

## Public Safety and Enforcement Programming at OSU Corvallis Campus

### BACKGROUND

OSU's top priority is the safety of students, faculty, staff and visitors to the university's campuses and facilities. Public safety is essential to advancing OSU's teaching, learning, research, and extension and engagement services.

OSU has had a security department on its Corvallis campus since the mid-1950s. In 1974, OSU created its own police department, in which armed officers, who were commissioned by the Benton County Sheriff's Office, worked on the Corvallis campus. In 1989, the Oregon Legislature passed legislation limiting universities' ability to have their own police departments. In response, OSU contracted with Oregon State Police (OSP) to provide licensed law enforcement services for the Corvallis campus. In 2013, the Oregon Legislature adopted legislation enabling Oregon's public universities with governing boards to choose to independently operate their own licensed law enforcement departments. The University of Oregon and Portland State University operate their own campus police departments, as do all other Pac12 institutions.

Currently, the provision of public safety on OSU's Corvallis campus is fulfilled under intragovernmental agreements (IGA) for licensed law enforcement services with OSP. These agreements will end on June 30, 2020. Given this transition, in October 2019, the university embarked on efforts to gain community input and recommendations while also reviewing options for meeting its public safety needs and will present a recommendation to the Board for its consideration at the April 3, 2020, meeting.

### DISCUSSION

In October 2019, President Ray reconvened the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) to make recommendations to the vice president for finance and administration to address both the short-term and long-term safety and law enforcement needs of the Corvallis campus and community. The committee is composed of students, faculty, and senior leaders. To meet its charge, the PSAC conducted four community listening sessions in mid-March 2020 — three on the Corvallis campus and one in the City of Corvallis — and created an online feedback form. The sessions and online survey focused on gathering stakeholder input on the values, principles, and expectations for the conduct of public safety on the Corvallis campus. Approximately 80 community members participated in these sessions. Common themes gathered at these sessions will be shared during the Board meeting and will help to shape the conduct of law enforcement on the campus moving forward.

One option considered by the university was acquiring law enforcement services from another jurisdiction under a contract-for service mechanism similar to the OSP contract. However, in-depth discussions with and outreach to other potential providers was not fruitful in finding a business partner with the capacity and operational construct to meet the unique needs of a university campus. These discussions did yield a greater appreciation by staff of the challenges of providing leadership, appropriate staffing levels, and oversight of a contracted police force.

Another option considered was moving the university's licensed law enforcement capability from contract to in-house as a new element of the existing Department of Public Safety. After

considering both options and the changing nature of policing within our nation's college and university campuses, it was determined that OSU should have more control of the conduct and culture of the law enforcement program at OSU's Corvallis campus. This control and alignment with OSU values can best be achieved through discontinuing a contract-for-service approach and bringing the provision of law enforcement services in-house. Authority for universities with governing boards to establish a police department and commission officers is set out in Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 352.118 and 352.121.

### **NEXT STEPS**

If approved by the Board, OSU would commence recruitment, hiring, training, and equipping of licensed law enforcement employees using expedited procedures to field a well-trained, professional public safety department with embedded licensed law enforcement officers.

In consultation with general counsel, OSU will also ensure appropriate department policies and operational procedures are in place. As specifically required by ORS 352.118 and 352.121 (3), a process will be established and approved by the president by which OSU will receive and respond to complaints involving the policies of the police department and the conduct of the police officers.

The Corvallis campus would then transition to in-house provision of law enforcement services on or before July 1, 2020. The university will also seek mutual aid agreements with other agencies for specialty capabilities including large events and depth of service.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommend that the Board authorize the establishment of a police department within the Department of Public Safety and the commissioning of employees as police officers in the manner and with all of the privileges and immunities set forth in ORS 352.118 and 352.121 regarding the establishment of police department and commission of police officers and special campus security officers and authorities and regarding university police departments and officers and standards.