

Interview with UCI Police Dept. **Police Officer Joe Bessolo**



Joe Bessolo, UC Irvine Police

Why did you choose law enforcement as a career?

I was motivated in the wake of September 11. At first, I looked into military options then ended up looking at the law enforcement route. I attended UCI as a Bio Sci Major where I became interested in the subject of bioterrorism and its prevention. I then ended up switching to a Criminology, Law and Society Major and graduating in 2009.

How long have you worked in law enforcement and how long have you worked for UCI specifically?

I started with UCIPD in 2007 as a CSO . I then left for a year after graduating and came back as professional staff. In total, I worked 4 years on the administrative side and then I've been an officer for 1 year and 4 months.

What is your favorite food?

I'm completely addicted to Chipotle. All of the officers laugh at me because of it. I eat there at least once a week and when I was a CSO the employees at the Chipotle off Bison would know my exact order when I walked in. I didn't even have to tell them!

Where do you want to travel to next?

I don't have anything in the books right now, but if I could choose anywhere to travel to right now it would be somewhere tropical. I think taking a cruise to the Bahamas would be ideal. I love the warm tropical weather.

What is your favorite hobby?

I love exercising. I definitely drank the Crossfit Kool-Aid while I was prepping for the police academy and now I love it. Anything that is a circuit-type workout is what I like to spend time on physically.

What is your most memorable moment as an Officer?

My most memorable moments as an officer have to be all of the positive interactions with the public, with people. I love helping people even during something as simple as a traffic stop. Interacting with people is a big reason why I do what I do and something that fuels me. A lot of people thank you for being respectful and are surprised by the way I interact. But I'm just doing my job and treating people with respect and it's what we're called to do and what I love doing.

What is your advice for students at UCI?

I see a lot of stressed out students not practicing self-care: this is a result from students not being able to handle schoolwork/ social relationships/family pressure. My advice to UCI students at this time is to take it one day at a time – try and develop coping strategies with stress. Be aware of things that will pile on your plate beforehand and how that may affect your stress level. If more self-care and school-life balance was handled by students, it would eliminate a lot of these negative interactions officers sometimes have with students and poor choices some students make. Even a small choice (like choosing to get behind the wheel after some drinks) is something that can haunt students for their entire lives. I want to encourage students to think through decisions before they're put in pressured or stressful situations. There is always a better option! Trust me, we don't want to arrest anyone, we want to make sure everyone is happy and healthy.

What is one thing you want the campus to know about why you come to work every day?

I don't come to work to cause hassle or inconvenience people. I want to help build a safer community and it's the reason we're out there. We don't personally target certain people or situations, it just has to do with us trying to enforce the rules in order to keep order and peace. I want students to know the reason we're out there (patrolling at traffic stops, enforcing parking)– someone could have gotten hit or hurt recently or there could have been multiple complaints about unsafe situations and now we're trying to make it a better place for everyone. I take a very thorough stake in all my cases: be as thorough and help people out as much as possible.

