

5-school master's program planned in public safety

By Kyle Hopkins

TIMES STAFF WRITER

Working in the trenches — walking a beat, fighting fires — doesn't necessarily prepare public safety officers for the supervisory challenges that come with an advance in rank.

Leadership training, high-level research techniques and tapping into the experience of others help officers handle new responsibilities, but with the state's only criminal justice master's degree program in St. Cloud, officers in outlying communities can't conveniently pursue a graduate degree.

In response, a five-university master's degree program is in the works, with classes beginning as early as the summer.

St. Cloud State University likely will serve as the program's statewide hub, partnering with Bemidji State University, Metropolitan State University, Minnesota State University-Mankato and Winona State University.

Earlier this month, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities schools dedicated \$98,135 for start-up costs for the program — the Public Safety Executive Leadership Master's Program — through June, said Barry Schreiber, a longtime St. Cloud State criminal justice professor.

Prospects look good for another \$100,000 from MnSCU in July, he said.

Delivering the courses to students will mean relying on interactive TV, the Internet and other technology.

One program goal is to help students create a network of contacts, increasing communication among departments such as health care, corrections and fire prevention.

"The more you can learn about what other people have done, what quantifiable research shows, the better your decisions are going to be," Schreiber said.

Any classes students take



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Barry Schreiber teaches both graduate and undergraduate classes in the criminal justice department at St. Cloud State University. Schreiber has been teaching at the university for 20 years.

through the program this summer likely would count toward a certificate degree, but will carry over into the official master's degree program when it gains final approval, Schreiber said.

A public safety advisory council of professionals is being assembled to help develop the

program's curriculum. While final MnSCU approval still may be a year or two away, Schreiber is confident about the project's future.

"This is going to happen. It's a question of how soon it's going to happen, and exactly what the elements are," he said.