

# Re-Envisioning Police Training in the U.S.

*Rejecting the Status Quo, Speeding the Pace of Progress Toward a True 21st Century Model*

Proceedings of the American University Advisory Committee On Re-Envisioning Police Training in the U.S.



SCHOOL of PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
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*Photo courtesy of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department.*

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*Photo courtesy of the Baltimore City Police Department.*

## INTRODUCTION

Policing in America is one of the most challenging career paths imaginable. Each day, hundreds of thousands of police officers head out to a job that is stunningly complex, ranging from minor neighborhood disputes to life and death struggles with armed and violent criminals. Federal, state, county, local, and other law enforcement officers respond to well over half a million 911 calls for help every day. The training of these officers dictates the success of their work, their safety, and the safety of all those they encounter. Given the uniquely local model of United States policing, it is not surprising that the scope, quality, and length of training varies dramatically across the roughly 18,000 Federal, state, county, and local police departments in the country.

At the request of American University School of Public Affairs (SPA) Dean Vicky Wilkins, staff of both SPA's Department of Justice, Law and Criminology (JLC) and the Key Leadership

Institute (KLI) have launched a new initiative on the training of entry-level recruits, mid-rank officers, and senior leaders.

Beyond officers' core values, departmental leadership, mission, vision, and policy, their responses to workplace challenges is determined largely by the quality of training they receive. The question this paper seeks to answer is straightforward: how good is current police training? While the variations in recruit, mid-rank, in-service and leadership-level training across the 50 states and territories complicate the answer, this paper seeks to address this core policing issue in its entirety.

The current spotlight on police practices nationwide, stemming from events like the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and so many other equally concerning incidents, has called into question all aspects of policing practice. While police mission,

vision, policy and practices can all benefit from thoughtful reconsideration, how police are trained to do their work is a particularly urgent issue. The events at the U.S. Capitol on January 6th, 2021 also relate directly to police training. Watching live televised coverage of violent domestic terrorists attempting to overthrow the government of the United States was both frightening and painful. At the same time, questions about police training and their capacity to respond effectively and interdict such actions came into clear focus.

Training U.S. police officers at all rank levels has historically been driven by: 1) the vision of those providing the training, 2) fiscal resources, 3) priorities of key stakeholders, 4) emerging issues, 5) training required by state boards at academy and annual in-service classes, and 6) an over-arching theme of achieving command and control in complex situations. The local design of more than 18,000 independent city, county, state, and federal policing agencies makes syllabi standardization impossible. Each agency receives its respective training from a patchwork of private and public resources, each with its own unique mission, syllabus, and delivery methods. Inarguably, this complex de-centralized training model does not lend itself to standardized, best practice policing training approaches.

Entry level recruit/patrol officer level training is provided by local, state, or federally-funded academies. The syllabi at all private or public training academies are approved by the Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) board in each state. At the local level, academy training is typically measured in weeks rather than months

(commonly, 10, 15, or 20 weeks). Additionally, many community colleges in various states provide pre-hire entry-level police officer certification training.

To put police recruit training in context, the time allocated to training for other professions that address life or death situations is significantly longer. Medical school and criminal law students spend roughly nine years in preparation before taking on a case in which life and death could hang in the balance.\* Young men and women entering most U.S. police academies can face these same life-or-death situations after graduating from training academies where programs are measured in weeks or months. Beyond crisis situations, these officers will be called upon to respond to amazingly complex 911 calls related to community problems that have been long in the making. While police academy training may be compressed and intensive, it must also represent the highest possible quality, to prepare officers to succeed. In too many instances, recruit training does not meet this critical threshold.

Mid-rank (supervisory, command-level) training, for the most part, is inconsistent and uncoordinated, with various government-funded or fee-based private offerings made available on an ad hoc basis. This training gap leaves well-meaning but untrained supervisors without the necessary skills to lead.

At the leadership level, most senior staff must make their own choices on professional development/training, typically relying on private and public sector leadership training programs. Major police leadership organizations such as The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Police

*\*Includes all undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate work and internship assignments*



*Photo of Deputy Navdeep Singh Nijjar graduating from Harris County (TX) Sheriff's Office police academy, courtesy of the Sikh Coalition.*

Executive Research Forum (PERF), National Police Foundation, FBI National Academy, Major County Sheriffs Association, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, and many others offer high quality training opportunities.

Annual in-service training also merits close attention. States with POSTS provide annual, required, in-service training for all officers. While some of these trainings are robust and evidence-based, too many fall short of that threshold. State-level mandates often create variations in content, quality, evidence-based research findings, faculty expertise, and delivery approach.

Lastly, the content of each program is of particular concern. Who creates these training curricula? Who critiques and suggests improvements? How does the development process ensure that proven, evidence-based approaches are always included? How skilled and experienced are the instructors relaying this information to the students? Are they equally well-

versed in educational theory? Finally, is the length of each training program sufficient to ensure that all key elements are covered? Current training processes across the country make it clear that there is no one simple answer to these critical questions. This de-centralized approach leaves adherence to best practices and policies unlikely, if not impossible.

The goal of American University's *Re-Envisioning Police Training in the US.: Rejecting the Status Quo, Speeding the Pace of Progress Toward a True 21st Century Model* is to both examine the current state of police training in America and support the improvement of that training. As we gain a clearer understanding of the state of practice, we will present the policing community with recommendations for changes, and in appropriate instances, we will develop entirely new training curricula to fill urgent gaps. Our scope will be inclusive, with equal focus on entry-level recruit, recurring in-service, mid-rank, and leadership training. This position paper is this first step in a multi-year effort.

## TRAINING INITIATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Numerous sources can confirm the issues and concerns raised in this report. Even so, on October 13, 2020, American University gathered twelve diverse and nationally-respected police and educational experts to provide counsel before determining action items. The following individuals participated:

**Rick Brown:** Deputy Superintendent, Pennsylvania State Police (retired), CEO Transparency Matters, LLC

**Tracy Burnett:** Professor, American University, Principal, Burnett Leadership Coaching and Development

**Genevieve Citron:** Former Senior Policy Advisor, Justice Programs Office, American University

**Mary Gavin:** Chief, Falls Church Police Department (VA)

**Maureen McGough:** National Institute of Justice (NIJ) (retired), Former Director of National Projects the Police Foundation, Chief of Staff, New York University Policing Project

**Renee Mitchell:** Sergeant, Sacramento Police Department (retired), Senior Researcher, RTI International (NC), President, American Society of Evidence-Based Policing (ASEBP)

**Phillip Morse:** Chief of Police, United States Capitol Police (retired), Assistant Vice President, University Police Services & Emergency Management, American University

**Sasha O’Connell:** Formerly Federal Bureau of Investigation, Executive in Residence, American University

**Marc Partee:** Director of Training, Baltimore Police Department (MD) (retired), former IACP Visiting Police Fellow, Chief of Police, Lincoln University

**Ed Roessler:** Chief of Police, Fairfax County Police Department (VA) (retired), Adjunct Professor American University

**Ronal Serpas:** Superintendent, New Orleans Police Department (retired), Chief of Police, Nashville TN (retired), Chief, Washington State Patrol (retired), Professor of Practice, Loyola University/New Orleans

**Tiffany Simmons:** D.C. Department of Corrections; Professor, American University

**Nicola Smith-Kea:** Policing Specialist, Smith-Kea Consulting, LLC

As this project proceeds, our advisors will continue to provide input. AU is most grateful for their willingness to guide us as we take on this critical policing issue. Diversity of thought must be a constant focus of our work. Our advisory committee, along with other subject matter experts, will ensure we attain that goal.

# PROCEEDINGS

## Opening Comments

Each of the three leaders of the AU Re-Envisioning Police Training (RPT) Initiative—Dr. Richard Bennett, Chair of the Department of Justice, Law and Criminology (JLC) within AU’s School of Public Affairs (SPA), Patrick Malone, Director of AU’s Key Leadership Institute (KLI), and SPA/JLC Professor John Firman, RPT Project Director—delivered welcoming comments. Dr. Bennett emphasized the history of police training in the U.S., citing efforts at the highest governmental levels (including the White House) to create best practice police policy and training models. Malone made clear that successful leadership training organizations throughout the U.S. like KLI can provide innovative training concepts to the police field. Firman, reflecting on his 25 years as Director of Research for the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), pointed to the need to re-visit all levels of police training—academy, in-service, mid-rank, command, and leadership. This multi-level approach will ensure that everyone at every rank is keying off the same mission, vision, and strategies to ensure consistent and successful service delivery.

Members of the advisory group all shared their training perspectives as the discussion got underway. Advisors first complimented AU on its training initiative, agreeing that police training is one of the most critical components of any successful policing strategy. Current police training at all levels must be carefully examined to ensure that best practices

and evidence-based innovations are present in every program across the U.S. They also noted that creating a high quality, standardized training system for the almost 18,000 federal, state, county, and local police agencies presents a formidable challenge. It will be equally difficult to ensure that the qualifications of each trainer, the quality of each curriculum, and the balance of time spent on each training component are comparable across the nation’s many training platforms.

## Over-Arching Training Issues

Before tackling the various levels of training within policing, advisors discussed several over-arching issues that must be addressed as the field moves to a true 21st Century model.

### *National Policing Climate*

All advisors were quick to note that any work undertaken to address police training improvement must fully understand and appreciate the current climate of police distrust across U.S. communities. Recent events—with the murder of George Floyd at the epicenter—certainly call into question how police think, respond, and perceive threats to their safety and that of the public. The national conversation taking place in town hall meetings and online forums links directly to training and how it guides every officer in uniform. Community members, watching benign events turn into tragedies, have every right to question how police think and act, and how training influences performance.



### ***Violent Domestic Terrorism***

The assault on the U.S. Capitol by violent domestic terrorists intent on overthrowing the government resonates as a historic tragedy, and shines a spotlight on policing performance, capacity, and training. Breakdowns in event preparation, intelligence sharing, multi-agency response, and incident command all relate back to the quality of training for all police leaders, mid-rank officers, and patrol officers. Post-incident inquiries will undoubtedly address these multiple issues, including gaps in police training, to protect our nation from future terrorist acts.

### ***Ethical Leadership, Transparency, and Public Trust***

Police leadership and transparency have always been essential elements in building strong community trust. Recent incidents suggest that Americans have reasonable questions about these issues. They want reassurance that all police agencies (some 18,000 state and local departments) and especially their own local police are well-led, entirely transparent, and ready to work with their community constituents to co-produce effective public safety. Are police leaders taught to be truly visionary? Are mid-rank officers taught how to connect leadership concepts to officers on patrol? Are patrol officers taught to make critical, ethical on-scene decisions immediately and with surety?

### ***Diversifying the Police Profession***

While many police agencies are making strides in diversifying their workforce, many remain predominantly white and male, with significant

under-representation of other races, ethnicities, and genders. Successfully diversified agencies attest that it promotes:

- Diverse thinking
- Development of cultural sensitivity training curricula and delivery
- More training support for underrepresented individuals
- Improved recruitment and retention patterns
- Enhanced community acceptance, as the profile of officer diversity more accurately reflects that of its community

Diversity can only be achieved through a proactive, intentional effort to recruit a more heterogeneous cohort. While such efforts demand a great deal of work, the benefits are evident—as unique individual perspectives help inform entire agencies on how to meet community needs more effectively.

### ***Institutional Barriers***

Advisors identified a number of institutional barriers to re-thinking training approaches and syllabi content. These obstacles include resistance to change, acceptance of a flawed syllabus, inability or unwillingness to seek out cutting edge/innovative training theory, lack of support for change from upper-level leadership, time and costs of making substantive changes to core components, and lack of continuing community input.

Those who lead training initiatives should create a culture open to both meta and micro changes in syllabi. Language and word choices are critical as well. For example, if the ‘warrior mindset’ requires



*Photo courtesy of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department.*

understanding a number of tactical strategies, shouldn't training on the 'guardian mindset' also present tactical strategies for success (for example cover, concealment, containment, de-escalation)? Taken as a whole, these barriers make it very difficult to step back, re-envision, and revamp current approaches, particularly for academy instructors with state-approved course content.

### ***Funding***

Advisors noted that funds for training enhancement and evidence-based improvement are inconsistent, and often insufficient. They called for a significant increase in public investment by governing bodies to ensure state-of-the-art training to all rank levels. Of particular concern was the national imbalance of resources. Major and midsize departments

generally enjoy sufficient training resources while the approximately 15,000 smaller agencies (those with fewer than 50 sworn officers) lack funds for even basic, recruit-level training.

### ***Facilities***

Facility quality, advisors commented, ranges from newer facilities with excellent technology integration to older buildings no longer appropriate for use. Advisors again pointed out that resources for facility upgrades favor major and midsize departments, leaving the country's some 15,000 smaller agencies struggling for dollars. Training facilities are vital for maximizing officer learning capacity. Further, sub-par facilities not only hurt training capacity, they also make clear that the agency and its governing body do not value training as they should.

## ***Faculty***

Advisors spoke of the disproportionately wide variation in faculty skills and preparedness. Academy faculty teams are typically made up of upper-rank permanent leadership, a variety of sworn police officers (various ranks) rotating through to train on their areas of expertise, and other non-sworn professionals from policing and/or other fields. Advisors noted that these variations may be based on funding availability or differing state and local minimum requirements for these critical positions.

Particularly at the recruit level, faculty have a huge impact on the new recruits and how they come to understand their mission and work. Advisors were supportive of organizations working toward program standardization (for example, the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training, or IADLEST) but still worried that insufficient progress has been made in re-envisioning training curricula in the face of widespread unrest and distrust.

## ***How Police Learn/How Faculty Teach***

How do adults learn? Advisors reminded AU staff that every successful training curriculum must provide a full spectrum of learning approaches, including visualization, interaction, auditory input, or independent study, for example. However, they also made clear that certain things in the academy environment are designed to be uncomfortable to ensure that each recruit can manage complex critical events. Lastly, all academy approaches should be sensitive to individual learning challenges, providing appropriate support as necessary.

## ***Evolving Scope of Police Services***

The duties of police have evolved to include significant social service and public health functions. Advisors expressed concern that many current police training curricula, particularly at the recruit/academy level, have failed to keep up with these changes. Many programs continue to focus on the enforcement component of policing, failing to dedicate equivalent time to equally important protection issues. Thus recruits spend hundreds of hours on firearms, use of force, and tactical policing while spending significantly fewer hours on critical de-escalation, diversion, mediation, and dispute resolution skills.

Going back to their earlier point on national context, advisors called for a thoughtful rebalancing of training content to help officers more fully understand their mission and respond in more effective ways to complex, emotion-laden calls. Simply put, if the training cannot be successfully rebalanced, then departments may need to consider narrowing the scope of police services.

Note: A 2015 study on police training by Rahr and Rice, *From Warriors to Guardians: Recommitting American Policing Culture to Ensure Democratic Ideals* compared multiple curricula and found that an average of 124 hours were allowed for tactical (warrior) training, while 40 hours were devoted to communication and behavioral management (guardian) approaches.

## ***Community Input***

While community policing models certainly call on police to reach out to the public, newly emerging

*co-production of policing* models invite far more intentional and improved communication. Police need to open their doors to their community constituents to collaborate on critical policy, training, and program goals. Advisors cautioned that this concept—while proving hugely successful in departments nationally—causes concern, and even fear, in police leaders who hesitate to yield any degree of autonomy.

The panel agreed that careful language would be imperative here to manage these concerns. They also argued that these worries are unfounded: community members, once included in the conversation, will have no desire to assume actual law enforcement duties. Critical community input must not be mistaken for ‘community oversight.’ Also, this advanced (co-production) model helps police approach communities in a much more sophisticated and inclusive manner, identifying and working with trusted community and neighborhood leaders and avoiding self-appointed ones.

### ***Drawing Course Content from Other Disciplines (justice, law, education, psychology, health)***

While the core content of any police training curriculum is predictably unique to the profession, two key elements call for a much broader view: 1) how material is delivered to the class, and 2) how that material is contextualized around other community resources. Advisors urged that visionary trainers look to other disciplines, particularly the education field, to find and adopt teaching methods that enhance learning. For example, a complete understanding of learning theory is essential to any successful police training model. Instructors must

also make clear to students that police cannot and must not work in isolation. Police working alongside health care experts, psychologists, counselors, and victim advocates are positioned to achieve a much greater level of success — modeling that behavior in the classroom is an essential step.

### ***Leveraging Evidence-Based Policies and Training Research***

In recent years, advisors noted, the field is embracing the concept of Evidence-Based Policing (EBP). EBP asks that police implement policies, training, and programs based on evaluation research, or, in other words, efforts that have been proven to work. This concept has been reinforced by the emergence of two key national initiatives: 1) the creation of the National Institute of Justice/International Association of Chiefs of Police Law Enforcement Advancing Data and Science (LEADS) Scholar Program, which supports officers seeking advanced educational degrees, and 2) the creation of the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing (ASEBP), in which police and scholars join ranks to analyze and promote evidence-based police practices.

Advisors suggested that, at a minimum, all police training curricula (at all levels) should be reviewed to determine grounding in EBP research. Course material that is well-considered but not necessarily supported by research should motivate program leaders to collaborate with local, regional, or national scholars (such as ASEBP) to identify relevant research on that material. Advisors also promoted the implementation of a standardized pre-post training impact survey for all officers, to confirm whether training objectives are being met.



*Photo of training officers courtesy of the Baltimore City Police Department.*

## **Entry-Level Recruit Training**

In considerations of training by rank, advisors noted several issues with academy-based recruit training. Foremost, academy training represents the initial molding of new recruits into sworn police officers, setting the foundations for their sense of purpose, understanding of departmental culture, and ability to do the critical thinking necessary for smart and emotionally intelligent decisions in the field. Advisors recommended the following steps to improve the quality of recruit training:

- Thematic training approaches: create themes that span the curriculum (for example, community input) and ensure that all content reinforces that theme
- Value-added information: as new ideas emerge, build them into current curricula to improve training quality
- Creation of multi-disciplinary academy faculty (police, public health, justice, and community) to broaden scope and quality of content
- Partnering with local universities to leverage the teaching expertise of faculty to support and enhance the teaching capacity of police officers who train in their areas of expertise
- Training on emotional intelligence: the ability of the officer to be aware of and control emotions during volatile calls for service
- Reviews of all curricula to ensure training content is based on current research versus anecdotal information to ensure training content and practices align with the critical needs of the profession
- Guiding officers in avoiding tunnel vision or single-focus approaches, increasing their ability to use critical thinking in all situations

- Teaching self-management and self-awareness concepts, allowing officers to ‘do the right thing’ when a fellow officer is misbehaving or even committing a crime
- Adding a ‘seminal incident’ training feature, where near-misses (errors that could have resulted in significant damage/injury) are used as learning tools to ensure that flawed performance is not repeated
- Emphasizing departmental values across the syllabus: if community partnerships and engagement (co-production of policing) is a value, reinforce it in all training components
- Understanding the audience: most recruits tend to be relatively young (20s-30s) so awareness of their values, interests, and how they learn is essential information for faculty
- Ensuring continuity between academy faculty and field training officer (FTO) instruction to ensure that FTO guidance is entirely consistent with academy instruction

Advisors concluded that many academies are ‘stuck in the past,’ presenting training content and approaches steeped in tradition but not always inclusive of emerging concepts. In almost all cases, academy training curricula is approved by state authorities (Police Officer Standards and Training). All innovative change must be approved by this body. Advisors considered AU’s project theme ‘Rejecting the Status Quo: Speeding the Pace of Progress Toward a True 21<sup>st</sup> Century Model’ a critical goal, but one fraught with obstacles. While academy curricula should certainly set minimum standards for certification thresholds, that same curricula must also focus on broader 21<sup>st</sup> Century policing issues and always promote critical thinking.

## Mid-Rank Leadership Training

While entry-level and in-service training is requisite by law and state standards, advisors expressed concern that almost all subsequent mid-rank professional development training is inconsistent, and often entirely absent. Officers moving up from patrol to all other supervisory ranks (corporal, detective, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, major, commander) are often left to ‘learn on the job’ rather than obtain the critical classroom training they need to successfully supervise former peers. Advisors emphasized the danger of that approach, and provided the following guidance on mid-rank training:

- Departments should treat all promotions not just as career stepping-stones but as unique new positions requiring preparatory training to ensure officers fully understand their new role
- Developing individual syllabi for each rank (corporal, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, commander, major) to ensure officers understand how to adjust their approach in each upward rank
- Making clear the critical importance of in-service training and expand opportunities for other professional development opportunities
- Recognizing and reward mid-rank supervisory excellence
- Discussing span-of-control issues as officers at higher ranks take on supervision of larger numbers of sworn and non-sworn staff
- Reinforcing the importance of mid-rank mentoring of officers coming up the ranks
- Holding mid-rank officers accountable and correct behavior if supervisory approaches fall short

- Focusing all mid-rank training on the importance of a seamless approach to agency vision and mission; mid-rank messages must parallel and reinforce command and leadership messages

Advisors returned to the theme of the gap in mid-rank training, maintaining the need for bold, inclusive delivery models to ensure that newly-promoted officers receive sufficient training to successfully carry out their new duties. Failure to train these officers predicts that they will fail to lead well. This leadership void prevents line officers from receiving reliable supervisory leadership, and leaves police executives unable to trust that their vision/mission/goal messages are embedded throughout the organization. Departments with missing or insufficient mid-rank training are by nature dysfunctional.

## Leadership Training

Advisors applauded the expansion of police leadership training over the past several decades. At the national level, major police leadership organizations (for example, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Executive Research Forum, the National Police Foundation, and Major City and Major County Chiefs Associations) promote and often provide no-cost or fee-based training with a history of success. The efforts of these private organizations, along with an equally valuable set of public-sector training opportunities at all levels, makes state-of-the-art leadership training available to prospective chiefs, chiefs, deputy chiefs, sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, state police, and highway patrol leaders across the U.S. Recommendations to enhance training include:

- Ensuring that all training is evidence-based, relying on recent and definitive findings from trustworthy research sources

- Continuously updating curricula so that real-time incidents, problems, and issues are always included in course content
- Revisiting curricula to ensure that participants are continuously challenged to think critically, moving their departments toward innovation and away from status quo thinking
- Ensuring more equitable, inclusive training opportunities to create a more diverse cohort of future leaders
- Creating additional course content to explore emerging concepts in community engagement, including co-production of policing
- Adding and refining course content on bias, as it affects the community, the department, and the perceptions/actions of all officers
- Help leaders gain clear understanding of constituent-based policing in which success is measured by the quality of communication across their department, the rest of the justice system, the community, the governing body, unions, and other stakeholders
- Re-envision the formula for building community-police trust, focusing beyond well-intended town hall meetings to a much more strategic, long-range, collaborative, and intentional approach
- If not currently present, add course content on the mentoring and coaching role of police leaders, ensuring that they are simultaneously leading and helping create new leaders
- Review course content on building bridges to other organizations with unique expertise, to strengthen departmental capacity (for example, health, mental health, drug, alcohol, social service, victim service, mediation, and dispute resolution)



*Photo courtesy of the Baltimore City Police Department.*

In the end, advisors called for AU to challenge those delivering leadership training to reject status quo thinking, maximize innovation, and graduate police leaders who understand that their job demands risk taking, critical thinking, and often taking unpopular stands. Successful police leaders cannot be driven by fear of change, upsetting others, or job loss, but must always do the right thing, no matter the cost.

### **Committee Mandate to AU**

The advisory group was quite clear in its mandate to AU. While recognizing the strides made in training over the last several decades, they also unanimously agreed on the immediate need to re-think, re-envision, and, in some cases, entirely reconstruct training curricula at all rank levels. Looking at the three core training levels, their challenge to AU was again clear:

- **Recruit Training:** Reject status quo content and re-envision, rebalance, and re-design academy curricula to address current and emerging policing, justice, and community issues, relying largely on evidence-based policing (EBP) research
- **Mid-Rank Training:** Step into what they consider a serious void, and help create a nationwide, comprehensive mid-rank training model to meet the unique learning needs of newly promoted corporals, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, majors, and commanders. Advisors saw a strong potential for AU to act quickly to help increase the capacity for officer training at this critical career midpoint
- **Leadership Training:** Partner with organizations already delivering successful leadership programs, and support the enhancement of these programs to include newly emergent training approaches,



policing theory, and practice, with focus on the current national call for dialogue and thoughtful and intentional police reform

Finally, looking at the three distinct levels of police training, advisors felt that AU's most valuable contribution would be immediate action to address mid-rank training issues. Recruit training is mandatory, defined, and controlled by state and local authorities. Leadership training is broadly available. The significant void noted by advisors was mid-rank training. Often missing entirely, and just as often inadequate in design, mid-rank training is critically important to the organizational strength of every police agency. Mid-rank officers must reinforce agency mission, vision, policies, and procedures effectively to all officers under their command. Mid-rank officers are the glue that connects leaders and patrol officers, creating a shared, agency-wide vision. Advisors were unanimously supportive of AU stepping aggressively into this training area.

In review, this sweeping mandate calls for critical changes that can only come from greatly expanded collaboration among academics, police, governing bodies, and community leaders. The committee views AU's interest and involvement in police

training with great regard, given the skill with which the university convenes diverse thought-leaders to advise on problems and solutions. AU is committed to this collaborative approach. All subsequent action by Key and SPA/JLC staff--particularly development of entirely new training models and curricula--will be continuously vetted by this committee and other key stakeholders and piloted/evaluated to ascertain their value to major, mid-size, and smaller police agencies across the U.S.



*Photo courtesy of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department.*

## **AU ACTION AGENDA**

Based on the direction and wide range of ideas provided by the advisory group, AU Project Staff will immediately develop four discrete Action Agendas:

1) Re-Envisioning Police Training at All Ranks to Improve Outcomes, 2) Re-Envisioning Recruit/Entry-Level Police Training, 3) Re-Envisioning Mid-Rank Police Leadership Training, and 4) Re-Envisioning Police Executive Leadership Training. Staff, again in collaboration with project advisors, will then determine the best next steps to create change at all training levels, focusing in particular on creating multi-disciplinary teams (researchers, police, community, and governing body) to move ahead on each item.

Recommendations for change emerging from these Action Agendas will be shared nationally and globally to all concerned stakeholders. AU fully expects that many of our colleagues, in both the policing profession and academia, will move forward with emerging recommendations absent any support from our university. Conversely, AU looks forward to collaboration with any stakeholders wishing to engage with us as they work toward change. Lastly, regarding the issue of mid-rank training, AU, with the Key Leadership Institute at the forefront,

intends to make this training element one of our top priorities for advancement in the coming months and years.

AU understands the immense nature of this initiative, and realizes that progress and ultimate success will depend on a significant level of collaboration with other stakeholder organizations. We have listened carefully to our advisors and accepted their important and compelling mandate, and we will make every attempt to turn the thoughtful concepts in this proceedings report into reality to support the well-being and safety of American communities and the police who serve them.

Note: Dr. Bennett, Director Malone, and Professor Firman offer their gratitude to two American University graduate students, Sierra Egan and Linda Phiri, who attended the advisory group meeting, took copious notes, and created a document detailing the discussion. Their work was essential to the development of this final Proceedings Report, and we thank them for their expertise and great interest in this effort.



For further information about American University's *Re-Envisioning Police Training in the U.S.* initiative, please contact:

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