

The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas

Incentives to Higher Education

A Policy Research Project  
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by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The rapid advance of technology and education will soon leave behind law enforcement agencies that do not prepare their officers for the constant changes we are facing. It is very important that the Cherokee County Sheriff's Office is not caught lacking in the education it takes to keep up.

This research was done to show the need to motivate our officers to gain the necessary education to keep pace with our ever changing world. By using references from several authors who have written articles on "Incentive Pay" in several Police Journals and from taking surveys of several different law enforcement agencies in and around East Texas it is hoped that a favorable look at incentive pay for higher education can be obtained. It is concluded d that through incentive pay or school re-imbursment we can encourage higher education for the deputies of Cherokee County. It is recommended by this writer that the County Commissioners look into incentives to encourage officer education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education and technology is advancing so rapidly in the field of law enforcement that many departments are falling behind. The purpose of this research is to encourage our peace officers to continue their education and skills in the ever changing field of criminal justice and to look at incentive programs to help motivate our officers to seek higher education.

We are finding ourselves in an ever changing role "From pure enforcement of the law to one of dealing with people and their problems." (Tyre/Braunstein 1992:6). This social work/community problem solving approach is requiring new demands and attitude changes from many officers whose attitude has been, "We've done it this way for 30 years and it's been good enough so far!"

The problem we are facing is that many officers will not take the time or make the effort to advance in education. There are many officers in our department who have the required time as a peace officer to advance from their TECLEOSE basic certificate to their intermediate and also from their intermediate to their advanced, but they lack the educational points to do so. Through incentive pay and/or tuition reimbursement we may encourage officers to excell in the law enforcement profession and be a true asset to their community.

Through this research and its presentation to the County Commissioners' Court of Cherokee County, I will attempt to show through articles on merit and incentive pay in Police and Law Enforcement journals that a general consensus exists among most authors that a better educated officer makes a better officer. I will also use surveys of other departments' practices in researching the incentives used by them to encourage higher education. I hope to encourage our county commissioners to examine the facts both for and against incentive pay. I believe most law enforcement administrators will agree that education of their officers will not only help cut down on lawsuits but also put more knowledgeable officers on the streets who will be better able to adjust to the changes our profession is facing at the close of the century.

By encouraging higher education among our officers we will better serve our community and be better able to handle the coming technological changes in law enforcement.

#### **HISTORICAL, LEGAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT**

There have been arguments for many years as to what constitutes a "professional". Many feel that only those with a college degree can be considered professional. The law enforcement profession has been looked down on because of the lack of education in our ranks.

The upgrading of educational levels has been an important part of law enforcement administrations' plan to gain professional recognition for our chosen career. (Fogelson 1977)

Before the social upheavals of the 1960's and 1970's began to bring about criticism and change, law enforcement required little if any education. All a person needed was a little common sense and a strong body and they could carry a gun and a badge. Since the 1960's and 1970's there has been a strong demand for better educated peace officers. (Buckley, et al 1993) The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (1967) was among many bodies to call for university educated peace officers (Sherman, 1978).

The Buford Pusser and Andy of Mayberry attitudes are no longer workable in the law enforcement community. Change has to take place for us to keep up with not only technology but the criminal element we must deal with.

Due to the social changes that have come about since the 1960's officers are no longer just the "cop on the beat". Law enforcement has evolved to where a peace officer has to wear many hats to properly serve the public.

Peace officers in the past have had little tolerance for those we considered outside the normal part of society. With the changes we have been bombarded with such as gay rights, the feminist movement and the different cultural and ethnic groups, we have had to modify our attitudes and perspectives.

By giving officers an incentive through possibly certificate or college hours pay, administrators would improve the level of writing competency on reports and would spend less time trying to figure out what an officer is trying to say in his written reports and affidavits.

Many departments are constrained in their finances and not able to monetarily award officers for their advances in education. Budget constraints can also be the cause of training deficiencies.

Many times the city councils or commissioner's courts are not aware of the training needs of officers and are under the impression that training past that obtained at a basic academy is not necessary. It becomes imperative that we must also educate the administrators so they understand that modern law enforcement is becoming more high-tech every day and only by continuing education can street officers hope to hold their own against the methods used by the criminal element of society which they face. If doctors were only required to have a high school education where would the medical field be now? The same theory goes with law enforcement. Our "profession" must be educated to gain the respect we have sought for so many years.

Educational requirements for peace officers are being upheld by courts across the country. In *Davis v. City of Dallas*, 777 F.2d205, '(1985), a Federal appeals court upheld the 45-hour college requirement for entry level police officers. In another case, *Civil Sere Cmsn. v. Iowa (montz)*, 522N.W. 82 (1994), the

Iowa courts enforced a two-year college requirement for police applicants. The court systems are beginning to recognize the importance of educational standards in the law enforcement field. Lack of training and educational standards can eventually end up in the court system and cost law enforcement entities considerable monetary losses in lawsuits that could be avoided with proper educational documentation.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE OR PRACTICE**

Several Studies have been done concerning higher education for Peace Officers. In reviewing some of the studies in different Police and law enforcement journals it is found that higher educated peace officers were more likely to make ethically sound choices. Studies done by Roberg (1978, 1980) and Parker, et al., (1976) have found that there is a definite relationship between higher education and police officer attitudes. Officers with higher education are proving to be less dogmatic and more willing to accept change. Taylor (1983) found through his studies that higher educated officers had less authoritarian and punitive attitudes towards the public. The better educated officers used better discretion and over all seemed more satisfied with their jobs.

Worden (1990) found that peace officers with higher education have a broader perspective of the role of a peace officer and a more positive attitude toward the legal and ethical restrictions they are facing. The better educated the peace officer the more tolerant they seem to be towards those outside



the "norm" of society. Cohen and Chaiken (1973) have found in their studies that the higher educated peace officer received fewer complaints and had fewer disciplinary actions than the less educated officers. Through these studies it has also been found that peace officers who have a higher education are better at report writing and at oral communications as well.

Tyre and Braunstein (1992) found several studies to back higher education. They stated that a New York City - Rand Institute study of the New York Police Department concluded that "...college educated officers in New York performed at a level well above average."

The study also found the more educated officers had less civilian complaints. They also showed two Florida studies that seemed to indicate higher educated officers held higher ethical standards. One of the studies by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement posed three different ethical scenarios to fifty active police officers from two departments and sixty unsworn control subjects. Their scenarios ranged from ethically sound to outright illegal. The results not only showed that those with higher education made better choices but that the correlation between a college degree and ethical decisions was twelve times greater among the police officers than it was for the control group.

Most studies also indicate that higher educated peace officers have better leadership capabilities. (Buckley, et al 1993)

In the study and survey done by this author it was found that Texas agencies have diverse policies. For this policy research project ten Texas law enforcement agencies were surveyed as to whether they paid incentive pay for higher education above their officers base pay and if so did their agency fund college courses in general or just for courses in criminal justice.

A copy of the letter sent to each agency and a copy of the survey is attached as Appendix A and B. Out of the ten agencies surveyed only eight responded by returning the surveys. Out of the eight, six of the agencies pay their officers TECLEOSE certificate pay for intermediate, advanced and master certificates. Three of the agencies that pay certificate pay also reimburse for criminal justice and/or other college courses. The range of certificate pay goes from twenty five dollars a month for a basic certificate to two hundred fifty six dollars and twenty nine cents for a masters certificate. One agency pays two hundred dollars per semester for college courses and others reimburse for carrying a "c" average. One agency pays fifty dollars more per month above certificate pay for an associate degree and one hundred per month more for a bachelors degree. All of the administrators surveyed had positive and very strong feelings about higher education. Even the administrators whose agencies did not pay incentives or reimburse officers for college courses felt their departments would improve and benefit by having an incentive program. All felt that with law enforcement's rapidly changing role that all officers must

continue learning and striving for a better educated professional level. (Baxter, 1 998).

A.N. Potter (1979) believes that merit pay at ten percent for each rank or step advanced instead of longevity pay would entice higher education and would reward efforts of officers towards excellence. J.A. Conser (1979) however, writes in the Journal of Police Science and Administration that due to the money problems of most law enforcement agencies that monetary incentives for education or performance is generally too low to be a motivational factor. Conser also feels that officers may be motivated when public recognition or opportunities to learn specialist fields are offered rather than higher pay.

In a survey done in several police organizations it was found that "education is a highly charged issue. Those in possession of it view it as an input that merits consideration, and those without it view it as irrelevant." (Buckley, et ale 1993:92).

According to an article in "CloseUp", a Texas Commission on Law Enforcement publication, the present minimum educational standard used by most departments is a GED or High School diploma. (CloseUp, Vol. 5 No.1, November 1998).

The article titled "Raising the bar" also states that "A study by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), The State of Police Education: Policy direction for the 21st Century provides evidence to validate the decision to raise educational requirements for entry into the law enforcement profession." (Raising the bar, 1998:1).

By raising the educational standards and encouraging higher education an agency will have a more competent workforce that will gain the confidence of the community they serve.

#### DISCUSSION OF RELEVANT ISSUES

There are many issues to educational incentives that can be addressed.

1. Lack of the public's perception of police as "professionals".
2. Resistance of officers towards higher education.
3. Technological advances.
4. Better educated criminals.
5. Alternative incentive programs.
6. Benefits.
7. Costs.

Regarding lack of the public's perception of police as "professionals", it is necessary to begin to educate the administrators of our law enforcement agencies to the importance of higher education. Our agency chiefs must be able to go to the city councils and county commissioners with all of the facts, surveys and other data to convince them of the need to encourage a higher educated work force. I believe there is more than enough research to back the need for law enforcement personnel to be better educated. Law enforcement will only be considered a "profession" when we become professional in our actions and our education. Many times the "professional" world only considers peace officers as "skilled labor." The desire to educate will help gain the status we most assuredly deserve.

The resistance of officers to use their off-duty time to gain higher education is a problem when there is no incentive to do so. Monetary incentive is only one way to boost an officer's desire to learn. Due to limitations many smaller departments have in promotional opportunities, an increase in pay for TECLEOSE certificates or college hours earned could be an incentive to higher education.

Many issues are raised when it comes to higher education. Questions are asked as to why it should be needed. Many who oppose higher education are also opposed to computers and modern forensics and technology. They want things to "stay the same". The world we live in is fast becoming automated and high-tech. Without education law enforcement will fall so far behind we cannot hope to catch up. More and more agencies are putting computers in their patrol cars and at the officers work areas to increase safety and efficiency. Fingerprint techniques, crime scene data and photography are advancing to high-tech equipment. Laws are constantly changing and the law enforcement community must keep up to remain viable.

Regarding better educated criminals, the 'criminals on the streets are getting smarter and are educating themselves in high-tech areas and law enforcement must stay ahead of them.

It is realized that many departments do not have the funds to pay incentive pay. But all agencies can give officers time off or comp time to help them go to classes and schools that will benefit the officer and the department.

Public recognition in the local newspapers telling what schools or courses officers have taken could be a type of incentive. Even something as small as a department award or certificate for devotion to improving oneself could be made into a special incentive.

Many officers take and pay for courses and schools on their own time to better themselves. Some commendation for their bettering themselves professionally would help boost morale and desire to gain a higher education.

The benefits of incentive pay are tremendous. By giving officers incentives to get higher education above the required 40 hours TECLEOSE requires every two years all agencies would benefit. More officers would advance to higher TECLEOSE levels rather than just staying at the basic or intermediate level. Lawsuit liability would go down as the education level rises. Officers would become more aware of the diversity of culture and mores that they deal with daily. With the incentive to educate themselves officers would find their analytical faculties improving and become better equipped to make the quick, accurate decisions needed in our field.

A proposed cost for this could be looked at by the Cherokee County Commissioners with an incentive scale proposal as follows:

1. Basic certificate - \$25.00 per month
2. Intermediate certificate - \$50.00 per month
3. Advanced certificate - \$75.00 per month
4. Master certificate - \$100.00 per month

5. Associate degree - \$125.00 per month
6. Bachelors degree - \$150.00 per month
7. Masters degree - \$175.00 per month

The proposed pay scale could be adjusted lower but this proposal would be the average across the state. I believe that any kind of incentive given towards higher education would bring immediate increase in morale and also many more applicants of high standards to this agency.

#### **CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this research as stated earlier is to encourage law enforcement officers to seek higher education and encourage our administrators to examine incentive pay or some sort of incentive for these officers. Incentive pay to encourage higher education is something that has been researched quite extensively and has found to be a motivator for higher education.

In this time in history as we approach the millenium years of the 2000's, education is becoming ever more important. Technology has advanced so rapidly and we do not yet know where it will take us in the law enforcement profession. We must be prepared to expand with it. The problem we are finding is in motivating officers to advance their education past the basic academy training. Most officers are content to just answer their calls and put in their time without attending any extra schooling. Most have no incentive to learn

In reviewing the studies and surveys done by other educators and different agency administrators it is clear that higher educated officers are needed and may make the better officer. The attitudes and social skills of higher educated officers tends to be more positive and more tolerant towards the technological and social changes taking place than those who have not had the diverse cultural impact that is gained through University or College attendance.

By paying officers incentive pay for each TECLEOSE certificate and/or college degree, officers are encouraged to learn. This author recommends that the Cherokee County Commissioners look at and consider an incentive pay program or at the very least a reimbursement program for courses taken that relate to the law enforcement profession. This writer believes that these incentives will benefit our community by having better educated and trained officers to serve Cherokee County.



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# Cherokee County

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**JAMES E. CAMPBELL**  
SHERIFF

(903) 663-2271

To:

From: Ray A. Baxter  
Cherokee County Sheriff's Office

Subject: Educational Incentive Survey  
LEMIT Graduate Management Institute

I am doing a policy research project for the Graduate Management Institute put on by the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas. I am taking a survey of several different agencies to find if they provide incentive Pay or any other assistance towards continuing education for their officers. These surveys will be used in my research paper that I am working on. If your agency now pays certificate pay or educational incentive pay or has thought about doing so, I would like to hear your suggestions. Please fill out the enclosed survey and return it to me as soon as possible in the enclosed envelope.

Ray A. Baxter P.O.  
Box 604  
Wells, Texas 75976  
903/ 683-2271 FAX  
409/ 858-2271

GMI SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What is the sworn officer size of your agency?

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2. Do you have a designated training officer who conducts in-service training?

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3. Does your agency have an educational incentive program that encourages officers to seek higher education?

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4. Does your agency reimburse officers for passing law enforcement related college courses or pay their tuition?

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5. Does your agency give incentive pay above the officer's regular pay for college hours completed or for TECLEOSE certificates earned?

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6. If your agency does pay certificate or college pay as incentives could you give a pay break down below as to how it is done?

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7. If your agency does not have educational incentives for your officers do you feel that it would benefit your agency to have such a program?

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8. Do you believe education is important to the future of law enforcement and if so why?

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