**NEWS**

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O’NEILL NAMED DIRECTOR OF UTM DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

MARTIN – Michael O’Neill will be the next director of the University of Tennessee at Martin Department of Public Safety, the university announced today.

O’Neill comes to the Martin campus after serving 28 years in the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office in St. Paul, Minnesota, where his most recent rank was commander. He most recently served as the watch commander and hospital security unit commander, overseeing all operations after hours for a department of more than 450 employees. He also directly supervised a hospital unit of two sergeants, 13 deputies and other correctional staff.

O’Neill also serves as a command sergeant major in the U.S. Army Reserve, where he has served for 25 years. He is a member of the command team of the 6th Brigade 102nd Division, conducting all civil affairs and psychological operations training in the Army Reserve. He is also the garrison command sergeant major, or “mayor,” of the military base at Fort Totten, New York. He has previously served as a military police command sergeant major, operations sergeant major and first sergeant, and has deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait.

"My wife, Barbara, and I are excited to join the University of Tennessee at Martin community,” O’Neill said. “I will focus on continuing to provide a safe environment for the students, staff and faculty at UTM while also building positive relationships with the police. I am thankful for this wonderful opportunity."

O’Neill’s awards include the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Distinguished Service Medal, the U.S. Army Bronze Star, Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal and the Combat Action Badge.

The director of public safety is responsible for directing UT Martin’s efforts to provide a safe, secure and orderly environment for members of the campus community and visitors to the campus. This responsibility is fulfilled through crime prevention activities and education, enforcement activities and extensive interactions with students, faculty, staff members, non-campus individuals and groups that frequent the campus or that are otherwise impacted by and have an impact on the university.

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O’Neill earned his bachelor’s degree in 2010 from Columbia College in Missouri and his master of business administration degree from Columbia Southern University. He earned an executive certificate in leadership and management in 2012 from the University of Notre Dame and a graduate certificate in police executive leadership development in 2022 from the Southern Police Institute in Louisville.

He is currently pursuing his doctor of philosophy degree in public policy and administration from Walden University in Minneapolis, where he is completing his dissertation.

“UT Martin will be fortunate to have Commander Michael O’Neill join the Department of Public Safety,” said Petra Rencher McPhearson, the senior vice chancellor for finance and accounting. “In addition to his military experience, his law enforcement background – including peer support counseling, crisis intervention, investigations, training instruction and state and federal collaborations – have positioned him to lead our incredibly dedicated campus police force.”

O’Neill succeeds Monte Belew as the director of public safety. Belew held the position for three years after serving as the Henry County sheriff for 14 years. Lt. Jerry Garcia has served as interim director of public safety since Belew’s departure.

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