

## College Internships:

### Experience for Tomorrow's Law Enforcement Leaders, Support for Today's

In today's challenging economy, law enforcement agencies are facing increased responsibilities with fewer resources. Meanwhile, college students are challenged to stand out in a difficult job market. Law enforcement internships can be a mutually beneficial way for agencies to expand their services and for students to acquire valuable work experience.

Internships may require some additional work on the part of the volunteer coordinator, as some schools may have their own paperwork and course requirements, but otherwise, college students can be managed in the same manner as other volunteers. Typically staying only a semester or year, interns can be a good resource for short term projects; though some interns do stay on as volunteers or even go on to become paid staff members.

Whether working for college credit or simply for the experience, students with an interest in law enforcement appreciate the opportunity to gain hands-on practical knowledge in the field. Students from other disciplines can offer skilled support for special projects ranging from

marketing to surveys to technological and web support. While the following agencies structure their intern programs differently, they have all found creative ways to engage the next generation of law enforcement leaders.

### *Longmont, Colorado, Police Department*

Longmont, Colorado, is located 15 miles northeast of Boulder and 31 miles northwest of Denver. The Longmont Police Department (LPD) with 137 sworn officers, 65 civilian personnel, and 129 volunteers supports a jurisdiction of 21 square miles and 86,000 residents. In 2010, LPD volunteers provided 19,331 hours of service, valued at \$412,910.16,

to LPD. Volunteers are found in most aspects of the department. Volunteers in the Safety Justice Center participate in the police gang intervention unit and the emergency communications center. Volunteers also serve as equipment service specialists, personnel and training video library specialists, building tour guides, and provide administrative support to the front desk. LPD also has citizen patrol, explorers, chaplains, victim advocates, and interns.



The mission of the Longmont Police Department Student Intern Officer (SIO) Program is to provide a quality educational experience to college students by utilizing them in programs that enhance the delivery of service from the Longmont Police Department to the citizens of Longmont and provide an opportunity for students to gain practical work experience in their chosen field of study. To apply to the SIO program, student applicants submit a signed application, an unofficial transcript, and a letter of recommendation from a current professor. To be eligible to be an LPD student intern officer, the student must have a valid driver's license, be enrolled at an accredited college or university, and maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or better during the duration of the internship. Intern screening includes an oral interview, an integrity interview to learn a student's habits and behaviors, a polygraph, drug screening, and background check. The final selection of an intern is subject to approval by the LPD Support Services Commander.

The application deadlines for internships falls the semester prior to the intern's start date (apply November 1 for spring semester, April 1 for summer and fall). SIO volunteers may stay with the program for the duration of their education through one semester beyond graduation. If a student is placed on academic probation with the university, he or she is suspended from the SIO program until probation is lifted.

Once accepted into the program, SIO volunteers are assigned to a patrol mentor. This patrol mentor provides additional training and is the SIO's direct supervisor. SIOs work alongside a commissioned law enforcement officers for five

hour shifts, limited to two shifts a day (or 10 hours). Training by their mentor covers report writing, radio procedures, officer safety, property room procedures, physical protection training, and call handling. All SIO's are initially assigned to patrol, as this allows SIO's to support all aspects of LPD. Once mastering patrol, students may be assigned to specialized units. Students learn City of Longmont Municipal Code, standard operating procedures, and general orders dealing with ordinances associated within their scope of work. SIOs must volunteer for a minimum of 10 hours a month if they are not participating for credit. Students that are taking the internship for credit must complete the set college requirement for the higher education facility they are attending. In most colleges in Colorado, this is about 20 hours a week for the semester. Scheduling is coordinated between the SIO and their patrol mentor.

Student Intern Officers, who serve more than one semester and have a high-degree of functionality can be cleared by their mentors to respond alone to take minor police reports for no suspect reports for thefts under \$1,000 or malicious mischief, runaway, walk away and missing (from nursing homes) reports and assist in searches. SIO's can also assist with welfare checks, respond to parking complaints, and support crime, fire, and traffic accident scenes by providing perimeter, crowd and traffic control. SIO's at all levels assist with special events such as parades and road races and can be asked to assist with special detail such as K-9 Unit Training, SWAT team training, evacuations, and community notifications.

Student Intern Officers can begin with Longmont Police Department as early as their freshman year in college and can continue through one semester beyond graduation. This allows interns to stay active while seeking a full time law enforcement career. In the 12 years that LPD has offered this internship opportunity, nearly all SIOs have gone on to careers in local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies in Colorado and across the country.

### *Arlington County, Virginia, Police Department*

Arlington County sits along the Potomac River opposite Washington, DC. The Arlington County Police Department (ACPD) has 360 sworn officers, 100 civilian staff members, and 25 volunteers. ACPD is leanly staffed with approximately 1.7 officers per 1,000 residents and utilizes the skills of strategically positioned volunteers to maximize their enforcement efforts.

ACPD uses volunteers as auxiliary officers to assist officers, clerical volunteers to assist



ACPD interns in the criminal investigations division.

with administrative tasks, and interns from area colleges to assist detectives in the criminal investigation division. The department's internship program began in 2000, as a partnership with George Washington University's Forensic Science department. The first students worked on cold case homicides. The program has since evolved to include graduate and undergraduates from the Washington, DC greater metropolitan area.

ACPD accepts seven to eight interns each semester from more than 40 applications. The application process for an intern is thorough and includes an initial application with essays, a panel interview, a background questionnaire identical to an officer applicant, and a polygraph. A background investigation is conducted if the intern applicant passes each stage of the process.

Interns attend all unit meetings and briefings and are cleared to assist with simple assault, petty larceny, cold cases, and financial crimes. Interns gain experience through directly interviewing victims and witnesses. Interns are provided with orientation and guidance on how to conduct these interviews and work on each case with the assigned detective. Interns conduct interviews, document statements, and provide input to the detectives on disposition of cases. For a crime like a stolen wallet, interns will speak with the victim, call pawnshops, and credit card companies, and stores to try to recover surveillance video (which they will watch) or receipts.

The interns are assigned to the criminal investigations division and assist in the

homicide/robbery, sex crimes/youth offense/ domestic violence, crimes against property, auto/financial crimes, investigative support, and vice control units. Interns are asked to provide service for a minimum of one semester. The intense application process encourages students to volunteer for more than a semester, and students find they are able to get more involved the longer they intern. Some of the Interns receive course credit(s) from their college/university, but many do not. The department provides free parking to interns but the department is also easily accessible by public transportation. The department also provides dedicated workspace for interns, and the intern coordinator sits in the same area. Interns must commit at least 20 hours a week to the department, although some interns dedicate up to 40 hours a week.

When the criminal investigations division receives a missing person report, interns are sometimes asked to put aside their current cases to assist detectives in the search. The interns maintain a database of every hospital, medical center and clinic, morgue, and shelter in the 5,546 square mile Washington metro area. When a missing person report is received, the interns divide the database among themselves and start making phone calls. As they call each facility, interns also update the contact information as there is constant turnover in some of the facilities.

From January of 2009 through December of 2010, more than 24 student interns with ACPD provided 11, 575 hours assisting the criminal investigation division. Based on the hourly value of a volunteer for Virginia, \$22.03, intern

hours for 2009 and 2010 equaled \$254,997.25 of service. Over those two years, student interns were assigned to more than 550 cases and assisted with 216 special projects such as analyzing cell phone records, listening in on detective phone conversations, and organizing case binders for cold murder and rape cases.

### *Cincinnati, Ohio, Police Department*

Cincinnati is the third largest city in Ohio, with a population of 375,000, and covers 76 square miles along the Ohio River. The Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) is comprised of 1,057 sworn officers and 281 civilian employees. CPD boasts 700 volunteers, the majority of whom are active in the Citizens on Patrol program, with others participating in the Volunteer Camera Surveillance Team, Volunteer Police Photography Team, and Collegiate Internship Program.

With a large number of colleges and universities in and around Cincinnati, including the University of Cincinnati, Xavier University, and Northern Kentucky University, CPD has



developed a strong internship program. Each quarter, CPD places 20 to 40 interns throughout the department. CPD attributes the strength of its internship program to the strength of its relationships with local university professors. CPD does not accept applications directly

from students. All applicants must come pre-vetted through a university field placement coordinator who knows what qualities CPD looks for in its interns. This saves CPD staff time in not having to interview each applicant. CPD does conduct a thorough background check on each intern prior to acceptance.

At the beginning of each quarter, CPD staff members give a presentation to the University of Cincinnati Criminal Justice Field Placement class, through which the majority of interns are placed. This presentation discusses the roles and expectations of CPD interns and the process for applying. After several issues with previous interns, the presentation was updated to include information about dress code and professional image that is applicable for the internship and careers in public safety. This includes tips on social media image. CPD uses social media checks as another form of background checks for most interns and volunteers. Interns from other colleges and universities are recruited through their school's field placement coordinator.

CPD ensures that interns not only add value to the department but also have a quality, educational work experience. Students complete 96 hours of administrative work and 48 hours of field observation per semester. All interns are issued a student identification badges similar to those worn by civilian employees. Badges are returned to their supervisor and destroyed at the end of the internship. All students receive an orientation with their assigned supervisor. To further their education, interns are given the opportunity to use the driving simulator and fire arms

training program at the police academy. All intern supervisors are encouraged to let students learn by doing. From learning the rules of document destruction to learning about crime analysis through real time data tracking, interns gain valuable knowledge about police work. Interns have been placed in a variety of positions throughout the department, including supporting the financial crimes unit with bank surveys, conducting outreach to faith-based groups for crime prevention programs, and assisting the public at CPD substations.

While most students are criminal justice majors, students from other majors are accepted as well. Students with communications backgrounds have worked with the Public Information Officers, and an intern from a broadcasting program helped create public service announcements. Another student with a pharmacy background assisted with drug research during a high profile nursing home investigation. Officers often learn from their interns as well. A recent intern in the Vortex Investigation Unit taught officers how to better use Google maps for tracking suspect activity and how to use Facebook to track gang connections and activity. With the loss of more than 100 officers since the economic downturn, CPD is making use of interns to support day-to-day functions, while ensuring students are gaining valuable work experience.

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**VIPS Products and Resources****VIPS in a College or University Setting**

This supplemental chapter of the VIPS resource guide *Volunteer Programs: Enhancing Public Safety by Leveraging Resources* provides information specific to law enforcement volunteer efforts on college and university campuses. Although the core principles of volunteer management are identical in any law enforcement agency, there are unique issues related to law enforcement volunteer programs in a campus setting.

**Community Involvement in Campus Safety**

This 11-minute video highlights the breadth and scope of volunteer efforts in college and university law enforcement.

**VIPS Resource Library**

Browse and download sample documents from law enforcement volunteer programs, such as program descriptions, position descriptions, and policy and procedures for volunteer programs.

All products and resources can be found at [www.policevolunteers.org](http://www.policevolunteers.org).

The Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program works to enhance the capacity of state and local law enforcement to utilize volunteers. VIPS serves as a gateway to resources and information for and about law enforcement volunteer programs. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) manages the VIPS Program in partnership with and on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.



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