
Submitted by



The

**UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

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Excellence in Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACT

Though 1972 marked the beginning of the current UAB Police Department and the eventual end of a spiraling crime rate, an obstinate, subliminal image of crime, as well as a characteristically real negative perspective of crime, persisted about the campus well into the late 1980's. Even as true crime rates continued to plummet, and despite a marked professionalization of the Police Department, UAB continued to suffer its negative image. To attempt to end the negative perception problem once and for all, beginning in 1990, a purposeful, strategically developed plan to create a positive perception of crime at UAB was begun by the men and women of the UAB Police Department.

The exact means of solving the "problem" of crime on a large, world class, urban medical, research, and educational center, as planned, developed, and initiated by the UAB PD is described in this paper. The problem solving steps and the high, easily observed results made by the men and women of the Department have not only resulted in dramatically lowering the actual and subliminal, negative perception of crime in the UAB community, but have served as a superior tried and proven problem solving technique resulting in the UAB Police Department becoming a fully nationally accredited, state of the art, model university police Department for others to emulate.

A. **Scanning:**

1. The origins of the present day University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) began in 1945 as several buildings located on several blocks in the southern portion of downtown Birmingham. Though UAB's early focus was the School of Medicine, by 1972 the faculty, staff, and students included the full continuum of academic studies through the doctoral and post-doctoral levels. By 1990, UAB had developed into 65 acres which housed approximately 15,500 students and 14,500 faculty and staff who drove on and off the property and intermingled with a larger numbered combination of one day surgery and short stay patients, visitors, and guests. Major city streets pass through and around the campus. In 1971, the UAB Security Department consisted of 60 full time and part time personnel. In 1972, thirty-three officers were fully sworn, possessing a dual commission with both the City and the State. The sworn were complemented by 65 non-sworn personnel consisting of security, part time students, and staff. By 1991, the Department's staff was down sized to 56 sworn officers and 38 non-sworn personnel. The title of "police and security" was changed to "police" and required security officers were "contracted" for fixed post duties. UAB had become the largest employer in the State and had obtained the reputation as a world class leader in patient care and higher education. In 1997, the campus has a student population in excess of 16,500 and 15,400 faculty and staff.

Though the campus was generally free of serious crimes of all categories, a persistent, negative perception of high crime at UAB "subliminally" existed, in the community and within the surrounding metropolitan area. The reputation for being associated with the center of Birmingham, and therefore, probable high crime statistics, or at least an association with high statistics, and some assaults against female students in 1972, 1982, 1991, and 1992, caused concern and served as the focus of the problem of a negative perception.

2. The "problem" of a negative perception by the community, in regard to high crime or an uncomfortable "dangerousness" that one would find hard to describe or admit to at two similarly sized universities, or other colleges through out the State, seemed to be a universal, yet rarely spoken of state of the art in 1990, and was not described or communicated in a strong, negative manner, either by the faculty, staff, or the news media. The "problem" simply existed.
3. The "problem" was identified and labeled by a former UAB Chief of Police (1990), who being an out of state candidate for the chief's position, stated that he felt a negative perception of crime existed whenever he spoke with anyone on around the campus, in the Hospital, or in a nearby metropolitan community. Though criminal statistics indicated that crime was low, he said the perception was a problem that would have to be eliminated and that the Department would take the responsibility for eliminating it as quickly as possible, to not only enhance the image of the

Department, but to reinforce our purpose in the eyes of the UAB and Birmingham community. Few members of the Department argued the point.

4. The Department had other problems. It had a high attrition rate, wage levels had dropped in comparison to other surrounding communities, morale was low, and its mission and goals were confused due to earlier transient and ineffective executive leadership. An appointed committee consisting of all the major staff and command leadership agreed that if a negative perception of crime could be changed to one more positive in nature, all of the other problems would be resolved through the community's growing support for the Department in its role as a pro-active, highly motivated, professional group of personnel who intention was nothing other than minimizing the negative , nagging perception of crime. It would take a great deal of planning, development, perpetual self evaluation, correction, and determination by each member to resolve the problem in order to serve the best interests of Department, and most importantly the UAB community.
5. The level of diagnosis begin with the participation and problem solving ability of the first level sworn officer all the way through the level and support of the Chief. Committees were formed of all command levels, sworn and unsworn, to define the problem, evaluate the problem, come up with solutions, refine the workable solutions, implement them, evaluate them, and readjust for effect. Initially, the community was involved through feed back from various departmental and unit staff meetings which the Chief and his assistants were in attendance. These perceptions and problems by the community were then shared by the Police Department executive staff with the officers and other members of the Department's committees. The elimination of a negative perception of crime became the Department's highest and most obvious goal.

B. Analysis:

1. There were several sources used to analyze the problem of the negative perception of crime at UAB. The tools materialized more quickly once the Department made the decision to become nationally accredited through the auspices of the Commission for the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). The decision occurred in 1990 and CALEA standards insisted on constantly surveying the community's victims and non-victims regarding the Department's effectiveness, ineffectiveness, purpose, means of accomplishing its purpose, and overall effect as a public service agency.

The Department therefore developed several questionnaires for self evaluation as reported by victims and community members. These surveys were mailed to each victim of any form of crime, and to any community member at large whenever an incident was written which would negatively impact UAB. These questionnaires are

mailed in a regular manner, compiled, analyzed, and evaluated by the Planning and Research Unit. One questionnaire originates from the Victim Witness Officer (formally the Community Assistance Response Effort-CARE) for serious crimes, one is sent from the Chiefs office for all recorded incidents, a third is mailed by the Crime Specialist to the UAB community at large, and a fourth is handed to faculty, staff, students, visitors, and guests by officers while performing routine patrol duties.

The UAB Criminal Justice Department was also asked to commit to planning, developing, executing, and evaluating, and extensive UAB faculty, staff, and student survey, which would measure the perception of crime on the campus. This was a three year study comparing the University to other similar institutions.

Finally, though statistics appeared to be lower each year, analysis of all criminal statistics generated by the Department, served to produce an actual picture of the status of crime on the campus compared to what may have been perceived by the questionnaires.

2. The subliminal "problem" of negative perception was pervasively present since the official designation of the Department as a professionally staffed, fully sworn agency in 1972. Though less pervasive than ever before, some negativity may exist. The goal of the Department is to minimize the perception to as insignificant a perception as possible.
3. The problem is a generic one for the entire Birmingham and UAB community. Removal of a negative perception of crime would benefit the Department, UAB, and the entire metropolitan community.
4. "Harms" would be conceptualized as forms of skepticism for sending daughters and other female members to the campus if fear of assault was real. If the perception of theft was high, other campuses would be considered to avoid becoming a victim of property theft. The national and international image of the campus would suffer.
5. Before 1990, the problem of "negative perception" was challenged by continually enhancing the professional capability of Department. Efforts were made with crime prevention techniques to convince the community that crime was not significant, but that constant preventative actions and pro-active responses to given possible criminal acts could be effective. Posters, printing of crime statistics, presentation, and seminars became common. The UAB community response remained about the same. The Department's effort remained about the same.
6. The initial analysis in 1990 by the Chief of police and the Department's executive staff, based upon initial surveys and committee meetings generated by accreditation requirements and member suggestions for effectiveness resulted in the determination

that the Department itself was not playing an effective pro-active role in overcoming the negative perception. Over extended patrol officers and criminal investigators responding to calls for service or writing follow up reports, respectively, while making routine patrols in a cars or observing for obvious "modus operandi" in targeted areas was not the best communications mode with the community. More communications would have to occur. More mutual understandings between the Department and the community would have to materialize in order to neutralize the negativity.

7. Other than initially returned surveys, continued informal conversations through staff and committee meetings by the various departments throughout the University, and the eventual change of perceived images, the true extent of the problem could not be realized without continued surveys over a minimum of four or five years, unless the changes by the Department were great enough to cause immediate changes in negative perception by the public and the true crime rate continued to precipitously, statistically drop. The quick-fix, drop in criminal statistics was not realistically possible due to a lack of operational funding. However, positive, progressive change over a four year period of time through high exposure, professional public relations, positive and progressive victim witness procedures, radical changes in patrol techniques, and the modification of Department member paradigms, would be the logical way to demonstrate progressive change.
8. Situational information was basically gained through the Chiefs initial perception of what the faculty, staff, students, patients, visitors and guests perceived the problem to be regarding the negative perception of crime on the campus. The negativity was not overt but the subliminal aspect seemed to persist. The chief's primary goal became the means through which a permanent removal of the subliminal negative perception of crime at UAB could be affected.
9. Open discussion about the negative perception of crime at UAB became routine at all meetings with faculty, staff, and students, as well as the continued monitoring of all surveys continuously being returned to the Department.

C. Response

1. The Department's response to creative solutions materialized through intensive, routine meetings , voluntary and paid overtime, of larger and smaller groups of members, sworn and unsworn, whose purpose it was to solicit ideas through which the Department could successfully eliminate the problem of subliminal negative perception of crime within the Department's operating budget. To do this they would:

Cause the communities perception of crime at UAB to become more positive and

decrease or eliminate any negative perception by:

Enhancing and reinforcing the Department's crime prevention public relations effort through increased presentations and seminars for all students, faculty, and staff, particularly during the fall quarter, as well as at each new student and employee orientation.

Certify Rape Aggression Defense Systems instructors in the Department and assure the programs are immediately available to all faculty, staff, and students.

Plan, develop, initiate, evaluate, and maintain "Drug Store" programs for all the metropolitan area youth who attend public and private schools.

Plan, develop, initiate, evaluate, and maintain selected presentations and seminars regarding specific crimes and victimless crimes for all faculty, students, and staff as often as routinely as possible.

Increase communications between the officer on the beat in the community by establishing a Special Operations Unit whose form of transportation would be the Mountain bike and the Horse. Have each officer strike up conversation with all contacted faculty, staff; and students, and have them pass out a survey card for mailing to the Chief for feed back. Insist that all officers meet the community on their beat, pass out survey cards, and work on the negative perception of crime.

Post all criminal statistics in the two major libraries for viewing by all faculty, staff, and students.

- Assure the Campus newsmedia have access to all written crime and incident reports.

Publish a comprehensive information booklet about the Department for all faculty, staff, student, patients, visitors, and guests in which the annual statistics would be published for five year comparisons.

Whenever possible, make positive newsmedia presentations through the newspapers, radio, and television regarding crime on campus, how it is being minimized and what all community members can do at home or at their place of work to prevent it.

Become a fully accredited agency to demonstrate to the public and the community, the Department's deliberate intent to professionalize, enhance their image, and minimize crime through nationally proven methods and techniques.

Conduct intensive, user friendly security surveys for all institutional offices, hospital, and research areas. Recommend the continued use of CCTV, state of the art alarms systems, and card keys. Advocate the use of the electronic emergency signal for all UAB faculty, staff, and students on the campus. Place CCTV in all critical, densely populated, and sparsely populated areas on the campus to minimize patrol requirements if not necessary, and maximize them where required.

2. Response actually taken by the Department to decrease the negative perception of Crime by the UAB community and the surrounding metropolitan area.

A. Enhancing and reinforcing the Department's crime prevention public relations effort through increased presentations and seminars for all students, faculty, and staff, particularly during the fall quarter, as well as at each new student and employee orientation.

Certify Rape Aggression Defense Systems instructors in the Department and assure the programs are immediately available to all faculty, staff, and students.

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that all officers meet the community on their beat, pass out survey cards, and work on the negative perception of crime.

- C. Post all criminal statistics in the two major libraries for viewing by all faculty, staff, and students.
 - D. Assure the Campus newsmedia have access to all written crime and incident reports.
 - E. Publish a comprehensive information booklet about the Department for all faculty, staff, student, patients, visitors, and guests in which the annual statistics would be published for five year comparisons.
 - F. Whenever possible, make positive newsmedia presentations through the newspapers, radio, and television regarding crime on campus, how it is being minimized and what all community members can do at home or at their place of work to prevent it.
 - G. Assure that the COP and the executive staff get put and ring door bells, speak at meetings, and shake hands as much as possible in selling the programs and responses to the UAB community and the surrounding metropolitan areas.
 - H. Become a fully accredited agency to demonstrate to the public and the community, the Department's deliberate intent to professionalize, enhance their image, and minimize crime through nationally proven methods and techniques.
 - I. Conduct intensive, user friendly security surveys for all institutional offices, hospital and research areas. Recommend the continued use of CCTV, state of the art alarms systems, and card keys. Advocate the use of the electronic emergency signal for all females on the campus. Place CCTV in all critical, densely populated, and sparsely populated area on the campus to minimize patrol requirements if not necessary and maximize them where required.
3. The above listed responses were all suggestions made by the members of the Department at large. Each was simultaneously initiated as staffing, funding, and timing permitted.

4. The evaluation of the responses by the Department would be measured with the continued multiple forms of surveys conducted by the Department to measure the community's feelings and perceptions of crime and the Department. The evaluations are continuously being passed out and mailed into the Chief's office.
5. The overall goal of the Department's response was the mimiztion of a negative perception of crime of UAB by UAB community members and the surrounding metropolitan areas.
6. Except for the published booklet, all responses were staffed and funded.
7. Preparations for initiating the responses were planned in phases, e.g., bugeting was requested each year, personnel were briefed on their role in a classroom environment to assure the program's success, equipment and supplies were purchased, and altenatives for failure or non-success was discussed. There were no failures, the responses were enthusiastically received by all personnel and maximal efforts on the part of all personnel was witnessed by all the command and staff
8. As in the case of some personalities, the reason for change had to be further explained in order to change significant paradigms. A mentality of "we are servants, they are customers" had to be constantly and positively reinforced among the older members who were not initially in their careers programmed for the tenets of TQM and the "making of customer relations" concepts which TQM advocates. With very few exceptions, the concept of TQM has been sold and working daily in the Department.
9. Every single person employed by the agency was involved in assuring the Department's responses worked. No person could be left out of the service requirements necessary to please the public.

D. Evaluation

1. The impact of all the Departmental responses were all positive, openly accepted by the community, and according to the surveys, the negative perception of crime at UAB is growing minimal. Attrition slowed despite wage levels remaining the same, and morale rose in almost a quid quo pro manner due to the Department's accredited status (the Department became fully accredited on July 29, 1995 and

has never achieved a greater professional status or stronger sense of respect by the community). Comparative five-year criminal statistics indicate that crime has never been lower. The media is totally informed, press relations have never been better and all minimum requirements are being maximally met according to the 1990 Student Right to Know Act. The Department's Special Operations Unit exceeded all expectations of excellence and effectiveness. The community welcomed the bicycle and horse patrols. New uniforms, equipment, and purposeful daily interaction with the community stirred incentive on all the officer's parts. "Campus Watch" involved six hundred faculty and staff all most immediately. Local campus papers assured something was said positively about the Department a minimum of once a week.

2. The methods of evaluation were based upon the statistical results of all the issued surveys. Surveying began in earnest in 1990 and continue at this writing.
3. The Chief's office and the Planning and Research Unit accumulated and correlated the survey results. Multi-member Department committees still regularly meet to discuss all targeted conditions and responses. All responses are still in effect in the community.
4. No. The administration financed responses as required over a five year period. Members in the Department became quickly accustomed to TQM tenets.
5. Improvement was noted in all areas of the Department 's responses.
6. All response goals, except the initial and follow up publication of a Department information brochure booklet, were accomplished and continue to take their effect in their continued implementation, evaluation, and maintenance.
7. Survey results, newsmedia coverage, community comments, crime rate, officer morale, and our professional status in the community.
8. More operational funding would have doubled the effect by simply making more written information and media information available to the community. 5000 copies of specialized victim booklets would always be better than 500 because operating funds were not available. Downsizing, smaller budgets, and increased workloads can all be minimized to assure more effective responses.

9. No
10. Yes. Monitoring the responses will be a perpetual understanding.

3. **Agency and Officer Information**

1. The entire Department
2. Yes, the Concept of TQM was introduced in 1995. However, an open management style was practiced in the Department since 1990 to assure the effective passage of information, participation at all levels in the organization, and to assure the maximum utilization of individual strengths and talents.
3. Self worth, working as part of a team, learning effective networking techniques, successful bench marking, experiencing the "win/win" philosophy, being in total partnership with the community, and serving as part of a career oriented, professionally accredited organization.
4. TQM
5. Participative leadership, problem oriented policing, and a state of the art management techniques beginning from the CEO to all levels throughout the organization.
6. No special commitments were made to these responses. Funding has not increased nor have staffing levels increased during this six year period. Resources were re-prioritized to justify each response in given , scheduled time periods.
7. Project Contact Person:

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Supporting Documents

A Six Year Crime Comparison of Reported Crimes at UAB

Crime	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Murder	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sexual Assault With Force	0	1	1	0	0	1	2
Sexual Assault without Force	0	0	0	0	0		
Robbery	6	16	6	8	9	12	11
Aggravated Assault	0	16	3	3	2	0	0
Burglary	12	51	38	23	36	12	7
Vehicle Theft	54	73	38	28	36	32	30
Minor in Possession	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alcohol Sold to Minor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Public intoxication	0	72	65	64	76	71	54
Possession of Drugs	0	0	0	0	0	5	7
Distribution of Drugs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Drug Trafficking	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Weapon Without Permit	0	0	4	2	1	2	3
Concealed Weapon	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Theft of Property Person	601	513	402	313	368	268	187
Theft of Property Business	623	421	313	246	199	179	162
indecent Exposure	14	7	7	1	4	4	3
Simple Assault	29	8	18	13	16	19	33
Vandalism	99	82	67	57	82	78	46
Disorderly Conduct	1	19	16	10	20	23	10
Criminal Trespass	76	68	72	57	52	52	49
Harrassment	57	48	36	23	27	30	20
Harassing Communications	43	56	40	52	31	30	19
DUI	53	45	22	14	13	16	16

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