

ANTHONY MARTINESI, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SAFETY, WAGNER COLLEGE

Bigger focus on community policing improves perception of campus safety unit

After retiring from a long career in law enforcement, the last thing Anthony Martinesi expected was to become the director of a public safety unit. But that's just what happened.

Just one week after accepting part-time work as a security guard at Wagner College, the unit's assistant director quit and Martinesi was asked to take the post. Nine years later, when his director of public safety retired, he was offered that job.

Three years after his appointment, Martinesi has transformed his department.

"In the 1970's I was part of an experimental plan in community policing," he said. "Here on campus we were doing it since I came on board, but not fully, so I decided to put a lot more focus on it."

Since, his unit's perception among members of the campus community has improved drastically. In fact, in a statewide survey of colleges, students were asked to rate the different departments within their institutions for helpfulness. While at most colleges, public safety ranked among the worst for customer service, Martinesi's department came in second best for his institution.

If you're looking to improve how members of your

campus community see your unit, learn from what Martinesi did.

During monthly training sessions with his security guards, Martinesi and his four shift supervisors stressed the importance of community policing. They encouraged guards to make friends with students and to get to know who the faculty and staff are and what each person does.

He has also held meetings with residence life and other departments to explain what his unit does and how he and his officers can be of help to them.

Additionally, Martinesi makes sure that his door isn't just open to the immediate members of his community. If a parent calls, concerned that her daughter hasn't called home or answered her phone in three days, Martinesi doesn't hesitate to investigate.

"We're more of a service-oriented department than a security department now," he explained. "We know everyone

well and they know us."

While his is a small campus where people tend to feel safe, Martinesi stresses to students that it's also an open campus. He urges them to serve as extra eyes and ears for his unit and report any suspicious activity.

You can contact Anthony Martinesi via e-mail at tmartine@wagner.edu. ■



ANTHONY MARTINESI

MODEL POLICY

Don't just create a response plan; test it

When Anthony Martinesi took over as director of public safety at Wagner College, there was no emergency response system. So when the institution hired a chief of staff five years ago, Martinesi and his unit began working with him on an emergency plan. That plan is now in place.

But it's not enough to have a plan. That's why Martinesi recently organized a life-like drill in one of the college's three residence halls.

He congregated the institution's crisis response team, which is composed of all the major decision makers, in one board room. After evacuating the building, Martinesi and his unit began feeding the response team information regarding a fire. The team received the information in spurts, as they would during any real situation. As they got bits of information, they had

to make myriad decisions and relay those decisions regarding resource coordination and other things.

This was the first such drill ever, and it proved valuable. For one, they found that the only crisis response team member who showed up with a laptop was the director of information technology.

"We realized at that point that they should all have had laptops with the crisis response plan loaded on it," Martinesi said. ■

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