

Eastern students, staff go on patrol

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WILLIMANTIC — Eastern Connecticut State University students and staff recently expanded their law enforcement knowledge through an extensive program offered by the Willimantic Police Department.

Eight students as well as Christopher Ambrosio, interim director of the Office of Student Conduct, completed the WPD's Citizen's Police Academy last fall. The nine-week course covered a variety of topics centered on police officer training.

Each week focused on a different component, including traffic stops, the use of force, drug searches and more.

Those in the program were able to assess mock crime scenes and practice firing non-lethal weapons. Three-hour classes were facilitated by officers each week.

"It was a pleasure having Eastern students in the class each week," said Willimantic Police Lt. Douglas Glode. "Most were interested in a career in law enforcement, and I hope this influenced



Eastern Connecticut State University student Lucian Afragola is trained in using a Taser during 'Use of Force Week.' Contributed photo

them in some way.

"I think the class opened their eyes to the inner workings of a police department, which, for the most part, not many citizens get to see."

Criminology major Lucian Afragola agreed.

"I gained much more insight into what it's like to be

a police officer. The course ranged from working with K-9 units to riding in the department's military vehicle. We were told at the beginning of the class it was going to be hands-on, and it did not disappoint," he said.

Afragola hopes to become a police officer.

Ambrosio given the university's working relationship with local police, such a program was beneficial.

"Since the Office of Student Conduct works closely with law enforcement, the Citizen's Police Academy was a great opportunity to see how they examine critical incidents that may involve our students," Ambrosio said.

"This is such a wonderful accomplishment," said Eastern President Elsa Núñez. "It really binds Eastern to the law enforcement community in a positive way. These efforts show initiative and motivation."

"For me, the most important takeaway from this program is that the police really do want to help the community and show people how law enforcement operations run," said Afragola. "I highly recommend applying."

The Citizen's Police Academy is free and applicants must be at least 17 when the course begins. Willimantic residents are given priority.

More information can be found at www.willimanticpolice.org/citizens-police-academy.