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UCSC LAW ENFORCEMENT

New Chief Nader Oweis 'always wanted to be a police officer'

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SANTA CRUZ — Nader Oweis, sworn in as UC Santa Cruz's new police chief earlier this month, has five weeks to get acclimated before students start arriving around Sept. 17.

There are people to meet, a staff to become acquainted with, and policies and records that the 41-year-old hired from UC Davis needs to review. Not surprisingly, papers and binders are scattered around his office. A

'I always thought it would be fun, and I respected the work that law enforcement does. I think it's honorable.'

NADER OWEIS, UC Santa Cruz's new police chief

whiteboard and a map of perhaps the greatest challenge to any UCSC newcomer — the labyrinthine campus — are all that adorn the walls.

"It's crazy. I had no idea how hard it would be to navigate," Oweis said about finding his bearings.

Getting up to speed as the head of

a department with 17 sworn officers and 40 employees total is a big task, but one Oweis (pronounced "oh-wayce") has been preparing for as long as he can remember.

"I always wanted to be a police officer," Oweis said. "I always thought it would be fun, and I respected the

work that law enforcement does. I think it's honorable."

Oweis was born in Daly City to a Catholic Palestinian-American family. His parents ran a grocery store, and he often interacted with the police officers who frequented the store.

As an undergraduate at UC Davis, where he studied agriculture and managerial economics, Oweis joined the Aggie Host Security Program, which was run by UC Davis Police,

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UC Santa Cruz's new police chief, Nader Oweis, took over the top spot earlier this month after working for UC Davis. He leads a force of 17 sworn officers.
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and provided security for sports contests, concerts and other events.

After graduating from UC Davis in 1992, he applied to many law enforcement agencies and eventually landed with the UC Davis Police Department, where he worked for the past 17 years.

"Nader is just a good person," said UC Davis Lt. Matthew Carmichael, who worked with Oweis for 10 years. "He is nice, professional and he has an amazing ability to talk to people. He is just a genuine guy. He was a huge part of this campus community, and his influence went way beyond the walls of the police department."

Oweis does not lack energy to not only get the job done, but also develop his own skills. While serving as a lieutenant and commanding officer for the UC Davis substation that

BIOGRAPHY

NADER SAMI OWEIS

WHO: UCSC police chief

AGE: 41

HOMETOWN: Daly City

EDUCATION: Bachelor's in agriculture and managerial economics, UC Davis; master's in higher education, Drexel University, Sacramento

EXPERIENCE: Three years as a student employee of the UC Davis Aggie Host Security Program, 17 years with the UC Davis Police Department

handles public safety for the Health System's campus in Sacramento, Oweis earned his master's degree in education from Drexel University.

He served on the FBI's Sacramento Joint Terrorism Task Force, received an FBI award for his role in developing the Northern California

Hospital Cyberterrorism Seminar, and also has served as an Arab, Muslim and Sikh intercultural competency instructor.

"UCSC is getting someone who is well-qualified, and I think the department will benefit and flourish with him in the lead," Carmichael said.

Oweis, who played four sports in high school, has found a place to live on the Westside and says he stays active and might join one of Santa Cruz's recreational soccer leagues.

In the meantime, he will be focused on learning about UCSC and putting his stamp on campus public safety.

"Community engagement is a top priority," he said. "The police department is a resource for the community. It's not only here for law enforcement, but also to be part of the community, engage the public and build partnerships."

Oweis said, like any person, he tries to draw on his own life experiences to help guide his decision making.

"I think it's important to look at things from different points of view. Each situation is different and the actions you take have to be appropriate. You want to treat everyone with respect so misunderstandings and stereotypes don't occur," he said.

Oweis, who was chosen from a pool of about 70 applicants, will earn \$130,000 annually.

"Chief Oweis was selected from a very qualified pool of candidates, and we're extremely pleased that he has joined the campus and Santa Cruz community," said Jean Marie Scott, UCSC's associate vice chancellor of risk and safety services. "Nader's breadth of experience, the fact that he worked in a leadership position on a UC campus and his commitment to community-based policing are impressive qualities. They also make him a very good fit for the campus."

Oweis replaces former Chief Mickey Aluffi, who retired last November.