

The Milpitas Police Department is seeking information from agencies that have sponsored, approved, or officially supported any employees' enrollment in the 18-month, Naval Postgraduate School [NPS] Center for Homeland Defense and Security Masters Degree Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office for Domestic Preparedness.

We would like to learn about any experiences, good or bad, and whether agencies recommend sponsoring the enrollment of management level employees in this program.

I requested input from police chiefs and second-in-commands from around the state as to the overall value this program brings to the sponsoring organization. I received responses from one current student and one former program student, two responses from program applicants, one response from an instructor, and a chief who previously sponsored the enrollment of an employee.

The current and former student separately spoke very highly of the program. It has been described as academically rigorous, comprehensive, and very relevant to the police role in homeland security and counterterrorism. Both recommended that we support our employee and permit his enrollment should his application be accepted.

The two applicants who responded reported that the program is highly competitive and very difficult to gain admission. One said that he has twice been rejected, and was told that most of the admitted applicants have existing graduate degrees or significant graduate coursework completed.

One chief who allowed his employee to attend expressed regrets. The chief explained that having his employee away for those 12 weeks was difficult. Shortly after the employee graduated from the program, the employee retired.

I spoke with a program alumnus and current instructor. He recommends that if we have an interested employee who can gain acceptance into the program, we should support his enrollment. The primary benefit organizations will realize from sponsoring employees through this program is that with regard to counterterrorism preparedness and strategy planning, graduates operate at the highest level in terms of effective information exchange with agencies and organizations including Fire, Public Health, etc. Intelligence gathering and sharing abilities will be tremendous, primarily due to the extensive networking and contacts students will make. This program is widely considered to be the top Homeland Security graduate curriculum in the U.S., and has deservedly attained an Ivy League caliber level of respect.

The instructor cautioned that the program is extremely competitive, and that there are more applicants who are not accepted than accepted. He said that an applicant of average academic potential will have a difficult time succeeding, thus he recommends only highly-driven professionals apply. Approximately 50% of program students have prior graduate degrees at the their time of enrollment.