

An Interview with Captain Joe Garcia

I sat down with Captain Joe Garcia, head of Campus Security to discuss the history of Temple Campus Police as well as their training and the programs they currently offer to the community. Captain Garcia specializes in Communication, Training and Development for Temple Police.

Paul LaFollette (PL): I am sure that the Temple community is well aware of the existence of Campus Security, but I am also certain that there are activities that your organization does that we don't know much about. Let me ask you to start by telling me a bit about how you are organized.

Captain Joe Garcia (JG): Temple University Campus Safety Services began back in 1968. This has always been a progressive department since its inception, almost 50 years ago. We are always enhancing our equipment and the services we provide. We have police officers, security officers, and we have police dispatchers, as well. Within the past three years, we have been able to professionalize our dispatch center. We have approximately 130 police officers, well over 400 security officers, and close to 20 professional dispatchers. This is a 24/7 operation.

We have approximately 60 in-house security officers and AlliedBarton Security Services has augmented our security force for the past 19 years. AlliedBarton does a good job adapting to the Temple culture and assimilating into Temple.

While our approach to our mission is to be proactive and preventive, we also prepare for emergencies in case we ever have to respond to them. For instance, our police officers and dispatchers go through active shooter training and certifications. We include all of our security officers in our First Aid/CPR certification training.

We are now emphasizing customer service aspects of our mission, trying to build customer loyalty. We want our services to our students to be so good that they will feel comfortable referring other potential students to Temple.

PL: Tell me about the kind of training that your police force has.

JG: Our police officers are trained at the Philadelphia Police Academy; they are certified through the Municipal Police Officers Education & Training Commission. So they are "cops." This training lasts approximately eight months. Then they come here and we put them through a departmental orientation program. It is one thing to be a police officer but it is even more important that they become university campus police officers. We enhance their training in ways that are pertinent to their work at Temple. Understand that one minute a Temple police officer might be taking down a bad guy. Ten minutes after the officer completes the paper work, that same officer might be called to assist a professor who has locked himself out of his office or building.

We also have canine, which is a complete training program all of its own. Our officers are trained to be crime prevention practitioners. We have other officers who have been trained and serve as dignitary protection officers. When high profile, high risk guests, such as President Obama or Secretary of State Hilary Clinton come here, our dignitary protection officers work closely with the agencies that protect them, the Secret Service, FBI, and so forth.

Our officers are continually receiving professional development training. They go to the State Police to be trained and certified in the use of Tasers and other equipment along with tactical training. We also do first-aid recertification and training. We have recently begun mental health first-aid certification training. Our goal is to get the entire department, including AlliedBarton Security, certified as mental health first-aid providers.

PL: How does the size of Temple's police force compare to others in the state?

JG: Temple, according to reports, has the largest university campus police department in the state of Pennsylvania.

In addition to our policing activities, we have an incredible community outreach program. We review community complaints. We live in an urban area, so every few months; it feels like an invasion of new neighbors moving into the community. People who have been living here forever sometimes feel a bit uneasy about the transient community arriving. There are about 13,000 students who live at Temple.

There are issues, at times, with too much trash being left after students move out of their apartment or event after a party. Sometimes the music that is played during a party gets a bit too loud. So, we have some folks, in our department, whose main focus is to help with these community-impacting issues. They have teamed up with TSG, student workers, other police officers and even outside agencies that attend community meetings with us and respond to community complaints. As a result, we have done well to improve our relationship with the community.

We work hard to exceed the standard of service for a campus police department. That standard is to provide a "reasonable level" of security. Our goal is always to provide more than that.

PL: I have been at Temple since 1983. I have watched over the past several years as Temple students have spread out into the neighborhood. When I first came here, I would walk over to the Engineering and Science High School where my son went, or I would walk over to the Wagner Free Institute of Science, and I never saw any Temple students in those areas at all. And now, they are all over that side of Broad Street.

JG: We have extended our patrol to 18th street as a result of the amount of students living on the west side of Broad Street.

I came here in 1988; at that time Temple was a commuter school. During summer months, there was hardly anyone staying on or near campus, except for a few graduate students. During fall and spring semesters we had a few thousand students living on or near campus. It is now approximately 13,000 and the projection is that by 2020 it will reach to about 25,000. We are preparing for that growth now.

PL: It is my impression that you co-ordinate pretty closely with the Philadelphia Police.

JG: We do. We are in constant communication with the Philadelphia Police Department. We work closely with them on the west side of Broad and during special events. Our captain of police operation attends the compstat meetings along with the Philadelphia Police district. We also have a very good relationship with SEPTA Police, the Secret Service and the FBI.

PL: Tell me a little more about the training you offer to the Temple community.

JG: We offer a 2-credit course on rape aggression defense training for women. We also do crime prevention orientations. Probably one of the most important things is to understand the elements of crime and knowing how to reduce or eliminate the opportunity for a crime to exist. We provide that kind of training at orientation each year.

Our community outreach people do tenant/landlord training. This includes such things as students knowing their rights as tenants.

PL: I know that a number of my colleagues feel uncomfortable that they do not really know how to handle certain situations that may arise in a classroom – for instance aggressive students, or how they should respond if a campus wide emergency were to arise while they are teaching or while they are in their offices. Have you considered directing some training towards faculty?

JG: We have. One of the things that we do is called “Coffee with the Cops.” A lot of students come to these events, but not many faculty. That is a great opportunity for us to interact one- on-one with individuals.

PL: When and where do these happen? This is something I have never heard of.

JG: They happen throughout fall and spring semesters. We do them at various locations in the university to make sure that we cover as much of the university as possible. We use twitter and our website to inform the community. We actually have not yet figured out how best to use these communications resources to cover everyone, because everyone seems to have their own preference as it relates to social media and mass communication.

PL: Yes. And I suspect that twitter is much better at attracting the students' attention than the faculty's. If you would like to send me a list of meeting times, I will keep that up to date in the *Faculty Herald*.

JG: Yes, that would be great.

PL: Well, thank you for your time. This will give our readers considerably more insight into the work your people do to serve the university.