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### Final Internship Reflection

The University of Arizona Police Department offered me a chance to work hand-in-hand with every office in the department. Patrol, detectives, crime prevention, records, dispatch, and even analysis are just a few of the offices that make up the larger machine that the public sees as campus police. It was an opportunity to not only work with each office, but to build on the skills learned and relationships built in order to “snowball” the entire experience as a whole.

Many prevalent themes having to do with policing began to emerge over the course of the summer, but none perhaps as clearly as the idea of community policing. The effort and sacrifice required in order to not only institute an idea like community policing, but to actually shift the culture of the department, university, and surrounding communities is unfathomable. It does not happen overnight, or over the course of a semester. It happens over the tenure of an entity such as UAPD, the decades of selfless service to this institution and its clientele, no matter the personal cost. Up until this internship, community policing only made sense to me on paper. As an idea, I was able to understand and comprehend it. But in actual application, I was left wanting. UAPD showed me how to actually go out and make a change, engage in positive interactions with people, and go above and beyond when it comes to not only protection, but providing service as well.

With this idea of community policing becoming a very tangible thing over the course of the summer semester, I was resolved to use this opportunity to keep growing in my own understanding and experiences. I did my very best to improve my experience as I went from section to section throughout the weeks, using my previous week’s experiences and conversations to build and direct my next course of action. It was like computing compound interest over the summer, each week a new beginning in its own right, but still rolling over the lessons learned from the weeks prior. So when I was able to see the perspective of the patrol officers and hear how their interactions with the detective squad usually transpire, I was then able to formulate inquisitive and challenging questions for the detective during my time with them. It allowed me a glimpse into the two seemingly separate worlds of police work, but sort of from the same viewpoint. The simple act of being willing to listen really helped me to get a better handle on how the everyday operations of the squads funnel into a more unified, “big picture” aspect. People are willing to talk, and sometimes all I needed to do was not interrupt or follow up with an immediate response, and people would be more than willing to continue on their train of thought, adding details and rehashing comments in order for me to get a better understanding.

The way in which this internship has influenced my career path and plans for the future is through direct conversation with others, as well as indirect observation of others. Given my outsider’s perspective, I was allowed to observe the ways officers interacted with one another, as well as the community at large. After seeing the university police officers do their job day in and day out, one facet of the department is that it has a real “small-town” feel to it. While a

very defined rank and respect structure is present, at the same time it is a very familial department. Officers know one another, command staff makes inquiries about spouses and children, and they really look out for each other. It really seems to make all the difference knowing that the people at work have your back, and that you can count on them indefinitely.

Through direct conversation with others who have more experience, I was able to better refine my career trajectory, and I was able to discuss the details with those who had the opportunity to experience some of those other jobs. So while discussing policing at different agencies, and officer who had just recently transferred from the county was able to answer my more direct questions about the various differences, both for the worse and for the better. It helped me to develop a better-rounded view about law enforcement agencies, as it was no longer simply speculation on my part, but rather hearing firsthand experience.

Networking within the department was an almost daily opportunity for me, and greatly appreciated the chance to meet new people and to hear their stories. I made sure to present myself as approachable, willing to listen, and actively engaged in the conversation. I honestly believe that this made the difference in whether I would complete the hours, say my goodbyes and leave; or whether I would have lasting friendships and enduring professional relationships amongst my peers in the department. Pursuing those networking opportunities was key for me, and I rest easy knowing that one day, if I ever has the great privilege of working for such a fine police department, I will get to see my friends again, and will be that much further down the road of a lasting and fulfilling career of doing what I now know that I love.