

The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas

Evaluating the Importance of Promotional Guidelines
for Law Enforcement Departments

An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Graduation from the
Leadership Command College

By
Michael J. Mirelez

Pflugerville Police Department
Pflugerville, Texas
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Abstract

The reason for researching this topic was to expand our knowledge on how different law enforcement agencies viewed areas concerning education, lateral entry, seniority, and time in grade or rank. Many law enforcement departments still do not have policies or procedures covering promotional process for advancements. The good ole boy system still exists in some law enforcement departments in our beautiful State of Texas. However, do we want someone that was promoted using this system to lead our communities in a crisis situation or to teach our children what is right or what is wrong?

Several different law enforcement agencies were provided a survey covering these areas and with responses received a insight of the promotional process was gained that was used by these agencies. However one of the most controversial topics was education and seniority, this was understandable due to the age and experience of the officers that were surveyed. The survey showed that agencies near the Dallas Metroplex predominantly required college hours prior to hire and agencies further south were still accepting high school diplomas for hire.

The Pflugerville Police Department currently updated their policies covering promotions and advancements but has not completed this task yet. The policies are still being worked on due to the possibility of the Chief of Police researching and getting budgets to work out to create additional positions for advancements.

The final result of this administrative research paper will be submitted to the Chief of Police for recommendations based on information that was gained from several Law Enforcement Agencies throughout the State of Texas.

Introduction

One of the most significant events in a police department is the hiring of new police officers. The hiring ensures that the department will continue to grow and will be able to promote qualified police officers into administrative positions. The intent of this research is to review criteria that have been established to determine the eligibility for police officers to promote in their career.

The eligibility for promotions incorporates several comprehensive subjects that will be expounded upon within the lengths of this paper. Assessment centers, cognitive examinations, oral boards and psychological examinations will not be addressed in this topic. The topics that are going to be reviewed concerning promotions are education, lateral entry, seniority, and time in grade / rank. Currently the Pflugerville Police Department has a policy concerning the eligibility requirements for promotion, but some areas are vague. Full time police officers are eligible to promote in rank upon completing their second year of employment, provided that they are able to pass an examination. At which time they are promoted to the title of Patrolman II (Senior Patrol Officer).

This research will be based on information received from other agencies throughout the State of Texas on requirements for promotions. The evaluations of promotional policies from other agencies will be reviewed to determine the best means available to determine how to hire the best-qualified candidate for the promotion.

The intended audience for this research paper will be the officers of the Pflugerville Police Department, the citizens of the City of Pflugerville and other law enforcement agencies that may find this information beneficial.

Various sources of information were used in this project such as textbooks, magazine articles, abstracts, and contacts from the Internet. There were also surveys disseminated to multiple Texas police agencies, and departmental policies from different police agencies.

This will be presented to the Pflugerville Police Department to assist in developing new policies and establishing criteria for promotions. In addition, the implementation of a revised policy and procedure as a result of this research will assist in putting to rest the theory of promoting in-experience officers in rank, at an early stage in their career. This will also establish guidelines that must be met by police officers prior to being eligible to promote within the rank structure of their law enforcement department, while still at the discretion of the Chief of Police.

Review of Literature

Questionnaire surveys were done on several Central and North Texas Law Enforcement agencies concerning issues pertaining to the feasibility of implementing educational requirements, and lateral entry. It also addressed the importance if any, to seniority, and the time in grade / rank. There are several independent research documents concerning education for police officers, and lateral entry. However there was very little independent research concerning seniority and duration in grade.

According to the Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 143, Civil Service, seniority is addressed as the amount of time a person spends at employee status in an organization. Stating that each officer is entitled to receive one point for each year of seniority as a classified police officer in that department, with a maximum of ten points.

Lateral entry was introduced some thirty to thirty-five years ago, unfortunately many law enforcement departments overlook the advantage of lateral entry. Some departments believe hiring outsiders can lead to dissatisfaction and low morale from the lower ranking officers that feel that they are losing opportunities for advancement (Penegor, 1992). The practice of lateral entry has the potential to enhance department's recruiting efforts by expanding the pool of qualified personnel, increase training, and cost-effectiveness. Finally lateral entry enhances competition and educational growth in providing new talent and ability, enabling departments to select personnel from among the best candidates. (Nix, 1990)

Lateral entry is the ability of a police officer in one geographic location to enter employment in another area, with the officer's starting salary determined at the new department based on experience, job knowledge, and the ability to do the job. Lateral entry programs attract innovative, administrative, professional and technical personnel especially for small departments.

As an example many former police officers have left law enforcement because of inflexibility, such as lack of mobility and promotional opportunities, yet these officers would be desirable candidates in many police departments. Lateral entry is a way to gain access to such an untapped resource. Training police officers is both time consuming and expensive, it is not only costly from the view point of salary, benefits, and uniforms but also the down time prior to achieving patrol officer status. For this reason lateral entry police officers provide substantial savings to law enforcement departments, in some instances when this occurs within state the savings is even greater.

The President's Commission on Law Enforcement in its Task Force Police Report stated that to improve police services, competition for all advanced positions should be opened to all qualified persons from both within and outside of the department. This would enable a department to obtain the best available talent for positions of the leadership. If candidates from within an agency are unable to meet the competition from other applicants, it should be recognized that the influx of more highly qualified personnel would greatly improve the overall quality of the service (Task Force Report, 1967)

Education is one area that is currently being talked about the most. This is mainly due to the fact that some law enforcement agencies are increasing their requirement from a high school diploma, to anywhere from 45 hours of college to an Associates Degree in order to apply to be hired on as a police officer with their departments.

By increasing the number of college hours police officer are needing in lieu of a high school diploma it is the belief that college educated individual will be more qualified and able to handle the job better. These officers will be more able to be more effective and promote to higher ranks with more responsibility.

“Studies conducted by Sanderson (1977), Cohen and Chaiken (1972) directly addressed the issue of promotion and found a positive relationship between educational level and promotions obtained” (Fischer, 1985, pg.335). “There has been limited studies that examined police attitudes towards education, however Buckley found that university graduate police officers believe that education enhances performance. While non-graduates endorsed instincts, common sense and experience over education and claimed that education provided no additional perspective for the job of policing” (Buckley, 1991). By the year 2025 it is estimated that formal education will be the standard for entry and advancement in 70% of the police departments in the United States (Campbell 1997, pg. 7).

A study conducted by (Dr. Campbell, 1997) was developed because of the need to understand the career development activities and their impact on Texas peace officers. The study describes the levels of human resources development activities of the 36 largest law enforcement agencies in Texas representing 21,000 plus peace officers, approximately 45% of all Texas peace officers. It was interesting that officers with less than ten years of experience were more apt to have a college degree and those with more experience. Law enforcement needs to adopt the model for its human resource activities from the professions rather than the trades. Law enforcement has stagnated on the high school requirement since the 1960s and before. Our society and the nature of the job are evolving over time. This means using qualitative studies for job analysis and validation of job requirements and educational and training needs. Unless current in-service participation in college programs increases or hiring standards concerning college minimums increases, we could be facing a less educated officer's corps in the future as retirement affect the officer work force. The 21st century calls for a more educated officer, not a

less educated officer. We cannot accept standard setting that always uses the rear view mirror (Campbell 1997, pg.5).

The complex problems of today's society have made it necessary to have highly trained personnel to meet the needs and demands placed upon law enforcement services. The police officer must be a teacher, an arbitrator, an orator, a mediator, a parent, a friend, a social worker, a counselor, and an enforcer of the law (Abilene Police Department, 2002). Also remembering that our new police officers being hired now are in the era of a technological boom with the implementation of Mobile Data Terminals, laptop computers, video, and recording devices. Officers will have to be able to keep up with hi-tech demand that is coming in the future. By placing educational requirements into the promotional process we will encourage officers who want to advance up the career ladder, which is beneficial to them and the department in a whole. This is a good example of a win-win situation; it would be good for the department, good for the officers, and good for the policing of the 21st century.

Time in grade is an area that has very little research available in due to the fact that several departments have implemented civil service in lieu of running a department with General Order. Time in grade / rank should be a minimum of two years exclusive of police academy, as a law enforcement officer should be enacted. Within these two years an officer should be able to learn and understand their position in the department. According to the Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 143, Civil Service officers are eligible to promote within two years provided all requirements are met.

Methodology

Surveys were sent out to several Central and North Texas law enforcement agencies concerning issues pertaining to the feasibility of implementing educational requirements, and lateral entry. Also addressed is the importance if any, to seniority, and the time in grade / rank. According to the surveys that were returned their appeared to be a grave need to evaluate the importance of promotional guidelines within several law enforcement departments. This information is bases on the questions that were asked and the answers that were given. The majority of the agencies that were surveyed encompassed a population of approximately 18,000 people to 24,000 people. Approximately 100 surveys disseminated throughout these agencies with a returned of approximately 78% completed and returned. The survey covered several areas but mainly covering the area of education pertaining to:

- Should officer have college hours prior to hiring on?
- Does your department require a college education prior to being hired?
- Should college degree be considered to promotions?
- Should officer have their intermediate certificate prior to advancement to detective, sergeants or advanced certificate for the position of lieutenant?
- Should officers be allowed to skip rank?
- Should officer have experience in the rank they hold?
- Estimated number of years officers should have prior to promoting to the rank above their current position?

Formal college education for law enforcement officers has been recommend many times since the beginning of the twentieth century (Baker, 1995).

The Wickersham Commission report (1931) identified the need for formal training and a strong educational background for police officers (Baker, 1995). In 1967 the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice encouraged officers to earn education beyond high school and at a minimum should be able to demonstrate an ability to compete college-entry studies. (Baker, 1995). Few would argue with the contention that one of the most necessary traits for police officers is the ability to communicate. The majority of an officer's time is spent interacting with the public. An officer must be capable of communicating with citizens whose personal education level varies greatly. Another basic function for police officers is to gather data regarding crimes that have occurred and record them in written form. The ability to write in a clear and concise manner is a significant skill enhanced through higher education (Girand, 1977). At the same time, the overall educational level of society is increasing and police officers must be provided with psychological and mental tools equal, or superior, to those of the general populace (Gambino, 1973).

Many police departments may employ a method of successive elimination. These are rather simple and inexpensive procedure, which eliminates many candidates and proceeds through progressively more complex, expensive and sophisticated procedures capable of making finer distinctions among the remaining candidates. An officer must have at least their intermediate certificate and at least four years with their agency in order to complete for a sergeant rank and have a permanent rank of Senior Patrol Officer, Corporal or Detective (Epstein, Laymon, 1973).

Findings

Surveys were sent out to several police department in the Dallas / Ft. Worth area, Houston and Austin including departments such as Memorial Village, Grand Prairie, Bryan, Saginaw, Hedwig, Nacogdoches, Hillsboro, Greenville, Flower Mound, Hewitt, Cedar Park, Taylor, Leander, Georgetown all of which are police departments in the estimated population range of 18,000 to 24,000 of people. This survey targets four major areas that are dealt with everyday in the promotional aspect of a police department. The areas are education, seniority, lateral entry and time in grade in rank.

Education is a large subject that is covered in many aspects of our law enforcement field. However only a few were chosen to discuss. Those are: Should officers be required to have college hours prior to being hired? 46% of the police officers responded by saying yes college hours should being required prior to being hired. 53% of the police officers responded to the same question by saying no officers should not have to have college hours to apply for a law enforcement job. As we see everyday in our profession many departments are now requiring a minimum of 15 college hours and have a grade point average of 3.0 or better to seek employment as a police officer.

Does your department require a minimum amount of college hours for employment? 12% stated yes and this was mainly in the Dallas / Ft. Worth area that stated that they department required college prior to being hired as a police officer. 88% stated no that their department did not require college hours prior to being hired. This is predominantly the norm for law enforcement agencies across the State of Texas. The majority of departments still only require a high school diploma to become a police officer. Many college applicants who have a college

education seek employment with larger industries either for money or status as opposed to become a police officer.

Should a college degree completed by a candidate be considered in a promotional process? 49% said yes that a college degree should be considered in a promotional process and 51% said no that it should not be considered. The majority of these officer do not have degrees therefore they feel that by having a degree it is not fair to promote over those who have done their time on the streets and excelled in their job by experience and training.

One of the areas that was focused on in this research was should the completion of their intermediate certificate be specifically considered in a promotion to the rank of Corporal or Detective. 95% responded by saying yes, that the intermediate certificate should be obtained prior to promoting to the rank of Corporal or Detective. 5% responded by saying no that the certificate was not needed for promotion to a Corporal or Detective.

It normally takes a rookie officer approximately 4 years to actually know what is going on with his job. This allows for the officer to obtain needed training and experience to progress in his job. Normally a four-year officer would not have accrued enough training hours to obtain an intermediate certificate, which takes 1200 training hours and four years of service, unless they would have had prior college hours. Therefore by having an intermediate certificate shows that the officer has more knowledge and experience that a 4 years officer and will able to handle the position he is seeking.

Should the completion of their intermediate certificate be considered in a promotion to the rank of Sergeant? 95% responded by saying yes that this certificate was needed to prior to promoting to the rank of Sergeant. 5% said no that this certificate was not needed to promote to the rank of Sergeant.

Should the completion of their advanced or masters certificate be considered in a promotion to the rank of Lieutenant? 91% responded by saying yes that either certificate was needed in order to promote to lieutenant. 9% responded by saying that these certificates were not needed to promote to a lieutenant (See Figure 1).

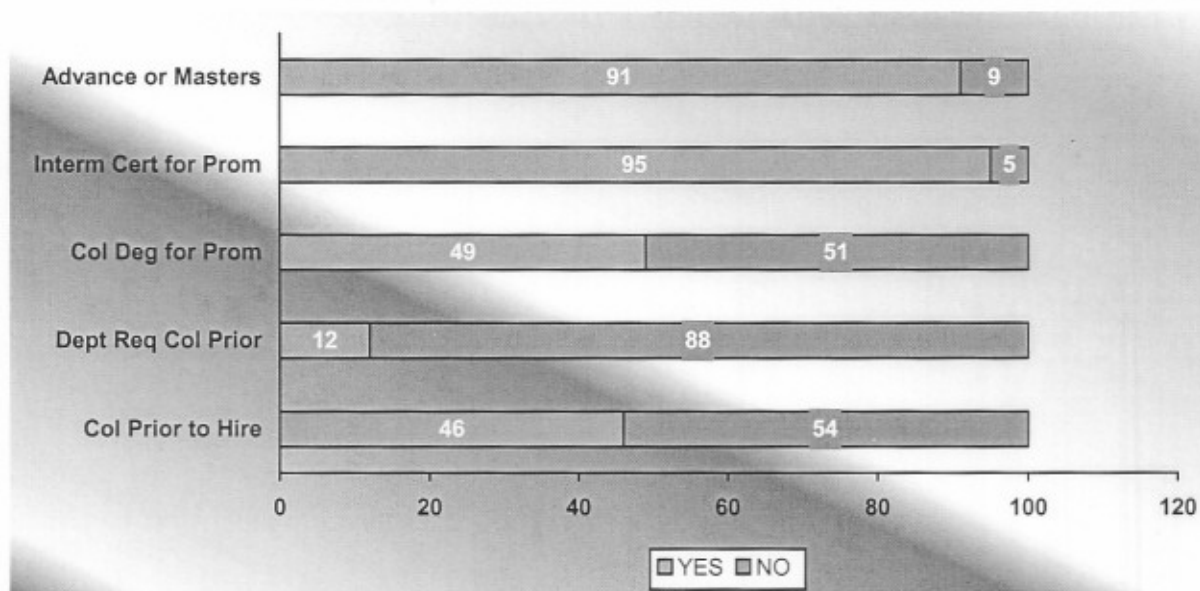


Figure 1. Education and Certificate

Seniority is the second area that was covered in this survey. However few questions were asked in this area. The main question asked was should seniority be used in promotional processes? 72% responded by saying yes, Seniority should be used on promotional process and 27% responded by say no that it should be used. Most law enforcement agencies still consider seniority a very important aspect of a police officers career. The system of seniority in the law enforcement profession has been used for quite some time it is mainly used to grant the season officers a chance to advance over the newly hired officer. This is done in a variety of ways: allowing seasoned officers to pick shifts between days or nights, and having the luxury of having a take home car or sharing with a another officer, being chosen for special assignments, given

assignment of new patrol vehicles, allowing them to chose areas that they work, and many other things in our profession.

The third area covered in this survey is lateral entry. Lateral entry has been in existence for some thirty-five years and is used by many law enforcement agencies (Nix, 1990). Lateral entry is one way to gain an untapped resource. Police officers' training is both time consuming and expensive, it is not only costly from the viewpoint of salary, benefits, and uniforms but also the down time prior to achieving patrol officer status. This is one area that many department choose not to use and will usually suffer the loss of new hired officers with different levels of training and education from different areas. Questions that were asked in the survey were: Do you think that morale would be affected if the department hired someone from outside of your agency? 66% responded by saying yes, that morale would be affected and 34% said no morale would not be affected by hiring someone from outside of their agency.

Should lateral entry be an accepted practice in the law enforcement profession? 55% said yes that it would be an accepted practice in the law enforcement profession, and 45% responded by saying no that it was not an acceptable practice in their profession.

Should lateral entry only be used in upper management? 57% said yes that lateral entry should be used in upper management and 43% said no that it should be used in upper management positions.

Do you think that your department should use lateral entry? 50% responded by saying yes and 50% said no that lateral entry would not benefit their department (See Figure 2).

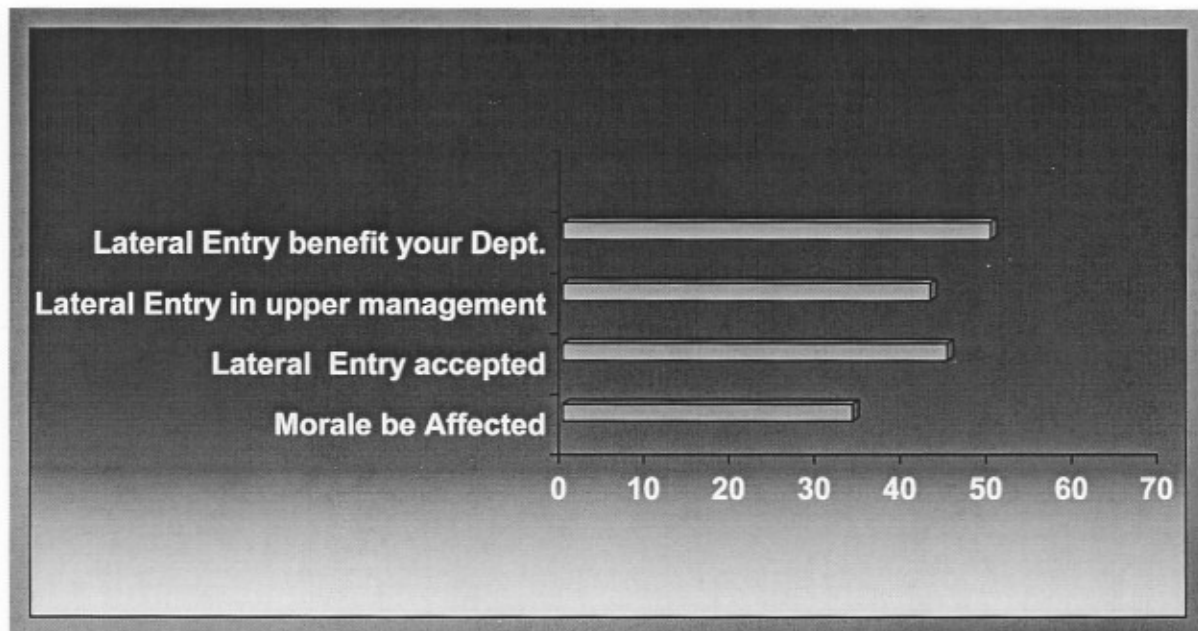


Figure 2. Lateral Entry

The last area covered was time in grade in rank. This area covers number of years an officer should have prior to promoting to the next grade or rank. Should officers be allowed to skip rank? 33% said yes that officers should be able to skip rank and 67% said no that skipping rank was not allowed. Understanding that in some small department skipping rank is the only way to promote officers and is allowed but not sanctioned by many agencies. Numbers of years that each rank should hold prior to promoting to the next grade are as followed, Corporal/Detective 2 ½ years, Sergeant 3 ½ years, and Lieutenants 5 ½ years (See figure 3).

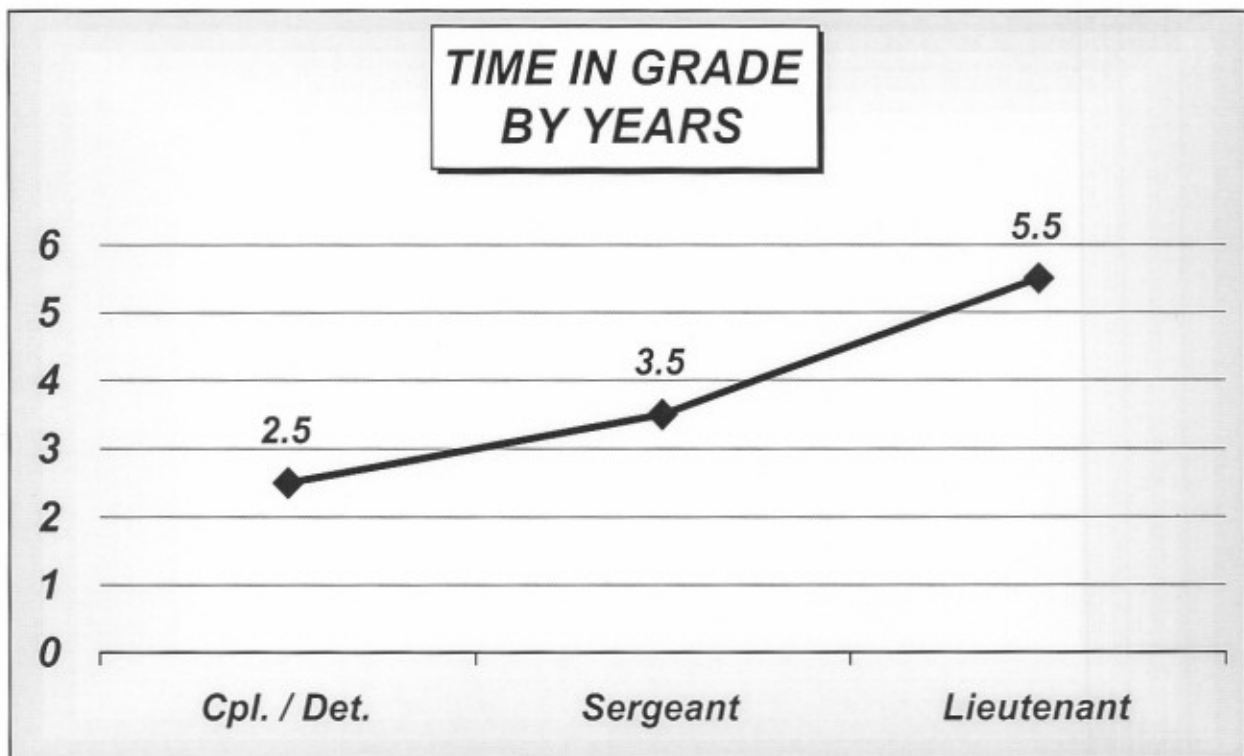


Figure 3. Time in grade

This is something that is sometimes overlooked in order to promote police officers to the next grand or rank, however in the long run the officer come up short due to lack of experience and training in the new position.

Currently this agency had policy covering educational incentives by stating that a regular full time employee, who has completed their probationary period, can apply for educational benefits that will enhance their training beyond what is normally required and enhance their job productivity. The city will pay for tuition for courses relating to the employees related duties not to exceed \$1,500.00, reimbursement will only be made if the course is completed (Pflugerville Police Department General Orders, 2002).

The law enforcement profession is trying to catch up with current times by educating and training their officers to become better professionals but due to lack of money and time, our profession continues to operate as it has for some years.

Discussion/Conclusions

The purpose of this research has been to evaluate the need of certain factors affecting the promotional guidelines for police officers. Law enforcement agencies that have no promotional guidelines are susceptible to civil litigation. Furthermore, these agencies can also hamper the integrity of the agencies, by allowing officers to believe that the good ole boy system still works. The areas that were chosen in this research paper were education, lateral entry, seniority, and time in grade / rank.

These topics were evaluated on survey questions disseminated throughout several law enforcement departments and the results showed the need for promotional guidelines. Several agencies stated that there was not a need for college hours to become a police officer, nor did their department require it to be employed. On the other hand, these agencies stated that a college degree should be considered for promotions and an Intermediate Certificate should be required prior to promoting the rank of Detective or Corporal and Sergeant.

Seniority was probably the highest rated, showing that all these agencies believe that seniority is being used especially for promotions. This was one area that was somewhat disturbing because this goes to prove that the good ole boy system is still being used for

promotions. The majority of the law enforcement agencies agreed to using lateral entry, however it would affect the morale of the department and would only benefit some departments. Remembering that these same agencies had requested to use lateral entry only in upper management positions. The last item covered was time in grade / rank showing that these agencies did not approve of someone skipping rank to promote and that officers should have experience in the rank they currently hold for a minimum of three years. These law enforcement agencies showed that a detective or corporal should have a minimum of 2 ½ years before being allowed to promote. A sergeant should have a minimum of 3 ½ years and a Lieutenant should have a minimum of 5 years before they promote to a higher grade.

The Pflugerville Police Department has since improved their policy covering promotions showing the requirements to promote to the grade and what is required advancing in the career ladder. This policy is still being worked on to include Patrol officers I & II ranks and possibly including other ranks or position within this agency.

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Appendix A – Survey Tool

Survey Questionnaire

I am a participant in the 50th Leadership Command College (Lemit) and a requirement for completion of this program is an Administrative Research Paper (APR). I have chosen my dissertation topic to be Evaluating the Importance of Promotional Guidelines for Law Enforcement Departments. The criteria that are being surveyed are: education, seniority, lateral entry, and time in grade in rank. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey as your information will greatly assist me in completing my research for my dissertation. Thank You.

Education

Question	Yes	No	Hour
1. Should new police officers be required to have college hours prior to being hired ?			
2. Does your department require a minimum amount of college hours for employment?			
3. Should a college degree completed by a candidate be considered in the promotional process?			
4. Should the completion of their Intermediate certificate be considered in promotion to corporal/Detective rank?			
5. Should the completion of their Intermediate certificate be considered in promotion to Sergeant rank?			
6. Should the completion of their Advanced or Masters certificate be considered in promotion to Lieutenant rank?			

Seniority

Questions	Yes	No	Points
1. Should seniority be considered in the promotional process?			
2. If yes, should there be a maximum amount of points given?			

Lateral Entry

Questions	Yes	No	
1. Do you think that morale would be affected if the department hired someone from outside the department?			
2. Do you think that lateral entry should be an accepted practice in the law enforcement profession?			
3. Do you think that lateral entry should only be used in upper management?			
4. Do you think that lateral entry could benefit your department?			

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Time in Grade in rank

Questions	Yes	No	Years
Should a candidate be allowed to skip a rank?			
To be eligible for promotion, should the candidate have a certain amount of experience in the rank they hold?			
If yes to the above listed question, how many years of previous experience do you think should require for each rank.			
Corporal / Detective			
Sergeant			
Lieutenant			

Thank You,

Mike Mirelez, Detective
Pflugerville Police Department

[If you have questions pertaining to this survey contact me at (512) 670-5579]

Return to: Pflugerville Police Department
Care of Det. Mike Mirelez #54
P.O. Box 679
Pflugerville, Texas 78691
Email: mmirelez@cityofpflugerville.com

Appendix B - Survey Results

Survey Questionnaire

I am a participant in the 50th Leadership Command College (Lemit) and a requirement for completion of this program is an Administrative Research Paper (APR). I have chosen my dissertation topic to be evaluating the Importance of Promotional Guidelines for Law Enforcement Departments. The criteria that are being surveyed are: education, seniority, lateral entry, and time in grade in rank. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey, as your information will greatly assist me in completing my research for my dissertation. Thank You.

Education

Question	Yes	No	Hour
1. Should new police officers be required to have college hours prior to being hired ?	46	53	
2. Does your department require a minimum amount of college hours for employment?	12	88	
3. Should a college degree completed by a candidate be considered in the promotional process?	49	51	
4. Should the completion of their Intermediate certificate be considered in promotion to corporal/Detective rank?	95	5	
5. Should the completion of their Intermediate certificate be considered in promotion to Sergeant rank?	95	5	
6. Should the completion of their Advanced or Masters certificate be considered in promotion to Lieutenant rank?	91	9	

Seniority

Questions	Yes	No	Points
1. Should seniority be considered in the promotional process?	72	27	

Lateral Entry

Questions	Yes	No	
1. Do you think that morale would be affected if the department hired someone from outside the department?	66	34	
2. Do you think that lateral entry should be an accepted practice in the law enforcement profession?	55	45	
3. Do you think that lateral entry should only be used in upper management?	57	43	
4. Do you think that lateral entry could benefit your department?	50	50	

CONTINUES ON BACK

Time in Grade in rank

Questions	Yes	No	Years
Should a candidate be allowed to skip a rank?	33	67	
To be eligible for promotion, should the candidate have a certain amount of experience in the rank they hold?			
If yes to the above listed question, how many years of previous experience do you think should require for each rank.			
Corporal / Detective			2.5%
Sergeant			3.5%
Lieutenant			5.5%

Thank You,

Mike Mirelez, Detective
Pflugerville Police Department

[If you have questions pertaining to this survey contact me at (512) 670-5579]

Return to: Pflugerville Police Department
Care of Det. Mike Mirelez #54
P.O. Box 679
Pflugerville, Texas 78691
Email: mmirelez@cityofpflugerville.com