

**HOW WILL LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFECTIVELY RECRUIT  
UNIVERSITY GRADUATES BY THE YEAR 2007?**

JOURNAL ARTICLE

KENNETH C. KLASSEN  
CHICO POLICE DEPARTMENT

COMMAND COLLEGE/EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE CLASS XXV  
PEACE OFFICER STANDARDS AND TRAINING  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

MAY 1998

25-0514

**This Command College Independent Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.**

**Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.**

**Managing the future means influencing the future--creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.**

**The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).**

**THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION  
IN LAW ENFORCEMENT**

by Kenneth C. Klassen

**Introduction**

The conventional wisdom of past decades dictated that all one needed to be a police officer was a badge, a gun, and physical strength. With all of these attributes, one was effectively equipped to handle all of the issues facing a police officer. The recruitment of police officers was centered around this successful image, as there was only a minimal need to communicate and write reports. As the American culture developed, so did its technology. It was no longer enough to simply “catch and arrest.” Society began to have expectations that police officers could drive a radio equipped car and actually communicate by wireless radio to the police station. Telephone call boxes and walking beat officers were not enough for a growing and advancing society. Since the first time a VHF radio was put into the police car, technology associated with the police officer has moved forward with increasing speed. Police officers of today are faced with voice activated computer systems installed in police car; they are expected to understand and successfully function in a complex legal system that is orchestrated by highly educated attorneys and possess the ability to understand DNA evidence processing procedures while retaining humanity in handling human situations in our society. The social complexity of our society will require a police officer surviving in the community policing arena of the future

to have a broad base of social and community problem solving skills. These skills will be developed from job training programs, life experience, and broad based educational experience.

The emphasis on advanced education for police officers is due to the increasing complexity of the role of police officers in our society, as they are involved in interrelated role concepts of law enforcement, maintenance of social order, and social services. These role concepts are requiring an in-depth understanding of the psychological and sociological implications pertaining to our communities which is gained through broad based university education.<sup>1</sup> If law enforcement efforts are going to be effective, it will be necessary to produce sensitive, holistic police officers who can produce practical results without losing sight of the moral consequences of their job. This will require that they receive a higher form of education than is presently required or offered.<sup>2</sup> The university education of police officers, which includes multi-disciplinary training in law enforcement, the physical sciences, public administration management, social sciences, humanities with a small professional police science core curriculum, is the desired university educational program.<sup>3</sup>

Within the university system there currently exists a highly educated potential work force, which law enforcement is not effectively recruiting. In the City of Chico, California, very little time is spent recruiting from the pool of 15,000 college students that are an integral part of our community. It would seem that recruitment of these educated students would be one way to address the age old problem of police officer recruitment. It has been my experience during the 1970's and early 1980's, law enforcement would recruit for a position and would then select the most qualified applicants for employment. The number of applicants applying was plentiful and the qualifications of the candidates was high. The qualifications issue may have been directly

related to the technological and legal standard of that era. It has changed considerably since that time and the comparison is made to current complex technology and performance. It is unlikely that technology will slow down or decrease in complexity. Technological sophistication will continue to increase, not only in the computer arena, but also in the police vehicle and the defensive weaponry of the future.

As law enforcement addresses personnel needs in the future, it will be required to broaden the base of recruitment efforts to meet human resource requirements. Only four percent of all police officer applicants are successful in becoming a sworn police officer. In the 1989 Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Symposium on Police Officer Recruitment, findings were presented which indicate that 33% of applicants fail the written examination and another 30% fail the oral interview for admission to a police academy.<sup>4</sup> In a national survey of 185 law enforcement agencies nationwide, 93.5% of the respondents felt that college education contributes to the success of the police candidates in the testing and selection process.<sup>5</sup>

The Lakewood, Colorado Police Department was formed in 1969 when the new city of Lakewood was incorporated. Since 1969, the minimum educational requirement for a Lakewood police officer has been a four year degree. Lakewood Police Chief Charles Johnston reported that this educational requirement has allowed Lakewood to be “successful in emphasizing and attracting the brightest, most energetic people in law enforcement.” Chief Johnston noted that since 1969, “fifty former Lakewood police officers now hold chief executive posts in law enforcement agencies across the country.” This is good testimony to the requirement of higher education leading to a better quality of law enforcement.

The intention here is not to suggest that law enforcement recruitment should only be directed toward university graduates, but that there will be a point in the future when being a police officer changes from a vocation to a profession. It is reasonable to expect that there are qualified, motivated, and self-disciplined individuals who are attending universities in our state that would have an interest in applying for the job of police officer. This assumes that law enforcement will continue to recruit police officers at the current or increased rate, while maintaining the current entry physical standards.

### **Educational Requirements**

In the past 10 years, POST educational requirements for entry level peace officer have been governed by California Government Code section 1031(e), which requires high school graduation or passing of the General Education Development Test (GED), or attainment of a two or four year degree from an accredited college or university.

The California Government Code has allowed the law enforcement agency the flexibility, within section 1031(e), to enact educational standards requiring two and four year college educations. There has been a slow, but steady increase on the part of local, and state agencies toward the requirement of college education as a minimum level for recruitment as a police officer. During the past 27 years that I have been in law enforcement, I have noted the steady increase from the minimum educational requirement of a high school education or GED to be a peace officer to the requirement of a college education. This observation is validated by the "Employment Data for California Law Enforcement 1995/96" published by POST.

The "Employment Data for California Law Enforcement 1995/96" published by POST

covers the 580 law enforcement agencies employing 73,079 sworn officers in the State of California. The breakdown of these 580 law enforcement agencies is 344 Police Departments, 58 Sheriff's Departments, 51 University/College Police Departments, 9 Marshal's Offices, 47 District Attorney's Offices, 25 State Agencies, and 46 other POST certified departments. The educational requirement for peace officer recruitment for these agencies is as follows:

1. 503 agencies require graduation from high school or GED attainment.
2. 31 agencies require 15 to 30 semester college units of work.
3. 26 agencies require 31 to 60 semester college units of work.
4. 15 agencies require AA/AS degree attainment.
5. 5 agencies require BA/BS degree attainment.

It is an important aspect concerning the recruitment of university graduates to be police officers, to examine where law enforcement has been, where law enforcement is, and where law enforcement may be going. If law enforcement educational requirements are going to keep pace with a rapidly changing society and meet the needs of the future, the time for planning is now. Law enforcement must develop programs and plans in conjunction with a large group of stakeholders in this issue. These stakeholders will include, but are not limited to: the university/college educational system, law enforcement agencies, basic training academies, local and state government legislative groups, POST and community members. It is possible to develop a program using the Armed Forces ROTC as a template. The focus would be police officer training with an emphasis on a broad educational experience and problem solving.

## **Police Training Corps**

The following is a possible scenario utilizing a Police Training Corps Program as an educational model. It is not my intent to suggest that this is the only educational model that will be available to peace officers in the future. It can be one of many possible educational models:

The afternoon heat of Thursday, August 15, 2007, is beating down on the students at California State University, Chico, as they finish the final days of the summer session. The newest and most popular program at the University is the Police Training Corps Program, which is a collaborative effort of the City of Chico Police Department, the University Associated Students and the University. Currently, there are eight students enrolled in the Training Corps program, which is a combination of academics and work experience. The students' work experience affords them paid employment for up to 30 hours per month under the Student Noise Abatement Patrol (SNAP), which is the first responder to reports of college parties that are creating a noise complaint in the college district of the City of Chico.

Within the academic program, each student completes a course of study towards a Bachelor's Degree which includes mandated POST Basic Academy training. Tuition and books for the program are funded through the state/federal sponsored Police Training Corps Program which is similar in nature to the Armed Services ROTC Program. This program provides a contractual employment program for the students with a law enforcement agency, which has already accepted the student's employment application and personal history statement.

Police Corps trainee, Mario Montero, has just completed his final project for this session and has requested a review of his final draft from his voice activated laptop computer. After Mario reviews and approves the final project, he will instruct the computer to transmit the project

to the class professor and the police department Training Officer, Sheryl Garcia. As part of Mario's employment contract with the Chico Police Department, he was provided with the voice activated laptop computer.

Mario confirms, by his computer, that he is scheduled to work with his Police Corps Training Program student-partner, Bill Wong. This is their weekend to work as the SNAP Team to intervene in school parties that are causing disturbances in the neighborhood. Mario and Bill will work three 10 hour shifts as first responders to disturbance calls in the college district. This employment is funded jointly by the City of Chico and the Associated Students, and provides Police Corps students with funds to assist with their educational pursuit of a college degree. The Police Corps Training Program pays for all their tuition, books, and other materials associated with their education.

Mario and Bill have contracted with the Chico Police Department for employment as Police Officers at the conclusion of their university education. The Police Training Corps Program provides for a 25% cancellation of their financial debt incurred in obtaining a college degree for each year they are employed by the contracting agency. Mario explains this is mutually beneficial in that he is afforded job security, while the Chico Police Department is guaranteed a university graduate, and who has received four years of applied training. At the completion of four years of employment, Mario's costs of education will be forgiven. If Mario leaves the Chico Police Department prior to completion of his four year employment obligation, he is liable for the costs of his education at a rate of 25% per year. Mario's intentions are clear in that he will stay with the Chico Police Department and that his goal is to assist other interested students in getting involved in the Police Training Corps Program to help the community.

Chico Police Chief, Melanie Davis, has identified this program as being the best recruiting tool she has been involved with during her 25 year police career. Chief Davis was instrumental in designing and implementing this program with the University, after state and/or federal funding was made available. The program has been identified as being the means utilized to recruit across all ethnic and gender backgrounds, provide a solid education and the broad based experience required for the Police Officers of the next generation. Chief Davis recently reported to the City Council that slightly more than 50% of the Chico police officers were bilingual, predominately in Spanish, and that the higher level of education has, in her opinion, been effective.

### **Conclusion**

The critical issue for law enforcement in the area of human resources for the future is going to be how to attract qualified applicants for police officer positions. The position of police officer has already undergone a transformation of unbelievable magnitude and this will continue as technology, along with social needs, drives our society. During this transformation, the police officer will move from a vocation to a profession. The profession will require the police officer to be university educated with a four year degree. This degree will not be in the traditional “cop” subjects of criminal justice or administration of justice, but will be broad based degrees in liberal arts, engineering, history, sociology and computerization.

There has to be a workable plan in place to allow university students exposure to law enforcement which adequately generates a level of employment interest. The future may develop a Police Training Corps program as the vehicle for this exposure in the university/college setting. This system could easily become a reality with planning and funding. The program could be

located on select university campuses throughout the state and would involve a contract system of hiring between law enforcement agencies, universities and students.

In the early 1970's there was a federally financed program entitled Law Enforcement Educational Program (LEEP), which was administered by university financial aid offices. Students at the institution could borrow funds for tuition and books which would be guaranteed by signing a commitment to work in law enforcement for four years after completion of their education. The loan amount would be set aside at the rate of 25% for every year that one worked in law enforcement after leaving the university. At the conclusion of four years of work in law enforcement, the student education loan was eliminated.

If our current educational system and government could conceive a successful educational loan program (such as LEEP), and given our current economy and planning abilities for the future, there is hope that a successful law enforcement training program can be accomplished. The concept of a Police Training Corps, similar to the Armed Forces ROTC program, can be a reality. Law enforcement agencies with university campuses in their cities need to begin planning for the recruitment of graduate students.

- 
1. Daley, T.P. 1989 Little Rock, Arkansas  
Increasing Educational Levels of Little Rock Police Officers
  2. Educational and Psychological Research, Volume 5, Number 3, pages 149-164  
"Criminal Justice Education and the Humanities (1985)
  3. Liberal Education, Volume 63, Number 2, pages 154-158  
"College Education for Police Officers?" (1987)
  4. Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training  
"POST Symposium on Recruitment, June 1988" Sacramento, CA

5. Downs, Max. 1987.  
Recruiting Qualified Police Applicants: Problems and Responses.