

MSU and Springfield Police Department extend contract for the new academic year

The Missouri State Board of Governors has agreed to extend its long-time partnership with the city of Springfield to provide law enforcement services around campus for the 2024-25 academic year.

In a meeting held on July 17, the university's Board of Governors voted unanimously, 8-0, to continue its 33-year relationship with the Springfield Police Department.

Both parties have confirmed that the new agreement includes a 3.86% increase in the contract cost, equating to an additional \$39,194.81, to pay for salary and benefits increases for the officers.

The university's commitment to achieving a safe environment for its students and staff has helped build a workforce of 10 full-time police officers from the Springfield Police Department to be ready and available on campus 24/7.

Those 10 officers, as they have been for decades now, are positioned in a substation located on campus on East Elm Street. This is the same building as Missouri State's campus security team.

Todd Revel, associate director of university safety at Missouri State University, noted that, unlike other college institutions that solely employ their own law enforcement staff, MSU benefits from working in tandem with the Springfield Police Department for several reasons.

A key factor is cost. "Usually, a university of this size would have its own police department," he said, adding that such an arrangement would "cost a lot more than the \$1 million a year we are spending."

Revell then added, "It would cost us a lot more to get the quality of officer that we're getting, and as well trained as we're getting, for the money we pay."

Response time and efficiency seem to be another benefit of the close-knit partnership. According to Sgt. Joshua Ludwig of the Springfield Police Department, having officers on campus allows for a "supremely quick response time to any criminal activity."

The police force is responsible for handling criminal calls from students and staff as well as enforcing state laws across the main campus. They are also ready to respond to campus security if an issue requires more serious handling.

"We take great pride in our campus having one of the lowest rates of crime in the local community," Ludwig said. This claim is supported by the Springfield and Greene County crime reports released from 2023.

Their jurisdiction also extends to the downtown area, where many students are accommodated, as well as fraternity and sorority houses.

The crime figures for downtown Springfield don't read quite so well, and Ludwig admitted that problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, as well as theft, are repeated issues that the police are working hard to tackle.

"It's been working since 1991, and I think everyone is happy with it," Ludwig insisted.

Written by Alex Matthews