

# **Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education Conference**

## **Analysis of Registrants (65)**

### **Institutions and Organizations**

28 two-year technical or community colleges

19 four-year colleges or universities

8 state fire-related organizations

- Florida State Fire College
- Florida Fire Marshal's Office
- Illinois Fire Service Institute
- Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute
- New Jersey Fire Safety Division
- New York Fire Prevention and Control
- Pennsylvania Fire Academy
- Utah Fire and Rescue Academy

4 fire departments

- Bridgeport, CT
- Washington, DC
- Kansas City, MO
- Greensboro, NC

Bergen County (NJ) Fire and Police Academy

FDIC

### **States (29 and DC)**

AL, AR, AZ, CA, CT, DE, (DC), FL, IA, IL, KY, LA, MA, MD, MI, MO, NC, NJ, NY, NV, OH, OK, OR, PA, TN, TX, UT, VA, WI, WA

### **Major Positions**

Dean, Assistant Dean: 4

Director, Assistant Director, Coordinator, Administrator: 18

Professors, Assistant Professors: 16

Program Chair, Coordinator, Manager: 18

Senior Fire Officers: 4

Mid-level Fire Officers: 3

## **Notes from Discussion Groups Day 1 and Day 2**

The following is a summary of the three discussions that took place on Day 1 and on the morning of Day 2 of the conference. The topic of each group's discussion lies in the shaded box found at the start of the each summary. The notes are incomplete, some lists being nothing more than a brainstorming list of issues.

### **Group: Increased Access to Distance Education**

#### **Articulation**

1. Increase participation  
  
Access is there but availability has problems
2. Articulation – accreditation
  - A. Should be designed to be accepted by academic regional accreditation bodies
  - B. When accreditation is accomplished, national and regional articulation may follow.
3. Guidelines  
  
Knowledge-based testing (proctored).  
Same course, different delivery.  
Same assignments, texts, outcomes and competencies

#### **Quality Assurance**

1. NFA should facilitate the development of nationally recognized guidelines for fire and emergency services distance learning programs that ensure quality and incorporate the best learning practices with flexibility, accessibility and technology.
2. NFA should publish two separate checklists to identify key components of quality distance learning programs for both educators and students.
3. NFA should establish a program of (mini)grants to enhance existing programs and foster the development of new distance learning courses.

## **Role for the NFA**

1. Continue to support the initiatives of this conference.
  - A. Identify and inventory FSHE programs (2 and 4-yr. and graduate) including distance education
  - B. Facilitate the process of information exchange between FSHE.
  - C. Identify model distance education courses and host symposium to show:
    - Course materials
    - Development process
    - New technology
2. Create a vehicle for the articulation process.
  - A. Model articulation agreement
  - B. Benchmarks for certain courses
3. Provide assistance in course development.

## **Increased Access to Distance Education**

Sharing distance education/distance learning courses

Sharing takes a lot of time

Operationalize a definition

Quality issues --- Academy blessing

Accreditation

Community college competition

Level of education of instructors

## **Operational definition of distance learning**

“An alternative means of delivering education and training through non-traditional means focussing on flexibility, accessibility and technology.”

## **Delivery through satellite of print-based courses**

Synchronous/asynchronous

Independent

Interactive

Video screening

7/24-window of opportunity

Internet delivery

CD-ROM

## **Issues in Distance Learning**

Quality

Accreditation

Programmatic portability

All distance education programs need to be properly accredited.

Need to keep both sets of customers in mind: learners and agencies... Universal value

Staying in business

Articulation agreements are a guarantee that an associate degree student's courses will be recognized by the same institution toward a baccalaureate.

## **What can the NFA do?**

Can it be a vehicle for the articulation process?

NFA should not serve as accrediting body.

NFA should promote the value of distance education in the fire service.

There is a need to establish some basis of comparability (bench marks) from course to course, program to program.

How can we determine if a course taught in the traditional method achieves the same results as one taught via distance learning?

It is possible to evaluate both sets of outcomes objectively.

NFA has a golden opportunity to help evaluate distance learning course outcomes.

## **What is the role of NFA in fire service distance learning?**

Resource center

Clearinghouse/benchmarking

Establishing some national guidelines on distance education

Set up program criteria for distance education for fire service

NFA should bring together experts from education who can help determine criteria/guidelines to establish distance learning programs (different from what NFPA does with standards setting process).

Core of courses that have generic applicability...

Core abilities must not get lost when offering distance learning courses.

Need to focus on the elusive factors that are part of distance learning.

## **Group: Fire Service Acceptance of Higher Education**

### **Five Categories of Barriers To Acceptance Of Higher Education In The Fire Service**

#### **Cultural Barriers**

- No incentives and general resistance to change
- General lack of mentoring for education in fire service
- Current leaders don't place same emphasis on education
- Opposition or indifference within departments
- Lack of understanding among firefighters of what the fire service requires
- Generational difference in perception of importance of education
- Fire service organizational culture as barrier
- Need to capitalize on educational desire at end of training
- Need to avoid idea of just a series of certifications of training
- Promotion vs. professional development
- Labor concerns for additional requirements. Seniority.
- Volunteer element of fire service undercuts perception of professionalism
- Idea of personal development through education not understood sufficiently
- Hiring standards for fire managers
- Incentive is to concentrate on fire training courses

#### **Logistical & Access Barriers**

- Educational systems often not user-friendly to young firefighter
- Cost and barriers (single parents, time constraints, financial burdens, etc.)
- Lack of financial incentives
- Presence of financial disincentives

#### **National Standards & Accreditation Barriers**

- Lack of acceptance of fire science as an academic discipline
- Lack of consistent standards in depts.
- No consistent state level standards
- Paid vs. volunteer motivation for education
- Lack of consistency between states in interpretation of standards
- Not a national registry for fire service professional qualifications
- Professional accreditation system's role-CFAI, IFSAC, NPQB, IAFC
- Limited effective oversight

## **Academic Barriers**

Lack of acceptance of fire science as an academic discipline  
Training vs. education  
Educational systems often not user-friendly to young firefighter  
Lack of fire science graduate school infrastructure  
Lack of fire science research sponsorship  
Need to capitalize on educational desire at end of training  
Need to avoid idea of just a series of certifications of training  
Curricula may be inappropriate to the times  
Generation gap expectations  
Need to have academic standards for courses

## **Marketing Barriers**

Educational systems often not user-friendly to young firefighter  
Perception of firefighting as a trade  
Public perception of fire service  
Fire fighters' perception  
Elected and appointed officials' perception  
Need to raise awareness among fire fighters of competition from law enforcement  
Expectations from outside – public and politicians

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Culture**

- Promote value of education within the fire service (promotion and entry)
- Points for promotion
- Educational requirements to sit for exam
- EEO Impacts of entry requirements
- Encourage mentoring process within Fire Service
- Program graduates market degree program
- Minimum ed. Requirements for fire chief / command officers (target city officials)
- Career development program for officers / specialists
  - Exposure to all aspects of department
  - Career development officer / counselor
  - Create other external influence to promote higher ed.
- NFA to set example by further upgrading their course prerequisites firefighters (Law enforcement may provide useful examples)

## **2. Logistics / Access**

- Financial incentives for education
- Perkins, Pell, federal block grants
- Research effects of various incentives to determine most effective
  - Distribute results nationally (Lamp process)
  - Use EFO research component for this research
- Class schedules to accommodate firefighters
- Innovative financing of tuition (partnership between FD & Colleges, state funding or grants, city account for tuition reimbursement, federal grant funds)
- Program to demonstrate lifetime value of education for self improvement
- Distance education
- Resolve issue of training and experience for credit
- Dept. of Education & NFA cooperation for fire ed.
- NFA investigate advanced technology for education

## **3. National Standards**

- NFA or other recognized organization develop a model national standard curriculum and course descriptions for fire degree and training programs (including contact hours)
- Explore development of national registry for firefighters
- Require certification for command officers
- Revise NFPA officer standards to include education standards
- Integration of training and education in degree programs

## **4. Academic Issues**

- Recast curriculum to identify divergent & diverse demands and delivery of services
- Recognize the need for multi disciplinary expertise in fire science academic programs
- Promote growth and use of scholarly peer review research journals
- Recognize need for doctorate level faculty
- Fire science degrees (both two-yr. & four yr.) should include a broad base of general and management education
- Develop sources for basic research grant money
- Encourage research grant sources to fund basic fire research
- Up date educational methodologies for students of today

## **5. Marketing**

- Mission statement: Enhancing quality of life by every means at our disposal
  - Market fire department as law enforcement has marketed itself
- Continuing campaign to educate city managers and public administrators (insert fire ed. in MPA programs )

## **Group: Formation of a Higher Education Network**

### ***Problems, Issues, and Challenges***

- National network of schools does not exist
  - IFSAC is growing
- We don't know what curriculum exists
- We use different definitions for programs
  - Fire science, fire technology, fire admin.
- Some schools do not control their curriculum
- Travel budgets are limited-many conferences
- How membership is determined in new network
  - Accreditation?
- College credit for training courses
- Course content consistency/inconsistency
- Program standardization
- No standards for entry-level fire degrees
- Lack of articulation – 2 and 4-year schools

### **Recommendations**

- Establish a national educational forum
  - NFA as the federal coordinating entity
- Membership requirements
  - Regional accredited higher ed. Institution
- North American organization
  - Use TRADE as model only
    - Expandable, adaptable
  - 10 FEMA regions
    - Canada – FEMA 10, 8, 5, 1, 2.
  - Sub-groups – 2-year and 4-year institutions
- Create system for listing curriculum
  - By category
- Develop system to share curriculum
- Create a Listserv or Web-thing - online sharing
- Seek efficient meeting opportunities

## **North American Educational Resource and Data Exchange**

- Peer driven
- Charter (why exist, what we do)
- Establish Non Profit Organization (nationally)
  - Regional NPOs under the national charter
- NFA contact / coordinator / info dispersion
- FEMA regions (10 regions)
- Co-chairs representing lower and upper division institutions (1 each per region)
  - 20 individuals

### **Action Step Considerations**

What, who, when

- Form a planning group of representatives from each region- co-chairs
- Draft the mission, purpose, and goals for review and approval by the attending body.
  - Adopt Tab 1 stuff
  - Avoid offending non-attendees (draft only)
  - Notify potentially affected groups
- Develop the electronic means to communicate, share, information, and discuss issues.
- Develop the LAMP list as well as lists of human and educational resources, which can be shared.
- Agree to continue these efforts, nurture the evolution of this network and meet again.
- Research the pros and cons of various means to develop a formal organization.

## Proposed Goals

### **Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education Consortium**

The following goals resulted from three group discussions on the afternoon of the second day of the conference. The groups derived the goals from their previous discussions and the various reports to the plenary session on Day 1 and earlier in Day 2. This list was the starting point of a general discussion on Day 3. It led to the Steering Committee's formulation of its recommendations.

#### Goal #1

Create and fund a formalized organization that would develop and recommend initiatives to FEMA that would support the mission of higher education in the Fire and Emergency Services, through,

- Curriculum development, support, and standardization.
  - Promotion and support of networking.
  - Promotion of higher education importance through any other appropriate means.
- Such a committee should be composed of members that represent higher education.

#### Goal #2

A national survey of fire education institutions be performed to determine the number of programs, structure, and enrollments with a goal of increasing participation and investment by members of the fire and emergency services.

#### Goal #3

Develop a 'model' curriculum. The initial steps being:

- Analyze and determine the current level of service provided by two-year and four-year programs.
- Determine the consistency with ACE or other higher education criteria.

#### Goal #4

Seek partnerships with other agencies to develop funding sources for research and curriculum development, for fire services as a community 'quality of life' issue.

#### Goal #5

NFA will facilitate the creation of and support for the Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education Consortium to promote professional networking and form partnerships with individuals and organizations resulting in improved learning and higher education.

#### Goal #6

NFA will facilitate the development and handoff of higher education fire and emergency services courses that have national recognition with input from FESHEC (in the same manner as EMI).

Goal #7

To implement the committee on distance education's recommendations presented on 4/9/99 prior to Fiscal Year 2000.

Goal #8

Establish a digest-driven "fire-related higher education" list-serve hosted by the NFA or a participating institution by June 1, 1999.

Goal #9

Establish a North American educational network, with NFA as the federal coordinating entity, composed of regionally accredited educational institutions offering higher education fire and emergency services-related degree programs by December 31, 1999.

Goal #10

Establish a steering committee, by April 10, 1999, composed of 6-10 members to draft a charter and organization for the national network, and to establish the date for a national conference to be held in the year 2000.

## **Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education Consortium**

The following is the proposal the newly-formed steering committee made to the general assembly late Saturday morning. The general assembly accepted it.

### **Goal**

Establish an organization of post-secondary institutions to promote higher education and to enhance the recognition of the fire and emergency services as a profession in support of the mission of FEMA.

### **Objectives**

1. Develop and recommend initiatives that would support the mission of higher education for the Fire and Emergency Services to include:
  - Curriculum development, support, and standardization.
  - Promotion and support of networking.
  - Basic and applied research.
  - Promotion of higher education as a component of professional development.
2. Establish a partnership with FEMA/USFA and the nation's higher education institution infrastructure.
3. Procure funding to facilitate the organizational objectives.

### **Steering Committee Actions**

- Submit a conference report to Rich Marinucci by May 15, 1999.
- Create a digest-driven "fire-related higher education" list-serve hosted by the NFA or a participating institution by June 1, 1999.
- Draft and circulate a charter and proposed organization for the national network by July 1, 1999.
- Establish the date for a national conference to be held in the year 2000, by July 1, 1999.
- Update list of institutions by May 15,

### **Steering Committee Members**

James Matlock III - Chair  
Terry L. Spoor - Vice-Chair  
Richard B. Arwood  
Brian Bay  
Larry R. Collins  
Michelle Harkins  
JoAnne F. Hildebrand  
Charles R. Jennings  
Gerald F. LaFlamme

David A. McFadden  
Ray O. Shackelford



## **Suggestions for a FESHEC 2000 Conference**

### **Topics**

Entry-level capabilities  
Exit outcomes  
Technical preparation (2+2+2 – Articulation)  
Staff development  
Credit for prior learning  
Budget and funding alternatives (partnerships, grants, etc.)  
Distance learning  
Role of the instructor in fire service career development  
Partnership exploration (NFAP, Dept. of Education, IAFC, etc.)

### **Conference Format**

Business meetings  
“Share Fair”  
Keynote address  
Break-out sessions

Balance a variety of the activities to keep things moving and interesting.  
Conduct the conference at a time more compatible with the academic schedule (i.e., mid- to late May).