

Running head: DIVERSITY IN THE NORTH CHARLESTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Executive Leadership

Diversity in the North Charleston Fire Department

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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Abstract

This research focused on the issue of recruiting a racially diverse workforce for the North Charleston Fire Department (NCFD). The problem identified was that the racial diversity of NCFD personnel was not proportional to the city that it served. The purpose of this research was to identify ways for the NCFD to obtain a more racially diverse workforce. The researcher used the descriptive research method to answer the following research questions: (a) What are the internal issues that prevent the NCFD from attaining a racially diverse workforce? (b) What is the level of racial diversity of other North Charleston departments in comparison to the NCFD? (c) What is the level of racial diversity of other South Carolina fire departments in comparison to the NCFD? (d) What are successful methods to attain a more diverse workforce?

The procedures used for this research included the use of internal survey to gain information on issues related to diversity and successful recruiting efforts from within the NCFD. The researcher analyzed official documents to compare and contrast levels of diversity within City departments. The researcher utilized an external survey to gain information on diversity levels in other South Carolina fire departments and the efforts they have made to recruit for diversity.

The results indicated no other large City departments or responding South Carolina fire departments had achieved proportional racial diversity. The researcher identified a perceived lack of interest by minority candidates, and a satisfaction with the status quo as potential barriers to effective recruitment. The researcher identified that most current NCFD personnel were referred for employment by other NCFD personnel or family members.

The researcher recommended that the NCFD continue supporting youth programs, that recruiting efforts focus on the appealing aspects of the career, and that the NCFD pursue a well planned program of diversity training with a focus on long term success.

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Introduction

The City of North Charleston, South Carolina is a diverse city of approximately 87,000 residents. Yet despite the fact that nearly half of the Cities' residents are African American, less than 25% of the personnel of North Charleston Fire Department (NCFD) are African American. The vast majority of the personnel of the NCFD, more than 73%, are Caucasian. The problem is that the racial diversity of NCFD personnel is not proportional to the City that it serves. The purpose of this research is to identify ways for the NCFD to obtain a more racially diverse workforce. The researcher will use the descriptive research method to answer the following research questions: (a) What are the internal issues that prevent the NCFD from attaining a racially diverse workforce? (b) What is the level of racial diversity of other North Charleston departments in comparison to the NCFD? (c) What is the level of racial diversity of other South Carolina Fire Departments in comparison to the NCFD? (d) What are successful methods to attain a more diverse workforce?

The researcher will conduct a literature review to determine the extent of this problem in the United States fire service and to determine what successful methods have been used to attain a more diverse work force. The researcher will conduct a survey of NCFD personnel to determine if there are internal issues or barriers that prevent the NCFD from attaining a racially diverse workforce. The researcher will review the personnel summary reports from other North Charleston agencies to determine their level of racial diversity. The researcher will survey members of other paid or combination departments located in South Carolina to determine their level of racial diversity and what methods they have used to attempt to attain a more racially diverse workforce.

Background and Significance

There are numerous benefits to achieving proportional diversity within an organization. Many companies view diversity as a source of competitive advantage and many public service organizations strive to achieve diversity to improve the stability and effectiveness of their organizations. Other organizations that may not realize the value of diversity, at least want to avoid allegations of racism or political fallout. Yet achieving diversity has proven to be an elusive goal for a variety of reasons. In order for the NCFD to achieve the benefits that diversity provides, the NCFD must identify the means to overcome the barriers that prevent it from becoming a racially diverse organization.

The NCFD provides fire protection to the third largest city in South Carolina. North Charleston has a population of 87,000 residents and covers 58 square miles (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). North Charleston is a retail and industrial center for the greater Charleston area which places additional service demands on the NCFD. The NCFD is a fully paid, career department with approximately 218 personnel and 11 fire stations. In 2007, the NCFD responded to more than 4,800 emergency incidents and the 2007-2008 budget is \$13.3 million.

Though the area has been populated for hundreds of years, North Charleston incorporated as a city in 1972. The “north area,” as North Charleston was known before incorporation, has had organized fire protection since 1937 (North Charleston Fire Department History, 2005/2006). As the city grew, the organization that was to become the NCFD has been pieced together from many smaller departments. In 1996 the NCFD took over three fire stations from the North Charleston Sewer District and also began providing fire protection to the former Charleston Naval Base. In addition to absorbing facilities from these organizations, in many cases the NCFD hired on many of the personnel as well.

In 2005, the Fire Chief, two Assistant Chiefs and two Administrative Chiefs retired within months of each other. Later that year, the City hired a Fire Chief from out of state. That Fire Chief left seven months later amid accusations of racism in promotions and hiring which led to an investigation by the local media. During more than a month in September and October, 2006, the NCFD was the focus of very public scrutiny regarding diversity issues. The local newspaper filed requests through the Freedom of Information Act and obtained e-mail messages and hand written notes from NCFD command staff. The paper also researched the diversity proportions of the NCFD in comparison to the City and confronted the former Chief with this evidence. The former Chief was forced to defend himself against accusations by stating that he inherited the situation. He stated to a reporter, "It was not a diverse department when I got there. It didn't go backwards when I got there. It probably went forward when I got there" (Haglund, 2006).

During this period, the Mayor of North Charleston stated that the Fire Chief left due to other issues unrelated to racial issues. The Mayor stated, "That had nothing to do with my decision," (referring to charges of racism,) "Not in any way, shape or form." (Parks, 2006) The former Chief was left to look for a new job with a "tainted" career. This period demonstrated that disproportionate diversity ratios leave a fire chief and a fire department open for distracting accusations regardless of whether they have any base or merit.

In December 2007 the city promoted the Acting Fire Chief, Assistant Chief Leonard Judge to the position of permanent Fire Chief. Chief Leonard Judge is the first African American Fire Chief in the history of the NCFD.

The NCFD currently has not attained proportional diversity ratios despite efforts to do so. The NCFD is currently 73% Caucasian and 24 % African-American while the city population is

45% Caucasian and 49% African-American. These ratios have remained fairly consistent over at least the last ten years. For the purposes of this research. The researcher primarily focused on Caucasians and African-Americans because they comprise nearly 95% of the population of the City.

Females are currently underrepresented in the NCFD as well. Currently females represent approximately 10% of NCFD personnel. This issue is certainly a worthy topic of research that can and should be addressed as well, however it is beyond the scope of this research project.

The NCFD has made efforts in the last two years to improve diversity by addressing this issue through a committee. The committee is made up of volunteer members from the department and is diverse in terms of race and gender. Based on the recommendations of the committee, the department has implemented an "Explorers" program which is a career education program for high school age youth who are interested in a career in the fire service. Several former Explorers, all African Americans males, have been hired by the department. The NCFD has also developed recruitment brochures that picture a diverse selection of personnel and emphasize aspects of the career that appeal to diverse candidates. Additionally, the NCFD has attended job fairs with a diverse audience and purchased a trade show display and developed an audio/visual presentation for recruiting. The department's Public Information Officer, who is an African-American male, has been placed in charge of developing a recruitment plan that includes meeting with minority community leaders to assist him in his efforts. While these efforts are ongoing, this research is intended to provide an additional source of information related to this issue.

Achieving diversity within the NCFD relates directly to the *Executive Leadership* course and the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP). According to the overview of the EFOP the purpose of the program is to communicate the need to “transform fire and emergency service organizations from being reactive to proactive” (Executive Fire Officer Program, 2008). Achieving diversity within the fire service will require this type of proactive transformation. Another purpose of the program is to communicate “the value of research and its application to the profession.” By utilizing research to identify best practices in achieving diversity, the NCFD can better reach this goal. This topic relates directly to the *Executive Leadership* course because failing to address it successfully could potentially derail the progress of the organization and its leadership. Conversely, achieving diversity could provide additional benefits to the NCFD and the City of North Charleston.

This topic also relates directly to the operational objectives of the United States Fire Administration. USFA Objective number 3 is “Appropriately respond in a timely manner to emergent issues” (USFA: Strategic Plan, 2008). Certainly, diversity has become of the major “emergent issues” facing the fire service over the last several decades and into the twenty-first century. As the United States becomes more diverse this trend is certain to continue. By overcoming barriers and implementing best practices the NCFD can become a more diverse, and therefore a more stable and effective organization.

Literature Review

The researcher conducted a literature review to determine what other researchers have found concerning this topic. The researcher encountered various definitions of diversity that go well beyond the topic of racial diversity that is addressed in this research. Greenburg wrote,

“Workplace diversity refers to the variety of differences between people in an organization. That sounds simple, but diversity encompasses race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background and more” (Greenburg, 2004). Other frequently cited diversity differences include religion and sexual orientation (Wallace, 2002).

The researcher identified an effort to promote diversity within the United States fire service as a whole. The researcher identified an organization called “Fire 20/20” that is a non-profit organization, “dedicated to helping Fire/EMS connect with their multicultural communities to increase the reach and effectiveness of prevention and recruitment program” (Fire 20/20). Fire 20/20 completed a research project on the current multi-cultural make-up of firefighters in metro departments in the United States. They surveyed metro departments in November, 2006 and published the results in 2007. According to the results, three major ethnic groups comprised the 108 departments which included 71.63% white, 14.80% African-American and Hispanic 11.18% (Fire 20/20, 2007). In November 2008, Fire 20/20 made available a six-minute recruitment video for departments to utilize in their recruitment efforts. According to a article in Fire Chief magazine the video “is designed to educate, inspire and motivate 15-21 year old women of all cultures and men of color to explore a career as a firefighter or paramedic” (Fire Chief, 2008).

The researcher identified an earlier nationwide survey that examined the testing and assessment of new firefighters in relation to diversity issues. The author examined factors such as educational requirements, experience, and the testing of written and physical ability and the effect it had on recruiting minorities and women. The author provided various options in order to recruit diverse candidates for a job that is changing and expanding (Booth, 1999).

Another author focused on the impact of their department's recruit training process on the diversity of their department. Whether this department sent recruits away to a state academy or hired experienced personnel from volunteer departments, they were producing "the traditional white male candidate" (Barnes, 2001) The solution for this North Carolina fire department was to begin a regional training academy through partnerships with local organizations.

The researcher identified other departments that utilized new programs to deal with diversity issues. One author described a series of summer camps for teenage females that provided exposure to the fire service well before they were old enough for employment (Harper, 2005).

The researcher identified numerous articles addressing the topic of diversity in the U.S. fire service. The author of one article was a current member of the International Association of Fire Chief's committee on human relations which addresses the issue of diversity. He stated that the consensus of the committee was that very few departments were "doing it right" when it came to efforts to recruit, hire and retain minorities and women (Crawford, 2004). The author identified two major barriers to achieving diversity which included "regimenting" and "traditionalism." Regimenting is an informal system that provides information on securing employment only to certain people such as friends or family members. Traditionalism is a nostalgic sense of maintaining the status quo. The author recommends overcoming these barriers through an all-inclusive recruitment strategy and through career counseling and mentoring.

Several articles examined the role of culture and the impact it has on diversity. The author of one article identified numerous ways that an organization communicates that minorities are unwelcome regardless of the official position. The author stated that the way to overcome these issues is through education and training on diversity and by setting a good example

(Walter, 1999). Another article warns against “canned diversity programs” that may have the unintended effect of making discrimination more subversive (Wallace, 2002).

The researcher also examined the topic of diversity in the other emergency services including law enforcement and the emergency medical services. The researcher identified numerous articles in law enforcement periodicals that address the topic of diversity and the struggle to achieve proportional representation. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) implemented a coordinating panel in 2006 to address diversity issues. The stated purpose of this panel was to support law enforcement agencies in their efforts to “reflect the diversity of the communities they serve” (Campbell, 2006).

Another article described the effort of a partnership between the IACP, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Hartford, Connecticut, Police Department to deal with recruiting for diversity. This “collaboration model” divided these efforts into three phases with subdivided efforts under each of these (Tangel, 2004). This plan was described more fully in the report entitled, “Mobilizing the community for Minority Recruitment and Selection” (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2003) It also included a long appendix of more than twenty “best practices” from police departments from around the country.

An article from EMS magazine also provides a list of best practices for recruiting that have benefitted a department in Fairfax, Virginia. The author described efforts to target youth and minorities at targeted events (Erich, 2008).

The researcher identified research related to the benefits of diversity mostly from research material outside of the fire service including business journals and management publications. The author of one article in *Fire Chief Magazine* stated that there is actually “very

limited” published research on the effect of diversity on performance in the public sector and “none, to my knowledge, relating to the fire service” (Morgan, 2002).

An article that assessed diversity in state government identified numerous specific benefits for a public agency. These included creating a workforce with diverse opinions, breaking down barriers, fostering a sense of opportunity and fairness, increased productivity, representation, innovation and communication (Charles, 2003). This author also described successful efforts to promote diversity within state government. During a fifteen year period, African American employment was raised by more than 5 percent in New Jersey due to these efforts.

Private sector businesses have also identified advantages and benefits from diversity. According to the author the most frequently cited benefits include increasing revenue, increasing corporate goodwill, utilizing best practices and avoiding pitfalls (Orenstein, 2005). The author states that not all executives see an absolute benefit for diversity in every business. However, it is particularly important for businesses that are trying to reach new markets or generate innovative ideas. One particular field that is seeking innovation through diversity was discussed in another article. The author discusses the methods that the Research and Development (R&D) field is using to recruit or develop a diverse pool of candidates (Salomon, 2003). This includes training at all levels, temporary assignments in foreign cultures and mentoring.

An article from a financial journal specifically listed how and why diversity provides a competitive advantage for businesses. The author provides a list of seven benefits but warns that successful diversity initiatives take time to implement because they require cultural change within organizations (Espinoza, 2007). Another article provided a similar list of benefits of diversity as well as challenges and solutions in achieving diversity (Greenburg, 2004).

The Literature Review provided information on what others have researchers have found related to achieving diversity in the emergency services as well as in the public and private sector.

Procedures

The researcher used the descriptive research methodology to answer the research questions posed for this project. In order to answer the first research question, “What are the internal issues that prevent the NCFD from attaining a racially diverse workforce?” the researcher conducted a survey of NCFD personnel. This was a ten question survey (Appendix A) that included demographic questions as well as multiple choice questions intended to gain information on internal issues related to diversity. The researcher received ninety completed surveys which provided a large representative sample of the department in order to answer the research questions.

In order to answer the research question, “What is the level of racial diversity of other North Charleston departments in comparison to the NCFD?” the researcher requested information from the City of North Charleston Personnel Department. The Personnel Department provided a current summary of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) reports from each department in the City. These reports provide a complete summary of all city employees by department, divided by race and gender. The researcher transferred this information to a spreadsheet and graphed the information for analysis.

The researcher utilized another survey (Appendix B) to gather the information to answer the research question, “What is the level of racial diversity of other South Carolina Fire Departments in comparison to the NCFD?” The researcher developed the survey of six multiple choice and short answer questions and provided it to other South Carolina Fire Departments in

several ways. The researcher e-mailed the survey through a comprehensive list of departments throughout the state. The researcher attended a statewide sub-committee meeting on fire department recruitment and made a presentation requesting participating departments to complete the survey. The researcher made similar presentations to County Fire Chief Associations requesting participation. The researcher received nine completed surveys and processed the results for analysis. While more surveys would have been beneficial, the nine completed surveys provided sufficient information to determine a standard of comparison for the NCFD.

The researcher used both surveys to answer the fourth and final research question, “What are successful methods to attain a more diverse workforce?” The survey for other departments asked them to identify the methods that they have attempted to use to recruit minorities as well as the methods that have been successful in doing so. The internal survey asked what methods successfully attracted our current personnel to seek employment with our department, as well as other questions to those with institutional knowledge.

The researcher faced limitations in the course of this research. The sensitive nature of this topic may have reduced the participation of some departments and some NCFD personnel. The researcher assumed the survey respondents answered the questions honestly and in good faith.

The researcher faced limitations with the external survey as well. As each of the surveyed agencies were unique entities, their experience may not apply directly to the NCFD or the City of North Charleston. Some of the surveyed agencies were unable to provide accurate figures on the demographics of their service areas. Finally, the race of the researcher, a Caucasian, could have affected the results of this research in ways that are not possible to measure or avoid.

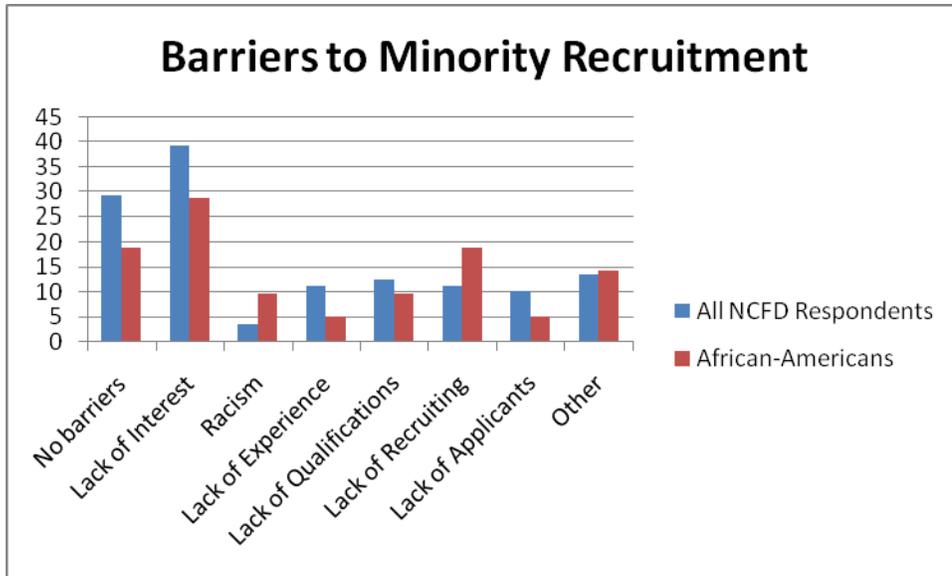
Results

Research Question #1

In order to answer the first research question, “What are the internal issues that prevent the NCFD from attaining a racially diverse workforce?” the researcher analyzed the results of the internal survey. One of the survey questions asked directly, “What issues or barriers prevent the NCFD from hiring more minority personnel?” This was a multiple choice question with eight possible responses. Respondents chose two particular responses at a much higher rate. Nearly 30% of all respondents indicated that there were “no issues or barriers.” Nearly 40% of respondents indicated that the barrier was “Lack of interest by applicants.” The six other categories received less than 13% of responses. Only 3% of respondents indicated “racism or discrimination by the NCFD” was a barrier to hiring minority personnel.

Responses to this question varied slightly when the researcher viewed responses by African-Americans. Nearly 20% of African-American respondents indicated that there were “no issues or barriers.” Nearly 30% African-American respondents also indicated “lack of interest by applicants.” Nearly 20% of African-American respondents indicated “lack of recruiting by NCFD.” Approximately 9% indicated “racism or discrimination by the NCFD” was a barrier to recruiting minorities. (See Graph 1.)

Graph 1.



Overall, the most common issue or barrier that internal respondents identified was a perceived lack of interest by employees. This was true regardless of the race of respondents. Many respondents indicated that there were no issues or barriers to recruiting minorities. More African Americans indicated that the NCFD did not do enough to recruit more minority employees.

Research Question #2

The researcher analyzed the Equal Employment Opportunity reports from the City to answer the second research question, “What is the level of racial diversity of other North Charleston departments in comparison to the NCFD?” These reports indicate that no City of North Charleston department closely resembles the diversity of the City itself. The City government is divided into twenty-two separate departments ranging in size from one employee to nearly four hundred. (See Chart 1.)

Chart 1.

City of North Charleston Diversity by Department						
Department/Ethnicity	American Indian	Asian	African-American	Caucasian	Hispanic	Total
Executive			2	11		13
Building Operations			2	4		6
Council			3	9		12
Finance		1	3	4	1	9
Purchasing				4		4
MIS		1	1	6	1	9
Court			10	14		24
Personnel				6		6
Legal				4		4
Planning		1	1	2	1	5
Zoning			8	1	1	10
Code Enforcement		2	3	7	2	14
Police	3	2	89	288	11	393
Fire	1	3	52	158	4	218
Building Operations			6	11		17
Public Works			152	49	3	204
Recreation			91	44	4	139
Cultural Arts		2	5	6		10
Fire Museum			2	8		10
Naval Complex			1	4		5
Parking Fund				2		2
Weed and Seed				1		1
Totals	4	12	431	643	28	1115

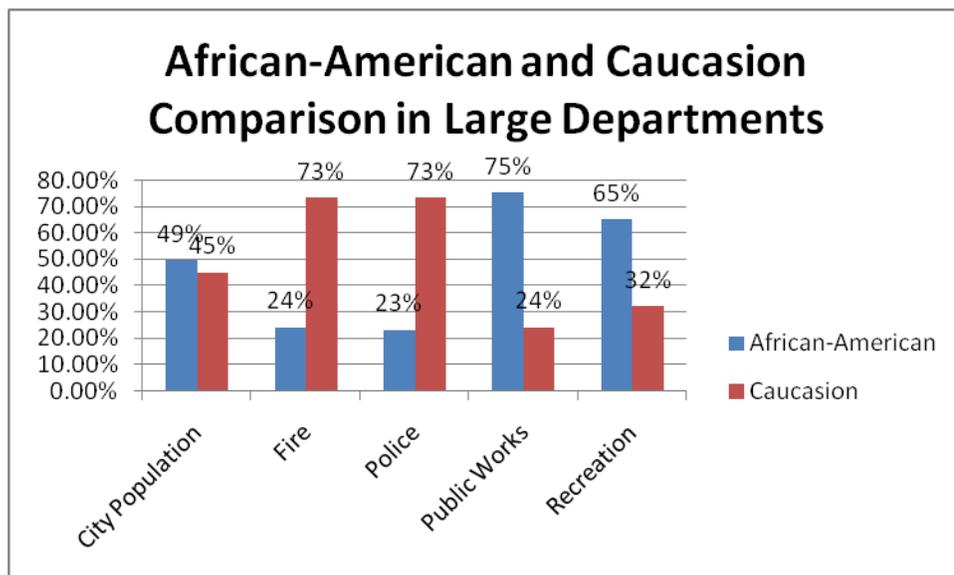
Eighteen of these departments had fewer than twenty five employees so the researcher focused on the four departments that made up more than 85% of City employees. (See Chart 2.)

Chart 2.

City of North Charleston Diversity in Large Departments						
Entity	American Indian	Asian	African-American	Caucasian	Hispanic	Total
City Population	0.40%	1.60%	49.40%	44.80%	4.00%	87482
Fire	0.00%	1.00%	24.00%	73.00%	2.00%	218
Police	1.00%	0.00%	23.00%	73.00%	3.00%	393
Public Works	0.00%	0.00%	75.00%	24.00%	1.00%	204
Recreation	0.00%	0.00%	65.00%	32.00%	3.00%	139

The level of diversity of the other large departments is also not proportional with the overall population of the City. The Police and Fire departments have almost identical ratios of minority representation with a disproportionately high percentage of Caucasian representation. The Public Works departments has almost the exact opposite ratios of both the Police and Fire departments with a disproportionately high ratio of African American representation. The Recreation department has the most proportinate racial representation of the large city departments however this department has a more than 15% higher level of African American representation than the population of the City. (See Graph 2.)

Graph 2.



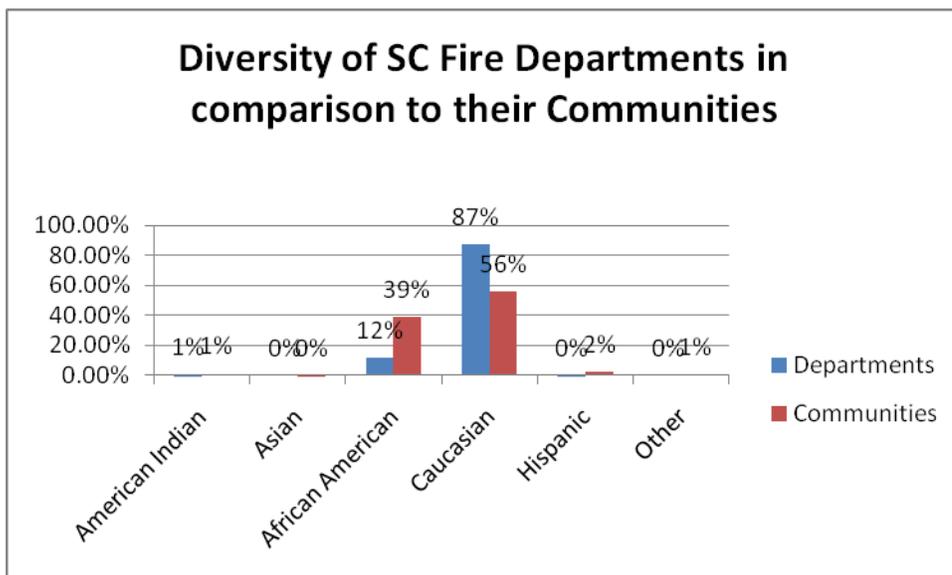
From this information the researcher determined that the NCFD has similar levels of disproportionate racial representation as the three other large City departments.

Research Question #3

The researcher used the external survey to answer the research question, “What is the level of racial diversity of other South Carolina Fire Departments in comparison to the NCFD?”

The total population of the communities that provided information included approximately 73,000 residents. Approximately 40,000 (55%) residents were Caucasian and approximately 29,000 (40%) were African American. The vast majority of the fire personnel serving these communities were Caucasian but at a much higher relative ratio of 87% Caucasian. The responding departments averaged approximately 12% African American representation. (See Graph 3.)

Graph 3.



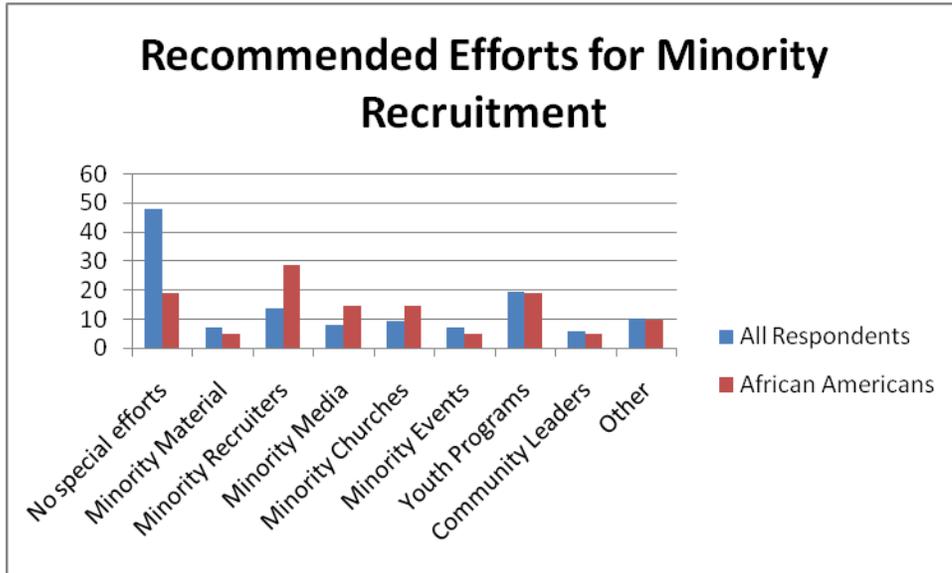
None of the responding departments had achieved racial diversity that was proportional to the communities that they served. Five of the nine responding departments had greater than 90% Caucasian representation with one department of 50 personnel with 100% Caucasian representation. This was highly disproportional to communities that averaged 40% African-American representation. Other South Carolina fire departments have disproportionately high Caucasian representation.

Research Question #4

The researcher analyzed both surveys to answer the research question, “What methods are successful to attain a more diverse workforce?” The internal survey asked NCFD personnel directly, “What should the NCFD do to recruit more minority applicants?” Almost 50% of respondents indicated that the NCFD should make “no special efforts” to recruit minority applicants. Nearly 20% of respondents indicated that the NCFD should support youth programs and approximately 14% indicated that the NCFD should use minority recruiters.

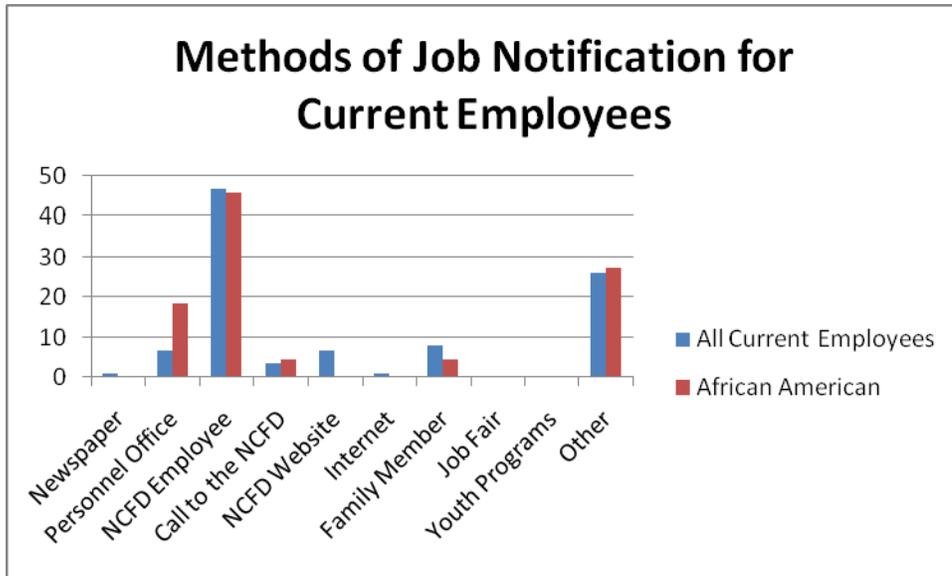
Less than 20% of African American respondents indicated that the NCFD should make no special efforts to recruit minority applicants. Nearly 30% of African American respondents indicated that the NCFD should use minority recruiters and nearly 20% also indicated that the NCFD should support youth programs. Approximately 14% of African-American respondents also indicated that the NCFD should utilize minority media and reach out to minority churches. (See Graph 4.)

Graph 4.



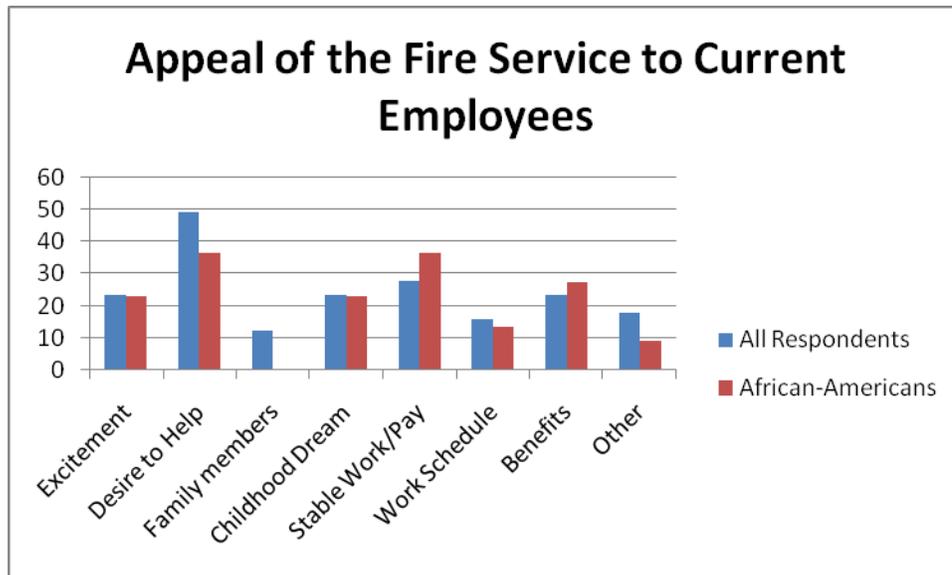
The researcher also analyzed the survey question, “When you were hired what best describes how you found out that North Charleston was hiring?” Of the ten multiple choices, more than 46% of respondents indicated that they were notified or referred by an NCFD employee. This was also true of current African-American employees who indicated an “NCFD employee” more than 45% of the time. Current employees were referred by family members at the rate of 8% for all current employees and 4% by African-Americans. More than 18% of current African-American employees indicated that they called the NCFD personnel office to seek employment. This was a much higher rate compared with 6% of all employees. (See Graph 5.)

Graph 5.



The researcher also analyzed the survey question, “Prior to your hire, what best describes what appealed to you about the fire service?” Of the eight choices, nearly 49% of all respondents indicated the “desire to help people” is what appealed to them. African-American respondents also indicated the appeal of the “desire to help people” at a high rate of 36%. African-American respondents rated two other factors at higher rates than all personnel. African-Americans rated “stable work and pay” at the rate of 36% and benefits at the rate of 27%. (See Graph 6.)

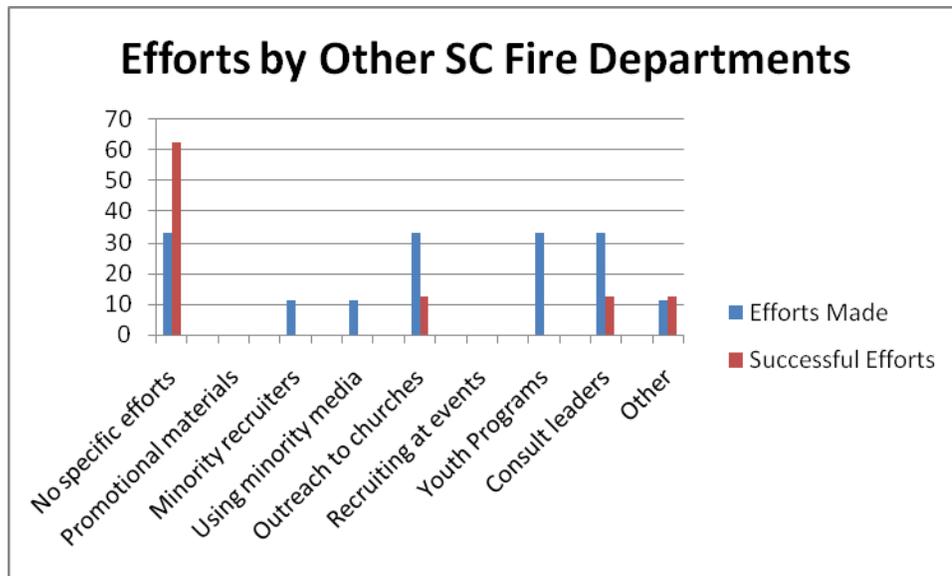
Graph 6.



The researcher analyzed the external survey responses to answer this research question. Six of the nine responding departments indicated that they had made some efforts to recruit minorities. Three departments each attempted to recruit minorities by reaching out to minority churches/organizations, using Explorer or youth programs, and consulting minority community leaders. One department utilized minority recruiters, one utilized minority media and one made efforts cited as “other.”

Another external survey question asked, “What efforts have been successful in recruiting more minority candidates.” Even though none of these departments had achieved proportional diversity their efforts may have made some positive impact. Five of the responding departments cited, “no specific efforts.” One department cited outreach to community churches and organizations, one cited consulting community leaders and one cited, “other.” (See Graph 7.)

Graph 7.



The external survey did not provide a clear model on what the NCFD should do to recruit more minority applicants. The internal survey revealed that the majority of current NCFD employees were referred by another employee or family member. This was true of all employees including African-Americans. Referrals from current employees and family members have been successful in recruiting minority personnel. All employees were attracted to the fire service by a desire to help people. In addition to the desire to help people, African-American employees also indicated that they were attracted by the stable work and pay as well as the benefits. Communicating these appealing characteristics of the job has apparently been successful in recruiting African-American personnel. These findings will be further interpreted in the discussion section of this research.

Discussion

The results revealed some information that warrants discussion regarding this topic. Results of the internal survey indicated that many NCFD employees felt that the NCFD did not hire more minority personnel due to a perceived “lack of interest” by minorities. This perception was widespread among all personnel including African-American respondents. This perceived lack of interest seems to be contradicted by another survey question. Approximately three times as many African American respondents sought employment from the City personnel office compared with all NCFD personnel. (See Graph 5.) This is a more active effort than viewing a website or a referral from another person and it would seem to indicate a strong level of interest. Since most NCFD employees are referred from current employees or family members, this perceived lack of interest may have a strong negative impact on the recruiting of minorities. Current employees may assume that minorities are not interested in the fire department and therefore make no attempt to refer them for employment.

If one assumes that most of an individual person’s family and friends are of the same race, then this referral process may perpetuate the current demographics of an organization. Caucasians may continue to refer their Caucasian family members and friends, while minority personnel refer their family members and friends and the disproportions may remain relatively constant. Since the NCFD is 75% Caucasian, the racial demographics of the department may likely remain disproportionate unless efforts are made to change the self-perpetuating cycle.

This problem seems to strongly resemble the concept of “regimenting” identified in the literature review. The author, Brian Crawford stated, “Regimenting refers to an informal system that provides the benefits of information to individual who know someone or have a friend or

relative already in the fire department where they are seeking employment” (Crawford, 2004).

The author states that this information can range from a father providing career guidance to his son, all the way to providing study-guides for entry level exams. Since current employees have obviously successfully completed the hiring process they are best able to guide a friend or family member through it. Crawford also describes the negative impact that regimenting has on minority recruitment as well as the problems it causes for an organization.

Crawford (2004) states the following:

The problem with regimenting is that it often provides an unfair advantage to those who have department contacts over those who don't, such as minorities and women. Past hiring practices for all businesses, not just the fire service, often relied on referrals from current employees to fill open positions. This process can create and perpetuate a homogeneous work force, which can stagnate an organization with its group-think mentality. In the fire service that often means carrying the same prejudices, discriminatory and isolationist practices over from one generation of firefighters to the next. (Page 24)

The author states that the best way to avoid regimenting is to have an all-inclusive recruitment program that provides the same advantages to anyone seeking employment. The author states that the way to accomplish this is through career counseling and mentoring. He recommends partnering with local high schools and colleges, as well as civic organizations that concentrate on youth development. Both the internal and external surveys recommended supporting youth programs as a way to improve minority recruitment as well.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police list several youth recruiting programs on their list identified as “best practices” in recruiting minorities. A Lansing, Michigan program

sends a group of young, diverse police officers into the local high schools during lunch hours to answer student's questions about a career in law enforcement (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2003). Another program in Jersey City, New Jersey involves the fire department as well.

The report (2003) includes the following:

Both police officers and firefighters go to high schools to teach a class called Police and Fire Sciences. This 12-week course for high school seniors gives them high school credit, college credit and an opportunity to be exposed to six weeks of police academy study and six weeks of fire academy study. The course, offered at both public and private high schools in the city, produces a pool of potential applicants that have already expressed an interest in public safety. As for post high school, recruiters target the three local colleges, focusing on criminal justice majors and hiring them as part-time employees or department interns. A significant number of new employees have been generated from both of these school-to-police initiatives. (Appendix C, Page 4)

Results of the internal survey indicated that very few respondents indicated that racism or discrimination was a barrier to effective minority recruitment. It was the least often cited barrier to recruitment and was cited by only three respondents out of ninety. Certainly, any instances of racism or discrimination are unacceptable. However, according to NCFD personnel, racism and discrimination do not appear to be a widespread barrier to recruitment.

Results from the second research question clearly indicated that no large department in the city was proportionally diverse. These disproportions may have the appearance of unfairness

for potential employees who are of a different race than the majority of the members of a certain department. According to the literature review, the issue of fairness is central to the entire concept of diversity. An article from *Financial Executive* states, “Executives are not always so sure there is a concrete, absolute case for diversity, if they are looking for a quid pro quo from a narrow standpoint” (Orenstein, 2005). However the writer states that even if there are no other clear benefits to achieving diversity, it is widely seen as “the right thing to do.”

In an article on “turning diversity into a competitive advantage” the author lists seven reasons for diversity and the number one reason is, “it is the right thing to do.” The author goes on to state, “...any diversity program that can even the playing field and make it easier for a company to achieve parity with their community is good. If it is good for the community, it is normally good for the company that supports the diversity initiatives (Espinoza, 2007).

According to another article proportional representation is vital in order achieve community support. According to a article in *Police Chief Magazine*, “Central to maintaining that support is the recognition that law enforcement agencies must reflect the diversity of the communities they serve” (Campbell, 2006).

Although some City departments were successful in recruiting minorities they may not achieve the benefits of diversity until they achieve proportional diversity, according to information in the literature review. An article in *Public Personnel Management* states, “Diversity management refers to the ‘systematic and planned commitment by organizations to recruit, retain and promote a heterogeneous mix of employees in order to increase productivity, competitiveness and harmony’ in the workplace” (Charles, 2003) Therefore recruiting minorities is not a goal in and of itself but it has often been necessary to achieve the overall goal of creating public organizations that reflect the diversity of the communities that they serve. However,

because of discrimination in the past, minority recruitment is particularly important for government agencies.

Charles (2003) states the following:

The perception of equity in hiring practices is magnified in its importance, when the applicant is a minority and the organization is a government agency. In order to effectively manage the projected increase of African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American and older workers and to maintain adequate minority group representation, diversity initiatives must be revisited. Unless the government continues to build a civil service talent pool with available minority workers, it will have to contend with a human capital crisis and a deteriorating representative bureaucracy. (Page 562)

The NCFD as well as other large city departments may miss out on talent and community support unless there is a greater effort to improve proportional diversity.

Results from the third research question show that other South Carolina fire departments have also not achieved proportional diversity. Responding South Carolina fire departments face a similar problem with minority representation as other states throughout the country and the results indicate that South Carolina is part of a national issue. Like departments around the Country, South Carolina recruiting practices have “produced the traditional white, male candidate” (Barnes, 2001).

The external survey did not provide much useful information to answer the fourth research question. Since none of the nine responding fire departments had yet achieved

proportional diversity it would not make sense to attempt to model their efforts, just as it may not make sense for those departments to model the efforts of the NCFD. That is not to say that these efforts were wasted or that they may not eventually produce positive results.

There were several noteworthy results from the internal survey. Nearly 50% of respondents indicated that the NCFD should make “no special efforts” to recruit minority applicants. This included high percentages of African American respondents as well. This seems to indicate that NCFD personnel, of all races, may lack an understanding of the benefits that diversity provides to an organization. This appears to be part of a national problem that was identified in the literature review. An article in *Fire Chief Magazine* stated, “I continue to hear the question, “What’s the impact of diversity on our fire service?” from members across America. Surprisingly, there’s very little published research concerning diversity’s effects on performance in the public sector and none, to my knowledge, relating to the fire service” (Morgan, 2002). The author recommends educating personnel on the value of diversity beyond the typical link to lawsuits, turnover, recruitment, retraining costs and Equal Employment Opportunity compliance.

Morgan (2002) states the following:

From a fire department perspective, the real challenge is linking diversity initiatives directly to operations. Implementing diversity as a strategy is a long-term objective that likely will be fraught with many obstacles, such as existing fire department culture, lack of understanding of diversity issues, and attitudes that are resistant to change and difference. (Page 22)

Another author writes in *Fire Chief* magazine about the need for education in order to achieve diversity. The author states, “Educating your department on diversity is a critical step in

achieving success and maintaining that education is equally important. Working together with your department on diversity will be much better received than ordering them to follow a concept that is frequently misunderstood” (Walter, 1999).

This education may be necessary to overcome the perception that minority personnel lack interest in the fire service. The survey indicated the African American personnel were attracted to the fire service for many of the same reasons as other personnel and that some African-American candidates made a more active effort in seeking employment. Education may also be especially important for NCFD personnel because the survey indicates that they are the department’s most effective recruiters. If NCFD personnel do not achieve a genuine understanding on the value of diversity for the organization, then it is unlikely that the department will achieve proportional representation.

According to the literature review, “Research demonstrates that ongoing diversity training is positively associated with the valuing of diversity within a fire department and is an effective tool in determining how to interact with coworkers” (Morgan, 2002).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher recommends taking the following action to improve diversity in the NCFD. The NCFD should continue to support youth programs that promote the fire service to diverse young people in the community. The NCFD has had an Explorers program for the last two years and it is just beginning to provide some benefits from the program. A high percentage of NCFD personnel of all races recommended supporting youth programs and seem to recognize their value. Youths programs are widely regarded as “best practices” for minority recruiting in public safety. Although this is a long term effort that may

not produce immediate results, the NCFD should continue, and perhaps increase, the support of youth programs as a means to recruit for diversity.

The researcher also recommends highlighting appealing aspects of the fire service in its recruitment efforts. The research indicates these aspects include the opportunity to help others, stable work and pay, and the benefits that the job provides. Communicating these appealing aspects to a broad and diverse group of potential applicants may provide positive results.

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher also recommends that the department pursue some form of diversity training that is well planned, well thought out, and focuses on long term success. The department should avoid implementing the type of “canned diversity programs” that the writer referred to in the literature review. The research indicates that NCFD personnel are by far the most effective recruiters for the department. Forcing diversity may produce a backlash if the friends and family members of current personnel can no longer gain employment due to poorly implemented and short-sighted initiatives. Efforts should be made to educate members of the department on a genuine understanding of the value of diversity so that they channel their effective efforts in a broader direction. Research should be conducted on what type of diversity training is available that would produce measurable, positive results.

Finally, the researcher recommends additional research regarding this issue. Similar research should be conducted to improve female representation within the department. The NCFD should continuously monitor levels of diversity to determine if efforts are producing positive results and that employee attitudes toward diversity improve or remain positive. The NCFD should continue to monitor what other agencies are doing to improve diversity within a broad range of organizations.

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Appendix A

Recruiting Survey

Please complete the following survey.

1. What is your current rank?

- 1. Firefighter
- 2. Back-up driver
- 3. Engineer
- 4. Captain
- 5. Battalion Chief

2. How long have you been employed with the NCFD?

- 1. Less than 1 year
- 2. 1-4 years
- 3. 5-10 years
- 4. 11-15 years
- 5. 16-20 years
- 6. More than 20 years

3. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

4. What best describes your racial identity?

- Caucasian
- African-American
- Latino
- Asian
- Other

5. When you were hired, what best describes how you found out that the NCFD was hiring?

- Newspaper
- Personnel office
- NCFD employee
- Call to the NCFD
- NCFD website
- Internet advertisement
- Family member
- Job Fair/Recruiting event
- Explorers
- Other

6. Where did you live when you applied for employment with the NCFD?

- I lived in North Charleston
- I lived in the Charleston area
- I lived elsewhere in SC
- I lived out of state

7. Prior to your hire, what best describes what appealed to you about the fire service?

- Excitement
- Desire to help people
- Family members are firefighters
- Childhood dream
- Stable work and pay
- Work schedule
- Benefits
- Other

8. What best describes why you accepted employment with the NCFD?

- High number of fire calls
- Department growth
- First job offer
- Best job offer
- Stable work and pay
- Work schedule
- Benefits
- Other

9. What should the NCFD do to recruit more minority applicants?

- No special efforts
- Minority recruitment materials
- Minority recruiters
- Use minority media
- Outreach to minority churches
- Recruit at minority events
- Support youth programs
- Consult community leaders
- Other

10. What issues or barriers prevent the NCFD from hiring more minority personnel?

- No issues or barriers
- Lack of interest by applicants
- Racism or discrimination by NCFD
- Applicants lack experience
- Applicants lack qualifications
- Lack of recruiting by NCFD
- Lack of enough applicants
- Other

Appendix B

S.C. Fire Recruiting for Diversity Survey

This survey is intended for Fire/Rescue organizations located in South Carolina. Survey responses will remain anonymous but the information will be used to make recommendations to improve minority recruitment in the fire service. The findings of this research may be published as part of an Applied Research Project for the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. Respondents may provide results by mail, e-mail, phone or fax. Thank you for your participation.

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1. Is your department a paid, combination or volunteer department?

Paid Combination Volunteer

2. What is the demographic make-up of your department by race?

Total	
African-American	
Asian/Pacific Islander	
Caucasian	
Hispanic	
Native American	
Other	

3. What is the demographic make-up by race of the community that your department serves?

Total	
African-American	
Asian/Pacific Islander	
Caucasian	
Hispanic	
Native American	
Other	

4. What efforts has your department made to recruit minority candidates? (Check all that apply)

- No specific efforts
- Promotional materials featuring minority personnel
- Minority recruiters
- Using minority media
- Outreach to minority churches/organizations
- Recruiting activities at minority events
- Explorer or youth programs
- Consult minority community leaders
- Other:

5. What methods have been successful in recruiting and hiring minority candidates? (Check all that apply)

- No specific efforts
- Promotional materials featuring minority personnel
- Minority recruiters
- Using minority media
- Outreach to minority churches/organizations
- Recruiting activities at minority events
- Explorer or youth programs
- Consult minority community leaders
- Other:

6. What issues or barriers has your department encountered in attempting to hire minority candidates? (Check all that apply)

- No specific issues or barriers
- Lack of interest among minority candidates
- Racism or discrimination by those who hire
- Subjective decisions by those who hire
- Lack of experienced minority candidates
- Lack of a sufficient recruiting budget
- Lack of qualified minority candidates
- Lack of candidates who apply
- Other

Appendix C

Internal Survey Results

EFO 4		
What is your current rank?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
Firefighter	32.2%	29
Back-up driver	24.4%	22
Engineer	23.3%	21
Captain	18.9%	17
Battalion Chief	1.1%	1
<i>answered question</i>		90
<i>skipped question</i>		0

EFO 4	EFO 4	EFO 4	EFO 4
How long have you been employed with the NCFD?			
Answer Options		Response Frequency	Response Count
Less than 1 year	Less than 1 year	6.7%	6
1-4 years	1-4 years	40.0%	36
5-10 years	5-10 years	26.7%	24
11-15 years	11-15 years	16.7%	15
16-20 years		4.4%	4
More than 20 years	More than 20 years	5.6%	5
		<i>answered question</i>	90
<i>skipped question</i>	<i>skipped question</i>	0	0

EFO 4		
What is your gender?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
Male	95.5%	84
Female	4.5%	4
<i>answered question</i>		88
<i>skipped question</i>		2

EFO 4		
What best describes your racial identity?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count

Caucasian	64.4%	58
African-American	24.4%	22
Latino	1.1%	1
Asian	0.0%	0
Other	10.0%	9
<i>answered question</i>		90

EFO 4		
When you were hired, what best describes how you found out that the NCFD was hiring?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
Newspaper	1.1%	1
Personnel office	6.8%	6
NCFD employee	46.6%	41
Call to the NCFD	3.4%	3
NCFD website	6.8%	6
Internet advertisement	1.1%	1
Family member	8.0%	7
Job Fair/Recruiting event	0.0%	0
Explorers	0.0%	0
Other	26.1%	23
<i>answered question</i>		88
<i>skipped question</i>		2

EFO 4		
Where did you live when you applied for employment with the NCFD?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
I lived in North Charleston	33.3%	30
I lived in the Charleston area	37.8%	34
I lived elsewhere in SC	18.9%	17
I lived out of state	10.0%	9
<i>answered question</i>		90
<i>skipped question</i>		0

EFO 4		
Prior to your hire, what best describes what appealed to you about the fire service?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
Excitement	23.3%	21
Desire to help people	48.9%	44
Family members are firefighters	12.2%	11
Childhood dream	23.3%	21
Stable work and pay	27.8%	25
Work schedule	15.6%	14
Benefits	23.3%	21

Other	17.8%	16
<i>answered question</i>		90
<i>skipped question</i>		0

EFO 4		
What issues or barriers prevent the NCFD from hiring more minority personnel?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
No issues or barriers	29.2%	26
Lack of interest by applicants	39.3%	35
Racism or discrimination by NCFD	3.4%	3
Applicants lack experience	11.2%	10
Applicants lack qualifications	12.4%	11
Lack of recruiting by NCFD	11.2%	10
Lack of enough applicants	10.1%	9
Other	13.5%	12
<i>answered question</i>		89
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Appendix D

External Survey Results

Recruiting		
Is your department a paid, combination or volunteer department?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
Paid	33.3%	3
Combination	66.7%	6
Volunteer	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		9
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Recruiting			
What is the demographic make-up of your department by race?			
Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Total	65.13	521	8
African-American	8.86	62	7
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.00	0	1
Caucasian	57.00	456	8
Hispanic	1.00	1	1
Native American	3.00	3	1
Other	0.00	0	1
<i>answered question</i>			8
<i>skipped question</i>			1

Recruiting			
What is the demographic make-up by race of the community that your department serves?			
Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Total	26461.67	79385	3
African-American	14328.00	28656	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	15.00	30	2
Caucasian	20436.00	40872	2
Hispanic	884.50	1769	2
Native American	459.00	918	2
Other	375.00	750	2
<i>answered question</i>			3
<i>skipped question</i>			6

Recruiting	
What efforts has your department made to recruit minority candidates?	

(Check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
No specific efforts	33.3%	3
Promotional materials featuring minority personnel	0.0%	0
Minority recruiters	11.1%	1
Using minority media	11.1%	1
Outreach to minority churches/organizations	33.3%	3
Recruiting activities at minority events	0.0%	0
Explorer or youth programs	33.3%	3
Consult minority community leaders	33.3%	3
Other	11.1%	1
<i>answered question</i>		9
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Recruiting		
What methods have been successful in recruiting and hiring minority candidates? (Check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
No specific efforts	62.5%	5
Promotional materials featuring minority personnel	0.0%	0
Minority recruiters	0.0%	0
Using minority media	0.0%	0
Outreach to minority churches/organizations	12.5%	1
Recruiting activities at minority events	0.0%	0
Explorer or youth programs	0.0%	0
Consult minority community leaders	12.5%	1
Other	12.5%	1
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Recruiting		
What issues or barriers has your department encountered in attempting to hire minority candidates? (Check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
No specific issues or	33.3%	3

barriers		
Lack of interest among minority candidates	55.6%	5
Racism or discrimination by those who hire	0.0%	0
Subjective decisions by those who hire	0.0%	0
Lack of experienced minority candidates	55.6%	5
Lack of a sufficient recruiting budget	11.1%	1
Lack of qualified minority candidates	66.7%	6
Lack of candidates who apply	66.7%	6
Other	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		9
<i>skipped question</i>		0