

EYES ON TOMORROW – HANDS ON TODAY

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California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training

**Command College
Class 41**

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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).

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**Ronald E. Jones, Captain
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It was 8:04 p.m. on February 4, 1986; President Ronald Reagan entered the House Chamber of the Capitol amidst resounding applause. A short time later in his nationally televised “State of the Union” address, President Reagan reported: “*Never has there been a more exciting time to be alive, a time of rousing wonder and heroic achievement. As they said in the film, ‘Back to the Future,’ ‘Where we’re going, we don’t need roads.’*”¹

President Reagan’s remarks were clearly pointed towards space exploration – *where there are no roads*, and towards the building of the space station - *where there are no roads*. The space program did not get off the ground because roads reached from here to there, but because someone envisioned what many thought impossible. The President’s vision turned-accomplishment did not come to pass merely because the vision existed. It came to pass through purposeful human investment, strategic planning, teamwork and calculated execution.

In the same way the President had to create a pathway to the stars, leadership and innovation in the public safety arena often requires the law enforcement executive to visualize a future where no trails have been blazed, no paths cleared and no roads built. With its futures-based curriculum, strategic planning and transition management emphasis, the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards of Training’s (POST) prestigious Law Enforcement Command College was designed to blaze the trail to the

¹ http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ronald_Reagan's_Fifth_State_of_the_Union_Speech

future. In its 24th year, it is positioned and equipped to help you and your agency build strategic inroads to a desired organizational future.

Law Enforcement Command College

Command College is viewed by many to be the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training's (POST) premier management program. POST was truly original when it envisioned a Law Enforcement Command College in 1982. While other states such as Florida, Texas and Georgia have similar executive development programs, POST was the first. According to Command College Course Manager Tom Esensten, POST's program became the standard that others have followed.

Command College is designed with a specific purpose in mind. As shown on the POST website, "The Law Enforcement Command College is designed to prepare law enforcement leaders of today for the challenges of the future." According to POST, "The primary goal of the Command College is to provide an enhanced leadership course with a futures perspective to prepare the law enforcement leaders of today to lead into the future. The program has an emphasis on adult learning theories, placing accountability and responsibility on the student."² The program focuses on³:

- Leadership principles needed to influence the future direction of the organization
- Strategies to identify emerging issues and provide a proactive response
- Skills and knowledge necessary to anticipate and prepare for the future

² POST website: <http://post.ca.gov/training/cc/>

³ POST website: <http://post.ca.gov/training/cc/>

- Methods and benefits of sharing information
- Use of stakeholders in problem solving

The primary goal is accomplished by exploring new ideas about the future, providing tools for futures research, strategic planning and organizational change, challenging fundamental assumptions, seeking creative solutions, sharing resources and knowledge, building a futures focus and to identify leadership challenges and opportunities.⁴

Graduates of the program can attest to the effectiveness of the Command College, and to the impact it has had on their careers and that of others.

Perceived Benefits

Retired Livermore CA Police Department Chief Steven Krull is a graduate of Command College Class 19, and past President of the California Police Chiefs Association (CPCA). Chief Krull was a Captain with the East Bay Regional Parks Police Department when he attended Command College. He said the benefits of Command College are not necessarily realized while in the learning process, but later when its principles are applied to organizational situations. While Chief in Livermore, he asked the question, “What will Livermore look like in five-years?” Krull used the principles learned in Command College to look forward to possible futures, to assess organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and to subsequently manage needed change to create a desired future.

⁴ Powerpoint Presentation – Tom Esensten, Class 41, Session 1

In his role as President of CPCA, Krull facilitated a survey of fellow Command College graduates regarding their Command College experience. While not necessarily focusing on specific outcomes, a number of interesting responses emerged. These indicate that:

- 90 percent of graduates attended because they desired to attend
- 66 percent believe attendance at Command College assisted them in the promotional process
- 84 percent believe attendance at Command College will assist them with future promotions
- 93 percent believe the benefits received from attending Command College are worth the efforts they put into the program
- 90 percent believe they are better managers/leaders as a result of attending the program

The survey also indicated that 94 percent of Command College graduates actively scan and review local and national information sources to determine what current issues may or will affect their agencies in the future. The high percentage of “active futures scanners” is also evidenced by the fact that 55 percent of all surveyed graduates placed the program’s “futures mindset” as the most important aspect of the Command College experience. In fact, California Highway Patrol Division Chief Teresa Becher – a graduate of Class 36 – reported she actively scans five separate newspapers and looks for local, national and global events that could affect her department. She described Command College as an “extraordinary experience” and related that commanders should have an understanding of how global events have the potential to impact local operations.

While the statements provided by Command College graduates like Chiefs Krull and Becher reflect the consensus of most graduates, it is also important to understand the benefits seen by a chief executive who has a management staff comprised primarily of Command College graduates.

Chief Richard Word is Chief of the Vacaville Police Department and the President of the California Chiefs of Police Association. Interestingly, he is not a Command College graduate. Word reported he has seen a notable and positive difference in members of his command staff following graduation from Command College. The primary benefits are a marked improvement in their writing skills, critical thinking, and the addition of a strategic planning mindset. He further indicated that his staff no longer brings him ideas, but ideas with a strategic plan that take associated factors into consideration. He said, “That’s what a chief needs to make informed decisions.” The sentiments expressed by Chiefs Krull, Becher and Word add credence to the fact that 91 percent of all graduates reported they would recommend other law enforcement managers attend Command College.

To better understand how Command College began and evolved to prepare law enforcement leaders for the challenges of the future, where it is today, and proposed changes for program improvement, an overview of the program’s past, present and future is provided.

The Past

In 1982, POST Executive Director Norman Boehm⁵ directed Assistant Executive Director Michael DiMiceli to design a program specifically designed to train law enforcement managers. Mr. Boehm noted, “We are not doing much for managers beyond management training. Let’s build something good for folks after management training.”⁶

With strategic management as a starting point, Mr. DiMiceli assessed the focus of several existing programs created to educate police managers. Those programs included the Senior Management Institute managed by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), the Penn State Police Executive Program (POLEX), the Michigan State School of Criminology Program, the State of Virginia’s Executive Training Program and Federal programs such as the FBI National Academy. At the time, these programs taught students how to be a manager or executive in policing, with some leadership and personnel management components.

Mr. DiMiceli formed a steering committee to develop the program. According to DiMiceli, the committee believed the program should be something participants could not get anywhere else. Simply stated, there was no reason to develop a program that mirrored those already available to the law enforcement community through academic, state or federal programs. In essence, the program needed to be unique and provide what was not available through other management training programs. DiMiceli further stated the committee’s research revealed that some businesses managed their operations through

⁵ Executive Director from July 25, 1979 to January 2, 1997: POST Publication: A Glimpse Of The Past, A Look To The Future: 1999 – 2000, Page 9

⁶ Interview of Mr. Michael DiMiceli – August 29, 2006

strategic foresight. These businesses identified trends and looked ahead to anticipate future events and how those events might affect the identified trends. Drawing from the futures mindset, the committee decided to give Command College a futures orientation to prepare law enforcement leaders of today for the challenges of tomorrow.

The first Command College class began a two-year program in January of 1984. The program consisted of ten sessions and a research project. Class 1 concluded in January of 1986 with 20 graduates. Command College classes 1 through 23 were two year programs; however, beginning with Command College Class 24, course length and the number of sessions was reduced. This change was the result of a one-year Command College hiatus which took place in 1995. According to POST Bureau Chief John Dineen, the hiatus took place because of budget cutbacks and because the Command College Advisory Committee felt it was time to review program curriculum. Contrary to the original intent of Command College, the advisory committee felt there was too great an emphasis on futures orientation and not enough on leadership. As a result, following the hiatus and beginning with Class 24, Command College reduced its futures orientation and added a leadership theme. Furthermore, the program was reduced to 18 months with six sessions and retained the research project component. These changes were not prompted by feedback from either the policing community or Command College graduates, but were the result of the Command College Advisory Committee's review of program curriculum.

Later, as a result of feedback from program participants and graduates, Dineen renewed Command College's commitment to a futures orientation and reduced – in some measure – the leadership emphasis. The program also integrated completion of the research project into class sessions and added the requirement for each student to submit a publishable article.⁷ Dineen also reported that one of the original intents of the program was to make the research completed by Command College students available to the law enforcement community; however, research projects were too lengthy for realistic review and application by law enforcement executives. As a result, the program incorporated a requirement to complete a journal article suitable for publication as a capstone experience at the conclusion of the program. These changes were implemented in Class 37 in 2004.

Mr. Dineen reported that the changes incorporated in Class 37 have been very successful and have resulted in a significant number Command College articles being published. In fact, Esensten reports the percentage of graduates publishing their research has risen to a level of about 40 percent. The changes implemented in Class 37 remain in effect today and at the time of this writing, POST has graduated 40 Command College classes with a total of 814 graduates – many of these graduates are now agency chief executives.

2004 Survey Results

Prior to his 2006 survey of Command College graduates, Krull conducted a 2004 assessment that included data regarding the impact of graduation on subsequent promotion. At that time, 45.8 percent of all police chiefs in California were Command College graduates. That equals the number of surveyed police chiefs with a masters

⁷ Powerpoint Presentation – Tom Esensten, Class 41, Session 1

degree – 45.9 percent. While a survey was not taken to determine the number of sitting County Sheriffs that have gone through the program, research revealed that both the current Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of the California Highway Patrol are Command College graduates. In fact, with almost half of California’s chiefs of police as graduates, it is increasingly likely future graduates will be the chief executives of tomorrow.

Chief Anthony Batts of the Long Beach Police Department - who referred to Command College as a “god-send” - is a prime example. Batts is a graduate of Command College Class 20 and a Commissioner on the California Commission for POST. He was a Commander with Long Beach when he attended Command College. Chief Batts related that Command College gave him a long-range planning mindset and helped him plan for a desired future through the use of miniature strategic plans. As Chief of one of the largest police agencies in the nation, this mindset is put to the test every day.

There are other middle manager graduates who have promoted to positions of greater influence as well. Captain Michael L. Brown of the California Highway Patrol - a graduate of Class 13 - is now Commissioner of the California Highway Patrol.

Lieutenant Neil Lingle of the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department - also a graduate of Class 13 - is now the Undersheriff of Riverside County. These are but a few of the countless stories of graduate success. Certainly, as with Chief Batts, Commissioner Brown and Undersheriff Lingle, it is likely that other Command College graduates will

have the opportunity to promote and influence the direction of a number of the 627 POST certified California law enforcement agencies in the future.

The Future

POST has not changed its stated purpose for the Command College. As noted in the current program literature, “The Law Enforcement Command College is designed to prepare law enforcement leaders of today for the challenges of the future.”⁸ In support of that purpose, and in an ongoing effort to assess program effectiveness, POST convened the Command College Advisory Committee in July of 2006, and March and June of 2007. The committee consisted of a variety of subject matter experts, Command College graduates and POST executives and managers. The committee reviewed a variety of issues and focused on program goals, existing curriculum and materials used in Command College.

The committee felt very strongly that the program remains viable and relevant with its futures oriented curriculum. Elements of the program, however, clearly need to be revitalized to ensure it continues to meet the present and future needs of California law enforcement community. The listed recommendations are the result of ongoing program assessments by the Advisory Committee and the author’s research and observations. POST is considering the history of maintaining relevance by assessing these potential changes:

⁸ POST website: <http://post.ca.gov/training/cc/>

- Modernize the methods of delivery to reflect contemporary technologies beyond the currently used didactic lecture methods - these updated methods would necessarily incorporate both technologies and instructional methods designed to accommodate the various learning styles of program participants
- Brand the Command College program with an iconic symbol (similar in nature to the FBI's gold brick)
- Contemporize the Command College motto and logo
- Update the Command College website to make it more user friendly and to allow easier access to completed research projects/articles
- Provide a means to allow all course work to be submitted, reviewed and approved online to reduce hardcopy exchanges and the amount of time needed for instructor-to-student feedback
- Provide each student with a laptop computer for the duration of the program. Each laptop would contain necessary programs and examples of previous Command College work to contribute to the student's learning experience
- Provide each student with a graduate mentor to facilitate student success
- Develop a mechanism to increase graduate feedback to assess subsequent operational successes and continued developmental needs of Command College methodologies
- Provide POST-certified semi-annual continuing education seminars

Considering that POST is an agency in state government and subject to budget constraints and other governmental restrictions, the Command College program cannot – at this point – be as progressive and contemporary in its presentation and approach as it

teaches in its own curriculum. While it is clear that delivery methods need to be updated, the core strength of Command College is truly its futures based curriculum. Other programs have a strong leadership emphasis. This program, however, is designed to *enhance* executive leadership rather than teach it.

Conclusion

While other prestigious managerial programs such as the FBI Academy are available, Command College stands apart because of its unique futures based curriculum. For California law enforcement agencies, a futures orientation is not available through any other educating body. Consistent with the original steering committee's goal, this truly places Command College in a unique position to provide management training that is otherwise unavailable to California law enforcement executives.

For more than 23-years, Command College has been a critical part of the education and development of law enforcement executives and managers in California. At present, POST is "practicing what it preaches" as the program once again evolves to address the future organizational challenges facing California's policing community. Those who are graduates staff many executive positions in the profession; those who may wish to follow should consider the same path to success.