

Chief Joseph Marswillo is a long-term employee who has advanced through the ranks of NJIT's Department of Public Safety.



IN GOOD HANDS

While some may consider a long stint on grand jury duty to be somewhat of a nuisance, for NJIT's Chief of Public Safety Joseph Marswillo, it was a career-changing experience. At the time, Marswillo was employed as an electrician in his father and grandfather's business and owner of a landscaping firm, but he became fascinated with the judicial process and with the testimonies of police officers in court. He subsequently took several police examinations, started looking for jobs and landed at NJIT in 1997. Over the years, he was promoted to sergeant and then to lieutenant. He served as acting chief following the departure of former Director Robert Sabattis and was appointed to chief in 2014. Marswillo is a graduate of Fairleigh Dickinson University and has received formal training in investigation, compliance, management and internal affairs.

The challenges of ensuring campus security while balancing the need to maintain an open and welcoming environment are all in a day's work for the Department of Public Safety. This is accomplished through the concerted efforts of dedicated law enforcement professionals who create a very visible police presence and also through partnerships with all of the key stakeholders throughout the university. Patrolling an area of approximately 0.47 square miles, 24 hours per day, seven days per week, the 78 police and security officers who comprise the department collaborate on many activities with surrounding agencies including the Newark Police Department, Rutgers Police and Essex County College Police, as well as the county sheriff's and prosecutor's offices. This proactive collaboration has proven effective on campus with student organizations as well as with off-campus resources.

As an open campus, with no physical barriers to the surrounding community, NJIT is diligent in its crime prevention and reduction efforts. Educating the campus community about safety is a top priority, as many students come to the university from suburban areas and must be taught—and then constantly reminded—of NJIT's urban setting.

"Our philosophy has been to open up our campus to the community around us, embrace the diversity, and allow interaction with our neighbors," Marswillo said. "At the same time, our police and public safety officers must patrol, our card access systems must provide security, and our closed-circuit video camera

PHOTO: JOSH SANDERS



The Department of Public Safety has engaged in increasingly more meaningful and productive dialogue with Student Senate leaders and as well as other student organizations.

PHOTO: SCOTT JONES PHOTOGRAPHY



Police officer bike units, along with newly established public safety officer bike units, patrol interior campus areas and parking lots to provide greater visibility of law enforcement.

PHOTO: SCOTT JONES PHOTOGRAPHY



Walking or vehicle escort services are provided 24 hours per day, seven days a week upon request, to parking lots, transit hubs, and between and around campus buildings.

"We utilize current technology to analyze internal and external crime statistics and trends so as to maximize the allocation of all law enforcement resources in the reduction of crime."

- CHIEF JOSEPH MARSWILLO

systems must monitor the activity to maintain law and order. Parents of current and prospective students must be confident that our campus is safe and, while our statistics represent that as fact, the perception must stay in front of that reality."

In order to help foster this type of relationship-building and trust, NJIT uses the Community Oriented Policing and Problem-Solving Philosophy (COPPS) model and its associate programs. Police and public safety officers are assigned to clubs, student organizations and the neighboring James Street Commons Historic District community group to continuously provide safety education programs, joint safety initiatives and social interaction while fostering trust and partnerships with students, along with receiving feedback on how service can be improved. The officers distribute flyers listing safety and crime prevention tips, host community outreach meetings, provide training on active shooter incidents, and visit offices to evaluate and train on "run, hide, fight" concepts. These efforts have resulted in the highest student satisfaction scores for the Public Safety Department in over six years.

"We utilize current technology to analyze internal and external crime statistics and trends so as to maximize the allocation of all law enforcement resources in the

reduction of crime,” Marswillo said. “This assists in assigning directed patrols and posts to areas requiring a high-visibility police presence. Additionally, police and security walking and bike patrol units are used to enhance presence and promote approachability within the community.”

POLICE PLUS

During his NJIT tenure, Marswillo has received many awards, including commendations for meritorious service and exceptional duty. When asked what he enjoys most about his job, he notes that “every day is different” and he has the opportunity to perform a wide range of tasks—everything from speaking at new student orientations and participating in Meet and Greet events to partnering with Student Senate leaders and other student organizations on initiatives such as the Challenge Coin, which is awarded to those that volunteer to assist with safety initiatives. Due to the varied nature of these activities in conjunction with regular safety and security efforts,



The department recently deployed body-worn cameras to all NJIT police officers. Cameras can be mounted on the shoulder or center chest even with the badge line; plain clothes officers may wear cameras anywhere from their waistline up to their shoulder line.

PHOTOS: SCOTT JONES PHOTOGRAPHY



The Public Safety Department's vehicle fleet, shown here in front of the Honors Residential Hall, helps maintain a safe and secure environment for students, faculty, staff and visitors.

Marswillo describes the department as “Police Plus.”

“As Certified NJ Police Training Commission (PTC) Police Officers, we are tasked with the same legal and administrative responsibilities as our law enforcement counterparts,” he explained. “We must enforce all criminal, (Title 2c) motor vehicle (Title 39) laws of the state, as well as city ordinances. We are accountable to abide by and follow all Attorney General and Essex County Prosecutor directives, policies and procedures while maintaining the safety and security of the campus and surrounding community. With that said, ‘Plus’ encapsulates our department’s resolute conviction to foster trust and confidence in our officers. Our officers don their uniform each day not only as representatives of law enforcement but as individuals that strive to connect with our students, faculty and staff as mentors and as leaders.” ■

Author: Christina Crovetto is editor of NJIT Magazine.

MEASURING UP

The Department of Public Safety employs a proactive, goal-oriented policing philosophy where department performance is monitored and compared to internal past performance and benchmarked against other universities as well as Newark and surrounding agencies. In an effort to proactively participate in law enforcement activities, the university monitors communication of surrounding agencies, which allows more efficient operations with its neighbors. Shared and joint police operations across the multi-agency municipalities—including the City of Newark, Essex County, Rutgers University and Essex County College—and the open lines of communication have helped everyone to improve their policing. This proactive collaboration has proven effective on campus with student organizations as well as with off-campus resources.

“Reducing crime both on campus and in the surrounding community has become increasingly challenging as a result of the changing crime trends and the growth of University Heights,” said Andrew P. Christ, P.E., B.S. ’94, M.S. ’01, vice president for Real Estate Development and Capital Operations at NJIT. “However, as we compare our Clery Act crime statistics for 2013 and 2014, we are a safe urban campus and perform very well versus our peers. Our statistics are well below many suburban campuses of institutions similar in size and scope to NJIT.”

The department has initiated the process of becoming an Accredited Police Department through the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police, a voluntary statewide law enforcement accreditation program for New Jersey, assisting the agency in determining how existing operations can

be adapted to meet best practices and industry standards. Additionally, the department spearheads Joint Campus Lighting and Security Surveys with officers certified in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design. These officers walk the campus with students, faculty and staff to pinpoint areas of concern and work with the appropriate university offices to rectify the issues.

As part of its continuous improvement philosophy, NJIT is examining the feasibility of these proposed initiatives:

- The creation of a traffic enforcement unit to proactively enforce motor vehicle violations, that may result in other crime suppression activities.
- Increased police officer staffing as the campus grows and expands to maintain a highly visible public safety presence.
- Increase the department fleet for visibility, equipment and personnel deployment, and decreasing response time to incidents.
- Transition from a local dispatch center to a 9-1-1 call center for the campus in an immediately surrounding area.
- Increased joint initiatives with local law enforcement agencies including motor vehicle safety checks, DUI checkpoints, joint patrol and other specialized units.
- Enhanced communication and transparency through continued development of social media to the campus and the surrounding community.
- Increased closed-circuit video camera coverage of the campus and surrounding area to aid in deterring and investigating criminal activity.