

Report on UNT Department of Anthropology’s Response to Student Demands About Defunding UNT Police

Christina Wasson

13 July 2021

Table of Contents

- 1. The Demand 2
- 2. Initial Faculty Response: Search for Collaborators..... 2
- 3. Collecting Background Information..... 3
- 4. Learning about Official UNT Activities: Correspondence with Debbie Rohwer 4
- 5. Learning about Official UNT Activities: Correspondence with UNT Chief of Police..... 8
- 6. Update on UNT’s Progress in Some Areas 17
- 7. Now What? 18

1. The Demand

On 12 June 2020, faculty of the UNT Department of Anthropology received a letter from a UNT student group #AnthrosForEquity that articulated a series of demands concerning the need for material actions to address systemic racism and inequalities. The first demand was this:

Lobby for defunding the university police and to create alternatives to policing on campus. For 2020, the police budget for UNT is \$5.3 million. The UNT Police Department receives 7x more funding than the Multicultural Center, Pride Alliance, Office of Equal Opportunity, Equity and Diversity, and Diversity and Inclusion combined. Identity based organizations receive no guaranteed funding. We demand that the department collectively engage during the 2020-2021 academic year and beyond in formal lobbying to the Dean and higher levels of administration within the University to: defund the university's police, establish non-police alternatives for non-violent calls and calls involving people with mental illness or a drug-induced crisis, and for a police oversight board that includes a majority BIPOC students, faculty, and staff. Advocate for less punitive, more constructive, and reformist approaches to resolving non-violent drug possession. Lobby to protect students from drug convictions to ensure that they remain eligible for financial aid. Advocate that UNT embraces reality-based drug education centered on harm reduction, along with providing services like Narcan distribution for free on campus.

2. Initial Faculty Response: Search for Collaborators

Faculty discussed all issues raised by the #AnthrosForEquity letter in a series of meetings that started in August 2020. With regard to defunding the police, we initially focused on identifying other groups on campus we could collaborate with, such as other departments or student organizations.

One of the challenges we faced was that all of our faculty were already overextended, and some were working on other demands from the letter. Although I also felt overextended, I could not ignore this topic in the context of George Floyd's murder and subsequent racial justice protests. I embarked on a search for potential collaborators on campus. To my disappointment, I did not find much activism in this area. I reported back to faculty on my efforts in December 2020.

Here are the steps I took to try to find UNT collaborators:

UNT Faculty

I contacted two professors in Philosophy and one in English. None of them were engaged in relevant activities, or knew of any.

Grassroots Law Project

One of the Philosophy professors connected me with a former student who was working for the [Grassroots Law Project](#). That person connected me with Dawn Jones, an organizer in Houston. I had a really interesting Zoom call with Dawn on 26 October. Her organization was eager to help and they are connected with various UNT student organizations, such as BSU and DemLeft. Dawn sent me two documents, which I would be happy to share:

- GLP Police-Free Schools Toolkit
- Police on college campuses policy

UNT Multicultural Center

I had a super helpful conversation with the Director of the UNT Multicultural Center. He filled me in on a lot of context about what had been going on over the past year. Various student organizations had been putting pressure on the administration to take action on racial justice – there had been a lot of dialogue, and it was ongoing. The Multicultural Center advised a number of the relevant student organizations. Police reform was one of the items on the table, but not one of the main ones. The President had created a Diversity and Inclusion Council, and it included a “subcommittee” on police reform.

Deb Armintor (UNT Associate Professor of English and Denton City Council Member)

Since Deb is politically active in Denton, I asked if she knew of any faculty or student activities on campus related to defunding the UNT Police. She said no, but suggested a few students I could contact.

Former Student Leader

I had a really helpful email conversation with a former student leader that Deb Armintor connected me with. She had held a leadership role in the UNT Student Government Association in spring 2020, but subsequently graduated and moved to another city. She wrote a great article on defunding the police in June. Here is the key part of the message she sent me:

Thanks so much for reaching out! I'm still pretty connected to some UNT activists, but I haven't heard much about organizing to defund the police from them since the summer. I know that ROSE, my former organization, was doing some work around this but they're currently dormant. I think there are definitely students on campus who are interested in doing police defunding and divestment work, but the problem is likely that they aren't organized in any concrete way.

Sorry that my answer couldn't be more helpful! If there's anything more I can do to support you or help you find some interested students, please let me know.

3. Collecting Background Information

As I learned more about the recent history of racial injustice at UNT, I put together a timeline of events that I shared with faculty. I'm sure many of them were already familiar with the information, but I thought a summary might be useful. Here it is:

In November 2019, at a free speech symposium, a UNT attorney (assistant general counsel) made a comment using the n-word and resigned next morning; <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/2019/11/08/staff-attorney-uses-n-word-as-example-during-free-speech-event-sparking-controversy-at-university-of-north-texas/>. This event led to student demands regarding racial justice.

George Floyd's murder on May 25, 2020, led to renewed calls for action.

In addition, on May 29, a Black former UNT student was stopped on campus by the UNT police because the light on his bicycle was not working. The event escalated; it turned out he had some outstanding arrest warrants. Here are a couple articles:

- https://dentonrc.com/news/unt-investigating-campus-arrest-involving-one-black-man-several-officers/article_9d67cfbd-debd-54d9-8a53-2f899dc4cfd1.html
- https://dentonrc.com/news/unt-police-release-footage-in-arrest-of-black-man/article_9f793c6a-5a67-501d-bb3b-6820b965d678.html

There was a lot of public attention.

On June 1 UNT President Smatresk released this [statement](#) which included plans for two town hall meetings.

At the same time, the hashtag #BlackAtUNT was started – lots of people shared negative experiences at UNT. Not just about police though.

Here is a web page that has been created by the President's Office to focus on diversity and inclusion on campus: <https://president.unt.edu/diversity-and-inclusion-campus>. It includes links to information about the two town halls, and other things.

One link on that page goes to the transcript of a meeting the President had with Black student leaders on 2020-06-17. There were some interesting exchanges between the police chief and students. I pulled those out into a document I shared with faculty. (I'm happy to share it if anyone wants it.)

4. Learning about Official UNT Activities: Correspondence with Debbie Rohwer

When I shared with my colleagues that I was unable to locate other campus groups we could collaborate with, attention turned to learning about ongoing efforts already sanctioned within UNT. By chance we had a meeting with Provost Cowley right about then, and she recommended that we contact Debbie Rohwer, Vice President for Planning and Chief of Staff.

I suggested that the faculty collaboratively prepare a list of questions for Dr. Rohwer. Together we did so. When everyone felt ready, I initiated contact.

Here is the correspondence with Dr. Rohwer.

The committee reports back through the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board to the President. The committee reports are being reviewed by the Cabinet right now. Plans are being made for prioritizing initiatives.

Deb

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From: "Wasson, Christina" <Christina.Wasson@unt.edu>
Date: Monday, February 15, 2021 at 10:18 AM
To: "Rohwer, Debbie" <Debbie.Rohwer@unt.edu>
Subject: Re: Learning More About UNT Police

Thank you!

Peace,
Christina

5. Learning about Official UNT Activities: Correspondence with UNT Chief of Police

Following up on Debbie Rohwer’s suggestion, and with the support of the anthropology faculty, I sent the list of questions to UNT Chief of Police Ed Reynolds. Here is our correspondence from February-March 2021.

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From: "Wasson, Christina" <Christina.Wasson@unt.edu>
Date: Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 11:57 AM
To: "Reynolds, Ed" <Ed.Reynolds@unt.edu>
Subject: Learning More About UNT Police

Dear Chief Reynolds,

I am professor of anthropology at UNT. Last summer, the UNT anthropology faculty received a letter from our students challenging us to take action on a variety of issues related to racial injustices. The first demand pertained to defunding the police. We have realized that we first need to educate ourselves more. To that end, we collaboratively developed the following list of questions. Would you be so kind as to answer them for us?

I have volunteered to be the contact node for this topic, but all of our departmental faculty are collaborating in the discussions and reflections.

Thank you in advance for your assistance!

- What is the UNT police budget?
- Where does the money come from?
- Where does the money go?

- By salary, equipment, related categories?
- How many employees are there?
 - How many are full-time police officers?
 - Part time?
 - Other employees?
- What are the main activities of the police officers?
 - How much time (person-hours per year) is spent on each activity?
- Do the police employees handle parking tickets? If so, which type of employees, how many, how many person-hours per year?
- Does the UNT police keep statistics on types of calls? What are the statistics?
- How many warrants are issued by UNT police per calendar year? What are the warrants for? How many are issued for offenses on campus? How many for off-campus offenses? What are the demographics of the recipients?
- How are capabilities of UNT police officers similar and different from municipal police officers?
- What is the relationship between Denton police and UNT police?
- What is the range of the jurisdictions for UNT police? Where are UNT police allowed to be active?
- What is the procedure for filing complaints?
- Did the UNT police create a policy reflecting the 8cantwait criteria? You mentioned it was in draft last June (<https://president.unt.edu/student-leaders-meeting-transcript>)
- What is the status of the investigation related to white supremacist flyers and activities on campus, especially groups like Patriot Front?
- How has policing at UNT changed over time, in the last 20-30 years?

Peace,
Christina

Christina Wasson

Professor of Anthropology, University of North Texas
<https://www.christinawasson.com>

Pronouns: she/her/hers

I acknowledge that the land on which I live and work is the traditional territory of the Wichita, Caddo, Kickapoo, Tawakoni, Waco, and Keechi.

+++++

From: "Reynolds, Ed" <Ed.Reynolds@unt.edu>
Date: Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 9:58 AM
To: "Wasson, Christina" <Christina.Wasson@unt.edu>
Subject: RE: Learning More About UNT Police

Good morning Christina and thank you for the email. I am happy to respond to this. It may be next week before I can get this to you.

Thanks and have a great day.
Ed

Ed Reynolds
Chief of Police
University of North Texas Police Department
1700 Wilshire St. Denton, TX 76201-6572
Phone 940-565-3010 Fax 940-369-8788

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From: "Wasson, Christina" <Christina.Wasson@unt.edu>
Date: Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 1:10 PM
To: "Reynolds, Ed" <Ed.Reynolds@unt.edu>
Subject: Re: Learning More About UNT Police

Thank you so much for the quick response! No worries about responding more fully next week. I know we are asking a lot of questions!

Peace,
Christina

Christina Wasson
Professor of Anthropology, University of North Texas
<https://www.christinawasson.com>

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I acknowledge that the land on which I live and work is the traditional territory of the Wichita, Caddo, Kickapoo, Tawakoni, Waco, and Keechi.

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From: "Reynolds, Ed" <Ed.Reynolds@unt.edu>
Date: Friday, March 5, 2021 at 1:42 PM
To: "Wasson, Christina" <Christina.Wasson@unt.edu>
Subject: Learning More About UNT Police

Good afternoon Dr. Wasson,

Thank you for reaching out to me. I am happy to help answer these questions. It's important for the community to have a greater understanding of our department and what we do here on campus.

About 50 percent of our staff are UNT alumni. Many of our dependents are also current or former students. We actively recruit UNT graduates because we want staff members who are invested in our community. We know we must do our part to create a respectful, caring environment for students and the entire UNT community.

It's also extremely important for faculty such as yourself to have this information. Each year, as UNT graduates 10,000 students, we lose a large base of community members with whom we have established relationships. Faculty and staff are the consistent community members on our campus and, together, we can share vital information with our students so that they are equipped with the right information and resources that can help them.

Our UNT Police Department Fact Sheet might also help give context to some of these answers so I am attaching that. We typically share this with student organizations but are happy to share it with faculty and staff groups, too.

I've included answers to your questions below. Please note that in some cases I combined your questions into one line so that I could give you a fuller answer that accounts for everything listed. If you have any further questions or follow up, please feel free to reach out again.

What is the UNT police budget?

FY 21 budget is \$5.1 Million

Where does the money come from?

Funding comes from auxiliary (parking revenue) and tuition.

Where does the money go? By salary, equipment, related categories?

The budget covers employee and operational costs. Employee costs include salary and benefits. Operational costs include equipment, supplies, training, fuel, etc.

How many employees are there? How many are full-time police officers? Part time? Other employees?

There are about 60 full-time staff members in our department; 45 are full-time police officers. The other full-time staff members include a few safety officers who help with patrol at Discovery Park, 911 dispatchers and office personnel. Part-time staff varies depending on the time of year and activities. For example, we had several part-time and temporary staff members going into spring 2020 who would have helped with commencement and high school graduations.

We also have several part-time police officers that assist us during special events, such as football games. However, due to COVID, we did not need those part-time services. For additional information please see our org chart: [org_chart_may2020.pdf \(unt.edu\)](#)

What are the main activities of the police officers? How much time (person-hours per year) is spent on each activity?

It's difficult to give you an exact number of hours per year that our officers do specific tasks since there is so much they contribute to as part of our collaborations with the UNT community. I can give you an overview of the tasks on which they spend the majority (75% or more) of their time but if you have specific questions about a certain task, I welcome those:

Field Services – 24/7 every day of the year they patrol on bike, foot or vehicle to ensure a safe environment. They also participate in community programs, for example, our Residence Hall Housing Liaison program.

Support Services – we have a training lieutenant who develops, schedules, and tracks our training, which includes practical skills as well as soft skills, for our two accreditation agencies. Our Community Engagement officer conducts proactive safety training, runs our social media and represents our department in meetings with partners such as the Survivor Advocate.

Investigative Services – detectives spend the majority of their time investigating cases and working with our internal partners, such as the Dean of Students, and external partners, such as the District Attorney. They also work with victims and survivors of crimes to build cases and connect them with services on campus and off campus.

Do the police employees handle parking tickets? If so, which type of employees, how many, how many person-hours per year?

UNT's Transportation Services Department became its own independent department in 2015. That office handles citations, partners with DCTA to provide transit for students, and maintains parking lots. Executive Director Bill Donovan leads that team and is very open to making connections with the UNT community. If you have any questions, you can reach him at William.Donovan@unt.edu.

Does the UNT police keep statistics on types of calls? What are the statistics?

We do. The best way for us to learn about trends in the types of crimes on and near campus – and to learn about our own actions – is to keep statistics. You'll find a lot of information on our website, police.unt.edu. Under the "Public Information" Tab you can find the 60-day crime and fire log that gives the most recent calls for service on campus. We comply with the Clery Act by keeping track of specific statistics required by law and you can find a link to the latest Annual Security and Fire Safety Report. You may also be interested in our Racial Profiling Report. We commission a third-party group to review our statistics and give us a report. This helps us better understand what we are doing well and where we need to improve so we can better train our officers.

How many warrants are issued by UNT police per calendar year? What are the warrants for? How many are issued for offenses on campus? How many for off-campus offenses? What are the demographics of the recipients?

Police departments do not issue warrants. Warrants are issued by magistrates. Please refer to our Annual Security & Fire Safety Report of types of offenses that are reported to us. You can also review our racial profiling report for additional demographic data.

How are capabilities of UNT police officers similar and different from municipal police officers?

While our capabilities are very similar – we offer much of the same basic service in that we patrol to keep our community safe, investigate crimes that are reported and take cases to court, and offer safety programming to our community – the difference we strive to make is in creating a unique relationship that is attuned to our community. Our goal is to create a positive community-policing relationship so that students who graduate today and become the future leaders of tomorrow have a better idea of what to expect from a police department. We aren't always perfect, but we know that it's only by being active, integrated members of this community that we can better provide for the students, faculty, staff and guests here. You'll find that our safety programming (now mostly online) and our events (non-existent for now due to COVID) are aimed at creating that more close-knit relationship so we can get feedback directly from the UNT community and respond appropriately.

What is the relationship between Denton police and UNT police?

We have a good working relationship with them. When possible, we also welcome dual training. For example, Lt. Washington, who leads our diversity and inclusion efforts, recently trained our officers and their officers on Fair and Impartial Policing. (view the course information here <https://fipolicing.com/>) This is a training that our officers attend regularly, and in which all our new employees participate.

What is the range of the jurisdictions for UNT police? Where are UNT police allowed to be active?

Statutorily, we have jurisdiction in any county the university owns or controls property. However, we primarily focus our efforts on the campus. This includes the streets that run through and adjacent to UNT.

What is the procedure for filing complaints?

There are two options. On our website, under “Contact Us” you will also find a page that allows you to file a complaint. This is the where someone might go to report a general complaint.

Also on that page, you’ll see that allegations of sexual harassment or discrimination will be referred to – or can be directly reported to – UNT’s Office of Equity and Diversity. When I became police chief in 2015, I worked with Vice President Woodard to create this third-party review to ensure impartiality.

This information is typically given as part of our discussion with student groups, as we take complaints very seriously.

It might also be of interest to you that our patrol supervisors regularly review officer body cam footage to look for trainable moments so that we can ensure the best possible service to the UNT community.

Did the UNT police create a policy reflecting the 8cantwait criteria? You mentioned it was in draft last June (<https://president.unt.edu/student-leaders-meeting-transcript>)

Yes. You can also find that on our website under the Public Information tab, here:

<https://police.unt.edu/8-cant-wait>

What is the status of the investigation related to white supremacist flyers and activities on campus, especially groups like Patriot Front?

We do not have any recent reports of this activity on campus. Several years back we had reports. We were not able to identify the person(s) responsible for posting the flyers.

How has policing at UNT changed over time, in the last 20-30 years?

Campus policing has a deep history that has evolved greatly over time. UNT’s police department celebrated its [50th anniversary](#) last year but the reason why universities created police departments is no reason to celebrate. Prior to 1966, universities were not allowed to have police departments. It was after the Charles Whitman shooting at UT that Texas finally allowed higher education institutions to create their own departments.

From the beginning, the North Texas State University police department focused on working with our community. We have long held ourselves to a high standard. It’s one of the reasons I started here as a criminal justice major and then stayed on with the department. I saw an immense amount of concern for our campus community.

Once I became deputy chief, I also saw the need for us to ensure that we were accountable not just to ourselves but to standards of professionalism and service that would be meaningful to our community. We now have two national accreditations, which is extremely rare for any police agency but even more so for a university police department. We are accredited with the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (<https://calea.org/>) and the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (<https://www.iaclea.org/accreditation>), which was created in part by the National Association of Black Law Enforcement Executives.

I often borrow a quote from Ray Kroc that asks, “Are you green and growing or ripe and rotting?” I want our department to be growing, changing and flexible to the needs of our community.

Our most recent efforts include a targeted focus on diverse candidates so that we can continue to reflect the diversity of our campus community. Our last application period gave us more diverse candidates that we have ever had.

I know with that initiative and even more planned that we will continue to best serve UNT.

Have a wonderful weekend.

Ed Reynolds

Chief of Police
University of North Texas Police Department
1700 Wilshire St. Denton, TX 76201-6572
Phone 940-565-3010 Fax 940-369-8788

Attachment:



UNT Police Department Fact Sheet



UNT Police Department was created in 1970 to protect the campus community. While we are a dual accredited police agency that is open 24 hours a day every day of the year, we are also a UNT campus department that responds to the needs of students, faculty, staff and visitors.

Alumni strong
 Over half our officers are UNT alumni. Many also have children who attend UNT. These connections are important because they give us a greater understanding of our community and allows us to give back. We welcome student interns – they may one day be the new hires at UNT PD!

Community policing focus

- Our aim is proactive assistance to our community through communication, educational events and more.
- We support the learning environment at UNT and encourage a safe campus.
- Community policing keeps the focus on service. We are here to serve the UNT community.

We adhere to best practices

- We are assessed annually for compliance with more than 400 law enforcement standards.
- Officers learn communication and de-escalation techniques.
- We promote learning, professional growth and personal development.

Dually accredited
 We are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies and The International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators.

UNT Police Department Fact Sheet

page 2



Community events

Community connection

We directly support the UNT community in many ways. For example, we offer free safety programs, such as self-defense; host outreach events on campus and in the community; and have a substation at Discovery Park. We work directly with campus partners, meeting with student leaders and groups each semester; actively participating on the UNT CARE Team; and through the Police Advisory Board. We send our officers into the UNT community to represent the police department on various campus committees.



Discovery Park station

Accountability

- Footage from our body and vehicle cameras are reviewed regularly by supervisors to ensure department standards are met.
- A 60-day crime and fire log of events is viewable on our website, police.unt.edu.
- We work closely with campus partners, such as the Dean of Students and Survivor Advocate.
- The UNT Office of Equal Opportunity investigates all bias-based complaints.



Safety training

Training

Providing our officers with training so that they understand the many ways to help solve issues is important to us. New officers receive more than 1,600 training hours over a nearly 12-month period before they can work on their own. Every officer participates in at least 80 hours of continuing education training each training cycle. Officers receive specialized training in topics like sexual assault investigations, mental health response and implicit bias.

Contact us

police.unt.edu
@UNT Police on Twitter or Facebook
Emergency: 911 Non-emergency: 940-565-3000
1700 Wilshire St, behind Mozart Hall

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From: "Wasson, Christina" <Christina.Wasson@unt.edu>
Date: Saturday, March 6, 2021 at 10:53 AM
To: "Reynolds, Ed" <Ed.Reynolds@unt.edu>
Subject: Re: Learning More About UNT Police

Thank you so much for your thoughtful responses! We really appreciate it. I have shared your email with the rest of the faculty. I will let you know if there are any follow up questions.

Peace,
Christina

Christina Wasson

Professor of Anthropology, University of North Texas
<https://www.christinawasson.com>

Pronouns: she/her/hers

I acknowledge that the land on which I live and work is the traditional territory of the Wichita, Caddo, Kickapoo, Tawakoni, Waco, and Keechi.

6. Update on UNT's Progress in Some Areas

As the preceding sections show, UNT began to address some of the issues mentioned in the #AnthrosForEquity letter in the year since it was written. In July, I asked Debbie Rohwer to provide updates on two of the issues highlighted in the #AnthrosForEquity letter. Here are her responses:

Addressing Funding Imbalances

Letter: For 2020, the police budget for UNT is \$5.3 million. The UNT Police Department receives 7x more funding than the Multicultural Center, Pride Alliance, Office of Equal Opportunity, Equity and Diversity, and Diversity and Inclusion combined. Identity based organizations receive no guaranteed funding.

Update: The Division of Institutional Equity and Diversity's \$1.7M budget includes guaranteed funding for the Multicultural Center's operations, as well as the Pride Alliance. Additional resources are dedicated to the division with each budget cycle, and in FY22 we have budgeted for the addition of three FTEs. We also are scheduled to break ground in February on a \$5M freestanding Multicultural Center building, which will likely incur additional costs and enable expanded program. UNT's total public safety budget is \$5.1M.

Establishing Non-Police Alternatives

Letter: ... establish non-police alternatives for non-violent calls and calls involving people with mental illness or a drug-induced crisis.

Update: UNT partners with mental health first responders (not sworn and sworn) in the community through Denton PD's Crisis Intervention Response Team (CIRT) as needed for mental health crisis. We also assist students in recovery through the RISE Center and recently filled a position that directly helps students in recovery from substance and alcohol abuse.

UNT may have initiated other changes that address points raised in the letter; I only asked about these two points. At the same time, although the steps described above make a start, they do not fully address the concerns identified in the letter.

7. Now What?

The next step we, the anthropology faculty members, wanted to take was to share this information with you, the students in our department. We welcome further communication on the topic. We want to support any efforts you may be taking to address problems with the UNT police.

Unfortunately, the faculty in our department do not feel able to take a lead role in a large effort to mobilize UNT without significant partners among other departments and/or student organizations. It is also a sad reality that many of us feel overwhelmed by existing commitments. I am sorry not to be able to report on more progress in this report.