

**RECRUITING AND RETENTION OF AFRICAN -
AMERICAN APPLICANTS IN THE
WILMINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT**

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Certification Statement

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

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to explore why the recruitment and retention of African Americans is unsuccessful for the Wilmington Fire Department (WFD) and to explore what can be done to close the gap? The descriptive method was used to investigate what could be done to recruit and retain African Americans and also to explore what types of internal and external factors were preventing African American applicants from pursuing Firefighting positions. The procedures for this research included an external survey of volunteer fire fighters throughout the State of Delaware. The goal here was to determine if the lack of African Americans was an isolated problem in Wilmington or if it existed state-wide? The purpose of the internal questionnaire was to determine what type of internal factors and job requirements uniformed WFD personnel saw as being a deterrent to these applicants. The results of this research indicated that volunteers reported that they have the same types of issues with low African American membership as the WFD. It was also determined that word of mouth and newspaper articles was the most common and successful methods of recruitment utilized by other departments. Furthermore, research showed that a majority of the polled participants believed that factors such as the lack of professional qualifications, no prior firefighting experience and the inability to perform well on the firefighter entry-level exams were all major

items that limited the applicant pool. The recommendations were to make the current workforce aware about the importance of diversity, reevaluate current recruitment practices, create real partnerships with the community and establish a mentoring program with the Wilmington Fire Department.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT.....	2
ABSTRACT	3-4
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	5
INTRODUCTION.....	6-7
BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE.....	8-11
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12-14
PROCEDURES.....	15-19
RESULTS	
Research Question 1.....	20-25
Research Question 2.....	26-29
Research Question 3.....	29-30
Research Question 4.....	30-33
DISCUSSION.....	34-37
RECOMMENDATION.....	38-43
REFERENCES.....	44-45

APPENDICES

COVER PAGE TO SURVEYS.....	46
APPENDIX A: External Questionnaire.....	47-49
APPENDIX B: Volunteer Questionnaire.....	50-52
APPENDIX C: Internal Questionnaire.....	53-54

INTRODUCTION

Part of the overview of the National Fire Academy's (NFA) Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) is to create a better understanding of the need to assist in changing the fire and emergency services organizations from being reactive to proactive and also to transform these same institutions to reflect the diversity of America's communities.

This in of itself is why this research is important. This research was conducted to evaluate the recruiting and retention of African American applicants for the City of Wilmington Fire Department, (WFD) located in Wilmington, Del. The problem is that the workforce of the WFD does not reflect the demographics of the population it serves. If a fire department is to be a reflection of the community it serves, it must have a diversified candidate pool to choose from. The portion of African Americans that work at the WFD is 22%. Whereas the City of Wilmington according to the US Census is 58% African American. Now, this problem takes into consideration two important things. 1. The fact that the numbers alone are lopsided and 2. If something isn't done within a very reasonable amount of time, through attrition, resignation or termination the small subsection of African Americans that work for the WFD will be obsolete and then the City of Wilmington will have an all white non minority public service department that doesn't represent the City's make up at all. Within the fire department if nothing is done to close the gap some of the consequences could include more lawsuits, EEOC investigations, judicial consent

decreases, decreased community support and decreased morale within the department. All of which already happened or is currently happening within the department. That being said, the purpose of this research was to determine why African American recruitment and retention for the WFD is unsuccessful? And what can be done to assist in eliminating or closing the gap on the aforementioned consequences thus helping to increase these staggering numbers?

The descriptive research method was used to investigate how the level of diversity of the WFD compared to the demographics of the City of Wilmington. It was also used to evaluate what if any internal/external factors prevented African American applicants from applying or keeping a firefighter position. This research has utilized a collection of data by way of the world-wide-web, readings, personal observations and surveys. It also utilized a comprehensive literature review for best in practice methodologies related to minority recruitment within both the fire service and public sector. The National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center in conjunction with my local library was utilized to gain a wider perspective on available resources. In performing the aforementioned methodology the following questions were answered:

1. Why is it important to achieve and retain a diverse workforce?
2. What are the barriers preventing African Americans from considering a career with the WFD?
3. How does the demographic profile of Wilmington compare to the WFD?
4. What does the hiring of the last six years of WFD classes look like in comparison to the City of Wilmington demographically?
5. What strategies can be implemented to persuade more African Americans to apply to and stay employed with the WFD?

BACKGROUND & SIGNIFICANCE

Wilmington is strategically located approximately mid-point between New York and Washington, DC and like most eastern cities has been evolving for over 350 years. Throughout this evolution, there has always been a need to provide fire suppression and emergency services to the constituents of the City of Wilmington. The Wilmington Fire Department is a career department protecting 19 square miles consisting of 10.8 square miles of land and 8.2 miles of waterways. The department protects a population of 150,000 during the day and 70,851 at night with a density of 6,728 people per square mile. (Conrad, 1908) Although the City of Wilmington has been around since 1731 the City has only been a career professional paid fire department since March 16, 1921. This came by way of the Delaware General Assembly passing legislation to make the fire department the only fully paid career fire department in the State of Delaware.

The fire department currently maintains six engines, two ladders and a marine fire fighting force. The department is divided into two divisions, Operations and Fire Administration both of which are headed by Deputies. There are 172 uniformed members with 118 being white, 39 being African American and 15 being Hispanic. The total operating budget for the WFD is 25.4 million dollars. According to 2010 Census information, demographically, Wilmington's population is 70,851. Of the 70,851 people, 23,079 are white, 41,127 are black or African American, 685 are Asian and 5,960 are other. Looking at this statistical information it could easily

be argued that the white population makes up only 32% of the population while the black or African American population makes up almost twice that amount with 58%. Problem is, these numbers aren't reflected in the membership of the department.

This is a problem according to McInnis because there is a school of thought that everyone deserves the opportunity to participate fully in our economic community and that work places are enriched by the diversity of its people and that these same people should be valued for their differences not be spited for them. McInnis further states that diversity refers to policies and practices that seek to include people within a workforce who are considered to be in some way, different from those in the prevailing constituency. (McInnis, 1999)

Within the WFD and the City of Wilmington, the problem is that the workforce of the WFD does not reflect the demographics of the population that it serves. That being said, the purpose of this research was to determine why African American recruitment and retention for the WFD is unsuccessful? It is the mission of the Wilmington Fire Department to work in partnership with the citizens of Wilmington in an effort to provide an effective and professional response to all man-made or natural hazards with well-trained emergency services personnel to provide a safe environment and enhanced quality of life for all. (WFD Brochure)

This being said, there is a definite benefit to solving the problem of under representation of African Americans on the WFD. Just from a mission standpoint when your working in partnership that means all parties are equitably at the table. This is not happening within the WFD. If the representation of the aforementioned group was prevalent, the WFD would be better because constituents in the

community would see people that looked like them in positions of leadership and they would be able to better identify with one another.

Just as the workforce is becoming more diverse so is your market. Employees who mirror the customers you serve can benefit an organization since they will feel as if they hold a common ground. Furthermore, employees with different perspectives can help provide companies with a holistic view of the market, identify unmet needs and identify new opportunities. As the value of diversity continues to grow in the business community and elsewhere, recruiting and retaining diverse employees is becoming even more important to continued organizational success. (Rice, 2013)

This whole notion of what Rice discusses would bring about a sense of cultural sensitivity and diversity to any organization which in turn would allow respect for and an enhanced quality of life and services for all. By creating an environment where all employees feel included, represented and valued it helps to produce greater employee commitment and motivation. This in of itself is the framework for a perfect utopia and it matters. It matters to the WFD as an organization because ultimately, the WFD should strive for excellence to be its expectation and in a fire service that's changing daily from a fire based service to an EMS based service you would want to be able to be more reflective of the community in which you're serving. The day of putting fires out and going home is gone. The fire service and the WFD have now evolved into more of an Emergency Medical Service (EMS) where excellent customer service and customer sensitivity is key. In 2012 the WFD responded to 16,878 EMS runs and had a total of 410 actual fire calls. (WFD Brochure 2012) This shows that the WFD is doing a staggering

amount more EMS calls and every time this happens there is yet another opportunity to provide excellent customer service and leave a impression that will be positive on the department and city.

Often times it is seen that certain ethnic groups or demographics of people are more apt to call public services when people look like them or they feel they would be able to identify with them. Ie a Latina woman calls 911 because she was assaulted by a man and as a result the fire department responds to provide EMS and there is nothing but men on the truck. In this situation, it would prove to be more beneficial for a woman to be part of the fire service to help provide a service to this particular constituent.

This will also matter to the City because the City itself is diversified from its Mayor to the City Solicitors, City Council, pockets of different cultural neighborhoods and the City's different departments including but not limited too Police, Public Works, Water, Sanitation, Constituent Services, Real Estate and Housing and License & Inspections. It matters to the world and most importantly to me as the author because I am from the City of Wilmington and as child I recall wanting to be a fireman but never having an upfront experience with a firefighter or even knowing where the fire stations in my city were located. Like the National Fire Academy's goal, I would like to play my part in assisting in changing the fire and emergency services organizations from being reactive to proactive and also to transform these same institutions to reflect the diversity of America's communities so that other kids that grow up in the city will have an opportunity to meet with firemen who look like them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of my literature review was to determine what if any type of valid research was done on the recruiting and retention of African American applicants in the Wilmington Fire Department. From the information I was able to find, there was information on other departments that outlined hurdles or obstacles that were similar in nature but not quite an exact fit. More specifically, some departments were larger than Wilmington so when looking at the amount of African Americans on those departments it was safe to say that they had as many African Americans as was the size of the whole Wilmington Fire Department. So regionally, I wasn't able to compare apples to apples from that perspective. What I was able to do was find more legitimate research material from human resource management references and a variety of other fields.

The issues of recruiting in general and recruiting for diversity in particular are among the most critical issues facing the fire service (Fox, Hornick & Hardin, 2006). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-352) has had some of the greatest impacts on employment and advertisement. This is the information that we often see that says organizations are equal opportunity employers and it further says that employment can't indicate preference based upon race, religion, color, sex or natural origin. Additionally, Title 41 Code of the Federal Regulations (41CFR60) Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures states that guidelines only apply to selection procedures designed to attract members of a particular race, sex, or ethnic group which was previously denied employment opportunities or which

were currently underutilized it further states that it may be necessary to bring an employer into compliance with Federal Law. This is frequently an essential element of any effective affirmative action program; but recruitment practices are not considered by these guidelines to be selection procedures.

The issue of the fire service not being reflective of communities is certainly a problem that plaques the American Fire Service as a whole.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration (2011), women make up 3.6% and African Americans 7.5% of the fire service in the United States (Gaines, 2011). This is despite the fact that females and African Americans make up over 50% and 12.6% of the population and is still growing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Many industries both public and private have successfully achieved acceptable levels of diversity, but the United States Fire Service has been unable to achieve this goal.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-352) has had one of the biggest impacts on recruitment and employment in recent history. It goes on to say that information cannot indicate preference based on race, color, national origin, sex or creed. Case study has shown that many municipalities solidify their procedures for recruitment by saying:

The responsibility for adopting specific requirements for recruitment and selection is placed on the individual city and county, and is not mandated by General Statutes. The decision to advertise positions, to post vacancy announcements, to interview candidates using panel interviews, and to make outreach efforts to improve minority recruitment is to be freely made by the

local government employer, and is not required by federal or state law.

Obviously, however, a city or county's recruitment and selection decisions are less likely challenged successfully under federal statutes prohibiting discrimination if they are based on a system that reaches a large applicant pool and gives full and fair consideration to all candidates (Juffras, 2006)

This case study was seen in North Carolina and I would venture to say that it is the same across state lines. This type of practice is definitely seen in the State of Delaware. The responsibility falls on the individual employer to show objectivity and non-discriminatory practices in their selection process. What this simply means is that preference cannot be indicated based on race.

PROCEDURES

The procedures outlined in this Applied Research Paper consisted of developing a problem to research that was important to this writer, it also had to show some type of value in the fire service/community and finally, it needed to be inline with the National Fire Academy's goals. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to examine the following four (4) areas: (1) the importance of having a diverse workforce (2) seeking why African Americans aren't choosing or aren't being selected for careers in the fire service (3) examining the demographic make up of the City of Wilmington compared to the last six (6) years of new hires of the Wilmington Fire Department and (4) exploring potential strategies that can be used to select and retain African Americans in the Wilmington Fire Department. The descriptive method was used to evaluate research materials for the above listed proposed questions.

The initial research for this Applied Research Paper started at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy. The goal was to find books articles and any other resource that could be used to aide in answering the above aforementioned questions . There is also personal observations that are incorporated into this research as well. While at home the local library was utilized as well as the world wide web to explore resources that reached further than libraries in New Castle County, DE.

The first research question addressed the importance of having a diverse workforce. Research has found numerous internet articles, publications and books written on the importance of diversity and how it affects a workforce. Discussions such as Kathryn Fox, Chris Hornick and Erin Hardin proved to be beneficial. They conducted a study for the IAFF. It was entitled an Initiative of *Achieving and Retaining a Diverse Fire Service Workforce (2006)*. It looked at the demographics of the United States. The study identified key obstacles that may affect the diversity of a fire department's recruitment. What their study showed was often times, a department's attitude about recruitment can be passive and or defeatist. Simply explained, there are departments that would much rather you force its hand by having legal mandates or consent decrees instead of addressing known diversity issues within their department with aggressive proactive recruitment and retention programs.

Other obstacles were the fact that some testing processes are not validated and do not adequately test whether or not applicants can perform necessary job skills. This in of itself places prerequisites to testing process that will limit the diversity pool of applicants. This tactic is used to further limit applicants by having minimum requirements on them that they may not have been exposed to like their counterparts. An example of this would be placing requirements on applicants such as having firefighter 1 or 2 or an EMT certification before applying. The placement of these requirements limits the diversity pool and its also used as a cost saving measure during recruitment. In order to be diversified it may be necessary for departments to look for unconventional ways of expanding the diversity pool.

Additionally, the consequences of ignoring diversity issues cost time, money and efficiency. Some of the consequences can include unhealthy tensions; loss of productivity because of increased conflict; inability to attract and retain talented people of all kinds; complaints and legal actions; and inability to retain valuable employees, resulting in lost investments in recruitment and training. (UCSF, 2013)

With respect to the second question of seeing why African Americans aren't being selected for careers in the fire service there were interviews and surveys conducted to get a snap shot of what's happening here in Delaware but more specifically the Wilmington Fire Department. There were three different surveys conducted to aide in answering that question. The first survey (Appendix A) was geared towards the everyday constituent who resided in Wilmington and met the minimum criteria of being 18 years old, had an high school diploma and a Delaware drivers license. The one unique criterion for this surveyed population was the fact that everyone surveyed was African American. It was the goal of this writer to explore what the perception of the WFD was to African Americans and what type of knowledge and interaction was levied between the Fire Department and African Americans.

The second survey (Appendix B) was geared towards volunteer fire fighters in New Castle County, DE. It was important to survey this population to get feedback from them because they are familiar with the culture/expectations of the fire service here in Delaware. Volunteers in Delaware also have a perception of

WFD being as though the WFD is the only paid career department in the state and a lot of current employees with the WFD at one point or another volunteered within the volunteer fire service in Delaware.

The third survey (Appendix C) was geared towards on the job fire department personnel. It was important to survey this population to get feedback from them because they are familiar with the inner workings of the WFD and it gave this writer a opportunity to see how participating personnel viewed themselves as an organization.

The different samples of surveyed population was performed the way that they was separately because it gave this writer a opportunity to have the specified population that was being surveyed an opportunity to answer honestly. Also taken into consideration was the fact that sensitive information regarding race and relationships were asked and this writer felt it was best to have the questions asked of the participants in an environment that was comfortable to them.

For each survey the goal was to yield at least 25 participants, which would give a grand total of 75 surveys produced. The actual numbers were different. The first surveyed yielded 25, the second survey yielded 24 and the third survey yielded 25 surveys completed. All of the surveys were administered in February 2013. The greatest limitation experienced was validating whether or not participants answered the questions with honesty, second to that was time.

The third question focused on examining the demographic make up of the City of Wilmington in comparison to the last six years worth of new hires, hired by the Wilmington Fire Department. The information used to help answer this question was the 2010 Census information and recruitment class information from the Wilmington Fire Department's Professional Development and Standards Division formally known as Safety and Training. This information enabled this writer to look at what Census information reported Wilmington looked like demographically compared to what the statistical information of who was hired for the Wilmington Fire Department over the last six years reflected.

Finally, surveyed information was utilized to answer the final question of exploring potential strategies that can be used to select and retain African Americans in the Wilmington Fire Department. Results of the surveyed participants showed the way recruitment is now taking place but at the same time it gave recommendations as to what types of recruitment methods could potentially work better to ascertain the desired targeted population.

Results

In order to address the first research question of the importance of having a diverse workforce one must first understand that diversity is a must have in an organization. In an article written by Innovation Zen entitled The Benefits of a Diverse Workplace they report that a workplace can be most effective when it mirrors the company's clients and customers. This same concept should be prevalent at the Wilmington Fire Department. Workforce diversity should go beyond a company's or organizations legal obligation to comply with federal and local mandates of being an equal opportunity employer. It should reflect more specifically the society in which the company operates in terms of race, ethnicity, age, class, spiritual practice and sexual orientation. Employing a diverse workforce requires a company to create a culture that respects conflicting opinions and promote the dignity of each member of the workforce. When this doesn't happen the workforce and community becomes disadvantaged.

When workforces are diverse it is more probable that you will see an improvement of corporate culture an improvement of employee morale and a higher retention rate of employees will follow. When your workforce is already diverse, organizations find it easier to recruit new employees. Issues such complaints, litigation and interpersonal conflicts decrease between employees. There are also reports of improved productivity and reduction of training cost when workplaces are diverse. These benefits could be interchangeably seen in corporate America or your neighborhood fire station. When workforces are diverse it

becomes a part of a company's organizational culture. Whether or not you have a diverse workforce rests primarily on the attitude of that particular organization or Fire Administration.

Organizations and businesses should care about diversity and inclusion now because of the changing demographics in the US. Minorities are now roughly one third of the US population and are expected to become the majority by 2042.

(Andrade, 2006) Moreover, through globalization and the changing faces of today's workforce it's showing a diverse mix of people. These people range anywhere from baby boomers, Generation X or Y, conservatives or the Millennials. Because people are living longer, these different pockets of generational gap people are all part of the melting pot of workforce workers whom all have their own set of attitudes, work habits and mind sets.

Some of the major challenges of workplace diversity according to Alpha Measure are communication, resistance to change and implementation of diversity in the workplace policies. Communication can be a challenge because ineffective communication can cause confusion, lack of teamwork or a feeling of low morale. With respect to resisting change, there will always be a population of employees who refuse to change and want to maintain the current status quo.

Finally, the implementation of diversity in the workplace can be a challenge because no two organizations are the same and what works for one organization may not work for another. Organizational cultures of companies or fire departments may be different from company to company or station to station. For example, it's assumed that the inner workings of a fortune 500 Company will be run

differently from a Fire Department even though they both have some of the same issues of personnel, payroll and diversity.

According to information collected from the Wilmington Fire Department's Office of Professional Development and Standards Division the Wilmington Fire Department showed a less than modest amount of diversity when it came to the numbers. Of the 172 uniformed employees the breakdown was as follows. There were 118 White, 39 African American and 15 Hispanic employees. By comparison, if you look at the 2010 Census information it would show that Whites make up 32% African Americans make up 58% and Hispanics make up .08% of Wilmington's population.

If what Rice says hold true Just as the workforce is becoming more diverse so Is your market. Employees who mirror the customers you serve can benefit an organization since they will feel as if they hold a common ground.

Furthermore, employees with different perspectives can help provide companies with a holistic view of the market, identify unmet needs and identify new opportunities. As the value of diversity continues to grow in the business community and elsewhere, recruiting and retaining diverse employees is becoming even more important to continued organizational success. (Rice, 2013)

Then why would the demographics of the Wilmington Fire Department be opposite of what the city demographics reflects? On the Wilmington Fire Department Whites represent 68%, African Americans make up 22% and Hispanics make up .08 percent of the workforce? (See Charts)

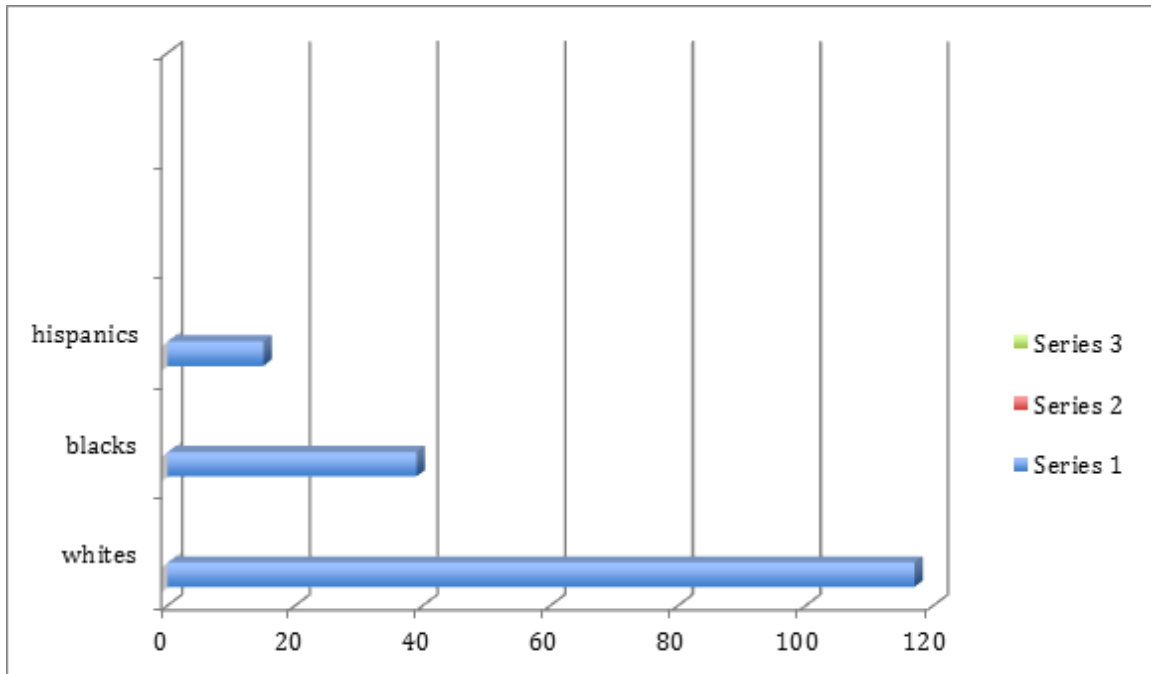


Chart # 1 This chart gives a visual representation of the number of employees currently on the Wilmington Fire Department. White being 118, black 39 and Hispanic 15.

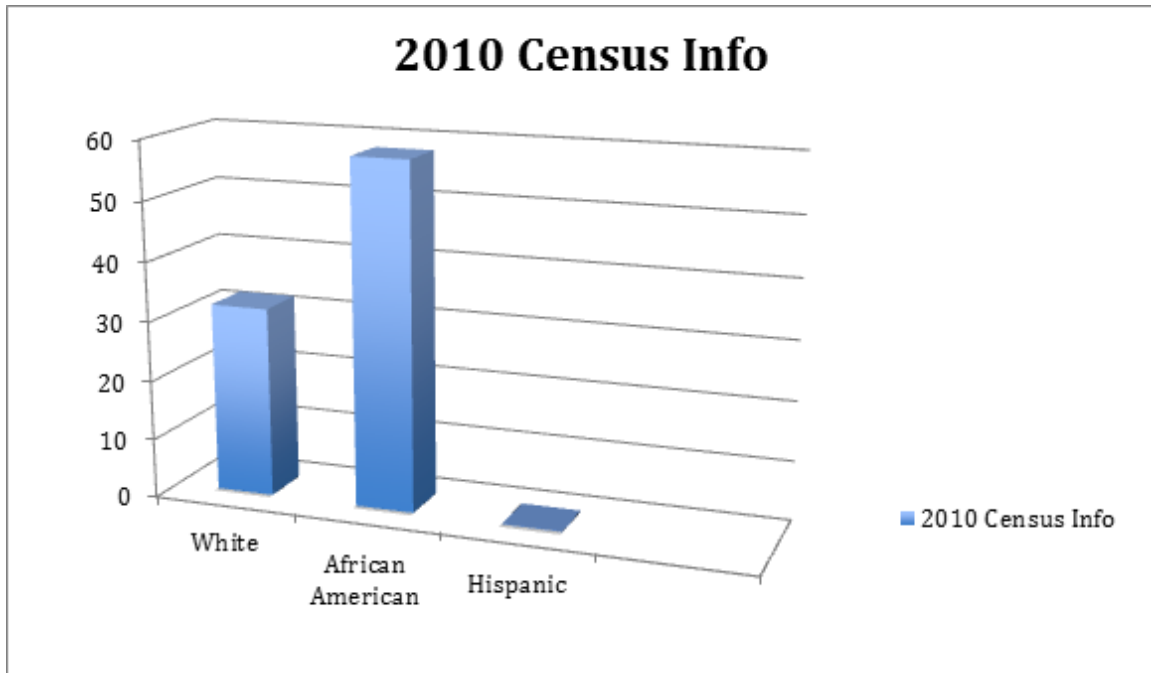


Chart #2 gives a visual representation of the City of Wilmington's demographic numbers. This chart shows that in the City of Wilmington Whites make up 32% of the population while African Americans make up almost twice that amount with 58% and Hispanics only make up .08 %.

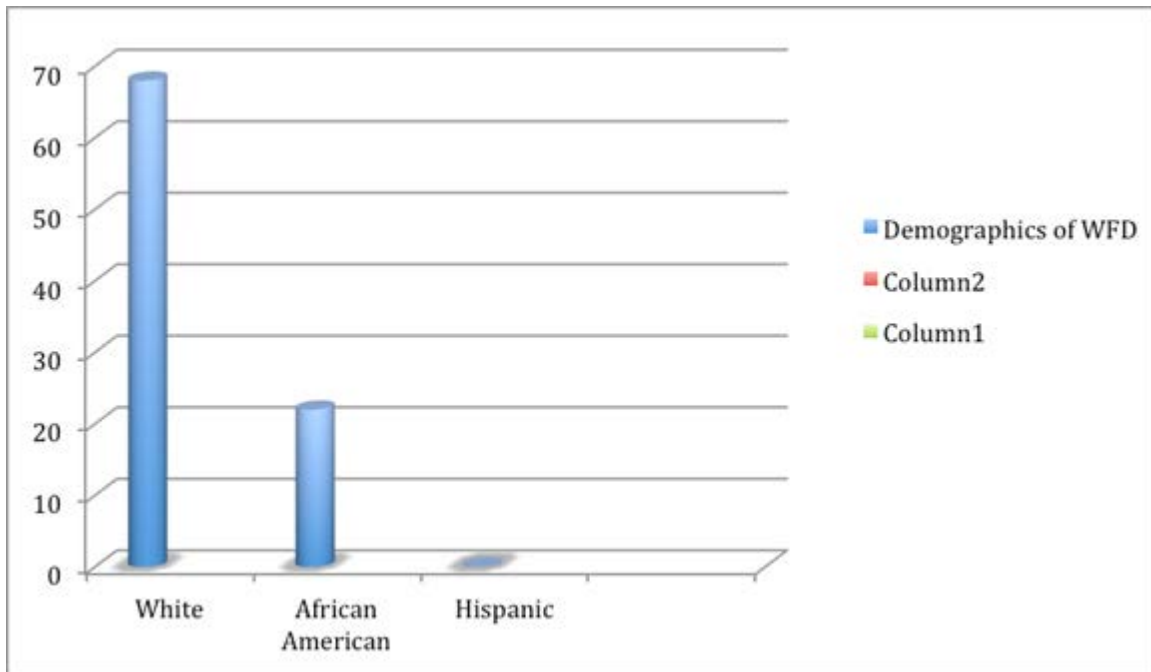


Chart # 3 gives a visual representation of the Wilmington Fire Department's current staffing. When this chart is compared to chart # 2 It show how disportionatly lopsided the amount of African Americans living in Wilmington doesn't reflect the amount of African Americans working for the Wilmington Fire Department.

In order to answer the second research question of why African Americans aren't choosing or being selected for careers in the fire service? This writer administered a battery of different surveys to both internal and external survey participants. All surveys were administered during the month of February 2013. The first survey performed targeted a specific population and asked 10 questions to 25 participants. The prerequisites needed to participate was the participants needed to be African American, at least 18 years old, live in the City of Wilmington and possess a valid Delaware drivers license.

The results of this survey showed some significant highlights. Of the 25 participants, 18 answered they were male and seven were female. One male selected he was both African American and Caucasian and one female selected she was both African American and Hispanic. When participants were asked if they thought the WFD reflected the diversity of the community two answered yes, fourteen answered no, four answered they don't know and five answered they didn't care. Twenty-one of the surveyed participants answered they were never recruited or encouraged by the WFD to apply for a firefighters position and four answered they were. Ads in the newspaper as well as posters and flyers placed on telephone poles and inside of local businesses constituted the most common ways of advertisement that some of the participants could remember seeing WFD advertisements for hire.

Professional Qualifications is always a sticking point for many fire departments in need of recruiting applicants to become probationary firefighters. Of the twenty-five participants surveyed, twenty-two admitted to having a high school diploma, twenty-three expressed a willingness to live in the city upon being hired by the fire department and finally twenty-four of the participants reported that they have a clean criminal record without any felonies. What sticks out with respect to this part of the survey is the fact that none of the participants reported having any type of fire related certifications including but not limited to Fire Fighter 1 & 2, National Registered Emergency Medical Technician (EMT-B) training or any type of familiarity with the CPAT Physical Agility Test.

When asked how the participants viewed the WFD eleven participants reported somewhat negative, four reported somewhat positive, five reported negative and the final five reported that they had no opinion of the fire department. As far as how the participants of the survey viewed the WFD and what types of internal factors they perceived kept them from obtaining a job with the WFD eleven felt they were disenfranchised because of discrimination, six felt it was the attitudes of the fire fighters that kept them from applying, four reported it was due to a lack of diversity, three felt they were stereotyped against and finally one had no opinion.

The final questions of the survey involving potential African American applicants asked if these potential applicants knew any current WFD employees? Six knew employees and nineteen didn't. There was also an opportunity for the surveyed to freely write any additional comments or concerns. Some of the

comments ranged from *“I don’t know where all the fire stations are”, “When are you hiring” and “I went through the process before and got to the Chief’s interview.”*

The second survey conducted was administered to 25 volunteer fire fighters throughout New Castle County, DE and it yielded 24 participants. The results of this survey showed some significant results as well. Of the 24 participants, twenty-two that participated were male and two were female. Twenty-three of them were white and one classified themselves as White and Hispanic. Of the twenty-four participants, when asked what type of relationship they have with the fire service they all answered they are volunteer, eight were retired/paid career, three belonged to a fire brigade and five to the fire police.

As with the first research question, diversity was explored and sixteen of the twenty-four participants believe diversity should be an organizational priority eight answered that it shouldn’t be. All of the twenty-four participants were familiar with the WFD. When asked to guesstimate what the participants thought was the ethnic breakdown of the Wilmington Fire Department on average the participants reported they believed there was approximately 130 White employees, 40 African Americans and 10 Hispanics. When asked to identify the breakdown of ethnicity at their own fire stations on average the numbers yielded in percentages close to 100% all White with less than three of any other race or ethnicity outside of Caucasion or White. Knowing all of this information fourteen of the same participants reported that they felt their volunteer fire department reflects the diversity of the community and ten said no it didn’t reflect the community.

With respect to familiarity, all 24 of the participants selected were familiar with the hiring process. 19 of the 24 participants applied with the WFD for employment at one time or another and five did not. Nine admitted to having a family member whom currently work for the Wilmington Fire Department 15 didn't whereas 22 of the 24 surveyed participants know someone whom works for the Wilmington Fire Department. That being said, 100% or 24 of the participants was encouraged to apply to the Wilmington Fire Department when they were having an active application process. Finally, when asked how did the 24 applicants hear about employment opportunities with the Wilmington Fire Department applicants were able to select from a list of all that applied and 100% of the applicants reported they heard about employment opportunities via word of mouth, 22 of the 24 reported some other type of way including but not limited too friends and family on the job, at their Volunteer Fire Station and Delaware State Fire School (DSFS). 11 of the 24 participants reported they heard about opportunities through the explorer program.

The third survey conducted was administered to 25 employees of the Wilmington Fire Department and the results of this survey showed some significant results. All of the participants were male and Caucasian. 17 of the participants felt that the diversity of the department reflects the community and 12 answered they felt the Wilmington Fire Department have problems recruiting African Americans. With respect to recruitment methods, some of the more popular selections was 25 selected an ad in a newspaper, 25 selected other and filled in community centers and local businesses. Nearly all of the participants at 22 selected word of mouth and

17 selected direct card interest mail. This particular question allowed participants to select more than one option. As far as internal factors that prevent African Americans from applying for the Fire Department 23 selected stereotypes, 20 the attitudes of fire fighters, 17 perceived or actual discrimination and 13 selected nepotism.

When Professional Qualifications and Job requirements were asked about the 25 participants reported that African Americans don't apply for fire fighter positions because they don't have fire fighter 1 or 2 a clean criminal background or EMT-B certification before applying. In addition, it was reported that many African Americans aren't familiar with the requirements or know how to perform or prepare for the CPAT Agility test before test date. When asked how they viewed the Wilmington Fire Department, 10 answered somewhat positive, seven somewhat negative, five were neutral and three had no opinion. During the last six years, 19 of the participating applicants have not heard any talk of diversifying and 6 have.

The last question involved an open section where participants could identify any additional comments and some of the comments included but were not limited too the following. "People don't retire, they keep their jobs for 30 plus years", "The Wilmington Fire Department is an extension of the Volunteer Departments with benefits."

The third research question seeks to examine the demographics of the City of Wilmington in comparison to the last five classes hired for the fire department. 2010 Census information showed that Wilmington had 70,851 residents of that 23,079 was White and 41,127 were African American. This translates to Whites

making up 32% and African Americans making up 58% of Wilmington's population. Now when compared to the Wilmington Fire Department's current staffing Whites make up almost three times the amount of African Americans with 118 of Wilmington Fire Departments employees being White and 39 of the employees being African American.

According to the Data and Statistics Divisions Seniority List Based on Date of Employment with the Wilmington Fire Department, the last six years of classes is represented from 04/02/2007 thru 03/11/2013. During this six year time period there were 36 new hires. Of the 36 new hires there were 32 White males, 3 African American males and one White female hired. Two of the three African American males that were hired were already City Employees they just made lateral moves over to the fire department.

The fourth and final research question sought to explore potential strategies that can be used to select and retain African Americans in the Wilmington Fire Department. Research has led this writer to report the following. First, the current method of posting a firefighters position is not working. Word of mouth, running an ad in the newspaper and putting a flyer in local community buildings has proved to be ineffective in recruiting African Americans. Internally, when asked what recruitment methods are used 100% of the participants answered Ads in the paper and flyers in community buildings and 88% answered word of mouth. Externally, 84% of the African Americans whom participated answered they were never recruited by the Wilmington Fire Department. Recruit efforts should be expanded to utilize the local television channel, churches, community colleges and also current

personnel whom look like the targeted population should be utilized. All outreach for recruitment should feature some sort of quick presentation which will outline the application process and job function of a firefighter. This will aide in breaking down the stereotypes of expectation and add familiarity to the process and personnel.

A second strategy that should be followed to explore potential strategies to select and retain African Americans in the Wilmington Fire Department would be to provide education and diversity training to the current staff. Within the Wilmington Fire Department 88% of the current employees feel there isn't a problem with diversity and that the diversity of the fire department reflects the community although the fire department is 68% white in a community that is 58% African American and 32% white. Also alarming is the fact that over the last six years, out of the last 36 new hires 33 were White male, 3 were African American Male and 1 was a white female. When all of these numbers are compared to what's available in the community it looks disproportionatly lopsided.

A third strategy would be to look at the qualifications for an entry-level job with the fire department. 88% of African Americans surveyed had a high school diploma, 92% expressed a willingness to live in the city if hired with the fire department and 96% expressed they didn't have a negative criminal background consisting of a felony. The irony of this survey is that none of the African American applicants had any of the certified training used to gain employment such as National Registry EMT-B, Firefighter 1 & 2 or any type of familiarity with the CPAT Physical Agility test.

A fourth strategy would be to build on the Explorer Program that the Wilmington Fire Department offers. Currently, this program is geared towards young men and women between the ages of 14-20. It offers an up close hands on experience with the fire service through the use of live burn evolutions and classroom instruction. Meetings are held twice a week throughout the academic school year at one of the local fire stations. Becoming an explorer is an excellent opportunity for young people to safely explore alternative career information and it allows participants the opportunity to look into future vocation. Problem is its not being fully utilized as a feeder tool for the department. It's this researcher's opinion that once a candidate successfully completed the Explorers program they should be strongly considered for employment when it becomes available with the department. Thousands of dollars worth of time, money and resources have been invested into these participants, it's only natural to pull them into the department.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research proved to be a door opener for additional information that will need to be further discussed. The research showed that the diversity problem in Wilmington is not unique to just Wilmington and that there are diversity issues at volunteer fire departments according to surveyed participants and across the county. It is important to note that the volunteer fire departments that participated in this survey aren't located within the City of Wilmington's limits. These volunteer fire departments are located on the outskirts. Traditionally, the volunteer fire departments have strong ties with the city because of the history of mutual aide that has been provided to one another by both organizations.

According to Volunteer firefighters that were polled, the diversity problem showed that the breakdown of ethnicity at their own fire stations was disproportionately lopsided at a rate of almost 100% of all members being white with the exception of a few African Americans here and there. In knowing this information, 14 of the 24 volunteer participants still felt their volunteer fire department reflected the diversity of the community. If this is the common thinking or majority view of the polled population then there is truly work to do. One school of thought after speaking to a volunteer fire fighter that grew up in Wilmington that I discovered was his mind set was his fire department reflects his community because where he grew up everyone was white just like in his volunteer fire department. He further enlightened me that his neighbors were white but he knew 3-4 blocks away from his

home in any direction would put him in a different ethnic community. He viewed his community more from a neighborhood perspective.

From a not so local perspective, there has been case study that showed throughout the country there is a push pull effects when it comes to diversifying fire departments. Take the City of Chicago and their fire department for example. According to CBS New Reporter Dorothy Tucker, the Chicago Fire Department (CFD) was sued by 110 African Americans who were denied the opportunity to become firefighters. They were denied that opportunity over 15years ago because it was said that they weren't able to pass a Written, EMT and CPAT Agility test. After winning the law suit, the 110 African Americans passed the EMT test with a 91.6 class average being the highest in CFD history. Additionally the average age of the participant was 46 and each recruit had to complete all the physical CPAT Agility requirements of any other new recruit. The myths and stereotypes that are perceived against minority candidates at times can hinder them from exploring the true depths of their abilities. Thankfully for the fire service, even though this dream was deferred for 15 years because of the fear of diversifying and assimilation. It was able to come into fruition because of perseverance and persistence.

Another example is seen right in Wilmington's back yard in the City of Philadelphia with the Philadelphia Fire Department (PFD). The PFD union is in an uproar as a result of the Commissioner enacting mass transfers. As of Nov 15, 2012 according to MacDonald reporting that union secretary Michael Bresnan says the transfers will hurt their ability to protect residents and businesses. He goes on to say that "some of these guys have been together for 20 years and ultimately who is

going to suffer is the citizens of Philadelphia, because these guys will die for each other, they would die for the citizens of Philadelphia because they trust each other”, said Bresnan. “All of that has gone out the window.” It is this researchers opinion that one would have to only presume that this is a way of staying comfortable and not being willing to diversify and work next to someone else whom may not look like you but whom have the qualifications to be a Philadelphia Fire Fighter (PFF). How is that one is willing to die for a complete stranger a citizen of Philadelphia but will not put it all on the line for someone whom went through the same training and wear the same uniform as him or her?

It is simple. This researcher has found that the diversity problem can’t be solved if no one wants to recognize that it exists. As in the case of Wilmington. 71% of the surveyed participants whom were caucassion employees feel as though the diversity of the fire department reflects the community. The new question would have to be after conducting this research is whose community? This whole notion limiting your community to a neighborhood and the unwillingness to extend beyond the boundaries of your immediate pocket of community has been a noted similarity shared between the volunteers and the 71% of the polled Wilmington Fire Fighters.

Up for additional discussion is also this researchers findings with respect to the results of the surveys. When looking at the African Americans that participated in the survey vs. the volunteers the results were almost even. 56% of the African American participants reported that the WFD doesn’t reflect the community whereas the volunteers reported at a rate of 42%. 84% of the African Americans were never recruited or encouraged to apply for the Wilmington Fire Department

where as 100% of the volunteers that participated in this survey reported they were encouraged or recruited to apply to the Wilmington Fire Department. Could this encouragement come to the volunteers because of the community in which they live? or maybe its because of word of mouth or the newspaper articles and community centers where the job postings are posted. This researcher couldn't exactly pin point the reasoning or rationale.

Further discussion moves this researcher to point out the fact that in six years there were 36 new hires for the Wilmington Fire Department and 33 of the 36 new hires were white and 3 were black with 2 of the 3 being previous city employees. With the demographics of the City of Wilmington reflecting 32% being white and 58% being African American how is it feasible that of the last 36 employees hired for the Wilmington Fire Department African Americans only represent 0.083 percent of new hires? At this rate a new potential problem will arise and that problem will be 39 African American employees of the Wilmington Fire Department would either have retired or their would be little to no more African Americans to speak of with 22 of the 39 African Americans having the ability to retire today with 20 or more years to their credit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the literature review and survey results conducted by this author. The problem that was stated early on in this Applied Research Paper was the workforce of the Wilmington Fire Department does not reflect the population that it serves. That being said, the purpose of this research was to determine why African American recruitment and retention for the Wilmington Fire Department is unsuccessful? And what can be done to assist in eliminating or closing the gap. This research suggests the following:

1. The current workforce should be educated about the importance of diversity.
2. Reevaluate current recruitment practices.
3. Create real partnerships with community.
4. Establish a mentoring program within the WFD

These recommendations aren't the end all be all for establishing a change in African American recruitment and retention but it will prove to be a good start in the right direction. For example, recommendation number 1. Educating the current workforce about the importance of diversity is essential. Since the majority of the WFD already believe their organization is diverse despite the fact that the demographics of the city in relationship to the fire department and surveys taken suggest otherwise, there is a real issue.

Just as the workforce is becoming more diverse so is your market. Employees who mirror the customer you serve can benefit an organization since they will feel as if they hold common ground. (Rice, 2013) The demographics of the WFD and the

City of Wilmington aren't mirrored, this is a fact and it's been proven. This being said, it would prove to be beneficial if the WFD educated their current workforce about the importance of diversity. Especially before it happens. They need to play it up and make a big deal about it. Let everyone know that change is going to take place. This way it's not as big of a shock to the current organizational culture. They should also encourage suggestions and participation. This allows for buy in, ownership and acceptance. Finally, they should institute on going diversity training, it should be interactive and it should be mandatory from the top down and headed up by Chief Officers in coordination with personnel or human resources.

These Chief Officers in harmony with personnel or human resources should be trained to have the required tools for managing diversity in the Wilmington Fire Department. These effective managers will be aware that certain skills are necessary for creating a successful, diverse workforce. This being said, there are a few things that should happen. First, managers must understand discrimination and its consequences. Second, managers must recognize their own cultural biases and prejudices (Koonce, 2001). Diversity is not about differences among groups, but rather about differences among individuals. Each individual is unique and does not represent or speak for a particular group. Finally, managers must be willing to change the organization if necessary. (Koonce, 2001). Organizations need to learn how to manage diversity in the workplace to be successful in the future (Flagg 2002).

Diversity issues are now considered important and are projected to become even more important in the future due to increasing differences in the U.S. population. Companies need to focus on diversity and look for ways to become totally inclusive organizations because diversity has the potential of yielding greater productivity and competitive advantages (SHRM, 1995).

Recommendation #2 is to reevaluate current recruitment practices. Currently the Wilmington Fire Department run ads in the local newspaper, circulate posters at local business establishments and utilize word of mouth. This has all proven to not be enough to recruit the needed population. Although the aforementioned things is a step in the right direction there need to be more done to target African Americans and Minorities. The results of this research shows that the WFD should use a more aggressive approach to advertising to African Americans about job opportunities with the department. The WFD needs to raise awareness of the department and showcase the opportunities that are available. It may prove to be a nice idea to give potential applicants a glimpse of what the WFD has to offer. One very simple and effective solution is to open up the apparatus bay doors and hand out water and juices on a hot summer day inviting constituents inside or even holding a group outing promoting the fun of working at the WFD. Presentations should be made to civic organizations, church groups, high schools and colleges in the area.

Another issue is the fact that the Wilmington Fire Department have a Public Education division consisting of one person. This division should be expanded to properly service the 150,00 constituents whom live, work and recreate in the City of

Wilmington and it should also be expanded to assist in being used as a recruitment /education component of the WFD. This expanded division of Public Education should also be a diverse group. This group should be representative of the City's demographics and those same demographics should reflect the fire department. If this expanded division can come into fruition it could be used to investigate, identify and correct any barriers that prevents or limits targeted candidates from applying to and being hired by the WFD. Additionally, another issue is to sharpen our focus on our Wilmington Explorers Program. This program provides young men and women from the City of Wilmington, ages 14 through 20, with an up close, hands on experience of the fire service. Explorers are responsible for the operation of the post and are advised by officers and firefighters of the WFD. Training is accomplished through live training evolutions and through classroom lectures. This program should be more inline with selecting youth and young adults from populations that would otherwise not have the exposure and then funnel those people into potential opportunities with the WFD.

Recommendation #3 is to create real partnerships with the community. The WFD should be actively creating its own propaganda. They should be actively participating in civic association, church and community block meetings. Here at a grass roots level, they can explain the mission and goals of the fire department. Discuss career options with constituents and give out useful information that can be taken away and looked at later. The WFD also should seek access to Wilmington's local radio and TV stations to further expose what they do and how someone could be apart of it.

Finally recommendation #4 is to establish a mentoring program within the WFD. A mentor in the workplace is someone who gives guidance to a less experienced employee, the mentee. This mentor is a role model who shares information to the mentee to help in this employee's growth. Mentoring relationships within the WFD will have benefits to the employee, the WFD and the mentor. This relationship will have long-term advantages' which are absolutely essential. Without this recommendation, the first three doesn't mean anything. You cant have the diversity training, prep your employees for change, revamp your recruitment practices and create partnerships to get your desired employee base on the department only to fail without the needed continued support. Bottom line, success flows upwards. You can leverage a lot of human capital when you treat your employees' right.

In the end, remember the real driver for diversity is you. The WFD may never be able to correct past or traditional social wrongs but if the WFD openly starts to increase the competitive advantages of displaced or non traditional recruits such as African Americans, the organization wins. Its not enough to say it, the WFD will have to really do it. If the word on the street contradicts what the WFD is promoting then people will see through the promotions. WFD needs to be genuine in its approach. The WFD should also evaluate its strategic plan for hiring before and after each application process. This should be done in conjunction with the City's Personnel department to ensure fairness in the process. These are this researchers recommendations. These recommendations are based on research performed on

the Recruiting and Retaining of African American Applicants for the Wilmington Fire Department. It is this researchers hope that it will generate some additional understanding as it relates to this topic.

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Hello,

My name is Demetrius A. Todd, M.A. and I am a Captain with the Wilmington Fire Department. I am currently enrolled in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. Part of the requirement for this program is that I complete a paper on subject matter that's of importance to the fire service and my community.

I chose to do a paper on The Recruitment and Retention of African Americans in the Wilmington Fire Department. The survey will only take a few minutes of your time, there are only 10 questions and your help in answering them will be extremely valuable.

I would like to take this opportunity in advance to thank you for your assistance and encourage you to call if you have any additional questions or suggestions I can be reached at (302) 275-4172.

Appendix A: External Questionnaire
ARP Research Questionnaire for Wilmington Fire Department

Please check or write in your answers

1. Please select your gender

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. How would you describe your race/ethnicity?

<input type="checkbox"/> African American	<input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian Pacific Islander	<input type="checkbox"/> Native American
<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to Answer
<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/> None Listed

3. Do you think the Wilmington Fire Department reflects the diversity of the community?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐ Don't Care

4. Have you ever been recruited or encouraged by the Wilmington Fire Department to apply?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. If you ever heard of the Wilmington Fire Department recruiting applicants select how you heard about the recruitment. Please check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Ads in Local/Major Newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/> Job Fairs
<input type="checkbox"/> Cable TV	<input type="checkbox"/> Job Search Engines (Internet)
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Events	<input type="checkbox"/> Explorer Program
<input type="checkbox"/> Direct Mail Interest Cards	<input type="checkbox"/> Word of Mouth
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> College

6. Which professional qualifications below do you currently have that would assist you in becoming a firefighter? Check all that apply.

☐ Familiarity with CPAT/Physical Agility Test

☐ Certified Firefighter Certification Fire 1 & 2

☐ Certified EMT

☐ High School Diploma or Equivalent

☐ Current Residency or willingness to live in the City of Wilmington upon hire.

☐ Clean Criminal Background (No Felony)

☐ None

7. How would you view the Wilmington Fire Department?

☐ Very Positive

☐ Somewhat Negative

☐ Somewhat Positive

☐ Very Negative

☐ Neutral

☐ No Opinion

8. What internal factors do you feel are keeping African American candidates from applying for firefighter positions in the Wilmington Fire Department? Check all that apply.

☐ Attitudes of Firefighters

☐ The current lack of diversity

☐ Attitudes of Supervisors

☐ Nepotism

☐ Stereotypes

☐ Other Please List _____

☐ Perceived or Actual Discrimination

☐ None

9 Do you know anyone who works for the Wilmington Fire Department?

___ Yes

___ No

10 If you have any additional comments about anything asked or discussed please state them here.

Appendix B: Volunteer Questionnaire
ARP Research Questionnaire for Wilmington Fire Department

1. Please select your gender

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. How would you describe yourself?

<input type="checkbox"/> African American	<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian/White
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic
<input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander	<input type="checkbox"/> Native American
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Indian

3. What type of relationship do you have within the fire service? Check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer	<input type="checkbox"/> Retired Paid/Career
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Police	<input type="checkbox"/> Auxillary Group
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Brigade	<input type="checkbox"/> None

4. Do you think that diversity should be an organizational priority?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Are you familiar with the Wilmington Fire Department?

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. To the best of your knowledge, what is the ethnic breakdown of employees of the Wilmington Fire Department? List each using whole numbers.

<input type="checkbox"/> African American	<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian/White
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> Native American
<input type="checkbox"/> Latino/Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

7. To the best of your knowledge, what is the ethnic breakdown of firefighters at your organization? List each using whole numbers.

___ African American

___ Caucasian/White

___ Asian

___ Native American

___ Latino/Hispanic

___ Pacific Islander

___ Other

8. Do you feel your volunteer fire department reflects the community it serves?

___ Yes

___ No

9. Are you familiar with the Wilmington Fire Departments hiring process?

___ Yes

___ No

10. Have you ever applied to the Wilmington Fire Department?

___ Yes

___ No

11. Do you have a family member that works for the Wilmington Fire Department?

___ Yes

___ No

12. Do you know someone who works for the Wilmington Fire Department?

___ Yes

___ No

13. Do you think the Wilmington Fire Department employee base is reflective of the community?

___ Yes

___ No

14. Have you ever been encouraged to apply to the Wilmington Fire Department?

___ Yes

___ No

15. How did you hear about employment opportunities with the Wilmington Fire Department?

___ Ads in Local/Major Newspapers

___ Job Fairs

___ Cable TV

___ Job Search Engines (Internet)

___ Community Events

___ Explorer Program

___ Direct Mail Interest Cards

___ Word of Mouth

___ Other _____

___ Colleges

Appendix C: Internal Questionnaire
ARP Research Questionnaire for Wilmington Fire Department

Please check or write in your answers

1. Please select your gender

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. How would you describe your race/ethnicity?

<input type="checkbox"/> African American	<input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian Pacific Islander	<input type="checkbox"/> Native American
<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to Answer
<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/> None Listed

3. Does your department reflect the diversity of the community?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Does your department have problems recruiting African Americans?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. What recruitment method does your department currently employ? Please check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Ads in Local/Major Newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/> Job Fairs
<input type="checkbox"/> Cable TV	<input type="checkbox"/> Job Search Engines (Internet)
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Events	<input type="checkbox"/> Explorer Program
<input type="checkbox"/> Direct Mail Interest Cards	<input type="checkbox"/> Word of Mouth
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Colleges

6. What internal factors do you feel are keeping African American candidates from applying for firefighter positions in the Wilmington Fire Department? Check all that apply.

☐ Attitudes of Firefighters ☐ The current lack of diversity
☐ Attitudes of Supervisors ☐ Nepotism
☐ Stereotypes ☐ Other Please List _____
☐ Perceived or Actual Discrimination ☐ None

7. Which professional qualifications/job requirements are preventing African Americans from applying for firefighter positions in the Wilmington Fire Department? Check all that apply.

☐ CPAT/Physical Agility Test
☐ Certified Firefighter Certification Fire 1 & 2
☐ Certified EMT
☐ High School Diploma or Equivalent
☐ Having to live in the City of Wilmington upon hire
☐ Criminal Background
☐ None

8. How would you view the Wilmington Fire Department?

☐ Very Positive ☐ Somewhat Negative
☐ Somewhat Positive ☐ Very Negative
☐ Neutral ☐ No Opinion

9. During the last 6yrs have you read or heard anything about diversifying the Wilmington Fire Department?

☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NEUTRAL

10. Any Additional Comments? Please use back of paper.