

Self Sufficiency

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“Self Sufficiency”

The best practice that the University of Georgia Police Department would recommend to any agency is the promotion of self sufficiency within the department. Especially in highly technical areas, not having to depend on outside agencies for response can enable a department to move on incidents rapidly and get the institution back to business as quickly as possible. This helps keep down the cost of doing business for an institution by keeping “down time” to a minimum.

Examples of how the Police Department has endeavored to provide this level of service to the University Community are through the development of an Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) Team, development of personnel with expertise in Crime Scene Processing, and using training funds to send employees to Instructor Classes so that they may teach a topic to other employees. All of these efforts have enabled the department to respond to requests for services on campus with speed and competency; and to provide some support to outside agencies which helps build good relations with the institution through giving back to the community which surrounds us.

Introduction of the Organization

The University of Georgia Police Department is a full service police department serving the flagship institution of the State of Georgia. The police department has 61 sworn police officers, 17 non sworn employees and 13 student workers. The University of Georgia has a student enrollment of 32,800 students and an average daily population of approximately 45,000 to 50,000 individuals.

The University of Georgia Police Department comprises the following bureaus: Patrol, Investigative, Support Services (Training, Crime Prevention and Student Escort Service), Administrative Services and Communications. These bureaus work 24 hours a day each day of the year to provide a safe environment for the University community.

The University of Georgia is located in the northeast Georgia town of Athens. Athens and the bordering counties and communities are growing in population at a healthy rate. Athens is 65 miles east of Atlanta, Georgia. The University of Georgia is host to major research initiatives as well as owner of one of the largest campus football stadiums (seating more than 90,000 in 2003). In 1996, the University of Georgia was the host to several Olympic sporting venues including the final rounds of the men and women's soccer.

Statement (Restatement) of the Problem/Initiative

The University of Georgia Police Department has for many years experienced an abnormally high rate of turnover. It is common that approximately every three years the total number of police officers will turnover. That means that is possible for sixty-one police officers to be hired in three years.

There are several reasons for this abnormally high rate of turnover. First, until recently, the police department could only hire police officers from the student population. By hiring from the student

population it was guaranteed that employees would be leaving for other jobs upon graduating from the University. Second, as is the case with other police departments, it has become increasingly more difficult to compete with larger agencies because the larger agencies pay higher salaries. It is now the practice to open up the pool of applicants to non-students and the starting salary has been increased.

Because of the challenges confronting the police department, several decisions were made to place the police department in a position to help itself. In the area of training, the decision was made to use a train the trainer approach. This has become a staple for the police department. High turnover by employees and the inability of being able to get advanced training slots at the state police training facility demanded that the police department provide training to a select group of police officers who would then train new police officers. This process has resulted in the savings of many dollars as well as the ability to have all officers trained in areas such as DUI Detection, Verbal Judo, and RADAR Operation.

It was evident during planning for the Summer Olympics of 1996 that the federal and state governments had very little support for athletic venues outside the Atlanta metro area in the event of a tragic criminal occurrence. For that reason, the University of Georgia Police Department created a Special Response Team or SRT. Team members are police officers highly trained in the area of weapons and building entry. They would be on campus during an athletic event and would be dispatched to the venue if a threat occurred. The creation of this team provides a level of support that did not previously occur. This team has been in existence since 1995.

It was also determined during the Summer Olympics of 1996 that the ability of federal and state law enforcement to provide explosive ordinance protection was limited at best. It became very obvious after the bombings at Centennial Park in Atlanta, Georgia that calls concerning suspicious packages would increase.

In fact, this is exactly what occurred. After the Olympics, a decision was made to research the feasibility of creating an Explosive Ordinance Disposal Team or EOD.

With the creation of the EOD Team, the University of Georgia has an immediate response with specially trained dogs and explosive ordinance technicians, who can assess a situation quickly. This team provides the University a means to limit the amount of time lost in the event a suspicious package is found or a building must be evacuated. If the University of Georgia Police Department did not have this team it could be hours before assistance could arrive on campus. During a large special event or during finals this delay could be catastrophic.

Having Crime Scene Technicians on staff enables the police department to handle intricate crime scenes. With state crime laboratories having staffing problems, it makes sense to have trained personnel that can process certain pieces of evidence so that time is not lost in an investigation.

Design

The design for all three areas, SRT, EOD and training, were all quite simple.

The creation of both teams involves a total commitment by the institution and the police department. Both teams are very costly to start up. The UGA Police Department had funds within its budget to pay for the cost over several years. All equipment was not purchased at one time. However, the cost of not having these teams can be even more devastating to an organization. A department must have personnel available that are willing to be a member of these teams. If personnel are not available, then additional personnel would have to be hired. In the case of the University of Georgia, there have been a willing number of volunteers. The challenge in creating these teams is to keep the team members. Additional funds have been

made available to the team members.

Training the trainer is much simpler. Several police officers are selected to receive advanced training and they then come back and provide that training to members of the UGA Police Department. This results in the reduction of training and travel expense. With high turnover, this can result in tremendous savings. Areas of instruction are Radar Detection, Field Sobriety, Verbal Judo, and Pepper Spray.

Implementation

The creation of a team requires the need to research what others have done. This is to avoid financial waste and time loss. Highly specialized teams cannot be created over night. A commitment to create the team must be made. Financial resources must be located once a cost figure has been developed. Personnel must be selected.

Another factor is the commitment to sustain the teams. These teams require ongoing training. The cost to sustain these teams is not as great as the start up cost. However, equipment will have to be replaced over time and there is cost in continued training.

Benefits

There are numerous benefits in creating specialized teams or utilizing a train the trainer approach to provide training to police officers. The first and most important factor is the ability to react quickly to events occurring on your campus. There is very little time wasted. If the call out of a team is deemed to be not needed or the threat was not real, the campus is back in service without a long delay. As the academic year comes to an end, there is precious little time that can be lost or time that can be rescheduled.

A second factor is the control the University has over a team. There is much better communication between police officers and administrators. A third benefit is the added job worth to the police officers involved.