June). The media, the public, and the law enforcement community: Correcting misperceptions. *The Police Chief*, 76(6). Retrieved from [http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display&article\\_id=1828&issue\\_id=62009](http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display&article_id=1828&issue_id=62009)

Wetzel, T. (2012, April). Community policing revisited: The very essence of protecting & serving. *Law & Order*. Retrieved from [http://www.hendonpub.com/resources/article\\_archive/results/details?id=1137](http://www.hendonpub.com/resources/article_archive/results/details?id=1137)

Willis, B. (2014, November 14). Why “no comment” no longer works after a critical police incident. *Police One*. Retrieved from <https://www.policeone.com/chiefs-sheriffs/articles/7791137-Why-no-comment-no-longer-works-after-a-critical-police-incident/>

Zacharias, M. (2009, August). *Peel's principles*. Retrieved from <http://mennozacharias.com/2009/08/20/peels-principles/>