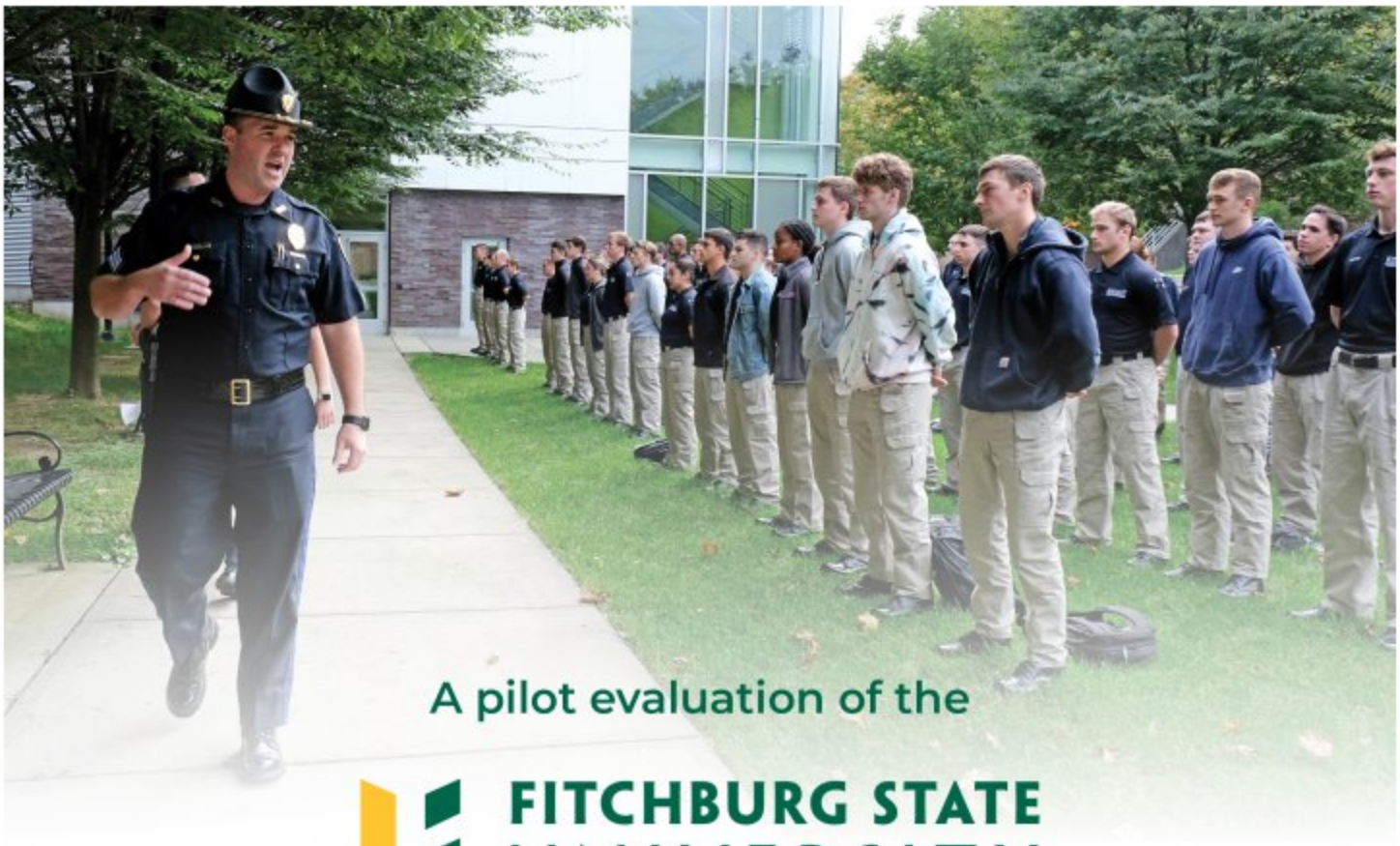

A pilot evaluation of the

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

POLICE ACADEMY




Examining student satisfaction and retention



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Executive Summary

The Fitchburg State University 4+1 Police Program and Academy is a unique partnership between Fitchburg State University and the Municipal Police Training Commission to integrate undergraduate and graduate education with police training to educate and certify municipal police officers in Massachusetts efficiently. While working toward their bachelor's degree, students in the Police Program complete 153 hours of the police academy curriculum, follow the MPTC recruit officer code of conduct, and participate in professional development activities as a program. This pilot evaluation relied on archival records to describe patterns of enrollment, retention, and graduation from the Police Program; focus groups with students, faculty, and drill instructors to understand perceptions of and experiences with the Police Program; and a pilot survey to measure student and alumni satisfaction with the Police Program as well as test measures of hypothesized mechanisms of the Police Program.

Our archival records analysis revealed that those who enter and graduate from the Fitchburg State University Police Academy are more likely to be white, male, non-Hispanic, and have parents with a college degree than those who enroll in the Police Program. Additionally, trends of attrition and graduation indicated that personal development, academic and training performance, and global events impacted whether students remained in the 4+1 Police Program.

Through conducting ten focus groups with stakeholders from across campus, we learned that faculty, Police Program students, and drill instructors generally agreed that the goals of the Police Program were to train a new generation of police officers to work toward more diverse and community-oriented policing. Additionally, the groups agreed that better policing is policing that is community-oriented, based on high-quality communication, and driven by diverse perspectives, as well as built through merit-based hiring practices. The stakeholder groups also agreed that the blended curriculum and Director Lane were strengths of the Program. We identified areas of tension within and between the stakeholder groups. Although students and faculty agreed that education is an important tool for developing more community-focused policing, they disagreed about how to use the Police Program and University curriculum to achieve this goal. While the faculty recommended a more integrated curriculum that pushes the students toward a critical perspective, the students requested fewer general education requirements that do not directly relate to policing. Faculty and students also both made recommendations for structural changes to the program; however, they focused on different areas for improvement. Overall, the focus groups revealed that our campus community is representative of the broader community in its attitudes toward the Police Program and policing in general - some strong support, some strong opposition, but mostly an understanding about the goals and value of the Program, with an interest in having a more representative and community-focused future for policing.

Our pilot survey successfully tested and narrowed evaluation and attitude measures to pursue in the future. Alumni and students' perceptions of and experiences with the Police Program were varied, which suggested that responses were not influenced by acquiescence bias. However, there was less variance on the items about the value of higher education, which suggested these items may not be the most effective way of measuring how Police Program students think and feel about the impact of higher education. Finally, respondents' ratings of the usefulness of

courses distinguished between MPTC and non-MPTC, CJ and general education courses, and were consistent with how students discussed the curriculum in the focus groups, which suggests that the measure reliably assessed respondents' attitudes toward their courses. However, the tool does not help us understand whether respondents were rating how useful the course was or how much they enjoyed it. Finally, we observed patterns of mean differences between alumni, upper-class, and underclass students for ambiguity tolerance and attitudes toward sex-, race-, and class-based discrimination and privilege. We did not see significant or emerging mean differences between alumni, upper-class, or underclass students for emotional intelligence or social dominance orientation. However, because our overall response rate was very low, our comparisons across respondents' graduation year were underpowered and we cannot draw conclusions from these tests. Due to our small sample size, we suggest revisiting how we recruited current students and alumni for evaluation surveys.

Based on these findings, we developed conclusions and recommendations for the Police Program, Behavioral Sciences Department, and University to increase diversity, improve retention, enhance legitimacy, and smooth relationships across campus:

1. **Develop a plan to address that Black and brown students are underrepresented in the Police Program.**

2. **Address gaps in communication that lead to confusion and uncertainty for students.**

3. **Increase campus-wide understanding of the Police Program to improve buy-in and support.**

4. **Reduce the 'us vs. them' culture on campus through Program and University efforts.**

5. **Explicitly center academics in the Police Program marketing, orientations, and communication to foster realistic expectations.**

6. **Create a clear and consistent protocol for rule violations to enhance transparency and legitimacy.**

Finally, with ongoing support from the Behavioral Sciences Department and the University, we will use the lessons learned and results of this pilot evaluation to conduct a comprehensive evaluation that measures academic success, professional success, and mechanisms of both, as well as whether the Police Program is being implemented as intended.

A pilot evaluation of the Fitchburg State University Police Academy: Examining student satisfaction and retention.

In 2014 Fitchburg State University (hereinafter, "Fitchburg State"), in partnership with the Municipal Police Training Committee (hereinafter, "MPTC"), began to offer students the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, a certification as a municipal police officer through MPTC from the Fitchburg State University Police Academy, and a master's degree in criminal justice, in just five years. This program of study became known as the "4+1 Police Program" (hereinafter, "the Police Program"). This report described the Police Program, the students who have been enrolled in the Police Program, and a pilot evaluation. The pilot evaluation examined student, faculty, and staff experiences with the Police Program through focus groups and surveys. Finally, based on the findings from the pilot evaluation, we made recommendations for the Police Program, the Behavioral Sciences Department, the University, and future evaluation efforts.

The establishment of the Police Program was an innovative and unique partnership between Fitchburg State and MPTC that recognized the importance of liberal arts education for police officers as a fundamental tool for police officers to identify and respond to the needs of individual civilians and their communities. Substantial research suggests that educated and properly trained police officers will benefit not only the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but also the institution of policing through improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills, reduced influence of traditional police culture during training, and increased exposure to interdisciplinary and diverse perspectives on how to address pressing social issues (see, Belur et al., 2020; Bykov, 2014; Cox & Kirby, 2017; Terpstra & Schaap, 2021). The Police Program advanced these goals through a merger of academic education and academy training in a one-of-a-kind program, which provides students with the unique opportunity to transition seamlessly from university-based academic education to academy skills training in a single, five-year program.

Given the unique nature of the Police Program and the existing gap in research related to the potential benefits and effects of an integrated, multidisciplinary university experience on police officers, the Police Program curriculum, the extracurricular professional development activities, and advising practices have been responsive to MPTC requirements. Therefore, we address this gap in the literature and established a framework for innovation by examining the Police Program and its impact on the students and University. In this report, we described the Police Program as it currently exists, described the patterns of enrollment, retention, and graduation in the Program, and presented the pilot evaluation results. Finally, based on our findings, we made a series of recommendations about the Program and future evaluation efforts.

The 4+1 Police Program: Integrating liberal arts with police training.

Potential students interested in the Police Program designate the criminal justice major with a concentration in policing on their applications to Fitchburg State. Once the prospective student is

accepted into Fitchburg State and admitted into the College of Arts and Sciences, the Police Program's director sends those students a waiver form for the Fitchburg State University Police Department to conduct a preliminary background check before they are officially admitted into the Program. Once accepted into the Police Program, students are sent the Fitchburg State Police Program Student Manual (discussed further below).

Students are enrolled in the Police Program from their first day on campus until they complete their master's degree. The five-year Police Program comprises three curricular components as well as extracurricular professional development and training.

Curriculum Components

1. *Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice with a concentration in policing*

Undergraduate students enrolled at Fitchburg State and in the Police Program must complete 120 credit hours to obtain their bachelor's degree. Those credits include 51 credit hours of general education requirements in literature, fine arts, science and mathematics, and interdisciplinary studies to develop basic writing, speech, and critical thinking skills. These credits are taught by Fitchburg State faculty in each corresponding discipline and completed with Fitchburg State students who may or may not also be majoring in criminal justice or have a concentration in policing. In addition to the general education content, criminal justice majors must complete 45 credit hours through ten required and five elective courses. The coursework for the concentration in policing distinguishes Police Program students from traditional criminal justice students. The concentration in policing includes six courses incorporating the MPTC-approved police academy curriculum, covering 153 hours of academy training. See Table 1 for the Fitchburg State courses and corresponding academy courses that Police Program students must complete. Required courses for the criminal justice major are taught by faculty in the Behavioral Sciences Department, including criminal justice, human services, and sociology professors, as well as adjunct faculty. Professors who teach the required courses for the Police Program must obtain and maintain certification by MPTC by attending annual training on new laws, procedures, and rules.

2. *Fitchburg State University Police Academy*

Official preparation for the Fitchburg State University Police Academy (hereinafter, "the Academy") begins during the final year of college. Beginning with the students entering in fall 2023, rising seniors will be required to take and pass the physical fitness test to remain in the Police Program during their senior year. During the fall of their senior year, Police Program

Table 1.

Concentration in policing required courses and corresponding academy courses.

Fitchburg State courses (before 2018)	Fitchburg State courses (after 2018)	MPTC Academy course
CJ 2050 Theory and Practices of Policing	CJ 2050 Theory and Practices of Policing	Who We Are; Problem-Solving
CJ 2270 Introduction to the Legal Process		Court Procedures
CJ 2550 Criminal Law	CJ 2550 Criminal Law	Criminal Law
CJ 2600 Juvenile Justice	CJ 2600 Juvenile Justice	Juvenile Investigations
CJ 2651 Ethics in Criminal Justice		Integrity
CJ 3000 Domestic Terrorism and Hate Crime	CJ 3000 Domestic Terrorism and Hate Crime	Hate Crime Investigations
CJ 3XXX Homeland Security		Homeland Defense
CJ 3055 Legal Issues in Policing	CJ 3055 Legal Issues in Policing	Report Writing; Constitutional Law
CJ 3057 Criminal Investigations	CJ 3057 Criminal Investigations	Criminal Investigation Main; Controlled Substance Investigations; Motor Vehicle Theft
CJ 3100 Organized Crime and Youth Gangs		Gang Investigation and Intervention
CJ 3141 Innovative Practices in Policing		Crime Prevention, Fear Reduction, & Problem Solving
CJ 3250 Crime and Delinquency Prevention		Crime Prevention, Fear Reduction, & Problem Solving
HMSV 2400 Crisis Intervention		Crisis Intervention/Conflict Resolution

Note: Some of the MPTC Academy content covered by pre-2018 curriculum is no longer covered under the same topic in the MPTC curriculum listed in Appendix A.

students begin to prepare their materials to apply to the Academy, including their medical exam and full background check. During the spring semester, Police Program students preparing for the Academy must pass a physical abilities test, a physical fitness test, and a comprehensive exam of the MPTC content incorporated into their education at Fitchburg State. As the sponsoring department, the Fitchburg State University Police Department may un-sponsor students who do not pass the required elements. Students who are accepted into the Academy begin the seventeen-week training program the week after they graduate with their bachelor's degree in May.

During the seventeen weeks, Police Program students, now called “recruits,” complete 647 hours of classroom and practical training. See Appendix A for the full MPTC Academy Curriculum. The curriculum covers 46 topics, including interviewing and interrogations, firearms, and sexual and domestic violence. Most topics include a combination of classroom instruction and practical application. For example, motor vehicle stops are covered during six hours of classroom instruction and eighteen hours of practical application. Recruits must pass instructional and practical tests on the topics throughout the Academy. If they fail a test, they are given one opportunity to retake it within two weeks.

The academy instructors must be established experts in their given area and complete MPTC instructor training and continuing education to maintain their certification. Instructors are contracted to teach through the University and MPTC. Recruits who pass all the topics and attend the minimum required training throughout the Academy earn a certificate to be a municipal police officer in Massachusetts, which is also accepted by some surrounding states.

3. *Master of Science in criminal justice*

The online Master of Science in criminal justice requires 30 credits (36 for those who attended the Academy) and may be completed in one or more years. The master’s program provides students with advanced critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills to make data-driven decisions and advance within policing. The curriculum includes four required courses: Crime Causation, Program Evaluation, Ethical Issues in Criminal Justice, and Cultural Diversity and Communication. The remaining credits can be completed with electives, such as Advanced Criminal Law and Procedure, Leadership and Management, Contemporary Issues topics courses, and Social Relations and the Law. Students enrolled in the Police Program earn 12 credits toward their master’s degree during the seventeen-week Academy. Courses are taught exclusively online during all academic terms by current criminal justice faculty and adjuncts.

4+1 Police Program extracurricular professional development and training

Throughout the four years leading up to the Academy, Police Program students are exposed to police professional experiences through a command structure that includes student leaders, behavioral and academic expectations, and monthly meetings.

Command structure

The Fitchburg State Police Program and Academy are managed and supervised by Academy Director Lisa Lane McCarty. Director Lane works closely with the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Fitchburg State University Police Department as a liaison between the University, the sponsoring department, and MPTC to ensure the Academy runs smoothly and complies with MPTC requirements. Additionally, the Director collaborates with a member of the criminal justice

faculty as the Academic Coordinator to ensure that the faculty maintain their MPTC certification, the faculty have access to the MPTC curriculum materials, and that students stay on track academically.

Director Lane is at the top of the Fitchburg State Police Academy command structure. Her second in command is the Lead Drill Instructor, who directly supervises nine drill instructors and the student leadership. Each year, the Director, in consultation with the Lead Drill Instructor and the Academic Coordinator, selects a student Class Leader as the highest-ranked student leader. The Class Leader directly supervises four to six Platoon Leaders, who supervise four to six Squad Leaders, who each supervise approximately five Police Program students. The command structure is designed to provide efficient communication from the Director to the students, and from the students to the Director. Students are encouraged to first go to their Squad Leader with questions or concerns and the Squad Leader will take those questions or concerns higher up the chain of command as needed.

Behavioral and academic expectations

Once the new students are accepted into Fitchburg State and the Police Program, they receive a Fitchburg State Police Program Student Manual and the MPTC academy manual. These manuals both prohibit and mandate certain student behaviors while in the Police Program and describe possible disciplinary actions should they engage in or fail to engage in defined conduct. The Manual prohibits specific behaviors. For example, Police Program students may not engage in illegal behavior (such as underage drinking), in smoking or vaping any substance, in dishonesty (such as plagiarism), or in discriminatory conduct (such as sexism, racism, or homophobia). The Manual also mandates certain behaviors. For example, students must attend their police concentration classes and may receive a demerit for missing more than three classes. Students must also wear their uniform to such classes.

Violations of any of the rules outlined in the manual must be addressed through a memorandum directed to the Academy Director and the Lead Drill Instructor explaining what rule(s) were violated, the reasons and conditions of the violation, and how those at fault will change their behavior. Serious violations could result in a demerit (and/or a demotion, in cases involving student leaders), as well as the risk of being removed from the Police Program.

In addition to the behavioral expectations, the Manual also states that students must maintain a minimum overall grade point average of 2.5 while in the Program and achieve a 2.0 (equivalent to 70% or C-) in the police concentration classes. Students who fail to achieve a 2.0 in a police concentration course are required to retake the class. Students who do not maintain the required GPA may be academically dismissed from the Police Program.

Extracurricular professional development in monthly meetings

In addition to their coursework, Police Program students must attend once-monthly Police Program meetings during the academic year. These meetings are usually held on the first Tuesday of the month at 3:30 pm, a time the University has set aside in course schedules for extracurricular activities and meetings. Before the meeting begins, students must line up according to their command units to take attendance and for the drill instructors to check their uniforms.

The students subsequently move into an auditorium for policing-oriented professional development, including guest speakers, job panels, introduction/review of Academy content, and other police professional skills training. For example, during Fall 2021, meetings included discussions about identifying and managing emotions, use of force regulations, and a conversation with the Executive Director of the MPTC. These meetings are similar to "in-service" training that police officers participate in throughout their careers and serve as opportunities for connection, professional training, and socialization.

Enrollment, retention, and graduation: Police Program students

In collaboration with Fitchburg State Institutional Research, the Fitchburg State University Police Department, and the Police Program and Academy, we collected data to describe the students who have been enrolled in the Police Program since its inception in 2014. To do so, we obtained from Institutional Research lists of all students who were ever registered in the police concentration, lists of students on whom the Fitchburg State University Police Department conducted initial and complete background checks, and Police Program and Academy rosters from the Academy Director. Through these efforts, we identified 573 students who were at some time enrolled in the Police Program between 2014 and May 2023. For each person, we recorded demographic information, their current status in the Program, their current status at the University, and their final grade point average.

Most of the students who have enrolled in the Fitchburg State Police Program were white (72%), male (64%), and non-Hispanic (67%). The majority received need-based financial aid (76%) and had at least one parent with a college degree (69%). Moreover, the students who have graduated from the Academy tended to resemble those who enrolled in the Program. However, the data indicated that those who graduate from the Academy are marginally more likely to be white (89%) and male (76%) and are significantly more likely to be non-Hispanic (89%) and to have parents with a college degree (84%) than their classmates who did not graduate from the Academy. See Table 2 for the demographic characteristics of all the Police Program students, the Police Program students ever enrolled before May 2022, and the successful Academy graduates from the first five recruit officer courses (ROC). These findings reveal that the demographic profile of Academy

graduates tends to be more homogeneous, and attrition is more likely among non-white, Hispanic, and first-generation students.

Of those 573 students who have ever been enrolled in the Program, 199 (34.7%) students left Fitchburg State without graduating, 232 (40.5%) graduated with the bachelor's degree from Fitchburg State, and 142 (24.8%) are still enrolled in a bachelor's degree program at Fitchburg State. Each group was examined in more detail below. Although we have some ideas about why people left the Program, we do not have consistent data to support any particular reason. Therefore, we reported on a few indicators that may shed light on attrition from the Program, including academics, major changes, and during which year of college the student left the Program.

No longer enrolled and not graduated students

We identified 199 (34.7%) students who are not currently enrolled at Fitchburg State but also did not graduate from Fitchburg State. Little is known about why these students left Fitchburg State but some indicators, including academic performance and when the student left the Program or University, were examined. More than a third of these students were not successful in the classroom and were suspended from the University. Two-thirds (60%) had a GPA less than 2.5, which is the minimum GPA required to remain in the Program. Indeed, the average last recorded GPA for students who were no longer enrolled but also had not graduated was 2.01 (*SD* = 1.12). Further, 21 (10.6%) students were suspended from the University because of their academic performance. On average, these students left the Police Program within 1.09 (*SD* = 1.03) years of enrolling. The majority left within one year (51.6%), fewer left within two (10.8%), three (5.4%), or more (4.8%) years. Although we do not have data to know why these students left, we can speculate that they were suspended for academic reasons, decided college was not for them, or that they transferred to a different college.

Currently enrolled students

Of the 142 students that remain enrolled at Fitchburg State, 81 (57%) are still enrolled in the Police Program, but 61 (43%) are no longer enrolled in the Police Program. Seven (11.5%) students have a GPA under the 2.5 GPA minimum required by the Program and appeared to have been excused for academic reasons. One (1.6%) had a significant flag on their preliminary background check. Twenty (32.8%) students changed their major to something other than Criminal Justice, including Business Administration, Human Services, and Exercise and Sports Sciences. Major changes suggest that the students changed their mind about what they wanted to do with their education and/or career. The largest proportion of students left the Program within

Table 2.
All Police Program students (N = 573), all students who graduated in or before May 2022 (n = 323), and Academy graduates (n = 74) demographic characteristics, as well as significance tests comparing the original pool of students with graduates.

	All Police Program	All graduated before 2022	Academy graduates before 2022	X^2 (df)	p
Sex					
Male	365 (63.7%)	203 (69.5%)	56 (75.7%)	3.08 (1)	.080
Female	162 (28.3%)	89 (27.6%)	16 (21.6%)		
Missing	46 (8.0%)	31 (9.6%)	2 (2.7%)		
Race					
White	413 (72.1%)	225 (69.7%)	66 (89.2%)	11.51 (6)	.074
Black/African American	34 (5.9%)	22 (6.8%)	1 (1.4%)		
Latin American	13 (2.3%)	8 (2.5%)	1 (1.4%)		
Asian/Pacific Islander	5 (.9%)	3 (.9%)	0 (0.0%)		
Native American/Alaskan	3 (.5%)	1 (.3%)	0 (0.0%)		
Multiple racial identities	8 (1.4%)	6 (1.9%)	1 (1.4%)		
Unknown	35 (6.1%)	19 (5.9%)	2 (2.7%)		
Missing	62 (10.8%)	39 (12.1%)	3 (4.1%)		
Ethnicity					
Hispanic	64 (11.2%)	25 (7.7%)	3 (4.1%)	5.31 (1)	.021
Not Hispanic	386 (67.4%)	189 (58.5%)	66 (89.2%)		
Missing	123 (21.5%)	109 (33.75)	5 (6.8%)		
Received need-based financial aid	438 (76.4%)	243 (75.2%)	57 (77.0%)	2.03 (1)	.154
First Generation student	176 (30.7%)	92 (28.5%)	12 (16.2%)	10.09 (1)	.001
Enrolled in TRIO	30 (5.2%)	22 (6.8%)	3 (4.1%)	1.67 (1)	.197

Note. Chi-square compared the proportion of students who enrolled in or before class of 2022 with the Academy classes that graduated in or before 2022.

their first year at Fitchburg State (53.3%), with fewer leaving during their third year (25.0%), second year (16.7%), and fourth year (5.0%). These findings suggest that the students who are most likely to leave the Police Program do so during their first year, and that students leave the Program because they cannot meet the academic requirements or because they change their mind about their career path. However, there may be other reasons that we have not captured in this data.

Completed bachelor's degree

We identified 232 (40.5%) students who are no longer enrolled because they graduated from Fitchburg State with their bachelor's degree. 91 (39.2%) of those students continued into the Academy and 139 (59.9%) of those students had left the Police Program before graduation.[1] Each of these groups will be considered in turn.

Enrolled in Academy

At the time of writing, six recruit officer courses (ROCs) had been started and five ROCs had been completed. See Table 3 for the patterns of enrollment and graduation in the five ROCs. In the first five ROCs, 197 students graduated with a bachelor's degree, 79 (40%) entered the Academy, and 74 (37.6%) graduated as certified municipal police officers in Massachusetts. Additionally, across all six classes that have graduated, 115 (50%) have enrolled in the master's program.

Did not enroll in Academy

Among the students who graduated from Fitchburg State, data suggested that students left the Police Program due to the mismatch between the Program's academic demands and the student's performance, due to failing pre-Academy tests, and because they changed their minds about their major. Among those who graduated from Fitchburg State but did not enter the Academy, only 5 (2.5%) had a GPA below the Program's 2.5 minimum. Indeed, the average final GPA among graduates was 3.55 (SD = .54). Additionally, some students did not enter the Academy because they failed pre-Academy checks, including the medical exams (1.7%) and fitness tests (3.4%). Finally, our data revealed that 23 (10%) students graduated with a degree in something other than Criminal Justice, including Business Administration, Human Services, and Exercise and Sports Sciences. However, unlike currently enrolled students, those who graduated were statistically just as likely to leave the Police Program during any year before graduation; during their first year (31%), second year (22%), third year (20%), or fourth year (25%).

[1] Two (0.9%) of those students graduated a year early and are planning to attend the Academy in 2024. These two students are excluded from the analyses.

Table 3.

Patterns of enrollment and graduation for bachelor's degree, Academy, and master's degree by recruit officer course (ROC).

	Enrolled BS	Graduated BS	Enrolled Academy	Graduated Academy	Enrolled MS	Graduated MS
	N	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)
1st ROC (2018)*	15	15 (100%)	10 (66.7%)	9 (90%)	11 (73.3%)	11 (100%)
2nd ROC (2019)	48	36 (75.0%)	9 (25.0%)	9 (100.0%)	17 (47.2%)	11 (64.7%)
3rd ROC (2020)	57	42 (73.7%)	21 (50.0%)	20 (95.2%)	26 (61.9%)	9 (34.6%)
4th ROC (2021)	103	53 (51.5%)	16 (30.2%)	15 (93.8%)	20 (37.7%)	5 (25.0%)
5th ROC (2022)	100	51 (51%)	23 (45.1%)	21 (91.3%)	24 (47.1%)	1 (4.2%)
6th ROC (2023)	84	33 (39.3%)	12 (36.4%)		17 (51.5%)	
Total	407	230 (56.5%)	91 (39.6%)		115 (50.0%)	

Note. * indicated that the total registration in police concentration was not available.
Percent who graduated is out of the total enrollment. Percent who enrolled in the Academy is out of the total who graduated. Percent who graduated from the Academy is out of those who enrolled in the Academy. Percent who enrolled in master's is out of those who graduated with bachelors. Percent graduated with master's is out of those who enrolled in masters.

Overall enrollment, retention, and graduation trends

Of all the students who left the Police Program at any time of their career (*n* = 482, 84%), we identified the term when that happened for 364 (75.5%) of them. The greatest proportion of students left the Program during their first year of college (40%), but some also left during their second (15%), third (13%) and fourth (11%) years at Fitchburg State.

Two major events are often cited as contributing to why students left college or the Police Program over the last five years: the COVID-19 Pandemic and the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. Both of these events happened during 2020 and are, therefore, difficult to distinguish within our data. See Figure 1 for a graphical representation of the number of students departing the Police Program by year. The number of students who left the Police Program each year steadily increased from one in 2015 to its peak during 2020 (n = 70, 19.2%) and 2021 (n = 72, 19.8%). In 2022 attrition dropped to only 40 (11%) students. At its peak, the attrition each year accounted for approximately 20% of all the students who left the program, totaling 142 (39%) students leaving during 2020 and 2021. The pattern of years during which students left the program does support the theory that the COVID-19 Pandemic (beginning in March 2020) or the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police officers (on May 25, 2020) were the reasons students left the program. This is assuming that attrition due to these events occurred in 2020 and continued into 2021. While the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with many people leaving higher education because of the cost and dislike for distance education, the murder of George Floyd was associated with historic attrition and recruitment issues within policing (Bulman & Fairlie, 2022; Mourtgos, Adams, & Nix, 2021). Both events could have impacted Police Program enrollment but without specific information about each of the students who left during 2020 and 2021, we cannot speculate about which event was more impactful.

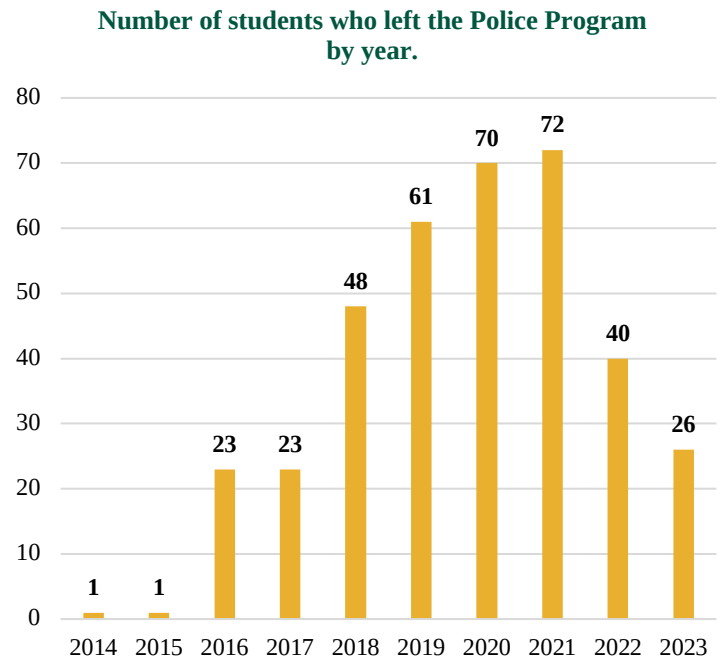

Figure 1. A bar graph depicting the number of the students who exited the Police Program by year.

Take-aways on enrollment, retention, and graduation

Overall, our findings suggest that those who enter and graduate from the Academy are more likely to be white, male, non-Hispanic, and have parents with a college degree than those who enroll in the Police Program. Additionally, trends of attrition and graduation suggest that personal development, academic and training performance, and global events are among the reasons students remain in the Police Program, but more information from the students is needed to fully explain attrition from the Program.

Stakeholder experiences with, and perceptions of, the Police Program: focus groups

We conducted ten focus groups among Fitchburg State faculty and staff (n = 20; collectively referred to as "faculty"), current Program students (n = 13), and drill instructors (n = 2). The goal of these focus groups was to understand what people on campus know and think about the Police Program as well as probe for the mechanisms and outcomes stakeholders prioritized for future evaluation. For a technical description of the methods, please see Appendix B.

Here each question is presented with a description of the themes that emerged from each group of stakeholders.

What is the goal of the Police Program?

When asked what they perceived to be the goals of the police program, respondents tended to discuss two major themes: better policing and professional training and development. Additionally, some faculty expressed uncertainty about the goal.

"Better policing"

Both faculty and students expressed that they believed the goal of the Police Program is to create better policing by creating community-focused officers with a wider perspective.

Community-focused officers

When discussing the better policing goal, students and faculty alike reported that one way the Police Program works toward better policing is by developing officers who are community focused. Students tended to think of themselves as being actively involved in "influenc[ing] the community [where] you work" and acknowledged that they are "working with people's lives" similar to those in medical professions, like nursing. This sense comes with an implicit recognition that being community-focused is unlike current forms of policing, with students expressing the need to "have better relationships" with communities than is currently the norm. Faculty echoed this sentiment by emphasizing the goal of "trying to do something better than what's been done in the past." They specifically highlighted the need to produce officers who are "less at risk of the kind of violence we've seen in places around the country in the past few years," and who are instead utilizing "critical thinking" and who "had a guardian mindset rather than a warrior mindset." Faculty even took this a step further and discussed evaluating officers by using more community-centric goals rather than traditional policing measures, "how many people did you put at ease . . . [h]ow many kids did you maybe affect in a positive manner by being accessible, being out and about?" One respondent summed this up by saying that the goal was to create police who

are “not out there to arrest. They're out there to protect and serve and make sure that people get the help they need if they are in emergencies.”

Wider perspective

Faculty and student focus groups also both highlighted the development of a wider perspective as one of the goals of the Police Program. Students tended to frame this a bit more specifically around college, highlighting the benefits of the “extra education level” offered by the Police Program, and expressing the view that, within policing, “[e]veryone, regardless of what level they’re at, needs to be educated,” before specifying college as the best way to do that.

Faculty were a bit broader in their perspectives, hoping that the Police Program would give students “a deeper awareness than your average 18-year-old comes with,” which would allow them to “think critically and broadly about policing from a lot of different perspectives,” all the way up to, and including “understanding a global perspective.” One faculty member summed this up by saying, “I know the goal is to get them a full education and help to foster a well-rounded law enforcement pool,” while also stating that the goal of this is to “giv[e] … students, and police, people interested in law enforcement a wider, a more holistic education.”

When discussing what better policing looks like, a smaller number of faculty expressed a hope that the Police Program could instill in graduates “[m]ore empathy, and things of that nature, so that they can understand they are policing people who are like themselves.” Another respondent similarly saw the goal of the Police Program to be “to create and instill empathy in our police students and to get them to not make that division between them and us, and citizens and the police.”

“Professional training and development”

Both students and faculty reported that the goal of the Police Program was to train and develop police officers by instilling specific knowledge and skills and support in getting jobs. Students and drill instructors reported that the goal of the Police Program was professional training and development that prepared students for the police academy and gave them realistic job expectations.

Instilling specific knowledge and skills

Both faculty and students agreed that a major goal of the Police Program is to teach and train students around skills related to policing. Faculty reported that they hoped students were learning, “tangible skills such as writing skills, speaking skills, presentation skills, problem-solving skills, analytical skills, critical thinking,” as well as “organizational skills, and self-maintenance.” These skills, among others, were perceived as necessary to be “ready on day one for what the job actually is” and “to be a really informed officer of the law.” Faculty also saw these skills as crucial to “be

prepared for an advanced position" and "to move educated officers up the ranks once they are hired."

Students expressed broadly similar ideas, noting that they believed the Police Program will "build a police officer that's ready for the world," and saw their efforts at Fitchburg State as "preparation" for their future careers. But they reported that the Police Program does two main things for those who are enrolled: prepares them for the Academy and helps them understand what the job of being a police officer is actually like.

Preparing for the Academy

Many students expressed uncertainty about their transition to the Academy. Still, they reported that the Police Program generally is "trying to have us ready for the Academy when we get there." They reflected that completing their studies, and the associated Police Program activities, will "help our day one [of the Academy] not be as bad" because they are "somewhat squared away" due to the experiences they have already had. Students know that the Academy will be very different from what they have done so far, but believe that the training with drill instructors, and other police training, act as "a little shock here and there throughout your four years" to prepare them for the future.

Drill instructors expressed a similar point of view. They noted that the Police Program will "get the students a little bit prepared for the Academy and police life once they get out." They believe that this is superior to the "traditional route" where "you just jump into all this training . . . [i]t's kind of a lot to hit you all at once." Instead, they prefer the method where "[students] have the director telling them anything and everything they need to know before it comes to the moment before they go to the police Academy."

Understanding, obtaining, and succeeding at the job

Beyond teaching skills that are valuable in the Academy, students also saw the Police Program as helping them understand whether they want to become police at all (mirroring a later theme of the positive aspects of attrition among the Police Program students). Students noted that their experiences at Fitchburg State can help "make sure you want to be a police officer" and provide "extra knowledge of what you're getting yourself into" in order to be able to better "understand what policing actually is."

Finally, moving beyond the process of helping students decide if they wanted a job in policing, a small number of faculty highlighted that one goal of the Police Program is to help students find employment. They viewed the goals as "[t]o get students trained and then . . . to get them jobs." Some also saw this as a way to help students both to obtain initial employment and also to move up the ranks more quickly: "the Program's goal is to provide opportunities for students to be able to complete a bachelor's and master's degree, in a sort of efficient and expedited way, as well as

graduate from the police academy, to then [be] prepared to start their law enforcement career, and prepared to advance in positions of leadership with an advanced degree."

"Don't know"

With this question, as well as others, it is important to acknowledge that a minority of respondents – faculty, in this case – reported being unable to answer the question about the goals of the Police Program. Respondents like this would simply say, "I do not know" or would give non-committal statements such as, "[d]epends on who you talk to." While in some ways it might seem tempting to leave this data out, these seeming non-responses in fact constitute a type of response when considered together. The fact is that there are at least some faculty on campus who have no knowledge of the goals of the Police Program, and for whom the entire thing may represent a kind of black box. Indeed, this perspective may be more prevalent among faculty even than the current respondents' statements reflect since it is reasonable to imagine that a self-selection bias may be at work (e.g., some faculty may have chosen not to participate in the focus groups based on the reality, or the perception, that they had nothing to add to such a conversation).

The issue of the lack of knowledge about the Police Program will be discussed further in the recommendations section.

Is the Program achieving its goals, and how do you know?

When asked whether the Police Program is achieving its goals and how they know, faculty tended to point to more indicators than did students. However, common themes that emerged across samples were attrition from the Program as an indicator of success, course learning outcomes, and professional socialization. Faculty also stated that increased enrollment was an indicator of success and that they did not know if the Police Program was achieving its goals.

"Attrition"

When asked to identify how they knew whether the Police Program was meeting its goals or not, both students and faculty considered attrition to be an indicator of success.

Students viewed attrition exclusively positively, seeing it as a way to weed out those who, for whatever reason, are not good candidates for the job of policing. They acknowledged that there will be a certain percentage of students "who think they want to do the job, and realiz[e] that maybe it's not for them" through the course of their time on campus. Some saw it as better for this to happen early on rather than "going out into the world and realizing it's not for them." One student hypothesized that the Police Program would be better at this simply because whereas a bad candidate "can make it through three or four months" at a traditional Academy and "it's like you're

good to go," instead "[h]ere, it's like you actually have to make it through four or five years without messing up. Here people do get picked out, weeded out."

Students tended to feel that leaving the Program is within people's control, and they tended to view these departures as indicating that the person was not meeting Police Program requirements. This was true in areas of objective measurements, such as the physical fitness test, where students viewed a failure as a "sign" of their low level of commitment, arguing that "[y]ou had four years," and summing up the failure as occurring "because you didn't want to go out and run a couple of times a week." Academically, students reported counting on the classes, and their challenging content, to eliminate some people: "I hope that the people who think that they don't want to do that are sitting in that class hating it and dropping it. I want you to sit in that uncomfortableness and realize that, okay, I can't do this; like great, I don't want you here then." Overall, there was a sense that if a person has some deficiency, "[i]t'll catch up by senior year" and that there was "more pressure" as time went along.

Faculty also saw the positive side of attrition, mirroring many of the same issues identified by the students: "I think there's two advantages to it. One is the idea that people who decide that they don't want to do this because they don't want to be police officers, they leave. And the other is that people who can't handle the demands on their maturity including being able to do their class work, and stay out of trouble, they leave." However, faculty also reported concerns about the downsides of attrition. Faculty were primarily concerned that "the attrition is disproportionately female and people of color," and that "the cohort gets smaller and smaller as the years go on, and we see a lot of the diversity, whether it's socioeconomic diversity, racial and ethnic diversity, filter out." Connecting this with the faculty's goal of community-focused policing, one respondent noted that, as a result of skewed attrition, "I also think if we want our cops to reflect our community, that is not happening either."

"Takeaways from coursework" and "Academic behavior"

Several success indicators raised by respondents revolved around academics. Students reported that one way they knew the Police Program was successful was their experiences in their courses. Some highlighted policing-specific skills - such as readiness they learned in particular classes: "Legal issues of policing, especially last class with the videos of traffic stops, the officers were killed on. It gives the reality, this is the nature, and the danger of the job; . . . Being educated on responses, and how certain responses are perceived by the public as well." Others spoke about the MPTC curriculum as a whole: "in the MPTC classes, all six classes, whatever the teachers are teaching in that class, it's for a reason; it's gonna be useful in the future one way or another."

Other students highlighted the benefits of non-CJ classes, suggesting that such classes "forc[e] you to open your eyes to like reality before you step out," and noting that "I have taken sociology classes, too, that made me think 'that would affect this in policing.'" Some reported that the

perspective that can be gained from attending college is crucial for development: "[L]et's just say you didn't graduate college and you're going right out of high school, and you wait till you're 21 and go to the academy. You don't have the understanding; you only understand what high school gave you, and high school doesn't give you anything, it just gives you that degree to go to college." Just attending college, though, might not be sufficient on its own to create better policing. For example, one student argued that non-MPTC classes are valuable specifically for those who might never seek a critical perspective: "you have to take classes that aren't just about policing, you have to find about criminal justice, arts, and sciences. I think it does a really good job at forcing some of the students to see a different perspective . . . I don't want to generalize, like there [are] some people going to policing in a very rigid way. And having to think about criminal justice, or policing in a different way; they probably don't wanna learn about structural racism in policing, but they have to."

When faculty discussed academic outcomes, they noted the positives of perceiving students to be "more enlightened as opposed to pre-MPTC incorporation," and noted more "critical thinking and exploration . . . creating people who have a better fit for what they want to do to help the field of Criminal Justice in general" and "well-rounded police officer[s]" specifically. However, there were also some more neutral and negative observations. There is an ongoing tension – addressed elsewhere in this report – about the usefulness of non-CJ classes. A non-CJ faculty member reported, "I even had a student in the fall who was saying, 'We just have to write these police reports . . .' They don't want anything else they think is outside of their program."

Furthermore, there was pushback by some faculty against the idea that the Police Program is achieving its' larger goals. For instance, some faculty reported: "it's just hard, you're trying to direct the discussion towards this sort of more liberal values we talk about here, empathy for everybody and all that kind of stuff. But, a lot of times, their default is right and wrong, black and white . . . But it does mean, often, it is still knee-jerk, and it [is] still a little bit disturbing." Another reported similarly, "If there's the perception of being too woke or anti-cop, I've noticed they shut down. I have seen that in my classes, and I have heard this anecdotally, if they're challenged to think critically, especially about their future career, they're particularly unwilling to do that." Along the lines of the attrition issue above, one faculty member wondered whether the Police Program might drive away students who take too much influence from other classes: "I think about a lot of critical thinking, sensitive, good communicating students who . . . didn't cross that line [and graduate] . . . the majority of them, are ones that are more likely to answer '. . . I don't really have to think about how I'm contributing to the human services needs of the people I meet.' So, I don't know, but I worry that there are two paths and two goals, two sets of priorities; the actual finishing of the 4+1 program, may be better suited to folks not so much focused on becoming critical thinkers and great communicators."

"Professional socialization" and "Inclusiveness"

Faculty saw the extent to which the Police Program imparts key professional socialization to students as one important measure of the Program's success. This can take the form of faculty seeing chiefs of police who are "happy with our recruits" (a position also endorsed by drill instructors), but also was more forward-looking than that. Some faculty saw the potential success of the Program not exclusively in the students' ability to succeed in the short-term, but rather in "planting seeds that will bear fruit when it's time to promote and particularly when they get far enough for command."

However, in the process of becoming socialized in ways that will allow them to succeed in policing, some faculty wondered if other important messages were being lost. This question was especially poignant as students approached the Academy: "For folks in the final semester of their senior year, as they're socializing, and getting ready for the Academy, even when I had them in prior classes, they behave and present themselves very differently. I know they're being socialized, they're sort of getting ready for the important task of the Academy, but I sort of wonder, are they also holding on [to] 'I need to be a critical thinker'?" Faculty specifically commented upon students being yelled at by drill instructors as "very counterintuitive to everything else that we're doing," and also mentioned how the requirement to wear uniforms can create a "neo-military kind of thought" among students and can create a "kind of separation from the rest of the student body [that] is not necessarily a healthy thing."

Along these same lines, some faculty raised the issue of the extent to which the Police Program can be both inclusive and exclusive, particularly with students. They reported, for example, that "4+1 students do tend to clump with each other; they don't interact with anybody else in the class unless I force them to." This tendency for students who know each other to sit together takes on additional importance with Police Program students "because the students are siloed, and they don't really interact with people outside of theirs, which as a citizen, that makes me nervous. If police officers only spend time with police officers, that makes me nervous, the same way with other groups that serve the public." These dynamics can be difficult enough to navigate when the issue is Police Program students versus the general student population, but other dynamics exist as well: "I had a recent juvenile justice course that was crowded with maybe 28 police students and two or three non. It was really tough to feel heard, and I also noticed I have students of color coming to me afterward, saying they didn't feel comfortable speaking. I don't know how to handle that exactly, you can't like say, 'let this person speak.'" These problems can also be exacerbated if, for instance, the university intentionally groups students in similar programs into on-campus living arrangements. Some faculty were concerned that, by doing so, "you're building that police mentality that you know . . . [w]e don't want."

Exclusivity is not limited to questions of students. Some non-CJ faculty reported that they "weren't included" in discussions about what the Police Program would be when it was being formed.

Others reported feeling excluded when, upon attending an Academy graduation, they were denied entry into faculty seating in the front of the event because those seats were reserved solely for "their core faculty" (e.g., CJ faculty). This incident was reported to have led to a feeling of "stepping-back sort of ever since."

"Enrollment"

A minor theme noted by faculty was the perception that the Police Program has succeeded through "increased enrollment."

"Don't know"

In this section as well, a small number of faculty reported that, when attempting to evaluate success, "I don't feel like I have a lot to go off of." This was especially true for non-CJ faculty, one of whom reported, "I don't see them much when they get to their senior year . . . I don't know who they become when they leave here."

Has the program met your expectations and how or how not?

When asked if the Police Program met their expectations and how so, faculty and students responded that the Program both met and did not meet their expectations but pointed to different aspects of the Program.

Faculty

Faculty discussed their met and unmet expectations through student academic performance and how siloed the Police Program and the students can be.

"Students' academic performance"

Faculty reported the quality of the students was an area in which the Program both met and did not meet their expectations. Some tended to view the students from a generally positive perspective: "I have seen students, particularly the ones . . . from the Police Program; they were the best. They came in, full of curiosity, and very motivated to do the right thing, to do good. And so I think that there has been an anecdotal way of saying that we have made a difference just by the model of the program itself."

Some faculty acknowledged that many Police Program students are high-achievers and high-quality students – "I have had some students who were fabulous, you know, come through; they're really thoughtful, good critical-thinker, and so forth" – but also stated that this might not be true universally: "I don't have any sense of if they're the majority." Still others reported a kind of split within Police Program students: "I do feel mixed about it, in the sense that some students are very outstanding with it and the other half of students is more I'm not sure what they're getting out of

a general education curriculum that might challenge them intentionally." This faculty member shared an example of a class where four Police Program students were enrolled, and two were "quite strong" and routinely engaged in difficult conversations about race, whereas the other two were "quiet" during these discussions, and would "[find] ways" to avoid "engaging with . . . the text," and were overall more "withdrawn from the material." This idea – about Police Program students breaking down into two groups – was seen in other areas of the data as well, supporting the wider validity of this anecdote.

"Siloed" and "Non-CJ faculty inclusion"

Faculty reported some concerns that they felt the Police Program was siloed in a variety of ways, which met some expectations of a professional training program: "it's exactly what I thought it would be. It would be tunnel-vision, siloed, 'we're just gonna become cops' cause they're having experience with other professional programs." As discussed above, some reported that students see their Program work as more important than anything else: "I've seen that in other professional programs, not only here but at other universities. That's the idea of 'we're promising you if you get through to these times, you'll be prepared for this job.' Very siloed, tunnel vision; nothing else is important."

The issue of siloing was not limited to students, however. Some faculty reported having a difficult time even understanding whether the Police Program is successful "because of the way the Department is siloed to such an extent that criminal justice is here, the Police Program is there, human services here, and sociology here. And I think that kind of lack of interaction between it or among the programs has not been helpful." Another non-CJ faculty member felt that initially there had been messaging about "how the 4+1 program would be overlapping or connecting to [the rest of Behavioral Sciences]. It was sort of presented to me as that the curriculum is more integrated than what I discovered it is." This led the faculty member to perceive that, relative to the Police Program, they were "definitely on the outside of what's thought of as the core purpose of this."

Students

Students discussed their met and unmet expectations regarding the extent to which the Academy content is integrated with academics, disciplinary issues, and Program costs.

"Academic expectations"

One area where students felt that the Police Program met their expectations was academics. Overall, students reported positive feelings about their academic experiences in general, saying, "I feel good about my degree, and it's something I'm proud of," and noting that "academics has met my standards of what I expected it to be."

However, the academic program did not meet all students' expectations. Some students reported feeling that "six MPTC classes . . . is such a small portion to have such a specialized program . . .

I just thought it would be more of a specialization than just normal CJ." Along these lines, some reported feeling upset when professors "did not teach MPTC" curriculum, saying, "I was just shocked, why am I paying you? Everything we're supposed to learn for the academy, I just don't have right now . . . two of the professors. I had them twice each, and have yet to teach me anything about MPTC." Still, others reported a desire for more professors teaching MPTC classes: "We need to get more professors out here, to kinda, for them to teach us what they've been through, what they've been successful at, not successful at so then, that we feed off of it." Others, though, preferred the smaller number of professors because it allows for more consistency: "We're all getting the same experience. Everybody is coming out with the same thing."

"Intensity of the Academy portion"

Students reported that the amount and intensity of the police training did not meet their expectations.

Students reported that they had expected that a greater portion of the Police Program was going to "be very squad-based": "it's not what I [thought] it would be like. When you hear police work, you hear, you know, working out with your squads, being platoons, kinda like socializing with each other." Some assumed this would be part of the official MPTC curriculum, while others thought it might be less formal: "One thing that was not met, was I thought we were gonna do a lot more hands-on things, as like a group. Like if squad is going . . . [to] have a squad meet-up one day, or like every other day, doing like exercise, like a workout. Not like just someone volunteering to run that, or something like that. I thought every week, we would have like a run, or every month, not just like every month have a meeting."

Along similar lines, students reported a desire for more hands-on experience. Some wanted this to be "hands-on work with police departments," while others understood that that might not be possible: "we don't even have to go to the field. That's more dangerous, and the school doesn't wanna risk our lives. Let's just be in the department, and see what happens; what calls they get, how they pull themselves together in the department." Still others reported that they would be satisfied with increased contact with working police officers: "having people who are on the job meet with leadership of the Program to create stuff."

"Disciplinary issues"

Another area where students' expectations were not consistently met was discipline. Their responses revealed ongoing tension between the desire for more attention to whether individuals were following MPTC rules, and recognizing the difficulties associated with making such a change. One underlying issue in this area is that of the nature, and extent, of the authority of Police Program students over their peers. As described above, the Police Program has several layers of student leadership, but students reported that the level of authority – both practical and moral authority – of those leaders was decidedly unclear. Students perceived that some student leaders

were chosen on limited criteria – "they have a higher position, cause they wrote a better essay" – that would not necessarily translate to respecting their authority. Students also reported that some types of exercise of authority were perceived as an "ego-trip" and that "that's why the academy doesn't enforce it as much," which suggests that less authority for student leaders may be viewed as a good thing rather than a problem.

There were broader reports from students about uncertainty about who has the authority to call out small disciplinary infractions, such as those related to uniforms or grooming. There was some sense that students lack the moral authority to point out these errors, since those doing the enforcement may be committing other infractions as well: "you're not gonna write up the kid you were partying with all weekend." Others viewed the calling out of such infractions as "not my place." And there was also a sense that the presence of larger infractions rendered smaller infractions less worthy of concern, and may be a sign that discipline surrounding small infractions is viewed as unimportant by the Police Program: "I'm like, 'Okay. This kid doesn't even come in uniform, I don't think my earrings are a matter.' Cause I know nobody's watching me."

Some students appeared to internally resolve this conflict by punting the issue of discipline to the drill instructors, whose authority to discipline students is universally recognized as valid. However, while drill instructors are present at monthly meetings – and enforce discipline there – they are rarely present for classes, leading to students letting smaller things slide: "I still think the DIs should pop in at least once a week. They don't work that far, why not come in once a week?"

Students were aware, however, that it is difficult to strike a balance between retention and discipline over small infractions, as illustrated by this exchange:

> S01: I would say the program isn't doing its job. I think it's hard cause if they're too strict on us, we're gonna complain.
>
> S02: Or we're gonna quit.
>
> S01: And if they're not strict enough, we're complaining. It's hard for them to find an in-between.

Students' attitudes were more unified, however, on larger disciplinary issues, and infractions of greater importance. Students perceived that there was an ongoing lack of accountability for a small group of students who seemed to be able to avoid consequences: "But to look and see that I'm trying my absolute hardest, I'm doing all my work, I'm respectful, I hope at least. For the most part, I'm doing my best, and to see someone find the easy way out by doing all this stuff that just . . ." Students were aware that sometimes the decision in this area was out of the Police Program's hands, but that did not lessen their feelings about it: "it's upsetting because I did speak with

Director Lane about it, and I know that her hands are tied to a certain extent because it's university policy where you can't just kick students out blah blah blah. But there needs to be a way where people are held accountable like they said they would be. We're being yelled at, and screamed at by these DIs for a bunch of good reasons, but that's it; it's just constant being yelled at for the same thing, nothing is coming of it because the people who are doing it are never gonna change at this point in time."

These issues were most serious when they rose to the extent of unbecoming conduct. Although these incidents were rare, students reported being upset by other students who displayed, "outright immaturity, irresponsible. I hate to say it, but prejudice, and sexism." Another confirmed the experience of "sexism and disrespect," as well as calling out "someone who had a confederate flag." Students were concerned about the perceived lack of action in response to serious problems, saying, "Director Lane is always talking about we don't want the bad police officers; you're not going to make it through if you do this, no tolerance for this, and unfortunately, that's just not the case; it's not what we hear, it's not what we see, and the people who are making it through the program." In summary, students' expectations about the Program's willingness and power to enforce minor infractions, such as uniform violations, and major infractions, such as unbecoming conduct, were not met.

"Command structure"

Another area where students reported the Police Program did not meet their expectations was in regard to the command structure. Director Lane is universally viewed as an asset to the Police Program (see below in the section about the strengths of the Program) but one way students reported that their expectations were not being met was that the Director's availability is very limited. Students acknowledged that Director Lane is "a busy woman; she's running this program" and that "she has a lot on her plate." But at the same time, they perceived her as being "very hard to reach," which creates problems "if the only person who could possibly know the answer to this question doesn't have time to meet with me." Not every problem needs the Director's attention, but students perceived that "you can't just come up and talk to even the sergeant or DIs" and that, in the end, "somebody has to be there."

Students foresaw challenges with fixing this issue, given the current Program staffing. One student proposed the idea of having a drill instructor be available to speak with students, but eventually dismissed this saying, "Sometimes, we don't need the DIs in our faces. Sometimes, we need help, and support; we need to be able to come to you with questions . . . things like that because there's still college, we're still in an academic program. We don't have our lives figured out yet; we don't necessarily feel comfortable going to certain people because of who they need to be at our monthly meetings." This student eventually suggested hiring someone "who's approachable" to help deal with these kinds of issues.

Students also reported that there can sometimes be communication issues up and down the chain of command, including "miscommunication between even Director Lane and the drill instructors." They reported that a key point of disconnect is between upper-level figures and student leadership and that having better communication across these groups is key, because "the lack of communication stresses us out."

"Pre-enrollment information: cost"

One final area where students felt that their expectations were not being met was in the provision of certain types of information prior to enrolling in the Police Program. One such area is related to payment for the Academy. Some students had the impression that their tuition would be paid for, and later found out that "they hold a spot for you at the academy. We're guaranteed a spot, but we still have to pay for that spot." One student reported: "We were also told the Police Program was our sponsor. So, the expectation was that . . . for that part of it, but that's not the case. I think the way it's worded when I joined and stuff, I think that was a little misleading . . . In the greatest scheme, it's not a huge cost, but it's thousands . . . It's still a cost we weren't expecting."

What is the greatest strength of the police program?

When asked about the greatest strengths of the Police Program, faculty, students, and drill instructors agreed that the academic and professional training and the socialization and social support are strengths. Students and drill instructors also stated that the reputation of the Program and University buy-in for the Program are strengths. Students and faculty mentioned student accountability and socio-emotional maturity as strengths. And faculty mentioned Director Lane as a strength of the Program.

"Curriculum" and "Educational" and "Professional Skills"

Faculty and students alike praised the curricular and educational aspects of the Police Program. Faculty specifically approved of "having the human services classes as part of the program," as well as the colloquium class, saying, "I think that's a strength of the program . . . I know some of the books they've read in that class . . . the fact that they're even exposed to those ideas, I think there's definitely an improvement over the regular police academy as I understand it." They perceived that, as a result of this education, the Police Program would produce a different quality of officer: "there are some creative things happening with challenging students to look at other perspectives . . . I got some really impressive students who have thought through who they want to be as an officer, what their plan is, and why." But they also felt that the effects were broader than simply on the students' professional work: "there are folks who are thinking really critically and productively about law enforcement and law, and policy, and law-making, and all sorts of things . . . I get a chance to glance at students doing some great integrative work with the curriculum." One faculty member summarized it by saying, "I've taught a lot of places, [the Police Program is] not like anything that I've seen."

Students also saw education as a strength, citing equally the overall broadening effects of education as well as the effects on their professional abilities. For example, one student who reflected on the overall benefits of education stated: "[t]he whole college experience does make you more well-rounded, like I certainly can think more on my own than I think other people can, who didn't go to college." And a student who reflected on the effects on their professional abilities stated: "I think having a more educated person to make those decisions that are probably on somebody's worst day or life or death for some people is huge, and a better-educated person is gonna make better decisions, and better outcomes for the communities that they're in." Students also identified Human Services classes as valuable, saying that they "complement the Police Program," and that the skills learned there – as well as in other classes, such as communications classes – would be valuable on the job. One student even admitted, "I learned a lot more than I thought I was going to in some of the classes."

Drill instructors agreed that students' classroom learning would be valuable: "having the students from here being engrained in that lifestyle, being at school, going to all these classes, and learning; that gives them kind of a leg up on those other recruits that are coming out of other academies and competing with them for jobs." However, they also observed that experience as imparting more basic personal skills: "And the way we are, you gotta talk, use your words, put down your phone, look at someone eye-to-eye, shake their hand, 'How are you? I'm recruit such-and-such.' I think it's huge as in communication, and they have to do it in college." They also looked beyond the classroom to the MPTC meetings as producing positive outcomes, though they noted that those outcomes had wider applicability: "[t]hey're learning things every single month that will benefit them in the Academy, in their career, in their life; even if they decided they don't want to go through the Police Program, they want to go the traditional route."

"Social support" and "Social dynamics of program" and "Networking"

Faculty and students both cited social support as a strength of the Police Program. Students reported that being together with a cohort is helpful for them generally: "We all know each other from day one, freshman year, to learn our coping mechanisms, and be able to talk with each other. I think that it's very helpful." Others reported this support as a way to keep motivated: "it makes you excited for your future. Okay, we're in the program, we're all gonna become police officers, maybe we'll go to the same department . . . I think it makes it so much easier that you have your friends since freshman year." Having this "camaraderie" was seen as a strength, and cited as something that students missed in semesters where they did not take any MPTC classes: "it reminds me, sometimes, I'm like, why am I in this program because . . . I don't live with people from the program, I'm distanced from what it is about . . . but it's a nice reminder that we're all in this together. If you live like me, in [dormitory name], none of my roommates are CJ, you are far away from it. Now, I'm not taking MPTC classes, this monthly meeting remind[s] me that this is what I'm here for, I'm fully charged up, and I'm ready to go."

Faculty had similar perceptions, stating "the students, they do feel like they're not alone; they have other people going through this with them, so that is definitely a strength." Faculty did see the group cohesion as having potential downsides (see below), but noted that "[a]s much as it can be a negative, the Program does a really great job with cohorts, of creating a community that supports that Program." Faculty also saw themselves as part of the social support network for students: "I think that the strength of the Program is that students form relationships with professors, not just academy instructors . . . If our future police officers consider their relationships with their professors as significant as their relationships with their academy instructors and trainers in departments. We have a chance for the things and attitudes and the substance that we're trying to teach to go along with the emotional bond, and I think that's a real strength of the Program"

The drill instructors also reported that building a wide variety of professional interconnections was a valuable outcome primarily through giving students a wider set of experiences to draw from: "The strength of the Program, I would say probably the accessibility that the students have to all the instructors, leading up to the academy . . . I think it's just things that can help them, give them a little bit more access to different people in the policing field, different officers, different departments. The way things are done, everyone does things differently across the state. It's kind of opening up their eyes if they want to go to the state, municipal, or whatever they want to do, all those different departments, kind of giving them different options."

"Reputation"

Students cited the Police Program's reputation as its own strength. One cited it as a major reason for enrolling: "That's the whole reason why I came to Fitchburg State, just for the Police Program. I know there's not another school that do[es] something like that." Others reported that sharing where they go to college can cause them to "get more respect" because of the "name recognition."

Reputation was seen as valuable on its own, but also because of the opportunities it leads to. These opportunities included local short-term work – "I'm doing a traffic officer, and we wouldn't even have that opportunity without them" – but also internship placements: "I'm doing an internship this summer . . . There are 90 people, I don't even know how many they picked but I'm in the Fitchburg Police Program . . . they want you more cause they know what we're all about. That's a very big benefit that people don't know. Any internship that you want, as soon as you say you're in the Fitchburg Police Program, they want you."

Even without specific tangible outcomes, students believed that the Police Program's reputation may give them a key edge in job searches: "I think that the connection you make here is really awesome, half of life is who you know. But to me, it really is . . . If somebody has that connection, sees you and sees your name, has heard of you, even if it's that bump above one person."

"Program adjustments" and "University buy-in"

Students also saw the vibrancy and changing nature of the Police Program as a strength. While change can be difficult at times, they tend to have a positive view: "I think a strength is that you can really tell they're trying to wrap it up and put it in the right direction and they're trying to figure stuff out. It might seem like a roller coaster, with ups and downs, and things changing a little bit; you can definitely tell that people are putting more into the Program, not money-wise, but people are investing, there are more stakeholders." Another student agreed, indicating that "every ROC is trial and error," but cited "the traffic control job at Fitchburg" as a new opportunity that had not existed previously, and saw this as putting a level of trust in students to do a good job, saying, "This is the first one, don't screw it up because it's put on you; you're trial and error." In the end, students tended to feel that those running the Police Program "care about the Program, and you can see that."

Along these lines, drill instructors noted that university buy-in had increased slowly over time. One drill instructor reported that: "In my opinion, when we first started, people were looking at the Program and the police; back then when it started we weren't well-liked. I think more people that work here, professors and stuff, you guys are all coming together and making not only this program but everything bigger and better on campus. I see it more and more 'cause there are a couple of teachers and stuff or doctors on campus that I saw before; they didn't want to look at me, but I see them now, and I'm like 'Hey,' talking to them 'how's the program,' 'it's going great, thank you for the support,' when before they were like 'huh' but you get that, that time when we had going on, and no one wanted to be around us, but they see you're trying to do good for the kids." The drill instructors also cited the opportunity to work with Exercise Science professors on research as a notable change, as well as "[b]eing able to use different facilities," as positive changes. They perceived that "that took a little while to kind of go in the right direction" but that "now it seems we're kind of going in that direction."

"Accountability" and "Student motivation and accountability" and "Socio-emotional maturity"

Students also mentioned accountability as a strength, but their interpretation of this concept tended to center around the idea that being a part of the Police Program is a kind of motivation, especially as it relates to tempering behavior: "It also keeps you out of trouble. I feel like when you're 18, 19, you kinda want to try and do something new. But that kinda holds you back." Students clearly acknowledged that being in the Police Program did not prevent all bad decision making, nor all youthful exploratory behavior, which was partially by design: "Dr. Lane tells us, 'You're gonna be a college kid. I don't want you to not experience what other college kids can get.' But I think for us, 'Okay. Maybe I shouldn't do this 'cause I want to be in this profession.' It makes you think about your actions. I think it's more like, the program is not telling you to not live your college lives, but . . ." They did note, however, that thoughts of jeopardizing their future profession were strong when more serious repercussions were looming, especially when it comes to the possibility

of getting kicked out of the Police Program: “It means more because you know that you had the strength to not do that . . . but in that moment when you’re 21, and had a few drinks, and you have to drive back. That makes you think you can get kicked out of the Program.” Students reported that it could be challenging to navigate college life now that marijuana use is legal for those over 21, but in order to become a police officer they are not allowed to have used marijuana within the previous year: “I can personally talk about that too. I used to smoke weed and everything, but it’s junior year, there’s no reason I should still be doing that when I know I’ll be going to the academy in two years . . . Just having the Police Program, the idea of it, the opportunity you get to have. You’re like, ‘Am I gonna be dumb and do whatever I want? Or am I gonna stop now, and be thankful for what I have?’”

Faculty also reflected on student accountability, motivation, and maturity; they highlighted the ability of the Police Program to either attract motivated and mature students or create these qualities in those already enrolled. On the academic side of things, faculty reported that motivation among the group is high: “I would say the 4+1 students were more engaged; they’re more like the nursing students . . . they’re among the students who really want to do well.” Faculty also reported that Police Program students can be counted on to take on more active roles in classes, such as when volunteers are needed “and no one is making eye contact; they’re just trying to disappear . . . it’s usually gonna be a 4+1 student, at the end of the day; and I do appreciate that.” Others described these students as “active learners, and they are coming to class wanting to get something out of it,” and as “confident mature people” who “interact with a new instructor, in a pretty confident, and casual but respectful way.” However, it should be noted that, as described above, faculty observed that this was not universally true of all Police Program students, but rather a certain percentage: “. . . of the students I teach, and there are police students and other students in the class, oftentimes the very best, most diligent students are Police Program students and most reluctant, annoying behaviorally, pain-in-the-ass students are police students both.”

“Director Lane”

Faculty cited Director Lane as an asset to the Program. They praised her as “[having] a real gravitas when it comes to dealing with the students” without using “the traditional, ‘I have rank and I can yell and you're going to listen to what I have to say because I have rank.’ She’s really, very good.” Faculty reported that Director Lane was able to help resolve thorny issues of cheating/plagiarism, and other issues with students. One faculty summarized this by saying, “she’s a great asset to this whole deal.”

What would you change?

When asked what changes they would make to the Police Program if they had the opportunity, students and faculty made recommendations about how to enhance the academic program and curriculum, although with different emphases. Additionally, faculty suggested changes to the

uniform requirements and students suggested structural changes that address some of their unmet expectations and changes to how time is spent at monthly meetings.

"Academics" and "Curriculum"

Both students and faculty identified proposed academic or curriculum changes they would like to see to the Police Program. However, in some ways, these recommendations work at cross-purposes, identifying a key tension across these stakeholder groups.

Students

Students reported ambivalence about their non-major classes. One student encapsulated much of the back-and-forth feelings on this topic by saying, "it's these totally unrelated classes that I'm required to take that aren't CJ. Art requirement is an example . . . that is so unhelpful to me in my future career; probably rounds you up as a person, but . . . I don't really know much about it . . . I don't necessarily see the point of that, I would rather just do more CJ classes." In one statement this student expressed a clear preference for fewer such classes, while also acknowledging the exact purpose that they are meant to achieve!

Students proposed a number of alternatives, such as requiring different non-CJ classes: "Instead of having these art classes, have classes that teach you about respect, morals, and human decency, common sense. I know it sounds kind of dumb, but I've been in classes and have heard conversations where I feel like students need that." Others proposed having classes that address topics that are important to police officers ("why is there no mental health class, when so much of policing is mental health, there're departments hiring full-time clinicians on staff, and stuff too? Why is that something we're not being taught instead of when you get on the job") and having CJ-centric versions of non-CJ classes: "I feel like . . . we need to take philosophy classes that really get you thinking, not just any philosophy but certain topics of philosophy that . . . would be very beneficial to all of us police officers." This perspective was endorsed by one faculty member who proposed "an ethics class designed specifically for police."[2]

General education aside, students expressed a preference for more courses with relevance to policing, noting that "classes could be better tailored to the Program," and saying that, "I do enjoy my MPTC classes, and I would love it actually if we were able to get more." This desire for more policing-oriented classes is not exclusively CJ classes, though. For example, one student said they wanted "to go more in-depth with the classes, and stuff. What I've learned from just this semester, especially in Abuse and Neglect, is putting yourself in other people's shoes, their background, you gotta put everything at hand. You go to domestic violence calls, you got to understand what they're going through to be able to react in the proper way."

[2] These ideas about major-specific courses are largely incompatible with recent large-scale changes to the University's general education requirements. One major idea behind these changes was to ensure that students are exposed to other disciplines and ways of thinking about and answering questions by taking more courses outside of their major, with specific limits on using major courses to fulfill general education requirements.

Faculty

Faculty have a different perspective on the educational component of the Program, one aspect of which is an emphasis on increasing the amount of content that is not specifically police training-oriented but is broadly police-adjacent. Faculty called for Police Program students to have greater knowledge of gender ("when it comes to violent crime, the vast majority of it is committed by men, and yet it seems in the syllabi in this department, we don't talk about gender and crime"), to have "interviewing techniques back as a required component of the Program," and courses "thinking about police in context, police in the context of society, police in the context of interactions with other groups of people."

While some faculty expressed support for "creating exposure to the field, what it looks like, more people who are in the field, whether it's panels, job shadowing" a small number reported a general preference to see Police Program students "value more classroom learning." One faculty noted that with Human Services students (who have heavy internships and practicum requirements) there are some students who "can't focus on their other classes 'cause they have to get their [internship] hours in." This faculty member instead advocated for "a way in which you marry the two, make clear they're both valuable" rather than seeing classroom work as less important than the "real" work "of going out in the field."

One specific way in which classroom work appeared to be devalued compared with Police Program work was when students appeared to prioritize MPTC meetings over classes:

> "I'm often teaching 2 o'clock classes on Monday and Tuesday, they have a monthly meeting that happens right after that, and my first year, I had students regularly say, 'We have to leave 10 to 15 minutes early or else, we will be in trouble.' I have talked with Lisa about this, and she assures me that's not the case, and it continues to happen. I think that there's a socialization piece happening on whoever is that they get in trouble with or don't get in trouble with about are they lined up 15 minutes; they were told, 'You need to be lined up 15 minutes before 3:30.' And they're also told there is an exception if you have a class but they don't feel that . . . I don't know those folks [drill instructors], and I think the students appear to be caught in the middle sometimes of those two demands."

Although this incident was anecdotal, it exemplifies the type of student response it would be reasonable to anticipate if presence at one priority (MPTC meetings) was associated with social pressure and/or punishment while another (a non-MPTC class) was not.

A small number of faculty reported a belief that one issue students faced was that "there's no room for students to pursue other interests" in terms of space in their schedules. And while this issue has

largely been addressed by the reduction from twelve required MPTC classes to six, there nevertheless remains a larger issue of whether students will opt-in to taking non-required courses: "to think about that holistic curriculum. I think implementing that would be, I don't know . . . if they would be that interested in it. So, how do we convey that, as an important asset, sort of integral to their education?"

A small number of faculty also expressed concerns about advising[3]. One faculty called the current state of affairs "a working solution, I don't think it's the best solution" while also noting, "[b]ut at the same time, I think it's the most I have felt integrated and understood what's happening in the Police Program." Another faculty member agreed, saying, "I was really reluctant to take on advising of the CJ and Police Program students initially . . . I don't know if I'm the best advisor for those students." However, this faculty member similarly noted that, "I think it's been good for me to feel better integrated and to understand the Program better" and also highlighted that "[f]or the students that are struggling with their identity, I think it's great to have somebody from outside of the Program."

"Uniforms"

Outside of academics, faculty's suggestions for change revolved broadly around the issue of uniforms. One factor associated with this was that of cost: "It cost them so much - I hate to say it - fucking money. They complain: this shit is expensive . . . some of them can't afford it." Others partially concurred, feeling that uniforms might not be necessary right away: "I feel like if you're a first year, you shouldn't have to invest that kind of money, so many just end up dropping." Another agreed, saying, "please don't start their freshman year. I've always thought it'd be best for one year in school to see how they do academically . . . they're leaving their parents for the first time, many of them, so I don't think, and I think at the tender age of 17 or 18, that students don't know what they want to do when they grow up. They might have an idea but I think they really don't know. So I've been advocating for years that the program not start until sophomore year, and then they apply sophomore year."

Beyond cost and timing, the issue of uniforms raised larger questions about group identity. One faculty member noted that "I like the idea that there's this camaraderie - it builds that among them" but continued immediately, "then it's the 'us and them,' too. So, how to balance, they can have the opportunity to come together, but still not exclude others." This issue took on a special significance when faculty shared experiences of feeling alienated by certain police imagery. One faculty member advocated for "the removal of the thin blue line flag as an approved campus symbol because while it is a symbol that a lot of police use, it is also a symbol that instills fear in many

[3] Most majors on campus are advised by faculty within their major program or department. However, due to the size of the Criminal Justice major, many criminal justice students – including Police Program students – are advised by professors in Human Services or Sociology, who are within the Behavioral Sciences Department, but outside the criminal justice program.

groups that are also present on campus, including me, as a queer person." Another spoke of the power of police imagery: "when you see them with the punisher logos or the blue lives matter flags, that gives a vibe that they're not safe to be around, and if I'm feeling that. I'm adult and professional enough to put it aside, but I can only imagine what other people on campus or students might [think] . . . It's kind of that notion of them being part of the campus community instead of their own community moving in a bubble."

"Program Structural Changes"

Students suggested a few changes to the structure of the Police Program, often echoing comments from previous sections, including more squad-based activities, increased availability of Director Lane, changes to the leadership selection process, and increased accountability.

They advocated for "extra time with your squad," whether just for "conversation" or to "run through [an] exercise." Students were split on whether this should be optional or mandatory, but they saw it as beneficial for both individual students and squad leaders.

They also advocated for greater availability of Director Lane, "maybe not for the freshmen that don't get involved as heavily - but for upperclassmen, I feel it would be beneficial to talk with her." Students also recommended that the chain of command below Director Lane be expanded or empowered: "I feel like having, even a student position, like a squad leader, be there as a liaison or point of contact. It's more like having communication with people to answer questions." There was also a reiteration of the need to avoid "miscommunication" along the chain of command, saying that "[t]he DIs, and Director Lane need to be coherent."

Students advocated for changes to the way that leadership roles are selected. Specifically, students called for "squad leaders, platoon leaders, and class leaders should have more than just an essay to it." One student observed that "more stuff should be taken into account" – such as a peer recommendation letter – so that the person reading is "not just judging my opportunity to become a platoon leader off a piece of paper." Concerns were also raised that the selection of leadership roles is meant not to be "a popularity contest" but that there is an appearance that those who engage most with Director Lane are most likely to be selected.

Students also expressed a desire for greater accountability, saying "too many things fall into the cracks." Regarding students who had committed serious infractions there was a perception that the Director knew of these issues "but nothing happens to them" because she "can't do anything about it."[4] Students reported concerns that this could lead to reputational repercussions – "Who knows

[4] As of spring 2023, the Police Academy, Fitchburg State University Police Department, and Academic Affairs have agreed that police students can now be "unsponsored" by the Chief of the University Police Department. This process requires a violation of the Police Program or Academy code of conduct that is serious but that may not be serious enough to rise to the level of a formal dismissal through MPTC. These types of violations will be investigated by the Police Program Academy Director and University Police Chief with the final decision, after the

what they're gonna do, when they come back and say, 'so, you knew, they were a bad egg.' Couldn't do anything, wouldn't do anything" – as well as safety consequences: "One strike and you're done; that's all it should take. This is not a career field that can allow slip-ups and accidents; it's not okay, this is people's lives." They also reported being concerned about being associated with people who are "cutting corners. It's like a slap in the face. Because at the end of the day, you guys both become police officers, both get the same badge."

"Monthly meetings"

Students suggested some changes to the structure, process, and content of monthly meetings. Students reported that many people feel unable to speak up in meetings and ask questions: "You think at the meetings, I'm gonna raise my hands, stand up, and talk? Nobody's going to do that." One student reported that if they saw a raised hand at a meeting they would assume it must be "a really good question." They suggested having "maybe a more relaxed setting for every other meeting, that gives you the opportunity to be more comfortable with the DIs."

Some suggested that the meetings could be improved by being more interactive: "I would say monthly meetings, the only thing I would suggest, instead of being talked at, to be incorporated. So, we get talked about, we watch videos, we're told what we should do, what we shouldn't do; there are opportunities for questions, but I feel as though there should be opportunities for communication . . . I'd rather have it more inclusive instead of just being talked at for two hours and then leaving." Another suggested that being in "smaller groups" could facilitate a different type of communication: "let's put them into platoons, and have individual conversations about things . . . because maybe we hear some good stuff, maybe we hear some bad stuff."

More advanced students reported that the content of the meetings can be repetitive: "obviously some of the monthly meetings, we sit down and talk about rules over and over." More than one student suggested that it could help to have upperclassmen and lowerclassmen attend different meetings, to avoid repeating the content and allowing the content to be appropriate to their professional development.

Finally, a student suggested that having "leadership meetings" could help avoid communication problems: "During the meeting, we should have at least one or two drill sergeants there, so they know what's going on . . . I want to have more of these meetings because then all the platoon leaders, squad leaders, and class leaders, and can talk about all the problems all at once instead of having to send ten thousand emails."

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investigation, being made by the two of them in conjunction with the Fitchburg State Administration. Through this process, students are not suspended or separated from the University, they simply transition from the Police Program into the traditional criminal justice track. They will still be able to pursue a policing career by going through the traditional hiring process.

"Remove Police Program"

A couple of faculty members shared that they did not support having a police program or academy on campus. For example, "in general, I do not support having a police program on campus. The institutionalization of the police." Although this theme was less prevalent among our sample, it is important to note that this perspective is present on campus. This sentiment may be underrepresented in our sample due to self-selection, similarly to the "I do not know" responses to questions about the Program. It is possible that faculty or students with this perspective did not feel comfortable or welcomed to share their thoughts about or experiences with the Program with our evaluation team.

Why do students join or leave the Program?

When asked why participants believed students join or leave the Police Program, faculty and drill instructors identified family pressures and professional security as primary reasons to join the Program and family pressures, feeling overwhelmed, external pressures, and fit as the reasons students leave the Program.

Reasons to join the Program

"Family Pressure"

Faculty identified families as playing a key role in students' choices regarding both joining and leaving the Police Program. On the "join" side, faculty noted that, in answering the question "what do you want to be when you grow up?" "people get excited when you say you want to be a police officer," which may lead children to feel like this is a more legitimate choice than others. Along similar lines, one faculty member suggested that "it's a very clear professional path and that feels very comfortable, for, you know, for some families, . . . and for some students, and so that could also be a reason why they enter into the program." Additionally, faculty noted that many students have told them about family members who are police officers: "students raise their hand and say 'I have an uncle,' 'My dad,' 'my grandfather.' It's like being a fireman. There is sort of a hereditary longitudinal, this is the career path we all take."

"Professional Security"

Another reason faculty indicated that students join the Police Program is the overall stability of the job market, suggesting, "there's a huge incentive to have a job on the other side of the period of time one might go to college." This was thought of as a particular benefit of the Police Program – rather than taking a traditional Academy route – because "getting the masters with the 4+1 means a higher salary, and [a student] is very motivated to really be strategic about investing in his long-term future that way."

Reasons to leave the Program

"Family Pressure"

Family pressure was the only reason given that factored into both joining and leaving the Police Program. On the "leave" side, faculty indicated that they have heard about students "getting shit from their families . . . and especially some of our Black kids." Another agreed, noting that "it's like you're going to the dark side. If you're going to . . . policing."

The drill instructors added that sometimes this family pressure may also come from fear: "I understand when they're looking at police officers being killed across the country and think they don't want it to be my kid."

"It's too much"

Faculty perceived that students sometimes leave because "of academic constraints. They can't keep up, can't stay on track." There were different reasons for facing this problem including a lack of preparation ("a lot of Fitchburg students, that like, what is demanded of them is demanding and they don't always have the prior experiences, or the current support to meet that demand"), an inability to pass a specific class ("this is not working out because I can't pass stats; this isn't what I thought it was going to be . . . they're having issues with passing certain classes' GPA requirement"), or having too much going on in their personal life ("I know it's a lot of pressure . . . how can you help students that are going through life, life stuff").

"External pressures"

Faculty reported that students perceived negative messages, or hold negative perceptions, about policing that lead them to drop out of the Police Program. Some reported that students can feel "a little stigmatized by what is out there about policing," and that this is especially powerful for students of color: "they're on the fence. The whole Minneapolis police department, the Black Lives Matter movement, they question, right; they question whether they should go into policing at all or whether now is the right time to go into policing." Current social justice issues may not be the only factor in causing these attitudes, however: "most of our students don't go into corrections. Well, after learning about the problems of institutional corrections, who would want to?"

Drill instructors reported being aware of similar perceptions: "I think you see a lot of young guys and girls, and they look at 'Why would I want to get into a profession where people are yelling and swearing at us when we're walking down the street?' people are throwing stuff at them when they're in their uniform, even classmates don't like them because they're in the Police Program."

"Fit"

Faculty reported that students sometimes leave the Police Program because they do not feel connected to the work, and/or the cohort around them. The specific reasons for this were sometimes unclear ("I've seen students leave the Program because they didn't feel like they fit

with those students; that's how they felt, I couldn't tell you why or what that really means. The cohort they were in, they were not comfortable being a part of, the plan was still policing but this is not how they wanted to do it") or were generally associated with having changed as a person over time ("[t]hey age during that time, and they might find that this is not for me;" "because they've been exposed to something they find more interesting, or is a better alignment with what they want to do;" "some people have been leaving because they figured out that's not what they want to do"). One of the drill instructors noted that sometimes students leave once they have a better sense of what the job will actually be like: "some people, it's just not what they want to do; they've tried and it's just not their thing. A lot of people think when they're younger, 'I'll go and be a cop,' weekends, holidays . . . Once they start seeing the realization . . . it's real; they start to see what it entails."

However, in other cases, the lack of fit is specifically due to feeling a lack of acceptance, whether for reasons having to do with race ("I have heard that some students have left the Program because they do not feel comfortable in the Program, particularly our students of color, don't always find the Program to be a safe haven for them, and that is a reason that some students have left the Program") or sexual orientation ("to think about - as an openly gay instructor - having students, a lot of the Police Program students, come to me, shut the door of the office during my office hours to come out to me and tell me they don't feel safe to be known to anybody else, but because I'm out in class they're willing to talk with me and talk about what's the future").

What does "better policing" mean to you?

Participants in the focus groups were presented with the phrase "better policing" and asked to react with one or two words. The faculty stuck the closest to this format, whereas the students and drill instructors tended to give longer responses.

Faculty

Below are the categories of responses given by faculty, as well as some of the additional related words they provided related to the category in question:

Community-focused:	People skills:
Community – 4 Reframing goals around community issues – 3 Fraternity – 1 Cooperation – 1 Policing by consensus – 1 Accessibility – 1	Compassion – 3 Understanding – 1 Empathy – 1 Skillful communication – 1 Humility – 1 Sensitivity – 1

Cultural competency – 1 More humanistic policing – 1	
Diversity:	**Education:**
Diversity - 3 Anti-segregation and policing - 1	Education/college degree - 4 Critical thinking/think critically – 3 Scientific method to solve problems – 1 Less confirmation bias – 1 Cultural competency – 1
System changes:	
Demilitarized – 2 Guardian philosophy/warrior mentality – 2 Self-care – 2 Funding because of defunding – 1 Restorative justice – 1 Generational change – 1 Leadership – 1 Better CJ overall – 1 De-hierarchy – 1 Less "blue wall of silence" when police commit crimes – 1 Self-control replacing policing – 1 Goal of making themselves obsolete – 1 Focus on white collar crime – 1 Communication with their families – 1 Focus on prevention – 1	

Many of the themes found among faculty responses were similar to, if not the same as, what they perceived to be the goals of the Police Program.

Students and drill instructors

When asked to do the same task, students and drill instructors hit on many broadly similar themes as faculty for defining what is better policing, including community-focused, diversity, system changes, education, and communication.

"Community-focused"

Students emphasized common phrases such as "community policing," "community relations," "communicating with the community," and "knowing your community." For some students this had an implicit component of moving away from the ways things have been done in the past: "[t]he way that policing gets better is that it has to be a joint relationship, everybody has to work together." There was also a sense in some responses of there being a variety of groups who need to work together in order for community policing to be effective: "getting different people's

perspectives together and having them come together. You still have to communicate your side, to understand someone else's side, so I would say that just means you need more communication to get out and about and around." There was also at times a sense that this process may not always produce consensus, but it is nevertheless valuable: "It also has to be backed by community members, politicians, and all the other stakeholders in every municipality or whatever. I think there has to be everybody not on the same page, but there has to be some sort of agreeance on 'this is what we're doing; this is what makes it better.'"

Drill instructors also focused on community, saying that ideally, "[i]t wouldn't be a 'us versus them' mentality." They also emphasized the process nature of community policing, saying, "[m]y main thing is community, you know. Community in, communication, and that would lead to trust and transparency; you wouldn't have everybody trying to lie and hide, just be honest, tell people what you want . . . We can fix each other's problems; they're not just yours cause it's your community, it's ours cause we work with you."

"Diversity"

When students mentioned diversity, the statements tended to be explicitly about increasing racial diversity in policing: "I think it would be police officers of different cultures, Latino officers, African American officers. The different background officers that need to be involved," and "Getting more people of color in policing, erasing the idea that you got to be a white guy to be a cop." Others, however, addressed the issue of sexual diversity, either on its own or along with racial diversity: "my mom, when she tells me about the police, it's a white man, especially if it's a trooper. It's a white man, with a hat on, and I just feel like, throw that away, get more people of color, more Hispanic [police]."

"System changes"

Students reported that better policing meant opposition to traditional "police culture," which they described as "always hav[ing] each other's back, but there's definitely a line between having your back and now covering for everything." Students saw this as the old way of doing things, and "not how it should be," whereas graduates of the Police Program would instead "speak up because it's the right thing."

One student also said, "I absolutely hate the paramilitary aspect of this program. I think that it's not the direction policing is going in; I think that if you want better police officers, you don't want a soldier, you don't want someone who can stand there - sure, it's part of it. But I don't think standing there, and being able to take abuse should be a part of the majority."

"Selection criteria"

Students reported that one element of better policing would be moving away from

exclusively test score-based selection for jobs and promotion. They noted that prospective employers "can't see your personality with a test" and one raised the following scenario to demonstrate: "[l]ike civil service, if I get a 98, and somebody get[s] 99 . . . I get passed up over the person above me, and they found out they're racist in their background check, and they just pass up on me. It should be the other way around, an oral interview, talk to somebody, don't take a test, and base it on a test score." One student shared a story of a parent who was a police officer who repeatedly failed a test for promotion despite having on-the-job experience that the student perceived as more relevant than a test score: "some guys could study for the test and ace it, when they were on the road for two years, have no experience on how to control a situation. But because they passed the test score . . . the board signed off." Finally, others reported that things like being the child of a fallen officer can boost someone to the top of civil service lists, which students were ambivalent about, saying, "[w]hich is, like, understandable, but at the same time . . ." Drill instructors also expressed frustration with the score-based approach, saying, ". . . they have to hire the top score, and you get someone everyone know[s] shouldn't be a cop, but they got the top score, . . . "

"Education"

Students associated better policing with education because they saw officers as needing to be well-rounded: "the idea of the program is creating better police officers than the ones that are out there, ones that are educated on not just policing but on social issues, and how things are perceived. Creating people who are knowledgeable on multiple topics, as well as how to be a police officer." Students also perceived education as helping to improve their skills – "it will make you more empathetic; it will assist with your decision-making, your articulation, and how you deal with other people . . ." – specifically because of their educational experiences: "You spent four years dealing with people with different views, different cultures, a very diverse set of people, and that's exactly what you experience."

"Communication"

The drill instructors mentioned communication as a key element of better policing, saying, "[c]ommunication is one; every word I'm thinking about kind of goes back to that." They believed that better policing would mean saying, "[w]e want to find out what you want us to be better at." They also identified an older model of policing where, "[w]hen we started, you didn't go out and talk to people . . . you just answer call for service, you don't speak unless spoken to; that was always the mentality of it" whereas now the model centers around, "[y]ou interact with people and that's how you understand what's going on in the community . . . and any ways, we can help them."

Focus group takeaways

Through conducting ten focus groups with stakeholders from across campus, we learned that faculty, Police Program students, and drill instructors agreed generally on the goals of the Police

Program as being to train a new generation of police officers to continue to work toward more diverse and community-oriented policing. Additionally, the groups agreed that "better policing" is policing that is community-oriented, based on high-quality communication, and that incorporates diverse perspectives, as well as that relies on merit-based hiring practices. The patterns among what participants perceived to be the goals of the Program and definition of ''better policing' suggest that participants understand the Police Program as a tool for working toward better policing. The groups also agreed that the blended curriculum and Director Lane were strengths of the Program. We also identified areas of tension within and between the stakeholder groups about the instrumental role of education to achieve the Program's goals. Although students and faculty agreed that education is an important tool for developing more community-focused policing, they disagreed about using the University curriculum to achieve this goal. While the faculty recommended a more integrated curriculum that pushes the students toward a critical perspective, the students requested fewer general education requirements that do not directly relate to policing.

Faculty and students also both made recommendations for structural changes to the program; however, they focused on different areas for improvement. Faculty suggested recentering academics and prioritizing classroom learning as well as adjusting the uniform policy to facilitate integrating the Police Program students into the broader campus community. Students focused on changes to how the command structure communicates; rethinking monthly meetings to create open conversations, cultivate camaraderie with platoons and squads, and decrease repetition; and finally, enhanced accountability for minor and major rules violations. Faculty and drill instructors reported that students join the Police Program because they dreamed of being police officers and sought professional security. However, they reported that students leave the Program because of internal and external social dynamics, including social pressure, or because they learn what the job involves and change their minds. Finally, faculty, students, and drill instructors agreed that to achieve "better policing" there need to be systems changes that are focused on and based in the community, developing a more diverse pool of police officers, and selecting officers to hire and for promotion on criteria beyond test scores and politics. Overall, the focus groups revealed that the Fitchburg State campus community is representative of the broader community in its attitudes toward the Police Program and policing in general - some strong support, some strong opposition, but mostly understanding the goals and value of the Program with an interest in having a more representative and integrated community.

Program student and alumni perceptions and attitudes: a pilot survey

We created a survey to pilot test recruiting students and alumni as participants as well as to test measures of hypothesized mechanisms and evaluations of the Police Program to develop a realistic plan for a comprehensive evaluation. The survey was sent via email with an invitation to follow the link to the survey. Current students and those who began the Academy received the invitation.

Respondents were asked about their graduation year, current employment, future career plans, to make evaluations of how well the Program had prepared them for a career in law enforcement, the usefulness of the required courses, as well as to respond to scales to measure emotional intelligence, social attitudes on race, gender, and class, attitudes toward social hierarchies, willingness to handle uncertainty, and the benefits of higher education. See Appendix B for the technical methods and a complete description of each measure.

Respondents and recruitment

We sent survey invitations to 230 current students and recent alumni, including 156 currently enrolled and recently graduated students (through Blackboard), and directly to 74 students who graduated from the Academy before September 2022 (through Qualtrics). See Appendix B for a complete discussion of the response rates.

Forty-five (19.6%) respondents followed the link to begin the survey and 30 responded to the entire survey. One respondent was excluded for not answering any questions. Both current students and alumni answered the survey; however, the greatest proportion of respondents were current students who expect to graduate in 2023 or later (75.5%). See Figure 2 for the respondents' self-reported graduation years. Most alumni reported that they are currently employed by municipal police departments (60%) and fewer reported they are employed by the Massachusetts State Police (20%) or did not report their current employer (20%). On average, respondents were 20.9 years old (*SD* = 2.1, *Min* = 18, *Max* = 27).

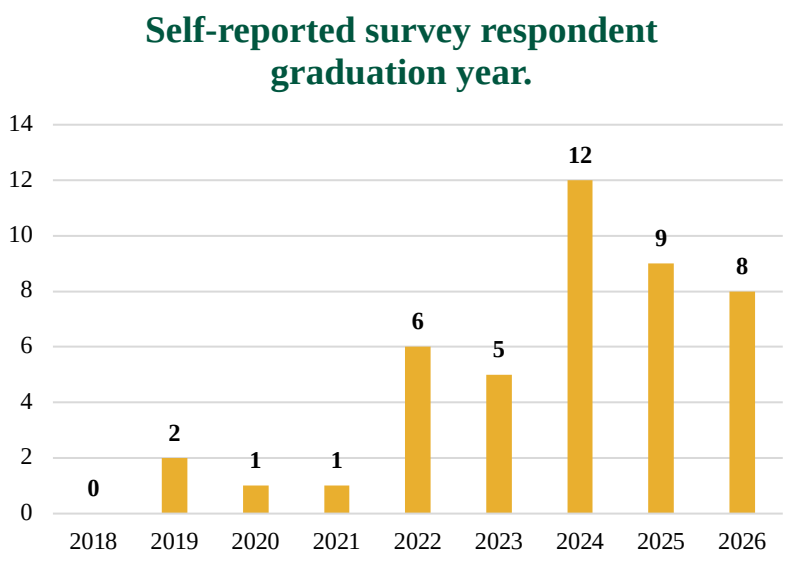

Figure 2. Survey respondents self-reported graduation year (*n* = 44).

Thirty-four respondents described their professional goals when prompted. Most respondents (94%) reported that they wanted to be a city or state police officer. One respondent stated that they plan to become a lawyer involved in policing or police reform, and one stated that they wanted to work in behavioral sciences. Respondents who reported professional goals in law enforcement expanded on their goals by specifying that they wanted leadership positions (26.5%; such as, to be

sergeants, supervisors, or chiefs), mentioning that they want to be engaged in their communities and have a positive impact on their communities (29.4%), or to specialize as school resource officers, K-9 officers, environmental police, SWAT, or federal agencies (29.4%).

Perceptions of the Police Program and University

Thirty respondents each made several evaluations of the Police Program and Fitchburg State University, including rating their agreement with five specific statements about the Program, rating the usefulness of their courses, and responding to 15 statements about the value of higher education in general.

Respondents rated their agreement with five statements about whether the Police Program contributed to their professional development as a police officer on a 5-point scale, (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). On average, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the drill instructors, academy instructors, university professors, and the Police Program contributed to their professional development as police officers. Additionally, they agreed or strongly agreed that the Police Program met their expectations. See Table 4 for the frequency of responses and the descriptive statistics.

Table 4.
Frequencies and descriptive statistics for five evaluative statements about the Program and the University (n = 30).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	
	n (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*M* (*SD*)
The Drill Instructors employed by the FSU Police Academy contribute to my professional development as a police officer.	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	9 (30.0%)	17 (37.8%)	4.30 (1.06)
The professors employed by FSU contribute to my professional development as a police officer.	2 (6.7%)	3 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (23.3%)	18 (40.0%)	4.20 (1.27)
The Academy Instructors employed by the FSU Police Academy contribute to my professional development as a police officer.	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10.0%)	9 (30.0%)	16 (53.3%)	4.30 (.92)
Overall, the Fitchburg State University 4+1 Police Program met my expectations.	3 (10.0%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)	13 (43.3%)	10 (33.3%)	3.83 (1.26)
Overall, the Fitchburg State University 4+1 Police Program contributed to my professional development as a police officer.	1 (3.3%)	1 (3.3%)	3 (10.0%)	11 (36.7%)	14 (46.7%)	4.20 (1.00)

Respondents rated how useful each required course or category of courses from the Fitchburg State curriculum was for them, from 0 (not at all) to 10 (extremely). Respondents rated Crisis Intervention, Interviewing Techniques, Theory and Practice in Policing, Criminal Law, and Criminal Investigations as the five most useful courses (M > 8.89) and general education courses

in art, science, lab, history, and literature as the five least useful courses ($M < 3.63$). See Figure 3 for a graphical representation of the course ratings.

Finally, respondents rated their agreement with 15 statements about the value of higher education on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). On average, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that higher education meant they would be able to be active in their communities, effectively solve problems, engage in critical and creative thinking, communicate effectively with other people, debate respectfully and persuasively with people with whom they disagree, appreciate social diversity, enter a desirable career, achieve a higher quality of life, to grow as an individual, understand their life's purpose, use their morality and values to guide decision making, and meet their families' expectations of them. See Table 5 for the frequency of responses and descriptive statistics.

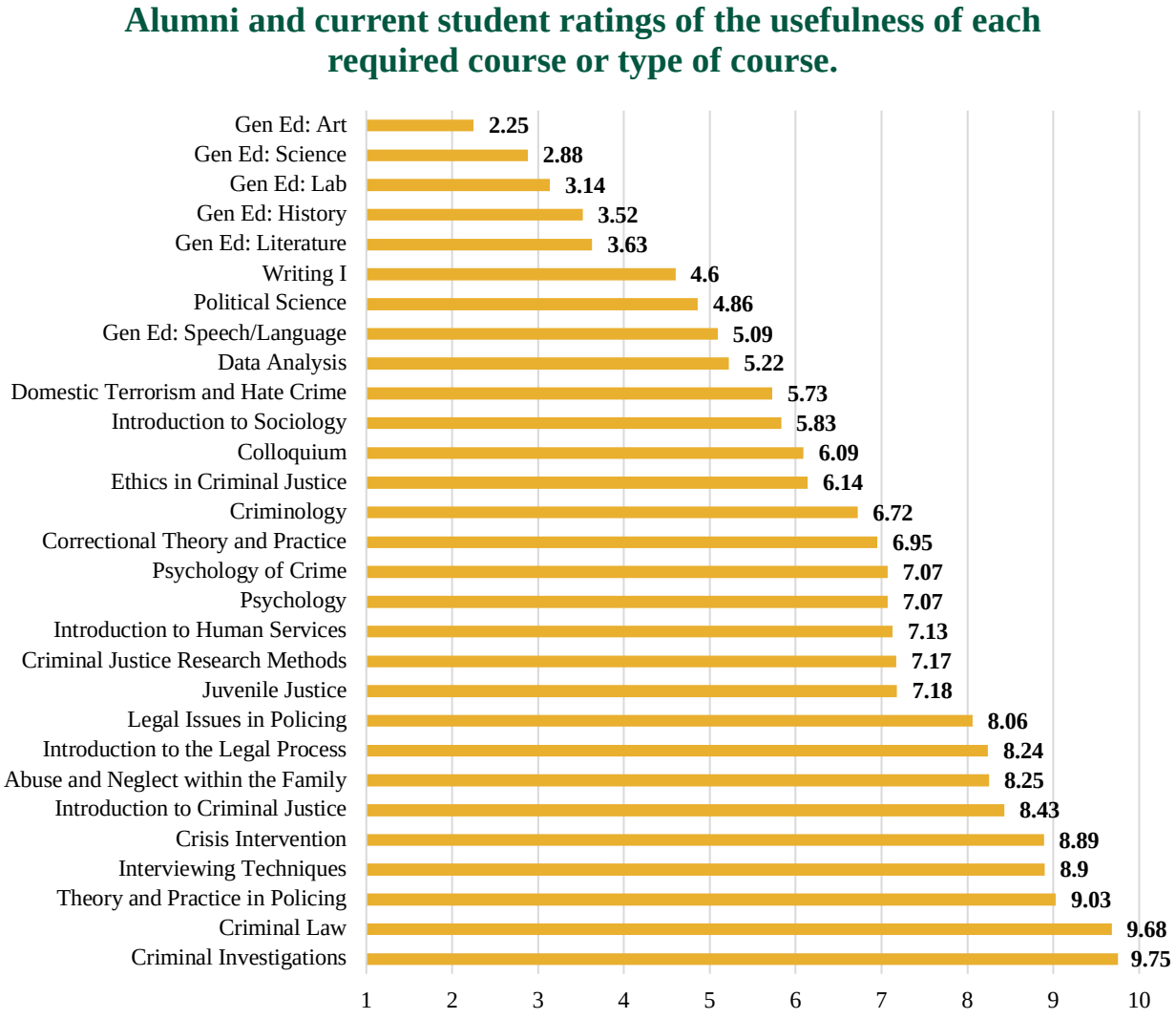

Figure 3. Survey respondents' ratings of the usefulness of each required course or category of courses from Fitchburg State curriculum ($n = 30$).

Table 5.
Current student and alumni attitudes toward the value of college education (n = 30).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	
	n (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*M* (*SD*)
Upon graduation, I believe I will be able to . . . /As a college graduate, I am able to . . .						
. . . an active role in society and in my community.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (16.7%)	25 (83.3%)	4.83 (.38)
. . . engage in effective problem-solving.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (20.0%)	24 (54.5%)	4.80 (.41)
. . . engage in critical thinking about important issues.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (26.7%)	22 (73.3%)	4.73 (.45)
. . . exercise my creativity.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	11 (36.7%)	18 (60.0%)	4.57 (.57)
. . . communicate effectively with others.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (23.35)	23 (76.7%)	4.77 (.43)
. . . debate respectfully with people who have differing viewpoints.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (26.7%)	22 (73.3%)	4.73 (.45)
. . . persuade others through effective communication.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (23.3%)	23 (76.7%)	4.77 (.43)
. . . appreciate social diversity.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	5 (16.7%)	24 (80.0%)	4.77 (.50)
. . . enter a desirable career.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (16.7%)	25 (83.3%)	4.83 (.38)
. . . achieve a higher quality of life.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	7 (23.3%)	22 (73.3%)	4.70 (.54)
. . . grow as an individual.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (16.7%)	25 (83.3%)	4.83 (.38)
. . . understand my life's purpose.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.7%)	10 (33.3%)	18 (60.0%)	4.53 (.63)
. . . use my personal morality and values in decision-making.	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (13.3%)	25 (83.3%)	4.77 (.63)
. . . understand complex concepts.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (20.0%)	24 (80.0%)	4.80 (.41)
. . . fulfill my family's expectations.	1 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	9 (30.0%)	19 (63.3%)	4.50 (.86)

Cognitive tendencies and social attitudes among current students and alumni: Potential mechanisms of higher education on policing.

We examined six potential mechanisms of the Program on students, including emotional intelligence, ambiguity tolerance, Social Dominance Orientation, and attitudes toward race, sex, and class. Although the sample size is too small to draw conclusions about the patterns of results, we presented the results for the entire sample as well as descriptive statistics and mean comparisons between current under-class students (*n* = 14; graduation years 2025 and 2026), upper-class students (*n* = 8; graduation years 2023 and 2024), and alumni (*n* = 8; graduation years 2018 to 2022) to examine trends across those at different points in their training. See Appendix B for the technical methods and Table 6 in Appendix C for the full descriptive and inferential statistics. See Figures 4-8 for graphical representations of the results.

Emotional Intelligence

On average, respondents scored high and above the mid-point on four types of emotional intelligence across all groups. Program students and alumni reported that they understand and can express their deep emotions (self-emotional appraisal), that they are sensitive to and understand other's emotions (other-emotional appraisal), that they are able to direct their emotions productively (use of emotion), and that they are able to control their emotional state (regulation of emotion). There were no significant or emerging patterns across progress in the program. See Figure 4 for the graphical representations of the subscale means for the full sample, alumni, upper-class students, and under-class students.

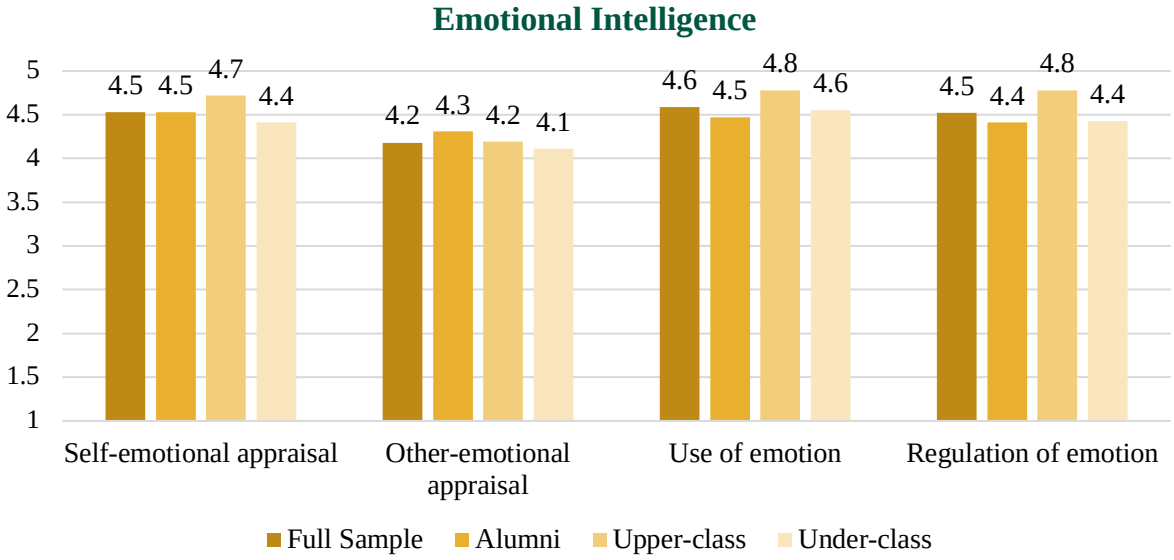

Figure 4. Graphical representation of average scale scores for all survey respondents (*n* = 30), alumni (*n* = 8), upper-class students (*n* = 8), and under-class students (*n* = 14) on Emotional Intelligence.

Ambiguity Tolerance

On average, respondents reported medium to high tolerance for ambiguous situations across five common types of ambiguous stimuli. For two types of ambiguous stimuli, current students and alumni reported high levels of tolerance: insoluble or illogical stimuli and complex stimuli. No significant or emerging patterns of progress in the Program emerged. Respondents also reported above the midpoint tolerance for general ambiguous stimuli. Alumni reported descriptively lesser tolerance for general ambiguous stimuli than current students. Similarly, on average, respondents reported some tolerance for uncertain stimuli, with average scores at or just above the midpoint. Upper-class students reported descriptively higher tolerance for uncertain stimuli than under-class students or alumni. Finally, respondents reported below the midpoint average tolerance for new or unfamiliar stimuli. However, alumni reported being significantly less tolerant of new or unfamiliar stimuli than upper-class students, who were not different than under-class students. Overall, these patterns of results suggested that, on average, Program students and alumni have medium to high tolerance for unclear situations and that tolerance was not impacted by their time in the Program. However, some significant and marginal trends suggested that participating in the Academy and obtaining a job in law enforcement was associated with lesser tolerance for generally ambiguous stimuli, uncertain stimuli, and new or unfamiliar stimuli. See Figure 5 for the graphical representations of the subscale means for the full sample, alumni, upper-class students, and under-class students.

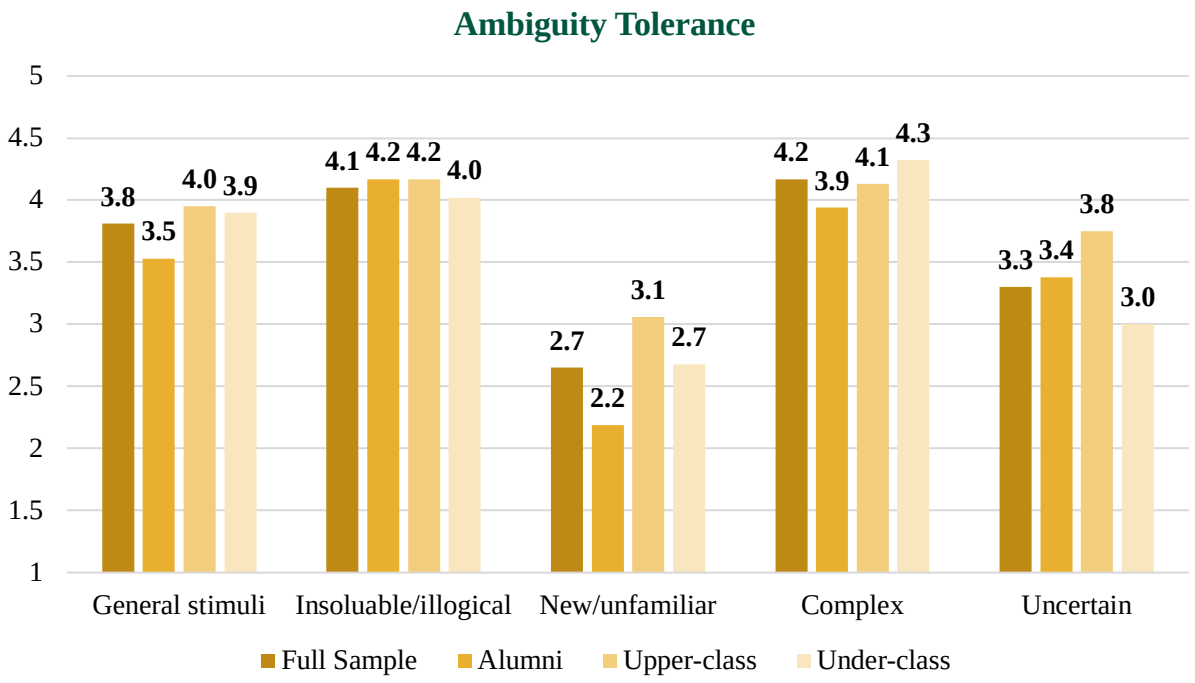

Figure 5. Graphical representation of average scale scores for all survey respondents (*n* = 30), alumni (*n* = 8), upper-class students (*n* = 8), and under-class students (*n* = 14) on Ambiguity Tolerance.

Social Dominance Orientation

On average, students and alumni reported greater support for an egalitarian society that is not dominated by a particular group. Both alumni and current students reported below the midpoint support for policies and positions that endorsed a society governed by a particular group of people and for policies and positions that were opposed to intragroup equality. Although there were not significant differences by progress in the program, there was a descriptive trend toward greater support for a hierarchical society as students progressed in the program. Both alumni and current students reported above the midpoint support for policies and positions that are opposed to one group dominating society and policies and positions that support creating equal opportunity and conditions for all members of society. There were no significant patterns of results by progress in the program; however, alumni and upper-class students expressed descriptively greater support for creating equal opportunities for all members of society as compared to under-class students. These findings suggest that there may have been changes in attitudes toward social hierarchies over the course of the Program, and that Social Dominance Orientation would be a rich area of further inquiry. See Figure 6 for the graphical representations of the subscale means for the full sample, alumni, upper-class students, and under-class students.

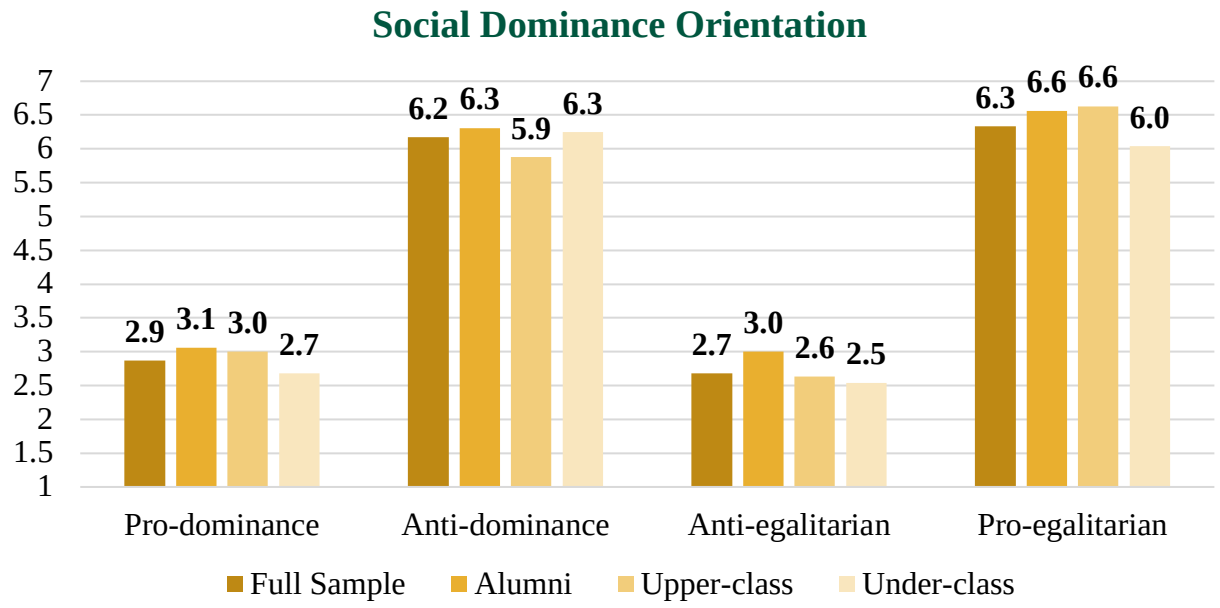

Figure 6. Graphical representation of average scale scores for all survey respondents (n = 30), alumni (n = 8), upper-class students (n = 8), and under-class students (n = 14) on Social Dominance Orientation.

Attitudes toward sex-based discrimination, race-based discrimination, and class

Significant and marginal mean differences by progress in the Police Program on scales measuring attitudes toward sex, race, and class emerged, such that upper-class students and alumni expressed

more awareness about continued sex- and race-based discrimination and endorsed fewer stereotypes about poor people.

On average, respondents reported low levels of old-fashioned sexism, agreeing more strongly with statements that women are just as intelligent as men and disagreeing more strongly that it is more important to encourage male children to be good at athletics than female children. There were no significant patterns of results for old-fashioned sexism. Alumni and students expressed levels of modern sexism that were at or above the midpoint. A significant pattern of results emerged for denial of continuing sex-based discrimination such that under-class students denied ongoing sex-based discrimination to a greater extent than did alumni, who were not different from upper-class students. This finding suggested that during their undergraduate education, Program students learned about and accepted that sex-based discrimination continues to be a problem for women in our society. On average, alumni strongly agreed or agreed and students neither agreed nor disagreed that women had a right to be angry and make demands for change about the status of women in society and that society pays more attention than is warranted to sex-based discrimination. No significant patterns of results by progress in the Program emerged for agreeing that women had a right to be angry or feeling more attention is given to sex-based discrimination than is warranted. See Figure 7 for the graphical representations of the subscale means for the full sample, alumni, upper-class students, and under-class students.

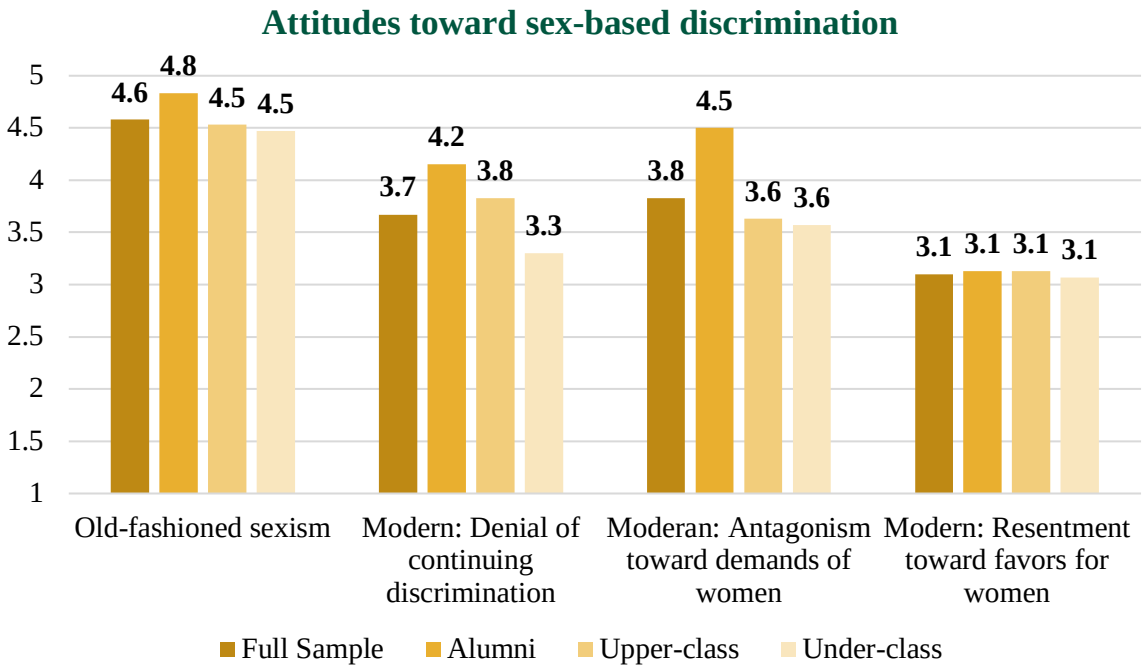

Figure 7. Graphical representation of average scale scores for all survey respondents (*n* = 30), alumni (*n* = 8), upper-class students (*n* = 8), and under-class students (*n* = 14) on attitudes toward sex-based discrimination.

Overall, alumni and students were aware of race-based discrimination and privilege and endorsed few class-based stereotypes, with average scores below the midpoint on the Color Blindness Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) and the modern classism scale. However, significant mean differences emerged for both attitudes by progress in the Program. Under-class students reported significantly more unawareness of race-based discrimination and privilege as compared to upper-class students, who were not different from alumni. A similar pattern emerged for attitudes toward class. On average, alumni and students disagreed or strongly disagreed with stereotypes about poor people being responsible for their poverty and a burden on society. Alumni disagreed significantly more strongly than under-class students with those class-based stereotypes and were not different from upper-class students. These findings, again, suggest that students learned about race- and class-based discrimination throughout their undergraduate education. See Figure 8 for the graphical representations of the CoBRAS and modern classism scale means for the full sample, alumni, upper-class students, and under-class students.

Overall, these patterns of results suggested that throughout their undergraduate education Police Program students became more aware of and less likely to endorse sex-, race-, and class-based disparities in our society.

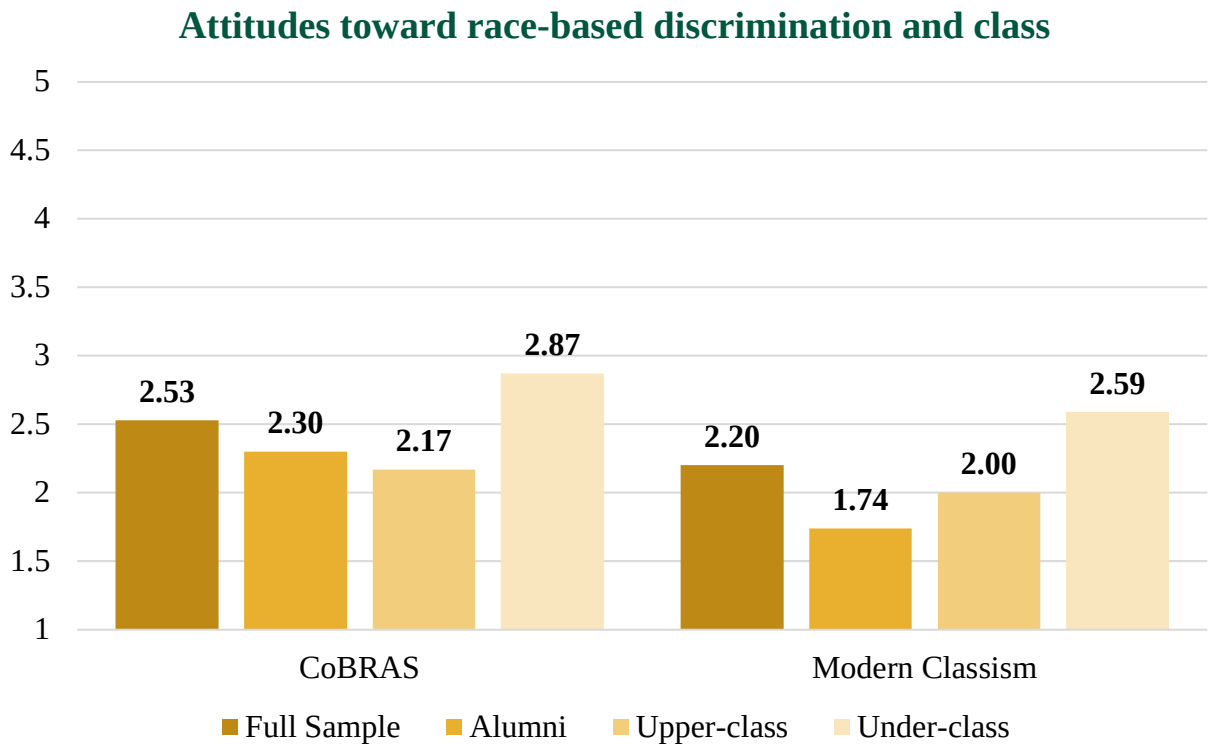

Figure 8. Graphical representation of average scale scores for all survey respondents (*n* = 30), alumni (*n* = 8), upper-class students (*n* = 8), and under-class students (*n* = 14) on Color Blindness Racial Attitudes Scale and modern classism scale.

Pilot survey takeaway

Our pilot survey was successful at testing email invitations as a recruitment strategy for Police Program alumni and current students and for narrowing evaluation and attitude measures to pursue in the future. Respondents' perceptions of and experiences with the Police Program were varied, which suggests that acquiescence bias was not present. However, there was less variance on the items about the value of higher education, which suggests these items may not be an effective way of measuring how Police Program students think and feel about the impact of higher education. Finally, respondents' ratings of the usefulness of courses distinguished between MPTC and non-MPTC, criminal justice and general education courses and those ratings were consistent with how students discussed the curriculum in the focus groups. These results suggest that the measure reliably assessed alumni and student attitudes toward their courses. However, the tool does not help us understand if respondents are rating how useful the course was or how much they enjoyed the course. An additional rating of how enjoyable each course was might help distinguish these ideas. Finally, we observed emerging and significant mean differences between alumni, upper-class, and under-class students for ambiguity tolerance and attitudes toward sex-, race-, and class-based discrimination and privilege. We did not see differences across groups for emotional intelligence or social dominance orientation, but we did see some promising patterns. However, because our overall response rate was very low and our comparisons across progress in the Program were underpowered, we cannot draw conclusions from these tests. Our small sample size suggests that we need to revisit how we recruited current students and alumni for evaluation surveys. Future directions for the evaluation, including recruitment, are discussed in detail below.

Findings, recommendations, and future directions

The Fitchburg State University 4+1 Police Program and Academy is an innovative partnership with the Municipal Police Training Commission (MPTC) that provides individuals interested in being police officers the opportunity to earn a Bachelor's of Science in criminal justice, a certification to be a municipal police officer in Massachusetts, and a Master's of Science in criminal justice in five years by incorporating police academy curriculum and professional training into the undergraduate curriculum and offering credits toward a master's degree during Academy training. This report described the Police Program and a pilot evaluation that examined: archival records to describe the individuals who have enrolled in, left, and graduated from the Police Program; ten focus groups with Fitchburg State stakeholders; and a pilot survey that examined student and alumni satisfaction with the Police Program, as well as tested potential mechanisms through which the Police Program impacts individual success.

Through the pilot evaluation, we identified six patterns of areas of opportunity for the Police Program, Behavioral Sciences Department, and University to make progress toward the goals of

the Police Program while enhancing the campus community and experience of faculty, staff, and students from across the University.

Develop a plan to address that Black and brown students are underrepresented in the Police Program.

We set out to examine the lay theory across campus that white students are overrepresented in the Police Program students and Academy graduates and that historically excluded groups, including Black, brown, and female students, are less likely than white students to enroll in and graduate from the Police Program. Additionally, we explored why historically excluded groups are less likely to remain in the Police Program or graduate from the Academy. University statistics indicated that, when compared with the demographics of police officers serving in federal or local law enforcement, white students are overrepresented in the Police Program (Brooks, et al., 2022; Goodison, et al., 2022). The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated that 61% of federal and 45% of local law enforcement officers identified as white compared to 73% of all Police Program entrants and 89% of Academy graduates identified as white. Although the chi-square tests of associations were not significant, the proportion of white students graduating from the Academy was 16 percentage points higher than the proportion of white students entering the Police Program. Further, only five Academy graduates were not identified as white. In contrast, females are overrepresented among Police Program students (28%) and Academy graduates (22%), when compared to the rates of women in policing nationally (15% federal and 14% local).

In our focus groups, all the stakeholder groups - faculty, students, and drill instructors - identified increasing racial and ethnic diversity in policing as an important element of the Police Program. Although attrition was generally considered to be positive by all participants, faculty and students expressed concern that Black, brown, and female students were more likely to leave the Police Program. Faculty and drill instructors hypothesized that social pressure - from family, peers, and current events (i.e., the 2020 Movement for Black Lives) - is one reason students leave the Police Program, particularly Black students. Students and faculty also reported that social fit may be one reason students leave the Police Program and expressed concern about racism and sexism among Program students as well as resistance to difficult conversations about the role of policing, particularly for marginalized communities. Our archival data also demonstrated that academic success is one of the factors distinguishing students who remain in, and graduate from, the Police Program from those who leave the Program or Fitchburg State without graduating. These findings, within the broader context of non-white representation in law enforcement nationwide, suggested that the reason there are not more non-white students making it through the Academy cannot be solely attributed to a lack of interest in policing among Black and brown people. Rather, it may require the Police Program and the University to consider their recruitment strategies as well as the social, academic, and economic supports available to students.

Therefore, we recommend that the Police Program, in collaboration with the Criminal Justice Program and Behavioral Sciences Department, set measurable racial and ethnic diversity goals, and develop and implement a comprehensive plan to achieve those goals. This could include targeted recruitment, but a greater emphasis should be placed on supporting non-white students and identifying and addressing the factors that cause their higher attrition rates (some of which are discussed in this report). Additionally, the Police Program, in collaboration with the evaluation team, should request demographic information about recruits in all other in-state police academies. That data will offer a better comparison than national level data and will allow the Police Program to better assess the impact of its innovative practices on diversity.

Reduce gaps in communication that lead to confusion and uncertainty for students.

In both focus groups and the pilot survey, students reported that the Police Program has somewhat met their expectations. Consistent, clear, and accessible communication is one area students pointed to for improvement. Students reported that they do not always feel comfortable approaching drill instructors or asking questions in monthly meetings, due to the formal, intimidating nature of these interactions. However, they also reported that they want the drill instructors around for various reasons, including mentorship. Additionally, students reported that they experience gaps in how information flows along the chain of command. They reported that information gets lost or changed and that sometimes they get directly conflicting information from different people in the chain. These miscommunications often lead students to feel as though they need to speak directly with Director Lane in order to have a non-threatening interaction with someone who can fully and accurately address their concerns. This can create a burden on Director Lane's time and produces inefficiencies in the command structure.

Therefore, the Police Program should implement new, more efficient means of communication. In addition to Director Lane's office hours established in spring 2023, the Police Program should consider having a drill instructor, or another high-level figure, offer regular times when they are available to address student concerns in an explicitly non-threatening setting. There should also be a re-evaluation of the command structure to identify ways in which important information flow is being interrupted. One way to address this could be to implement additional meetings between high-level figures - especially prior to monthly meetings - to ensure uniformity in messaging. Another way would be to implement meetings between high-level figures and student leaders (class, platoon, and squad) so that students can serve as peer sources of accurate information as well. One final method of improving communication would be to implement an extensive online FAQ document or bulletin board providing clear answers to common student questions, dates of meetings, examples of forms, and links or QR codes to relevant resources.

Increase campus-wide understanding of the Police Program to improve buy-in and support.

Drill instructors and students noted that having university buy-in and knowledge about the Police Program is key to its overall success. However, focus group data indicated that even some non-criminal justice faculty within the Behavioral Sciences Department have outdated or incomplete knowledge about the Police Program. This problem is enhanced when speaking with faculty outside the Department as these faculty have only sporadic contact with Police Program students and receive little to no other information about the Program. As a result, faculty's ideas about the issues facing the students and the Program are sometimes incorrect, or they may have no information from which to draw conclusions at all. This limits the ability of non-criminal justice faculty to offer support to the Police Program, and its students, and increases the risk of negative perceptions among university faculty, librarians, staff, and administrators.

Therefore, we recommend that the Police Program and University administration partner to initiate a program of internal communication aimed at the university community. This could take the form of a newsletter, or other publicly available communication, that highlights the Police Program and its students. At a minimum, these communications should familiarize the university community with the major faculty and staff figures involved with the Police Program, discuss any pending changes, and highlight successes (e.g., graduation rates, diversity milestones, new community partners, etc.). Additionally, we recommend that marketing materials and website information about the Police Program center the curriculum and undergraduate academic experience to increase transparency for the campus community as well as potential students and external stakeholders. Such communications would provide the Police Program with a way to share its message directly with stakeholders and act as a demonstration of its commitment to key values of community accountability and transparency.

Reducing 'Us vs. Them' culture on campus through Program and University efforts.

Group dynamics within the Police Program and across campus came up throughout the focus groups. Faculty mentioned issues of group identity when they reflected on what they know about the Program, their classroom observations, and when considering the culture of policing that has come with the Police Program. They reported that they feel actively and passively excluded from the Police Program because they do not know what is going on in the Program and perceive that they are unwelcomed at Academy events, including graduation. Additionally, faculty observed that while the cohort model creates a sense of belonging for students, it can also result in segmented classrooms and other students feeling excluded. As a consequence of this natural grouping, faculty also expressed concerns about an emerging police culture on campus that makes them and some students feel unwelcome. Some faculty specifically pointed to the uniforms and "thin blue line" imagery as creating clear divisions between Police Program students and everyone else. Faculty

were particularly concerned that such divisions and imagery were counterproductive to the benefits inherent to having future police officers socializing and learning with non-police students.

Students expressed concerns that they did not feel as close to or included in their cohort as they would like and concerns that they are lumped in with students who do not reflect well on them. Specifically, when students reflected on their expectations and things they would like to change, students reported that they thought they would spend more time with and build stronger relationships with their squads by doing regular, mandatory workouts or other skill-building activities. The only time some students felt connected to the Program was at monthly meetings, which did not feel adequate. They wanted more organized and mandatory time with their squads, platoons, and the Program. However, they also reported that there were some students they did not want to be associated with for behavioral, attitudinal, or academic reasons. Overall, students wanted to feel a greater sense of belonging with the Program and their cohort but also wanted to be able to be proud they were associated with other students in the Program.

Overall, campus stakeholders feel that the Police Program is in a bubble on campus, rather than an integrated part of the University community. Separating Police Program students from the rest of the University students (with uniforms, segregated classrooms, and previously implemented segregated housing) may promote camaraderie and a sense of belonging for Program students, but also is potentially harmful to the goals of creating normal college life and integrated socialization that benefits diversity and inclusion. These divisions lead to internal and external conflicts for the Program, including an image problem on campus. Faculty and students are concerned about low-quality students - who are likely to leave the Program - wearing uniforms, giving rise to the bifurcation of faculty perceptions and concerns about legitimacy among students.

Therefore, we recommended three changes that could address the “us vs. them” culture on campus.

First, a few faculty members, with whom we agree, recommended delaying the implementation of uniforms until after students complete their first year. Uniforms could be a status symbol among underclass students that must be earned by successfully completing the first year, similar to a white coat in the medical profession. This policy change could address concerns about belonging and integration by allowing another year of socialization and development to find their people and learn how to cope with being distinguished from their peers. Requiring students to earn their uniform will motivate students to work toward something concrete in their first year, enhancing their pride in and commitment to the Program later on. Finally, it will prevent the largest proportion of students who will leave the Program within the first year from spending money on something they ultimately do not need. (As an aside, it also lets the male students grow for one more year and need fewer replacement uniforms later on.)

Second, we recommend that the Police Program incorporate more small group work and professional development that allows the students to develop relationships with their class, platoon, and squad. This could specifically be done during monthly meetings by separating classes for more tailored training. In addition to developing relationships among squads, this will also address concerns that the meetings are repetitive for upper class students. Once practiced, breaking the students into their squads regularly will become the norm and facilitate mandatory or voluntary squad-based activities, such as regular workouts or study groups.

Third and finally, we recommend that the Police Program, Behavioral Sciences Department, and the University commit to not creating additional structural ways of segregating Police Program students from the rest of the students on campus. For example, historically the University designated a floor in a dormitory for Police Program students to live together. And although this no longer exists, it created additional separation of Police Program students from the rest of their campus peers and undermined the goal of integrated police socialization.

Explicitly center academics in Police Program marketing, orientations, and communications to set realistic expectations.

Faculty and students identified tensions between the goals of a liberal arts education and traditional police training as well as between the academic and academy portions of the Police Program. Although faculty and students agreed there were mismatches between liberal arts education and police training, they were not in agreement about which side should be given greater weight. Faculty observed that Police Program students are academically strong and motivated but mourned that they have a one-track mind toward police training and do not value other aspects of their education. And even though many Police Program students are among the best and most motivated students, faculty observed, and University archival records revealed large disparities between successful and unsuccessful students. Additionally, faculty were concerned that the perspective-widening benefits of liberal arts education that exposed students to new and critical perspectives about diverse experiences were outweighed by traditional police culture introduced through monthly meetings, drills, and the Academy. Specifically, Behavioral Sciences faculty reported they had hoped the Program would incorporate more human services training and less stress training and the students agreed that crisis intervention and interviewing techniques were among the most useful courses they took during their time at Fitchburg.

Students, on the other hand, reflected that they were proud of, satisfied with, and valued their education at Fitchburg State but that they wanted more police specialization in their courses. Although they agreed that the goals of liberal arts education were essential for developing more well-rounded, responsive, and informed police officers, students did not connect those values and goals to the general education curriculum. Students reported that they expected more skills-based and Academy curriculum throughout their four years at Fitchburg State and did not believe that

art, sciences, or literature classes contributed to that training. These findings were present in both focus group responses and the pilot survey.

Additionally, we found a generalized tension between the academic and socialization goals of the Police Program. Faculty expressed concerns that students were getting the message that the Program should come before classwork from somewhere within the command structure of the Program. For example, faculty recalled that Police Program students have requested to leave classes early to be on time for monthly meetings. And that students reported they would get yelled at if they were not lined up fifteen minutes before the meeting start time, which is what time the class ended. Consequently, faculty and students expressed concerns that stress training within the Program was counterproductive to the goals of developing more humanized and empathetic police officers and that it created the expectation that only a certain type of authority needed to be respected, even in the classroom.

Therefore, we recommended changes that could help balance academics and Academy training in the Police Program.

First, we recommend that the Police Program, Behavioral Sciences Department, and University review marketing materials, orientation materials, and communications to re-center academics and distinguish the bachelor's degree, Academy training, and master's degree. This could be accomplished by incorporating a discussion of the objectives and values of liberal arts education for police officers into materials. Additionally, by painting a realistic picture for potential students about what their four-years in the Police Program will be like by incorporating images of students in uniform in classes taking notes, or asking current students to describe their average day, week, or semester in the Police Program. Additionally, this revised messaging about what to expect should be included in new student orientation to establish realistic expectations.

Second, we recommend that the Police Program ensure consistent messaging throughout the chain of command about when students are required to arrive at the monthly meetings and how to respond when they have come from a class that just finished.

Third and consistent with prior recommendations, the Police Program should consider adjusting the structure and content of the monthly meetings to tailor the information to students' stage of professional development, incorporate more practical skills, and provide more team-building opportunities for the squads, platoons, and classes to meet students' expectations.

Fourth, we recommend that the Police Program and Behavioral Sciences Department collaborate to incorporate Human Services courses back into the required curriculum, including crisis intervention and interviewing techniques. These courses train the students in critical skills they will use throughout their careers.

Fifth, we recommend that the Police Program, Behavioral Sciences Department, and University (such as Academic Coaching and Tutor Center and Center for Teaching and Learning) collaborate to provide targeted, reliable, and friendly academic support to students and student-ready, classroom management support for professors. For example, a monthly meeting early in the academic year could teach basic study skills for first- and second-year students and advanced study skills for third- and fourth-year students. Or establish a Police Program study hall with tutors from within the Police Program available. Additionally, professors across the University could receive training in mediation and justice circles to cultivate trust with and among their students.

Sixth and finally, we recommend, again, that the Police Program, Behavioral Sciences Department, and University collaborate to communicate across the university with faculty, librarians, staff, and administrators about the goals and processes of the Police Program. See University buy-in recommendations. Additionally, stakeholders could provide open opportunities for faculty and staff to attend and participate in Police Program activities and get to know the drill instructors. It is important to acknowledge that these spaces are intimidating for many people who would not naturally put themselves in spaces dominated by police and perceive they are not welcomed there. For example, providing a place of honor at the Academy graduation for university faculty and staff. Or welcoming observation of the monthly meetings at least once a year as an "open house" for faculty and staff.

Create a clear and consistent protocol for rule violations to enhance transparency and legitimacy.

Integrity and respect are values that are central to the Police Program and the policing profession. Therefore, the Police Program and Academy have a code of conduct that explains behavioral mandates and prohibitions as well as the potential consequences. Students and faculty, however, expressed concerns and frustrations about Police Program student conduct as well as uncertainty about how behavioral issues and rule violations are handled within the Program. Faculty observed that Police Program students can be both the most respectful and engaged students and that Police Program students can be the most disrespectful and disengaged students in any class. Additionally, faculty shared that criminal justice students as a whole seem to engage in more academic dishonesty. However, faculty were also concerned about the lasting consequences of severe penalties for young people who are still learning and developing. However, some faculty also expressed discomfort with being an enforcement mechanism and did not think that was their role or appropriate in the classroom.

Students were frustrated with what they saw as peers being able to get away with breaking minor rules - and occasionally even serious ones - without seeming to face consequences. Students pointed to uniform violations in required classes, conduct during classes, and instances of racism

and sexism. These violations led students to shirk minor rules themselves, based on a perception that they are less important. Further, inconsistent enforcement, including over-enforcement in some instances and under-enforcement in others, resulted in concerns that people who should not be graduating from the Program and Academy were graduating and the consequences for the Police Program down the road. These legitimacy concerns among students should not be taken lightly - the students were aware that some of the enforcement mechanisms were out of Director Lane's control and wanted the University to allow her to appropriately enforce consequences for severe rule violations.

Therefore, we recommend that the Police Program decide how to communicate about and enforce minor rules violations and work closely with the University administration and police department to develop a protocol for addressing major violations. Importantly, action on this recommendation has already been taken. As of spring 2023, the Police Academy, Fitchburg State University Police Department, and Academic Affairs have made significant changes to the Police Program in an effort to align with MPTC requirements under new police training legislation and to ensure better student success. Police Program students can now be "unsponsored" by the Chief of the University police department. This process requires a violation of the Police Program or Academy code of conduct that is serious but that may not be serious enough to rise to the level of a formal dismissal through MPTC. These types of violations will be investigated by the Police Program Academy Director and University Police Chief with the final decision, after the investigation, being made by the two of them in conjunction with the University Administration. Through this process, students are not suspended or separated from the University, they simply transition from the Police Program into the traditional criminal justice major. Students will still be able to pursue a policing career through the traditional hiring process.

However, the rules and their consequences should be made clear to the students and be consistently as well as transparently enforced. Based on our findings, we recommend that the Program and, where appropriate, University consider to what extent enforcement is outsourced to student leaders, as opposed to drill instructors, and to be intentional about how students implement those rules. It may be helpful to have the drill instructors on campus and appear in required classes more regularly to remind students about the requirements and to support professors teaching the required classes. Additionally, we recommend that the Police Program publicize its approach to discipline, including that certain serious infractions are being addressed and how they are addressed to increase transparency and legitimacy. It may also be appropriate to publicize certain minor infractions. However, the benefits of publication to transparency and legitimacy must be balanced with confidentiality, equity, and belonging.

Future directions: create a sustainable and insightful evaluation.

This pilot evaluation, funded by the Fitchburg State University Innovation Grant, was a successful first step toward developing a comprehensive and sustainable evaluation of the 4+1 Police Program. We conducted archival records analyses to describe the students who have enrolled in the Police Program, ten focus groups with stakeholders from across campus to understand how the University community understands and experiences the Police Program, and piloted a student and alumni survey that measured satisfaction with the Program as well as hypothesized mechanisms for accomplishing Program goals. Ongoing University support for evaluation, including faculty course releases, funding to support summer research hours and undergraduate research assistants, and infrastructure support sufficient to obtain external funding is required to continue and expand this evaluation.

We successfully developed working relationships and data-sharing practices with Institutional Research, the Police Program, and the Fitchburg State University Police Department to create an up-to-date database to identify our population - all the students who have ever been enrolled in the Police Program. Additional partnerships should be developed with the Police Program and Alumni Relations to find out where all of these students go after they leave Fitchburg State.

We successfully recruited participants for, conducted, transcribed, and coded ten focus groups with stakeholders from across campus. From our focus groups, we learned that campus stakeholders agree that the goals of the Police Program are to educate and prepare future police officers who are more community engaged than police officers have been historically. Further, our alumni will be ready to move into leadership roles within their departments. Additionally, our stakeholders agree that better policing includes community-oriented officers from diverse backgrounds who are skilled communicators, open to different perspectives and includes system changes that include merit-based selection criteria and a shift toward a culture of care and accountability. These findings provided us with a foundation for developing our outcome evaluation as well as direction for exploring Program mechanisms.

While our focus groups included stakeholders from across the campus community, the representation was limited. First and despite our efforts explained in Appendix B, we did not include alumni, students who were previously enrolled in the Police Program, or students from outside criminal justice and behavioral sciences. Similarly, we only had two drill instructors participants. Our faculty participants were representative of the campus community and included one staff member with regular contact with Police Program and non-Police Program students, one librarian, two non-tenure track adjunct professors, and 15 tenure-track professors from eight disciplines. Insights from additional staff members, particularly from recruitment, retention, and student support areas, on the difficulties our students are facing and what kinds of academic and social supports they use and are successful would be beneficial in the future. Additional resources,

including time and money, need to be allocated or obtained to continue to recruit students, alumni, and drill instructor participants (see suggestions below).

We developed, distributed, and analyzed a pilot survey to measure student and alumni satisfaction with the Police Program as well as attitudes and beliefs that may change while students are enrolled in the Program or college. We found students and alumni are generally satisfied with their experience in the Police Program, considered most of the required Police Program courses and some human services courses to be the most useful to them, and expected to be positively impacted by college. We also found some patterns of results that suggested future evaluation should continue to explore the effect of the Program and Academy on tolerance for new, uncertain, or ambiguous stimuli and attitudes toward sex, race, and class. A weaker trend emerged for emotional intelligence that may be fruitful to continue to explore with a larger, more representative sample of current students and alumni. Overall, our survey sample size was too small to draw conclusions about student satisfaction with or the effects of the Program. The findings should be used to assess the usefulness of measures for developing a comprehensive evaluation.

Sample size was a major limitation of our pilot evaluation. Accessing student and alumni samples is an ongoing barrier to this evaluation. One potential solution to motivate students to participate could be to offer them options for compensation, including extra credit in criminal justice courses or alternative gift cards (i.e., to local restaurants or attractions). Alternative suggestions for recruiting current students include having the recruitment come from more than one faculty member, handing out cards with QR codes for students to follow soon after in-class recruitment, or posting eye-catching flyers around campus with a QR code to the survey. Alternative suggestions for recruiting alumni include collaborating with the Police Program to cultivate trust in the project, recruitment through text message or social media rather than email and using snowball sampling or word-of-mouth sampling among alumni. Finally, it may be effective to schedule a specific time for students or alumni to come to a computer lab on campus and complete surveys. This technique would activate their desire to not disappoint professors and the Program by scheduling something and not showing up. However, there are important ethical considerations related to confidentiality that must be considered with this approach. Similar approaches could be used for recruiting from drill instructors if desired. Unfortunately, we ran out of time to test various approaches to sampling and recruitment for the survey.

Another major limitation of this pilot evaluation was our failed efforts to recruit students who were previously enrolled in the Police Program. And although the current Police Program students provided a critical perspective of the Program, we still do not know why students leave the Program. Efforts should be made, and resources should be allocated to conduct an exit interview or survey with students when they leave the Program.

Our goal was to be able to design a comprehensive evaluation based on our findings from this pilot evaluation. We have made progress toward this goal by identifying the goals and therefore outcome evaluation dependent variables (i.e., enrollment and retention patterns, exit points, academic outcomes, employment and promotion rates, job satisfaction and performance, community relations, disciplinary action) as well as potential mechanisms of the Program (see discussion above). Additionally, we have identified variables to measure whether the Police Program is being implemented as intended - process evaluation (i.e., curriculum implementation, monthly meeting, faculty certification). See Appendix D for the logic model of the Fitchburg State Police Program. A quasi-experimental design would be the most effective and informative way to evaluate this Program by relying on longitudinal comparisons or, more ideally, identifying a comparison group. The most common-sense comparison group would be folks going through traditional police training in MPTC academies across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The evaluation team needs to partner with MPTC stakeholders and academy directors to access archival data on the recruit demographic information and information about the academies themselves. Additionally, collaboration will be necessary to sample directly from the recruits to access comparable information about the recruits (i.e., educational background, academic success, employment and promotion rates, job satisfaction and performance, community relations, disciplinary actions). These efforts are labor and intensive and will require ongoing support from the Police Program and Fitchburg State.

Final Thoughts

In this report, we summarized the Fitchburg State University Police Program and Academy, patterns of enrollment, attrition, and graduation for the first five Academy recruit officer courses, the perceptions and attitudes of faculty, staff, and students from ten focus groups, and the results of a pilot survey to measure student and alumni satisfaction with the Program as well as test mechanisms of the Program. Based on these data collection efforts, we found that Fitchburg State, the Behavioral Sciences Department, and the Police Program should collaborate to address six areas of opportunity:

1. **Develop a plan to address that Black and brown students are underrepresented in the Police Program.**

2. **Address gaps in communication that lead to confusion and uncertainty for students.**

3. **Increase campus-wide understanding of the Police Program to improve buy-in and support.**

4. **Reduce the ‘us vs. them’ culture on campus through Program and University efforts.**

5. **Explicitly center academics in the Police Program marketing, orientations, and communication to foster realistic expectations.**

6. **Create a clear and consistent protocol for rule violations to enhance transparency and legitimacy.**

Finally, to continue to build on our understanding of the Program and its effectiveness, the University should invest resources, including money and faculty time, to support a comprehensive, longitudinal evaluation.

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Appendix A. Full MPTC Academy Curriculum

Topic	Hours in Classroom	Hours Applied	Total Hours
Volume I: Policing In Massachusetts			
Orientation	3	0	3
Who We Are	6	0	6
Problem Solving	6	0	6
Communication Skills	12	6	18
Officer Wellness	6	60	66
First Responder / CPR	39	0	39
Report Writing *	6	0	6
Constitutional Law	18	0	18
Volume II: Investigations			
Criminal Law	18	0	18
Interviews & Interrogations	12	6	18
Criminal Investigations	18	24	42
Motor Vehicle Theft	3	0	3
Controlled Substance Investigations	6	3	9
Hate Crime Investigations	6	0	6
Gangs	3	0	3
Crimes Against Persons w/ Disabilities	3	0	3
Autism Law Enforcement Coalition	3	0	3
Missing Person Investigations**	3	0	3
Deceased Person Investigations**	3	0	3
Domestic Violence Investigations	9	3	12
Sexual Assault Investigations	6	3	9

Human Trafficking Investigations	6	3	9
Juvenile Investigations	9	3	12
Motor Vehicle Investigations			
Motor Vehicle Laws	18	6	24
Traffic Control & Direction (TIM)**	3	0	3
Hazardous Material Emergencies**	3	0	3
Speed Detection & Measurement	12	6	18
Crash Investigations	6	6	12
O.U.I. Investigations	16	16	32
Motor Vehicle Stops	6	18	24
Volume III: Patrol Procedures			
Emergency Vehicle Operations	6	40	46
Use of Force	6	0	6
Handcuffing	2	14	16
Defensive Tactics	2	38	40
OC	1	7	8
Baton	1	7	8
Firearms: Handgun	12	40	52
Firearms: Rifle	6	40	46
Water Safety	1	5	6
Incident Command System***	3	0	3
Police Response to Mentally Ill	12	0	12
Crime Prevention**	3	0	3
Crowd Management**	3	0	3
Patrol Duties & Officer Safety	6	56	62
Active Shooter	6	32	38

Homeland Security**	3	0	3
Testing	17	0	17
TOTAL	358	442	800

* Required to write 12 reports that are reviewed throughout the Academy
** Online course through Acadis
*** FEMA online course

Appendix B. Technical Methods

Archival records: Student enrollment, retention, and graduation in the Police Program

We obtained archival records of student enrollment and status in the Police Program and Fitchburg State from Fitchburg State Institutional Research, the Fitchburg State University Police Department, the Police Program, and by accessing student records on the SSC Navigate advising platform.

Institutional Research administrative data

Institutional Research provided us with a list of all the students who have ever been registered as part of the Police Program by designating their major as criminal justice with a concentration in policing. Institutional Research created a spreadsheet that included student identification number, first name, last name, term enrolled in the Police Program, term graduated, last registered major(s), and last registered concentration. Additionally, the data included demographic characteristics, including race/ethnicity, binary sex (0 = male, 1 = female), whether the student received financial aid (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*), whether the student was a first generation student (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*), and whether the student received TRIO supports services[5] (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*). In January 2022, Institutional Research identified 540 students who had ever been enrolled in the Police Program and in April 2023 Institutional Research identified another 40 students who enrolled, resulting in 580 students identified by Institutional Research.

Fitchburg State University Police Department and Police Program archival records

The Fitchburg State University Police Department shared their records of the preliminary and final background checks they conducted on students before they entered the Police Program and during their last semester before the Academy. The records were organized by recruit officer class (ROC). The data included the student's first name, last name, date of birth, and whether the background check raised any flags. The Police Program shared their living Police Program roster that included students' names, their ROC, and whether they have withdrawn from the Program and why. We compared the Fitchburg State Police Department and Police Program data to the list Institutional Research compiled to identify additional students and to record ROC (0 = none, 1 = 1st ROC (2018), 2 = 2nd ROC (2019), 3 = 3rd ROC (2020), 4 = 4th ROC (2021), 5 = 5th ROC (2022), 6 = 6th ROC (2023), 7 = 7th ROC (2024), 8 = 8th ROC (2025), 9 = 9th ROC (2026)). We identified an additional 56 students from these records, resulting in a total sample of 636 students (None: n = 63 (9.9%), 1st ROC (2018): n = 15 (2.4%), 2nd ROC (2019): n = 48 (7.5%), 3rd ROC (2020): n = 57 (9.0%), 4th ROC (2021): n = 103 (16.2%), 5th ROC (2022): n = 100 (15.7%), 6th ROC (2023): n = 84 (13.2%), 7th ROC (2024): n = 82 (12.9%), 8th ROC (2025): n = 48 (7.5%), 9th ROC (2026): n = 36 (5.7%)). We also used Police Program records to find the list of students who entered (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*) and graduated (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*) from the Police Academy and notes about why students left the Academy. Reasons a student left the Academy included: voluntary, disciplinary, medical, background check, or fitness. Students for

[5] TRIO Student Support Services provides professional and peer support to students from low-income backgrounds, whose parents did not earn a four-year degree, or have disabilities. TRIO SSS also provides additional advising and access to cultural experiences to maintain a connection to the community.

whom we could not confirm an ROC with Fitchburg State University Police Department or Police Program records were excluded from the analysis in this report (*n* = 63, 9.9%).

SCC Navigate student records

Once a complete list was compiled, we used the SSC advising platform to collect student current status, date of birth, last known GPA, term student left the Program, and approximate reason student left the Program.

We recorded current status (1 = *enrolled BS*, 2 = *alumni BS*, 3 = *suspended*, 4 = *not enrolled, not graduated*, 5 = *enrolled MS*, 6 = *alumni MS*) from the basic information provided by SSC. We relied on current major to determine whether the student was most recently enrolled in the bachelor's or master's degree programs as well as the most recent enrollment. For example, for currently enrolled undergraduate students, their major and degree are listed as "Criminal Justice: Police Program; Bachelor of Science," their classification is "Freshmen," "Sophomore," "Junior," "Senior," or "Suspended" and their most recent term of enrollment is listed as the term and the year, such as "Spring 2023." A student who is not enrolled and has not graduated would be very similar to a currently enrolled student but their most recent term of enrollment would be a semester earlier than the term in which their data were collected, such as "Spring 2020."

Current major was recorded from the basic information provided in SSC. Current minor was recorded from additional information provided on the bottom of the student "overview" page among the tags.

Last known GPA on a 4.0 scale was recorded for alumni and not enrolled, not graduated students from the student overview page on SSC. For students enrolled in the master's program, final undergraduate GPA was recorded from the "courses" tab in SSC as the cumulative GPA for the last semester they enrolled in undergraduate courses.

The term the student left the Police Program was recorded as the semester (1 = *fall semester*, 2 = *spring semester*, 3 = *summer semester*) and year the student changed their major from "Criminal Justice: Police Program" to anything else. Students who have had more than one major have a small arrow below their major on SSC. This small arrow opens to reveal any and all majors that student has been enrolled in as well as the term when they enrolled in that major. For example, a student who was enrolled in the Police Program, but then entered the traditional criminal justice major instead, would have a small arrow that when clicked would reveal at least two majors and the terms (e.g.,"Criminal Justice, Bachelor of Science, Spring 2023; Criminal Justice: Police Program, Bachelor of Science, Fall 2021"). Therefore, the term enrolled in the non-Police Program major was recorded as the term when the student left the Program. Although this is not perfect because some students did not also change their major upon leaving the Program, the term was confirmed when possible with Police Program rosters.

The difference between the year the students left the Program and the year the student enrolled at Fitchburg State was used to determine how many years the student was enrolled in the Police Program. A difference of "0" or "1" meant the student left the Program within their first year at Fitchburg State, during either the fall semester of their first year, the spring semester of their first year, or the fall semester of their second year, a difference of "2" meant the student left the

Program during the spring semester of their second year or fall semester of third year, "3" indicated that the student left during the spring semester of their third year or fall of their fourth year, and "4+" meant that the student left during the spring semester of their fourth year or later.

Unless otherwise provided by the Police Program records, or a clear designation that the student was suspended from the university, all students were recorded as leaving the Program voluntarily. Students who were suspended for academic reasons, as indicated on SSC, were recorded as having left for academic reasons.

Some demographic characteristics were also confirmed and recorded through SSC. Date of birth was recorded as it is reported in SSC, "MM/DD/YYYY." Race and ethnicity from Institutional Research was divided into two variables with support from SSC. Race was taken from Institutional Research and was recorded as white, Latin American, Black or African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American or Alaskan, multiple racial identities, or unknown. Ethnicity was coded from Institutional Research and confirmed in SSC as Hispanic (coded 1) or non-Hispanic (coded 0).

Focus groups: Stakeholder experiences and perceptions of the Police Program

We conducted ten total focus groups with the following groups: current Program students, current faculty and staff from outside the Behavioral Sciences Department, current faculty in Behavioral Sciences (both Criminal Justice and non-Criminal Justice faculty), and drill instructors.

Participants

Students

Thirty-seven Fitchburg State University students responded to the recruitment email to express interest in participating in a focus group. Of these, 26 (70.3%) reported that they were currently enrolled in the Police Program, 8 (21.6%) reported that they were no longer enrolled in the Police Program, and 3 (8.1%) reported that they were a current Fitchburg State student. Based on their reported availability, 16 (43.2%) currently enrolled Police Program students were invited to participate in one of three focus groups and 13 (35.1%) current Police Program students participated in one of three focus groups. Based on the availability provided, there was no mutually agreeable time in which to schedule a focus group for the students who identified as no longer enrolled in the Police Program or for the students from the general Fitchburg State population. Therefore, we held three focus groups with students who, at the time of recruitment, were currently enrolled in the Police Program.

Thirteen students participated in one of three focus groups, which included 4.3 participants on average (SD = .58, min = 4, max = 5). At the time of participation, 12 (92.3%) students were enrolled in the Police Program. One (7.7%) student left the Program between recruitment and participation. Students self-identified as seniors (n = 4, 33%), juniors (n = 3, 25%), and sophomores (n = 3, 25%). Three (25%) students did not report their year in school. Eleven (84.6%) students reported that they planned to become police officers. Other students reported that they want to work with juveniles in probation or corrections (n =1, 7.7%), were unsure about

their career goals (*n* =1, 7.7%), or that although also reported they wanted to be a police officer, one also responded that they are considering a career in law (7.7%). We did not collect demographic information from the focus group participants.

Faculty and Staff

Twenty-nine Fitchburg State faculty and staff responded to the recruitment email to express interest in participating in a focus group. Of these, 11 (37.9%) were faculty outside the Behavioral Sciences Department, 10 (34.5%) were faculty in the Behavioral Sciences Department, and 3 (10.3%) were staff. Five (17.2%) responded to the recruitment email more than once and are counted twice in the total number of responses. Three (10.3%) criminal justice faculty responded to the email and were scheduled for a criminal justice faculty focus group with the other two criminal justice faculty who were not members of the research team.

Based on faculty and staff self-reported availability, we scheduled six focus groups, which included 3.5 participants on average (*SD* = 1.7, *min* = 1, *max* = 5). Twenty-eight faculty and staff were invited to participate in at least one of six focus groups. Five (17.9%) faculty were invited to participate twice due to last minute scheduling conflicts, meaning that 23 unique faculty and staff were invited. Twenty (87%) faculty and staff participated in one of six focus groups. Sixteen (80%) participants were tenure-track faculty from eight disciplines across campus, including criminal justice (*n* = 5, 31.3%), human services (*n* = 3, 18.8%), political science (*n* = 2, 12.5%), English (*n* = 2, 12.5%), sociology (*n* = 1, 6.3%), math (*n* = 1, 6.3%), physics (*n* = 1, 6.3%), and exercise science (*n* = 1, 6.3%). Two (10%) participants were non-tenure-track adjunct professors for political science and criminal justice, respectively. One (5%) participant was a tenure-track librarian, and one (5%) participant was a staff member who worked in student support. We did not collect other demographic information from the focus group participants.

Drill Instructors

All five drill instructors who expressed interest were then invited to participate in a focus group scheduled for immediately before a monthly meeting. Two (40%) drill instructors participated in one focus group. One (50%) drill instructor was a sergeant and one (50%) was an officer working in municipal police departments in north central Massachusetts. We did not collect other demographic information from the focus group participants.

Alumni

Three Police Program alumni responded to the recruitment survey to express their interest in participating in a focus group. Given that few alumni responded to the recruitment, and that they each had limited and inconsistent availability, we did not hold an alumni focus group.

Materials

The semi-structured focus group protocol included seven questions that varied somewhat by the sample. First, we asked participants about their role at Fitchburg State (department, major, courses taught) and professional ambitions or status (professional goals, current employer). Once the participants' relationship to the Police Program was established, we moved into the substantive questions including: “From your perspective, what do you think the goal of the

Police Program is?," "In what ways is the Program achieving or not achieving those goals? And how do you know?," "Has the Program met your expectations? Why or why not?," "From your perspective, what are some of the strengths of the Police Program?," "If you had the opportunity to, what are some changes you would make to the Police Program?," and "Based on your experiences, why do you think students join or leave the Police Program?" For each question, we prepared follow-up prompts to help the participants consider different angles and perspectives. For example, when we asked about changes, we were prepared to prompt participants to think about Program curriculum, pedagogical technique, or Program structure. Finally, we asked participants to engage in a free association activity: "I am going to put up two words and I want you to react with one or two words at a time. The responses could be what the words mean to you, how they make you feel, or how you would know if you saw the words come to life. We will just go around the circle a few times until we are out of reactions." We then presented participants with the words "better policing" written on a piece of paper.

Recruitment and procedures

We recruited participants to the focus groups with an email invitation. The email invited folks who were interested in participating in the focus groups to follow a link to a Google form to express their interest. They were asked their name, email address, relationship to the University and Police Program, confirmed that they were over 18 years old, and asked them to provide liberal availability to schedule their participation.

During the fall 2022 semester, we sent recruitment emails to all Fitchburg State faculty and staff using the "facultylist" listserv (N = 706) and to all current criminal justice students using Blackboard (N = 341). Twenty-one (6.2%) students responded to our first series of two recruitment emails in September 2022, including two (9.5%) students who had previously been enrolled in the Police Program and one (4.8%) criminal justice student who had never been enrolled in the Police Program. From that sample, we invited ten (47.6%) current Police Program students with common availability to participate in two focus groups. For each Police Program student focus group held in Fall 2022, four out of five invited students participated.

Given the small number of previously enrolled Police Program students who responded to our email recruitment, we also recruited students through personal invitations and asked the two students who responded to the initial recruitment email if they would be willing to refer other students to participate (i.e., snowball sampling). Members of the research team also personally invited students we knew to have been previously enrolled in the Police Program to share their unique perspective on the Program and provided them with a piece of paper with a QR code that would take them to the Google form. Three more previously enrolled students followed the QR code. The two students who responded to the initial email recruit did not respond to our emails asking them to refer other previously enrolled students who may be willing to participate. Through our efforts, we identified five students who had been enrolled in the Police Program and were willing to participate in our focus groups. Although five participants would be enough for

one focus group, those students did not share common availability and so we did not hold a focus group of students who were previously enrolled in the Police Program.

Sixteen (2.3%) faculty responded to our first series of two recruitment emails in November 2022, including three (18.8%) criminal justice faculty and two (12.5%) non-criminal justice behavioral sciences faculty. From the 11 faculty outside the Behavioral Sciences Department, we identified and invited ten (90.9%) to participate in one of two focus groups. All five faculty members invited participated in one of those groups and one out of the five invited participated in another.

In November 2022, we invited all five Criminal Justice faculty who are not on this evaluation team to participate in a focus group during a time when no classes or Department meetings were scheduled. All five faculty members participated in the focus group conducted by non-criminal justice faculty members of the evaluation team.

In January 2023, we again recruited faculty, staff, and criminal justice students to participate in focus groups. Seven (1.0%) faculty and staff expressed interest in participating in a focus group, including three who were scheduled to participate in an earlier focus group. Based on their reported availability, we identified and invited 5 (71.4%) faculty and staff members to participate in a focus group. All five participated in the focus group.

Eight (2.3%) students expressed interest in participating in a focus group, but most of them were currently enrolled in the Police Program (87.5%) and only one was previously enrolled in the Program. Although we planned to hold two focus groups with students previously enrolled in the Police Program, we were not able to recruit students from that population. Instead, we identified and invited six (85.7%) current Police Program students to participate in a focus group and five (8.3%) of them did participate in the focus group. This focus group was rescheduled twice due to snow days.

In February 2023, we sent a recruitment email to nine behavioral sciences faculty and adjunct professors who were not part of the evaluation team or part of the criminal justice faculty. Seven (77.8%) behavioral sciences professors expressed interest in participating. Based on their availability, we identified and invited five (71.4%) Behavioral Sciences professors to participate. This focus group was rescheduled due to a snow day and two (40.0%) Behavioral Sciences professors participated. We worked with the remaining three interested professors to reschedule their participation at a later date.

In January 2023, we worked with Director Lane to obtain a list of all the students who graduated from the Police Academy as well as any email addresses she had on record. Director Lane provided the complete list with a few email addresses. We worked with the University Alumni Relations to obtain the remainder of the email addresses. In late February 2023, we sent a

recruitment email to 74 alumni of the Police Academy. Three emails bounced, leaving 71 invited alumni. One (1.4%) alumnus expressed interest. We sent a second email in April and two (2.8%) alumni expressed interest, including the same one who expressed interest in February. In April, we also recruited alumni through the Fitchburg State Police Program's Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter accounts. 318 people followed the link and expressed interest in participating in a focus group. Three (0.9%) respondents were identified as having a relationship with the Police Program, two (66.7%) drill instructors and one alumnus (33.3%). Given the small number of alumni who expressed interest and their limited availability, we did not hold alumni focus groups.

In March 2023, we sent a recruitment email to eight drill instructors. Four (50%) drill instructors responded to the recruitment survey to express their interest and one (12.5%) expressed interest via email. Based on their availability, we identified and invited five drill instructors to a focus group and two (40%) drill instructors participated in the focus group.

Nine focus groups were held in a uniquely designed classroom in McKay Complex C that includes a one-way mirror and is outfitted with two cameras. One focus group was held via Zoom. The focus groups were scheduled for one hour each and conducted by two members of the evaluation team. Once most invited participants arrived, one researcher welcomed them and obtained their consent to participate in the focus group by explaining the procedure, their compensation ($25 Amazon gift card for students and $35 Amazon gift card for faculty and drill instructors) and explained that the discussion would be recorded. Once consent was obtained, the second researcher began the discussion. Once the discussion concluded, participants were thanked for their time and provided an opportunity to ask questions or make additional comments. The first focus group was not successfully recorded, and we relied on researcher notes to incorporate their perspectives into our analysis. The next two focus groups were successfully video recorded, but the recording did not detect audio. For the remaining six focus groups, we also used an additional audio recorder to capture the conversation. The power surged and was lost during one group for which we have audio but no video file. Audio files were transcribed by an undergraduate research assistant. Transcripts were separately theme coded by three members of the research team, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis. Once each researcher had theme coded the transcripts, they came together to talk through the themes they identified and agree on the major themes, as well as representative quotations for each question. All procedures were approved by the Fitchburg State University Institutional Review Board.

Pilot survey: student and alumni perceptions and attitudes

Participants

We recruited 230 current students and recent alumni to participate in a survey via email. 156 (67.8%) currently enrolled and recently graduated students were invited through the Police Program Blackboard.

A total of 74 (32.2%) students who graduated from the Academy were invited through Qualtrics. Five (6.8%) emails to alumni bounced. 33 (44.6%) opened the email invitations and 15 (20.3%) opened the survey. Four (5.4%) alumni finished the survey and 11 (14.9%) started the survey but their session expired. Responses from 10 alumni were recorded (five were lost when sessions in Qualtrics expired and data were not recorded because the default settings discard partial responses. Once this was identified, the settings were changed to keep partial responses). Alumni were 23.4 (*SD* = 1.8) years old on average and graduated with their bachelor's degree in 2019 (*n* = 2, 20.0%), 2020 (*n* = 1, 10.0%), 2021 (*n* = 1, 10.0%), and 2022 (*n* = 6, 60.0%).

Three-four (21.8%) current students followed the link in the recruitment email and started the survey. Current students were 20.1 (*SD* = 1.5) years old on average and will graduate in 2023 (*n* = 5, 14.7%), 2024 (*n* = 12, 35.3%), 2025 (*n* = 9, 26.5%), and 2026 (*n* = 8, 23.5%). Current students were divided into two groups: upper-class students expected to graduate in 2023 and 2024 (*n* = 17, 50%; *Mage* = 20.8, *SD* = .64) and under-class students expected to graduate in 2025 and 2026 (*n* = 17, 50%; *Mage* = 19.4, *SD* = 1.8).

Materials.

Unless otherwise noted, all items were on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*).

Questions about Profession and the Police Program

To describe participants, we first asked about their current employer, approximate hire date, and to describe their professional goals. Participants rated their agreement with five statements about their experience at Fitchburg State on a five-point Likert type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*), including: "The drill instructors employed by Fitchburg State University contribute to my professional development as a police officer," "The professors employed by Fitchburg State University contribute to my professional development as a police officer," "The academy instructors employed by Fitchburg State University contribute to my professional development as a police officer," "Overall, the Fitchburg State University 4+1 Police Program has met my expectations," and "Overall, the Fitchburg State University 4+1 Police Program contributed to my professional development as a police officer." Finally, participants rated how useful specific curricular requirements were from 0 (*not at all useful*) to 10 (*extremely useful*). The curricular requirements included specific courses Police Program students are required to take (e.g., Criminal Law, Legal Issues in Policing, Criminal Investigations), major requirements

(e.g., Introduction to Criminal Justice, Ethics in Criminal Justice, Colloquium), and general education requirements (e.g., general education: art, general education: literature, political science requirement). Finally, participants were asked what courses stood out to them as the most valuable and what courses stood out as the least valuable.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence - the ability to assess, use, and cope with our own and others' emotions - was measured with a 16-item scale (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004). Participants rated their agreement with 16 statements, divided into four subscales with four items each. Each subscale had excellent reliability: self-emotional appraisal (α = .91), other-emotional appraisal (α = .79), use of emotion (α = .83), and regulation of emotion (α = .90). Mean subscale scores were calculated, and higher scores indicated higher emotional intelligence.

Attitudes toward race-based discrimination and privilege

Attitudes toward race-based discrimination and privilege were measured with the Color-Blindness Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; Neville et al., 2000). Participants rated their agreement with 14 items, including six reverse-coded items. For example, "It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American, or Italian American," and "White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin." Higher mean scale scores indicated a greater level of blindness or unawareness of race-based discrimination. CoBRAS had excellent reliability (α = .87).

Attitudes toward sex-based discrimination

Attitudes toward sex-based discrimination were measured with the Modern and Old-fashioned Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). Participants responded to thirteen items on two subscales: old-fashioned sexism and modern sexism. Old-fashioned sexism was measured with five items, including three reverse coded items (e.g., "Women are generally not as smart as men," and "I would be equally comfortable having a woman as a boss as a man"). Modern sexism was captured on three subscales, including denial of continuing discrimination (5 items; "Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States"), antagonism toward women's demands (2 items; "It is easy to understand the anger of women's groups in America"), and resentment about special favors for women (1 item; "Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by actual experiences"). A lower mean score indicated more agreement with old-fashioned sexism and denial of sex-based discrimination. Each subscale had acceptable reliability, including old-fashioned sexism (α = .64), denial of continuing discrimination (α = .71), and antagonism toward women's demands (α = .89).

Attitudes toward socio-economic status

We measured attitudes toward socio-economic status and financial class with the nine-item Modified Economic Beliefs Scale (Aosved & Long, 2006). Example items included: "People who stay on welfare have no desire to work," and "People who don't make much money are generally unmotivated." Higher mean scale score indicated that the participants agreed more strongly with stereotypes about socio-economic class. The scale had excellent reliability (α = .86).

Social Dominance Orientation

Social dominance orientation scale (SDO_7) (Ho et al., 2015; Pratto et al., 1994) measured support for inequality between social groups, but not ingroup dominance over outgroups. Participants indicated the extent to which they supported 16 items on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly oppose*, 7 = *strongly favor*). SDO_7 conceptualizes SDO as comprised of two subdimensions, with half the items on each subscale framed in the positive (pro-traits) and half in the negative (con-traits): the *dominance* (SDO-D) subdimension and the *anti-egalitarianism* (SDO-E) subdimension. Higher mean scores for con-traits suggest more approval for social hierarchies and higher mean scores on pro-traits suggested more disapproval for social hierarchies.

SDO-D represents a preference for group-based hierarchies that are created and maintained through active suppression of the subordinate group. SDO_7 included eight SDO-D items, such as: "Some groups of people must be kept in their place" (pro-trait) and "Groups at the bottom are just as deserving as groups at the top" (con-trait). Reliability was poor (pro-dominance: α = .42; con-dominance: α = .44).

SDO-E represents opposition to equality between groups through a network of hierarchy-enhancing policies and beliefs. SDO_7 includes eight SDO-E items, such as: "We should not push for group equality," (pro-trait) and "We should work to give all groups an equal chance to succeed" (con-trait). Reliability was acceptable (pro-antiegalitarianism: α = .63; con-antiegalitarianism: α = .85).

Ambiguity tolerance

The Multiple Stimulus Types Ambiguity Tolerance Scale-II (MSTAT-II) measured participants' reactions to five types of ambiguous stimuli, including general ambiguous stimuli, complex stimuli, uncertain stimuli, new or novel stimuli, and insoluble or illogical stimuli (McLain, 2009). Participants responded to thirteen items on five subscales, one for each type of ambiguous stimuli. Nine items were reverse coded. The reliability of each subscale was acceptable or poor

for general stimuli (5 items; α = .69), complex stimuli (two items; α = .52), uncertain stimuli (1 item; α = 1.00), novel stimuli (2 items; α = .58), and insoluble stimuli (3 items; α = .34).

Value of college

Participants rated their agreement with 15 statements that finished the phrase "Upon graduation, I believe I will be able to . . ." or "As a college graduate, I am able to . . ." to measure participants beliefs about how a college degree will affect them. For example, ". . . take an active role in society and in my community," ". . . engage in effective problem-solving," and ". . . communicate effectively with others." These items were adapted from the career, learning, and self subscales of the Meaning of Education questionnaire (Henderson-King & Smith, 2006).

Procedure

Current students and alumni were recruited via email through Blackboard and Qualtrics, respectively. Students and alumni interested in participating in the survey followed a link to an online survey hosted on Qualtrics. Participants who provided consent first answered questions about their relationship to the Police Program, followed by the emotional intelligence scale, CoBRAS, modern sexism scale, modern classism scale, Social Dominance Orientation scale, evaluations of the Police Program, ratings of their courses, ambiguity tolerance scale, and, finally, value of college scale. Participants who finished the survey were redirected to a separate online survey to collect information for compensation purposes. Those students were compensated with a $10 Amazon gift card. All procedures were approved by the Fitchburg State Institutional Review Board.

Appendix C. Table 6. Descriptive statistics for pilot survey.

Table 6.

Descriptive statistics for emotional intelligence, ambiguity tolerance, social dominance orientation, color-blind racism scale, old-fashioned and modern sexism, and modern classism scales for entire sample (n = 30) and analysis of variance comparing alumni (n = 8), to upper-class (n = 8), and under-class (n = 14) current students.

	Full Sample	Alumni	Upper-class students	Under-class student		
	M(*SD*)	*M*(*SD*)	*M*(*SD*)	*M*(*SD*)	*F*(*df*)	η^2
Emotional Intelligence						
Self-emotional appraisal	4.53 (.52)	4.53 (.53)	4.72 (.36)	4.41 (.59)	.89 (27)	.06
Other-emotional appraisal	4.18 (.65)	4.31 (.72)	4.19 (.62)	4.11 (.67)	.24 (27)	.02
Use of emotion	4.59 (.56)	4.47 (.87)	4.78 (.34)	4.55 (.45)	.66 (27)	.05
Regulation of emotion	4.52 (.56)	4.41 (.68)	4.78 (.36)	4.43 (.56)	1.26 (27)	.09
Ambiguity Tolerance						
General stimuli	3.81 (.55)	3.53 (.43)	3.95 (.54)	3.90 (.58)	1.61 (27)	.11
Insoluble/illogical	4.10 (.47)	4.17 (.40)	4.17 (.50)	4.02 (.51)	.33 (27)	.02
New/unfamiliar	2.65 (.76)	2.19 (.37)[!]	3.06 (.32)[!]	2.68 (.95)	3.09 (27)	.19
Complex	4.17 (.65)	3.94 (.90)	4.13 (.69)	4.32 (.42)	.91 (27)	.06
Uncertain	3.30 (1.12)	3.38 (1.19)	3.75 (1.16)	3.00 (1.04)	1.18 (27)	.08
Sum Score (13-65)	48.30 (5.48)	45.75 (3.45)	50.38 (5.07)	48.57 (6.33)	1.51 (27)	.10
Social Dominance Orientation						
Pro-dominance	2.87 (1.33)	3.06 (1.37)	3.00 (1.31)	2.68 (1.39)	.25 (27)	.02
Anti-dominance	6.17 (.94)	6.31 (.75)	5.88 (1.13)	6.25 (.96)	.52 (27)	.04
Anti-egalitarian	2.68 (1.48)	3.00 (1.81)	2.63 (1.62)	2.54 (1.28)	.25 (27)	.02
Pro-egalitarian	6.33 (.92)	6.56 (.82)	6.63 (.44)	6.04 (1.12)	1.42 (27)	.10
CoBRAS	2.53 (.72)	2.30 (.58)	2.17 (.86)["]	2.87 (.60)["]	3.44 (27)*	.20
Sex						
Old-fashioned sexism	4.58 (.48)	4.83 (.25)	4.53 (.49)	4.47 (.54)	1.53 (27)	.10

Modern: Denial	3.67 (.82)	4.15 (.60)[#]	3.83 (.91)	3.30 (.75)[#]	3.40 (27)*	.20
Moderan: Antagonism	3.83 (1.12)	4.50 (.38)	3.63 (1.51)	3.57 (1.05)	2.10 (27)	.13
Modern: Resentment	3.10 (1.06)	3.13 (1.36)	3.13 (1.25)	3.07 (.83)	.01 (27)	.00
Classism	2.20 (.76)	1.74 (.64)[$]	2.00 (.84)	2.59 (.62)[$]	4.37 (27)*	.24

Note. $p < .05$. Same letter indicated least mean difference follow-up tests $p < .05$. CoBRAS = Color Blindness Racial Attitudes Scale

Appendix D. Fitchburg State University Police Program Logic Model

Fitchburg State University 4+1 Police Program Logic Model				
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Intermediate Outcomes	Long Term Outcomes
Fitchburg State Behavioral Sciences Curriculum and Faculty General Education curriculum Academic Coordinator **Fitchburg State Academy** Academy Director Academy Staff - DIs and instructors FSUPD **MPTC** MPTC Certifications MPTC Curriculum	Classroom Learning (Interdisciplinary education) - BS and MS Monthly Meetings Summer 17-week Academy Evaluation	Academic records (BS; MS) Archival records MPTC Exam results Employer evaluations	Increase number and representation of students completing academy Hiring & Promotion Job effectiveness Interdisciplinary education and socialization process Health and wellbeing Reduce endorsement of “traditional police culture”	Educate leaders in policing and police reform Graduate well-rounded students for the modern world and work force. Reduce human rights violations by MA officers Improve mutual trust and respect between police and civilians in MA