

Background – Legacy Executive Fire Officer Program

Since the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program was conceived, this premier training program has been providing senior fire, rescue, and emergency service officers and others in key leadership roles with the opportunity to enhance their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities. In 2016 the National Fire Academy (NFA) contracted an independent review of the EFO Program to include extensive data collection from EFO graduates. In response to recommendations outlined in the review (shown in italics below) the NFA has attempted to restructure the program to address these specific issues:

- *Provide mentorship throughout the ARP writing process; set up consistent standards for ARP evaluation.* Since 2021, the Program is structured so that there is only one, in-depth Capstone Research Paper (CRP), as opposed to the Applied Research Papers (ARPs) previously required for each course. Students receive in-depth assignments throughout the program to strengthen writing and research skills and receive in-depth feedback from instructors. The *Capstone I*, a 12-week instructor-led mediated course, focuses on the research paper with critical input and advice from subject matter experts.
- *Scale down the number of ARPs but have assignments every year to maintain progress.* Since 2021, the Program is structured with challenging 500-word to 10-page, writing assignments integrated into course materials throughout the program. Students focus literature reviews and original research on one, in-depth Capstone Research Paper (CRP).
- *Keep topics updated to align with what is going on around the world and add contemporary topics with real world application.* Since 2021, the Program focuses research on the critical issues identified in the [*21st Century Fire and Emergency Services*](#) white paper. Course content is also redesigned to be current and relevant. Focus is expected to evolve over time as events occur.
- *Include distance learning options and ensure frequent contact throughout distance learning courses.* Since 2021, the Program incorporates distance learning through extensive pre-course work for two courses, and through one mediated, online capstone course. Due to the extensive writing components for all resident courses, all have received three graduate credit equivalency recommendations by the American Council on Education.
- *The majority of respondents indicated the program should be kept at four years; however, many requested a fast track.* Since the redesign in 2021, the Program allows students to move through the program as soon as they can complete the research writing work and milestones, retain an 80% or higher grade in each course, and as NFA scheduling permits. Without NFA scheduling limitations, a student could complete the program in as little as two years.
- *Reduce some courses to one week.* Since 2021, the Program reduced three resident courses from a 10-day format to a six-day format and created online pre-coursework to ensure the same caliber of academic rigor is retained, and ideally, improved upon.

Additional considerations in the structuring of the EFO Program in 2021:

- The interaction, facilitated discussion, and activities have always been, and continue to be, essential components of the resident courses. Therefore, foundational elements such as literature reviews, data collection and analysis, and writing are fostered in the online course components, giving students the autonomy to process the information at a digestible pace and evidence the knowledge gained through various writing assignments.
- The capstone presentation requirement is an evolution of the legacy defense. Moving from a closed forum to a public presentation, students continue to receive expert scrutiny as with the traditional ARP defense, and now must perform under the pressure of a real-life public forum. The public forum also allows for all students to review and learn from the work of their peers.

LEGACY TO NOW COMPARISON

Legacy EFO Program		Current EFO Program	
1 st Year	10-Day Executive Development	R5201	10-Day Exercise of Executive Leadership: Self
	25-page ARP due in six months/advisor assigned for completion of the paper.		Essays due 10 days after class ends, comprised of 5000 words (or approximately 20 pages).
2 nd Year	10-Day Executive Risk Analysis of Community Risk Reduction	R5202	Six-Day Exercise of Executive Leadership: Organization
	25-page ARP due in six months/advisor assigned for completion of the paper.		Pre-Course Work: Approx. 40 hours. Self-paced, online to include required reading, literature review, data collection, and preliminary analysis in preparation for the resident course. At least five written assignments due prior to course start. Final paper due 10 days after class ends.
3 rd Year	10-Day Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management	R5203	Six-Day Exercise of Executive Leadership: Community
	25-page ARP due in six months/advisor assigned for completion of the paper.		Pre-Course Work: Approx. 40 hours. Self-paced, online to include required reading, literature review, data collection, and preliminary analysis in preparation for the resident course. At least five written assignments due prior to course start. Final paper due 10 days after class ends.
4 th Year	10-Day Executive Leadership	M5104	12-Week Capstone I
	25-page ARP (resubmission possible).		Instructor-led, online course that integrates the concepts and deliverables throughout the program and reviews research considerations to ensure students are positioned for success. Students will complete various assignments to include drafting Chapters 1-3 of the CRP.
	Oral Defense.		Six-Day Capstone II
		R5204	30+-page research paper due.
			Public defense/persuasion presentation.

Each of the current piloted courses in the new Executive Fire Officer Program have received a 3 graduate credit equivalency recommendation by the American Council of Education!