

UMassAdLab

presents

# C.O.P.

CHANGING OUR PERCEPTION

## UMass AdLab

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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# Executive Summary

In an effort to increase trust between students at the University of Massachusetts and local law enforcement, UMass AdLab launched the **Changing Our Perception (C.O.P.) Initiative**. The C.O.P. Initiative brought police officers' and students' perspectives together through several on-campus events, a virtual Q&A session with cops from around the country, and sharable video content. The campaign was so successful that the UMass Police Department plans to continue and expand it in the coming year.

# Target Market

## Students

University of Massachusetts Amherst

**22,000** Undergraduates



**49%** Female

**51%** Male

Our target market was identified as **undergraduate students** at the University of Massachusetts - Amherst. The university has its own police department, the UMPD, whose officers frequently interacts with students both on- and off-campus.

# Research

To understand how UMass Amherst students perceive law enforcement as a whole, as well as local police, we conducted two forms of primary research:



Surveys



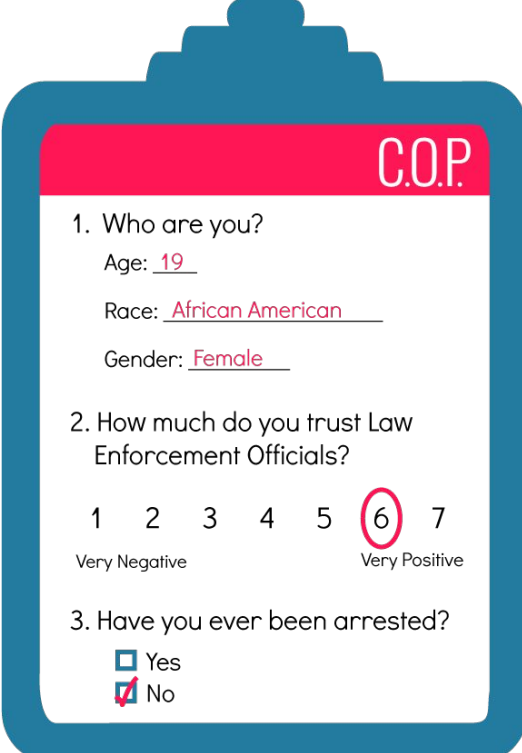
Interviews

# Primary Research

## Survey

As our first method of primary research, we conducted an online survey with questions aimed at understanding respondents' past interactions with police, as well as their current attitudes towards members of law enforcement.

We distributed the survey to members of our target market, undergraduate students at UMass, through social media outreach.



**C.O.P.**

1. Who are you?  
Age: 19  
Race: African American  
Gender: Female

2. How much do you trust Law Enforcement Officials?

1   2   3   4   5   **6**   7  
Very Negative                      Very Positive

3. Have you ever been arrested?

☐ Yes  
☒ No



# Survey Results

## How much do you trust Law Enforcement Officials?

Year	Average Rating (1 to 7)
Freshmen	5
Sophomores	2
Juniors	4
Seniors	4

Overall Average:

**4** out of 7

## What name do you use when referring to law enforcement officials? (Cops, Police, Feds, etc.)

**71%** use **“Cops”**



Average Respondent:  
**19.95** years old, **Female**,  
from **Massachusetts**

**67%**

Of those surveyed rate their last encounter  
with law enforcement as **positive**



# Primary Research

## Interview with a Police Officer

A few of our members sat down for a face-to-face interview with Lieutenant Thomas O'Donnell of the UMass Police Department. We asked Lieutenant O'Donnell a series of qualitative questions to understand how the UMPD views its own presence on campus, as well as to uncover any potential differences between the UMPD's point of view and students' perspectives.

### Our questions included:

- How do you believe students perceive UMPD?
- Does UMPD do anything to interact with students?
- What do you think is the biggest problem between students and law enforcement officials?
- Do you believe there are any active prejudices against police officers or UMPD specifically?





“I think people need to know we’re here to help. At the end of the day that’s why we do what we do.”

- Tom O'Donnell, UMPD



# Primary Research

## Key Takeaways

- Survey results illustrate that “**cop**” is the most commonly used word when referring to police officials
- Most students report that they only interact with police officers in **negative situations**, and rarely ever communicate with officers in a positive environment
- Students understand that police departments are established for community safety, but there is still a clear **lack of trust** between students and officers.



The background image is a blue-tinted photograph of an indoor space, likely a workshop or laboratory. In the foreground, a table is covered with a white cloth featuring a repeating pattern of the letters 'C.O.P.' in a stylized, blocky font. Two people are leaning over the table, looking at the pattern. In the background, another person is visible, and a sign on the wall reads 'UMassAdLab'. The overall scene suggests a collaborative work environment focused on design or technology.

What is C.O.P.?

# Strategy

## Initiative

C.O.P. came to be after realizing the biggest challenge we faced was **changing the overall perception of law enforcement** officials in the eyes of students.

CHANGING OUR PERCEPTION was a creative and easy way to communicate a powerful initiative focused on building trust and appreciation. Backed by the survey results that indicated **"cop" was the most commonly used term** for law enforcement officials, we chose the short brand name for our initiative. The choice of colors was meant to slightly mimic classic police colors, while still appealing to our young audience with modern colors.

**C** - Changing  
**O** - Our  
**P** - Perception



# Strategy

## Messaging Strategy

**The Message:** Put simply, our message was focused on changing any of the negative current perceptions students have about law enforcement officials.

**Goal:** The goal of our message was to create an opportunity for an open dialogue between students and law enforcement in a non-critical setting. Lieutenant O'Donnell explained that he believes students feel disconnected from Law enforcement officials because the two rarely interact in a casual setting. People see these officials as unapproachable and sometimes intimidating. We created “Ask a Cop Anything,” as a channel for casual discussion of issues of any sort between officials and students. Our goal was to make students feel comfortable with local officials, and get a better understanding of the police department's perspective.

# Strategy

## Reaching Our Audience

The central component of our initiative was our live virtual Q&A - Ask A Cop Anything.

### Ask A Cop Anything

Mirroring Reddit's Ask Me Anything Forums, UMass AdLab decided the best way to spark a friendly conversation between officers and students, as well as provide a place for students to clarify any misconceptions they had, was to have an online Question & Answer session. Officers from various locations such as Amherst, Massachusetts; Bedford, New Hampshire; and Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin volunteered to answer the questions submitted by students. Over 60 users were present on our website during the live Q&A.



ASK A COP ANYTHING

Your Email \*

e.g. What do you think of police wearing body cameras?

Submit



# Strategy

## Reaching Our Audience

### COPinitiative.com

Through the development of our website, COPinitiative.com, we provided a custom-built platform for question submissions and answers. The site featured a brief explanation of our initiative, space to submit questions, and an area where answers were displayed.

Total Page Views: **376**

Average Visit Duration: **5 minutes 49 seconds** per user



# ABOUT

## What is the C.O.P. Initiative?

The C.O.P. Initiative is a partnership between UMass AdLab and the UMass Amherst Police Department. C.O.P. stands for "Changing Our Perception", and is a campaign aiming to increase trust between students and law enforcement in the Amherst community.

## How does the C.O.P. Initiative increase trust?

We are hosting several events on the UMass Amherst campus with a focus on bringing students and police officers together in unique ways – one such way was through our virtual Q&A, called "Ask a Cop Anything," where officers from multiple departments around the country answered confidential student-submitted questions. You can check out the Q&A below, as well as submit your own questions at the bottom of the site, if you'd like. Officers will continue to answer questions over the next few weeks, so feel free to check back periodically for updates!

Refresh

**Question:** What inspired you to become a police officer? How has that inspiration lasted until today?

**Answer:** (Tom, UMPD) For me it was my dad being a police officer in the City of Chicopee. Being a kid and seeing your dad go to work in a uniform every day is pretty neat. He was also a K9 officer and the dog, Ivan, would come home with him every day. Hearing the stories of what he did made me want to be a police officer. Of course having a dad that is a police officer isn't always fun, especially when you are in high school - he finds out everything. Certainly the inspiration has lasted or I would not be doing this job still.

**Answer:** (Rob, Chippewa Falls PD) The diverse experiences offered by this line of work. Every day is different.

**Question:** When do you feel safest as a police officer? (Time of day, situation, in/out of your squad car, etc.)

**Answer:** (Ryan, NHSP) Police feel safe when they know that they have the public's trust.

**Answer:** (Tom, UMPD) The first thing is having people listen to what the police are telling them. When police deal with individuals that are doing the opposite of what is being asked or acting like they don't care, that makes police nervous. We are trained to look at hands and body language, making sure officers can see your hands is always a comforting thing. This could be at a car stop or just talking to you on the street.



# Strategy

## Reaching Our Audience

### Tabling

One issue that we came across was many students have questions that they would like to ask police officers, but they are not comfortable asking these questions to the officers directly. Our tabling event gave students the opportunity to ask questions to law enforcement officials anonymously.

Our table featured C.O.P. branded sunglasses, laptop stickers, and cell phone wallets. These items were given to any student who submitted a question to our Q&A.

To draw attention to the table and guarantee traffic, we asked a mounted police officer and his horse to stand with a few students holding signs and wearing t-shirts promoting the event. This decision was based on the insight that students at UMass get very excited when the police horses are in attendance and appreciate the animals.

Our tabling event was able to gather 42 questions to be asked in the live Q&A Ask A Cop Anything.





The Sunglasses, Cell Phone Wallets, and Laptop Stickers given out at the tabling event.

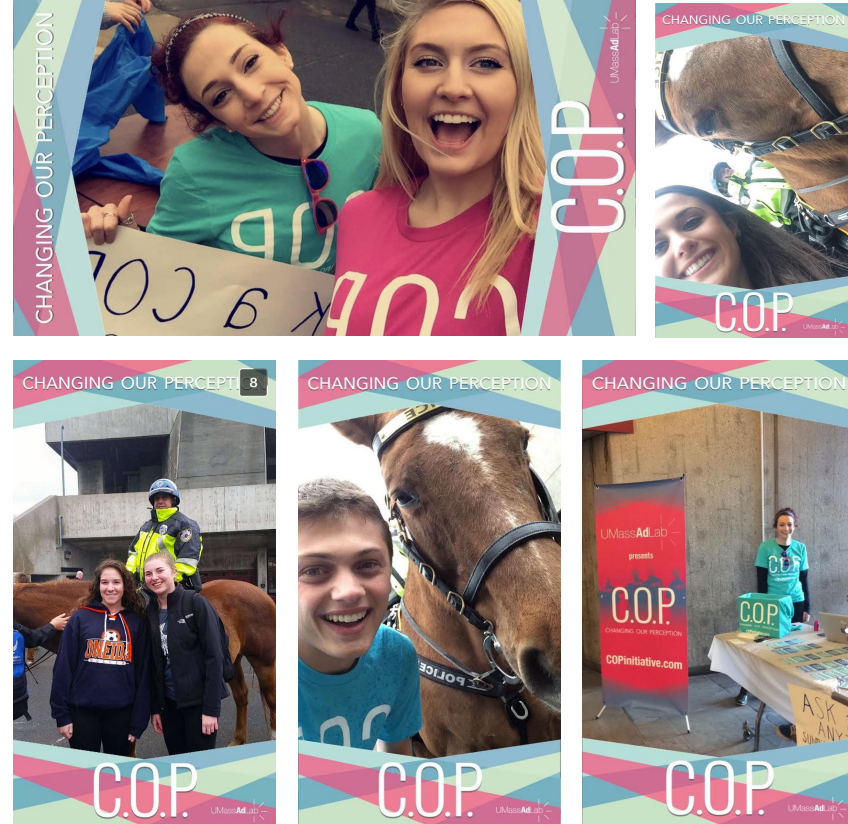


# Strategy

## Reaching Our Audience

### Snapchat

We created a simple and attractive Snapchat filter to promote our event. Snapchat is one of the most popular apps in the world and is known for its fast-paced content. Using this platform was an effective way to get our initiative into the minds of busy students.



# Project Implementation

**In order to increase our web presence and the scope of our audience, we created two videos that were posted across multiple social media platforms.**

## **Ask A Cop Anything: Q&A**

After interviewing a local police officer, we put together a video that compiled students asking questions, with an honest responses from a UMass Amherst police official. The documented interview aims to inform the public on the why police officers do what they do, and common misconceptions people have about their profession.

## **C.O.P.**

To illustrate what UMass AdLab had accomplished this semester, we designed a promotional video to share with the local community. Our mission was to spread awareness about our initiative, spark community involvement, and drive people to our website.

# Project Implementation

## C.O.P. Promotional Video



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzOQZW9rwxA>

## Comments

“Great Job! So refreshing to see today's youth involved with positive, productive efforts to facilitate a better understanding of social behaviors and roles”

“A great idea. More colleges should be doing this!”

## Results

Total Reach on FaceBook: **6072** people

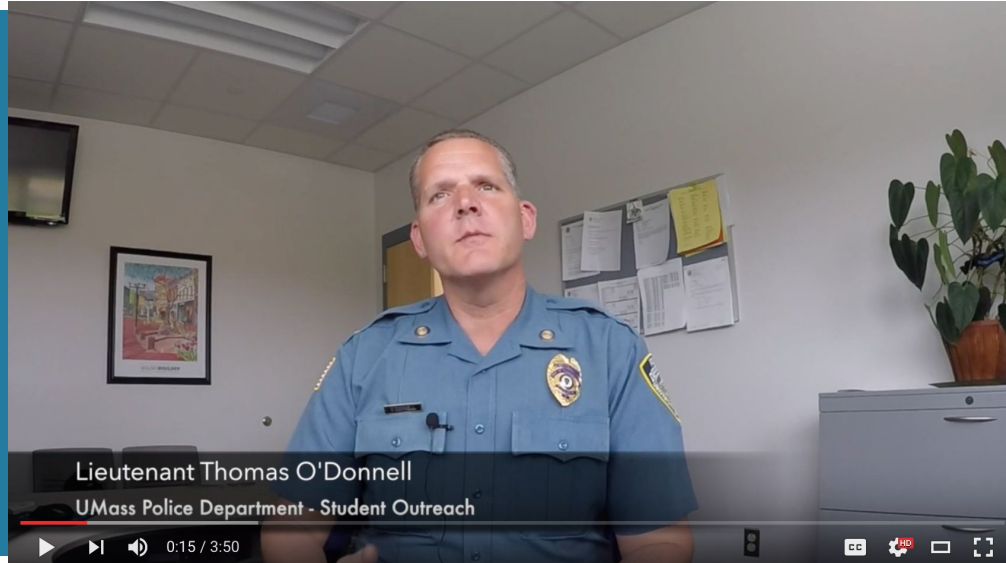
Engaged Users: **135** people

Shares and Likes: **56**

Views on Youtube: **140+**

# Project Implementation

## Ask A Cop Anything - Video Portion



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Qb-ga990q0>

### Comments

"Great venue for showing the value of a good relationship between students and police officers"

Love this idea, I hope my college does something like this!

### Results

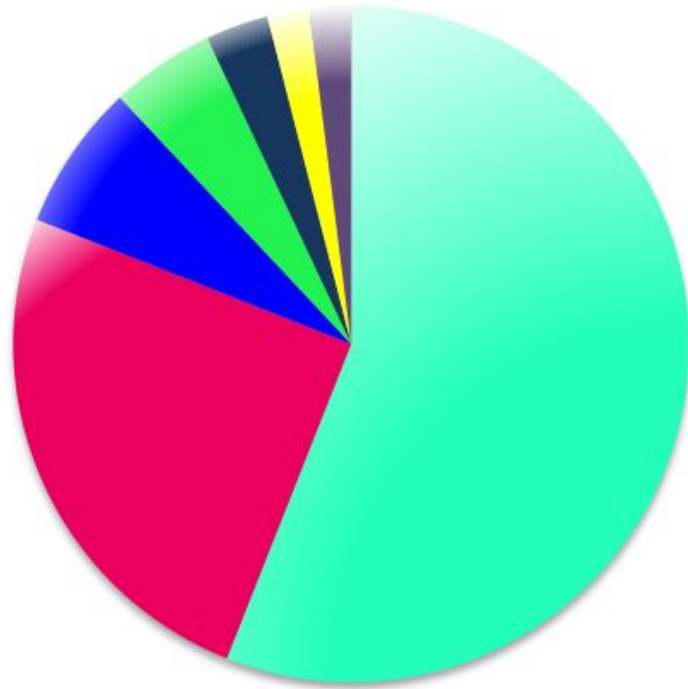
Total Reach on FaceBook: **5924** people







Engaged Users: **176** people

Shares and Likes: **31**

Views on Youtube: **140+**

# Budget



-  Promotional Merchandise (56%)
-  Video Production (25%)
-  Event Day Materials (7%)
-  SnapChat Geofilter (5%)
-  Gifts for Officers (3%)
-  Website Hosting (2%)
-  Social Media Production (2%)



# Strategy

## Effectiveness

Our chosen measures of success were website visits, Snapchat filter uses and views, and video content views. In order to keep an accurate measure of who we were able to reach, we decided to use the following data metrics:

**Website** - our website provided us with metrics for how many people visited the site during the time of the Q&A. - 376 pageviews and , 75+ questions submitted

**SnapChat** - Snapchat filter at our tabling event was used 123 times and was seen over 1,700 times in just nine hours. This filter covered over 950,000 square feet.

**Videos** - Q&A/Case Study 280+ views, and a combined social media reach of 11,900 people

# Post Survey Results

## Student Reactions to the Campaign:

**“They seem more like people to me now. It changed some of the ideas I had about them.”**

**“I found the Q&A a very beneficial and was happily surprised that there are no ticketing quotas for cops. Society and media supports this perception even though it is false.”**

**“It made me think about them more as people, and I like that there are no quotas and that they are mandated to interact with someone from CCPH if their case is traumatic.”**

**“[Police officers] are not power hungry men who like to ruin people's days. They are regular people with families, hobbies, and interests aside from their jobs who have chosen to put their own lives on the line to defend the greater good.”**

**“I see police officers as more human and approachable.”**

# Post Survey Results

## Quantitative Results

60% of students who were familiar with the “Ask a Cop Anything” event **reported an improvement** in their trust in law enforcement.

**How much do you trust Law Enforcement Officials?**  
**Overall Average Improved To:**

**5** out of 7



# Plans for Future

We are proud to say that our C.O.P. initiative is not finished just because the competition has ended. The University of Massachusetts Police Department was so impressed with our work, that it is now their mission to implement that initiative into their own Student Outreach program. Lieutenant Thomas O'Donnell, head of the Student Outreach department on campus, expressed the following:

**“I would love to continue to use the C.O.P. (changing our perception) idea with a couple of things I have wanted to do for a while”**

**“I would love to try to keep it alive as part of the legacy of the project. Who knows where it could lead no matter what happens with the project.”**

**“I would like to get ourselves more into classes and using C.O.P. would be a good icebreaker for faculty and students. We truly want to be accessible to our community, though that is not always the easiest thing to do, I think starting programing around your initiative could work well.”**

# Conclusion

The C.O.P. Initiative began as a semester-long project with the intent to bridge the trust gap between UMass students and local law enforcement officials. Since the Initiative began, police officers ar

hopes of building a more trusting world where law enforcement officials are not avoided or seen as frightening, but instead seen for their true intentions: protecting us. Police officers take an oath to protect and serve the public while putting their lives on the line in order to keep the streets safe. With recent occurrences, many have forgotten that. We at the University of Massachusetts AdLab have proven to reinforce this knowledge onto our community and remind everyone of the real reason for the officers in our area and throughout the world. We also hope to catalyze other students to create their own initiatives, products, or tools to become involved in constructive dialogue about building trust in the justice system. We are aiming to build a community focused on living with shared values that results in building trust in the justice system.