

Police on campus are the real thing

by Richard Crow Paul Harris.

In America, you can find students on campus who believe there are two kinds of police officers: the campus ones and the "real" police (either the city or county police department).

For a long time, campus police departments have been looked upon as a haven for "wannabe" police officers who could not make it or retired from a "real" police department.

"Campus police are as real as the university they swear to protect and to serve," said Detective Lonnie Barrett of the Department of Public Safety. "They go through the same training, continuing education classes and qualifying on the firing range. They must also follow the same rules and regulations as the real police."

Just as city or county police are responsible for the people of the community they serve, campus officers are responsible for the safety of every student, faculty and staff member.

The Department of Public Safety is responsible for 22,000 people, which is in reality a small city, Barrett said.

Campus officers investigate every unlawful act reported, arrest and book criminals they catch, ensure safety by patrolling the campus, ticketing speeders, stopping drunk drivers, conducting lectures, serving search warrants and even helping people who are locked out of their cars.

The Department of Public Safety is one of the largest among university campuses in the nation, Barrett said.

One hundred people work at the department, including 17 officers, 37 reserve officers, five dispatchers, one records clerk, 35 student security members and 10 student parking security members.

"We receive the same training as the [Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department], except it is done at the state academy," said Sgt.

The training is called State Police Officer Standards and Training, or POST, and takes place for 14 weeks in Carson City, Harris said.

"The only difference between the Metro, Henderson and UNLV police departments is jurisdiction," he said.

Harris said all new officers go through an intensive training schedule to evaluate their performance, including a 24-hour in-service training POST program. He added that all officers on the force now complete at least 70 to 75 hours of additional training each year from the Department of Public Safety.

"What we ended up with was one of the best groups of new officers I've seen in my four years on the force," Harris said.

All of the 17 commissioned officers are training specialists in at least one field of police work, Harris said, adding, "All of the officers are also trained and certified in crime scene investigation and host training seminars on campus for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other outside agencies."

Programs taught by the campus police include crime scene investigation, handgun retention and weapons training; handcuff, defensive and police baton tactics and sexual assault investigation.

Minorities make up 50 percent of the force. The average age of a campus officer is 35 years, with the youngest being 22 and the oldest 50.

"We attract officers from major city departments like Los Angeles, Chicago and Metro," Harris said. "One of our officers was a detective with Metro [for 13 years]."

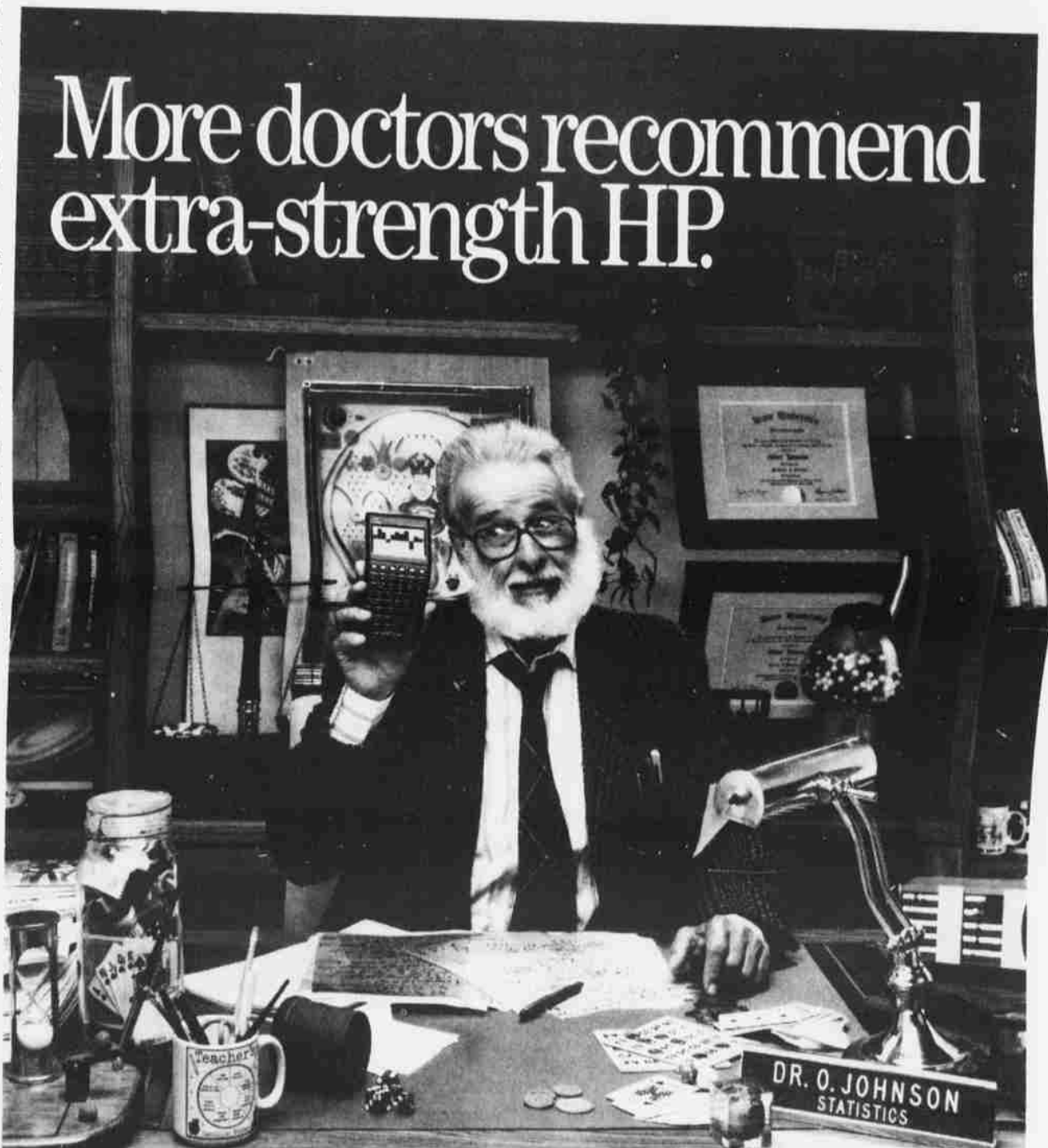
Barrett said that most officers come to work at UNLV for change of environment; some may have suffered burnout at other police departments.

Others like to be able to actually see the cases they work on come to completion,

Barrett added.

The campus officers work closely with Metro, Barrett said. "We have an excellent rapport with Metro. The call us for assistance almost as much as we call them for assistance."

Students are needed to report suspicious activities and report crimes when they happen, so they can become active in the prevention of crime on campus, Barrett said.



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