

Advertisement:



Northwestern College Featured Law Enforcement Training Simulator



By Laura Pollastrini Sep. 27 at 11:09 a.m.



Northwestern College Criminal Justice students await an opportunity to engage in a law enforcement training simulation on the Bridgeview Campus utilizing the PRISim firearms simulator.

[Bridgeview, IL] On Thursday, September 22nd, Northwestern College hosted a law enforcement training exercise that included a firearms simulator. Nearly 100 Northwestern College students were able to test their skills and challenge their minds using the same training exercise used by local police departments. The simulator was available on the College's Bridgeview Campus for eleven hours, with students getting the opportunity to both directly participate as well as observe from a control room as other students participated.

PRISim, a law enforcement advanced simulator of Advanced Interactive Systems (AIS), is a mobile trailer with a theater-like environment, including a large screen. It includes a control room where an instructor controls the interactive program, maintaining the ability to alter a scenario based on a student's actions and reactions. Before the scenario begins, the student is given a basic set-up of what to expect (fight, domestic disturbance, man with a gun, suspicious noises). Students then utilize simulator guns that project laser beams and take cover behind two separate barriers as they react to a suspect's movements through the scenes, including the presentation of a firearm which can be aimed and shot at the officer.

The simulator, which is designed to test student judgment and not their firearms ability, also tests a student's reaction skills during various scenarios. Each scenario spans from just 1 minute to 3-4 minutes and displays a suspect in a moving environment. The simulator includes a sound system that makes the student feel as if they are experiencing a real event. Immediately following the scenario the recorded event is played back, including footage of the student's actions, which allows the instructor to identify for the student step by step what they did right and wrong during the situation. The exercise requires the students to justify their actions, and explain why they reacted the way they did.

Hundreds of scenarios are pre-programmed for use in the system, each designed to familiarize the student with possible situations that an officer may find themselves in. There are scenes where a suspect comes at the students (who are role-playing as police officers) with a drawn weapon, or what appears to be a weapon. Other scenarios might include a disabled car at the side of the road whereby the officer approaches, only to find armed inhabitants; the approach of an officer to a suspect breaking into a car; or the dispatch to an office building where an active shooting was taking place. The purpose of the exercises is to get students to think about what they should do and how they should react to diffuse a situation or protect innocent victims.

These exercises though, are more than just an advanced video game, for the suspect also shoots at the participants (controlled by the instructor) to better simulate what happens when mistakes are made, or when the officer fails to take cover in volatile situations. "Bullets" that propel at the students are in fact hard nylon balls shot from a cannon above the screen and are synchronized with the offender's movements. These projectiles are enough to give the students motivation to get behind the cover.

The scenarios the students go through are highly stressful until they become accustomed to it, but are designed to allow the students to feel the kind of stress they would feel if they were on the job as a law enforcement officer. Many times the student goes through the same scenario 2-3 times, with different outcomes based on their own responses. However, each scenario comes to an abrupt end when the officer either attains control over the situation or if either the suspect or the officer is shot.

Northwestern College's adjunct instructor Bernard Hogancamp, a retired Sergeant of the Homewood Police Department, has overseen this simulator experience for the College over the past several years, manning the control room of the simulator and altering the scenarios to reflect student responses. Hogancamp has shared his thirty years of law enforcement experience with the students of Northwestern College for five years, both as a classroom and on-line instructor for the Criminal Justice Program. He also works for North East Multi-Regional Training, Inc. (NEMRT), which provides in-service training to sworn law enforcement and corrections personnel throughout the metropolitan Chicagoland area. He further serves as a part-time officer for multiple law enforcement agencies, conducting training for officers, including utilization of the PRISim Simulator which travels between 40 law enforcement agencies in the south suburban area. Hogancamp is one of four Master Instructors qualified to train other instructors to operate the PRISim Simulator and has helped to train thousands of officers using this instrument, in addition to the simulation exercises featured at Northwestern College.

About Northwestern College:

Northwestern College (NC) is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, www.ncahlc.org. The college offers focused career-oriented programs with flexible schedules and a supportive faculty. NC's associate degrees and certificate programs help students enter into growing fields that offer financially rewarding careers. Day, evening, weekend, and online classes are available with campuses in Chicago, Bridgeview, and Naperville. More information can be found at www.northwesterncollege.edu or by calling toll-free, (888) 205-2283.