

THE *Current*

July 23, 2026

[Shelly Leachman](#)

New UCPD chief appointed, sworn in at UC Santa Barbara

Serving UC Santa Barbara as UCPD Interim Chief of Police since July 2025, Matthew Bly, a UCSB graduate and 20-year veteran of the department, has been appointed to the role permanently. He was sworn-in July 9, 2026.

“Throughout his career, Matt has demonstrated a commitment to enhancing campus safety, building community and working to ensure that UC Santa Barbara is a living, learning and working environment where our students, faculty, staff and visitors can thrive and feel welcomed,” Chancellor Dennis Assanis said in announcing the appointment. “He is a compassionate and dedicated leader who believes in public service and has made building relationships and partnering with organizations across campus a priority. Matt, who is also a dedicated husband and parent, exemplifies the mission of the UCPD, to serve and protect our community with accountability, professionalism and respect.”

Bly has earned numerous awards and citations throughout his years with UCPD, including the H. Thomas Guerry Award for Superior Performance, the Chief MacPherson Jr. Police Officer of the Year Award, and the UCPD Valor Award. He earned a Public Safety Meritorious Service Citation from the UCPD and Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Office for his bravery and heroism as a first responder to the 2014 Isla Vista tragedy.

He also was a part of the UCPD team that worked toward achieving the prestigious International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators accreditation last year. The award is granted to only 10% of university police agencies nationwide; fewer than 100 agencies have earned this distinctive recognition.

“My family and I are thrilled for the opportunity to serve our campus in my new role as Chief of Police. I look forward to continuing to work closely with our students, staff and faculty to ensure that UCPD provides excellent public safety services to our community,” Bly said. “It is of the utmost importance to me that all community members feel safe and welcome on our campus. To this end, I look forward to collaborating with our new Interim Vice Chancellor of Inclusive Excellence, Dr. Dolores Inés Casillas, to ensure UCPD plays its part in building a more inclusive environment at UC Santa Barbara. My office and all members of UCPD remain deeply committed to serving our campus community with professionalism, accountability and respect.”

Bly joined the UCPD in 2006 as an officer in the Field Operations Division, after graduating with a B.A. in history. He served as a field training officer and sergeant, and was named lieutenant in 2021. As lieutenant, Bly represented UCPD on UC Santa Barbara’s multidisciplinary Student Behavioral Intervention Team and Threat Management Team, served as incident commander for large-scale campus events, and was the UCPD liaison to the Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Office Isla Vista Foot Patrol. He also served as UCPD’s commander on the Systemwide Response Team.

“Chief Bly’s calm approach and his extensive knowledge of UC Santa Barbara are a significant benefit to the university,” said Garry Mac Pherson, UCSB vice chancellor for administrative services. “I enthusiastically look forward to working with him to assure the campus remains a safe place to learn, conduct research and work.”

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About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.