

Higher Purpose, Higher Standards

By Randy Burba, President



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America's college and university campuses have become among the most socially-engaged arenas in which we all regularly see ideological conflicts take place, seemingly as never before. Social justice, political, economic, and even global issues have sustained the collective interest at our nation's institutions of higher learning. These intellectual intersections provide authentic and passionate debate and an energy that often any particular perspective can keep at a high level.

At the same time, these same campuses have been the intended destination for unprecedented forms of violence, ranging from the growing interpersonal forms of acts of aggression to the horror of terror acts that all too often end in the loss of life.

In such a diversely interesting and thought-provoking world, and in which the issues of local, national, and international news imbue even the most traditionally sedate and pedestrian college campuses, the onslaught of ideologies, technologies, and diverse attitudes have thrust the campus law enforcement profession into the very spotlight that it is called upon to protect.

These men and women don a uniform every day to serve our colleges with a form of courage that goes far beyond knowing and understanding the

threats from which most people would immediately flee. These public safety professionals remain committed to a very unique mission: protecting those they serve so that a future will be served well.

But these policing professionals also need modeling for them to sustain the confidence in their calling; they need leadership that is demonstrative and clear and courageous in its own form. To fail those we ask to follow us every day runs the most egregious of risks, for if we do not provide for our frontline personnel that preserve the mission and idea of higher education, we all, in truth, fail our community as a whole.

We, as executive leaders of public safety agencies, are exposed to tremendous amounts of stress, political pressure, and expectations of our campus and surrounding communities. This larger set of demands often leads us to forget the most important mission we have: To serve those we lead; to keep every member of our organizations safe so that they can keep our colleges and universities safe.

In many measures, and by many accounts, 2016 was a devastating year. Too many suffered too much loss too frequently. We saw a cycle of violence that took those we love, and we watched as others in our communities lost those they love.

Now is a time for us to truly commit to one another, and to find within ourselves that deeper strength and raise it to the call to all leaders to candidly review our training, our standards, and our practices and find a higher form of service as well as a broader means to share in the success of a better community and safer campuses. Our profession, when wholly accepted as our purpose, comes with the obligation to continue to learn and understand. May 2017 be a year to find such a new standard.