

Prince George's Community College

Site Visit Observations

November 3-4, 2003

Introduction

In 1967, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice in a seminal report, *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*, recommended that an ultimate goal was the B. A. degree for all police personnel with general enforcement powers. In 1973, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals recommended that as a condition of initial employment every police agency should require by no later than 1975 two years of education at an accredited college or university and by no later that 1982 four years of education at an accredited college or university.

None of the more than twenty police agencies within Prince George's County, including the largest among them—the Prince George's County Police Department (PGCPD)—adopted these recommendations at the time. However, the PGCPD did institute a program of salary incentives for personnel who earned an associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree. In spite of the stipends, however, no requirements for formal education, beyond the traditional high school diploma, were put in place for any of the several Prince George's County's police agencies. And unfortunately, the educational incentive program no longer exists within the Prince George's County Police Department. This lack of commitment to higher education for police personnel throughout the County creates conditions that make this CCTI project a particularly challenging one.

Prince George's County

Prince George's County, Maryland, is a large, suburban county that borders Washington, D. C. It is the second most populous county in Maryland (816,791 in 2001) having grown 12% in the last decade. It is also one of the most affluent of all counties in the United States, ranking 28th in annual per capita income of 3,087 counties. One of its distinguishing features is the nature of its racial and ethnic population. Sixty-three percent of the population is African American, 27% Caucasian, and 4% Asian. The County is the home of the highest concentration of *Black Enterprise* families in the country—wealthy African American householders. Minorities own 50% of the firms in the County.

There are several troubling indicators, however, that suggest a more precarious socio-economic situation than the one painted by this rosy picture of minority wealth. Between the last two censuses, for example, the County's mean annual household income in constant dollars has dropped by 3%. Residents living in neighborhoods with household incomes between \$45,000 and \$75,000 declined by 30% while those above and below in incomes increased by 35% and 37% respectively. There is a beginning "squeeze" on the middle class in Prince George's County.

The County's population has always been very mobile reflecting the constant moves in and out of the nation's capitol. But since 1990, most of the new families have been from lower socio-economic groups with single mothers rather than the previous prosperous out-of-state residents that cycle through Washington, D. C. following elections. As a result, there are emerging pockets of poverty that create concern for political leaders and educators. Now 10% of all households in the County fall below the poverty line, and 20% of households are headed by females. This change in socio-economic conditions is also reflected in the County's crime statistics: crime rates in Prince George's County are typically 3 to 4 times the rates of other counties in the region.

The County's split personality is also manifested in the pattern of occupations and the levels of education achieved by residents. In 2000, 40% of all County employers and 60% of all jobs were in professional services. A high tech corridor is emerging along Route 1 between NASA headquarters and the University of Maryland, College Park. The County boasts 3 additional institutions of higher education: Bowie State University, University of Maryland University College, and Prince George's Community College. In spite of the accessibility of higher education, only 25% of the County's residents hold a baccalaureate degree or higher compared to 55% in nearby Montgomery County. Forty percent of the residents have never attended a college class of any kind.

In the environment created by the socio-economic conditions of the County, law enforcement is a growing occupational area that provides high-demand, high-wage opportunities. Data from Maryland's Office of Labor Market Analysis and Information document that police patrol officers are among the 50 occupations in highest demand in the County averaging 106 openings annually. Between 1998 and 2008, across Maryland, there will be need for over 540 correctional officers. In Washington, D. C. there will be numerous opportunities for law enforcement personnel of all kinds with attractive salaries. The challenge and the opportunities for increased training and employment of law enforcement personnel in this region make this CCTI project very timely.

Prince George's Community College

Prince George's Community College was established in 1958 and rode the wave of that great period of community college development during the 1960s when over half of the current community colleges in the nation were created. It is a textbook community college: open-door philosophy, community based programs, comprehensive curriculum, student and teaching centered. Today the College consists of three campuses enrolling over 40,000 students in 60 different programs of study. The College's creative faculty has established many excellent programs, services, and centers to provide rich educational experiences for students in spite of considerable budget limitations. Prince George's County provides the lowest level of support for the College than any other county support for area community colleges in the state.

After 27 years under the same president who retired, a new president, Ron Williams, was appointed in 1999. Under the leadership of the new president a new vision statement for the College was approved by the Board of Trustees:

Prince George's Community College will excel as a nationally recognized, intellectually vibrant institution which is accessible, community-centered, technologically advanced, and responsible to the educational needs of a richly diverse population and workforce.

Prince George's Community College is an excellent community college with a very dedicated faculty and staff strongly committed to serving the citizens in its district. The following highlights some of the distinguishing characteristics of the College:

- ♦ The College was named one of 16 national models for undergraduate education by the Association of American Colleges and Universities—a distinction shared with Duke University, University of Michigan, Colgate University, and the U. S. Air Force Academy.
- ♦ In competition with leading four-year colleges and universities, the College was the recipient of the Theodore M. Hesburgh Award for Enhancing Undergraduate Teaching and Learning granted annually by TIAA-CREF.
- ♦ A study released in 2003 noted that the College accounts for \$146.7 million of all annual earnings in the County's economy.
- ♦ The Center for Academic Resource Development is a nationally recognized program at the College that sponsors innovative academic programs and faculty development. During 2000-2001 the Center received approximately \$3,750,000 in grants.
- ♦ The Outstanding Community College Professor of the Year for 2002, named by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, was a philosophy professor at the College, Alicia Juarrero.

The demographics of the College reflect the demographics of the County. In the fall of 1999, 73% of the students were African American, 17% were Caucasian, 5% were Asian, 3% were Hispanic, and 2% were other or unknown. Slightly more than half of the College's students (50.4%) receive financial aid. Of the 1,978 first-time freshmen who took the placement test in the fall of 1999, 71.4% required one or more developmental courses to prepare them for college-level work.

The faculty demographics do not reflect the composition of the student body. Prince George's Community College, like many of the community colleges established in the 1960s, is still dominated by the Caucasian faculty hired in the late 1960s and 70s. Over the ensuing decades the faculty did not change, but the ethnic composition of the student body did, creating today's mismatch of culture and backgrounds. In 1999 75.4% of the faculty were Caucasian, 18.9% African American, 2.2% Asian, 2.2% Hispanic, and 1.3% Native American. The part-time faculty is a little different: 60% are Caucasian, 36% are African American, 2% are Hispanic, and 2% are Asian.

The percent of both full-time and adjunct minority faculty has increased over the past five years. In 1995, 16% of the full-time faculty was African American; in 1999 the number had increased to 19%. Recognizing the need for a faculty that better reflects the students

they serve, the Board of Trustees has established a benchmark of 25% of the full-time faculty to be African American by 2004.

Criminal Justice, Forensics, and Paralegal Studies Department

The Department offers 50 courses in support of four degrees, two certificates, and one Letter of Recognition:

- AA Degree in Criminal Justice (Transfer Option)
- AAS Degree in Forensic Science Technology
- AS Degree in Forensic Studies (Transfer Option)
- AAS Degree in Paralegal/Legal Assistant Studies
- Certificate in Forensic Science Technology
- Certificate in Paralegal/Legal Assistant Studies
- Letter of Recognition for Paralegal/Legal Assistant Studies

Two programs illustrate the quality and impact of the training offered in this department.

The forensic science program is one of the most comprehensive in the country offering 14 forensic disciplines taught by 42 adjunct faculty who are all professionals in the field. In recognition of the quality of this program, the National Science Foundation awarded the College a grant to develop case-based forensic science curricula that can be tailored for postsecondary and secondary students. Currently, 485 students are enrolled in the program with 81% female and 78% minority.

Based in the continuing education department, the Criminal Justice Institute has trained over 300 law enforcement officers who are working in over 150 different law enforcement agencies. Designed to prepare officers for initial entry and to provide continuing education for career officers, the placement rate for entry-level officers is 100%.

The CCTI Project at Prince George's Community College

Given the need and opportunity for improved law enforcement training in Prince George's County; and given the quality of the Criminal Justice, Forensics, and Paralegal Studies Department; this CCTI project was a natural for Prince George's Community College.

Potomac High School (PHS) is a key partner in the project. PHS enrolls approximately 1150 lower to middle class students; 99.7% are African American. The school has been recently restructured into learning communities around six "Schools" containing 13 career academies. The Criminal Justice Academy will be the primary focus for the high school activities in this project. Other key partners include Bowie State University and the Laurel Police Department. Northwestern High School is "shadowing" the PHS program and is creating a criminal justice program which might become part of this project.

There are a number of challenges faced by the leaders and partners in this project:

1. In the Criminal Justice Academy at PHS the first cohort of 10th graders included 19 students. By the time this cohort had entered the 11th grade only 11 students were still enrolled. High school leaders indicated that many of the students were placed in the first cohort; in the second cohort students elected to participate in the Criminal Justice Academy. It will be important to determine at the earliest possible time whether or not the second cohort can maintain enrollment.
2. A key challenge described by project leaders relates to the nature of the students and their parents:
 - a) A great majority of these students will require financial aid if they are to attend Prince George's Community College or Bowie State University.
 - b) Some of the students lack parental guidance; there is little parental involvement in the school life of the students and no involvement in P. T. A.
 - c) Some of the students have to financially support themselves as best they can.
 - d) There is a potential gang problem in the region that may impact Prince George's County and the educational services provided in the County.
3. It is not quite clear in the early stages of planning what role the Laurel Police Department will play in the project. It appears the Department will provide service learning experiences, but these might be better designed as internships and mentoring experiences. One problem to be addressed is that Potomac High School and the Laurel Police Department are not in the same location; transporting students will be a challenge. However, project leaders have indicated that other local municipal police agencies are interested in this project, some located near to Potomac High School.
4. The strategies of service learning, counselor workshops, and curriculum alignment are relied on heavily to address a number of the outcomes. Some thought needs to be given to alternative strategies more appropriate to the outcomes of the project.
5. Since this is a new program in the high school there is an opportunity for the well-established program in the College to provide leadership for creating a model program. The experience and quality of the project leaders in the College and the quality and commitment of their partners provide a strong base for the success of this project.