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 **Saint Leo University, F1RST to Present Virtual**

 **‘Strengthening the Force’ Series for First Responders**

**ST. LEO, FL –** Saint Leo University and F1RST, Florida’s Forensics Institute for Research Security & Tactics, will present a free webinar series for first responders, targeting skills to improve their well-being.

“First responders are under a great deal of stress with the difficult jobs that they have, which has only been exacerbated by the pandemic and recent social unrest,” said Dr. Christopher Cronin, professor of psychology. Cronin will be the presenter for *Strengthening the Force: Service, Support, and Security Series*.

This four-part series of 8-hour sessions will improve responders’ mental and physical health as well as on-the-job effectiveness. The series will be interactive, with time for questions and answers, and attendance certificates will be issued for each 8-hour training seminar.

*Strengthening the Force: Service, Support, and Security Series* is being presented by Saint Leo’s Jacksonville Education Center in order to assist first responders and possibly enroll them in the university’s degree programs. The series will be available via Zoom and broadcast online so that all Saint Leo locations, and first responders from anywhere may participate.

The sessions are:

**● Unconscious Bias Training**, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. (EST), Tuesday, February 23. Register at [Session 1](https://saintleo.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMpdOGqqjktHd3IfQ8CtN4uv1oVnNqmsvv4).

**● De-escalation for First Responders**, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. (EST), Tuesday, March 23. Register at [Session 2](https://saintleo.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUrc-Cuqj0rHdANRDq6_4x-mZFDn82UEvk-).

**● Resiliency for First Responders**, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. (EST), Tuesday, April 13

Register at [Session 3](https://saintleo.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0pc-ytpjwqHddZhjfNgJFv_L-wiYnjlg39).

**● Suicide Prevention for Law Enforcement**, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Tuesday, May 11

Register at [Session 4](https://saintleo.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAud-6gqzwtGNOjFn4jYjsiBRvubraA3uvr).

After registering, participants will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

The presenter, Dr. Cronin, teaches at the graduate and undergraduate levels at Saint Leo and provides continuing education workshops to mental health and law enforcement professionals. He is a licensed clinical psychologist and has held academic positions in Europe, Australia, and the United States. He has practiced forensic psychology since 1991.

“This series will provide first responders with practical skills to deal with the stress as well as to develop resilience,” Cronin said. “The first in the series addresses the issue of unconscious bias. There has been a lot of recent press given to the concept of unconscious bias and, as a result, much misunderstanding. The other presentations address de-escalation of a situation, suicide prevention among first responders and resiliency development.”

For more information, contact Nikki Heister, special programs manager, Department of Public Safety Administration, at Nikki.heister@saintleo.edu or (352) 588-8487.

**About F1RST**

Florida’s Forensic Institute for Research, Security and Tactics, an enterprise of the Pasco Sheriff’s Office, embodies a collaborative approach between academia and practitioners, under one institute in pursuit of a common goal: shaping the future of public safety. F1RST will revolutionize training and invoke change through innovations in applied forensic science, forensic anthropology, public/private sector security and tactics.

**About Saint Leo University**

Saint Leo University is one of the largest Catholic universities in the nation, offering 57 undergraduate and graduate-level degree programs to more than 18,200 students each year. Founded in 1889 by Benedictine monks, the private, nonprofit university is known for providing a values-based education to learners of all backgrounds and ages in the liberal arts tradition. Saint Leo is regionally accredited and offers a residential campus in the Tampa Bay region of Florida, 16 education centers in five states, and an online program for students anywhere. The university is home to more than 98,000 alumni. Learn more at [saintleo.edu](https://www.saintleo.edu).

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