



**UW-Madison
Police Department**
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

June 27th, 2025

Officer Diego Lema Hernandez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Delivered via email

Officer Lema Hernandez,

On April 8, 2025 I received information from a student in an investigative reporting class making allegations against you regarding giving students rides in your squad without signing a waiver, providing police information on where bar checks would be occurring, [REDACTED] and offering to hold open back doors for students in the event of a bar check. I met with the student reporter on April 10, 2025 and provided the information she received to Lt. Ellis to complete a conduct review, as the student did not wish to file a formal complaint, nor did any of the sources file a formal complaint.

Lt. Ellis conducted a conduct review which included reviewing text messages from your UWPD issued work phone, and found 70 conversations which revolved around bar checks. Almost all text conversations were followed with a phone call. Based on this information, on April 28, 2025 I assigned Lt. Carl Siddell to open a personnel investigation into these matters for possible violations of the following UW-System Classified Employee Work Rules:

I. WORK PERFORMANCE

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

IV. PERSONAL ACTIONS AND APPEARANCE

J. Failure to exercise good judgment, or being discourteous, in dealing with fellow employees, students or the general public.

This incident also pointed to possible violation(s) of the UW-Madison Police Department's additional work rules, established to meet special requirements of the Department:

UWPD Written Directive 26.1 - Performance Procedures:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



BRENT PLISCH
Chief of Police

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

On May 9, 2025 and June 10th 2025 you met with Lt. Siddell and Lt. Boardman for investigatory meetings. You were advised you would be talking about the potential violations of the work rules indicated in the letter sent to you by Lt. Siddell.

You first discussed the text messages that led to phone calls with students. You stated bar checks are talked about all the time in the Langdon Street community. You prefer to have open-ended conversations with students rather than shutting them down with a "no" response in a text. You explained you have never, nor would you ever, given any confidential information regarding bar check locations, nor have you ever shared any impending locations for checks. You stated this would be unethical and a betrayal of trust between you and MPD officers, would burn a bridge you've worked hard to build, and would be a violation of your own ethics. Furthermore, you advised that the locations on any given night are not pre-determined, and it is based on lines at bars as well as behavior that may draw the attention of officers. You have told students if they receive an underage drinking citation that you can assist them through the process.

You acknowledge that many of the text exchanges "look bad" and know you should have used clearer language to explain that you do not have information about when and where bar checks are done. You also acknowledged that when you are sharing information about bar checks done earlier in the night with fraternity/sorority leadership, it would be more appropriate to have that communication shared the next day, versus the same evening.

You stated there are times the same person will ask the same question multiple times. When this happens, you stated you will still call and provide safety information and explain that you do not have information on where and when bar checks will happen. You also share information about the risks of going to bars, and those checks are random, but generally occur on weekends.

There are texts in which you discuss certain bars. You shared that when CPT starts a bar check, the bar is secured, and no one is allowed in or out until they are checked. In one instance you

discussed where a bar check had occurred, and CPT had already left the bar you were discussing. You stated that you have these discussions with the leadership of the various organizations to help with any follow-up that may be needed with any membership. You also share this information with contacts inside the institution to assist with follow-up.

Next you discussed the allegation of holding back doors open at bars to let students exit. In your role as the Downtown Liaison Community Officer, you give numerous presentations and safety training for students in the Langdon area. You said during these presentations, you talked about behavior-based enforcement and bar checks. To build rapport and gain trust, you use humor, especially when meeting with students for the first time. You said it is possible you have said something to the effect of, */ would much rather hold the door open for you during a bar check so you can leave, but that is not something I can or would do*. You acknowledged how easily this could have been taken out of context, and emphasized you would never, and have never, hold a back door open at a bar for students to exit.

[REDACTED]

Finally, you discussed giving students non-approved ride-alongs. You shared in your role, you routinely have meetings with student staff members of fraternities and sororities. The meetings are held at an agreed-upon time and place, generally of the student's selection. At times the meetings have gone late, or a student has needed to talk about ongoing issues such as mental health or instances where they were a victim of a crime. You have given students rides to their next class if the meetings have gone long and they were going to be late, or to the destination of their choice to assist with their issues. You do not take students on ride-alongs unless they have been approved, and paperwork has been completed. You also noted you are very intentional about having meetings with sorority members at the time and public place of their choosing, as you are aware of the optics of a male officer meeting with a female student.

Upon review of the investigation, I find the following regarding the alleged violations of UW-System Classified Employee Work Rules, and the UWPD Written Directive:

I. WORK PERFORMANCE

[REDACTED]

- *Unfounded* – Defined by UWPD Policy, this means the investigation reveals that the alleged action did not occur

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

[REDACTED]

- *Exonerated* – Defined by UWPD Policy, this means the investigation reveals that the alleged action did occur and was within Department policy, state law, and university work rules.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

IV. PERSONAL ACTIONS AND APPEARANCE

J. Failure to exercise good judgment, or being discourteous, in dealing with fellow employees, students or the general public.

- *Sustained* – Defined by UWPD Policy, this means the investigation reveals that the alleged action did occur and was not within Department policy, state law, or university work rules

Better judgement should have been used in the language to convey what information you do and don't have in several areas. You know you should have been more direct in your text messages sharing that you do not have information on where and when bars will be checked. You admitted you have made jokes about how you would rather hold a back door open at a bar for students so that they could get out of bar checks. You understand how this can easily be misrepresented and taken out of context, and that there is a need to be more direct and intentional with language used during presentations.

I have read all materials related to this investigation and determined a letter of reprimand is appropriate. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

You must work with your Sergeant to establish a better communication plan for those you serve in your community. Director Lovicott is also an excellent resource in this area to help you establish talking points. You must be more transparent with information you can and cannot/will not share. Your verbal and written communications must be clear to ensure there are no misunderstandings. Standard answers to commonly asked questions would streamline many of the communications you have with your community.

You are a valued member of the department. You go above and beyond to be a resource for your community, providing safety tips, meeting with community members, and assuring students have a sounding board to guide them through tough situations. Continue to do all these things using the guidance provided in this letter and lessons learned from this process.

Sincerely,



Assistant Chief Sasso

Cc:

Captain Ewing

Lieutenant Ellis

Lieutenant Siddell

Lieutenant Boardman

Sergeant Prescott