It’s been about four years since Steve Noftz graduated from the Voinovich School of Leadership & Public Affairs with a Master’s degree in public administration. Now, Noftz works as the manager of safety and security at OhioHealth O’Bleness Hospital, a local provider of healthcare services for southeastern Ohio. The Voinovich School caught up with Noftz to discuss what originally drew him to the MPA program, his experiences, and how his time at the Voinovich School helped him to move forward in his career and community.

How has the Voinovich School affected your career or your life?

My MPA was certainly a factor in the hospital’s decision to hire me. My career change from law enforcement to a health care environment has been a blessing, and the course work/curriculum from the MPA program is a benefit to me each day in my role. The other impact on my life is the friendships I formed while completing my degree. I have remained in contact with several classmates since graduating, and though there are benefits to keeping in touch from a networking standpoint, these friends are just good to hear from and see on occasion. They have all done well and we keep in touch for occasional encouragement, but mostly for having a laugh and being glad to know each other.

Can you briefly outline what different positions you have held, and why you decided to go back to school and earn your MPA?

My law enforcement career spanned 26 years. During that time I trained other officers and first responders as well as individuals and civic groups. My wife and I were interested in forming a company to provide training and consulting after we retired, and initially I just wanted to be able to put some letters behind my name. My wife has a JD and a PhD, and I felt that having my MPA would make my
offering to the company more legitimate to certain audiences or organizations. When I learned of the safety and security manager’s position at the hospital I was excited about the opportunity and thankful that I completed my MPA, as the cadre of candidates made the hiring process very competitive.

Can you share a bit about the community groups you are a member of and feel passionately about?

I am a member of the Athens County Suicide Prevention Coalition, the Crisis Intervention Team Coordinator’s Group, the Athens County Jail Diversion Board, and I attend meetings Athens Metropolitan Housing Authority Committee when I am available. I am a Local Outreach for Suicide Survivors team member and respond, at the request of law enforcement, to meet with family and loved ones when there is a completed suicide. I am a member of the Hocking Valley Regional Critical Incident Stress Management team and meet with first responders after critical incidents. I am the Athens Leg Coordinator for the Law Enforcement Torch Run for the Special Olympics, one of the five legs in Ohio, and I am a member of the Downtown Athens Kiwanis Club.

Any funny or interesting Voinovich School stories?

It was fun being in classes for a bit before I showed up in uniform out of necessity. Conversations were lively at times, especially related to discretionary authority or other things classmates felt passionately about. I just turned 50 so it’s more difficult to recall funny stories! I became friends with many of my classmates and, even if I’m the only one who thinks it’s funny, I remember when I first met Shmuel (Sam) Roth. He indicated that he had been a carpenter in Chicago and that he was Jewish and he said, “So, if you’ve never met a Jewish carpenter, now you can say you have.” I responded, as a God-loving Christian, “I happen to know a Jewish carpenter personally!” We spoke after class and have had many conversations and good times since, and I’m blessed to have Shmuel as a friend.

Is there a professor who you connected with? How did that professor change your experience at the Voinovich School?

I’m truly thankful for all of the professors. I’m a hugger and I gave Dr. Jay (Ryu) a hug at the local Special Olympics games a couple years ago. He’s less of a hugger than I am I think! He laughed, but he always laughed at me a bit anyway. I enjoyed him thoroughly as a professor and am glad to know him, but I have to say his budget classes weren’t my favorite area of study. I think Dr. Burnier and Ed Baum were there as well. Everyone got a hug! Dr. Burton and I go along well and I occasionally vented to him outside of class regarding issues unrelated to class. Good guy. Dr. Millisen is a friend and I am always glad to see her. Her energy and enthusiasm made classes a joy.