

**The Bill Blackwood
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**Incentive Pay for Police Officers with
Bachelors and Masters Degrees**

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**By
Brian P. Carpenter**

**Texas State University Police Department
San Marcos, TX
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ABSTRACT

The idea of pay incentives for bachelor's and master's degree is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because it addresses the idea that there is a need for police officers to further their education by receiving a bachelor's or master's degree. The education these officers will receive will not only better them but will also better the police profession. The purpose of this research is to show that college education is extremely important to the future of law enforcement and has been sought after by many important people dating back to 1931. The method of inquiry used by the researcher included a review of articles, Internet sites, periodicals, journals, and a survey distributed to 16 survey participants from departments from different sizes across a large geographic area in Texas. The researcher discovered that all 16 participants understood the importance of education in law enforcement. The participants also indicated that over 50% of the agencies polled currently offer incentive pay to their officers who possess at least a bachelor's degree, while only 25% of the agencies paid incentives for officers with master's degrees.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem or issue to be examined considers whether or not police officers should be paid an incentive pay for their education. The specific problem this research is looking at is that police officers should be paid extra money for having a bachelors or masters degree, which will benefit the police department the officer. The research will look at several issues to justify the reason not only for the continued growth of education, but also the need for rewards or incentives for their dedication in this matter.

The relevance of pay incentives for bachelors and masters degree to law enforcement is that the officer not only gets rewarded for building himself, but he also has a more professional standard to back him in his career. Both the police agency and society will benefit from the educated officer. The agency will have a better rounded officer to combat crimes, and the community will have a more professional officer they can count on to protect them.

The purpose of this research is to propose that police officers need to be paid for the education they have received. This will not only build the officer standards but also the standards of the department. With the advancement of the department through better trained officers, the community will benefit from a well rounded officer who can now serve the community.

The research question to be examined focuses on whether or not police officers should be paid extra for receiving a bachelor's or master's degree. The question will further examine what benefits will come to the department with this incentive type pay. A third result of the research will show the benefit to the community for the officer furthering his education.

The intended method of inquiry includes a review of articles, periodicals, journals, and a survey distributed to 16 survey participants. The intended outcome or anticipated findings of the research will show there is a benefit to paying police officers to go to school and get their bachelor's or master's degree. It will also show how this will not only benefit the department but will also benefit the department and the community in which the officer works.

The field of law enforcement will benefit from the research or be influenced by the conclusions because departments will better understand why they need to pay officers for their education. Members of a department will be able to go before a board or city counsel and be able to defend their request to increase a budget to give incentives for education pay. The benefit from officers' education will be seen by the department the officer works for, the officer, and the community in which the officer works.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Established in 1965 by the 59th Texas Legislator under Senate Bill 236, TCLEOSE, or the Texas Commission of Law Enforcement in Education, awarded its first certification to Peace Officers in 1968. In 1970, the minimum standards for officers were set at 140 hours of training. Today, graduating officers from a basic BPOC, or Basic Peace Officer Course, will have a minimum of 618 hours (TCLEOSE, n.d.). With this minimum standard set by the Texas legislature and the increased knowledge of criminals, officers will need to continue to advance through higher education.

The demand on police officers today is increasing with the advancements in technology and evolving criminals. The skills that police officers must use have also

increased over the years. These skills are necessary, so the officer can make the right choice and an effective arrest in a split-second decision. The decisions the officers make on the scene of an incident will be looked at by many different people who have the opportunity of time on their hands. Ferreira (1997) stated, "Society must acknowledge its responsibility in providing educational opportunities to allow police officers to carry out their duties effectively" (p. 30).

In the police field, there are two separate types of knowledge gathering for officers in their occupation. The officer can learn through training, which is intended to teach for a specific task in police work, such as firearms training, fingerprint analysis, or pursuit driving. According to Kratcoski (2004), education is designed to expand on the theoretical and analytical learning processes while training involves the skills to accomplish the immediate tasks and goals of police operations. Both types of learning processes are important in the police field to have a well balanced officer.

Potter (1979) stated, "we must revise the structure of our law enforcement agencies both to increase the prestige of our officers on the street and to encourage them to continue their professional development by providing compensation" (p. 50). The first person the community sees is the street officer who responding to the calls of the public. The impression this officer makes will directly impact the victim and the public regarding the department he works for. Though continued education, the officer will develop and be better able to serve the community.

If departments are going to reduce the risk of liability through officers, they will need to train the officers. Carter and Sapp (1990a) claimed, "college educated officers are more responsive to the public, are better decision-makers, more innovative and

flexible in problem solving” (p. 1). With higher educated officers, the department will be able to have a well rounded person who is more likely to make correct decisions. Carter and Sapp (1990b) indicated that the college educated officer shows greater empathy towards minorities, and they are less authoritarian and cynical than their non-college counterparts. This would indicate that college educated officers greatly reduce the chances of vicarious liability on the department.

Dating back to 1918, college education has been encouraged for many different reasons, including advancing professionalism and the understanding that the top leaders in police departments often rise through the ranks. The officers rising through the ranks were once patrolmen. Many times, it has been suggested that this requirement might decrease the amount of minorities and women in the police field. A study conducted by Decker and Huckabee (2002), however, indicated that regardless of race or gender, people who wish to become police officers do so for reasons like wanting interesting careers, job security, and the desire to help others. The study indicated that there is little impact on the number of women or minorities wanting to be police officers due to educational preferences.

In a study concluded by Polk and Armstrong (2001), they found that officers will attempt to manipulate his and her mobility with in the job, and one of the easiest ways available is to increase the level of education attained. These officers understand that if they want to be promoted, they need to keep improving themselves, and by obtaining an education, they are achieving part of this goal. These are the same officers who will be promoted up through the ranks and possibly become the command staff for the department.

Sharp (1997) referred to Frank Pane, Chief of Police in Geneva, NY, who indicated that all things being equal, he would rather hire a candidate who attended college with the idea of becoming a police officer. This does not mean that all police officers need to have degrees, but there are many departments that prefer hiring a person with a higher education. The idea of officers having a higher education level goes back to the assumption that a person who attends college and graduates with a degree has become a more rounded individual and would better serve as a police officer.

Incentive pay has been used by many police agencies in certain positions for specific assigned duties or positions. Officers who are working special details, such as motorcycle patrol, detectives, helicopter pilot, and harbor patrol are often paid under an incentive program. Other incentive programs that officers are paid for include shift differential or midnight shift, bilingual speaking, and bicycle patrol. Stanly (1976), based on a four state study, indicated that "Incentive pay should be provided for the attainment of specific levels of academic achievement. This pay should be in addition to any other salary incentive" (p. 223). If departments are willing to pay an officer for a specific assigned duty which he or she has learned on the job, then the department should pay the officer who has attempted to better himself or herself by obtaining a bachelor's or master's degree.

METHODOLOGY

The research question to be examined considers whether or not police officers should be given incentive pay for obtaining a bachelor's or master's degree. The researcher hypothesizes that officers should be paid an incentive for completing a

higher education and receiving a bachelor's or master's degree. The researcher also hypothesizes that departments should pay this incentive separate from a regular salary pay, and there are departments that are currently using this practice. The method of inquiry will include a review of articles, Internet sites, periodicals, journals, and a survey distributed to 16 survey participants.

The instrument that will be used to measure the researcher's findings regarding the subject of pay incentives for bachelor's and master's degrees will include a survey. The size of the survey will consist of seven questions, distributed to 16 survey participants from all sizes of departments across the Texas area. The response rate to the survey instrument resulted in 100% return rate. The information obtained from the survey will be analyzed by the author to determine the size of the department, if pay incentives are preset in the department, how much the pay incentives are, and whether or not the participants believed education was important to the future of law enforcement.

FINDINGS

With increasing technology and evolving criminals in today's society, there needs to be an equal or greater increase in the police response. This response comes in the form of education. No matter the size of the department or the geographic area, there needs to be an increased level of professionalism within the departments. This will be accomplished with the officers themselves and their willingness to change their career from skill-based to professional. Of the 16 surveys handed out, a 100% return was received from the participants. The participants were given options to choose departmental size ranging from 0-50 sworn personnel or 50-100 sworn personnel to

100-200 sworn personnel or over 200 sworn personnel. The returned surveys showed that all the ranges were represented in the study, with seven departments being in the smallest range of 0-50 sworn personnel, two departments being in the range of 50-100 sworn personnel, five departments being in the 100-200 sworn personnel range, and two departments being in the range of over 200 sworn personnel. Of the 16 departments surveyed, nine responded by indicating they do give incentive pay. Four of the departments indicated they only gave incentive pay to officers for earning a bachelor's degree, while the other five departments indicated they paid officers who received a bachelor's degree a certain incentive and officers who received a master's degree received a higher incentive. Interestingly enough, one of the departments that indicated they did not pay an incentive for a master's degree indicated that they do pay officers who receive an associate's degree a smaller amount than those who receive the bachelor's degree.

If their departments did pay incentive pay for degrees, participants were asked about the amount that is paid for a bachelor's degree or a master's degree. The amount paid for a bachelor's degree ranged from \$100 to \$125 a month. The amount paid for a master's degree ranged from \$120 to \$180 a month. Based on the amounts per month, the bachelor's degree could give the officer \$1,200 to \$1,500 a year, and the amount based on the master's degree could increase the officer's pay by \$1,440 to \$2,160 a year. The one department that pays for the associate's degree gives the officers \$50 a month, which would equal \$600 a year.

Of the 16 surveys handed out, 100% of the participants agreed that education was important for the future of law enforcement; however, five felt that officer did not

need to have more education than a minimum of a high school diploma or General Education Development (GED) to work in this profession. Eleven participants felt that education was important, and officers should have more than a high school diploma or a GED.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The problem or issue examined by the researcher considered whether or not education is important in law enforcement and whether officers should be paid incentives for their degrees. The issue further examined how the education of officers will benefit officer, the department, and the community in general. The purpose of this research was to demonstrate that education is important in law enforcement. By showing that education is important, this researcher exhibited how officers who achieve a bachelor's or master's degree should be compensated for their education. By providing officers with an incentive to achieve their degrees, this assures the continued development of the police. The research question that was examined focused on the importance of education to law enforcement. It also focused on the concept of providing monetary incentives for bachelor and master degrees received by officers. The researcher hypothesized that police officers should be given incentive pay for receiving a bachelor's and/or master's degree. The researcher concluded from the findings that police officers will continue to progress in their profession by obtaining a higher level of education. The officers will make the job in which they work stronger and more professional. This progress will enhance the field of police work from a skilled job to a professional career. The future leaders of the police department will be the officers who have grown with the profession and have received a bachelor's or master's degree.

The findings of the research did support the hypothesis. The reason why the findings did support the hypothesis is probably due to the importance that education plays in developing a police officer and a department.

Limitations that might have hindered this study resulted because of the lack of material to back one portion of the topic. There is a wide range of information on education and the need for this education by police; however, there is little information in regards to paying the officers a monthly incentive for their education. The research showed the increasing call for education, dating back to the 1960's, and showed little or no increasing pay amounts with the increased education.

The study of incentive pay to police officers for bachelor's and master's degree is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because the officer, the department, and the community stands to be benefit by the results of this research. The results of the research showed how education can only better every part of law enforcement. There is a need for this education, and, at the same time, there is a need to encourage police officers to earn their bachelor's and master's degree. Police officers serve a vital job to the community just as any other profession. Lawyers, doctors, dentists, and other professions are paid for their education, while, at the same time, police are often overlooked when they try to enhance their profession through education. The future of law enforcement is through a professional and educated department, and to achieve this, officers need to be rewarded with monthly incentives for their dedication to education.

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APPENDIX**LEMIT Research Paper Survey**

What is the size of your department in sworn officers?

(Check only one) _____ 0-50 _____ 50-100 _____ 100-200
_____ over 200

Does your agency have a pay incentive program for Bachelor's and/or Masters Degrees?

(Check only one) _____ yes _____ no

If Yes to #2. How much is paid for each degree?

Bachelor's Degree _____

Master's Degree _____

If your agency does not have a pay incentive for a degree program, do you feel it would benefit your agency to have this type of program?

(Check only one) _____ yes _____ no

Do you feel education is important to the future in law enforcement?

(Check only one) _____ yes _____ no

Do you feel an officer should have more education than a minimum of a high school diploma or GED to work in his/her profession?

(Check only one) _____ yes _____ no