

Reducing Attrition at the Cadet Training Academy

*Recommendations for the North Carolina Highway
Patrol*

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Executive Summary

Policy Question

What should the North Carolina Highway Patrol (NCHP) do to increase retention among cadets at the basic training academy?

Goal

The goal of this study is to identify policies that can reduce the NCHP training academy attrition rate from 27% to 10-15%. Doing so would reduce hiring costs by \$15,000 per cadet per academy class.¹

Problem Statement

The North Carolina Highway Patrol has experienced a cadet attrition rate of 27% at its basic training academy. The majority of these cadets leave within the first two weeks. Each cadet who leaves the academy costs the taxpayers of North Carolina \$15,000.

Causes of Attrition

We have identified nine primary causes of attrition at the NCHP training academy, which have been grouped into four categories:

Recruitment

1. Lack of physical preparation
2. Lack of mental preparation

Structure

3. Paramilitary style of training
4. Length of program
5. Redundancy of curriculum (BLET²)

¹ North Carolina Highway Patrol Estimate.

² Basic Law Enforcement Training

Administration

6. Uncertainty of job placement
7. Family related stress

Other

8. Injury
9. Academic failure

Profile of Cadets

Using a sample of demographic information from the four most recent training schools, we identified several characteristics that increase the probability that a cadet will graduate from the academy. Cadets with a four-year college degree, prior military experience, or previous law enforcement training are more likely to graduate from the training academy than other cadets.

Criteria

In evaluating policy options the most important considerations are to:

- Uphold the core competencies of the North Carolina Highway Patrol
- Uphold the core values of the North Carolina Highway Patrol
- Maintain morale and unit cohesion among cadets
- Reduce unnecessary stress for cadets

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report offers twelve recommendations grouped in three categories: recruitment, structural, and administrative.

Recruitment Recommendations

These recommendations focus on the application period before basic training academy begins. They are intended to increase and improve the applicant pool.

- I. Develop a marketing strategy oriented at targeting individuals with a four-year college degree, military experience, and/or law enforcement training.
- II. Increase the age limit for applicants.
- III. Lengthen and intensify the cadet preparatory program.
- IV. Improve the NCHP website.

Structural Recommendations

These recommendations address the length and style of the training academy. They are intended to maximize the benefits of different styles of training, as well as shorten the overall time cadets spend at the academy.

- V. Restructure the first three weeks of the training, gradually introducing paramilitary style training—"the ramping technique."
- VI. Reduce the length of trooper-specific training.
 1. Reevaluate the curriculum of trooper-specific training.
 2. Shift portions of trooper-specific training to on-the-job training.
 3. Transfer portions of trooper-specific training to in-service training.
- VII. Establish separate training programs for cadets with and without BLET certification.
- VIII. Provide positive incentives for cadet achievements.

Administrative

These recommendations address issues that are not directly related to training. They are intended to reduce anxiety and stress on cadets and their families. In addition, they provide the NCHP with feedback on the process and implementation of the basic training academy.

- IX. Establish a formal support network for cadet spouses.
- X. Increase support programs for cadets.
- XI. Inform cadets of their jobs assignment six weeks prior to graduation.
- XII. Improve the feedback and evaluation tools for the exit process.

CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW

Policy Question

What should the North Carolina Highway Patrol (NCHP) do to increase retention among cadets at the basic training academy?

Problem

Over the past seven years, the NCHP has experienced a cadet attrition rate of 27%. Excluding those who leave due to injury or academic failure, the rate has been 24%. Of the cadets that leave, 82% do so in the first two weeks of the basic training academy.

Compared to ten other states sampled for this study, North Carolina's 27% attrition rate is high. North Dakota and Colorado experienced the lowest rates—0% and 5% respectively. In the other eight states, attrition ranged between 10% and 20%, with an average rate of 13%.

Attrition causes unnecessary costs to the NCHP and the State of North Carolina. Cadets that leave the training academy during the first two weeks cost the taxpayers an estimated \$15,000 per cadet.³

Goal

Reduce attrition rate from 27% to 10-15%.

Reducing the average attrition rate to between 10 and 15% is a realistic goal that would place the NCHP academy within the mean range of academy attrition rates across the country. Reducing attrition rates to the 10-15% range would save the taxpayers \$15,000 per cadet.

Methodology

The analysis in this study is based upon interview data, demographic data, and best practices from other states. We interviewed NCHP recruitment personnel, academy staff members, current cadets, and cadets who resigned from the academy. We also read and evaluated 36 exit interviews from cadets that left the academy prior to graduation.⁴

³ North Carolina Highway Patrol estimate.

⁴ Cadets and former cadets were promised anonymity in exchange for frank answers. Personal interviews with current cadets will be cited as follows—Interview, NCHP Cadet, Date. Telephone interviews with previous cadets will be cited as follows—Telephone Interview, Former Cadet, Date.

We ascertained best practices via research that included telephone interviews with troopers from ten other states and independent reviews of state policies and practices. In doing so, we considered the style, length, and structure of training programs—along with average attrition rates, recruitment processes, and successful programs implemented by other states.

We analyzed the relationship between retention levels and various demographic characteristics of cadets—age, marital status, number of children, previous military experience, previous law enforcement experience, and education level. We used a sample of statistics from the four most recent training academies—the 102nd, 103rd, 104th, and 105th NCHP training schools.⁵

Cadet Profiles

Comparing cadets who graduated to those who resigned (see table below):

- Married cadets are 4 times more likely to graduate than leave.
- Cadets with children are 3 times more likely to graduate than leave.
- Cadets with a 4-year college degree are 9 times more likely to graduate than leave.
- Cadets with a 2-year college degree are 5 times more likely to graduate than leave.
- Cadets with previous military training are 12 times more likely to graduate than leave.
- Cadets that have prior BLET certification are 5 times more likely to graduate than leave.

By comparing the demographics of those cadets who failed to complete basic training with those who completed the academy we identified a set of distinguishing characteristics. All things being equal, cadets with a four-year college degree (10% attrition rate), prior military experience (7%), or previous law enforcement training (17%) are more likely to graduate from the training academy than other cadets.

	Cadets Who		All Cadets
	Stayed	Left	
Married	94	24	118
With Children	53	18	71
College Degree			
4-year	44	5	49
2-year	38	8	46
Military experience	62	5	67
BLET	87	18	105
Admission exam			
Written Score	79.3	79.7	
Fitness Score	73.0	67.5	

⁵ 456 graduates, 78 left

We found no correlation between the age of the cadets or their hometown in determining whether a cadet resigned from the academy or not. The average age of both groups was 25.5 years old. The hometowns of cadets that resigned were randomly scattered throughout the state, suggesting that distance from the academy is not a reason for resignation.

Causes of Attrition

We have identified nine causes of attrition at the NCHP training academy, which we have grouped into four categories: Recruitment, Structural, Administrative, and Other.

Category #1: Recruitment

1. *Lack of physical preparation.* Poor physical preparation is one of the primary reasons cited for leaving the academy.⁶ Although they passed preliminary physical fitness screening tests, former cadets identified the rigorous physical training regimen as a major factor contributing to their decision to leave.⁷

2. *Lack of mental preparation.* Many cadets are ill prepared for the stress and mental rigor of the training academy. Lack of mental toughness was especially visible in exit interviews (Appendix I).

Category #2: Structural

3. *Paramilitary style of training.* Interviews with current staff, current NCHP cadets, and cadets that resigned suggest that the academy's paramilitary style was a cause for dropping out of the academy. Many cadets were shocked by the rigorous regimen.

4. *Program length.* The prospect of being away from home for 27 weeks is difficult for many cadets to cope with and leads to resignation. Based on the cadet profiles and interviews, cadets with children are especially sensitive to the program length.

5. *Redundancy of BLET curriculum.* Cadets with Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) certification expressed concern for being required to repeat BLET training. For cadets with previous law enforcement training, motivation to complete the basic training academy is severely undermined by the redundancy of the BLET curriculum component.

Category #3: Administrative

6. *Uncertainty of job placement.* After the first two weeks of the academy, attrition is primarily caused by anxiety associated with cadets not knowing where they will be

⁶ Based on the analysis of exit interview transcripts.

⁷ Telephone Interview, Former Cadet, March 16, 2002.

stationed following graduation. Every cadet that we interviewed identified this uncertainty as a major cause of stress.⁸

7. *Family related stress.* Cadets leave the academy because of homesickness. Cadets with spouses and children feel pressured to drop out of the academy to spend more time with their families. Many interviewed cadets stated that weekends were not an adequate amount of time to spend with their families.⁹

Category #4: Other

8. *Injury.* Without radically altering the physically demanding training regimen, it is impossible to eliminate attrition due to injury. Injuries should be considered an unavoidable cause of attrition.

9. *Academic failure.* Although the screening process should eliminate academically unprepared applicants, academic failure remains a cause of attrition. Some cadets are ill prepared for the academic rigors of the academy. Others are unable to adapt to the rapid pace of academy classes.

Criteria

To address these nine causes of attrition, we have evaluated the outcomes of various options according to four criteria:

1. *Uphold core competencies required by the North Carolina Highway Patrol.* Core competencies include law enforcement tactics, weapons training, emergency vehicle operation, first aid, self-defense, radar and intoxilyzer training, and physical fitness training.¹⁰
2. *Uphold the core values of the North Carolina Highway Patrol.* Core values include attention to detail, discipline, neatness, courage, honesty, professionalism, principles, respect, integrity, and dedication.¹¹
3. *Maintain morale and unit cohesion among cadets.*
4. *Reduce stress that is unrelated to training.*

The following chapters include recommendations designed to decrease attrition at the NCHP academy. The recommendations include: recruitment recommendations; structural recommendations; and administrative recommendations.

⁸ Interview, NCHP Cadets, February 1, 2002.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Core competencies are based on information gathered from the NCHP as well as other states

¹¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER II: RECRUITMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Recruitment Recommendations

- I. Develop a marketing strategy targeting individuals with a four-year college degree, military experience, and/or law enforcement training.*
- II. Increase the age limit for applicants.*
- III. Lengthen and intensify the cadet preparatory program.*
- IV. Improve the NCHP website.*

This chapter provides analysis of recruitment-based recommendations. We recommend targeted recruitment to decrease attrition by attracting individuals who are statistically more likely to graduate from the academy. We recommend increasing the age limit for cadets. Strategies to make the cadet preparatory program more effective are presented. Suggested improvements to the North Carolina Highway Patrol website are also recommended.

I. Develop a marketing strategy targeting individuals with a four-year college degree, military experience, and/or law enforcement training

The NCHP should develop and implement policies focused on recruiting individuals who have been more likely to graduate from the basic training academy. The California Highway Patrol and Kansas Highway Patrol have specific recruitment policies for individuals with military or law enforcement experience. The California Highway Patrol has specific links on their website designed to attract individuals with military experience and/or prior law enforcement training. Sergeant Al Rea, a Kansas Highway Patrol recruiter, explained, “Individuals with previous military experience are the kind of people that any highway patrol would want. They are more mature, used to wearing a uniform, more responsible, disciplined, can go through boot camp more successfully, and are more physically fit.”¹²

Statistical analysis of the past four North Carolina Highway Patrol training academies demonstrates that individuals with a four-year college degree, prior military experience, and/or previous law enforcement training are more likely to graduate from the training academy than other cadets. While many cadets in each training class have these qualifications, the highway patrol does not actively target any of these groups for

¹² Telephone Interview, Sergeant Al Rea, Kansas Highway Patrol, February 6, 2002.

recruitment. Increasing the number of cadets with these qualifications should reduce the academy attrition rate.

We do not recommend mandating a four-year college degree, military experience, and/or law enforcement training. Doing so may disqualify some strong applicants and may significantly decrease the pool of female and minority applicants, which the NCHP is actively trying to increase.

Nevertheless, the NCHP should participate in college job fairs and post recruitment literature at college campuses. Increasing recruitment of cadets with college degrees will result in a decline in the attrition rate.

The NCHP could increase the number of applicants with law enforcement training by making recruitment presentations to BLET classes at community colleges. Recruiters should place literature in local and county police stations. Recruiting cadets with law enforcement experience must be joined with plans to separate the BLET and trooper-specific training programs. Failing to do so would cause law enforcement recruiting practices to fail.

II. Increase the age limit for cadets.

The NCHP should increase the maximum age requirement. Increasing the current age limit of 33 would allow more individuals with long-term military service to qualify for employment with the NCHP. Because cadets with prior military training are 12 times more likely to graduate than to leave, recruiting more military personnel should decrease attrition. While increasing the age limit may result in cadets with lower levels of physical capabilities, the screening process as well as the preparatory program should be able to disqualify applicants who will be unable to meet physical standards. Washington State has a mandatory retirement age of 60, but considers all cadets who apply. The Washington State academy has graduated a 52-year-old cadet who was able to meet all physical and mental requirements.

III. Lengthen and intensify the cadet preparatory program.

The NCHP should make its voluntary preparatory training program more similar to the training academy experience. The current preparatory training program has failed to reduce the basic training academy's attrition rate. Cadets are not prepared for the mental and physical rigors of academy training. Currently, cadets are encouraged to voluntarily participate in the program, which consist almost exclusively of physical training exercises.

We recommend making some of the programs an overnight experience and increasing the level of mental and physical rigor. The overnight preparatory program could be touted as an experience that would help recruits decide if the highway patrol is a correct career choice.

The overnight preparatory program could be structured in the following manner: recruits would arrive at the training academy in the afternoon. Troopers would introduce recruits to the structure and expectations of the academy. Afterwards, recruits would be involved in light physical training and fed dinner at the cafeteria. The next morning cadets would be exposed to the rigors of paramilitary style training. Cadets should be expected to wake up early, march in formation, engage in training exercises, and participate in strenuous physical fitness activities. The closing ceremony could outline ways that cadets can physically and mentally prepare for academy training.

Giving recruits a better exposure to the mental and physical rigors of academy life will assist recruits in understanding the level of physical fitness needed for the training academy. Likewise, an intense program will reduce the shock factor for cadets by mentally preparing them for the paramilitary style training. In addition, those who may have been unsuccessful at the training academy will withdraw their applications, avoiding their future resignation from the academy.

IV. Improve the NCHP website.

The NCHP website does not provide information that potential cadets would find useful in preparing for the academy. The website should contain recommended physical training programs, detailed information about academy life, the academy curriculum, contact information for the spousal support network, and a section of frequently asked questions. In addition, the NCHP website should include specific links and customized information for individuals with four-year college degrees, military experience, and/or prior law enforcement training. All of the website's information should be candid and forthright. The websites of the California and the Colorado Highway Patrol's are excellent examples¹³.

¹³ California: <<http://www.chp.ca.gov/html/academycadet.html>>
Colorado: <<http://www.csp.state.co.us/Jobs/ProfessionT.html>>

CHAPTER III: STRUCTURAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Structural Recommendations

V. Restructure the first three weeks of training, gradually introducing paramilitary style training—“the ramping technique.”

VI. Reduce the length of trooper-specific training.

- *Reevaluate the curriculum of trooper-specific training*
- *Transfer portions of trooper-specific training to on-the-job training*
- *Transfer portions of trooper-specific training to in-service training*

VII. Establish separate training academies for cadets with and without BLET certification.

VIII. Provide positive incentives for cadet achievements.

This chapter discusses approaches for changing the structure and content of the North Carolina Highway Patrol’s training academy. We recommend “the ramping technique” to reduce attrition during the first weeks of training. Three ways to shorten the length of trooper-specific training are recommended. We recommend changes in training academy lifestyle, and the creation of separate training academies for cadets with and without BLET certification.

V. Restructure the first three weeks of training, gradually introducing paramilitary style training—“the ramping technique.”

Eighty-two percent of the cadets who failed to graduate from the academy left during the first two weeks. Ninety-six percent of the NCHP cadets who successfully completed the first two weeks of training graduated. By gradually introducing cadets to paramilitary style training through “the ramping technique” (see Appendix II) the NCHP could reduce early attrition, caused by the initial shock of the training.¹⁴ The shock of the paramilitary style training is the primary feature distinguishing the first weeks of training from the rest of the academy. Assisting adaptation to the paramilitary training is essential to increasing retention levels.

“The ramping technique” has been used in Washington State during its last four basic training schools. Sergeant Francis Irwin of the Washington Highway Patrol said,

¹⁴ Telephone Interview, Former Cadet, March 16, 2002; Interview, NCHP Cadets, February 1, 2002.

“Ramping has done a lot to decrease our attrition rate. We were seeing 12 to 15 cadets leave in the first two weeks. That number is down dramatically. In the last class we lost one who didn’t really want to do law enforcement.”¹⁵

The Washington Highway Patrol (WHP) founded “the ramping technique” upon the philosophy that cadets learn most effectively using instruction based upon a “tell, show, do” model (i.e., cadets should be told and shown how to accomplish a task before they are actually required to perform the task). The WHP did not want cadets to leave the academy for the wrong reasons, such as being intimidated by the paramilitary style training. Sergeant Francis Irwin said, “For a lot of the cadets this is their first job. When we start screaming at them when they are tired and sweating, you can see it in their eyes, ‘I didn’t buy into this. I’m out of here.’ I don’t think we are giving them a fair shake to see if they are going to like being a trooper or not. We hoped that indoctrinating cadets slowly would give them more time to see if being a trooper was something that they really wanted to do.”¹⁶

The WHP structures the first seven weeks of its academy in the following manner: the first week of training, cadets are allowed to wear civilian attire, walk between classes, and are not punished for procedural violations. However, they are expected to respond to training officers using the standard “yes sir” or “yes ma’am.” Class time in the first week is set aside to acquaint cadets with training subjects, school procedures and the highway patrol’s expectations. In the second week, cadets are required to wear full uniform and stand at attention when spoken to; drill, ceremony, and cafeteria protocol are also introduced. In the third week, room inspections begin and cadets are required to run between classes. Disciplinary action for rule infractions begins in the fourth week. In the fifth and sixth weeks the level of accountability is increased. By the seventh week the academy operates in full paramilitary style. Using the ramping technique, the WHP has reduced attrition rates to an average of 15-20% per training class—a significant accomplishment given Washington’s longer training regimen.¹⁷

Given North Carolina’s shorter training academy, a three-week “ramping” program would probably be more fitting for the NCHP. During the first week, cadets would be allowed to wear street clothing, and physical training would only be moderate. In the second week cadets would be required to wear their uniforms, physical training would become more intense, and room inspections would take place. Cadets that failed room inspections would receive a warning detailing the aspects of the room that failed inspection and listing what the punishment will be for failing room inspection in future weeks. During the third week, paramilitary disciplinary action would be introduced, along with all other aspects of paramilitary style training. By the end of the third week

¹⁵ Telephone Interview, Sergeant Francis Irwin, Washington State Highway Patrol, April 11, 2002.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The WHP has a seven week introductory training program where it introduces the para-military training style and weapons training. Cadets are then stationed throughout the state doing security for six months. Upon completion of their security detail, cadets return to the academy for six months of para-military style trooper training.

the academy would be operating in full paramilitary style. Implementing the ramping technique should not change the curriculum during the first weeks of training.

VI. Reduce the length of trooper-specific training.

The NCHP should shorten its training regimen by two to four weeks. The NCHP basic patrol school is 27 weeks in length—16 weeks are devoted to Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) and 11 weeks to trooper-specific training. The curriculum for BLET is mandated by state law and cannot be altered without legislative action. Experience in Utah and Montana demonstrates that trooper-specific training can be reduced to between four and six weeks—160 to 240 hours of instruction—and still train high quality cadets.¹⁸ Tradition and bureaucratic inertia may make cutting trooper-specific training in North Carolina by five to seven weeks too difficult.¹⁹ Nevertheless, working at the margins, the NCHP could realistically reduce trooper-specific training by two to four weeks.

Trooper specific training should serve two functions. First, it should equip cadets with the skills and knowledge necessary to safely perform the basic duties of a trooper. Cadets should learn the core competencies of the highway patrol—law enforcement tactics, weapons training, emergency vehicle operation, first aid, self-defense, radar and intoxilyzer training, and fitness training.²⁰

Second, trooper-specific training should assist cadets to accept and internalize the norms of the North Carolina Highway Patrol—Neatness, Courage, Honesty, Professionalism, Principles, Respect, Integrity, Dedication, and *Esprit de corps*—NCHP PRIDE.²¹ The training should mold the character of cadets into that of a trooper. The United States Army has found that soldiers accept Army norms and values in fewer than nine weeks.²²

Law enforcement officials frequently report that little is remembered from basic training. Skills and knowledge are acquired primarily from work experience and on-the-job training. “Police recruits commonly denounced their academy experience as irrelevant, abstract, and dull.”²³ Major Claron Brenchley of the Utah Highway Patrol said: “Classroom training teaches you books and theories, but on the road is where you receive the real training.”²⁴ Thus, the NCHP can significantly reduce the length of

¹⁸ Telephone Interview, Major Claron Brenchley, Utah Highway Patrol, April 12, 2002; Utah Highway Patrol, “Becoming a UHP Trooper.” <<http://highwaypatrol.utah.gov/employment/index.html>>

¹⁹ Interview, Sergeant B. W. Foggiano, North Carolina Highway Patrol, February 1, 2002.

²⁰ California Highway Patrol. <<http://www.chp.ca.gov/html/academycadet.html>>; Utah Highway Patrol, “Becoming a UHP Trooper.” <<http://highwaypatrol.utah.gov/employment/index.html>>

²¹ California Highway Patrol, “Professional Values.” Note: “Neatness” was added to make the acronym “NCHP PRIDE.” <<http://www.chp.ca.gov/html/academycadet.html>>

²² U.S. Army, “Basic Training,” <<http://www.goarmy.com/basic/index.htm>>

²³ John Van Maanen, “Police Socialization: A Longitudinal Examination of Job Attitudes in an Urban Police Department,” *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 20 (June 1975): 24.

²⁴ Telephone Interview, Major Claron Brenchley, Utah Highway Patrol, April 12, 2002.

trooper-specific training without jeopardizing the safety or effectiveness of newly trained troopers.

We present three variants for this recommendation:

1. The NCHP should reevaluate the curriculum of trooper-specific training.

Trooper-specific training should be limited to the basics—training absolutely necessary for a cadet to function safely and effectively as a trooper. In reevaluating the curriculum of trooper-specific training, the North Carolina Highway Patrol should seek to eliminate training that is unrelated to the core competencies. Thus, the foundational components of trooper-specific training should include: 1) law enforcement tactics, 2) weapons training, 3) emergency vehicle operation, 4) first aid, 5) self defense, 6) radar and intoxilyzer training, and 7) fitness training.²⁵

Using a 40-hour workweek, the following model demonstrates that, by focusing on the core competencies, the NCHP could reduce trooper-specific training to seven to nine weeks.

Law Enforcement Tactics: The California Highway Patrol uses a 66-hour course in which cadets learn the basics for use of force, control and arrest tactics, vehicle pullovers, and crime in progress. Cadets are tested on their general knowledge in each phase, as well as their ability to apply that knowledge during both day and night scenario testing.²⁶

Weapons Training: This should prepare cadets to meet the challenges of “real world” encounters. The California Highway Patrol uses a 30-hour course in which cadets are instructed in the safe handling and effective use of the department's general duty weapons in both daylight and night conditions. Additionally, cadets are trained in the proper use of pepper spray, operations in a chemical environment (CS gas), and basic recognition and handling of confiscated and clandestine weapons.²⁷

Emergency Vehicle Operation: In California, cadets receive a minimum of 20 hours of vehicle dynamics, performance driving techniques, and departmental policy. Cadets also receive a minimum of 16 hours of hands-on driver training. Including vehicle placement, skid control techniques, performance driving, defensive driving, and code-3 pursuit driving.²⁸

First Aid: In Utah cadets are certified as Emergency Medical Responders—40 to 50 hours of training.²⁹

²⁵California Highway Patrol. <<http://www.chp.ca.gov/html/academycadet.html>>; Utah Highway Patrol, “Becoming a UHP Trooper.” <<http://highwaypatrol.utah.gov/employment/index.html>>

²⁶ California Highway Patrol. <<http://www.chp.ca.gov/html/academycadet.html>>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Emergency Responder Classes. <<http://www.emergencyresponder.com/classes.htm>>

Self Defense: In California, cadets receive no less than 50 hours of training in reality-based self-defense tactics.³⁰

Radar and Intoxilyzer Training: In Utah, cadets are certified in radar operation for about 4 hours and intoxilyzer operation and other field sobriety tests for approximately 16 hours.³¹

Fitness Training: Designed to enhance musculoskeletal development, range of flexibility, increase cardiovascular efficiency, and promote wellness as a lifestyle, California devotes at least one hour to physical training each day, most often prior to breakfast.³²

Other: Trooper specific training could also include limited instruction and/or training in some of the following key areas: professional ethics, traffic law, criminal law, communication tactics, report writing, radio procedures, crash investigation, controlled substances, traffic direction, crowd control, case preparation and courtroom testimony, and civil liability. Nevertheless, this training should not exceed 80 hours.³³

2. The NCHP should shorten trooper-specific training by transferring portions of it to on-the-job training.

Eliminating two to four weeks of trooper-specific training will require cutting portions of the basic academy curriculum. Field Training Officers (FTOs) should teach new troopers important topics not covered in the academy during the apprenticeship period. Major Claron Brenchley said, “There is no better training than on-the-job training. We can only simulate reality in the training camp. Riding with an experienced trooper is more legitimate training. There is no better training than hands-on.”³⁴

On-the-job training is more properly tailored to a cadet’s needs and cadets learn more effectively in a one-to-one training environment. Additionally, studies have shown that a one-to-one relationship such as the police apprenticeship is a more significant factor in helping cadets adopt trooper norms and values than the basic training academy.³⁵ Shifting training from the basic training academy to a trooper’s apprenticeship period may require lengthening the apprenticeship period.

³⁰ California Highway Patrol. <<http://www.chp.ca.gov/html/academycadet.html>>

³¹ Utah Highway Patrol, “Becoming a UHP Trooper.”
<<http://highwaypatrol.utah.gov/employment/index.html>>

³² California Highway Patrol. <<http://www.chp.ca.gov/html/academycadet.html>>

³³ New Mexico Department of Police Services, “New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy Lesson Plan Project.” <<http://www.dps.nm.org/training/LPprojectlink.htm>>

³⁴ Telephone Interview, Major Claron Brenchley, Utah Highway Patrol, April 12, 2002.

³⁵ Maanen, 25.

3. The NCHP should shorten trooper-specific training by transferring portions of it to in-service training.

During the first year, new troopers should participate in training exercises at their home base. In-service training has the benefit of being context based—that is, readily applicable to real life situations and circumstances. Many topics, such as Spanish, which is currently taught at the academy, are better taught over an extended period of time, requiring in-service training.³⁶ Local troopers and the faculties of community colleges could be used to provide in-service instruction. Because troopers would not be required to travel to Raleigh or board at the training academy, in-service training is logistically easier and less costly than instruction at the basic training academy.

Other states have used in-service training to shorten the length of trooper-specific training. For example, the Utah Highway Patrol’s trooper-specific training regimen is only four weeks. The Utah Highway Patrol compensates for its shorter training regimen by requiring all cadets to attend 40 hours of in-service training annually. According to Major Claron Brenchley, “Law enforcement has changed dramatically since September 11th; in-service training has allowed our troopers to stay up-to-date with changing law enforcement practices.”³⁷

VII. Establish separate training academies for cadets with and without BLET certification.

BLET-certified cadets should be trained in a separate academy class. The current system, requiring BLET-certified cadets to repeat BLET training, is unnecessary and costly to the state. Since each training academy class averages 20 to 30 cadets with law enforcement experience and BLET certification, the demand for a separate school exists. The redundancy in curriculum was cited by BLET-certified cadets who dropped out of the training academy as a reason for leaving.³⁸

We recommend that the training academy for BLET certified cadets include a two-week refresher course and followed by the full trooper-specific training regimen. If the current training regimen were not reduced, the BLET-certified training academy would be completed in 13 weeks. To maintain unit cohesion among cadets, the BLET-certified academy would be held separately. The training academy schedule is structured to allow for separate classes.

The North Dakota and Utah Highway Patrols allow cadets with BLET certification to test out of the BLET portion of their training academy on a case-by-case basis. NCHP could adopt this practice as well.

³⁶ Virginia P. Collier, “Acquiring a Second Language for School,” *Directions in Language and Education* Vol. 1, Fall 1995.

³⁷ Telephone Interview, Major Claron Brenchley, Utah Highway Patrol, April 12, 2002.

³⁸ Telephone Interview, Former Cadet, March 16, 2002.

VIII. Provide positive incentives for cadet achievements.

Paramilitary style training is based upon negative incentives. Cadets are motivated primarily by the fear of punishment and quickly learn to lie low and avoid being noticed.³⁹ Positive incentives provide rewards for excellence in training and/or good behavior. Motivation is based upon recognition of cadets' achievements, encouraging cadets to excel. Captain Michael Yankovich of the U.S. Army has found positive incentives, day off passes and medals, to be an effective way to motivate soldiers. He said, "There is only so much you can do to punish cadets. Today's society requires that you don't hammer people all the time. People respond to rewards."⁴⁰

Cadets drop out of the academy because they have difficulty envisioning the end result of the training academy, an inability to see the proverbial "light at the end of the tunnel." Positive incentives would increase retention levels by providing cadets with short-term goals, opportunities for accomplishment, and satisfaction from achievement. Officer Pinsack of the California Highway Patrol said, "Positive incentives keep cadets focused on their training."⁴¹

As a positive incentive to motivate cadets, the California Highway Patrol uses time off on Wednesday evenings. Cadets are allowed to leave the academy at 7:00 P.M. and are required to check in prior to midnight. Cadets failing to qualify for time off are required to write a memo and receive remedial instruction. Rewarding cadets with time off during the week or extended weekends could improve retention levels by providing something for cadets to work toward. Officer Pinsack noted, "Many cadets view Wednesday as their 'hump day.' It is nice for them to get something to eat outside of the academy. Cadets that live close have time to go home and see their families. Earning Wednesday night off definitely keeps cadets focused on their training."⁴²

Incentives could be symbolic or tangible. The important factors are that cadets have short term goals to work toward and recognizable achievements to keep them motivated and focused on the broader objective of the basic training academy—to graduate and become a trooper.

³⁹ Maanen, 26.

⁴⁰ Interview, Captain Michael Yankovich, U.S. Army, April 11, 2002.

⁴¹ Telephone Interview, Officer Pinsack, California Highway Patrol, April 12, 2002.

⁴² Ibid.

CHAPTER IV: ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary Administrative Recommendations

IX. Establish a formal support network for spouses.

X. Increase support programs for cadets.

XI. Inform cadets of their job assignment six weeks prior to graduation.

XII. Improve feedback and evaluation tools for the exit process.

This chapter presents our recommendations for changing certain administrative aspects of the basic training academy. We recommend a formal support network for spouses. Increasing support programs for cadets are presented. We recommend informing cadets of their job assignments six weeks prior to graduation. We recommend improving the North Carolina Highway Patrol's evaluation process.

IX. Establish a formal support network for spouses.

Being separated from their families for the 27-week training academy can cause emotional and physical hardship on cadet's spouse and children. In order to help cadet spouses cope with the anxiety of separation, the NCHP should institute a formal support network similar to the U.S. Army's "Family Readiness Group." The intention of the Army's support network is to "help family members prepare for imminent separation, cope during the separation and to bond with other family members in the unit."⁴³ The network should foster a sense of community while providing a vehicle for spouses to develop friendships and reduce their feelings of isolation and abandonment. The formal support network may also reduce cadet attrition. According to the exit interviews a significant number of cadets currently leave the academy because of family related stress. A spousal support network should enable cadets to concentrate more on their training.

The formal spouse network should begin with an orientation meeting conducted at the training academy. The orientation should be followed by monthly dinners in different regions of the state, providing the spouses a gathering point for further networking. In addition, the NCHP should establish a mentoring program. The Army's "Family Readiness Program" appoints a contact person—most often the wife of a commanding officer—who is responsible for initiating contact with six to ten spouses twice per month. This mentor provides advice and support throughout the six-month training period.

⁴³ U.S. Army, "The Army Spouse." <www.armyspouse.org>

A spouse website and monthly newsletter should also be circulated (www.armypouse.org). The website and newsletter should provide information on cadets' progress and achievement at the training academy, while also giving spouses a place to post announcements of upcoming events, births, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.

X. Lengthen the exit process and provide exit counseling for cadets.

The NCHP lacks formal mechanisms to encourage cadets not to resign. When cadets decide to leave the academy, the commanding officer expedites the process. It seems ironic that the NCHP would spend so much time and resources to recruit cadets and spend so little time trying to retain them.

The NCHP should require cadets to wait 24 hours after submitting their resignation before they can leave the academy. During this waiting period, the NCHP staff should provide support, guidance, and other assistance to help cadets think about their resignation. Slowing down the process will provide cadets with time to rethink their decision to leave, calm down, and remember their reasons for joining the NCHP.

Each cadet who wants to resign should be provided with a mentor. The mentoring program should model the program currently used by the Washington State Highway Patrol. In Washington State's program a current trooper with a similar background and circumstance is brought in to speak with the resigning cadet.⁴⁴ The trooper's encouragement and understanding can help cadets look beyond their immediate fears and focus on their original goal of becoming a trooper.

A full-time counselor, outside the command structure, should be available during the 24-hour period and throughout the training academy to provide additional counseling services for cadets. For counseling services to be successful, the NCHP must remove the psychological stigma associated with asking for help and advice. Cadets should be allowed to meet with the counselor as needed and be excused from training activities if necessary.

XI. Inform cadets of their job assignment six weeks prior to graduation.

Based on exit interviews and the NCHP "reviews of resignation," the main cause of late-term attrition—resignations after the first two weeks of training—is anxiety, stemming from cadets not knowing where they will be stationed after graduation. The NCHP currently waits as long as two weeks prior to graduation before informing cadets where they will be stationed. This late notice creates unnecessary stress for both cadets and their families. Issuing job assignments six weeks prior to graduation will give cadets and their families more time to relocate and adjust to a new locale. Early notification is

⁴⁴ Telephone Interview, Ken Irwin, Assistant Commander of Training, Washington Highway Patrol, March 18, 2002.

especially important for cadets with children who may need to find a new school or additional childcare services.

XII. Improve feedback and evaluation tools for the exit process.

The NCHP should improve its evaluation process by restructuring the exit interview, conducting follow-up surveys with cadets who leave the training academy prior to graduation, and surveying cadets who graduate from the academy.

It is essential to have a well-designed survey to accurately determine the reasons that cadets resign and what potential policy, administrative, or programmatic changes might lower the attrition rate. To gain more specific and constructive feedback the NCHP should redesign its exit interviews. The current exit interview questions are repetitive (Appendix III). For example, Questions 4, “What are the most positive features of the Basic School?” and Question 6, “What did you like about the Basic School?” ask virtually the same question. The responses generated from these two questions were almost identical. Question 5, “What is the most negative feature of Basic School?” and Question 7, “What did you dislike most about Basic School?” are also repetitive. In addition to reducing the repetition, the new exit interview should be more specific and elicit more constructive feedback (Appendix IV).⁴⁵

NCHP should conduct a second exit interview one month after a cadet resigns. When leaving the academy, cadets are often upset, and their perceptions of the academy may be distorted. Thus, exit interview data may be unreliable. Providing cadets time to reflect upon their experience and their decision to leave should improve the quality of the information gained from an interview.

Graduating cadets should also be surveyed about the training academy. These surveys should be administered at graduation and again one year later. These interviews will help NCHP analyze how the training experience and actual trooper duties fit together and establish the strengths and weakness of the academy from a new trooper’s point of view.

⁴⁵ The appendices contain sample exit interviews, including Washington State’s exit interview and a suggested exit interview developed by Andrea Ervin, Heather Lee, Gustavo Flores-Macias, Brock Taylor.

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<<http://highwaypatrol.utah.gov/employment/index.html>>

Appendix II
Ramping Technique⁴⁶
Washington State Academy

Week One Expectations

- Professional civilian attire
- Yes sir, yes ma'am
- Dorm room set-up
- Academy protocols
- Walk between classes
- Core values

Week Two Expectations

- In full cadet uniform
 - Stand at attention when spoken to
- Beginning Tuesday a.m.*
- Drill and ceremony
 - Flag
 - Cafeteria protocol
 - Sir and ma'am to begin all conversations

Week Three Expectations

- Run between classes
- Officer safety – be aware of surroundings
- Higher expectations in the following areas
 - Dorm rooms
 - Personal appearance
 - Team work
 - Core values

Week Four Expectations

- Physical exercises for discrepancies and violations of expectations
- Increased expectations in all areas

Week Five Expectations

- Increasing level of accountability

Week Six Expectations

- Increasing level of accountability

Week Seven Expectations

- Level expected first week of Trooper Basic Training Camp
- Should be working as team at all levels
- Self-policing

Appendix III
Current NCHP Basic School Exit Interview¹

Your comments will be held in confidence and will in no way affect your references or opportunities for future employment with the Patrol. The information will be combined

⁴⁶ Source: Washington State Highway Patrol

¹ Source: Copy of the exit interview provided by the North Carolina Highway Patrol

with other Exit Interview information, which will be used to improve the effectiveness of our Basic School.

1. Name _____ Social Security # _____

Entry Date: _____ Withdrawal Date _____

2. Why are you leaving the Basic School?
3. What will you do now? (e.g., job, school, etc.)
4. What are the advantages of leaving the Basic School? The disadvantages?
5. What do you think are the most positive features of the Basic School? The most negative features?
6. Are there aspects of the Basic School that you like? If so, please elaborate.
7. Are there aspects of the Basic School that you dislike? If so, please elaborate.
8. Are there ways you feel that the Basic School could be improved? If so, please elaborate.
9. Do you plan to reapply with the NCSHP? If not, please explain why.

Your comments will be held in confidence and will in no way affect your references or opportunities of future employment with the Patrol. The information will be combined with other Exit Interview information, which will be used to improve the effectiveness of our Basic School.

Employee's Signature

Date

Interviewers comments:

Cadet's reason for leaving:

Interviewer's Signature

Date

Appendix IV
Suggested Basic School Exit Interview:

The exit interview is an essential tool for the NCHP to gain constructive feedback about its Basic School. Please take the time to respond to all of the questions.

1. Name: _____ Social Security #: _____

Entry Date: _____ Date of Resignation: _____

2. Did you participate in the Preparatory Program? _____

If no, why? _____

If yes, was it beneficial? _____

3. Why are you leaving basic school? Circle all that apply

Illness	Injury	Program is too long	Miss family
Para-military style of training		A lack of physical preparation	
A lack of mental preparation		Uncertainty of future trooper placement	
Do not want to do repeat BLET certification		Other _____	

4. What will you do now? _____

5. What are *two* things you liked about the Basic School? _____

6. What are *two* things you think should be changed in the Basic School? _____

7. Please recommend changes NCHP should make to the Basic School? _____

8. Do you plan to reapply with the NCSHP? _____

If not, please explain why. _____

Your comments will be held in confidence and will in no way affect your references or opportunities for future employment with the Patrol. The information will be combined with other Exit Interview information, which will be used to improve the effectiveness of our Basic School.

Employee's Signature

Date

Appendix VI
Comparison of Highway Patrol Training Academies
in North Carolina and Ten Other States

State^o	Attrition Rate[±] (%)	Length of Program (weeks)	Age Limit
North Carolina	28	27	33
Kansas	20	20	None
Washington	15-20	26	60
Montana	10-15	15	None
Florida	14	24	None
California	10	27	35
Idaho	10	20	None
Iowa	10	20	None
Nevada	10	26	None
Colorado	4.5	22	None
North Dakota	0	28	None*

^o These states were selected to represent all regions of the country

* North Dakota has no age limitations, but requires an Associates Degree and work experience or a Bachelor's Degree

[±] Attrition rates for the different states represent interviewees' best estimates.

Appendix V Washington State Exit Interview⁴⁸

Name:
Date:
Position:
SS #

Disability: Yes No **Prior Law Enforcement Officer:** Yes No **Veteran:** Yes No

Race/Ethnicity: (Please circle one) Caucasian Black Hispanic Asian American Indian Other

Section 1

1. How long have you been employed by the Washington State Patrol? _____
 2. Were your job duties clearly explained to you at the time you were hired?
-

3. Why did you accept your position at the WSP? (circle the item that best describes your reason)
 - a. The job sounded interesting or more challenging than other jobs available at the time.
 - b. The pay was better than other jobs available.
 - c. I wanted a job with good health benefits for my family and myself.
 - d. I wanted work experience in this career field.
 - e. I had friends working at the WSP.
 - f. Other (specify) _____

4. How did you hear about the position?
 - a. State recruitment bulletin
 - b. Job fair
 - c. WSP recruiter
 - d. WSP employee
 - e. Newspaper advertisement
 - f. University, college, or school
 - g. Professional journal
 - h. Other (specify) _____

5. What did you like most about your job with the Washington State Patrol?
-

6. What did you like least?
-

7. How would you rate communication in the following areas?
1=excellent, 2=good, 3=fair, 4=poor, 5=no opinion

Policies, procedures and guidelines	1	2	3	4	5
General orientation to department	1	2	3	4	5
General orientation to facility/unit	1	2	3	4	5
Specific knowledge of your job	1	2	3	4	5
Career opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Between you and your supervisor	1	2	3	4	5

⁴⁸ The original WSP exit interview has been modified for the purposes of this report

Through chain of command	1	2	3	4	5
Human resource representatives	1	2	3	4	5

8. How do you feel about the following areas (if applicable to you)?
1= excellent, 2= good, 3= fair, 4= poor, 5= no opinion

Salary for your job	1	2	3	4	5
Equipment	1	2	3	4	5
Uniforms provided	1	2	3	4	5
Work hours	1	2	3	4	5
Performance evaluation system	1	2	3	4	5
Training					
On-the-job	1	2	3	4	5
Professional/technical	1	2	3	4	5
Cooperation					
Co-workers	1	2	3	4	5
Staff	1	2	3	4	5
Morale in the facility/unit	1	2	3	4	5

9. How would you rate your supervisors in the following areas? (scale of 1-4)
1=almost always, 2=usually, 3=sometimes, 4=never

Evaluation of your performance	1	2	3	4
Demonstrated fair and equal treatment	1	2	3	4
Encouraged feedback	1	2	3	4
Communicated well with you	1	2	3	4
Resolved complaints/grievances	1	2	3	4
Provided recognition for good work	1	2	3	4

10. What is your reason for leaving? (circle all that apply, if more than one, rank in order of most applicable)

Personal/external considerations

Supervision/Administration

Illness or physical condition

Philosophical differences

Distance from family

Lack of policies/procedures

Family related issues

Poor supervision

Moving from area

Disagree with operation of facility/unit

Housing accommodations

Have not been treated fairly

Childcare

Lack of training

Lack of support from supervisor

Work/Work environment

Job Stress

Salary

Type of work no longer desirable

Personal threats

Fringe benefits (i.e., leave, etc)

Lack of opportunities

Other (please specify)

11. Are you leaving for any reason, related to discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, creed, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, disabled veteran, or Vietnam era veteran status? Yes
No

If yes, please explain:

Did you attempt to remedy this situation? Yes No

If yes, please explain:

12. How do you think the Washington State Patrol can reduce staff turnover?

13. What constructive comments do you have for management to make our agency a better place to work?

14. What do you consider the biggest challenge this agency is now faced with or needs to overcome?

15. Please indicate your feelings toward future employment with this department:

- I would return and would recommend it to my friends.
- I would consider returning under certain conditions.
- I am undecided, but would not rule out returning.
- I probably would not seek reemployment.
- I would not seek to return or recommend it to others.

Comments:

Thank you for your time. Your answers will assist the agency in future planning.

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Appendix I Responses in Exit Interviews

Why are you leaving?		What will you do?		Advantages of leaving?		Disadvantages of leaving?		Positive features of the academy?		Negative features of the academy		What did you like?		What did you dislike?		In what ways can the school be improved?		Planning to reapply?	
Illness/ Injury	8	Look for employment	11	None	10	Not to be a State Trooper	9	Discipline	16	None	13	Discipline	8	No response	7	None	18	Yes	11
Family	5	Go back to old job	11	Reunite with family	6	Not meeting goal	6	Teamwork	8	No response	5	Physical training	4	Nothing	3	No response	9	No	11
Lack of physical ability	5	Go to school	7	Go back to old job	3	Pay	4	Getting in shape	5	Being away from family	5	Quality of instructors	4	Length	3	More respect to cadets	2	Unsure	8
Not the right job	4	Police officer	6	My injury will heal	2	Life long career	2	Teacher quality	4	Regimented lifestyle	2	No response	3	Disrespect from teachers	3	More time to complete tasks	2	No answer	1
Not mentally prepared	3	Get BLET	1	Finish degree	2	Loss of respect	2	Learning experience	3	Teachers	2	Professionalism	2	Isolation	2	Teachers knowledge of subject	1		
Academic failure	3	No response	4	Happier marriage	1	Regretting leaving	2	Professionalism	3	No enough prep before	2	Paramilitary style	2	Not prepared	2				
Too long	2			Less pain	1	Leaving friends	2	Structure	1	Overwhelming schedule	2	Teamwork	2	Useless	1				
Not the right time	2			Reevaluate physical condition	1	None	2	Mandatory for everyone	1	Repetition	1	Variety of teachers	1	Dorms	1				
Go back to old job	2			Know what to expect	1	Humiliation	1	Time management	1	Living in dorms	1	Structure	1	Distance from home	1				
Schedule constraints	2			Less stress	1	Work wasted	1	No response	2	Stress	1	Challenge	1	Chow line	1				
Other	4			Other	2	No response	1					Other	3						

- Some cadets gave more than one response per question
- Sample: 36 interviews from the 103rd and 104th Schools