

Saint X marks the spot



New scholarship for Chicago Police Officers continues the Saint Xavier University commitment to helping cops graduate to great opportunities

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL
■ PHOTOS BY JAMES PINTO

On the evening of Jan. 6, 1998, Kate Watland battled through the snow to make her way into the Chicago Police Academy. As the professor charged with teaching Saint Xavier University's newly minted graduate program for Chicago Police Officers, Watland came armed with a big box overflowing with textbooks and enthusiasm to work with cops.

Wouldn't you know it, the box broke. So Watland went back to her car, loaded the books into a laundry basket and hauled them in to the classroom. While still in the parking lot, an officer came to her aid, and safely helped her to the classroom. She realized then that this was a group of public servants that Saint Xavier University would commit to serve.

Talk about a lasting first impression. That first class included 22 coppers, and since then more than 1,700 have matriculated through the Saint Xavier University Graham School of Management's partnership program with the Chicago Police Academy to get a Master's of Business Administration with focuses in financial fraud management, business analytics, forensic accounting and other disciplines that apply directly to the business of policing.

"We are proud to be able to serve police officers in that way," states Watland, who is the Associate Dean and Di-

rector of the partnership program, as well as an Associate Professor. "We have found this program to be a very transformative experience."

More about that first class in a minute, but this just in: As part of its continuing commitment to Chicago Police Officers, Saint Xavier University has created a Chicago First Responder Scholarship program. Lodge 7 members can apply for this scholarship to cover the 25 percent of the tuition the Department no longer pays for as of the latest contract.

Now, back to that first night as a way to answer that question about why a Chicago Police Officer needs an MBA...Watland heard that same challenge about five minutes into that first class.

"I was asked what a professor could teach them about being police officers," she related. "I stood silent for a moment. And I will quote what another officer told me: 'It gives us additional tools that our experience hasn't already brought to us.' As they explained it to me, they manage people, location and resources every day. So an MBA makes perfect sense."

CONTINUED ON 48

They are curious because that is part of the job. They are lifelong learners because there's a constant desire to look at ways to do the job better. And if the classroom is a place that encourages giving your opinion on the topic of the day, well, isn't that part of the job, too.

"We have found that the officers really want to make it their own," Watland noted. "Frequently, when you teach a college class, the question you get from students is, 'Will this be on the test?' We're always hoping for a deeper application, and we get that from officers. If I'm teaching a class and talking about a motivational theory, somebody in the class will say, 'That won't work here.' And that leads to a great discussion about what we need to look at to make it successful."

When it came to class discussions, Folino realized another benefit from being in a student population with commanders, captains, lieutenants, detectives, patrol officers and truly all ranks.

"Everyone speaks freely on the topic of the day and that helps capitalize on the opportunity given to us," he added.

The opportunity only begins with having classes in a location accessible from the north side, south side, west side or wherever cops live or work. Having other officers in class means somebody is there to cover your academic back when you get caught on a late arrest or stuck in court.

The Graham School of Management also has an AACSB accreditation, which is accorded to just 775 of the world's best business schools across 52 countries and territories.

This equates to Saint Xavier University being in the top 5 percent of business programs worldwide. The AACSB accreditation often goes to schools with a very large number of students on campus, but Saint Xavier University is one of the few that can maintain the smaller class sizes that allow for greater personal attention from faculty.

And beginning Jan. 1, Chicago Police Officers can apply for the First Responder Scholarship. It's a pretty simple process that includes filling out a short application and writing in 250 words or less what the value of the program will be to your role as a first responder.

The scholarship was conceived as a way to commemorate the 20th anniversary of that night of the laundry basket coming in 2018, and Saint Xavier bringing its program to the academy. It is also another opportunity for the school to support cops by making them whole again with the 25 percent of tuition reimbursement.

"Making them whole again – that's the phrase that came up in our meetings," Watland shared. "We talked at length about removing the barriers that deter officers from coming to school. It comes down to what you are committed to, and we are committed to helping these officers. Everybody wins when that happens." ♥

For more information on Saint Xavier University's MBA program or First Responder Scholarship, contact Dr. Kate Watland at watland@sxu.edu or Associate Director Steve Hallenbeck at hallenbeck@sxu.edu

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Program Director Kate Watland has been working with students at the Chicago Police Academy since 1998.

SAINT X CONTINUED FROM PAGE 47

It made perfect sense to Officer John Folino, who has used his Saint Xavier MBA to move up in the Department from detective to sergeant, and perhaps lieutenant soon. Folino also recruits sister and brother officers into undergraduate and graduate programs because of how he has used what he learned through the program in his various roles on the job, and because, “I reflect on what I learned at Saint Xavier all the time.”

So what did he learn?

“Overall, a master’s degree is very marketable even out-

side of the public sector,” continued Folino, whose focus for his MBA was financial fraud examination and management. “It has helped me on promotional exams without a doubt. And when you retire, there is more than the Chicago Police Department. Having this degree is such a great asset to fall back on.”

The question on most cops’ minds (besides tuition reimbursement) stirs up whether you are ready to go back to school. Folino suggests taking what he calls the Nike approach and just do it.

Watland has found that cops make excellent students.

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