



**The University of Texas System**  
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**Office of the Director of Police**

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April 23, 2015

To My Fellow University of Texas System Police Officers:

I believe in you--

With April of 2015 upon us, I have now completed four years as the Director of Police and am marking my 40<sup>th</sup> year in law enforcement. Unfortunately, we are confronted with a difficult time in American policing, where arguably the confidence and respect that we have historically enjoyed from the American public is now at risk. I know that you share with me the frustration, anguish and distress that can come with being among the most scrutinized professions in the world, knowing that our every decision will be examined against the law, the social dynamics of the day and the greater issues that face America as a society.

On the other hand, first and foremost, we are public servants and the guardians of both the communities entrusted to our care and protection as well as the democratic process and the constitutional safeguards that we all enjoy. That is an extraordinary charter and challenge but we, as a profession, are up to the task. Policing in general can sometimes be an ugly and unseemly business and policing in a democratic society can be difficult and awkward. But no matter how difficult, the obligation we swore to uphold when we raised our right hands remains the responsibility before us today.

And not all of the seemingly relentless criticism is without basis—Police officers are human and they are fallible and they will make mistakes. When those missteps can be corrected and no one has suffered as a result, then we seize those opportunities to make each and every one of us better at what we do. But when those transgressions are unlawful, involve integrity or character, or are purposeful and deliberate, then we must be absolutely honest in acknowledging our culpability and sanction those responsible. But these failed or wrong decisions, when measured against the encounters of the nation's police on a daily basis, are fractional and I do not believe that such wrongdoing is somehow endemic or systemic. Although my experience is not everyone's experience, I can say without reservation that in my 40 years in this profession I have never come to work with a fellow officer who expressed his or her desire to do harm to someone that day or who demonstrated malice in his or her heart. I am as proud to be a member of the policing profession today as I was when I began. And I remain strongly committed to the law enforcement element of the policing role that we fulfill.

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To My Fellow University of Texas System Police Officers

April 22, 2015

Page 2

I also remain committed to the notion that policing is a noble pursuit and those who choose the police service do so because they have been called to do so. This is no ordinary job or vocation—the people whom we have pledged to protect and serve have granted us the authority to do so. We must passionately respect that extraordinary authority, treat that social contract with the respect and deference that it deserves and always remember we are not here to adjudicate people’s lives. Instead, we protect and serve in order to keep from harm those who might be victimized and enable the enjoyment of civil liberties by our fellow community members.

I will close by repeating what I said when I opened—I believe in you—I believe in your courage and resolve, in your sense of professionalism, in your respect for the democratic principles which guide our policing concepts, in your restraint, in your willingness to go in harm’s way on behalf of others and your steadfast commitment to do the right thing, first and always. As I said in our recently released recruiting and public service video: ethical behavior and principled decision making shall always guide our actions. We shall weather this difficult time, we shall be better for it, we shall embrace our roles as guardians, and the University of Texas System Police will continue to be the standard by which others are measured...and in doing so we commit to never violating the public trust.

I believe in you—

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Heidingsfeld", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Michael J. Heidingsfeld

Director of Police