

**HOW TO *ACHIEVE* SUCCESS IN THE FIRE DEPARTMENT
WITHOUT REALLY TRYING!**

A comparison of the fire chief qualifications in the Revere Fire Department
with the region and the nation.

Executive Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The problem is that the educational qualifications for fire chief in the City of Revere, Massachusetts had never been compared to regional and national qualifications for this position. The purpose of this research paper was to compare the qualifications for fire chief in Revere with the region and the nation.

The research questions were:

1. What are the educational requirements for fire chiefs nationally?
2. What are the educational requirements for regional fire chiefs?
3. What are the educational requirements for fire chief in Revere?

The study employed evaluative research.

Three procedures were employed in order to secure the necessary data for this project. For the national fire chief requirements, classified ads from *Fire Chief Magazine*, were surveyed from 1997 to 1999. Regionally, a survey was sent to the communities of Metro Fire District Thirteen in order to determine each community's requirements for fire chief. Last, the job announcement for the Revere Fire Chief's position was examined.

There were several conclusions. Nationally, the baccalaureate degree is the most sought after degree for fire chief. Just fewer than 60% of the classifieds either required or recommended a four-year degree. For the region, unlike national recommendations of a bachelor's degree, the preferred degree for regionally fire chiefs is the associate's degree. In addition, more than one half of the local fire chief positions mention no degree requirement. Last, there are no educational requirements for the fire chief's position in the City of Revere.

If the City of Revere Fire Department is to compete with other municipal government agencies, the fire chief must be college educated. Compared specifically with other departments, such as police and public works, where a baccalaureate degree is the fact rather than the exception or more generally with the military or the business world, college education is a requirement for the position. A university educated fire chief would certainly be better prepared to lead the fire service into the 21st Century. In the case of Revere, the City should explore the possibility of selecting a fire chief from outside the ranks of the Revere Fire Department in order to expand the field of qualified candidates. If this cannot be realized, the appointing authority should consider changing the fire chief's qualifications regarding education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	2
Table of Contents	4
List of Figures	5
Introduction	6
Background and Significance	6
Literature Review	9
Procedures	20
Results	22
Discussion	28
Recommendations	34
References	36
Appendix	42

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Required or Recommended Degrees for Fire Chief (Nationally).	23
2.	Required or Recommended Degrees for Police Chief (Nationally).	24
3.	Required or Recommended Degrees for Public Works Director (Nationally).	25
4.	Required or Recommended Degrees for Fire Chief (Regionally).	26
5.	Required or Recommended Degrees for Police Chief (Regionally).	27

INTRODUCTION

The problem is that the educational qualifications for fire chief in the City of Revere, Massachusetts have never been compared to regional and national qualifications for this position. The purpose of this research paper is to compare the qualifications for fire chief in Revere with the region and the nation. The research questions are:

1. What are the educational requirements for fire chiefs nationally?
2. What are the educational requirements for regional fire chiefs?
3. What are the educational requirements for fire chief in Revere?

This study will employ evaluative research.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

A brief examination of the numerous applied research projects at the National Fire Academy reveals no shortage of projects addressing the requirements for fire chief. In fact, this subject is probably the most researched topic at the Fire Academy. So why another project dedicated to the qualifications and selection of a fire chief?

In the next several months, the present fire chief in the City of Revere will retire. From what might be considered an archaic, flawed, and potentially prejudiced selection process, an enormous pool of candidates for this position will not be allowed for consideration of the chief's job. As a result, the Revere Fire Department might be shortchanging itself by potentially choosing a fire chief, who lacks the necessary academic qualifications, especially when compared with numerous other fire departments throughout the rest of the country.

In a long standing tradition, the City of Revere, much like many communities in the area, subscribes to the rules and regulations of the state's Division of Civil Service. Briefly, the Revere Fire Department's selection process for fire chief is solely based on one promotional examination. Moreover, the fire department is closed shop, whereby only Revere Fire Department personnel can be considered for promotion, fire chief included. Simply put, this practice prevents outside qualified personnel from even applying for head of the fire department. The result is a group of candidates, whose qualifications are uniquely the fact that they are deputy chiefs in the Revere Fire Department.

At a time where a college degree is a condition of employment for police officers and a graduate degree recommended for police chief, the fire chief in Revere must only be a deputy chief in the department, and pass a promotional examination, regardless of his education. Furthermore, in budget competition for tax dollars, the fire service is quickly falling behind such departments as school, public works, and of course, police (Hoover, Dowling, & Bouley, 1996).

It is the opinion of this writer that this responsibility falls directly upon the shoulders of the fire chief. It is his or her duty to not only provide leadership, but possess the necessary management tools to compete with other department heads for that shrinking tax dollar. This is the case in Revere.

Six years ago, an EFO paper authored by Paul Mras (1994) surveyed 391 city managers throughout the United States for their opinions regarding the qualifications for fire chief. In almost all responses, leadership ability was considered the most desirable qualification (Mras, p.8). This was followed in

descending order, by management skills, communication skills, goal oriented, prior fire chief experience, budget management experience, college education, professional certifications, assessment center scores, and last, seniority in the department. Paradoxically, in the case of Revere, seniority is generally considered as the most important qualification for fire chief. Harry Carter (2000) suggests mastering the following list in order to function as a fire chief in the future,

- Become computer literate,
- Attend various local, county, state, and national seminars,
- Build a library,
- Join professional associations,
- Commit time to the National Fire Academy,
- Train regularly,
- Broaden your administrative skills,
- Learn about the various laws that impact upon our daily operations.

The author never mentions obtaining a degree.

The following pages will examine classified ads from several professional journals to gain an understanding of what cities throughout the nation are looking for in their search for police chiefs, public works directors, and fire chiefs. On a more local note, regional fire departments will be surveyed to gather their respective qualifications for fire chief. Finally, the Revere Fire Department will be examined and compared with the above. The attempt here is to illustrate what may be an ineffective selection process in Revere.

Contrary to Mras's survey, the qualifications for fire chief anywhere should begin with the education of the candidate. Whether obtained by way of a distant learning program, courses taken at the Fire Academy, or through an on campus fire related academic degree program, today's fire chief must be educated. Examination scores or seniority in grade are not enough.

The relationship between this research paper and the Executive Leadership Course is philosophical in nature. In its course description, Executive Leadership examines contemporary public sector and fire service issues, using a case study approach to enhance the officer's ability to perform at the executive level. The course relies heavily on analysis and discussion of case studies as an educational methodology and is patterned after the graduate school model used throughout the country. This paper in its exploration of the qualifications for fire chief in Revere pays close attention to the concept of leadership and its relationship to academic achievement. Furthermore, it might serve as a case study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Unlike in past generations, the position of fire chief is rapidly undergoing a metamorphosis. Today's chiefs are generally college educated, better trained, in some states certified, and thus better prepared to lead their respective fire departments into the 21st Century. This is not to say that they are equally competent with their counterparts in the police service, public works, or on a more grandeur scale, those in the military or the business world.

Three words help to describe the prerequisites necessary for a fire chief's position. They are, education, professionalism, and certification. These qualifications, some so new that they are still in their trial stages, are so interwoven that on occasions they are hardly distinguishable.

This literature review will primarily focus on the relationship between education and promotion in such agencies as the military, the police service, and the fire service. These three are included here because of their para-military structure and organization. This review will also touch upon the effect of academic education on the business world. Some other areas examined will be the relationship between higher education and promotion, the role of credentialism, and certification in the fire service profession.

The theoretical relationship between higher education and professionalism in the public sector at first glance appears fundamental. The higher the education level, the better off one's position. Although there is considerable literature which documents the impact of education on earnings, occupational status, and the likelihood of promotion, such as found in Blau and Duncan (1967); Mincer (1994); Jenks et al. (1972); Rosenbaum (1979); and Wise (1975), assessments differ concerning which facets of educational achievement are rewarded in the workplace (Spilerman and Lunde, 1991).

Richard Schmidt (1996) writes that the business world has long favored those with college education for "professional" positions. In the 1960's businesses began to promote employees with education and training beyond the traditional four-year college degree. The Master of Business Administration

became popular for anyone interested in reaching the higher echelon of corporate America.

Other authors have begun to question the value of a graduate education. White, Adams, and Forrester (1996) examined the publications records of eight classes of doctorate recipients in Public Administration and concluded that doctoral education and research were making only minimal contributions to knowledge and theory development in the field. No comment was made of the graduate's contribution to the work force.

The education and training of public authority managers has been largely overlooked in the literature, curricula, and professions of public administration and business management. One study (Mitchell, 1991) examined several prominent government agencies, such as the Port Authorities of New York, and New Jersey, the Tennessee Valley Authority, Chicago Housing Authority, and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. Mitchell's findings were that 18% had no college degree, 82% had undergraduate degrees, and 35% held graduate degrees. For the graduate degree recipients, the Master of Public Administration and the Master of Business Administration were the two most predominant degrees. Mitchell concluded that to ignore the education of authority managers was to dismiss a large influential set of leaders pursuing long-term careers in the public sector.

Promotion is the standard means of growth in occupational status. As a consequence, investigations into the determinants of promotions (Bielby and Baron, 1983; Grandjean, 1981; Medoff and Abraham, 1980; Rosenbaum, 1979;

and Wise, 1975) have contributed to our knowledge of the dynamics of status attainment over the course of a career. Note that status and visibility are closely related terms and may on occasion be interchangeable.

Schmidt (1996) contends that an advanced education enhances the promotion of a military officer. It accelerates the development of critical thinking, problem analyzing, and result articulating skills in military personnel. Data verify the fact that an advanced education will improve the probability for officer career enhancement and promotion. Although at the rank of full colonel and higher in the army, performance ratings and prior assignments (experience) outweigh the importance of a graduate degree for promotion. Nevertheless, for the career officer interested in promotion, an advanced education significantly improves the chances of being selected for the next higher rank. In 1992, Department of Defense figures showed that 94.3% of officers held a baccalaureate degree and 38.4% had earned an advanced degree.

Others see it differently. Moore and Trout (1978) say that performance, while a necessary standard for acceptability into a rather large pool of officers from which the elite will emerge, is nonetheless a minor influence on promotion and becomes even less discriminating as an officer's career progresses. Visibility (status), the extent to which an individual has developed contacts with peers and superiors, who can influence one's movement in the organization, begins moderately and eventually becomes the dominant influence.

On a similar point, Morris Janowitz (1973) argues that education at the service academy is the most critical experience for an officer. He also identifies

attendance at higher military schools as important for advancement. The author contends that a particular assignment, which will permit the candidate to display talents (visibility) and make a conspicuous contribution, is prominent in the qualifications for promotion.

Mitchell Peck (1994), assessing the career mobility of Army officers from 1950 to 1974, sees the preference of those who graduated from a service academy as minimal. Academy graduates had little or no evident advantage before promotion to the general ranks. Years of service (experience), military education (education), and commission cohort (status/visibility), positively affected the likelihood of promotion.

A review of the literature addressing qualifications in the police service reveals that officer academic standards should be at least a baccalaureate degree. Two decades ago, Woska (1978) pointed out that the idea of a college education for police surfaced as early as in the second decade of the 20th Century, long before those in the fire service even recognized the existence of a problem. Grossman and Doherty (1994); Hennessey (1999); and Truxillo, Bennett, et al. (1998), to select just a few, argued that college education instills a degree of professionalism and maturity that is needed and valued at higher organizational levels, but also that advanced degrees are now so common at the supervisory and management levels in the police services that they no longer guarantee promotion.

Other research (Howard, 1986), has found that certain measures of education such as college grades, possession of a college degree, or a particular

major, for example, were related to specific performance criteria for managers, and advancement. Nevertheless, with the exception of grade point average, no clear pattern of relationships emerged between education measures and job performance (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, and Bretz, 1995). Although empirical relationships have been found between education and police job performance, these relationships are generally weak (Cascio, 1977; Roberg, 1978). At present, no studies for the fire service have been published.

A fire chief must be a leader and in that premise the term leadership comes into play. As is commonly known, the meanings of leadership are varied and widespread and perhaps have no clear definition (Adams, 1996). Ranging from the concept that leadership can be learned (Bennis and Goldsmith, 1994) to the age old belief that leaders are born and not created, leadership has many ingredients.

Wingspread I (Johnson Foundation, 1966) may have been the first to address the leadership void in the fire service. Stating that professional status begins with education, the conference members recommended that a systematic and deliberate educational program, which would be acceptable to the academic community, was the surest approach to professionalism. Formal educational achievement could assist a person in acquiring a sense of values which would give direction, meaning, and integrity to one's life and work, (p.11). Wingspread I's fire service educational model saw baccalaureate programs for chief fire officers. The participants of Wingspread I understood the importance of higher education, if the fire service was to achieve professional status (Clark, 1993).

Ten years later, Wingspread II continued that there was an educational void at the top and recommended that a means of deliberate and systematic development of all fire service personnel through the executive level was needed (Johnson Foundation, 1976, p.11). Executives, the committee continued, were responsible for overall problem identification, assessment of current and future priorities and resource needs, development of action plans, evaluation, and administrative policy making. Wingspread II also developed an educational model. One of the two major changes was the inclusion of graduate school education at both the master's and doctoral degree levels.

Wingspread III in 1986 (Johnson Foundation, 1986) did not discuss higher education other than to say that the fire service had made significant strides in professional development, but improvement was still needed. Wingspread IV addressed leadership by recommending that fire service leaders will need to be recruited, selected, trained, and supported to overcome the autocratic, power-focused, and controlling environments of the past (International Association of Fire Chiefs Foundation, 1996).

In reality, the argument of higher education for fire service personnel is not new, nor is it something difficult to find in fire service publications. A quick glance of the literature reveals a number of writers preaching the importance of college education for fire personnel. Boater, (1982); Carter, (1989); Kirtkey, (1989); and Treasure, (1989), advocate the necessity of an university education. Some (Sherman, 1988) see advanced education as a requirement for promotion to higher ranks. Still others, (Ridgeway and Zucco, 1986) attest to the importance of

higher education as assisting in the development of a fire officer's critical thinking abilities. In higher organizational ranks (chief officer), college and postgraduate study would be the critical levels of education, which enhance job performance (Spilerman and Lunde, 1991, p. 692-3).

In any profession where there is promotion, credentialism is also found. This concept refers to the tendency of employers to reward earned degrees apart from any contribution made by the person towards productivity, something, of course, very related to the fire service (Faia, 1981; Jenks, et al., 1979). Credentialism literature speaks of rewards for earned degrees even when they are only marginally associated with productivity, such as non related educational incentives for firefighters (Spilerman and Lunde, 1991, p. 694).

The idea of certification for fire chiefs is still in its infancy, but some progress has been made. Since the second decade of the 20th Century, national standards for fire service personnel have been debated and subsequently created and implemented. What was lacking was certification for the position of fire chief. There were many reasons for this void, the most important of which was qualified candidates (Coleman, 1998).

In November of 1991, the California State Board of Fire Services passed a motion to create a subcommittee to examine the possibility of adopting a certification process for fire chiefs. One result of the committee's findings was that the minimum educational requirements for a fire chief's position ranged from none to a master's degree. Also, the minimum experience levels ranged from as little as ten years in the fire service to eight years in the fire chief's position. The

committee's most important finding was that the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for successful completion of any fire chief's certification were not clearly defined in any state or national standard (Coleman, 1998).

The International Association of Fire Chiefs identified this deficiency and developed a program for fire chiefs and chief fire officers. Its goals ranged from increasing the professionalism and continuing education to recognizing achievement (Marinucci, 1998). The IAFC Professional Designation Program is divided into seven job related components: technical competencies, community involvement, active association membership, professional contributions, professional development, education, and experience. Education accounts for 15% of the total, while technical competencies make up the bulk of the component percentage at 40% (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2000).

In 1994, a study sponsored by the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs published a report entitled, *Toward a Canadian Chief Officer Standard*, which recommended that the program be based on a previously issued standard created by the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. Of importance, the report recommended that by the year 2000, a baccalaureate degree would be required for a candidate to be eligible to take the professional designation examination (Sherburne, 1998). For the present, non-degreed chiefs would be eligible for certification if they met all the other requirements. *Le directeur*, the official journal for Canadian fire chiefs, related that there was a growing need for chief officers to have a thorough understanding of core business functions such as accounting, finance, marketing, human resource management, labor relations, and

organizational behavior (Education permanente, 1997). No actual degree requirement was mentioned but the National Fire Protection Association's *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications* was highlighted as a guideline. The idea of fire chief certification received the blessing from the president of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (Hewitt, 1997). The result was the launching of the first Chief Officer Program in Canada.

The components for the Canadian version of fire chief certification were similar to those put forth by the IAFC. The Canadian program listed eight components: employment experience, academic achievement, continuous learning, professional behavior, active association membership, demonstrated competencies, community involvement, and self-assessment. In 2000, the first two recipients of the CAFC's Chief Fire Officer Professional designation were awarded. Both have academic degrees (Riorke, 2000).

At present, the Canadian program has been temporarily suspended while they move towards IAFC certification. When completed, the IAFC and the CAFC will agree to recognize each other's certifications (F. Sherburne, personal communication, May 25, 2000).

Following suit, the State of California sought to create a fire chief certification program. The review process included both Canadian and American certification programs. The certification program developed by the State of California reflects a synthesis of the two (Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 1999).

As mentioned above, the NFPA has created *Standard 1021, Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*, which was written with the intention of developing nationally applicable performance standards for uniformed fire service personnel (NFPA, 1992). Of the four fire officer designations, Fire Officer IV is aimed at chief fire officers. Several components of this certification include: human resource management, administration, budget, community awareness, organizational structure, government structure, communication skills, information management, planning, inspection, emergency services delivery, and safety. Some of the above components are without performance standards.

In conclusion, considering most of the fire departments in eastern Massachusetts are subject to the Commonwealth's Division of Civil Service, a word regarding this is in order. Historically, it was taken for granted that public services would be delivered by a staff of career civil service employees, as is in the case of Revere. They would work within the structure of centralized public agencies budgeted with appropriate funds (Klinger and Lynn, 1997). This is tradition in Massachusetts and in many communities, it is the law.

Today the climate is changing. When public agencies are used, they are more likely to be staffed by contingent workers hired through flexible employment mechanisms rather than permanent employees protected by civil service regulations and collective bargaining agreements (Kilborn, 1995). This is becoming the case in Massachusetts where the civil service system is being reconsidered and privatization is beginning to take its place. For the first time in

its history the fire commissioner in Boston will not be taken from the ranks of the Boston Fire Department, the mayor opting instead for a civilian to fill that position.

It is obvious from the above literature that academic education plays an important role in not only the promotion chances of a candidate, but how he or she may perform. Whether, public authority positions, the military, or the police service, an academic degree is paramount in climbing the ladder. Fortunately, the fire service has begun to recognize this as an important aptitude as well. More and more authors are addressing the need for today's fire chiefs to obtain academic degrees.

PROCEDURES

By the nature of research project guidelines, a survey was required for this paper. Unfortunately, attempting to obtain the educational requirements for fire chiefs throughout the nation is much too broad and extensive a venture to be completed in an ARP. Obviously thousands of fire departments in the United States cannot be polled to determine their particular educational requirements for the position of fire chief. There was an alternative, which at least helped one to gain a better understanding of what fire departments throughout the nation, sought as qualifications for the fire chief position.

This writer instead chose to examine the fire chief classified ads for the past three years (1997-1999) which appeared in *Fire Chief Magazine*. At the very least, some idea as to these requirements could be obtained in order to determine what a fire department or city considered as educational qualifications for the position.

Understanding that the fire service does not exist in a vacuum, police chief wanted ads were also examined for the past three years as a basis of comparison. The journal selected was *Police Chief Magazine*, again for the years 1997-1999. Also, in an attempt to gain a better view of other municipal department heads, *Public Works, Engineering, Construction, and Maintenance Magazine* was consulted for the public works director's position.

Gathering data from the regional fire departments was easier and more thorough. For the purposes of this project, the region selected is comprised of the thirty communities which make up Metro Fire District Thirteen. These cities are closely related by their proximity to Revere and their mutual aid agreements. For this project, a survey was sent to the District Thirteen fire chiefs requesting the educational requirements for their position. A copy of this survey and results appear in the appendix section.

The easiest information to secure was from the City of Revere. Here a copy of the fire chief's job description was examined.

For the purposes of this research endeavor, the above selection process for data gathering represented the most accurate and efficient way, considering the time restraints for the project. As stated above, securing comprehensive national data vis-à-vis the educational requirements for fire chief is next to impossible. Notwithstanding, this writer felt satisfied that an accurate cross-section of the fire chief's educational requirements throughout the country could be obtained by way of the classifieds.

A word about this project's limitations, no project outside of a lengthy, time consuming study could meet the objective of surveying all the fire departments in the nation. Yet, viewing several hundred classifieds in the fire and police service as well as public works is adequate for a research project of this nature.

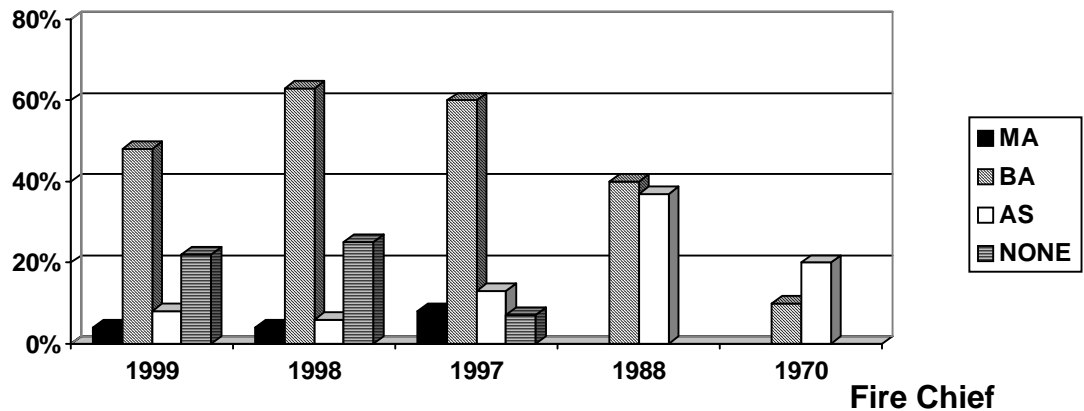
The objective of this research project is to compare the qualifications for fire chief in Revere with those regionally and nationally. If one looks at this from a bottom up rather than a top down approach, the objectives of the project can be realized. This writer's aim is to place emphasis on Revere's requirements for fire chief, not so much Metro Fire District Thirteen, or the nation. If the reader bears this in mind throughout while reading the following pages, the objective of the paper will be met.

RESULTS

The graph below helps to illustrate what are the educational requirements or recommendations for the fire chief's rank throughout the nation. The source for this data came from *Fire Chief Magazine*. The periodical was surveyed for the years 1997 to 1999. The data for the years 1970 and 1988 came from the EFO paper authored by Paul Mras (1994).

Figure 1

Required or Recommended Degrees for Fire Chief (Nationally).

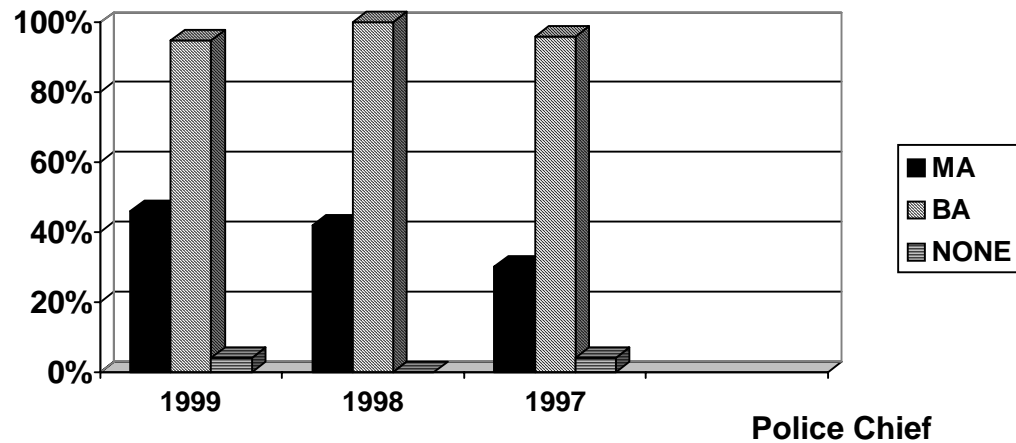


It is obvious that the baccalaureate degree is the most sought after degree for the fire chief's position. Although in the 1970's and 1980's, it appears that the associate's degree was at least on equal terms with the bachelor's degree. In any case, an average of just fewer than 60% of the classifieds either required or recommended a four-year degree. Also of note is the lack of importance given to graduate degrees. Only 5% of the fire departments examined in the classifieds mentioned a graduate degree. For the record, 12% of the classifieds highlighted the Executive Fire Officer Program.

The classified ads for police, on the other hand, present a different picture. This data came from *Police Chief Magazine*.

Figure 2

Required or Recommended Degrees for Police Chief (Nationally).

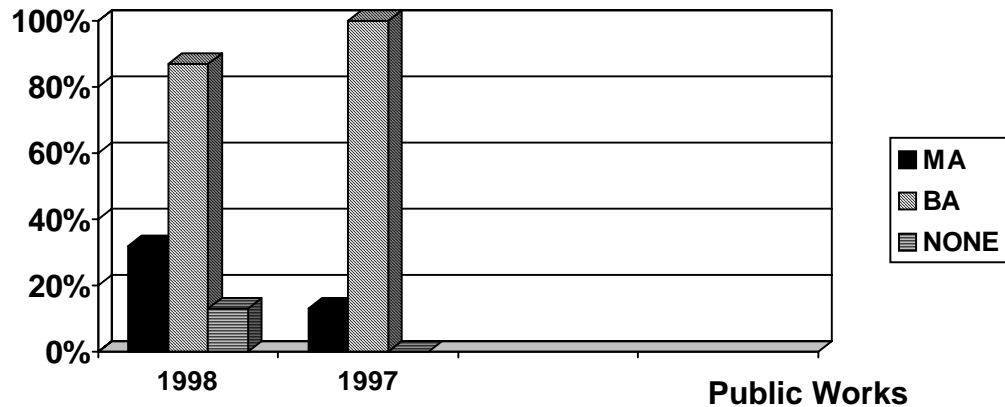


From examining the graph, the most obvious conclusion is that the baccalaureate degree is all but mandatory for the position of police chief. Moreover, appointing authorities, around 40%, want their police chief candidates to possess a master's degree.

Unexpectedly, missing from the classifieds was an associate's degree as a requirement for police chief. It appears that this degree is simply not considered essential for the chief's position. Almost 18% of the ads stated the importance of attending the Federal Bureau of Investigation Academy.

Figure 3

Required or Recommended Degrees for Public Works Director
(Nationally).



The data for the position of public works director came from the classifieds appearing in *Public Works. Engineering, Construction, and Maintenance*. This writer was unable to secure the data for 1999, hence the omission. Nevertheless, it is easy to see from the years 1997 and 1998, that a baccalaureate degree was almost mandatory for this position. Graduate degrees remain somewhat less weighty, probably for the lack of graduate programs specifically related to the occupation.

To address the first question, the educational requirement for fire chiefs nationally, according to the classifieds appearing in *Fire Chief Magazine*, is a baccalaureate degree. Almost 60% of the ads surveyed sought a fire chief with a four-year degree. Associates and masters degrees were in the minority. The requirements for police chief were more demanding.

The second question in this project is one that includes a survey. As stated in the procedures, a questionnaire was sent to the thirty fire chiefs of

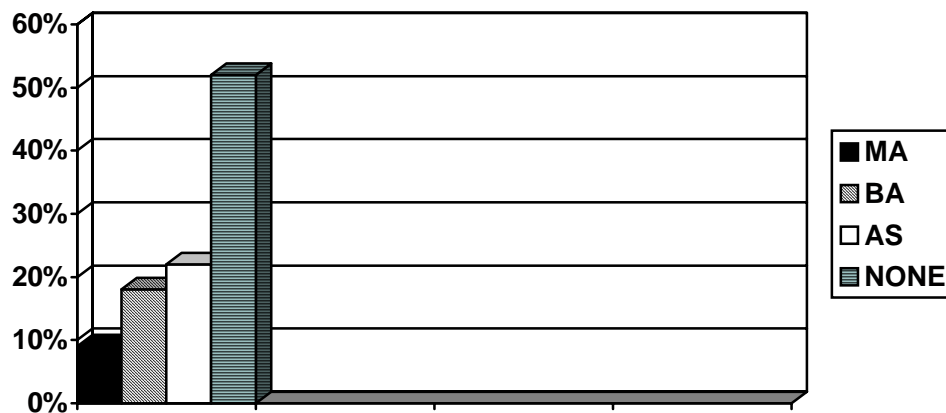
Metro Fire District Thirteen. Questions ranged from whether or not their office was civil service, to the educational requirements or recommendations for the position of fire chief. An optional question was the current fire chief's education.

Three pertinent questions regarding the community's police department were also asked. These were educational requirements for that position, degrees required, and degrees recommended for the same. The attempt here was to compare educational requirements between police and fire departments within the same geographical area. This would fit well into the data collected for question number one.

The following graph illustrates the educational qualifications for a fire chief's position in Metro Fire District Thirteen.

Figure 4

Required or Recommended Degrees for Fire Chief (Regionally).



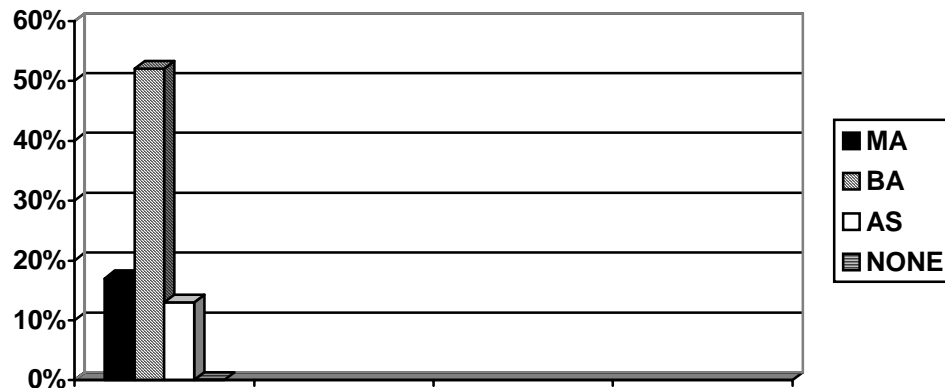
Unlike national recommendations of a bachelor's degree, the preferred degree for regional fire chiefs is the associates. Moreover, more than half of the regional fire chief positions mention no degree. Compare this with national

statistics, which show that an average of only 13% of the classifieds examined stating no degree preference. Of note, all fire chief responders to the survey possessed at least a two-year degree. The percentages were split about equally between bachelor and associate's degrees (48% to 52%).

The bonus section of the questionnaire, regarding the police chief qualifications, was completed.

Figure 5

Required or Recommended Degrees for Police Chief (Regionally).



Again, like the national data, the baccalaureate degree appears to be the required academic degree for the region's police chief. More than 50% of the cities and towns sought candidates with a four-year degree. Also of note, almost 100% of the communities surveyed mentioned an academic degree. This was also the case in the national classifieds.

The third question is easier to answer. There are no educational requirements for the fire chief's position in the City of Revere. The examination is open to "permanent Deputy Fire Chiefs in the Revere Fire Department, who have been employed in this grade, after certification, for at least one year prior to the

date of the examination” (Massachusetts Department of Personnel Administration, 1995). “Certification” in this context is holding the position of deputy chief in Revere for at least one year. It has no relation to the IAFC fire chief certification.

There is some credit given for education in the promotional examination. The written examination accounts for 80% of the final mark. Education and experience account for 20%. The formula to determine the latter mark is complex and cannot be ascertained by any applicant. Department of Personnel Administration staff determine this mark. It can be concluded that an academic degree accounts for little of the final education and experience mark. A greater emphasis is placed on seniority in grade.

DISCUSSION

The relationship between higher education and professionalism in the fire service, as discussed by several writers, is disputable. It is obvious that nationally, as well as regionally, higher education and the fire chief's position are not that compatible. Sixty percent of the national classifieds sought candidates with a bachelor's degree. Regionally, about 18% viewed the same degree as required or recommended. In Revere there was none. The same was not the case for other professions.

For the past three years, according to *Police Chief Magazine*, aspirants for chief of police had to possess an undergraduate degree. Likewise for directors of public works, their numbers were also close to 100%. Schmidt (1996) concludes

that the MBA is mandatory for people wishing to reach the higher echelon of corporate America (p. 29).

In terms of academic achievement, the fire service fails to statistically compete with other agencies. Mitchell (1991) finds that 82% of the typical public authority chief executives had an undergraduate degree (p. 431). Department of Defense figures showed that over 94% of the country's military officers held a baccalaureate degree. Regionally, 48% of the fire chiefs had received an undergraduate degree. National statistics for the fire service were unobtainable.

Promotion is the standard means of growth in occupational status. Although Schmidt (1996) writes that an advanced degree enhances the promotion potential of a military officer, experience outweighs the importance of any graduate degree. This is also the case in the fire service. From the data, it is obvious that academic degrees are not highly considered in the selection of a fire chief, nationally, regionally, and locally. Take for instance the certification process for fire chiefs in both the United States and Canada. The IAFC Professional Designation Program attributes only 15% toward education, as does the CAFC. Paul Mras's study ranked education seventh out of ten categories and the NFPA (1992), fails to even mention higher education. Considering 60% of the national classifieds and about 18% of the region placed any emphasis on academic education, the City of Revere, much like the region, is slightly behind the rest of the country's quasi emphasis on the value and importance of a college educated fire chief. On the other hand, the police service views matters differently.

Woska (1975) writing a few decades ago, concluded that the idea of college educated police officers began in the 1920's. This was also a time, when firefighting was considered as an industrial occupation rather than a profession (Fire service training, 1945). Woska stated that "the idea of higher education is to prepare people for life and to teach them the conceptual ability to understand themselves and the world around them." The second objective of higher education "should equip (police) with skills required for a career in a particular job" (p. 313). Again police statistics, both nationally and regionally, bear this out. Almost every national classified surveyed mentioned a college degree, usually a four year degree. Regionally, although the bachelor's degree was mentioned only half of the time, nevertheless almost 100% of the police chief positions required or recommended some form of college experience, including 17% desiring a graduate degree.

Probably the best view of the fire service over the past several decades comes from the four Wingspread Conferences, the first, convening in 1966 and the most recent in 1996. An accurate picture of the state of affairs in the fire service was presented through the reports published by each committee. Wingspread I preached that "a systematic and deliberate educational program leading to a broad knowledge base, which is acceptable to the academic community, is the surest approach to professionalism" (p.10). The committee continued "formal education achievement should help a person acquire a considered sense of values that will give direction, meaning, and integrity to his life and his work" (p.11).

Wingspread II concluded that "a means of deliberate and systematic development of all fire service personnel through the executive level is still needed. There is an educational void at the top" (p.12). One of the recommendations was the creation and development of graduate school programs at both the masters and doctoral degree levels. At present, there are few colleges which offer graduate degrees in fire related topics. Burt Clark's research in 1993 determined that there were approximately 36 baccalaureate fire programs as opposed to 648 police programs. At the master's level, there were four fire programs versus 130 police graduate programs (p.51). This might help to answer the question: Where are the college educated fire chiefs? As would be expected, less than 10% of the classifieds and the survey, recommended a graduate degree.

Wingspread IV, which convened only four years ago, addressed leadership by stating that to successfully compete with other government agencies, fire service leaders "will need to be recruited, selected, trained, and supported . . . to overcome the autocratic, power-focused, and controlling environments of the past" (p.8). As yet, this has not been regionally or locally instituted, unless, of course, one considers passing a promotional examination as being recruited or trained.

Despite the arguments of those who support the importance of a college education, it is apparent that higher education is not given much value in the search for a fire chief. Furthermore, if one is to accept the validity of the many participants of the four Wingspread Conferences over the past several decades,

then the fire service has failed to keep up with other professions such as specifically the police, or more generally, the military and the business world. As a footnote, a survey of Metro Fire District Thirteen fire chiefs conducted a few years ago (Moschella, 1998) found that only 10% had even ever heard of the Wingspread Conferences.

Any discussion about the fire service here in Massachusetts cannot be complete without addressing the role of the Division of Civil Service. Some interesting and perhaps disturbing conclusions have come from the fire chief's survey. Of the communities included in the survey, 60% of them were not part of the state's civil service system. The remaining 40%, Revere included, operated under the guidelines of this agency. In every non civil service community, there was no promotional examination for the position of fire chief, some opting instead for assessment centers. On the other hand, in all but one civil service city or town, a civil service promotional examination was a major, if not the most essential criteria in the selection process for chief. Although education was considered in the selection process by a three to one margin (65% to 21%), the most important criteria in the selection process was the examination. Here may be found the root of the problem.

The civil service fire chief promotional examination questions are taken from nine sources. They are:

J. Norman, *Fire Officers Handbook of Tactics*,

IFSTA, *Fire Cause Determination*,

F. Brannigan, *Building Construction for the Fire Service*,

IFSTA, *Hazardous Materials for First Responders*,
IFSTA, *Private Fire Protection and Detection*,
Massachusetts General Laws, Code of Massachusetts Regulations,
V. Dunn, *Safety and Survival on the Fireground*,
B. Phelps, *Incident Command System Policy and Procedures Manual*,
ICMA, *Managing Fire Services*.

With the exception of perhaps the last three books, the other monographs, although important to every chief officer, should not be the basis for a fire chief's examination. In fact, an argument could be made that *Managing Fire Services* is the only book (laws included) which completely addresses the roles and responsibilities of a fire chief.

In a symbiotic but archaic relationship, the Division of Civil Service perpetuates itself through the examination process. Thirty-nine percent of the area's fire departments, Revere included, adhere to the policies of this agency.

From perusing the examination reading list, which hardly tests the qualifications of the position, it is obvious why there is a critical failure to value the importance of an academic education. One only has to recall that education and experience together, comprise only 20% of the final mark. Of that, academic achievement represents a small percentage. In fact, an emergency medical technician certification is worth more than a bachelor's degree in fire science. The implications are onerous. A system that dwells in inefficacy, will surely produce ineffective leaders.

For the City of Revere, the road to fire chief remains basic. Be a deputy chief, pass an examination composed of books, most of which have little to do with the roles and responsibilities of the position and maybe attend a political fundraiser or two.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are two recommendations, one theoretical and one practical, which would help the Revere Fire Department secure effective leadership in the following years. Both can be realized, although not without a considerable change in the fire department's traditional but archaic culture.

Nationally, approximately 60% of the classified ads sought fire chief candidates who had at least a baccalaureate degree. In the region, the degree recommended was an associate's. Revere has no degree requirements or recommendations.

If the City of Revere Fire Department is to compete with other municipal agencies, the fire chief must be college educated. Compared with the police and public works, or more generally, the military and the business world (are not fire departments businesses?), a college education is required for promotion.

The problem rests in Revere's association with the Division of Civil Service. As long as the fire chief's position remains under the control of this agency, whose local requirement is simply that one be a deputy chief in order to qualify for promotion, the best candidates for fire chief may not even be considered. On a grander scheme, Revere could make the fire chief's position a non-Civil Service position. Two communities are presently exploring this change,

although not without considerable resistance from the local unions. The reaction would be the same in Revere. Nevertheless, this change would open the door for more qualified and educated candidates to apply for the chief's position.

On a practical and more achievable note, the appointing authority in Revere could raise the academic standards for fire chief. Present deputy chief's in the Revere Fire Department, who aspire to become fire chief, would have to obtain an academic degree in a fire related discipline, at the very least, an associate's degree, or better, a bachelor's degree.

Time waits for no one, the fire service included. Now is the time.

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APPENDIX

FIRE CHIEF SURVEY

Is the position of fire chief a Civil Service position?	Yes (39%)	No (61%)
Are there any educational requirements?	Yes (35%)	No (65%)
If yes, what degree(s) is/are required ?		Associates (22%) Bachelors (18%) Masters (9%) None (52%)
(%'s for REQUIRED AND PREFERRED COMBINED)		
If no, what degrees(s) might be preferred ?		Associates Bachelors Masters
Are academic achievements considered in the fire chief selection process?	No (22%)	Yes (65%)
Does the position of fire chief require a competitive examination?	Yes (44%)	No (65%)
Is the fire chief's position only open to members of your fire department?	Yes (56%)	No (44%)
OPTIONAL:		
What is your highest academic degree?		Associates (52%) Bachelors (48%) Masters (0%)

IF POSSIBLE, PLEASE ATTEMPT TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Are there any educational requirements
for the **police chief's** position in your community? Yes (57%) No (43%)

If yes, what degree(s) is/are **required**? Associates (13%)
Bachelors (52%)
Masters (17%)

(%'s for REQUIRED AND PREFERRED COMBINED)

If no, what degree(s) might be **preferred**? Associates
Bachelors
Masters