

**INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AWAITS
CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE POLICE OFFICERS?**

by

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The Command College Futures Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue of relevance to law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future; rather, to project a variety of possible scenarios useful for strategic planning in anticipation of the emerging landscape facing policing organizations.

This journal article was created using the futures forecasting process of Command College and its outcomes. Defining the future differs from analyzing the past, because it has not yet happened. In this article, methodologies have been used to discern useful alternatives to enhance the success of planners and leaders in their response to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing it—creating, constraining and adapting to emerging trends and events in a way that optimizes the opportunities and minimizes the threats of relevance to the profession.

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The need for well-qualified police officer candidates is a current and pressing need for all law enforcement agencies. The candidate who possesses a strong educational background and diverse life experience is better prepared to tackle the complexities of modern policing. A high degree of social, political and global understanding is no longer just a desirable trait, it is necessary for a successful career. But how does an individual acquire that level of understanding? Policing would be well served to prepare the peace officer candidate before they begin their career with programs to set the stage for how they think and respond to calls for service. Pre-service participation in an international student exchange program could be that critical first step to enhance the future police officer's critical thinking and community service skills.

California, known as the melting pot of the United States, has 36.5 million residents according to US Census statistics for 2007. Asians account for approximately 11% of the residents, listing at least seven different countries of origin. Latinos account for more than 36% of the state population, with people from Mexico and various Central and South American countries. Approximately 25% of the population is foreign born. (US Census, website 2009) Because of globalization and crime trends intensified due to the diversity of our population, law enforcement agencies are conducting in-service training on topics that were unheard of five to ten years ago. International and domestic

terrorism, international human trafficking, and global Internet crimes are just a few of the emerging training needs facing law enforcement. Cultural competence and language skills are other training topics. Dr. Zheng Wang, a professor of criminal justice at California State University-Long Beach, takes criminal justice students on a cultural exchange to China to explore some of these issues. (Wang, October 2008)

There are 84,000 California peace officers protecting this diverse population. Each officer receives initial and ongoing training with the goal of ensuring they can effectively police their communities. The question is, if their community is replete with those from a myriad of foreign cultures, can the officer truly provide the service they need and deserve? Lacking training in cultural competency or other standards and training to address these demographics and the social demands, any outcomes may be happenstance. To move forward, though, it is important to know how we got where we are in regards to police training. From that foundation, we will explore what we may want to do next to protect and serve our nation-state and its residents.

Historical Perspective

Modern policing in America has its roots in the early twentieth century when August Vollmer, the first police chief in Berkeley CA and a professor at the University of California, embarked on a quest to raise the bar on criminal justice education and training. In 1936 he wrote that “the original purpose of police organizations was protection against major crimes and the apprehension of perpetrators of such offenses”. (Delatorre, 2006) Vollmer was a strong proponent of criminal justice academics in post-

secondary education. He also believed police officers should acquire a college education. Building on Vollmer's early accomplishments, the federal government's Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) of the 1970s offered financial support to peace officers pursuing college degrees, which drove the explosion of criminal justice majors at universities and colleges. (Schafer, 2005)

In an article examining the future of police education and training, Doctors Joseph Schafer and Sandy Boyd state that "an education should prepare a student to succeed in any training regimen or philosophy or in any occupation regardless of major". (Schafer, 2005) According to the authors, the educational process is designed to teach the student how to learn. A college education better prepares an individual by having acquired superior reading and writing abilities, analytical thinking, organization and life management skills. The value of foreign exchange programs and internships for students further enriches these learning outcomes by adding intercultural competence and personal maturity to their skill sets. One of Schafer and Boyd's recommendations was that future approaches to police education should consider using "andragogy" as a method of learning. (Schafer, 2005) This method calls for more self-directed learning and would be well-served through foreign internship programs.

Within academia, the value of foreign exchange studies has been practiced for decades. The Council for the International Educational Exchange (CIES) of Scholars, the organization charged with administering the State Department's foreign academic exchange programs, sponsors opportunities for educators, administrators, and others to

study abroad in their respective fields. Summer programs cover topics such as civil-military relations, human rights abuses, social movements and political participation, and women, gender and citizen participation. (CIES website) They also sponsor programs for high school and college students interested in expanding their knowledge and understanding of the world. An internet search revealed almost all institutions of higher learning have some type of curriculum that offers their students opportunities to study in both domestic and international exchange programs.

A recent trend in educational institutions is the “Gap Year” or bridge year. The term applies to the time between high school and college (and sometimes during the middle of college) when a student elects to do service work abroad or some other structured activity rather than settling into the college classroom. Much like the benefits of internship programs, the “gap year” research suggests that participants acquire enhanced focus and maturity, motivation, and clearer goals. (MacDonald, G., August 2008) One young American student, Jacob Feinstein of Brookville, New York, traveled to New Zealand to work for a software start-up company for a year. He felt the experience of flying alone internationally, through non-English speaking countries, and living in a house with eleven peers, had made him a much more self-sufficient person and it had boosted his confidence and life skills. (MacDonald, G., August 2008) Educators are recognizing the link served by “gap year” and foreign exchange programs and the student’s maturity. (MacDonald, G. 2008) The benefits and desired outcomes of these programs are akin to what law enforcement agencies look for in their police officer candidates: maturity,

focus, self-sufficiency, confidence and strong life skills. Currently, though, no California police academy addresses the advantages foreign study presents.

In California, police agencies follow the guidelines set forth by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) in the recruitment, selection and training of sworn law enforcement officers. Since 1959, the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) has set the guidelines for the recruitment, selection and training of peace officers. Some of the learning domains covered that are reflective of societal changes over the last twenty years include: policing in the community (18 hours), domestic violence (10 hours), people with disabilities (6 hours), gang awareness (2 hours), and cultural diversity/discrimination (16 hours). (POST, 2008) Academy training, though, does not include the less tangible learning outcomes that could be acquired through an international exchange program.

In 2005, though, POST academy scenario testing has been redesigned to incorporate rating components that evaluate some of the emotional, ethical, and character traits that are often difficult to teach in the classroom (POST, 2008). As notable as these efforts are, they do not reach far enough into real-life knowledge that can only be obtained through a hands-on “worldly” experience.

Emerging Trends

In a comprehensive study entitled *55 Trends Now Shaping the Future of Policing*, by Dr Marvin Cetron, (Forecasting International, December 2007) forecast the rate of

technological change, demographics and changing social values as the three most important forces facing police communities in the future. One of Cetron's recommendations is that U.S. police agencies should partner with international societies that already are coping with the problems America will face in the future. Some agencies in the United States have already begun to seek solutions to social problems through partnerships with other international agencies.

Five of the top ten trends in the *55 Trends Now Shaping the Future of Policing* address issues that could be most directly affected by international student intern partnerships. For example, the trend of changing societal values poses rich opportunity for students to travel abroad and compare American social issues and their relationship with foreign cultures. The aftermath of the 9-11 disaster has led federal criminal justice intelligence agencies to investigate the historical roots and basic causes of Islamic terrorism. (Cetron, 2007) An outgrowth of this trend seen in universities is a focus within criminal justice majors that includes homeland security and intelligence analysis. (Schafer, 2005) Many of these programs encourage summer internships and other programs that take students abroad for a short time.

Another major trend is the global economy becoming more integrated. International fraud, money laundering and economic crimes, particularly those carried out via the Internet, are a growing problem. Globalization and cross-national crimes are becoming more difficult to investigate. Networking with international police communities is essential to address these types of cases. A police officer candidate who has taken the

time to immerse themselves in a short or long-term study in a foreign country would be exposed to how economic crimes affect the culture, how law enforcement deals with the issue, and how policy makers respond.

An expert panel weighs in

A panel of police professionals, criminal justice educators, and human resource experts was convened to study this concept. (NGT Panel, 2008) One panel member, Don Beasley, has been the director of a POST regional police recruit academy for many years. They identified a number of trends and created outcomes of significant importance to the issue. The panel was concerned about the lack of understanding for differing cultural norms by officers. They also expressed concern about the complexity of law enforcement and the breadth of knowledge necessary to be successful as an entry-level police officer. The panel felt there had been an increase in public expectations as it relates to an officer's understanding of global matters. A criminal justice professor on the panel said he has seen tremendous growth from students who have participated in foreign exchange programs while they were in college. He believes it leads to a person's tolerance and understanding of the world and people from different cultures. Although he has not worked with police academy students, he does believe the idea of attaching a foreign internship to their program would add similar value.

One of the more interesting trends was the quality of police applicants and the change currently being experienced with the military personnel returning from the Iraq War. The academy director said this is similar to the post Vietnam War era when many returning

soldiers, including himself, became police officers. Soldiers who have served in foreign countries gain a perspective beyond that of others who never leave their hometowns. Their view of the world and how they fit in it is generally broader than others. Foreign service in the military and in academia has value and would make for better cops. Ideally, if all candidates had this as part of their resume they would make more effective law enforcement officers. Realistically, the logistics to implement a mandatory program are daunting. It might be more feasible to offer incentives or preferences to those who have voluntarily completed internships prior to employment. Through proactive efforts by all stakeholders, individuals who are considering a law enforcement career should be encouraged to explore foreign internships.

Vision for the Future

The vision of implementing an international internship program for police officer applicants extends on the trend among progressive police agencies to encourage some college education from their applicants. Monetary incentives are commonly given to officers with college degrees. A police recruit who has developed good learning habits through a college education is better equipped to succeed in the academy training experience. This same premise suggests the college-educated police academy graduate will have enhanced skills that allow him/her to apply those abilities on the job. One with a foreign internship in their resume will be even that much more effective.

A topic-specific approach for internship candidates (whether they be pre-service or in-service) could be tailored to address specific issues that are common among international

communities. One example might be gang problems within a Latin American country compared to those experienced within a typical California city. Foreign language skills could be built into objectives, depending on the length of study. LAPD has an exchange programs for police officers to travel abroad and learn the nuances of these specific subject areas. It allows for expertise in subject matter on the global playing field. They have recognized the need to partner with foreign criminal justice agencies to better carry out their mission of public safety. The outcomes have proven valuable for both partners: the LAPD officers establish strong working relationships with police officials in countries, thereby gaining intelligence sources that would otherwise be unavailable; and, foreign police officials gain knowledge on modern police training, fingerprinting, and other U.S. police practices. (Delgadillo, 2008)

Currently, there are domestic criminal justice organizations that have internship programs that could be adapted to fit the parameters of a California POST program. They partner with local, state and federal criminal justice agencies. For instance, the International Family Justice Center, headquartered in San Diego, California has sponsored over one hundred international internships since it began operating in 1998. (Strack, June 2008) The San Diego Center has sister agencies throughout the world, and interns learn commonalities and unique cultural differences surrounding the issue of domestic violence. Another example is the Federal Bureau of Investigation's honors internships. In a recent article published in the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, a participant expressed his thoughts on the value of such programs by stating it provided the student with

unparalleled real-world experience, allowing for more effective formulation and exploration of career goals. (Lees, 2008)

A POST approved internship curriculum, made available to students at community colleges and universities, would provide the police officer applicant with skills and abilities needed for their professional lives. A partial list might include communication and language, advanced technology, cultural sensitivity and understanding, illicit narcotics trades, human trafficking, political and religious issues, and other criminal justice topics. The military veteran, returning from a tour of duty overseas might be able to petition the requirement by demonstrating comparable experiences gained while deployed. For example, a soldier assigned to protect a foreign embassy could certainly articulate experiences gained and their application to the internship requirement. Some military assignments, particularly those in intense combat zones, might focus on the social and psychological studies regarding the use of lethal force.

Development of an international internship program would require a partnership between POST and educational institutions throughout the state. There are 38 regional police academies. Most of them are part of a community college campus. Nearby police and sheriff agencies support the regional community college programs. The California State University system and the University of California system all have relationships with feeder community colleges. Designing curriculum, program development and other components would require a committee with members from all these stakeholder groups. Since most of the colleges and universities already have existing internship programs, the

basic framework of these programs could be used as a starting point. Some programs are independent study where the student reports back to their college with proof of “attendance” as part of their course enrollment. Others take the form of guided trips with professors who expose their students to the desired learning points.

A pilot program could be lead by a local law enforcement agency, partnering with a community college or university that already has a criminal justice program. Since POST would ultimately be the organization to certify the internship program, their involvement at this stage would be crucial. Instructors at the academies are knowledgeable on learning dimensions and how they are integrated with the desired outcomes and goals. Applying these principles to an international internship program is a natural progression or adaptation.

This partnership should address creative ways to accommodate the international student exchange program for police officer candidates. Flexibility will be vital. This means the requirement might be fulfilled right out of high school through a “Gap Year” experience or it might occur sometime during their college studies, such as through a summer session abroad. Inserting it within the academy curriculum would not be possible, though.

Don Beaseley, a POST academy director, notes that course curriculum and instructional methodologies are regularly evaluated and updated, with keen attention and scrutiny to include only mandated and necessary material. One of the obvious considerations will

be making the mandate something that is not cost prohibitive for all police officer candidates. Funding sources, such as grants, military GI benefits, and other creative financing streams will be critical. One of the expert panel members who is a businessman with international clients felt the concept was viable and worthy of pursuit. He suggested eliciting community support from individuals might be one of the ways to approach the cost issues. Designing a program that offers these types of choices and opportunities will provide for a greater possibility of success.

The number of recruits graduating from police academies throughout the state will continue to increase as the demand for police officers in California rises. Implementing the lofty ideal of foreign internships in the midst of this need is not unnoticed. Competing demands for time and dollars will impede the concept. Buy-in from law enforcement leaders who are concerned with putting officers on the street will be challenging. With that said, the value of a foreign internship is not diminished. Rather, how to get there is the question. Perhaps, beginning with a few students in a trial program could expose the benefits to decision makers. Moving towards a mandatory program would be the long term goal.

Conclusion

The guardians of civilized societies are the law enforcement officers who serve and protect their communities. They are expected to be skilled in so many areas. They must be well educated and have well-developed critical thinking skills. These individuals need to have a strong sense of self and how they fit into a rapidly changing world. The young

man or woman who has spent even a short amount of time visiting or living in a foreign culture develops a stronger understanding of the nature of humans and their varied needs.

The foreign internship graduate will have improved self-confidence, maturity, and life-long pursuit of personal development. An international study program will offer much in the way of accomplishing these goals. As we near the second decade of the twenty-first century, the workforce of the future continues to be an evolving topic. Addressing these concerns, expanding the perspective of our newest peace officers is a worthy goal.

Foreign study may be the best first step on that way.

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