

Police – Community College Partnerships: *increasing the number of suitable police candidates*

Discussion Paper – Part 3

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I. Executive Summary

Parts 1 and 2 of this discussion paper provided evidence that showed:

- (i) suitable ‘applicants’ and police officers are developed, not born,
- (ii) community colleges annually have a large pool of police ‘candidates’
- (iii) the benefits of a Ride-along partnership between a police service and a community college.

Part 3 proposes that:

- (i) a Police Foundations diploma becomes the equivalent to an OACP certificate, and
- (ii) a Ride-along certificate becomes the equivalent to the Constable Selection Process

These proposals are intended to supplement, not replace, the current police hiring practices. They provide a flexible approach to police recruiting by adding another pathway to hiring.

II. The Problem

Thousands of police officers have to be hired during the next decade.

This is not a small challenge – it’s a major problem. This human resource dilemma has public safety and financial consequences. We need experienced, qualified police officers to keep us safe but there is a significant taxpayer cost to selecting them. Recruiting in any profession is not an exact science. Recruiting mistakes are costly to both public safety and the taxpayers’ pocketbook.

The police have an obligation to hire the “brightest and the best” and need an appropriate number of suitable ‘applicants’ to select from.¹ The number of applicants is shrinking in some places.² In contrast, community college law enforcement enrolment has and

¹ Niagara Regional Police Deputy Chief Gary Beaulieu: June, 20, 2008. PF/LASA Program Advisory Meeting, Niagara College, Welland Campus, Welland, Ontario

² Ibid.

continues to explode. Yet, no formal pathway exists for qualified community college graduates to be fast-tracked into policing.

III. Sports Recruiting: Analogy

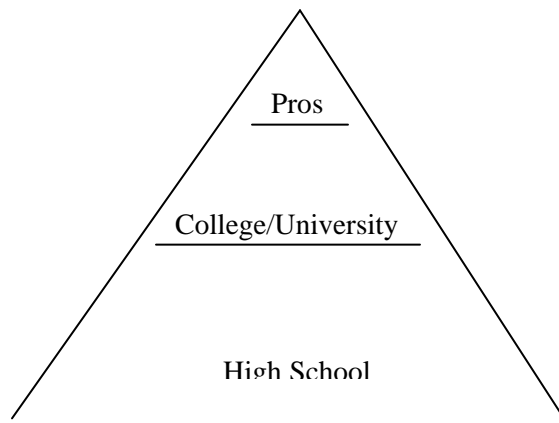
There are a number of similarities between:

- i) *sports recruiting and police recruiting, and*
- ii) *the 'athletic personality' and the 'ideal' police applicant personality.*³

Valuable lessons can be learned from sports recruiting, in particular football, where billions of dollars are at stake at both the post-secondary level for scholarships, and at the professional level in salaries. The key points are:

1. ***Filtering – narrowing the field:*** An enormous pool of potential professional candidates begin their development in high school. The pool shrinks at each higher level. A small percentage of student-athletes progress to post-secondary schools. The pool narrows dramatically with only a minute fraction making it to the highest level, the major leagues.

The following diagram illustrates the filtering system engendered by the narrowing pools of candidates:



2. ***Natural selection:*** Athletes are filtered by the 'natural selection' process defined as the *systems' way of picking the best and brightest*. Natural selection is characterized by the survival of the best and brightest by performing against the strongest competition possible. At each level, leading up to the highest, the same game is played. The lower

³ Supporting empirical evidence is found in a literature review and bibliography in a partial PhD dissertation with the citation: Arcaro, Gino (2007). *Police Interrogation: Personality Traits and Expertise Development*. Jordan Publications, Welland., Ontario, Canada

levels replicate the higher levels – there is no difference in the **game**. The only difference is the strength of competition. This is the purest form of competency-based selection – actually performing the same tasks as the pros but at a lower level of competition. Past performance indicates future performance. You only get better by competing against the best. Conversely, if the competition is weak, performance will not reach its fullest potential. Those who don't like hard work are filtered out. Those who like hard work stay and get better. That personal decision is part of natural selection. The key point is rigorous challenge. No one gets stronger with soft challenges.

3. **Meritocracy – performance-oriented evaluation:** Athletic recruiting is the purest form of meritocracy. Recruiters evaluate volumes of video-recorded performance before a selection is made. Because there is no such thing as long-term job security, sports recruiters do not care about anything else except past performance. Nothing else matters other than performance. Selection is based on merit because of the tenuous short-term job security given to recruits. No politics are involved.

4. **Scholarships & walk-ons:** There are two ways to progress from the large high school pool to the smaller post-secondary pool: (i) scholarship (ii) walk-on, referring to non-scholarship student-athletes who are invited to try-out and earn a scholarship through performance. The 'walk-on' path is a contingency plan – a way of finding the best and brightest in case they were overlooked in the recruiting process.

5. **Draft and free agents:** There are two ways to progress to the pros: (i) draft (ii) free agent referring to a post-secondary athlete who can try-out for any pro team to earn a salary by actual performance. This path is a contingency plan in case someone is overlooked by the professional recruiters.

6. **Noble pursuit.** There is an unrivaled purity in athletics. No one laughs at any athlete's dream of making it to the highest level. No one is insulted by a young person's dream to make it to the pros. We encourage our children to dream big and when they do, we should not be offended by their big dreams. *No one calls high school 'football' a fraud because the word 'football' is used. No one calls college 'football' a fraud because the word 'football' is used.*

Every one in athletics knows that getting to the next level is not guaranteed. Every one views a student-athlete's attempt to succeed as a noble pursuit. No one mocks the pursuit, is offended by it or calls it a fraud. Instead, it's called 'character-building.' The vast majority of student-athletes never reach the pros but the lessons learned from the pursuit last a lifetime and they are transferable to every aspect of life.

IV. Proposal: Two Equivalencies

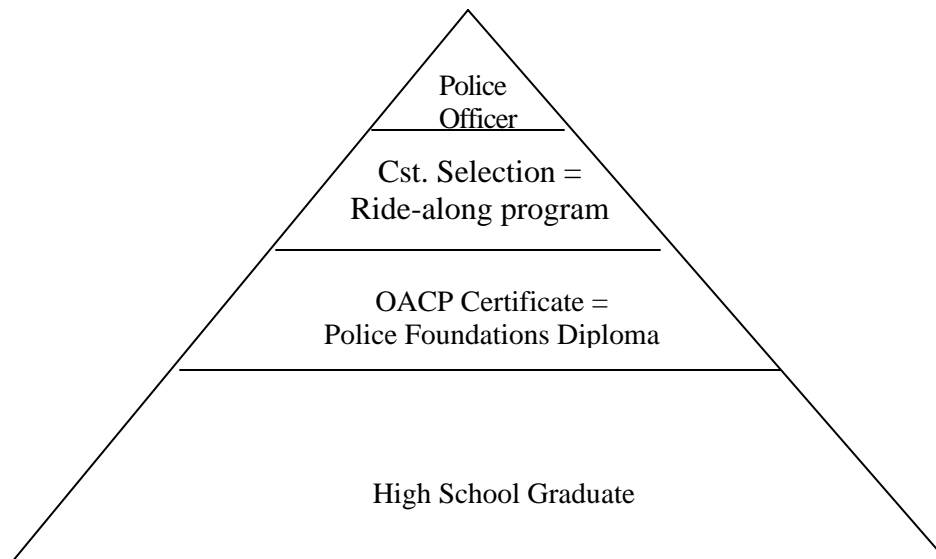
First equivalency – OACP certificate exemption

Give Police Foundations graduates exemption from the OACP certificate. If a student graduates from two years of college study, the Police Foundations diploma should be the equivalent of the OACP certificate. This would not guarantee employment. It would only guarantee police forces an immediate increase of potential ‘applicants.’

Second equivalency – Ride-along certificate exemption

Recognize Police Foundations graduates who have earned the Ride-along Certificate as being equivalent to “candidates” chosen in the Constable Selection process. The current NRPS/NC Ride-along program is essentially an internship where students demonstrate ‘*competency-capacity*.’ If a student demonstrates the essential competencies during an academically-rigorous Ride-along program, he/she should be logically viewed as having been successful in the Constable Selection process. In other words, the Ride-along program should be considered an alternate path to reaching the highest level, i.e., police officer.

The following is diagram illustrates the proposed equivalencies:



Considerations

Adopt elements of the sport recruiting model by:

1. 'performance-based' recruiting – using structured ride-along programs where students are mentored by coach officers and replicate 'reality' police tasks including:
 - i) report writing
 - ii) first officer responsibilities
 - iii) patrol officer investigations.
2. coach officer evaluations – submitted directly to recruiters

Incorporate pedagogical 'applied learning' including:

- i) scenario-based teaching that emphasized rapid decision-making (RDM)
- ii) structured role-playing that simulates frontline police investigation
- iii) video-taped performance for recruiters to evaluate.

Video-taped student performance supplements and, in some cases, corroborates the subjectivity of persons listed as 'references' who are interviewed by police recruiters.

Video-taped performance evaluation is effective if the performance is directly relevant to the competencies of front-line policing.

Establish a central, provincial Police Foundations Program Advisory Committee (PAC).

1. Every Police Foundations program must have a PAC by law. Each PAC is composed of members of law enforcement who advise on program issues including curriculum.
2. A provincial PAC would advise on the structure of Ride-along programs to ensure that they become the equivalent to the Constable Selection Process.

V. Military Police: Supporting Evidence

The most compelling support for these proposals is the fact that the Military Police has made a Police Foundations Diploma or its equivalent as a pre-requisite, mandatory requirement for MP hiring.

Additionally, the MP, face recruiting challenges similar to public police services. In June 2008, 72 MP jobs were available. Two MP recruiters attended Niagara College graduation to recruit the best and brightest. As a result of this simple yet effective recruiting practice (similar to the sport model), seven Police Foundations graduates applied and were hired.⁴

If the Military Police have recognized a Police Foundations diploma, public policing could do the same.

⁴ Chadwick, Frank, MP recruiter – Hamilton. July 23, 2008 interview.

VI. Summary

The two proposed equivalencies are intended as supplements to, not replacements for, the current Constable Selection Process. They are based on the ideologies connected to Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) which is intended to prevent repeat learning and give credit to learning acquired through experience and performance.

Communication between police chiefs, police colleges, and community colleges is imperative to make the proposals work. The wealth of anecdotal knowledge available from these three sources is enough to make it work. The Military Police recognition of a Police Foundations diploma should form the core of the research needed to adopt the proposals.