

Dustin D. Liston

- 1. Describe the ethics and values that are most important for a Police Chief to consistently demonstrate. Provide an example illustrating how you have practiced these personal characteristics in your current or most recent position.**

The theory of servant leadership best demonstrates the ethics and values that are most important for a Police Chief. The servant-leader puts the service of others, including employees and the community first. Servant leaders prioritize other's needs to encourage autonomy, empathy, personal growth while also mentoring others to engage in servant leadership. Servant leaders are particularly concerned with how leadership decisions affect those least privileged in society.

A Police Chief must be a person of high moral character. They must maintain a high level of integrity while demonstrating humility. They must make ethical and principle-based decisions. They should lead by example as the face of the police department.

Communication skills are critical for a Police Chief. A good communicator is an earnest listener that demonstrates empathy and encourages constant feedback. The ability to speak effectively and persuasively are essential.

A Police Chief must be able to compassionately collaborate with others and build effective teams with a commitment to the growth of people. Relationships need to be continuously reinforced by supporting diversity and inclusion. Gratitude and appreciation must be the default mindset, with the ability to negotiate conflict thoughtfully.

A Police Chief must demonstrate foresight. It is essential to have the ability to understand the lessons of the past, current realities, and the consequences that decisions will have on the future. A Police Chief must take courageous and decisive action while always including input from all stakeholders.

I have modeled the bulk of my career based on the principles of a servant leader even before I was familiar with it. I was fortunate to work with fantastic leaders who modeled this behavior and the effectiveness of this leadership style. Whether as an instructor at the Police Academy, SWAT team leader, patrol shift supervisor, or my current role as Director of the Fusion Center, it is my obligation to serve my co-workers, the community, and the Department.

The Fusion Center is staffed with capable personnel that have a wealth of experience and knowledge. When I was appointed Director, I had little experience in intelligence operations. I had to use servant leadership principles to gain the trust of the staff and encourage constant feedback. My focus was on facilitating their work and making decisions based on their views and experience.

I also currently supervise our department Special Investigations Unit. This unit is responsible for homeland security issues, emergency operations, and investigating cases of public corruption. All members of the unit must have an impeccable record of integrity due to the investigated cases' sensitive nature. As a team, the group inspires trust and confidence in the Department and creates a culture of accountability.

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2. Summarize the first conversation you have with a newly hired officer. What are the most important things new officers must understand to have a safe, healthy and productive career in law enforcement?

I have been fortunate enough to participate in many of these conversations with newly hired officers as a full-time academy instructor for over seven years and supervisor for recruit training. I first express a sense of gratitude towards the new officers. In a time of increased recruiting challenges, new officers need to be commended for their courage to embark on a career in law enforcement. I remind the officers that the Department and the community will hold them to a higher standard now that they wear a badge. With increased media and public scrutiny, the level of professionalism expected of an officer is higher than ever before.

I am always curious to discover the officer's motivations for getting into law enforcement and their career goals. This conversation demonstrates a genuine concern with the individual officer and establishes an initial bond. I inform them of the chain of command but also open up a free-flowing line of communication. Understanding the officer's motivation and goals helps provide specific guidance for career success.

I also introduce the new officers to the tenets of servant leadership that I described above with a focus on integrity, humility, character, and service. These pillars are crucial for the head of the agency, but they are equally important to the new officer.

Another key point that should be mentioned is trust and legitimacy. The community has entrusted the officer with a great deal of authority. Without trust and legitimacy, officers immediately lose that authority and are unable to serve the community effectively. Officers generate trust by embracing the guardian mindset where the officers assume a protective role. Evolving to a guardian mindset from one of the more traditional warrior roles tamps down adversarial feelings between the Department and the community and increases the agency's legitimacy.

I remind them that a police officer must be a life-long learner and career student. Just because the formal academy training may be complete does not mean they have nothing left to learn. The profession changes consistently, and a successful officer needs to be aware of the best practices. Case law, advances in technology, enforcement theories, and tactics are evolving, and an officer must stay abreast of these changes.

I end the conversation by discussing the stressors involved in a career in law enforcement. Sadly, suicide represents a more significant threat to an officer than an on-duty incident. I emphasize the importance of healthy relationships outside of the job. I remind them of the available resources provided to them by the Department and the community and try to dispel the stigma of seeking help.

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3. What does procedural justice mean to you and how specifically have you demonstrated leadership in this area as a law enforcement professional?

Procedural justice has evolved out of an overall community-based policy strategy that focuses on fairness in the processes of resolving disputes and allocating resources. (Kunard & Moe, 2015) Procedural justice comprises four pillars: fairness in the processes, transparency in actions, opportunities for voice, and impartiality in decision making. By implementing these four pillars, community relations and officer safety improve.

Studies have shown that the citizens form their opinions on law enforcement by evaluating both the process and the outcome of an interaction. The process seems to hold a more substantial value in this evaluation. I have experienced this first hand throughout my career. As a traffic officer, I would have dozens of individual interactions a day through traffic stops. Regardless of whether the outcome was a citation or a warning, the public's satisfaction was largely based upon the interaction. I made it a point on every stop to introduce myself, explain the reason for the stop, explain the enforcement action taken, and, most importantly, allow the person to have their voice heard. This strategy resulted in overwhelmingly in positive encounters.

My current Department places a heavy focus on collaboration with the public. All units have citizen advisory committees where the public has an open forum to address concerns and issues and provide suggestions on the Department's priorities. As the pre-service training coordinator at the Police Academy, I would host these meetings and implement many of the suggestions from committee members.

I have also been part of our Department's discipline review board. This board makes disciplinary decisions on administrative complaints against police officers with members of the public represented. Allowing the public to be part of the discipline board directly addresses each of the four pillars of procedural justice.

Procedural justice is not only applied externally to the public, but it is also used internally within the Department. All four pillars have a direct impact on the members of the Department. Members need to feel like internal processes are fair, transparent, impartial, and have a voice in the process. These pillars have been a personal focus of my supervisory career. To generate buy-in, I always ensured that my team felt like they were treated fairly, that decisions were made after considering input from all members, and policies were enforced impartially.

Works Cited

Kunard, L., & Moe, C. (2015). *Procedural Justice for Law Enforcement: An Overview*. Washington, DC: COPS Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.

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4. The City Council has worked hard to improve social justice and racial equity throughout the entire community. How will you further this effort as a Police Chief?

Law enforcement plays a crucial role in improving social justice and racial equality. Police officers are often the most visible representation of the government. A cursory search of the city website makes it apparent that the City of Iowa City has taken a proactive role in addressing social justice and racial equality.

The Iowa City Police Department should continue to be crucial partners with the city government in this endeavor through consistent training, statistical analysis, and reporting. The continuation and expansion of liaison officers and citizen committees for those traditionally disproportionately impacted by law enforcement action will continue to expand on the positive gains made in social justice.

As the Director of the Fusion Center, one of our primary missions is data collection and analysis. As technology improves, there is an increased capacity to capture more data. With robust data collection and analysis, unequal enforcement impacts can be quickly identified and addressed. Publishing the data and discussing the strategies to address any unequal enforcement demonstrates transparency, impartiality and contributes to the legitimacy of the Department.

I have spent my entire law enforcement career with the El Paso Police Department. El Paso, Texas, sits directly on the southern border with Mexico. The city is home to a majority ethnic minority, with just over 80% of the population identifying as Hispanic or Latino. It is important that the police department be a representation of the community they serve. The El Paso Police Department's demographics closely mirrors that of the city. This is only made possible with intense recruiting efforts in those communities that may not have traditionally considered a career in law enforcement.

Social justice and racial justice are closely tied to procedural justice. By committing to the four pillars of procedural justice, disparate impacts on social and racial groups are greatly diminished and community perception improves. With improved community relations, more citizens will be willing participants in police initiatives and more likely to consider a law enforcement career.

After the death of Mr. George Floyd in Minneapolis, social and racial justice has never been more critical. All major cities have had significant protests. El Paso has had several large protests that have remained peaceful. Our Department's commitment to social and racial justice played a significant role in keeping the peace during these trying times. We allowed the community a voice to express their concerns and encourage them to exercise their constitutional rights.

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5. What about the Iowa City community attracted you to apply for this position?

I was born and raised in rural Iowa. I graduated from the University of Iowa in 1997. During the four years that I lived in Iowa City, I fell in love with the community. Growing up in a small town, the diversity of Iowa City was attractive to me. The community embraces diversity of all kinds, which encourages the free exchange of ideas. This had an enormous impact on me during a crucial period of my life when I became an adult.

My first experience with law enforcement was during an independent study where I participated in an internship with the Iowa City Police Department during the 1996-1997 school year. The professionalism of the officers I worked with made an impression on me that I continue to reflect upon today. I specifically remember how welcoming, enthusiastic, and helpful these officers were. The example exhibited by these officers guided my perspective on what it meant to be a member of law enforcement and specifically the Iowa City Police Department throughout my career.

I recently reached out to one of the officers I met during my internship that is still employed by the Police Department. I wanted to gauge his overall feelings on the Department and the City. The fact that he is still working for the Department speaks volumes. He also spoke very highly of the leadership of the Department and City and mentioned how supportive they were.

During my time at the university, I was a part-time City of Iowa City employee working as a lifeguard and swimming lessons instructor. This was my first glimpse into how the city government operated. I was continually impressed by the quality of city management and other city employees and how they treated me as a young employee.

My wife is a first-generation Mexican-American and we have two elementary-aged children. My children were born in El Paso but the University of Iowa and Iowa City are such a big part of our family's lives that they sometimes think they are from there. The community's cultural diversity, stellar educational system, and recreational opportunities make it a wonderful place to raise a family.

I love the community of El Paso and am grateful for all of the opportunities that I have had here. My aging parents still live in rural Iowa and having my family closer to them is certainly a factor. I have always been a Midwesterner at heart and would love to get back home to serve the community that means so much to me.