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MSU police chief represents department statewide

Montclair State University Police Chief Paul Cell has a lot on his plate.

On top of his duties managing MSU's 40-member force, Cell earlier this summer took over as president of the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police. Cell is the first university department chief to hold the statewide distinction.

The role wasn't exactly unexpected as Cell ran for a seat on the association's board in 2009 and, as is their practice, has moved up from fourth vice president to third vice president, and up the ranks to the presidency.

Prior to representing police chiefs across the state, Cell was president of the Passaic County Police Chiefs Association.

"It's a lot of extra hours," Cell said of his outside responsibilities. "I know that coming into this position. It's something I truly believe in. It's not something I have to do, it's more of a personal commitment than a professional obligation."

The MSU chief credited university administration for supporting him as he's pursued county and state administrative roles. Cell added that he felt as though, being a campus police chief, that his role as president legitimizes campus policing.

"It's not so much validation for me, but for the profession," Cell said. "It says that campus police departments are legitimate agencies. I believe that law enforcement knows that, but I don't know if the public knows that."

As association president, Cell will be responsible for advocating and testifying on behalf of local law enforcement agencies. Issues that are on the forefront of statewide police concerns are firearm legislation and local departments protecting citizens with slashed budgets and staffs, according to Cell.

Next year, as is customary, Cell will chair the NJ Police Chiefs Foundation which provide for scholarship funds and charities throughout the state. When his time with the state police chiefs association concludes, Cell isn't necessarily shifting away from leadership, telling The Times that he may pursue a board position in the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

"I've spent my entire life in law enforcement," Cell explained. "This is a way to give back to law enforcement in a leadership role."

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