



# **LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH: Challenges and Opportunities in Educating Law Enforcement Officers**

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# OUTLINE

1. Importance of Education and Training
2. Societal Expectations of Law Enforcement Personnel
3. Challenges for Law Enforcement Agencies and Educational Institutions
4. Educational Initiatives at GWU
5. Opportunities for Collaboration and Partnerships
6. Concluding Comments
7. Questions and Discussion

# 1. Increasing Importance of Education and Training

- Relevance of higher levels of training and role of tertiary education now more highly regarded than 25 years ago.
- Attitudes toward 'external' education and training as 'too theoretical and thereby irrelevant' have improved.
- Globally, positive changes in Recruitment, Selection and Basic Training have occurred.
- Formal relationships with tertiary education programs have developed.
- 'Rote' learning is being replaced by critical thinking, problem solving, and scenario-based learning.

## 2. Societal Expectations of Law Enforcement Personnel

- Public expectations have changed and expanded in parallel with changing patterns of crime and societal behaviors.
- Law enforcement remains a basic expectation, however, police are often the ‘first contact’ with societal problems – drug abuse, domestic violence, mental health crises, etc.
- Police are not ‘heavily armed’ social workers or mental health professionals, yet they are expected to identify untoward symptoms and behaviors, know how to contact the appropriate support, and recognize that arrest may not be the necessary or appropriate action.

# BUT...the reality is...

- Community-Police relationships have become more strained in the U.S. due to increased incidences of 'police violence.'
- Inappropriate police behavior resulting in unjustified injury or death negatively affects community respect.
- The trend toward 'militarization' of law enforcement (riot control gear, armored personnel carriers, etc.) is **not** viewed positively.
- Loss of respect is **not** easy to reverse.
- Does 'police violence' reflect inadequate recruitment, selection, training, education, supervision? Increased stress?
- Better education and training can be **one** positive factor in regaining community respect, along with other strategies.

### 3. Challenges for Law Enforcement to Develop and Sustain Improved Education and Training Programs

- Availability of high quality tertiary education institutions with an interest in and commitment to law enforcement education.
- Academic faculty willing to modify and develop intellectually rigorous courses that are also clearly relevant.
- Faculty and police academy instructors collaboration to revise academy course content to earn academic credit.
- High cost of tertiary education. Tuition discounts and financial aid needed.
- Flexible work schedules to enable attending university classes.

## 4a. Educational Initiative at GWU

### 'Stackable Certificates' Leading to a Bachelor's Degree

- Designed to enable enrollment in three consecutive certificate programs. A free-standing certificate is awarded after completion of each one.
- Completion of the three certificates, combined with credits for general education courses, qualify for an Associate degree and a Bachelor's degree in Professional Studies.
- Credits toward the certificates and degrees can be transferred from other accredited institutions.
- Continues to assist many law enforcement personnel to complete a tertiary qualification.

## 4b. Educational Initiative - GWU and American University

### Graduate Certificate in Strategic Management and Executive Leadership

- Collaborative arrangement between The George Washington University and American University.
- A graduate certificate developed specially for mid to senior level sworn and civilian members of police departments in the DC metropolitan area.
- A 'Double Badged' certificate (both universities) would be awarded upon completion.
- Academic credits from the certificate would apply towards a master's degree at either university.
- Regrettably, program abandoned upon withdrawal of scholarships.



# 5. Opportunities for Collaboration & Partnerships

## Tertiary education and training

Recruit instructors with knowledge, skills and experience to teach across sectors.

## Research

Identify applied research topics which are academically rigorous and relevant.

Projects can serve multiple purposes for academia and law enforcement.

## Academic Advisory Groups

MPD, Washington DC, established an advisory group of academic members and senior local law enforcement officials. Senior international law enforcement leaders will advise as external members.

Will assist the MPD Academy to review existing programs, establish a research agenda, draft a strategic plan, etc.

## 6. Concluding Comments

- This presentation highlighted opportunities for law enforcement agencies and academic institutions to work together to advance collaboration between these two important sectors.
- Outcomes from this collaboration will be better educated law enforcement professionals at every level.
- The scope of collaboration has potential to expand to many related disciplines, including security, public health, and leader development – locally, nationally and globally.
- As these programs develop and expand throughout the world, it is vital that the ideas and findings be shared by practitioners and academics on a regular basis.

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JONATHAN BACHMAN/REUTERS

**A demonstrator protesting the shooting death of Alton Sterling is detained near the Baton Rouge Police Department headquarters.**

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## 7. Questions and Discussion

“A better educated and trained officer is a better officer”