Higher Education and Police Promotion:

An Analysis of Options

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Action Report
Spring Semester 2007

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April 22, 2007

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Dear Dr. Sullivan:

I have the honor of submitting to you Higher Education and Police Promotion: An Analysis of Options. The report is the product of extensive research and analysis over the winter and spring months of 2007. Police education requirements and promotional standards have long been an issue for law enforcement administrators. This study presents three management policy options aimed at improving the education level and promotional incentives within local law enforcement agencies.

After an in-depth examination, my recommendation is to retain the current policies on education and promotional requirements. This advice is based on four evaluative criteria: economic feasibility, individual morale, effects on the promotional recruitment pool, and effects on raising educational level. The decision to maintain the status quo scored highest of the reviewed policy options when all four evaluative criteria were considered with equal weight.

The above mentioned recommendation serves as the most efficient option in terms of retaining the highest qualified pool of applicants. Communities depend on high quality service from their law enforcement agencies. This policy option will assist these law enforcement agencies in running effectively, meeting their needs, and performing their missions.

Respectfully,

Jon C. Comottor
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter of Transmittal .................................................. i
Table of Contents ......................................................... ii
Executive Summary ......................................................... iii

CHAPTER

  I.  Problem Statement ................................................... 1
  II. Background and Literature Review ............................. 2
  III. Research Methodology and Evaluative Criteria .......... 6
       Research Methodology ........................................... 6
       Evaluative Criteria .............................................. 7
  IV. Policy Options ....................................................... 9
       Option 1: Maintain Status Quo ................................ 10
       Option 2: Institute Monthly Bonus System ............... 12
       Option 3: Require a College Degree for Police Officers 16
  V.  Recommendation for Change ....................................... 20
  VI. References ............................................................ 23
Executive Summary

ISSUE: Higher Education and Promotional Opportunities for Police Officers

Police administrators across the country continue to face the age old question of how to recruit high quality police officers that will remain loyal to the department and seek promotions when eligible. One approach that continues to garner attention from scholars is increasing the educational requirements for local law enforcement agencies. This study looks at alternative ways to enhance the education among police officers and offer incentives to pursue promotions.

METHODS

Information for this report was collected using two separate methods. First, professional journals, surveys, and academic literature garnered from the Florida University System’s WEB LUIS database were reviewed to gain background information and insight from experts. Second, information regarding size, hiring standards, and budget allowances was obtained from the Boca Raton Police Department to ascertain how well the proposed policy options would fit within the structure of a local law enforcement agency.

PROPOSED POLICY OPTIONS

This report discusses and compares three options to enhance the educational and promotional opportunities within local law enforcement agencies.

- **Maintaining the Status Quo:** maintaining all current policies regarding educational requirements and promotional eligibility.

- **Instituting a Monthly Bonus System:** providing a monetary bonus for those officers that have a college degree and are promoted to the rank of sergeant or higher. The amount of the bonus is dependant upon the level of degree (bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate) and rank (sergeant, lieutenant, captain, etc.) held by the officer.

- **Requiring a College Degree for Police Officers:** all new applicants, regardless of previous experience, must have a bachelor’s degree or higher to be considered for employment.

Each option was evaluated against four criteria: economic feasibility, individual morale, effects on the promotional recruitment pool, and effects on raising educational level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The preferable policy for recruiting and maintaining the best quality police officers is to maintain the status quo. While the scores for each policy option were very close, the recommendation to uphold the current educational and promotional policies proved to be the most beneficial. The other two policy alternatives remain feasible but this study indicates that they have fewer advantages than maintaining the status quo. This recommendation will not incur any additional cost, affect the recruitment pool of qualified applicants, or cause a shift in officer morale.
I.) Problem Statement

The debate over the value of higher education continues to garner much attention from police administrators and scholars throughout the country. Findings from the Wickersham Commission, published in 1931, provide early support for the idea that police officers should possess a four-year degree as an entry-level requirement. Recent national surveys (Whetstone, 2000) and increases in education requirements for police officer applicants indicate that the average educational level of police personnel is on the rise. While a majority of relevant research focuses on the legitimacy of higher education as a hiring component, comparatively less attention addresses the effects that a college degree has on career advancement.

Policing remains a reasonably stable occupation in which officers have the opportunity to remain at their initial rank or pursue a promotion. Promotions are widely seen as a remedy for officers dissatisfied with pay rate, the nature of the job, and supervision. Many officers compete in the promotional process to fulfill a personal goal. It is not unusual, however, for a large proportion of qualified officers to forego the promotional process due to factors such as family considerations and satisfaction with current assignment. When examining officer decisions to engage in the promotional process, one must consider education as a relevant variable (Carlan & Bixbee, 2000).

The issue of whether a college education assists officers in the promotional process is still unresolved. While some studies indicate that higher education is an asset in the managerial and supervisory ranks, other research implies that education does not alter the essential functions of policing (Whetstone, 2001). This Action Report examines the effectiveness of higher learning and suggests that college educated law enforcement officers are better suited to fulfill their duties.
II.) Background and Literature Review

Background

Every national census of police personnel shows the average educational level is on the rise, as is the proportion of police officers holding a college degree (Whetstone, 2000). This increase is caused by veteran officers pursuing degrees while on the job, as well as a new applicant pool presenting higher education credentials. The impetus for this activity can be attributed to many factors dating as far back as the 1960s. Perhaps the most significant contributions were the 1967 publication of reports from the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice and the Omnibus Crime Control Act and Safe Streets Act in 1968 (Carter, 1990). The President’s Commission recommended that police educational standards be raised, with the ultimate goal of requiring a bachelor’s degree as a minimum standard of employment. One provision of the Omnibus Crime Control Act was the creation of the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP). In the case of police, the belief was that better-educated law enforcement officers would provide more responsive, more comprehensive, and more insightful police service. In the long term, as these officers attained police leadership positions, they would explore new approaches, with more creativity and better planning (Carter, 1990).

Despite this upward shift in the education level of police officers, however, it is still not unusual for a large number of qualified officers to decline to participate in the promotional process (Whetstone, 2001). When examining officer decisions to seek promotion, education is one variable that weighs heavily on the decisions. Many departments have done a poor job of valuing college education and providing promotion-based incentives for obtaining a degree (Whetstone, 2001). In fact, Dantzker (1993) warns that agencies wishing to retain college-
educated officers need to demonstrate a greater commitment to these employees and that these agencies must examine the job and organizational structure carefully to ensure employee commitment.

**Literature Review**

Educational prerequisites are relatively new requirements for police officers. August Vollmer’s research at the beginning of the twentieth century suggests that officers have to be selected out of the best people in society to improve the quality of police service (Kakar, 1998). Many scholars interpret Vollmer’s statement to mean that individuals with higher levels of education are more qualified to perform police duties.

The debate whether college educated officers are more capable to perform their jobs than their counterparts without a college degree continues to be a main focus of research. Many existing studies concentrate on the relationship between police officers’ education level and variables such as performance, attitude, and professional identity. While these independent variables do not directly address promotional capabilities, they do provide insight into the level of effectiveness that higher education has on police officers’ careers.

Police education studies present diverse results. The current emphasis on quality management and community-oriented policing causes many scholars to feel that it is beneficial for police departments to have college-educated officers interacting with the public. These officers have well-developed communication skills and a racial awareness that promotes a professional demeanor and increases the success of the agency (Decker & Huckabee, 2002). Thus, proponents for higher education among police officers maintain that those officers with a college degree are more likely to appreciate the role of police in a democratic society, be more
tolerant of community members, build trust with citizens, and invest more resources in crime prevention (Worden, 1990). Analyses of survey research also reveal that college-educated officers are predisposed to exercise more discretion and are less likely to invoke the law in discretionary situations (Worden, 1990).

Other scholars, however, contend that education can be counterproductive to success within police departments. These scholars are quick to suggest that a better-educated police department may experience a higher turnover rate (Whetstone, 2001). One reason for this phenomenon is that those officers with a college degree quickly become frustrated from a lack of challenges on the job. This negative relationship between education level and attitudes causes many dissatisfied officers to leave policing for a different occupation (Kakar, 1998). A second factor supporting the high turnover rate is that many departments do a poor job of recognizing college education and providing promotion-based incentives for obtaining a degree (Whetstone, 2001). Research indicates that a potential approach to lessen the high turnover rate and enhance job satisfaction among officers involves offering more promotional opportunities, job enrichment, and chances for personal development (Whetstone, 2001).

Decker and Huckabee (2002) examined the issue of raising the education requirements (requiring a college degree) for local law enforcement agencies in their case study of the Indianapolis Police Department (IPD). Data were collected from the application files of “successful police applicants,” or those that were initially hired by the IPD in eight separate recruit classes from the mid 1990s.

The researchers examined the data to determine what effects the educational requirement changes would have on the typical pool of applicants. Most (65.3 percent) of the successful police applicants did not have a college degree. “Thus, a policy requiring a college degree would
significantly alter the traditional composition of recruit classes, and eventually of the entire police department” (Decker & Huckabee, 2002, p. 799). Changing the education requirement for the department would markedly reduce the number of applicants and force administrators to institute more focused and aggressive recruiting strategies. Likewise, it could become necessary to make the job more appealing through enhanced salaries, accelerated promotions, and a more relaxed bureaucratic structure that would encourage innovation and initiative. Based on the results of their case study, Decker and Huckabee did not recommend a policy that would increase the education requirements for the IPD.

One study in particular serves as an adequate summary of certain aspects of education in policing. Robert Worden (1990) combines officer surveys and citizen surveys to provide empirical evidence concerning the relationships between a college education and officers’ attitudes and behavior. The results from this study are largely consistent with those of previous research. The attitudes of officers who earn college degrees do not differ substantially from those of their less educated colleagues (Worden, 1990). In addition, a college degree accounts for small and insignificant differences when considering police-citizen encounters. Worden (1990) expands on previous research by using data that enable one to distinguish between officers who earn a degree before they enter police work and those who receive a degree while on the job. One downfall to this research is that none of the available indicators adequately capture other important aspects of officers’ educational background. There is no mention of the majors of college-educated officers (qualitative data) or the cumulative grade point average earned by officers with a college degree (quantitative data). Though the results from this study contend that education is not a contributing factor to success in policing, one must realize that
the data focus on the attitudes and performance of police officers rather than the promotional process itself.

Another important topic that links education to the promotional process for police officers is the level of morale present within the department. The intangible nature of morale often makes it difficult to identify. While scores of researchers have examined the concept of morale, it remains a rather ambiguous term. For purposes of this Action Report, the author defines morale as the capacity of people to maintain belief in an institution or a goal, or even in oneself and others. In other words, morale is a measure of the officer’s perception of his or her performance.

Kakar (1998) examined the relationship between morale and education in his case study of police departments in Metropolitan Dade County (greater Miami area). The participating police officers (n = 134) were given a self-report survey that determined officer performance and satisfaction. These surveys revealed that the police officers with a college education rated themselves significantly higher on several categories involving stress, changing work conditions, and acceptance of criticism. These college educated officers, however, rated the lowest when asked about attitudes toward their job, office, and department. This finding supports earlier research and suggests that officers with higher education do not feel their education is appreciated. Policy makers and administrators responsible for rewarding and promoting officers should perhaps make changes to ensure that qualified officers are valued and rewarded.

III.) Research Methodology and Evaluative Criteria

Research Methodology
Information for this report was collected using two methods. First, the author conducted an analysis of professional journals, surveys, and academic literature garnered from the Florida University System’s WEB LUIS database. After several months of scouring the literature, the author was able to locate a multitude of articles pertaining to higher education of police officers and its effect on the promotional process. The literature provided a variety of different viewpoints on the topic and gave valuable insight into the background of higher education, the problems it faces, and various policy options to effectively address the issue.

Second, the author obtained information regarding size, hiring standards, and budget allowances from the Boca Raton Police Department. The purpose for this was to ascertain how well the proposed policy options would fit within the structure of a local law enforcement agency.

**Evaluative Criteria**

In an effort to evaluate the information found in the literature, the researcher will use the following four criteria: economic feasibility, individual morale, effects on the promotional recruitment pool, and effects on raising educational level. Outlined in a decision matrix with a ranking scale, the options will be measured and scored according to the extent to which they meet the designated criteria (high, moderate, low). A ranking of 3 would be the highest possible score, while a ranking of 1 would be the lowest.

These criteria were selected as representative of the considerations made in the evaluation of promotional policy alternatives. Other criteria such as agency-wide benefit, political acceptability, and administrative feasibility could not be evaluated in the same manner. In each
case, appropriate data is not available and would take an actual implementation to generate some relevant information. These alternative criteria, while important, are secondary to this study.

First, economic feasibility rates the ability of a local law enforcement agency to enact a particular policy option within its current budgetary restraints. This criterion rates the reasonableness of the costs associated with implementing new policy options.

Second, individual morale rates how well the policy option meets the individual law enforcement officer’s needs and career objectives. Morale is defined as a state of mind in which men and women voluntarily seek to develop and apply their full powers to the task in which they are engaged (Whetstone, 2000). Other scholars contend that morale is a state of mind existing among the members of a group, stimulating them to the highest achievement in the attainment of a worthy objective. For purposes of this study, that “highest achievement” would be seen in gaining a promotion within the police department. In sum, this criterion measures the extent to which self-confidence, poise, and overall job satisfaction is affected.

Third, the effect on the recruitment pool of promotional candidates assesses the characteristics and qualifications of all officers eligible for promotion in a particular department. Retention within local law enforcement agencies is a vital component of maintaining a successful police department. Many local agencies neglect the advancement of their officers’ career and life goals. This criterion would measure the changes that each management policy option would have on the promotional recruitment pool. To clarify, the recruitment pool is comprised of any and all officers that are eligible for promotion (at the rank of sergeant and above) based on the prerequisites of the department.

Fourth, the effect on increasing the education level measures the amount of police officers that possess a college degree. The purpose of this criterion is to determine how each of
the proposed management policy options would increase the amount of police officers that have a college degree.

**Limitations**

One limitation of this study is the lack of consistency among local law enforcement agencies throughout the country. It is difficult to make sweeping generalizations for all police and sheriffs departments in this country when the logistics of each are so very different. Certain facts and data from the literature often pertain to one department, not all police departments in general. These facts are not necessarily indicative of all agencies due to factors such as department size, budgetary constraints, geographic location, etc.

**IV.) Management Policy Options**

This section identifies the three most important management policy options relating to higher education and promotional opportunities available to officers in local police departments. The three policy options for this Action Report are presented as being arrayed on a continuum that spans from no significant change to a formal, authoritative change, with the middle ground held by offering pay increases as an incentive for pursuing both higher education and promotion within the department. The first policy option suggests that local law enforcement agencies maintain the current rules and regulations for education and promotional requirements. More simply, this option calls for upholding the status quo. The second policy option recommends that local law enforcement agencies provide a monthly bonus to those officers that have a college degree and have been promoted to the rank of sergeant or above. This approach is the second point on the aforementioned continuum and calls for a minor change that would provide the
incentive for officers to obtain a college degree and pursue promotion. The third policy option takes a more drastic approach and proposes that local law enforcement agencies require every officer in the department to have a college degree. Each of these policy options is based on the findings cited in the background and literature review and will be expanded upon in the next few sections.

Each option is evaluated utilizing the four criteria detailed in the previous section: economic feasibility, individual morale, effects on the promotional recruitment pool, and effects on raising educational level. These management policy options are developed to ascertain the effects that higher education has on promotional opportunities for police officers. Furthermore, these policy options are built to assist local law enforcement agencies in creating and maintaining qualified officers.

For purposes of this section, the Boca Raton Police Department will be used as the model department. The department, located in Boca Raton, Florida (Palm Beach County), employs a sworn force of 198 officers serving a population of more than 83,960 people. Currently, there are 34 officers that hold a rank of sergeant or higher. This department is classified as a “medium” sized agency and was chosen due to the researcher’s previous volunteer experience and familiarization with the department.

**Policy Option 1: Maintain the Current Policy (Status Quo)**

This option would leave the policies and prerequisites for promotion as written and developed by the Boca Raton Police Department. Currently, the education requirements for employment are as follows: minimum of 60 credits from an accredited college, or two years
active duty military with an honorable discharge, or three years certified law enforcement experience as a police officer (Webmaster, City of Boca Raton, 2007).

In terms of promotional opportunities, the department requires five years of experience as a Boca Raton Police Officer prior to becoming eligible for the sergeant examination. Along with the examination, each applicant must complete a rigorous interview process with a panel of high ranking officers. The goal of this interview process is to determine the leadership capabilities and other job related skills that the applicant possesses. There are no additional education requirements in order to be eligible for promotion.

Economic Feasibility

Maintaining the current practices and procedures for education requirements and promotional opportunities will not incur any additional costs for the department. Thus, this policy option is very feasible economically and receives the highest possible ranking of 3 points. Since no changes will be made, there is no additional work or money involved with retaining the status quo.

Individual Morale

By not making any changes to educational standards or promotional requirements, there is no opportunity for the morale of the individual officers to change, at least not as it relates to education or advancement. To date, there has not been any study or examination into the level of morale that officers in the Boca Raton Police Department exhibit. This lack of knowledge, coupled with the fact that no significant policy changes are proposed for this option, results in a ranking of 2 points for this criterion. While there are no changes being made, it is unknown
whether the current morale is positive or negative. Thus, the only viable scoring option is 2 points, placing it in the middle of the matrix.

**Effects on Recruitment Pool**

Similar to the previous criterion, maintaining the status quo for education and promotional requirements will not have a significant impact on the recruitment pool for those officers eligible for advancement. Since the numbers will not change, the department will not have to spend any additional time administering the promotional examination or interview process. This is a major benefit, and results in a maximum score of 3 points on the decision matrix.

**Effects on Raising Education Level**

By not making any significant change to the current education policy for the Boca Raton Police Department, there will not be any major changes in the education level of the officers. Maintaining the status quo means that the department will likely continue to recruit and hire individuals that meet the minimum requirements. Since a college degree is not a minimum hiring requirement, there will not be an increase in the education level within the department. For that reason, this criterion receives the lowest possible score of 1 point on the decision matrix.

**Policy Option 2: Implement a Monthly Bonus Incentive**

Currently, the Boca Raton Police Department does not provide any monetary bonus for those officers that hold a bachelor’s degree or higher. This management policy option calls for
the institution of a monetary bonus system awarded to those officers that hold a degree(s) and have successfully risen to the rank of sergeant or above. The chart below depicts the specific allotment of money, based on rank and type of degree held by the officer. It should be noted that these monthly bonuses are awarded solely because of educational achievements. Job performance and longevity, while important, are not considered when granting the education bonus.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Degree Held</th>
<th>Dollar Amount</th>
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<td>Bachelor's</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Economic Feasibility

Obviously, making the commitment to provide the qualified officers with a substantial bonus based on educational success would be a costly endeavor for the Boca Raton Police Department. The command staff of the department is structured in the following way: 20 sergeants, 3 lieutenants, 7 captains, 3 assistant chiefs, and 1 chief. At this rate, it would cost the department a minimum of $13,200 per month, or $158,400 per year, to institute this policy.
option (calculations using only the figures for a bachelor’s degree). During the 2005-2006 fiscal year, the Boca Raton Police Department’s approved budget totaled $28,126,600 (Webmaster, City of Boca Raton, 2007). While some individuals may argue that this monthly bonus system would easily work within the current budget, the author believes that an economic pledge of this magnitude would create certain budgetary deficits for the department. Thus, this criterion receives the lowest possible score of 1 point on the scoring matrix.

Individual Morale

This criterion proved very difficult to evaluate. The benefit derived from the institution of this policy option is all but entirely financial. The scoring for this criterion is heavily based on a case study performed by Delbert C. Miller titled “Economic Factors in the Morale of College-Trained Adults.” Although it is rather dated, this is a classic study of institutional morale and is still highly regarded in the field today. Miller (1941), states that “it is not uncommon for the person with a low morale to explain his inability to reach his goals because of insufficient income.” Using only this statement as a basis for evaluation, it would seem easy to deduce that with increased income comes increased morale. There are many other factors, however, that shape the morale of police officers.

As discussed in the literature review, current job assignment/shift and association with co-workers have major impacts on the morale of police officers (Whetstone, 2000). The Boca Raton Police Department should also recognize that promotional processes can produce adverse effects. The structure of the system means that there are employees who neither desire nor are equipped to compete in the promotional process. This situation may create a climate in which those who do not gain promotion are left feeling like failures, or left with very low morale levels. Scarborough (2000) found that many officers who had participated in previous promotional
processes and failed grew disenchanted and declined to participate in subsequent promotional opportunities (Whetstone, 2001).

After considering all of the factors that may affect morale, it is the opinion of the researcher that this criterion be given a score of 2 points on the scoring matrix. While the substantial increase in income would certainly boost morale to some degree, there are too many other issues that police officers face that stand to affect the individual morale.

Effects on Recruitment Pool

Recruiting and maintaining the highest qualified pool of individuals has long been a goal of nearly every professional organization, not just local police departments. Osterburg and Trubitt (1970) developed very strong opinions in relation to higher education and recruitment efforts. While their research related to the initial hiring practices and recruitment of local police departments, it is not unreasonable to apply their findings to a promotional recruitment pool. Osterburg and Trubitt (1970) found that academic education is a necessary factor that should be considered when developing a pool of applicants and that a firm position on higher education should be articulated by each department. Their research also supported the notion that “college education should not only be encouraged but supported financially.” (Osterburg & Trubitt, 1970, 460).

It is the opinion of the author that offering a monthly bonus to those officers that hold at least a bachelor’s degree would not be detrimental to the make-up of the promotional recruitment pool. Since this policy option does not change any of the minimum eligibility requirements for promotion, offering additional money as a reward for educational attainments would not affect the size of the recruitment pool. A monthly bonus system of this magnitude would be the first of its kind. A newly promoted sergeant holding a bachelor’s degree would receive a yearly bonus of
$3,600 on top of the guaranteed raise for gaining promotion within the department. It would not be a stretch to deduce that a salary increase of this magnitude would not only maintain the current recruitment pool, but it would actually increase it. For this reason, along with the support of previous literature, the author gives this criterion a maximum score of 3 points on the decision matrix.

**Effects on Raising Education Level**

Instituting this monthly bonus system would have a modest effect on raising the education level within the Boca Raton Police Department. While this policy option does not require any of the officers to have a college degree, it does provide monetary incentive for doing so. For that reason, it is feasible to believe that a fair number current officers or new recruits would be motivated to obtain a degree. The moderate nature of this criterion results in a score of 2 points on the decision matrix.

**Policy Option 3: Require a Bachelor’s Degree For All New Applicants**

As previously mentioned, the trend toward increasing educational requirements for new police officers echoes as far back as the early 1900s (Decker & Huckabee, 2002). Proponents of this movement argue that police departments must have some mechanism to ensure a regular flow of intelligent, capable people into the ranks of policing. These scholars understand that police leaders are selected from the rank and file and that there is a specific need for educated people who will some day participate in the promotional process and rise to the top.

Based on the current hiring standards for the Boca Raton Police Department, an applicant does not need a college degree to be considered for employment. In fact, if the applicant has at
least two years of active duty military experience or three years of certified law enforcement experience with another department or agency, he or she is only required to have a high school diploma. If the applicant does not have prior military or law enforcement experience, he or she is eligible for employment after earning just 60 credits from an accredited college (Webmaster, City of Boca Raton, 2007). This policy option would require all new applicants, regardless of previous experience, to have at least a bachelor’s degree to be eligible for employment as a Boca Raton Police Officer.

Economic Feasibility

Incorporating a policy option that requires a college degree for all Boca Raton Police Officers would produce mixed effects on the economic feasibility criterion. While it would not cost the department any additional money in the beginning, one must dig a little deeper to determine the long-term effects of such a policy. Although there are no direct economic consequences, there are several penalties that the department may experience indirectly.

Police administrators must be aware of the potential challenges to tradition that college educated officers may present. Patterson (1991) sums it up best by saying, “as we advance in technology and evolve as a profession, we must acknowledge the necessity of increased education for officers. But, this increase comes at a cost. The cost is the demand that administrators realize education changes expectations and desires” (Decker & Huckabee, 2002). From this statement, one can assume that college graduates may demand a higher salary. Thus, creating a policy that requires every officer to have a college degree may potentially create a sense among all officers that they are underpaid for their qualifications.

Again, the establishment of this policy would not require any additional expenses for the department up front. There is the potential, however, for a major shift in the expectations and the
mindset of higher educated officers. While it is not certain that the demand for a higher salary will increase, it is certainly an issue that should be examined in relation to this management policy option. For that reason, the author assigns this criterion a score of 2 points on the decision matrix. This score was determined based on the potential for economic feasibility to be significantly lower in the long run.

*Individual Morale*

Incorporating a policy option that requires all Boca Raton Police officers to obtain a college degree would undoubtedly change the department’s organizational culture. On one hand, this policy would create a workforce with a much more uniformed background. With this new policy, every officer would have the college experience in common. While this could relieve some of the tensions that exist between seasoned military veterans and inexperienced college graduates, it could not be proven within the scope of this Action Report.

While it is difficult to argue against the benefit of creating a more educated police department, many scholars caution that such a policy would produce a new set of challenges that would affect individual morale. Dantzker’s (1992) study focusing on job satisfaction supports the suggestion that college educated patrol officers become less satisfied with their jobs the longer they remain in patrol. Specifically, Dantzker (1992, p. 113) noted that “after five years of service, job satisfaction was found to drop with education level.” Based on this research, it is apparent that requiring officers to earn a college degree would negatively affect individual morale. For that reason, the author gives this criterion a score of 1 point on the decision matrix.

*Effects on the Promotional Recruitment Pool*
As this paper has already revealed, recruitment and retention are two factors with which local law enforcement agencies continue to struggle. Requiring a college degree would be detrimental to the overall recruitment pool, thus creating a smaller pool of qualified applicants for promotion. Dantzker’s (1992) research revealed that officers have four broadly defined choices when making career decisions. These choices include patrol, management, specialization, or absconding to another agency.

Although produced nearly fifty years prior, Charles Sloane’s (1954) research focuses directly on Dantzker’s (1992) career choice of absconding to another agency. Sloane urges that due respect must be given to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in raising its personnel requirements to a professional level. Sloane was impressed with the fact that the FBI routinely recruited from a pool of law and accounting school graduates.

While it may not seem immediately apparent, this recruiting strategy is directly related to effects on the promotional recruitment pool for the Boca Raton Police Department. The department does not have the money or other resources to engage in a recruiting battle with the FBI or other federal agencies. The advantage of only requiring 60 college credits and thus attracting a different pool of applicants than the Federal law enforcement agencies would be lost as a result of this policy option.

The effects on the promotional recruitment pool can also be explained by reusing literature that was previously quoted in this Action Report. Dantzker (1992, p. 113) noted that “after five years of service, job satisfaction was found to drop with education level.” This quote is very relevant to this criterion, as the Boca Raton Police Department requires than an officer obtains at least five years of experience before becoming eligible for promotion. Using Dantzker’s (1992) study, the author believes that a college educated police force would
negatively affect the promotional recruitment pool. For this reason, and others supported by this section, the author gives this criterion a score of 1 point on the decision matrix.

*Effects on Raising Education Level*

Requiring every officer in the Boca Raton Police Department to have a college degree would have major implications on the education level. Instituting this policy option means that all of the officers would be on equal footing in terms of educational background and that the department as a whole would be very highly educated. Thus, this criterion receives the highest maximum score of 3 points on the decision matrix.

**V.) Conclusions/Recommendations for Action**

This Action Report examined three policy options relating to the effects that higher education has on the promotional process within local police departments. The purpose of this Action Report was to develop a policy that would motivate college educated police officers to remain loyal to their respective police departments and pursue promotions. Each policy option was evaluated based on economic feasibility, individual morale, its effects on the promotional recruitment pool, and its effects on raising the educational level. Based on facts presented in the background and literature review sections, the author scored each criterion on a three-point decision matrix. The results are summarized in the table below:
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<th>Status Quo</th>
<th>Monthly Bonus System</th>
<th>Require College Degree</th>
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The literature strongly supports the first policy option (maintaining the status quo) because it is the most economically feasible, is the best for individual morale, and produces the most positive effects on the promotional recruitment pool. For these reasons, the author recommends that the Boca Raton Police Department maintains its current policy on educational and promotional eligibility requirements.

While it is understood that the current policy may still produce inherent flaws, the fact that it produced the highest score on the decision matrix indicates that it is the best option out of those proposed in this Action Report. The recommendation to maintain the status quo scored 9 out of a possible 12 points. The policy option received the maximum amount of points based on two out of the four evaluative criteria (economic feasibility and effects on promotional recruitment pool) and only scored poorly on one criterion (effects on increasing education level). The only reason why it did not receive the maximum score for the individual morale criterion was due to the fact that it is unknown whether that would be a positive or negative effect.

For purposes of this Action Report, the author considered each of the policy options to be of equal importance and the evaluative criteria associated with each policy option was scored in the same manner. It is quite possible for other individuals to score each criterion very differently. For example, if a particular researcher feels very strongly that all local police officers should be required to obtain a college degree, the scores would most likely reflect that feeling. That person
may not acknowledge the morale change or increased costs that may result from such a policy. Again, the author felt that evaluating all of the criteria equally was the most efficient and effective way to address the issue.

There are many factors that determine a police officer’s willingness and eligibility to participate in the promotional process. While education is certainly a contributing reason, the literature reveals that family considerations and current level of job satisfaction also play a significant role in the decision process. Despite the fact that this Action Report advocates maintaining the status quo, the author does not recommend that this matter be laid to rest. The closeness in the scoring for each policy option reveals that education is a benefit to police officers and, in many respects, higher education makes for better law enforcement officers. The issue of recruiting and maintaining an educated pool of police officers that will strive for promotion is important and deserves further examination.
VI.) References


