PROTECT AND SERVE

University police to bring back student officer hiring program

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The University of Louisiana at Lafayette Police Department is putting its student police program back in full swing.

ULPD previously had a freeze on new student officer hires in place, but, after their last student officers graduated, the university decided it was time to start hiring student officers again, ULPD's Sgt. Lance Frederick said.

"The new chief that we have in place, he wants to bring it back, and so does Dr. Savoie and Vice President Cottonham they feel strongly about the program, so does SGA," Frederick said.

According to Frederick, ULPD made some changes to the program. Previously, ULPD had 30 spaces for student officers, but they decided to cut back to 15 student officers in order to pay them more.

"You're putting on a bulletproof vest and carrying a gun and a badge with responsibilities. We want to pay you more than the student worker that works at the front desk filing papers," he said.

Officer Tre Milstead said he was happy to be a part of the program as it will give him a huge advantage in the job market after graduation.

"When I do graduate I already have some experience and I'm certified, so as soon as I go to an agency, I can just hit the road and get started," Milstead said.

In addition, many criminal justice majors who graduate college before getting certified through UL Lafayette may have trouble finding a job after graduation according to Frederick.

"Whenever you get out you have a criminal justice degree, but there's not too much you can do with it in law enforcement because you have to find an agency though senior to the Academy, which means paying for your fees, paying for your salary, ammo, weapons, uniforms, all that good stuff," he said.

On top of this, many criminal justice majors don't have enough time or money to go to the academy to get certified.

"You can't do anything else for 12 weeks because (the academy) is Monday to Friday 40 hours a week. It's a full-time job just to go there, so if you try to go on your own it's not plausible unless you have huge savings, and a lot of these kids have been spending all their money trying to go to school," Frederick said.

"So, whenever they graduate from us and from UL they have the bachelor's degree and their post certified."

According to Frederick, the student officers spend a lot of time mingling with other students, as they can do a better job relating to young people than the older officers.

"They speak the same language, they're at the same maturity, that kind of things. A lot of times they have the same interests. Someone like me, at 31 years old, probably won't have the same exact interests as an 18-year-old," he said.

Officer Grant Creel said he enjoys this, as it's a great opportunity to improve ULPD's reputation with students.

"The best thing has just been being able to interact with people more and being able to create a better image of the police than that has been in the past," Creel said.

He also said the program was an amazing opportunity, but wished the process of becoming a student officer was less tedious.

"The process is a little slow, but that's not anybody's fault here," he said. "First you got to do the application, which is good, like, 10 pages probably. You got to do that. After you do the application, you got to do the interview. Once you get through the interview, you got to do a voice stress test which is basically a small lie detector test. After that, you got to do a drug test, then you got to do a psych test, then you gotta go through the academy."

Milstead said he's learned many valuable skills from the more experienced officers at ULPD.

"The best thing that's happened so far is learning from the vets. All the guys that work here have like 20-plus years of experience, SWAT experience, any type of situation that you can possibly think of they have experience," he said.