

Oral History Interview with Mike Hanson, Director of Campus Public Safety at Western Oregon University, conducted by Jandika Borden, Monica Davalos, Caleb Ihne, Mari Lemus-Sanchez, Lucy Teuteberg, and Kimberly Jensen on April 27, 2026 and May 11, 2026 in the Welcome Center, Western Oregon University.



Narrator: Mike Hanson (MH)

Interviewers: Jandika Borden (JB), Monica Davalos (MD), Caleb Ihne (CI), Mari Lemus-Sanchez (MLS), Lucy Teuteberg (LT), and Kimberly Jensen (KJ).

LT: Alright! Today, we are interviewing Mike Hanson. It is April 27, 2026, and we are at Western Oregon University in the Welcome Center. My name is Lucy Teuteberg.

JB: My name is Jandika Borden.

CI: My name is Caleb Ihne.

ML: My name is Mari Lemus.

MD: My name is Monica Davalos.

KJ: My name is Kim Jensen.

MH: My name is Mike Hanson.

ML: All right, so for the first question it's going to be when did you start working at Western, and what were the circumstances that led you to come work at Western?

MH: All right, so my first job actually takes me back to when I was a student. I was actually a referee for intramural sports my freshman year and decided, you know, I like sports, I'm going to play all the intramurals that I can. And I knew a lot about the rules and regulations. So I signed up through recreational sports and worked my way through that, through all the seasons, doing different sports throughout the year and, got my, one of my first scholarships on campus, since I was here. So rookie ref of the year kind of deal. So I kind of just continued on with that kind of stuff and love being on campus. So that led me to my second job on campus, which was a Resident Assistant [RA].

KJ: Oh. [All Laugh]

MH: So I worked as a Resident Assistant for the halls for about three years, two of them in Heritage Hall, and my last year was actually out in Arbor Park. So, as I kind of continued through school after my 4 years, I decided to kind of look at what I wanted to do, had nothing to do with my degree, and kind of got into law enforcement. So I was applying for jobs both outside the university, and then I also applied for a position here. So graduated in June and as of July 1, 2007 I started as a public safety officer here.

ML: What was your major?

MH: Economics, minor in Business. So I always thought about doing like financial advising and that kind of stuff, and just decided, you know what, sitting at a desk isn't going to probably suit exactly what I wanted to do. So I continued with my degree and then just ended up going into law enforcement. Spent a few years here, got hired on with a different agency outside of Western, and spent some time with them, and then position opened back up here, and decided that I did like it so much that I came back and worked my way into my current position. So that's kind of some of the circumstances that led me to work here. So, really becoming a student.

KJ: That's so cool.

CI: So the next question is what work positions have you had here, what is...

[This is where audio file one stopped working. We rescheduled and picked up starting from the question that got cut off.]

KJ: We are recording on two devices.

JB: Today is Monday, May 11; it is 2 pm, and we are doing part two of our interview with Mike Hanson. My name is Jandika Borden.

CI: My name is Caleb Ihne.

LT: My name is Lucy Teuteberg.

MD: My name is Monica Davalos.

ML: My name is Mari Lemus.

MH: My name is Mike Hanson.

KJ: My name is Kim Jensen.

CI: What different work positions have you had here, what is your job at Western at present, and how long have you held this position?

MH: ...until I got a position with University Housing, and I was an RA for three years, and that's what finished up my four years as a student. And then right after that, I got a job with Campus Public Safety as an officer. So, I worked as an officer for a few years, I did go work at a Sheriff's Office and then came back and worked a few more years [at WOU] and was promoted to sergeant and then the Associate Director of Campus Public Safety. And now today, Director of Campus Public Safety. So, I started as an officer way back in 2007, July 1st 2007, and my current position, I've had it for just over a year now.

JB: Awesome! Would you give us some examples of the kinds of work you do in your current position?

MH: Boy, there's all kinds of things. So, everything from working on different committees to making sure that we have policies and procedures for our students. Just having interactions with our students, holding trainings on everything from fire extinguishers to CPR trainings, all kinds of stuff that we do, and myself have done over the years. One of my favorite projects we've ever done

was we had a whole bunch of high school students come to campus, so we did a DUI [Driving Under the Influence] awareness program and actually had reached Life Flight, or reached Air Services similar to Life Flight, come on to campus and actually have the fire department come in and do all kinds of stuff. So, they actually took a patient away and flew them off to our back fields and all that kind of stuff. So, we've done all kinds of different projects but we, you know, a lot of it's just the day-to-day contacts and just making sure we're all kind of moving forward to the common goal.

JB: Yeah, on that note, it sounds like there's a lot of different kinds of work, but what would you say a typical workday looks like?

MH: Typical workday... A lot of it is just kind of going through—first I'll come in, see what kind of pressing emails will be on the docket, and then after that I will go through our caseload that has happened, either from the night previous or maybe from the weekend, and kind of get those, make sure those go out to our different departments that need them throughout the day, like Student Conduct, maybe that's Student Health Services, or other departments that might be relying on the information we collected throughout the day. After that, go to certain meetings that might come up throughout the day or other projects that we're working on. Right now, we're really pushing hard trying to get our EV [Electric Vehicle] chargers up and going for parking services, trying to get those contracts done, which it's been a process. It's been a few years because we get so far and then we have working with the state agency and it just wouldn't come to fruition, so. But we're very, very close, so we're almost there.

JB: Thank you.

MH: Yeah.

MD: What is the most interesting experience you've had while working at Western?

MH: You know, we've had a lot of awesome experiences here. I think the one that kind of sticks out in my mind the most is the time that former president Bill Clinton came to campus in 2008. He was campaigning for his wife Hillary and during that campaign stop or trip, he stopped here at Western. Boy, and I know it as Old PE, I can't remember the current name that we just changed [the building] to [Ruth Lautenbach Building], but I think we had close to 1500 people in that little itty bitty gym to see him, and just working with our local law enforcement, Secret Service, all the federal agencies that were involved as well just to have him stop here, was a very interesting experience and cool to be a part of.

LT: Wonderful. Do you think you could share a little bit about your plans and goals at Western for right now and for the future?

MH: Yeah! Right now we are obviously, like I said, we got some small goals. Just trying to get through the school year, and some of the projects that we've got with parking trying to make it as reachable for all folks, and those that are visiting, but one of the projects I really want to kind of focus on in the next few years is basically bridging gaps with our other agencies around the area, as an emergency manager here on campus, I'd like to bring more folks to us and be kind of a hub for the whole county, really, and other agencies as well. And actually, we're even reaching out to Marion County, because now that we've got the Salem building as our graduate program building, trying to bridge those gaps as well and seeing how we can get us more partnerships and become a hub in that community as well, and then—as we know with good partnerships we can have some really good things being done, so that's some of the goals I have in the next few years. It's just trying to figure out how can we strengthen our community. Western has recently taken over the CERT, which is the Community Emergency Response Team for the whole county. So we had one on campus, and then now the one where the county is kind of collapsed a little due to pretty much

involvement and COVID and that kind of stuff, so Western has stepped up and we're going to take on at least the host agency to be the hub for CERT, so we've got to build that team up. There's not a lot of volunteers right now, but we're trying to get a good volunteer basis and trying to be a real stop for the whole county.

KJ: That's cool. What else would you like to add about your experience at Western?

MH: Oh boy. Western is- I mean, obviously, it's got a place in all of our hearts, because it's a place where we can all find some common ground where we all enjoy to be a part of. I know it wouldn't be part of my life for 23 years if it wasn't for how much of a community it is. It's fun being here. It is just great people to work with, students to serve, all that kind of stuff. Western is just that place that, you know, I'm just glad that I have a little bit of a part of the 170 plus years that we've been here-- just to be a little part of that. I just-- yeah. Western's great.

KJ: I wonder, you mentioned that you were a Resident Assistant here at Western. How has that informed the work that you do now?

MH: I would say, it's really just been a part of my journey. I will say, I'll go back to my childhood a little bit, being in Boy Scouts and that kind of stuff growing up, and I've always just been a public service-oriented person myself. Being a Resident Assistant, it's awesome being a resource to all the students that need it. Being able to kind of connect with students that may need that connection, or even getting them to the other person, you know, how they can get connected to certain areas and that kind of stuff and really getting that little leg up to just kind of continue on with their journey. So, I would say RA is also just another resource for me to kind of take as a tool in my tool bag, to kind of understand how I can help serve others and be a part of just this community. Yeah, I enjoy it, all the way around. I don't know how I could do anything else; I don't know why I became an economics major and wanted to sit at a desk. [All laugh] I

should've always been a service-oriented person because it's just who I really am, I just have to be about and about and being a part of it. So- but yes, RA was a good start here. It was definitely a hook to keep me here.

KJ: Yeah, and we're grateful!

MH: Thank you, thank you.

LT: I have a question.

MH: Yeah.

LT: You said you've been here for about twenty-three years now. Can you talk a little bit about the changes that you've seen at Western? So, from back when you were a student, and then you mentioned how you had left for a while, then you came back. Can you talk a little bit about, how that has changed over time?

MH: Oh boy... This watching the landscaping and the different buildings that had changed, and the different departments. And, I am talking departments, where we are sitting now in the Welcome Center, is formerly known as the Oregon Military Academy. So, when I was a student living in Heritage Hall at 6 o'clock, 7 o'clock in the morning, [KJ laughs "yes"!] you had to keep your windows shut because the guys would be out here in the courtyard. [All laugh] This used to be just a paved courtyard, not with trees and all the rest of that. And they'd be out there, running around doing their drills, as the drill sergeants are kind of telling them to, you know, run around and make a lot of noise. We'd have to close our windows to get those extra couple hours of sleep. It's college, it's Friday night, or Saturday night, whatever...[Group giggles]. But then, the police academy used to be housed here [Welcome Center], actually, a lot of the places where they stayed, the dormitory portion of it, has been demolished. Student Health Center now sits

where a lot of those-- that building used to extend off the Math and Nursing Building, is what it is now. But they had to demolish it so they can make Ackerman, and it's kind of funny some of the stories you hear. That they literally couldn't build Ackerman because there was too many flushing toilets, and that it would be too much on the drains, so we had to take down a portion of the building just so we could build a new one. I mean, you just kind of, the way they put it, it's almost funny. Watching some of these buildings change, the Health and Wellness Center pop up, which used to be a parking lot. We burnt down Arnold Arms, the old Math building. It has just been interesting to watch it kind of change over time, and how it is, and looking at some of the historical pictures, even before I was here. How it's changed where, you know, where we had some campus presidents right where RWECE [Richard Woodcock Education Center] is and all kinds of stuff. It's amazing to look at the early 90s photos all the way to today. It just has-- a lot of stuff has changed, boy, well, HSS [Humanities and Social Sciences] or Bellamy Hall, that first floor where all the professors are on the first floor there used to be a walk-through we could walk right through there. Where there is no actual...

KJ: Right under my office, Boom, if the earthquake comes.

MH: Yup, so. [All laugh] Literally for seismic upgrading they put offices down there, they put a bunch of beams to make sure it wouldn't fall when the earthquake hits. [All laugh] So it has changed immensely.

KJ: Yeah, it used to have bars on the windows. Kind of like wooden slats. So it was a little more 1970s back then.

MH: We had definitely upgraded some of the looks of some of the buildings, which we have-- we have some way to go on some of these, you know, The Cottage. Which is cool, of course, with historical value, but it's a little aged as well.

KJ: Yes.

JB: Last time we spoke, you told us a about a story with graduation and a lost ring.

KJ: Oh, yay! [All laugh]

MH: Yes, yes, thank you for reminding me. We have had some great adventures, and like I said, this is the service-oriented part of my job that I love and then-- and also my competitive nature. I also wanted to make sure that we found it right?

KJ: Right.

MH: So, Dr. Jensen, remind me of the professor.

KJ: Chehalis Strapp.

MH: Had a wedding ring that she was clapping too hard, is what I am guessing, for all the graduates, as they were exiting graduation, clapping so hard that her wedding ring-- and I believe it was a family member's wedding ring-- had fallen off and actually broken into two equal parts, and the one thing she had left was the bottom half, which was the metal band. So, we employed some of our grounds folks, we got some metal detectors out, that they used to locate sprinklers heads and all kinds of stuff. I have too much of a competitive attitude to not have a mission that wasn't complete. So we made sure that we stayed out there and found the ring, found the top half with all the diamonds and all that kind of stuff in it, and she was able to secure it. Yes, it was just

one of those things that makes you feel good, cause all it is is time. I mean, time is finite but at the same time you know, Somebody else couldn't get that back either.

KJ: So I have to say that Mike is being modest, because other people had left the field and he was still on his hands and knees trying to find this ring, and this beautiful moment when the ring appeared is really great. She was so happy.

MH: Well, it's part of the community, being a community, and that what Western is about.

[Silent]

KJ: Any other questions? I wonder if you could just say, if you had a magic wand and an unlimited expense account which we all love to think about. What would you change about Western? If you could?

ML: I like that question!

ML and KJ [Laugh]

MH: You know that magic wand, unlimited expense account. I hear about some of these stories that donors that donate so much money to make school free and accessible. If you could do that and having the resources for the folks that come here, succeed. To take that stress off of them. It'd be so awesome. Because it's just one of those things that, I know has been impactful in my life. I met my wife here. You know, here we are building a wonderful life together and all that kind of stuff. And being able to grow upon the experiences, the learning I've had here... I guess if we could just, you know the financial-- not only making tuition free, maybe giving them the resources that would make it so you're successful. You know we all have different triggers that make it so that schooling is difficult. We all have different talents and all that kind of stuff so if we had awesome staff and everything, we could support every student. I think that would be the

magic wand for me. To make this place that much more special than what it already is. To be able to just kind of make it so we don't have the stresses of how am I going to pay rent and tuition and food and books and all that kind of stuff. That would be... I think that would be really awesome. I hear some about some of those stories and it's just, wow, that is something that I can't imagine, what that would be for students that are in those situations.

KJ: Yeah. Here. Here.

JB: I have one more question. What is something about CPS [Campus Public Safety] that you wish every student knew about?

MH: CPS is one of the multiple departments, one of the top departments, that is here to serve students, and the mission of the students. We are here to get you to have a safe, enjoyable environment, that you feel like you can come here, you can live here, you can make sure that you are feeling comfortable as if you were at home or anywhere else that you would want to be. We are, and along with Facilities [Facilities Services], these two departments work around the clock to make sure that if you have a question, or you need a resource, either they are that person or they know how to get you connected to that person. So, we are always, I guess to answer your question, what would CPS be for people, what do they need to know, is we're here for you. You can walk into our office or Facilities and be enabled to just ask that question of, where do I go, or what do I need, to do X? And if we can't do it, we'll figure out how to get you connected with that group. And if you don't like it or you don't feel comfortable with it, we'll help you connect with that group. It's just one of those things that we are service-oriented. I think that's the biggest thing is people just don't know that we're there to help as much as making sure people stay within the guidelines [All laugh]. Let's face it, you know, it's college, we have fun outside the guidelines but, making sure that you are all within those boundaries and we're not just there for

just the boundaries, I guess. We're there to make sure you're successful and as happy as possible doing what you want to do.

JB: Thank you.

LT: I have a question. Can you share an impactful experience that maybe you've had that has reassured that this is what you love to do? Does that make sense?

MH: Yeah. I don't know if it's just . . . let me put it as an analogy. I don't think I have to have one experience to make my bucket full. You know? It's all the little pebbles that you pick up along the way that make sure that you're feeling the enjoyment of who you are. I don't feel like I have to have one thing. When I get those big moments, a ring that falls off or something like that, that's a bigger pebble. But I think to fill my bucket with joy I think it's just one small piece of sand at a time. And at that point, your bucket, hopefully it's full at the end, right? And I've got 20 years in almost and I can see myself doing 20 more. I'm only 40 something, so. It's just one of those things, yes, it's a great place, it's something . . . you don't have to have all the big moments, I guess, so.

LT: Thank you.

All: Thank you!

MH: You're welcome.