

## A Program Evaluation of Millersville University Student Police Academy: Improving Diversity in Policing

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### Abstract

*Few studies of police recruitment have investigated successful methods of recruiting women and people of color. This study evaluates the Millersville University Student Police Academy (MUSPA) (which took place in Fall 2020), one of whose goals was to interest students who are women and people of color in a career in law enforcement. This evaluation examines whether the academy increased the participants' interest in pursuing a career in law enforcement, whether the participants gained knowledge of law enforcement, and if attending the academy influenced participants' perceptions of policing. Participants completed a pre- and post-survey, which allowed the authors to collect demographic information and feedback from participants. Our preliminary findings show that participants' level of interest in a career in law enforcement and their knowledge of the law enforcement field both increased after attending the academy. We recommend recruitment strategies that could be used to promote more participation from women and people of color and propose more effective methods of data collection for the future.*

The first Millersville University Student Police Academy (MUSPA) took place during the Fall 2020 semester. It met once a week from October 14th to November 17th. In addition, participants were encouraged to attend by Chief Anders (the Millersville University Police Chief) and/or their professors. A flyer advertising the academy was posted in 'Ville Daily, a news source sent to all students by email. As a result, 14 participants were recruited to attend MUSPA. Chief Anders' goals for the Academy were: (1) to recruit underrepresented groups such as women and

people of color into law enforcement; (2) increase participants' interest in a career in law enforcement; (3) increase participants' knowledge of the law enforcement field, and (4) establish networking opportunities between participants and professionals currently working in the field.

The participants filled out a pre-survey (see Appendix A) with questions that focused on their personal background, knowledge of aspects of law enforcement, level of interest in a career in law enforcement, and the quality of their previous interactions with law enforcement. Of the total 14 participants who

attended MUSPA, 13 filled out the pre-survey. 10 participants completed the post-survey (see Appendix B). The post-survey asked participants how much knowledge they gained about law enforcement, their level of interest in a career in law enforcement, whether they would recommend MUSPA to their friends and peers, and if they had a better understanding of civilian-police interactions. Finally, the participants were asked to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the academy.

## Results

While there were a total of 14 participants, some participants did not answer specific questions. The percentages provided below are based on valid responses. The largest group of participants were white (61.5%), followed by African American (15.4%), Latinx (7.7%), Asian American (7.7%), and bi/multi-racial (7.7%). The majority of participants were male at 61.5% compared to female at 38.5%. According to the Millersville University Fact Book, (Fall Department Five-Year Enrollments by Gender and Ethnicity), 73.6% of undergraduate students self-identify as white, 8.5% African American, 10.6% Hispanic, 3.0% Asian, and 1.2% Multi-racial (Institutional Effectiveness & Accountability at Millersville University, 2021). The group of participants of color (African American, Asian American, and Multiracial students) who attended the Fall 2020 MUSPA were overrepresented, compared to the larger university student body. However, female students were underrepresented compared to the student body with 59.2% of the university undergraduate population identifying as female and 40.8% as male (Institutional Effectiveness & Accountability at Millersville University 2021).

The majority of the participants were Sociology majors (with a concentration in Criminology) at 66.7%. Majors also included

History (7.1%), Biology (7.1%), Sports Journalism (7.1%), and English Education (7.1%). 50% of the academy attendees were seniors, 25.0% were juniors, 16.7% were sophomores, and 8.3% was an employee of the university.

In the post-survey, participants were asked whether their level of interest in a career in law enforcement had increased, decreased, or stayed the same. 90% of respondents said that they were more interested in a career in law enforcement. All participants said that they would “definitely” recommend the academy to friends and peers.

The participants were asked about the quality of their interactions with police in both the pre- and post-surveys, by measuring their level of trust in police and how likely they would be to call the police in an emergency. The level of trust was high during the pre-surveys with the average participant trusting police “most of the time.” However, trust in police did increase to the average participant trusting the police “completely” in the post-survey. On average, participants responded they “definitely” have a better understanding of police interactions with citizens and the role that police officers of diverse backgrounds can play after attending the academy.

Participants were asked to self-report their level of knowledge in several areas of law enforcement on the pre- and post-survey. All the variable means increased from the average participant responding they had “some” level of knowledge on the pre-survey to “mostly” and close to “definitely” having knowledge on these areas in the post-survey.

## Discussion

The four main goals of MUSPA were as follows: (1) to recruit underrepresented groups such as women and people of color into law enforcement; (2) increase participants’ interest in a career in law enforcement; (3) increase participants’

knowledge of the law enforcement field, and (4) establish networking opportunities between participants and professionals currently working in the field. Preliminary findings show that three of these goals were met. Participants of color were overrepresented compared to the larger student body, demonstrating that the first goal was partly successful in recruiting diverse participants (the academy was comparatively less successful in recruiting female participants). Both the levels of interest and knowledge of law enforcement participants reported increased following the academy, which shows that the second and third goals were met. We did not collect data regarding student-to-speaker networking, but Chief Anders has first-hand knowledge of the students who have been reaching out to him and other speakers for advice and mentorship. Overall, the academy was successful in attaining most of its goals. In the full report, we discuss additional ways to improve MUSPA, including focused recruitment efforts, refining academy goals, and improving data collection methods.

It is critical to understand the benefits of hiring people of color and women including increased police legitimacy, improved interactions with members of minority communities, and increased confidence from

citizens that police officers will understand their problems and concerns (Frydl et al., 2004). The goals of the academy were to not only interest women and people of color in a career in law enforcement, but also to improve the quality of interactions between participants and police officers to build relations with this community.

### **Conclusion**

This study was established to evaluate the Millersville University Student Police Academy, regarding its success at recruiting diverse students who are interested in a career in law enforcement, expanding their knowledge of the field, and increasing their overall interest in policing. The 14 participants were administered pre- and post-surveys, which the authors used to analyze the goals of the academy. The preliminary findings show that the interest in law enforcement careers and knowledge of the field both increased. It would be beneficial to follow up with the participants from the Fall 2020 academy at a later point to determine if they have pursued a career in law enforcement or plan to do so. This would provide us with more concrete evidence on the academy's goal of recruiting women and people of color to pursue careers in law enforcement.

## References

- Center for Public Scholarship and Social Change. (2021). MU Police Academy data set [Data file]. Millersville University: Center for Public Scholarship and Social Change.
- Frydl, K., Skogan, W. G., & National Research Council (U.S.). (2004). *Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing: The Evidence*. National Academies Press. Retrieved from <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=109203&authtype=sso&custid=s3915890&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Institutional Effectiveness & Accountability at Millersville University. (2021). Five-Year Fall Undergraduate and Graduate Enrollment By Department, Ethnicity and Gender [Data set]. Millersville University of Pennsylvania. <https://www.millersville.edu/iea/ir/factbooks/2021/index.php>

**Appendix A  
MUSPA Pre-Survey**

Millersville University Police Department  
Student Citizen’s Police Academy Application  
October – November 2020

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ M #: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (MI)

Current number of college credits: \_\_\_\_\_ Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain below why you would like to attend MUPD’s Student Citizen’s Police Academy?

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We would like to get a sense of your current background and knowledge about various aspects of law enforcement. Please select the best answer – with 1 being the least knowledgeable and 5 being extremely knowledgeable.

<u>Aspects of Law Enforcement</u>	Least Knowledgeable		→	Most Knowledgeable	
police patrol	1	2		3	4 5
police investigations	1	2		3	4 5
firearms and firearms training	1	2		3	4 5
active shooter response	1	2		3	4 5
community relations	1	2		3	4 5
different areas of law enforcement, e.g., policing, parole, corrections etc.	1	2		3	4 5

*Please turn over to the next page.*

We'd also like to learn a bit more about you, your interest in law enforcement, and your current experiences with police officers.

How interested are you in a career in law enforcement? (1 being the least interested and 5 being extremely interested)

1 2 3 4 5

Do you have any family members who currently work in law enforcement?

YES NO

If "YES," tell us which three of your closest family members work in law enforcement and their occupations:

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you currently live in the community you grew up in?

YES NO

**Thinking about the community you grew up in:**

How much did you trust the police officers there?

1 Not at all → 3 Completely 5  
2

How likely were you to call the police in an emergency?

1 Not at all → 3 Definitely 5  
2

Did you have negative interactions or encounters with police officers?

1 Not at all → 3 Very often 5  
2

Did anyone you know have negative interactions or encounters with police officers?

1 Not at all → 3 Very often 5  
2

Did you have positive interactions or encounters with police officers?

	Not at all	→	Very often	
1	2	3	4	5

Did anyone you know have positive interactions or encounters with police officers?

	Not at all	→	Very often	
1	2	3	4	5

**Thinking about the community you currently live in (if you do not currently live in the community in you grew up in):**

How much do you trust the police officers there?

	Not at all	→	Completely	
1	2	3	4	5

How likely are you to call the police in an emergency?

	Not at all	→	Definitely	
1	2	3	4	5

Do you have negative interactions or encounters with police officers?

	Not at all	→	Very often	
1	2	3	4	5

Does anyone you know have negative interactions or encounters with police officers?

	Not at all	→	Very often	
1	2	3	4	5

Do you have positive interactions or encounters with police officers?

	Not at all	→	Very often	
1	2	3	4	5

Does anyone you know have positive interactions or encounters with police officers?

	Not at all	→	Very often	
1	2	3	4	5

In your opinion, what are the top three challenges and difficulties facing police officers today?

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_

In your opinion, what are the top three barriers to recruiting female police officers and police officers of color?

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_

Finally, we'd like to know a little bit more about you. Please select the response that most applies to you.

Have you or anyone else you know been the victim of a crime?

YES

NO

Gender Identity

Male

Female

Other (\_\_\_\_\_)

Racial / Ethnic Identity

White

African-American

Latino/a (specify ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_)

Asian-American (specific ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_)

Bi- or multi-racial

Other (\_\_\_\_\_)

Thank you so much for filling out this survey.

If you are interested in participating in an interview at the completion of this academy, please provide us with your contact email and phone number below.

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix B  
MUSPA Post-Survey**

Millersville University Police Department  
Student Citizen’s Police Academy Wrap Up Survey  
October – November 2020

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
                    (Last)                    (First)                    (MI)

We would like to get a sense of whether attending this academy has improved your knowledge of law enforcement.

Please select the best answer – with 1 being “Attending this academy did not add to my knowledge of law enforcement” and 5 being “Attending this academy added significantly to my knowledge of law enforcement.”

Did not add to knowledge → Added significantly to knowledge

Aspects of Law Enforcement

police patrol	1	2	3	4	5
police investigations	1	2	3	4	5
firearms and firearms training	1	2	3	4	5
active shooter response	1	2	3	4	5
community relations	1	2	3	4	5
different areas of law enforcement, e.g., specialty units (SWAT/SERT) drug investigations, courtroom testimony, community policing, relationships with District Attorney etc.	1	2	3	4	5

After attending this academy, how would rate your interest in a career in law enforcement? Please select the answer that best suits your experience.

Less interested than before attending

Same level of interest than before attending

More interested than before attending

*Please turn over to the next page.*

We'd like to know how much you learned from the speakers and instructors. Did you find the content of their presentations valuable? Was their experience and background helpful?

Please select the best answer – with 1 being “I found this speaker to be of little or no value, and I learned nothing or little” and 5 being “I found this speaker to be of tremendous value, and I learned a lot.”

If you did not attend a speaker’s presentation, please select “N/A.”

Assistant District Attorney Lance Greene (criminal law and procedures, juvenile law)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

Sergeant Jim Jacobs (courtroom testimony, traffic and patrol procedures 1)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

Chief Pete Anders (vehicle stop safety, community policing, police reflecting community)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

Trooper Ruben De Los Santos (patrol procedures and operations, vehicle code enforcement)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

Officer Alan Anderson (county SERT/WAT and active shooter response)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

Detective Mike Cavanaugh (firearm qualification information, drug investigations)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

Sergeant Kim Geyer (crisis intervention, responding to special needs, community policing)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

Detective Will Smith (community policing, criminal investigations)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

*Please turn over to the next page.*

Officer Olivia Mauro (academy and testing prep)

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Sergeant Chris Kunkle (physical and emotional readiness)

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Officer Olivia Mauro, Officer Jake Waltz, Community Police Specialist Justin Guevarez, Community Police Specialist Shawn Sweda, Sergeant Julie Brennan, Sergeant Jim Jacobs (scenarios team)

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

**After attending this academy:**

How much do you trust police officers now?

1 Not at all → Completely 5  
2 3 4

How likely are you to call the police in an emergency?

1 Not at all → Definitely 5  
2 3 4

Do you have a better understanding of police interactions and encounters with citizens?

1 Not at all → Definitely 5  
2 3 4

Do you have a better understanding of the role that police officers of diverse backgrounds (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender) can play?

1 Not at all → Definitely 5  
2 3 4

Do you have a better understanding of how police departments work?

1 Not at all → Very often 5  
2 3 4

*Please turn over to the next page.*

Do you have a better understanding of how police officers interact with other law enforcement agencies (e.g., District Attorney, Probation and Parole)?

	Not at all	→	Very often	
1	2		4	5

In your opinion, after attending this academy, what are the top three challenges and difficulties facing police officers today? Feel free to elaborate and provide more detail on your responses.

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In your opinion, after attending this academy, what are the top three barriers to recruiting female police officers and police officers of color? Feel free to elaborate and provide more detail on your responses.

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you attend all sessions of the academy?

Yes                  No

If “no,” please describe your reasons.

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*Please turn over to the next page.*

In your opinion, what were the strengths and weaknesses of this academy? What was most and least helpful to you? Is there anything that you wish you had learned? Feel free to elaborate and provide more detail on your responses.

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Would you recommend this academy to your friends and fellow classmates?

Not at all      Maybe      Neutral      Yes      Definitely

Thank you so much for filling out this survey.

Once again, if you are interested in participating in an interview now that you have completed this academy, please provide us with your contact email and phone number below.

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Recommended Citation**

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