

SUU: One of the safest campuses in the country

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Parents and students who choose Southern Utah University can rest assured that they are attending one of the safest campuses in the country. This fact is largely due to the qualified and caring staff of SUU's Office of Public Safety.

Public Safety's mission statement is to guarantee "the campus community has a safe place to learn and work" by way of staff who are "competent and professional." The department employs four full-time public safety officers who have a combined 39 years experience. **Tom Cowan** has a total of 20 years police-work experience, 10 of which were with the Midvale Police Department and the last 10 with SUU Public Safety. **Taylor Nelson** has been with the SUU Public Safety Office for three years, and the newest member of the force, **Josh Neilson** ('02, Spanish), spent the previous three years with the Cedar City Police Department. All these officers are state-certified and equal in capacity to police officers in Utah.

Since its establishment on campus in 1967, Public Safety has had only four police chiefs. The presiding chief, **Rick Brown** ('90, Law Enforcement), was appointed in September 2003 and has 13 years of experience. Brown did take a leave of absence from February 2005 to September 2006 to serve in Iraq. Brown is also a member of the 2nd Battalion 222nd Field Artillery. While he was overseas, Cowan served SUU as interim police chief.

The glue that holds the depart-

ment together and keeps it in efficient operating order is **Pat Gardner**, the department secretary. Pat has been with SUU for eight years, donning the Outstanding Female Staff Member of the Year Award in 2005.

The officers take care to ensure all state, federal and university laws and procedures are enforced on all campus properties. Their



Josh, Taylor, Tom, Pat and Rick.

jurisdiction includes the main campus, the mountain property, the farm and all other campus units.

The officers are also in charge of taking care of cases of accidents, thefts, assaults and vandalism. They also assist the vast department of Student Services in addressing students who are in violation of any campus ordinance, including cheating or harassing teachers or administrators. SUU officers are also qualified to respond to medical emergencies.

Much of the peace officers' time is spent giving presentations on how to stay safe, in accordance with the portion of their mission statement that says, "We believe that educating the campus community regarding these

important topics is a key factor in maintaining a safe campus."

SUU's crime rates are consistently exceptionally-low compared to other institutions of higher education in the state and to peer institutions throughout the country. According to the Campus Security Statistics reported on the website of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Post-Secondary Education, SUU had 91 on-campus arrests from 2003 to 2005. A comparison to the other public universities in the state, for that same time period, shows 312

arrests at the University of Utah, 213 at Utah State University, and 132 at Weber State University.

SUU had only 20 reported on-campus burglaries between 2003 and 2005. Northern Utah campuses had a higher burglary rate, with the University of Utah with 67, USU had 53 and WSU had 50.

SUU's safety rates compare just as favorably with those of peer-institutions on the West and East Coasts. Two such schools that have approximately the same number of students are Humboldt State University in Arcata, Calif., and Millersville University in Millersville, Pa. Humboldt State University's arrest count for the same time period discussed above was 343, and Millersville University's was 268.