

## *History of the WKU Police Department*

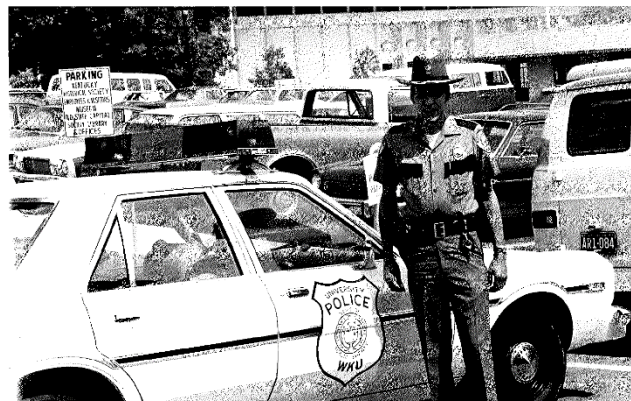
The inception of the Western Kentucky University Police Department was very unique. The department was initially known as a Department of Public Safety and Security. This was established at the Board of Regents Meeting on January 12, 1974. Immediately following the formation of the WKU Department of Public Safety and Security, Marcus S. Wallace was appointed as the first Director of the department on April 1, 1974. During Mr. Wallace's tenure as the leader of the department, he developed the guidelines for a policy and procedure manual to foster the department and its employees.



Exterior of department AOC side



1977 Campus Patrol



WKU PD Cruiser & Captain Eual Dean

The city of Bowling Green, home of Western Kentucky University's campus, has two prominent citizens that served on campus in the 1970s before they chose to champion themselves to pursue other entities in which to serve Bowling Green. Bruce Wilkerson was hired into the Department of Public Safety and Security in June 1977 as one of the youngest officers to serve.

He served the department until December 1979, moving on to the Bowling Green Police Department and then served as the city's Mayor from 2011-2020. In 1975, Steve Wilson started in the department as a member of Student Patrol, part of the SPA Program while he attended WKU. Afterwards, he went on to pursue a law degree and currently serves as Warren County Circuit Court Division 1 Judge.



**Mayor Bruce Wilkerson**



**Circuit Judge Steve Wilson**

Succeeding the leadership of Mr. Wallace that sustained several years, the department hired their second director, E. Paul Bunch, on September 30, 1979. Director Wallace retired in October of the same year. Also during that time, Marlice Cox was the Assistant Director to Mr. Bunch. Assistant Director Cox was also known as the highest ranking female officer in the state of Kentucky, at that time, who had done a great deal for women throughout her career. During the time of Mr. Bunch's leadership, he was instrumental in and responsible for obtaining hazardous duty retirement (March 1, 1989) and participated in the Kentucky Law Enforcement Foundation Program Fund (KLEFPF) for the WKU Police. Mr. Bunch subsequently retired on March 31, 1991.



*Ge. Bush*

**Director Bunch with President George Bush**



*To Paul Bunch,  
With best wishes,  
Ronald Reagan*

**Director Bunch with President Reagan**

On July 1, 1991, Horace Johnson was hired as Chief and reorganized the entire department. During this time, the assistant director position was made obsolete. Under the leadership of Chief Johnson, the department became accredited by the Kentucky Chiefs of Police acknowledging WKU as the first University Police Department to realize this accomplishment in the state of Kentucky while being the fourth police department in Kentucky to complete this gratifying process. While holding the title of police chief, Chief Johnson taught a class in Grise Hall known as “Intro to Law Enforcement”. This allowed him an exceptional opportunity to be personable and build rapport with WKU students while teaching them about policing. This also obliged the entire WKU Police to focus on building communication and networking with the students. Each officer was assigned to a specific dorm building and they would have pizza parties in the dorms with the students as special events to attain the goals Chief Johnson had set. This was used to socially intermingle with students and help them develop a positive notion of police officers.



**Chief Horace Johnson is pictured above.**

Several years later, on January 1, 1998, the name of the “Department of Public Safety” was officially changed to the “Western Kentucky University Police Department”. The departmental name change was collectively a much needed and considerable milestone for the department. Later in that same year on July 15, 1998, the WKU Police Department was approved to be in the Kentucky Law Enforcement Foundation Program Fund. Furthermore, on December 1, 1998, the Police Officer of Professional Standards were implemented. This had been one of Chief Johnson’s imperative objectives parallel to the Police Officer Professional Standards Task Force and the Kentucky Law Enforcement Council. These standards were guidelines for all police officers in the state of Kentucky. During Chief Johnson’s administration, the WKU Police were also helping other police departments implement “community policing” by instructing and training about bike patrol.

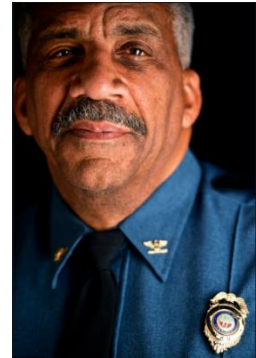


**Department Photo taken in 1998 with Chief Johnson**



In January 1999, WKU Police were re-accredited by the Kentucky Chiefs of Police. Later, on March 31, 1999, Horace Johnson retired and an interim chief was appointed. The Interim Chief was Captain Jerry Phelps. Jerry Phelps was the very first Interim Chief of Police in the history of WKU's Police Department. Phelps resumed his position as Major of Administrative Operations with the department after a new chief was named.

The fifth Chief of Police of WKU PD, Robert Deane was hired on January 31, 2000. During his time at Western, he helped reorganize the department and established significant changes in the positions for the officers. He specifically established a Major of Field Operations position, three Commanders, changed the Lieutenant titles to Shift Commanders or Sergeants, and he also put in place the position of Assistant Shift Commander as well. Adjustments to uniforms were also made during this time along with his success to add a significant number of police vehicles to the department's fleet. Chief Deane further implemented a Special Response Team to help transition to a more standardized weaponry for the field. Chief Deane held his position at the police department until 2016, when he retired.  
**Chief Robert Deane pictured at right**



In August of 2016, Mitchell Walker became Interim Chief at Western Kentucky University Police Department and remained as interim until September 2017 when he was then named chief. While Chief Walker has adhered to the remarkable leadership conceived by all previous administrations of the university police department, his leadership has affirmed continuous transformations. The department is continuing to advance in technology and equipment upgrades for 21<sup>st</sup> century policing. A new website was put into place to better bridge alliance with the students, faculty, and staff of WKU as a social media presence became more evident for the agency. Lastly, the department underwent a 1.4 million dollar renovation and rebranding which included new uniforms, patches, badges and new police cruiser striping.



**Chief Mitchell Walker**



**New Police Patch & Cruiser Design**

Western Kentucky University's campus has a total enrollment of 17,500+ students and is one of the most beautiful campuses for the officers of the WKU Police Department to maintain and cultivate the tradition of community policing. As this agency continues to make the safety of our community our *TOP* priority, we shall strive to endorse our mission statement. "To create a safe interactive environment that is conducive to learning. We seek to accomplish this mission by strengthening relationships within the community, developing and evaluating effective responses to identified problems, and maintaining order".

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