

# SCSU ADDS POLICE SKILLS TRAINING



Times photo by Paul Middlestaedt, pmiddlestaedt@stcloudtimes.com

**Bret Kasel gives commands through his loud speaker as he practices a high-risk felony stop with Steve Herman (background) on Wednesday at the Minnesota Highway Safety and Research Center.**



**Herman cuffs Dan Jelen during a high-risk felony stop training session Wednesday at the Minnesota Highway Safety and Research Center.**



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## SCSU adds police skills training

By David Unze  
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Glenn Gerads works security for a St. Cloud company, but he's always wanted to be a licensed peace officer.

The Albany native got his criminal justice degree from St. Cloud State University in 2003 but hasn't completed the skills portion of his training.

Skills training, the hands-on experience needed to prepare for a peace officer certification test, is required for a law enforcement job in Minnesota.

Minnesota has issued about 650 new peace officer licenses a year in the past two years, Dan Glass said. Glass is a licensing and testing coordinator for the Police Officer Standards and Training Board.

Gerads lives in Foley with his wife and young son and needs to keep his job to help support them. So it's difficult for him to take on the added expense of commuting or moving to Alexandria, Hibbing or the Twin Cities, places where the 10-week skills training traditionally has been offered.

Gerads is getting his skills training this summer at his alma mater, as St. Cloud State for the first time is host for the program.

"For me it would have been pretty much out of the question going to Alexandria or anywhere else," Gerads said. "It would have put such a burden on me being able to work and afford a house payment and everything else. That just wasn't an option."

He and 37 other St. Cloud State students or graduates are participating in the program this summer. In addition to meeting the needs of local criminal justice students and graduates, having skills training in St. Cloud also benefits local departments.

"We think if it becomes a routine every summer, that we can get a better look at potential candidates. And it gives us a chance to recruit," said Dennis Ballantine, St. Cloud police chief.

### Training on campus

The 485 hours of training that prospective cops must complete includes classroom sessions and participation in simulations on topics such as use-of-force, felony traffic stops, firearms safety and crime scene investigations.

St. Cloud State's facilities, which include the Minnesota Highway Safety and Research Center, offer the venues, and deputies and officers from area departments provide the bulk of the training. Area departments have asked for skills training in St. Cloud for at least a few years, said Grant Haugen. He is the director of the law enforcement training program at Alexandria Technical College.

"This is our first run, and as far as I know this is going to be a continuing agreement," he said.

St. Cloud State hopes for the same.

"There is every intention of this being a long-standing relationship with Alexandria Technical College," said Jennifer Furan, security coordinator for St. Cloud State's Public Safety department.

Planning already is under way for next summer's program at St. Cloud State, she said.

The program at Alexandria or elsewhere didn't fit for Charles Medeiros.

The St. Cloud State senior works for Public Safety on campus and has wanted to complete his skills training since he enrolled three years ago, he said.

"Going to Alexandria would have been a huge burden," Medeiros said. "Commuting was the first thing on my mind. But with gas prices what they are, I probably would have buckled down and paid two rents."

### Local advantages

One of his instructors had a similar choice when he wanted to become a Minnesota officer.

Tad Hoeschen, who grew up in the St. Cloud area, completed his four-year degree in South Dakota. He wanted to return to the area to work in law enforcement, but would have had to move his wife and child outside of St. Cloud to take his skills training. He decided to take a job as a police officer in Kansas, where skills training isn't required to get a job as an officer.

Hoeschen completed his skills training there and moved back to St. Cloud, where he works as an officer for St. Cloud Police Department.

"I absolutely believe that, had they had a program like this in St. Cloud, it would have been a lot more convenient," Hoeschen said. "Being a local kid, I probably could have done that and been in St. Cloud a lot sooner."

Hoeschen coordinates firearms training for the skills program at St. Cloud State. He's seen how much less stress the students have because they can stay home while taking the skills training.

"It's convenient, and they tend to appreciate it more," Hoeschen said.

He's also keeping an eye out for candidates who might one-day become fellow St. Cloud police officers.

"It's a nice first look for us to have. There are some officers out of this crew that we might want and some we might not want to take a look at," he said. "We can get a first look at these people and to an extent have our pick of the litter."

It helps the candidates get an advantage in the job market as well, Gerads said.

"It's kind of where I want to stay, and it really helped having instructors who I've actually worked with," he said. "That definitely gives us a lot more exposure. They are a lot more hands-on, and they see us and know what we can do. It gives us an upper hand."