

Duquesne University Public Safety Department Earns Accreditation

Nov. 19, 2009

Duquesne recently became only the third university in the state to have a public safety department accredited by the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association. Only Carnegie Mellon University and Lehigh University share this distinction.

Jim Caputo, director of public safety department, initiated the rigorous, two-year accreditation process and its 131 standards in the fall of 2007. The department will be accredited for the next three years.

“Meeting these standards demonstrates that we are a professional department keeping up with all the modern trends in policing,” Caputo said. “We wanted to be sure that we are providing the best possible service, and accreditation gives us the highest standards for comparison. We commend all of our officers and staff for this achievement.”

Duquesne’s Department of Public Safety employs 29 sworn police officers, nine security guards and nine support staff. All campus police officers receive Act 120 certification and annually receive 12 hours of mandatory training and firearms qualification training, and have the powers, authority and responsibility of any officer of the Commonwealth on property owned or operated by Duquesne University, including public streets and property adjacent to the 49-acre campus.

The accreditation process assessed various aspects of policing, including administration, law enforcement procedures, physical facilities, vehicles, equipment and other requirements, according to Lt. Michael Sippey, accreditation manager for the department. Representatives from the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association visited Duquesne to assess the public safety team and its efforts.

“By taking on this task, Director Caputo has put you at the top of law enforcement agencies,” said Richard Hammon, accreditation project coordinator of the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association, as he presented the accreditation on Thursday, Nov. 19. He noted that of 1,400 eligible departments across the state, merely 66 have withstood the rigors of accreditation. “Your agency did an exceptional job.”

Public safety, which patrols campus via vehicle, bicycle and on foot, provides a campus escort service from sunset to sunrise. The department also oversees the campus outside warning siren system, the first employed by a school in Pittsburgh, and the emergency alert system, an automated notification system that contacts individuals via mobile devices, phones and text message in event of an emergency.

Introduced in 2001, the Pennsylvania Law Enforcement Accreditation Program was designed and developed by professional law enforcement executives to provide a reasonable and cost-effective plan for the professionalization of law enforcement agencies within the Commonwealth.