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

Elizabeth Rohrback, Mary Brogna, Destiny Lebron,
David Lenig, Ana Carolina Munar, Emma Wright, and
Carrie Lee Smith¹

Center for Public Scholarship and Social Change
Huntingdon House
8 S. George Street
Millersville, PA
17551
Tel: 717-871-7622

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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.

INTRODUCTION

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.

METHODS

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. We first examine the demographics of the participants and compare them to the overall university's student body. Then, we examine the participants' interest in a career in law enforcement and whether the participants would recommend the MUSPA to their peers. Finally, we assess whether the participants self-reported an increase in their knowledge of different areas of law enforcement and better understanding of civilian-police interactions.

Figure 1 shows that the largest group of participants self-identify as white (61.5%), followed by African American (15.4%), Latino/a (7.7%), Asian American (7.7%), and Bi/Multi-racial (7.7%). 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.

Figure 1
Participants' Race (N=13)

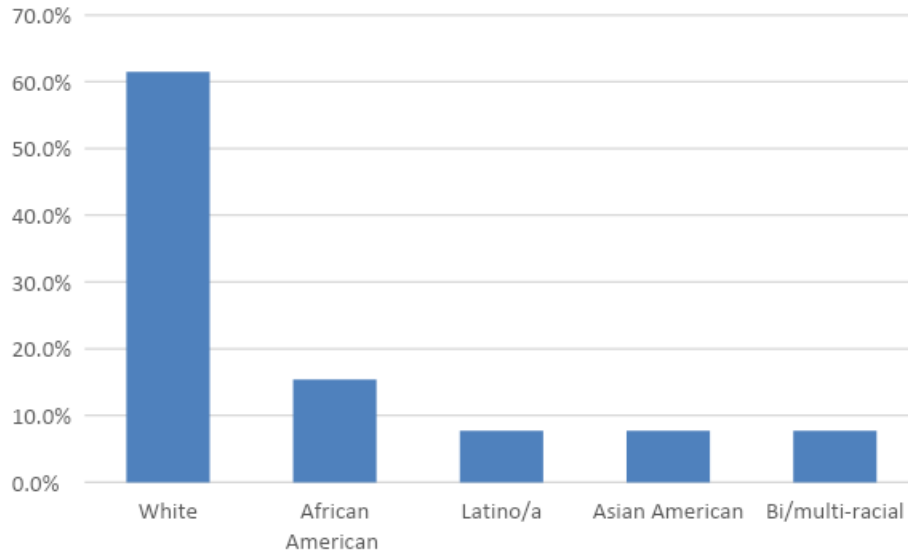


Figure 2 shows that the majority of participants were male (61.5%). According to the Millersville University Fact Book, 59.2% of the university undergraduate population is female and 40.8% is male (Institutional Effectiveness & Accountability at Millersville University 2021). This shows that female participants in MUSPA were underrepresented, compared to the university population.

Figure 2
Participants' Sex (N=13)

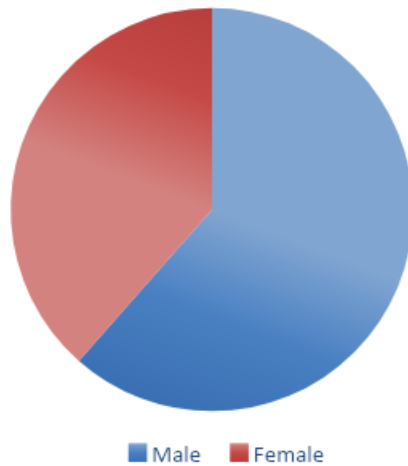


Figure 3 shows that the majority of participants were Sociology majors (with a Criminology concentration) (66.7%). Other majors also included History, Biology, Sports Journalism, and English Education. Clearly many of the participants interested in a career in law enforcement major in Sociology (with a Criminology concentration).

Figure 3
Participants' Majors (N=12)

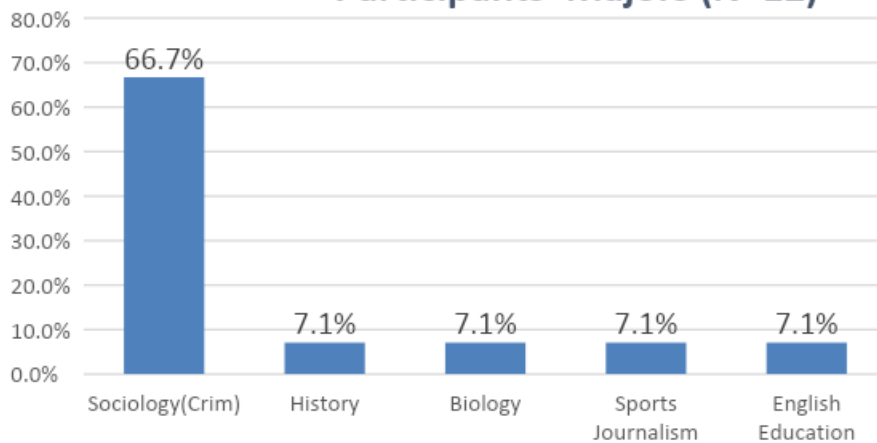
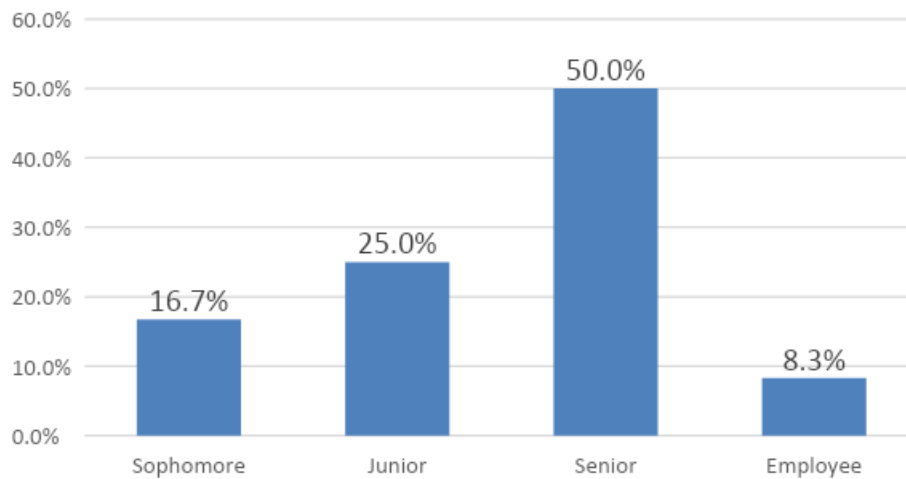


Figure 4 shows that 50% of the participants were seniors, 25.0% were juniors, 16.7% were sophomores, and 8.3% was an employee of the university. The academy seems to appeal more to students further along in their academic careers.

Figure 4
Participants' Class Standing (N=12)



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. Figure 5 shows that 90% of respondents said that they were more interested in a career in law enforcement and 10% responded that their interest level had stayed the same. All the participants said that they would “definitely” recommend the academy to friends and peers (on a scale of “not at all” to “definitely”). This clearly demonstrates that the Fall 2020 MUSPA excelled in increasing participants’ interest in a career in law enforcement.

Figure 5
Level of interest post-academy (N=10)



In addition, participants were asked to rate each academy speaker on a scale from 1 to 5, (1 meaning “I found this speaker to be of little or no value, and I learned nothing or little” to 5

meaning “I found this speaker to be of tremendous value, and I learned a lot”). The mean scores for the speakers ranged from 4.56 to 5, indicating that participants found the speakers to be very valuable.

The participants were asked about the quality of their interactions with police in both the pre- and post-surveys. Table 1 shows that the level of trust among respondents was high in the pre-surveys, a mean of 4.42. However, the level of trust in police increased after participation in the academy with a mean of 4.60. In the pre-survey, when asked whether they would call the police in an emergency, participants responded with a high mean of 4.50, and an even higher post-survey mean of 5.0. Although trust in police was already high, it increased following participation in MUSPA.

TABLE 1
Quality of interaction with the police pre-survey vs post-survey

Variable	N=12	N=10
	Pre-survey	Post-survey
1 Level of trust in police	4.42	4.60
2 Call police in an emergency	4.50	5.00

1 - Level of trust
1 = Not at all
2 = Little trust
3 = Average trust
4 = Most of the time
5 = Completely

2 - Call Police
1 = Not at all
2 = Rarely
3 = Average
4 = Most Likely
5 = Definitely

Table 2 shows that on average, after attending MUSPA, participants skewed towards “definitely” having a better understanding of civilian-police interactions, and having a better understanding of the role that police officers of diverse backgrounds can play. The results from Table 2 provide evidence that MUSPA achieved the goals of improving participants’ understanding of the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement officers.

TABLE 2

Level which participant has a better understanding of		N=10
		Post-survey
Variable		Mean
1	Police interactions with citizens	4.80
2	The role that police officers of diverse backgrounds can play	4.70

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = A little
- 3 = Some
- 4 = Mostly
- 5 = Definitely

Table 3 measures participants' knowledge of various aspects of law enforcement. The participants were asked to self-report the level of knowledge they had in various areas of law enforcement on both the pre- and post-surveys. The pre-survey results showed that on average, the participants reported having "average knowledge" (ranging from means of 3 to 3.38) in the different areas of law enforcement. In the post-survey, participants now reported being "knowledgeable" with means ranging from 3.8 to 4.78. MUSPA's goal of increasing participants' knowledge of various aspects of law enforcement was clearly met.

TABLE 3

Knowledge of Aspects in Law Enforcement		N = 12	N = 10
		Pre-survey	Post-survey
Variables		Mean	Mean
1	Police Patrol	3.31	4.1
2	Police Investigations	3	4.4
3	Firearms & Firearm Training	3	3.8
4	Active Shooter Response	3	3.9
5	Community Relations	3.31	4.78
6	Different Areas of Law Enforcement	3.38	4.6

- 1 = Least knowledgeable
- 2 = A little knowledgeable
- 3 = Average knowledge
- 4 = Knowledgeable
- 5 = Very knowledgeable

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. Below, we discuss additional ways to improve MUSPA, including focused recruitment efforts, refining academy goals, and improving data collection methods.

Student Feedback

Participants listed numerous strengths of MUSPA and provided suggestions for possible improvements. Participants appreciated the networking opportunities that MUSPA had to offer. All the speakers clearly indicated they were willing to assist students interested in the field of law enforcement. One participant stated, *"The most helpful was knowing that I now have several different people I can contact for help/advice...especially Chief Anders."* Participants reported that they found the sessions highly informative as well. A participant stated, *"I think everything was very helpful and informative. I liked that each session wasn't just Power Points and lectures, but we actually got to listen to personal experiences and testimonies."*

Participants indicated a wish for more hands-on and interactive activities (e.g., the scenarios and mock traffic stop). One participant stated, *"Although the talking was very helpful, I would've loved more hands-on."* Several participants also said that they were interested in ride-along opportunities with officers. However, we understand the limitations that COVID-19 safety measures placed on interactive academy activities. Finally, some participants suggested a clearer explanation of the academy at the outset. Many students felt that they did not know what to expect when they signed up to participate. One participant stated, *"I didn't know what to expect when I went there."* By the end of the academy, the participants enthusiastically reported a memorable experience. However, the initial vagueness might have been a possible deterrent for potential participants.

Marketing

One of the academy's goals was to interest people of color and women in law enforcement careers. Research shows that women, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans are currently underrepresented in law enforcement. The benefits of hiring people of color and women include increased police legitimacy, improved interactions with members of minority communities, increased confidence from citizens that police officers will understand their problems and concerns

(Frydl et al. 2004).

In order to improve recruitment of women and people of color for future academies, we suggest advertising at on-campus events, in classes exploring race relations and gender studies, and student-run clubs and organizations. We propose that outreach be conducted with the following clubs: Black Student Union, Society on Latino Affairs (SOLA), Asian Student Inclusivity Association, Zeta Phi Beta, Alpha Phi Alpha, Millersville Concerned Women, and other similar organizations. We further recommend partnering with the Dr. Rita Smith Wade-El Intercultural Center. The center can not only help facilitate discussions on diversity in policing, but potentially what participants can do to be an ally. MUSPA should consider how it can further encourage structural and cultural change by educating all participants on how to practice and model inclusivity.

Finally, the marketing flyer (see Appendix C) could be improved by providing a general overview of the topics covered during the academy, and by clearly stating the goals, which include recruiting diverse students. Considering that attempts to recruit candidates from minority communities are less successful if there is insufficient outreach, it is important to note that goal on the advertising flyer (Wilson et al. 2013).

Structure and Format

The academy could also be improved by defining more direct and specific goals. MUSPA invited speakers from diverse backgrounds and fields to discuss their own professional background in law enforcement. We suggest that MUSPA focus on a few select fields in law enforcement, while emphasizing the challenges and potential of improved diversity and inclusion. It also might be beneficial to offer sessions such as “Police Academy Preparation,” which would inform participants on when and how to apply for entrance into a police academy. Finally, we would recommend that more time be set aside for questions, discussion, and networking.

Data Collection

We can better evaluate MUSPA with improved research design. First, we suggest removing the speaker feedback questions from the post-survey and asking the participants to provide speaker feedback directly after each session. At the end of the 6-week academy, participants may not remember the individual speakers clearly. On the post-survey, participants were asked to rate the speaker on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = “I found this speaker to be of little or no value, and I learned nothing or little” to 5 = “I found this speaker to be of tremendous value, and I learned a lot”). We recommend asking participants to rate the speaker and the topic separately. For example, for Assistant District Attorney Lance Greene, the participants would be asked to rate Mr. Greene as a speaker, and separately on the topic he spoke on (criminal law, procedure, and juvenile law). This way, we can further evaluate if the participants found the speaker and topic to be of similar interest. A participant may have enjoyed listening to the speaker but did not enjoy the topic. This will allow

us to assess which topics the participants are most interested in, helping inform topic choices for future academies.

Second, we suggest that a pre-test and post-test be administered to participants before and after the academy. This will serve as an objective assessment or quiz of knowledge of law enforcement, instead of relying on the participants' self-reported knowledge. Since one of the goals of the academy is to increase knowledge of law enforcement, this would be a more robust form of measurement.

Third, it would be beneficial to add additional questions to the survey. For instance, we might consider asking participants how they learned about MUSPA. That might provide helpful data on future recruitment efforts. We might also consider adding questions that assess participants' understanding of diversity and inclusion in both pre- and post-surveys.

Finally, interviewing participants could offer more in-depth information. For example, we could ask participants about their career plans, and whether the academy had an impact on those plans. We could also collect more data on participants' concerns and questions about law enforcement. These data could help with selecting topics of discussion in future academies.

CONCLUSION

Overall, preliminary findings show that the academy's goals of increasing interest in law enforcement careers and knowledge of the field were both met. Participants in the academy were more diverse than the university population, an early indication that recruiting racially diverse students was successful. The Fall 2020 academy occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted the type of activities available to the participants. After pandemic restrictions are lifted, the academy has the potential to include more hands-on and interactive activities. We suggest that expanding recruitment, refining goals, and improving data collection strategies could greatly enhance the overall experiences and outcomes of future MU Student Police Academies. It would also 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.

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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?

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					<input type="checkbox"/>	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 Completely 5
2 3 4

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

1 Not at all Definitely 5
2 3 4

Did you have negative interactions or encounters with police officers?

1 Not at all Very often 5
2 3 4

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

1 Not at all Very often 5
2 3 4

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 3 Completely 4 5

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

1 Not at all 3 Definitely 4 5

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

1 Not at all 3 Definitely 4 5

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 3 Definitely 4 5

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

1 Not at all 3 Very often 4 5

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)?

1 Not at all □ Very often 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.

(4) _____

(5) _____

(6) _____

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.

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.

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: _____

Appendix C

MUSCPA Marketing Flyer

**WE
WANT
YOU**

To learn about policing our diverse communities.

Join us at Millersville University's first Student Citizen's Police Academy!



Learn the job from experienced Law Enforcement professionals and see if this job is right for you!

WHEN: Every Tuesday from 7pm – 8:30 pm Starting October 13th

WHERE: Located in the McIlwaine Room on the first floor of Gordinier.

WHO WILL BE THERE: Millersville University Police Department is partnering with the PA State Police, Lancaster District Attorney Office and multiple local police agencies to provide the training sessions.

We are looking for 20 motivated students, with at least 30 credits, interested in a community centered law enforcement career.



To register, please email Officer Mary Reynolds at mary.eckert@millersville.edu by October 6th!