

Running head: FUTURE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF CHIEF OFFICERS

Recruiting the Future Administrative Staff (A-Staff) Chief Officers

of the Santa Clara County Fire Department

Steve Prziborowski

Santa Clara County Fire Department, Los Gatos, California

**CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

### Abstract

The Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD) is facing significant turnover at the Administrative Staff (A-Staff) chief officer ranks due to retirements, with very limited numbers of SCCFD personnel who appear to desire to promote into those ranks. The purpose of this research was to identify solutions to ensure there are sufficient numbers of personnel interested and qualified to promote into the SCCFD A-Staff chief officer ranks in the near future.

Descriptive research, including a literature review and an internal survey, was used to determine the level of interest of SCCFD personnel in promoting into the A-Staff chief officer ranks, the advantages and disadvantages of being an A-Staff chief officer, whether the requirements for those positions was comparable to other departments, what barriers may exist in preventing personnel from promoting to those ranks, and what incentives may be offered to personnel to participate in future promotional examinations. The results showed that a significantly low number of personnel are interested in being A-Staff chief officers, and that the SCCFD could benefit from a succession or career development plan to ensure sufficient SCCFD personnel are not only interested, but also prepared and qualified to step into the A-Staff chief officer ranks in the future. Recommendations such as creating a career development committee, a succession plan, and revisiting the mentor program were made to assist the SCCFD in ensuring sufficient numbers of personnel are interested, qualified and prepared for future A-Staff chief officer vacancies. Getting sufficient numbers of personnel interested in promoting past the rank of captain is still going to be an on-going challenge; however, without a plan in place to address the issue, the potential exists that a number of things may occur, many of which SCCFD personnel may not find desirable.

Table of Contents

Abstract..... 3

Introduction ..... 6

Background and Significance..... 7

Literature Review ..... 12

Procedures ..... 37

Results ..... 41

Discussion..... 62

Recommendations ..... 70

References ..... 74

Appendix A: A-Staff Equivalent Job Flyers Reviewed..... 77

Appendix B: Internal SCCFD Survey ..... 80

Appendix C: Internal SCCFD Survey Results ..... 84

List of Tables

Table 1: SCCFD Strategic Plan Objective 4A..... 19

Table 2: SCCFD Strategic Plan Objective 4C..... 20

Table 3: SCCFD Strategic Plan Objective 4D..... 20

Table 4: SCCFD A-Staff Chief Officer Promotional Requirements..... 35

Table 5: Summary of Responses to Survey Item 1 ..... 42

Table 6: Summary of Responses to Survey Items 2..... 43

Table 7: Summary of Responses to Survey Item 3-4 ..... 44

Table 8: Summary of Responses to Survey Item 5 ..... 46

Table 9: Summary of Responses to Survey Item 6 ..... 48

Table 10: Summary of Responses to Survey Item 8 ..... 50

Table 11: Fire Chief Promotional Requirements – Education and Training..... 51

Table 12: Fire Chief Promotional Requirements – Experience..... 52

Table 13: Assistant Chief Promotional Requirements – Education and Training..... 53

Table 14: Assistant Chief Promotional Requirements – Experience ..... 54

Table 15: Deputy Chief Promotional Requirements – Education and Training..... 55

Table 16: Deputy Chief Promotional Requirements – Experience ..... 56

Table 17: Division Chief Promotional Requirements – Education and Training..... 57

Table 18: Division Chief Promotional Requirements – Experience ..... 58

Table 19: Summary of Responses to Survey Item 7 ..... 60

Table 20: Summary of Responses to Survey Item 9 ..... 61

Table 21: Summary of Responses to Survey Item 10 ..... 61

Recruiting the Future Administrative Staff (A-Staff)  
Chief Officers of the Santa Clara County Fire Department

Introduction

Over the last few years, there has been an extreme lack of interest by Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD) personnel in promoting to the battalion chief ranks - the gateway to the Administrative Staff (A-Staff) chief officer ranks. As recently as five years ago, the SCCFD would typically have approximately ten personnel apply for a battalion chief promotional examination, with only one or two actual promotions occurring over the life of the eligibility list. Most recently, the SCCFD has seen those numbers drop to typically five or less personnel apply for a battalion chief promotional examination, with at times only one or two personnel actually making the final eligibility list. This would result in the entire list being abolished almost immediately after being certified due to the number of positions available met or exceeded the number of candidates on the eligibility list (Prziborowski, 2007). This decrease in interested candidates for battalion chief positions has occurred while the SCCFD has actually been increasing in size due to additional contracts for service with various communities.

Now, couple this situation of declining interest in battalion chief positions with the fact that five of the six SCCFD A-Staff chief officers are currently eligible for retirement, either by age or years of service, with the sixth A-Staff chief officer being eligible for retirement in five years and anticipated to retire in seven years (SCCFD, 2010a). Because of the lack of interest in promoting to the battalion chief ranks and the large number of upcoming retirements in the A-Staff chief officer ranks, the potential exists in the near future that there will be a very limited pool of personnel to select from, to fill those A-Staff chief officer ranks vacated by retirements. Instead of having a sufficient candidate pool to select from, this situation could possibly force the SCCFD to do a number of things that may or may not be in the best interest of the department,

such as hold an outside recruitment to allow qualified individuals from other fire departments to apply, lower the qualifications, or even promote someone from the inside who may not be ready for the position in the way of education, training and/or experience, but by process of elimination, they are the only one left on the eligibility list.

The problem is that the SCCFD is faced with a high amount of turnover at the A-Staff chief officer level in the near future due to retirements and there is a very limited number of personnel interested in promoting to those ranks.

The purpose of this research was to identify solutions to ensure there are sufficient numbers of personnel interested and qualified to promotion into the SCCFD A-Staff chief officer ranks in the future. Descriptive research, including a literature review, and an internal survey, was used to answer the following research questions:

- a. What is the level of interest of current SCCFD personnel to promote to the A-Staff chief officer ranks?
- b. What are the advantages of being an A-Staff chief officer?
- c. What are the disadvantages of being an A-Staff chief officer?
- d. Are the requirements to promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks within the SCCFD comparable to what other fire departments require?
- e. What can the SCCFD do to encourage personnel to promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks?

### Background and Significance

The County of Santa Clara is located in Northern California, in the Silicon Valley portion of the San Francisco Bay Area. The SCCFD, legally known as the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District, has been doing business as the SCCFD since 1997, when the department

adopted the new name to more accurately reflect the service area. The SCCFD was created in 1947 evolving through the years to a regional fire department primarily funded through property taxes and contracts for service with various communities (SCCFD, 2010b).

The SCCFD provides fire and life safety protection services to 251,950 people within 114.5 square miles, to eight separate communities and to certain unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County. The eight communities served include Campbell, Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill and Saratoga. The SCCFD is authorized for 307 full-time positions and up to 40 volunteer positions, all of whom are working out of 17 fire stations and 6 support facilities. A minimum of 71 personnel are on duty each day staffing 21 Advanced Life Support fire companies, including 14 engine companies, 3 rescue companies, 2 truck companies, 1 hazardous materials company, and 4 command vehicles (SCCFD, 2010b).

The fire service in general has traditionally been a paramilitary organization comprised of various ranks of personnel, ranging from the fire chief at the top of the organizational chart to the firefighter at the bottom of the organizational chart, with various ranks in between. The smaller the department, the less ranks there typically are; the larger the department, the more ranks there typically are. There are typically three groups of firefighters within most fire departments: chief officers, company officers and firefighters.

The term chief officer is usually used to describe those individuals filling such middle or top level ranks such as fire chief, deputy chief, assistant chief, division chief and battalion chief. Depending on the size and structure of the department, the chief officer is typically a middle management to senior executive level position. A chief officer typically supervises major divisions within a fire department and/or a number of fire stations, and will usually have program management responsibility. The term company officer is used to describe those individuals



filling the first-line supervisor ranks such as lieutenant or captain. A company officer is typically supervising a crew of firefighters assigned to a specific company, such as an engine company or a truck company, and will usually not have any program management responsibility. The term firefighter is used to describe those individuals filling the lower level ranks such as firefighter, driver, engineer or apparatus operator. Chief officers may supervise other chief officers of lower ranks or company officers, while company officers typically supervise firefighters.

The SCCFD has two levels of chief officer: A-Staff and B-Staff. A-Staff stands for the administrative staff ranks of chief officer, particularly the fire chief, the assistant chief and the four deputy chief positions, and B-Staff stands for the battalion chief ranks. Of the 307 authorized full-time positions within the SCCFD, there are currently 20 chief officer positions: 1 fire chief, 1 assistant chief, 4 deputy chiefs, 11 battalion chiefs, 1 chief arson investigator (battalion chief equivalent position), 1 assistant fire marshal (battalion chief equivalent position), 1 Bay Area Super Urban Area Security Initiative (SUASI) battalion chief (battalion chief equivalent position). Of the 20 chief officers within the SCCFD, 6 are considered A-Staff and 14 are considered B-Staff (SCCFD, 2010a; SCCFD, 2010b).

To promote into the A-Staff ranks, an SCCFD employee must either be a current B-Staff member or a lower ranking individual on a B-Staff (or equivalent) promotional list. The word equivalent is used because traditionally, within the SCCFD and the fire service in general, there are two primary career paths: suppression and fire prevention. In years past, because of the specialty of the position, the fire prevention deputy chief position has been filled from personnel inside the fire prevention division while the other three deputy chief positions (training, operations and support services) have been filled from personnel coming up within the operations division.

The A-Staff chief officer is a critical rank within the SCCFD and the fire service in general. The A-Staff chief officer typically oversees a major division such as training, fire prevention, operations, emergency medical services, administration, or support services, and serves in a rank such as deputy chief, division chief, or assistant chief; they may also oversee the entire department while serving as the fire chief. Within the SCCFD, the A-Staff chief officers are as follows: 1 fire chief; 1 assistant chief, and 4 deputy chiefs – training, fire prevention, support services and operations.

When a person dials 9-1-1 to report an emergency, the face of the fire department they will see is found on the fire apparatus that arrives in an attempt to solve their problem: a group of firefighters that are supervised by a company officer. Depending on the scope of the incident, they may also see a battalion chief supervising a number of fire companies. Rarely does the public see the A-Staff chief officer as they work in the headquarters administrative facility in an administrative role, managing major divisions, establishing and maintaining budgets, performing administrative functions, performing strategic planning, and coordinating activities with their A-Staff counterparts. All of these necessary administrative functions are done with one goal in mind: to ensure the suppression personnel in the field working at the fire stations have personnel trained to handle the multitude of different types of responses they may be dispatched to; apparatus and equipment that is up-to-date and functioning; a fire station that is safe, comfortable and livable; all of this to ultimately be able to provide the highest level of service to the customers they protect and serve.

The SCCFD is facing a significant challenge in that three of the six current A-Staff chief officers have established tentative retirement dates this year - 2010, and the remaining three in the relatively near future: one in 2011, one in 2013 and one in 2017. Additionally, four of the

battalion chiefs have declared tentative retirement dates between now and 2012, eight of the battalion chiefs have declared tentative retirement dates between 2015 and 2020 and one has declared a tentative retirement date of 2026. Only one chief officer out of the current twenty chief officers is expected to still remain in the chief officer ranks after the year 2020, and one battalion chief position is currently unfilled pending the outcome of a personal matter (SCCFD, 2010a).

This significant challenge is not just limited to the SCCFD. Cochran (2007) described how the fire service across the country is facing a drastic changing of the leadership guard:

The trend is evident in the number of retiring tenured fire chiefs and fire service association executive directors. Approximately 50% of the current fire service leaders are eligible for retirement. The top one-third of fire department and association leaders can be expected to retire in the next six years. The days of chief fire executives serving more than 20 years are gone (p. 38).

This research project was chosen because of its direct relation to the course goal of the fourth-year course of the Executive Fire Officer Program, Executive Leadership: “The chief fire executive will develop the ability to conceptualize and employ the key processes used by effective executive-level managers” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2005, p. v). Recruitment and retention of personnel of all ranks, especially executive or senior staff managers, is critical to the long-term success and survival of a fire department, including the SCCFD. The completed research project will be a tool for the SCCFD to utilize to ensure that there are sufficient, qualified personnel available to step into the A-Staff chief officer ranks upon the retirements of the current A-Staff chief officers.

This research relates to three of the four U.S. Fire Administration Operational Objectives: 2—“Improve local planning and preparedness”; 3—“Improve the fire and emergency services’ capability for response to and recovery from all hazards”; and 4—“Improve the fire and emergency services’ professional status” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2009, p. II-2).

The SCCFD A-Staff chief officer is expected to be an active participant in local planning and preparedness, in addition to improving the fire and emergency services capability for response to and recovery from all hazards. Examples include participating in community planning sessions; building relationships with community members and leaders well in advance of an actual emergency; participating in committees specific to local planning and preparedness; participating in disaster preparedness exercises and training sessions; and staffing a local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the event of an emergency.

Also, the SCCFD A-Staff chief officer is expected to continuously improve the fire and emergency services’ professional status in various capacities such as participating in local, state, and national level committees, associations and organizations such as the California Fire Chiefs Association; attending local, state, and national training and educational opportunities such as the Executive Fire Officer Program; achieving formal educational accomplishments such as a four-year or graduate level degree; and achieving formal certification accomplishments such as the Chief Fire Officer Designation through the Center for Public Safety Excellence and Chief Officer certification through the California State Board of Services.

### Literature Review

The purposes of the literature review for this Applied Research Project (ARP) were to review relevant information on (a) succession planning; (b) career development; (c) mentoring; (d) recruitment and retention; and (e) educational and experience requirements for fire service

executive level chief officer positions from other fire departments and compare them to what is required at the SCCFD for A-Staff chief officer positions.

International Fire Service Training Association (2004) described succession planning as a “proactive approach that ensures that personnel hired, trained, and promoted today will have the skills to meet the challenges of tomorrow; it involves matching the job requirements with the skills of the applicants for the position” (p. 198). Cochran (2006) felt succession planning “is the process of identifying and preparing suitable employees for future leadership roles” (p. 84). If a department does not have qualified individuals to promote into the senior chief officer ranks, Cochran (2006) believed a fire department is then either forced to promote unqualified and/or unprepared individuals with outdated skills or hire from the outside which will only force current members within the department who may be talented and who want to advance, to become frustrated and leave for other opportunities.

Haigh (2010) reported that it is critical for a fire chief to not only look at those individuals who may succeed them tomorrow, but also who will be the fire chief 25 years from now. “With fire service careers spanning 25 years or more and most promotions coming from the lower ranks within the local department, the hiring decisions we make today will significantly impact the candidate pool years after we are gone” (p. 76). To help develop those future A-Staff chief officers, Haigh (2010) offered three primary mechanisms:

- a. Future leader required skills sets.
- b. Knowledge, skills and experiences for each fire department rank.
- c. Determination of techniques to develop future leaders; how can the fire department best prepare it’s personnel.

Compton and Granito (2002) described the obligation a fire department has for ensuring succession planning occurs:

Whatever the source of the education and training, each fire and rescue organization has an obligation to the community to provide high-quality leadership. Grooming those within the department to manage effectively not only addresses that obligation at the particular time but also provides an investment in future leadership (p. 276).

The success of a fire chief can be measured when the time has come for them to retire and they need to pick a successor. Graner (2006) determined that there ideally is not one, but many employees within a fire department that are interested, qualified and very prepared to step into the role of fire chief when it comes time for a fire department to choose a replacement fire chief. He added that too many times this does not occur; a fire chief does not adequately ensure their position can be successfully replaced upon their separation from the department, forcing the department to have to either open up the recruitment to the outside or even worse, choose a candidate from within that is not prepared to become the fire chief. Bringing in a fire chief from outside the department is not necessarily a bad thing, and at times may be needed to change policy, provide a fresh outlook or just modify the status quo. Regardless of the reason for bringing in someone from the outside, “the action is always a traumatic experience for the people in the department” (Graner, 2006, p. 21).

Johnson (2010b) stressed without solid succession plans in place, fire departments are being faced with a dire situation when faced with the increased possibility of a mass exodus of leaders in today’s times when the current economy is actually enticing some leaders to retire, especially if they are being faced with the possibility of their pension systems reducing their benefits or their salaries being frozen or reduced. He compared the fire service to private

industry, showing how the fire service has traditionally been reactive, while private industry has had more instances of being proactive, when it comes to succession planning. A primary example he used is the on-going success of many long-standing, successful businesses and athletic teams, “because their executives know that leading a team to success is only half the formula. The other half is filling the pipeline with the next generation of top performers” (p. 84). This in comparison to the fire service, who has traditionally waited for the leader to advise they are retiring and “only then do we glance at the promotional list to see who is on it” (Johnson, 2010b, p. 84).

In summary, succession planning should be considered a necessary component of every fire department’s day-to-day operations as well as strategic, long-term planning, to ensure there are sufficient numbers of qualified personnel to step into all ranks of an organization, not just the A-Staff chief officer ranks.

Is opening up recruitment to the outside for A-Staff chief officer positions the right thing to do? This would allow candidates from other agencies across the country that may be just as qualified (if not more) and prepared as the personnel within the department to compete for the position. Traditionally the only position the SCCFD has opened up to the outside is entry-level firefighter; on only one known occasion, the fire chief vacancy was opened up in 2002. Many fire departments are forced to open up company officer and chief officer positions due to the limited (or lack of) interest or qualified personnel from within the department. Graner (2006) believed it is a good thing to open up the recruitment for chief positions (with the assistance of a private company who specializes in such), to ensure the best candidate is actually being selected for the position and it is not just a political appointment.

Why would a fire department even consider going to the outside for an A-Staff chief officer position? Some of the most common reasons may include:

- a. The department is currently looked at as ineffective, inefficient, or not cost-effective.
- b. Nobody in the department is perceived to be able to adjust to the position.
- c. There is too much emphasis on status quo and necessary improvements or modifications may be impossible to achieve if current personnel are promoted.
- d. Current department staff for whatever reason may be unwilling to implement policies or direction from the elected or appointed officials overseeing the fire department.
- e. The previous fire chief supported the outgoing regime, such as a former mayor.
- f. Political reasons.
- g. There is currently a lack of confidence from the union and department personnel in the department leadership (Graner, 2006).

Can someone from the outside successfully come into a fire department? Of course, but it may not be an easy transition. Graner (2006) discussed bringing in a chief officer from the outside as well as the challenges placed on that individual:

Every new chief brought into an agency from the outside will certainly have a knowledge gap regarding local conditions. It will take time to learn the union/association infrastructure and for them to know the chief. It will take time to learn the real details of the budget, staff relationships, and political relationships, even if the candidate has one a thorough job of prior investigation of the local conditions before accepting a job and between appointment and assumption of command (p. 23).

The SCCFD can be considered a complex organization, different from the typical city or county fire department for a variety of reasons: the department is a dependent fire district; there



are eight, distinctively different communities and unincorporated areas served, as opposed to just one community; the funding sources come from primarily property taxes and contracts for services; the SCCFD takes a regional approach to providing fire protection services, unlike some other fire departments; and each of the cities the SCCFD has contracted with has a contract that is unlike the other contracts. The SCCFD does not have one, standard contract for each city desiring to be absorbed into the SCCFD. Each contract has been carefully written to reflect the needs of the community, the desired levels of service, the available funding, and most importantly, a desire to provide the highest level of service at a reasonable cost (SCCFD, 2010b). All of these factors could be considered challenging to learn, especially for someone coming from the outside that has not had the opportunity to learn and understand over time.

To ensure a fire department has adequate candidates that are prepared to step into the A-Staff chief officer ranks without having to do an outside recruitment, Johnson (2010b) suggested:

- a. Start looking now at who is likely to retire and move into all of your ranks; create a timeline for the estimated promotional process.
- b. For each of the ranks, determine the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities and make sure they are actually being evaluated in the promotional process.
- c. Personally contact the individuals you believe will be the future leaders of your organization, encouraging them to prepare.
- d. Ensure the personnel that will be filling those high ranking positions have a balance of experience of all aspects of the organization; this may require personnel to critical positions earlier in their careers so they have time to learn the positions, instead of being thrown into the fire.

In summary, while opening up the A-Staff chief officer recruitments in itself might produce a larger pool of qualified candidates, hiring someone from the outside may not be the best long-term solution for a fire department, especially if there are qualified candidates from within.

In the summer of 2009, the SCCFD hosted external and internal participants over three days to participate in the strategic plan update process. This process was created to assist with determining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the SCCFD, with the intention of creating an updated strategic plan that could guide the SCCFD for the next five years. One of the outcomes of this process, which was an area of customer and employee concern, was the issues of succession planning, as well as training and retaining excellent personnel. Participants felt that two of the weaknesses relating to succession planning, career development, recruitment and retention were a) the “lack of acting time prior to promotional position,” and b) “succession planning – inadequate employee development is not proactive” (SCCFD, 2010c, p. 23). Additionally, the strategic planning process (SCCFD, 2010c) took those weaknesses and opportunities and created a tangible list of “critical issues” and “service gaps” noted by external and internal participants with the hopes of identifying goals and objectives to demonstrate improvement in the future.

The SCCFD strategic planning process identified four major “critical issues” at the SCCFD were identified: a) “communications,” b) “policies and procedures,” c) “workforce management and planning,” and d) “emergency preparedness and planning.” Under the workforce management and planning section were four major areas relating to succession planning, career development, recruitment and retention: a) “division staffing,” b) “employee

development/mentoring,” c) “recruitment and retention,” and d) “accountability” (SCCFD, 2010c, p. 26).

The SCCFD strategic planning process identified five major “service gaps” at the SCCFD were also identified: a) “communications,” b) “infrastructure/physical resources,” c) “administration,” d) “workforce planning,” and e) “training.” Under the “workforce planning” section were three major areas relating to succession planning, career development, recruitment and retention: a) “career ladder,” b) “succession planning,” and c) “staff recruitment and retention.” Under the “training” section there was one major area relating to succession planning, career development, recruitment and retention: a) “staff development and the training of supervisors” (SCCFD, 2010c, p. 26).

The SCCFD strategic planning process identified the following three objectives – objective 4A, 4C and 4D, relating to succession planning, career development, training and education (Tables 1, 2 and 3):

Table 1

*SCCFD Strategic Plan Objective 4A – Evaluate a formal workforce plan for employee development; inclusive of coaching, job shadowing, and mentoring (timeline – 18 months)*

---

Items
Create two (2) focus groups: one safety and one non-safety.
Conduct a Department-wide survey.
Identify deficiencies in the Department’s current mentor program.
Review and establish an active mentor program.
Formalize and implement the new mentor program (p. 34).

---

Table 2

*SCCFD Strategic Plan Objective 4C – Develop a succession management plan, and create opportunities for employee career paths and career change (timeline – 24 months)*

---

Items

---

- Assess Department attrition trends.
  - Identify employees as a resource, and identify career path plans.
  - Develop an interactive performance evaluation geared towards employee development.
  - Assess the ability to maximize work out of class opportunities.
  - Report assessment findings (p. 34).
- 

Table 3

*SCCFD Strategic Plan Objective 4D – Identify and develop a training and education plan for each position and assignment (timeline – 12 months)*

---

Items

---

- Identify each position and assignment within the organization.
- Review actual job duties and qualifications for each position and assignment.
- Develop and update required KSAs for each position and assignment.
- Identify available training and education resources.
- Assess/evaluate policies/procedures for employees to access available opportunities.
- Create curriculum if not already available and determine program delivery methods.
- Document the training plan implemented for each position/assignment (p. 34).

Another outcome of the SCCFD strategic planning process was the opportunities that may be available to the SCCFD. Four of the opportunities noted by participants which relate to succession planning, career development, recruitment and retention were a) “career development training” at the state and national level, b) “external mentoring opportunities,” c) “sponsor continuing education classes for fire and EMS in order to generate revenue,” and d) “professional relationships, nationwide, state and local (associations)” (SCCFD, 2010c, p. 24).

While there are a variety of ways to create a succession plan, “effective fire department training and professional development don’t just happen” (Wallace, 2009, p. 111). Also, the key ingredient is that the governing body, the administration and the employee/labor organization has involvement and buy-in, and that the plan is actually carried out and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure it is meeting the needs of the department (SCCFD, 2010c). Wallace (2009) determined to be effective and to have those necessary forms of continuing education occur, it is critical to place the professional development and training of all personnel, especially chief officers, into the strategic plan. Putting succession planning into the strategic plan as the SCCFD has done above (Tables 1, 2 and 3), demonstrates the importance of succession planning, not to mention a method to not only advertise it, but to also ensure it occurs. Granted, anything on paper is only as good as it is evaluated and as people are held responsible and accountable for completion.

In summary, the recent SCCFD strategic planning process produced a number of objectives that the SCCFD can utilize to improve upon succession planning and mentoring, not to mention career development, to ensure that the SCCFD adequately recruits and retains employees of all ranks. These objectives were based on the critical issues and service gaps noted by the internal and external attendees.

Bruegman (2005) felt that the individual wanting to promote to the position of executive chief officer needs to be proactive early in their career in order to be successful. “Successful leaders made their declaration early in their career, understood the enormity of the position, and made the commitment to prepare themselves, from both a relational and an educational perspective to succeed” (p. 23). Smeby (2006) discussed the need for chief officers, especially A-Staff chief officers, to continuously improve themselves in the form of education and experience to be effective. A chief officer that wants to be successful and perform at the highest level needs higher education, in addition to additional career development such as attending or presenting at conferences and workshops, attending the National Fire Academy, reading professional periodicals, not to mention on-the-job training and experience (Smeby, 2006).

Graner (2006) felt that anyone desiring to become a company officer or chief officer should prepare very early in their fire service career, to allow adequate time to grow into the leadership roles of the fire service ranks you will be eventually occupying. Instead of completing all of your formal fire service education before you enter the field or at the late stage of your career after you reach the top and are ready to retire, in a perfect world, the successful chief officer will steadily complete their formal education as they progress through the ranks. Not rushing, but also not procrastinating; “as a senior fire service leader, you must have the tools you need to professionally serve your personnel and the public successfully and ethically” (Graner, 2006, xvi). Obviously this type preparation is primarily in the hands of the individual; even if the department provides tuition reimbursement or time off to assist with completing the education and training, it is still up to the individual to actually take the first step and start preparing. Even more importantly, it is up to the individual to actually complete the path they started and to not give up. A fire department cannot force a person to finish what they started, unless there was a

prearranged agreement such as having to complete a class if there was tuition reimbursement or time off allowed.

Why is career development necessary? Compton and Granito (2002) discussed how “fire and emergency response managers continually point to the lack of high-quality staff-type development programs, opportunities for employees and volunteers to grow, as a significant problem in their organization” (p. 275). They expand on the fact that the chief officer of today is faced with an overwhelming and increasing level of demands on their time and their abilities, resulting in an on-going challenge of the chief officer to have outstanding leadership, management, problem-solving and organizational skills. The value of formal education for the chief officer cannot be overlooked; if a chief officer wants to relate to their counterparts and superiors, especially elected or appointed officials who typically possess a four-year degree or higher, they should at least possess a four-year degree. “To be on an equal footing professionally, the chief needs an equivalent education” (Smeby, 2006, p. 115).

Graner (2006) discussed his experience of knowing some successful fire chiefs without any advanced formal education and training. How did they become fire chiefs? Some had become fire chiefs because of their political ties, while some had become fire chiefs because of their demonstrated leadership. Those with the knack for leadership without any formal education or training learned their leadership traits through the “school of hard knocks,” which provided success for some, but not all (xv). Ascending to the top in this fashion doesn’t work for everyone, especially in today’s world where more and more municipalities, not to mention the private sector, are requiring advanced education and training for A-Staff chief officer or equivalent positions.

Snodgrass (2009) discussed the importance of higher education as he interviewed a variety of fire chiefs from around the country. One of the items that stood out was a discussion with Jim Clack, Fire Chief of the Baltimore, Maryland Fire Department, who felt that one of the benefits of higher education included increasing your written communication skills, something that is clearly lacking at the chief officer level. He requires each of his appointed chief officers to take at least one class per semester, regardless of the level of college they may have already completed. He is promoting higher education “so I will be the last chief this department will hire from outside” (Snodgrass, 2009, p. 108).

What types of training and education programs are available for chief officers to assist them with preparing for A-Staff chief officer positions? Per Compton and Granito (2002), it is critical to not solely rely on staff development programs that are instructed or even created by in-house personnel, and to even think about using non-fire service instructors, especially from the private sector. They encourage including outside instructors who are subject matter experts in certain areas, to ensure that a diverse and all encompassing approach is taken to provide the most exposure to future leaders and managers and to different techniques or philosophies to solving problems.

Some fire departments have promoted personnel based on the “merit badge approach,” whereas the an evaluation of the candidate’s resume is done to check the box to ensure certain certifications or training classes have been accomplished, not to mention certain years of experience in a position without any evaluation of how well or how above-and-beyond the individual performed, when compared to their peers (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2010, p. 4). Unfortunately this approach does not take into account whether any specific learning objectives have been met.



How can a fire department best prepare personnel for promotional positions, particularly A-Staff chief officer positions? International Association of Fire Chiefs (2010) discussed the difference between how public safety agencies have addressed personnel career development, and how they actually should be addressing personnel career development. When preparing personnel for promotions, their research showed public safety agencies put 10% of their effort into experience, 20% of their effort into mentoring and 70% of their effort into education when in fact the experience and the education should be switched. Their research showed that what works best for personal development, was 10% for education, 20% for mentoring and 70% for experience, primarily because individuals learn best by doing things, as through experience.

Some of the techniques a fire department can employ for personal career development to prepare for A-Staff chief officer positions include:

- a. Lateral assignments in other areas of the department, not limited to different fire stations, but expanded to administrative duties or responsibilities on a 40-hour week.
- b. Project, committee assignments (as a member and as a leader) in different disciplines (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2010).

Since 1990, the State of Massachusetts Firefighting Academy has offered training specific to the chief officer, covering the necessary National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1021 - Standards for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications for Fire Officer III (Administrative Fire Officer) and IV (Executive Fire Officer). This 13-day program uses the International Fire Service Training Association Chief Officer as its text, requires the student to complete a research paper, prepares the student for Fire Officer III and IV certification, and provides continuing education and college credits that can be applied to undergraduate or graduate degree programs as well as Emergency Medical Service requirements (Pierce, 2008).

Butler and DiDomenico (2009) discussed how the Fire Department New York (FDNY), like some other fire departments, has been providing training to newly promoted company officers and battalion chiefs, but has failed to provide any training or education to members above battalion chief, such as deputy chief. Since individuals at the rank of deputy chief and above tend to have to think bigger picture, something that company officers and battalion chiefs typically do not have to do, the FDNY felt it was critical to create a program focusing on the differences between being a battalion chief and now having to be a deputy chief. Ultimately a two-week program containing the following subjects was created for newly promoted FDNY deputy chiefs: (a) fire management, (b) emergency management, (c) communications, (d) safety concerns, (e) Con Edison scenarios, (f) haz mat scenarios, (g) fire dynamics, (h) office building fires, (i) special operations command capabilities, (j) collapse management, (k) emergency medical service operations, (l) citywide incident management system concerns, (m) building construction, (n) mayday management, and (o) public speaking skills (p. 11).

In regard to how to best create well-rounded future leaders in a fire department, Johnson (2010a) suggested the following:

- a. Create a utility infielder: expose personnel to as many core functions and/or divisions of the department to ensure they are well-rounded and that they gain an appreciation of everything the department does, not just fire suppression.
- b. Trust them: give personnel the opportunity to take on projects, programs, budgets, etc., to allow them career development opportunities.
- c. Make the link: get your captains and battalion chiefs into the community, and have them start interacting and closely working with their city council, elected and appointed officials, citizen groups, etc.

- d. Expose them to other leaders: locate leaders in the fire service, the public sector and even the private sector and attempt to have them interact with your personnel to give them a more global perspective.
- e. Value formal education: while a 2-year degree may be acceptable for a company officer, it is critical for chief officers to have at least a 4-year degree, upon promotion or within a mutually agreed timeline after promotion (p. 62).

There are numerous local, state and even national fire academy programs and higher-education opportunities, not to mention private sector opportunities to expose the chief officer to. Bruegman (2005) discussed the change he has witnessed over the years, particularly with the shift in fire departments requiring more qualifications, especially in the form of education and certifications, when a fire chief vacancy opens up. Many fire departments are now requiring at least a four year degree with a graduate degree being preferred. Today, it is not uncommon to see fire departments requiring credentials such as a graduate degree, completion of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program and/or the Chief Fire Officer Designation through the Center for Public Safety Excellence for its A-Staff chief officer positions (Barr and Eversole, 2003; Bruegman, 2005; Carrizzo, 2005; Buckman, 2006; Graner, 2006; Smeby, 2006; Carter, 2007; Harmes, 2008; Poulin, 2009; Wallace, 2009; and Snodgrass, 2010).

Smeby (2006) believed that one of the biggest challenges facing the fire service is the lack of a standardized approach or system for someone aspiring to be an A-Staff chief officer. He went on to discuss a series of articles written by the Denis Oniel, the Superintendent of the National Fire Academy, who posed the question "Mom/Dad, I want to be a fire chief. What do I need to do?" (p. 185). Had this question been modified to reflect someone who aspired to become a doctor or lawyer, the answer would be very specific and there would be a path for

someone to take that would include training and education, and possibly even experience. The problem with that question of how to prepare to become a fire chief, is that there is no one best answer as the fire service is without a standardized approach at what level of training and education, in addition to experience does an A-Staff chief officer need, especially a fire chief.

One of the most thorough references for an aspiring A-Staff chief officer is the Officer Development Handbook, created by the International Association of Fire Chiefs. This document is in essence a road map for anyone interested in promoting above the ranks of firefighter or engineer and into the ranks of fire officer, partnering the responsibilities of both the organization and the individual desiring to promote. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1021 – Standards for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, is addressed in the Officer Development Handbook: Fire Officer I – Supervising Fire Officer, Fire Officer II – Managing Fire Officer, Fire Officer III – Administrative Fire Officer, and Fire Officer IV – Executive Fire Officer. Each of those four ranks is specifically addressed, demonstrating the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities for each, and more importantly, providing examples of experiences an individual can participate in, inside and outside of their department, to meet and/or exceed the expectations for each rank (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2010).

Regarding credentials, it is apparent that an A-Staff chief officer would benefit from the completion of the Chief Fire Officer Designation (CFOD) program through the Center for Public Safety Excellence and also the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) through the National Fire Academy. Barr and Eversole (2003), Bruegman (2005), Carrizzo (2005), Buckman (2006), Graner (2006), Smeby (2006), Carter (2007), Harmes (2008), Poulin (2009) and Wallace (2009) all confirm and emphasize the importance and relevance of a chief officer obtaining higher education, in addition to successfully completing education and training such as the EFOP and

the CFOD to ensure they are well rounded and as prepared as they can be for their leadership roles and responsibilities as they progress higher within the organization.

In summary, career development can be viewed as a two-way street; in order for career development to be successful, the employee and the department have to be in agreement how an aspiring promotional candidate gets from where they are today to where they want to be in the future. Also, to ensure an A-Staff chief officer is well rounded, career development should include a combination of education, training, and experience.

Broman (2009) described mentoring as “a developmental relationship wherein a more experienced person (mentor) fosters growth in a less experienced person (protégé) in certain capacities” (p. 58). Carter and Rousch (2008) consider a mentor the same as a coach, someone who can assist an individual with career development in the way of one-on-one interaction and building upon goals determined by the protégé. They felt that many fire officers discard the necessity for coaching or mentoring to round out their training and education, “yet without effective coaching, fire fighters and officers will not necessarily move aggressively toward enhancing their competencies” (p. 236).

In 2005, the SCCFD attempted to implement a formal mentor program to assist personnel with career development for the following reasons:

- a. To encourage cross-divisional sharing of ideas, knowledge, skills, and experiences.
- b. To promote a safe environment to support risk taking and learning.
- c. To increase morale and decrease workplace apathy.
- d. To acknowledge the importance, value and leadership potential of all personnel.
- e. To encourage and increase communication within the organization.

- f. To reinforce the need for the employee to be responsible for personal and professional career development.
- g. To broaden the knowledge and perspectives of issues relating to the department.
- h. To create and maintain informal organizational relationships within formally established parameters (SCCFD, 2005, p. 2).

While the SCCFD formally established the mentor program in 2005, it really never got off the ground, nor was it met with any form of acceptance from SCCFD personnel. However, based on the feedback obtained through the internal survey sent to SCCFD personnel (see Results section for more details), there appears to be evidence of the need for a mentor program. Additionally, based on the feedback obtained during the SCCFD strategic planning process, there is evidence that it is time to determine why the SCCFD mentor program was never accepted by personnel, and what needs to be done in order to re-establish the mentor program to have it best meet the needs of SCCFD personnel and ultimately the communities served (SCCFD, 2010c).

In summary, a mentoring program can be a valuable tool to assist with career development, succession planning, and ultimately ensuring personnel are being guided and directed in the right direction. A quality mentoring program will assist with the long-term growth and success of any organization, including a fire department.

What are some challenges to getting personnel to make the leap into the senior staff chief officer ranks or more specifically what are some disadvantages of being an A-Staff chief officer? Bruegman (2005) pointed out how someone who becomes a chief officer is no longer part of the fire station life anymore. This point is echoed by many of the respondents in the internal survey of SCCFD personnel (see Results section for more details). This ultimately results in a division between rank and file personnel, whether it is around the fire station or even off-duty during

social events. This division or even separation can be a very challenging process for many chief officers, especially the higher they go up the chain of command. While some may try to keep a balance, or even one foot on each side of the fence – straddling the line between the rank and file, and try to remain one of the guys or gals, it is not advisable. In showing how doing this does not work, Bruegman (2005) felt that the senior staff chief officer who try to straddle the fence eventually have their command authority reduced, eventually losing respect from everyone below, above and around them.

Going from a 24-hour shift schedule (typically working 10 days per month) to having to work an 8-hour day, on a Monday through Friday schedule (typically working 20 days per month) can be quite the adjustment or even quite the challenge at getting individuals to promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks. Having multiple days off is expected when someone is working as a firefighter, company officer or even a battalion chief. However, when one steps into the A-Staff chief officer ranks, the requirement to be available around-the-clock is an issue that may keep some personnel away from promoting into those ranks. Bruegman (2005) stressed that it is a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week, 365 day a year commitment to be a senior staff chief executive, and “for many, that can be an overwhelming burden and one that can cause a great deal of stress at home” (p. 24).

Smeby (2006) discussed a similar issue regarding the challenge of getting middle managers in the fire service to promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks:

In many departments, some of the brightest employees resist a transfer to a staff function or promotions above the rank of battalion or district chief because it usually means going to day work. These employees don't want to give up their part-time jobs and adjust their off-duty family and social commitments (p. 24).

Another disadvantage, challenge or barrier for some individuals going into the A-Staff chief officer ranks is the lack of overtime compensation and the potential reduction in pay for an increased workload. Faced with the challenge of attracting and recruiting top notch leaders to fill A-Staff chief officer ranks of the Baltimore, Maryland Fire Department (BFD), Fire Chief James Clack proposed a formula to ensure that his senior staff chief officers (eight deputy chiefs and one assistant chief) were fairly compensated. This was primarily because their salaries have not kept up with the raises offered to the personnel protected by the union, at the ranks of battalion chief and below. His proposed formula was 15% above the pay of a battalion chief. To make matters worse, two BFD deputy chiefs recently asked to be demoted to the rank of battalion chief, which is still a union protected position, because of the pay disparity and the lack of union protection offered to the deputy chief (and higher) ranks. Chief Clack was recently forced to open up a recent deputy chief recruitment to the outside and hire two individuals from the outside because no internal candidates were interested in the promotions (Fenton, 2010). This situation in Baltimore is very similar to situations faced in other fire departments across the country, including the SCCFD, especially when a battalion chief may still be eligible for overtime (or at least straight-time compensation for extra days worked) whereas a deputy chief or A-Staff chief officer is not since they are considered to be management.

Industries outside of the fire service appear to also be having challenges when attempting to recruit individuals into the top ranks of an organization. In an interview with a high school principal, Cusack (2010) wondered “why are teachers hesitant to move into administration?” Answers provided by the principal included being away from the students leading to a possible disconnect with the students and the instructional staff; the longer work hours and the extra



workload; the increased amount of paperwork and responsibilities; the added stress; and the fact that he is always on the clock when in the public eye, representing the school (p. 2).

In 2004, the fast-food conglomerate McDonald's was faced with two of its chief executives succumbing to fatal illnesses in a very short time frame; at the time, McDonald's apparently had properly completed succession planning to ensure there was a smooth transition of future leadership. However, in 2009, McDonald's was not as fortunate when their number two person in command suddenly retired, coming as a surprise to all. This unfortunate situation also occurred a few years prior that in 2006 when the number two person in command also suddenly retired. Why this was a surprise is that everyone at McDonald's had considered both of these individuals who had retired in 2006 and 2009 as the heir apparent for the top job. Industry experts felt that the sudden departure of the number two executive may not be coincidental, and may have some significant meaning (Neuman, 2009). What can fire departments learn from the McDonald's situation? Don't put your eggs in one basket, or assume that the number two executive will be the next number one executive. Ensure there are a number of qualified and prepared individuals at the lower ranks that can step up to the top if and when the time arises.

Wilmoth (2010) addressed some additional challenges for encouraging individuals to step into the A-Staff chief officer ranks: the increasing liability and the need to address the financial hardships the state of the economy is posing to the fire service across the country. Williams (2006) discussed the potential disconnect that can occur between administrative staff and the line personnel in the field, something that is very common and was noted by a number of SCCFD personnel in the internal survey (see Results section). For a variety of reasons, including a lack of understanding of what each side is actually doing or not doing; a lack of time management or organizational skills on the side of the administrative staff who do not have or make the time to

visit with line personnel on a regular basis; or just a lack of effort on the side of the line personnel to actually get in touch with administrative staff to find out how challenging their jobs are. Regardless of what causes this disconnect, the ultimate problem is that “the glass partition, both figuratively and literally, is often a major obstacle to meaningful and respectful relationships between senior administration and front line personnel” (Williams, 2006, p. 49).

Instead of focusing on just succession planning, Coleman (2008) offered a different take, and figured fire departments should instead focus on hiring the correct people at the firefighter level, that have the potential to eventually rise to the top ranks. He discussed how there are numerous individuals who have shown us their lack of desire to promote to the top ranks, especially that of fire chief. Of interest he felt “it is fair to say that we literally have paid people to stay off the career ladder by making working conditions more appealing at the bottom than we have at the top of the fire service” (p. 34).

What are some advantages to being an A-Staff chief officer? An obvious answer because of the higher ranking positions could be increased pay and better benefits, but that is not always the case as seen above with the situation occurring in Baltimore, Maryland. Cusack (2010) noted that being an administrator in a non-fire service position is ideal for someone who likes to be challenged, who really enjoys being a strong problem solver and being able to make a difference with the bigger picture. Johnson (2010b) felt there were a few primary reasons fire service personnel would want to promote up the ranks, including “money, greater control, needing a challenge, wanting to make a difference, and my personal favorite, fear of who might be managing you if you don’t promote” (p. 84).

In summary, there are numerous challenges a fire department such as the SCCFD is faced with when trying to inspire or encourage personnel to step into the A-Staff chief officer ranks,

and the disadvantages of being an A-Staff chief officer seem to outweigh the advantages based on the amount of information found within the literature review.

In order to apply to the SCCFD A-Staff chief officer ranks, a candidate can qualify as follows (Table 4):

Table 4

*SCCFD A-Staff Chief Officer Promotional Requirements*

---

Item	
<hr/>	
Fire Chief	
Education	4 year degree
Fire service experience	10 years
Administrative experience	4 years
Assistant Chief	
Education	4 year degree
Fire service experience	8 years
Administrative experience	3 years
Deputy Chief	
Education	4 year degree
Fire service experience	6 years
First-line supervisor experience	4 years

---

A review of 123 A-Staff chief officer (or equivalent) job flyers from fire departments across California as well as similar size or type of fire departments across the country showed

numerous commonalities. Sixty-eight were for fire chief positions, 14 were for assistant chief positions, 24 were for deputy chief positions and 17 were for division chief positions. Included were the flyers for the SCCFD A-Staff chief officer ranks of fire chief, assistant chief and deputy chief. What one fire department requires for being promoted to an A-Staff chief officer position can slightly vary from another department, even in the same region. See appendix A for a detailed list of job flyers reviewed, and Tables 11 through 18 in the Results section for specific information related to the experience, education and training required by those various fire departments.

The SCCFD does not have the rank of division chief, but that rank was included in the job flyer review because many departments utilize that rank as a rank above battalion chief and below the fire chief. Also, in the SCCFD, the assistant chief is directly below the fire chief and the deputy chief is directly below the deputy chief. However, in some fire departments, the deputy chief is directly below the fire chief with the assistant chief below the deputy chief. Since there is no one-size-fits-all approach to determining where the rank order of A-Staff chief officers, this has to be taken into consideration when comparing the promotional requirements of one A-Staff chief officer rank versus another. Regardless, the information discovered through the job flyer review was not that drastically different from department to department.

Another challenge for the SCCFD is that to promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks, an individual must either be a current battalion chief or a captain that is on the current battalion chief promotional list. As noted in a previous applied research project by the author, the SCCFD is having a problem getting sufficient numbers of candidates to not only apply for the battalion chief positions, but to eventually end up on the battalion chief promotional eligibility list (Prziborowski, 2007). Initially in 2006, the SCCFD had drastically increased the requirements to

promote to the rank of battalion chief; however, due to a variety of reasons, the actual requirements did not take effect until December 2008. While the requirements to take a battalion chief promotional exam have been increased to reflect more current knowledge, skills and abilities, the requirements for the A-Staff chief officer ranks have remained virtually unchanged over the last 21 or so years, when the fire chief job description was last updated (the assistant chief job description was updated in 1995 and the deputy chief job description was last updated in 1998). This has resulted in a significantly less number of qualified individuals eligible to participate in the battalion chief promotional process which ultimately decreases the number of eligible personnel to participate in A-Staff chief officer promotional examinations (Prziborowski, 2007).

In summary, the review of the job flyers of A-Staff chief officer positions around the country did not provide any results that showed the SCCFD is asking for anything out of the norm for A-Staff chief officer positions.

Overall the literature review did not provide any results that were drastically different from the results of the internal survey as noted in the Results section of this paper. The common theme noted in the literature review is that a fire department should have some form of succession planning, career development, and mentoring programs to ensure there are sufficient numbers of qualified personnel ready to step into the A-Staff chief officer ranks.

#### Procedures

The purpose of this research was to identify solutions to ensure there are sufficient numbers of personnel interested and qualified to promotion into the SCCFD A-Staff chief officer ranks in the future.

Descriptive research was used to address the following research questions:

- a. What is the level of interest of current SCCFD personnel to promote to the A-Staff chief officer ranks?
- b. What are the advantages of being an A-Staff chief officer?
- c. What are the disadvantages of being an A-Staff chief officer?
- d. Are the requirements to promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks within the SCCFD comparable to what other fire departments require?
- e. What can the SCCFD do to encourage personnel to promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks?

The first part of this ARP began at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center (LRC) in Emmitsburg, Maryland in May 2010, where the LRC staff assisted the researcher with collecting books, journals, and articles related to succession planning, career development, mentoring, recruitment and retention. The literature review continued in California with an online search, via the World Wide Web, of journals, books, and articles, as well as materials from the researcher's personal library, the SCCFD Training Division library, the City of San Jose public library, and lastly the review of A-Staff equivalent job flyers from around the County of Santa Clara, then the State of California, and then of other areas around the Country. Key words used for searching purposes were *chief officer, fire officer, training and education, career development, recruitment and retention, mentoring, professional development, jobs, and succession planning*.

The second part of this ARP involved an internal survey designed to elicit objective responses from study participants to facilitate consistent and accurate data collection and analysis. This survey design produced data for addressing the research questions and helped to delineate criteria that could be used to evaluate the current requirements to promote into the

SCCFD A-Staff chief officer ranks, to identify what barriers may be keeping SCCFD personnel from aspiring to promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks, and offer suggestions for improvement to ensure there are sufficient candidates who are interested and qualified to eventually promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks in the future due to expected retirements. The internal survey was intended to provide answers to all of the research questions.

A 10-item survey instrument (Appendix B) was created by the researcher to sample persons currently holding the ranks equivalent to battalion chief and below at the SCCFD. The survey sample was limited to the ranks equivalent to battalion chief and below, as those ranks were either the current or future target audience of the A-Staff chief officer positions. The items were a combination of forced-choice design (*yes, no, unsure, etc.*) and open-ended design, with clarification allowed for most questions. The respondents were asked to provide their perception of the advantages and disadvantages of being an SCCFD A-Staff chief officer, whether they were interested now or possibly in the future to promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks, their perception of whether the current A-Staff chief officer promotional requirements were reasonable, and what they felt the SCCFD could do to encourage personnel to participate in future A-Staff chief officer promotional processes. The expected time to finish the survey would be less than 10 minutes.

The internal survey was sent to a total of 248 personnel: 13 Battalion Chiefs (1 position was currently unfilled), 68 Fire Captains, 148 Firefighter/Engineers (including paramedics), and 19 personnel filling various positions within the Fire Prevention Division. The internal survey was administered to 4 persons inside and outside of the SCCFD, as a pilot study prior to its distribution to the SCCFD personnel. One of the persons was an SCCFD volunteer firefighter, and the rest were from other fire departments: one was a firefighter, one was a fire captain, and

one was an assistant chief. These individuals were chosen to obtain a variety of opinions, beliefs, and points of view. All pilot test participants completed the survey without difficulty, and their comments were incorporated into the final version of the survey, which was subsequently distributed to the SCCFD personnel at or below the rank equivalent to Battalion Chief.

The internal survey was sent via email using the Survey Monkey software to the 248 SCCFD personnel on June 19, 2010. The plan was to allow the respondents no more than 24 days to complete the survey. The advantage to using Survey Monkey was that the results could be exported and downloaded for tabulation and review much easier than having to input the data from each survey into a separate template. After the data from each of the completed surveys were transferred to the results section, the final data from the surveys was placed in a folder in a locked cabinet for archival purposes. A total of 76 out of a possible 248 surveys were returned, for a return rate of 31%.

### *Limitations*

After reviewing the completed surveys, it was noted that very few fire prevention division personnel completed a survey. After discussing the issue with some SCCFD personnel, it was determined that some of the fire prevention staff did not think that they were even eligible for any A-Staff chief officer positions other than the deputy chief of fire prevention and to the best of the author's knowledge, nobody from the fire prevention side has ever gone above deputy chief of fire prevention to the assistant or fire chief positions. Other limitations of the internally provided survey were that since it was electronically sent to the all of the above mentioned personnel as a group, and because each link was not uniquely tied to a specific person, nor were the names of the respondents asked for; there was no opportunity for specific follow-up or clarification.



Since it was not exactly known who had actually completed a survey, it was impossible to actually send out a reminder, specifically targeted at those who had not completed the survey. Instead, the only option was to send out a general reminder asking personnel to complete the survey. Lastly, other items that may have limited the final number of respondents is that there were a number of personnel who were off on approved time off, who must not regularly check their email, who choose not to complete such surveys, or who did not have sufficient time to complete the survey. Had the time limit to complete the survey been extended, and had the author followed up each fire station with a phone call to encourage personnel to complete the survey, there may have been an increase in respondents.

#### *Definition of Terms*

The following terms are defined in the context of this research.

*A-Staff chief officer:* A term used at the SCCFD to delineate the fire chief, the assistant chief, and/or one of the four deputy chiefs.

*Chief officer:* A term used to describe an individual within a fire department with not only supervisory experience, but also management and administrative experience. Fire chief, assistant chief, deputy chief, division chief and battalion chief are the most commonly used ranks at the chief officer level.

*Company officer:* The first-line supervisor within a fire department, typically supervising a crew of two to four personnel on a piece of fire apparatus, such as an engine or a truck. Captain and lieutenant are the most commonly used ranks at the company officer level.

#### Results

The purpose of this research was to identify solutions to ensure there are sufficient numbers of personnel interested and qualified to promote into the SCCFD A-Staff chief officer

ranks in the future. The analysis and interpretation of the internal survey included a review of (a) demographics of the respondent; (b) the respondent's level of interest in promoting to the SCCFD A-Staff chief officer ranks; (c) the respondent's preference of SCCFD A-Staff chief officer ranks if they were to promote; (d) the respondent's perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of being an SCCFD A-Staff chief officer; (e) the respondent's perception of what the SCCFD could do to encourage personnel to participate in future A-Staff chief officer promotional examinations; (f) the respondent's perception of the appropriateness and relevance of the current SCCFD A-Staff chief officer promotional requirements; (g) the respondent's perception of what options the SCCFD should consider if there are insufficient numbers of personnel interested in promoting to the A-Staff chief officer ranks in the future.

Table 5

*Summary of Responses to Survey Item 1 (N = 76)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
1. Years of fire service experience		
Less than 5	9	11.8
5 to 9	16	21.1
10 to 14	14	18.4
15 to 19	9	11.8
20 to 24	13	17.1
25 or greater	15	19.7

Item 1 of the internal survey asked how many years the respondent had been in the fire service. Nine (11.8%) of the respondents who answered the question reported *less than 5 years* of experience, 16 (21.1%) of the respondents who answered the question reported *5 to 9 years* of fire service experience, 14 (18.4%) reported *10 to 14 years*, 9 (11.8%) reported *15 to 19 years*, 13 (17.1%) reported *20 to 24 years*, and 15 (19.7%) reported *25 or more years* (Table 5).

Table 6

*Summary of Responses to Survey Item 2 (N = 76)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
2. Current SCCFD rank		
Assistant Fire Marshal	1	1.3
Battalion Chief	6	7.9
Decline to State	0	0.0
Deputy Fire Marshal	3	3.9
Fire Captain	31	40.8
Fire Protection Engineer	0	0.0
Firefighter/Engineer	16	21.1
Firefighter/Engineer-Paramedic	17	22.4
Haz Mat Program Supervisor	1	1.3
Haz Mat Specialist	1	1.3
Other	0	0.0
Senior Deputy Fire Marshal	0	0.0

Item 2 of the internal survey asked what rank the respondent currently filled. Thirty one (40.8%) of the respondents chose *Captain*, 17 (22.4%) reported *Firefighter/Engineer-Paramedic*, 16 (21.1%) reported *Firefighter/Engineer*, 6 (7.9%) reported *Battalion Chief*, 3 (3.9%) reported *Deputy Fire Marshal*, and 1 (1.3%) reported either *Assistant Fire Marshal*, *Haz Mat Program Supervisor* or *Haz Mat Specialist* (Table 6).

*Research Question 1*

Research question 1 asked, *What is the level of interest of current SCCFD personnel to promote to the A-Staff chief officer ranks?*

Table 7

*Summary of Responses to Survey Items 3-4 (N = 76)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
3. Interest in promoting to the A-Staff chief officer ranks		
Yes	11	14.5
No	33	43.4
Unsure	18	23.7
Not at this time, but possibly in the future	14	18.4
4. Interest in promoting to the A-Staff chief officer ranks		
Deputy Chief	21	27.6
Assistant Chief	2	2.6
Fire Chief	2	2.6
Unsure	22	28.9
None	35	46.1

Item 3 of the internal survey asked the respondent whether they had the interest in ever promoting to the A-Staff chief officer ranks. Thirty-three (43.4%) respondents who answered the question responded *no*, 18 (23.7%) respondents reported *unsure*, 14 (18.4%) respondents reported that *not at this time, but possibly in the future*, and 11 (14.5%) respondents who answered the question reported *yes*, they would be interested in promoting to the A-Staff chief officer ranks (Table 7).

Additional responses included 5 (7%) of the respondents who stated they had *too little time left on the job*, while 5 (7%) of the respondents who stated they had *too much time left on the job* to become an A-Staff chief officer. Two (3%) of the respondents answered that *they enjoyed the hands-on aspect of their current job too much and had no desire to work a 40-hour work week*.

Item 4 of the internal survey asked the respondent to choose which, if any, of the A-Staff Chief Officer ranks they may be interested in aspiring to in their career. Thirty-five (46.1%) of the respondents answered *none*, 22 (28.9%) answered *unsure*, 21 (27.6%) answered *Deputy Chief*, 2 (2.6%) answered *Assistant Chief*, and 2 (2.6%) answered *Fire Chief* (Table 7). Additional responses provided included 4 (5%) of the respondents answered that they would enjoy being the *Training Chief* and 3 (4%) of the respondents answered they would enjoy being the *Operations Chief*.

### *Research Question 2*

Research question 2 asked, *What are the advantages of being an A-Staff chief officer?* Item 5 of the internal survey asked the respondent to provide what they felt to be advantages of being an A-Staff chief officer. Sixty-six (86.8%) respondents stated the advantages include *making a difference, affecting change, being involved in the future of the department as well as*

*the big picture, and the potential for positive leadership.* Seventeen (22.4%) respondents stated the advantages include items relating to the *increased wages, the increased benefits and the working conditions, specifically being able to be at home on the nights, weekends and holidays with your family.* Ten (13.2%) respondents stated the advantages include *personal and professional career development and the sense of personal accomplishment.* Seven (9.2%) respondents stated the advantages include *being able to make a difference in the way of mentoring, succession planning and with the career development of other department personnel.* Five (6.6%) respondents stated the advantages as *none*, and 3 (3.9%) respondents were *unsure* as to the advantages of being an A-Staff chief officer (Table 8).

Table 8

*Summary of Responses to Survey Item 6 (N = 76)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
5. Advantages of being an A-Staff chief officer		
Making a difference/affecting change/involved in department future and the big picture/leadership potential	66	86.8
Wages/benefits/working conditions	17	22.4
Personal career development/achievement	10	13.2
Mentoring/succession planning/career development	7	9.2
None	5	6.6
Unsure	3	3.9

Advantages noted during the literature review primarily mirrored the items found above via the respondents answers during the internal survey. Cusack (2010) noted that a person best suited for an administrator position equivalent to an A-Staff chief officer was someone who enjoyed being challenged on a regular basis, as well as someone who enjoyed being a part of the bigger picture. Additional advantages to becoming an A-Staff chief officer would be “money, greater control, needing a challenge, wanting to make a difference, and my personal favorite, fear of who might be managing you if you don’t promote” (Johnson, 2010b, p. 84).

### *Research Question 3*

*Research question 3 asked, What are the disadvantages of being an A-Staff chief officer?*

Item 6 of the internal survey asked the respondent to describe what they felt to be disadvantages of being an A-Staff Chief Officer. Thirty-three (43.4%) of the respondents answered *not responding to calls/separation from the customer and the crews/lack of camaraderie*, 25 (32.9%) of the respondents answered *potential communication issues/disconnect from line personnel*, 22 (28.9%) responded *40-hour work week/not working 24-hour shifts*, 20 (26.3%) responded *internal/external politics and/or bureaucracy*, 19 (25%) responded *personal time commitment/workload*, 17 (22.4%) responded *stress/responsibility/liability*, 10 (13.2%) responded *office duty/meetings/paperwork*, 8 (10.5%) responded *unsure*, 4 (5.3%) responded *having to deal with personnel issues* and 3 (3.9%) answered *none* (Table 9).

Disadvantages noted during the literature review primarily mirrored the items found above via the respondents answers during the internal survey. Two of the items that stood out the most as being disadvantages were no longer being an integral part of the fire station life and going from the traditional 24-hour shift to a Monday through Friday 40-hour work week (Bruegman, 2005; Smeby, 2006). Additional disadvantages included the lack of union

protection, the lack of overtime compensation, the potential pay reduction from not being able to work overtime or for working additional hours, and not being compensated (Fenton, 2010).

Wilmoth (2010) discussed how the increased liability and the need to address the current financial hardship faced by the economy were two disadvantages, while Williams (2006) believed the potential disconnect between administrative and field personnel was a disadvantage.

Table 9

*Summary of Responses to Survey Item 6 (N = 76)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
6. Disadvantages of being an A-Staff chief officer		
Not responding to calls/separation from the customer and the crews/lack of camaraderie	33	43.4
Potential communication issues/disconnect from line personnel	25	32.9
40-hour work week / not working 24-hour shifts	22	28.9
Internal/external politics and/or bureaucracy	20	26.3
Personal time commitment/workload	19	25.0
Stress/responsibility/liability	17	22.4
Office duty/meetings/paperwork	10	13.2
Unsure	8	10.5
Having to deal with personnel issues	4	5.3
None	3	3.9



The fire service is not the only industry having challenges with recruiting personnel to promote into the senior, executive level ranks due to perceived disadvantages. In an interview with a high school principal, Cusack (2010) discovered that the increased workload and additional hours, not to mention the other administrative responsibilities such as increased paperwork and responsibilities, and the resulting stress appeared to be barriers faced by school districts when attempting to recruit teachers into the senior administrative ranks, which is parallel to problems the fire service is facing.

#### *Research Question 4*

Research question 4 asked, *Are the requirements to promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks within the SCCFD comparable to what other fire departments require?*

Item 8 of the internal survey asked the respondent whether they felt the current SCCFD requirements to promote to the A-Staff chief officer positions were reasonable. Forty-one (53.9%) of the respondents answered *yes*, 21 (27.6%) of the respondents answered *no*, 14 (18.4%) responded *unsure*. Other significant responses provided by respondents included 17 (22.4%) who answered *increase experience*, and 7 (9.2%) who answered *modify educational requirements* (Table 10).

The information obtained through the review of the 123 A-Staff chief officer job flyers mirrored what the majority of SCCFD personnel below in Table 10 answered when posed with the question of whether the current requirements are reasonable. If anything, a number of departments actually required more training, education and/or experience for their A-Staff chief officer positions, as compared to the SCCFD (Tables 11 through 18).

Table 10

*Summary of Responses to Survey Item 8 (N = 76)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
8. Determining whether current A-Staff chief officer requirements are reasonable		
Yes	41	53.9
No	21	27.6
Unsure	14	18.4
Additional comments offered by respondents		
Increase experience	17	22.4
Modify educational requirements	7	9.2
They are reasonable	4	5.3
A-Staff chief officers should have a graduate degree	3	3.9
Degree should be relevant to the fire service	3	3.9
Allow for flexibility in choosing promotional candidates	2	2.6
Decrease experience requirements	2	2.6
Change Battalion Chief requirements	1	1.3

Table 11

*Fire Chief Promotional Requirements – Education and Training (N = 68)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
Graduate degree		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	32	47.1
Four-year degree		
Required	57	83.8
Desirable	8	11.8
Two-year degree		
Required	1	1.5
Desirable	0	0.0
Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Designation		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	9	13.2
Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	22	32.4
California State Fire Marshal's Office Chief Officer		
Required	2	2.9
Desirable	7	10.3

Table 12

*Fire Chief Promotional Requirements – Experience (N = 68)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
Years as an assistant chief		
1	1	1.5
5	1	1.5
Years as a battalion chief		
1	3	4.4
2	5	7.4
3	12	17.7
4	11	16.2
5	15	22.1
10	6	8.8
15	1	1.5
Years as a deputy chief		
5	1	1.5
Years as a division chief		
1	1	1.5
5	3	4.4
7	2	2.9
10	1	1.5
Unspecified	5	7.4

Table 13

*Assistant Chief Promotional Requirements – Education and Training (N = 14)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
Graduate degree		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	2	14.3
Four-year degree		
Required	5	35.8
Desirable	4	28.6
Two-year degree		
Required	4	28.6
Desirable	0	0.0
Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Designation		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	1	7.1
Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	3	21.4
California State Fire Marshal's Office Chief Officer Certification		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	2	14.3

Table 14

*Assistant Chief Promotional Requirements – Experience (N = 14)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
Years as a battalion chief		
1	1	7.1
2	1	7.1
3	3	21.4
4	1	7.1
Years as a captain		
2	2	14.3
3	2	14.3
5	2	14.3
7	1	7.1
Unspecified	1	7.1

Table 15

*Deputy Chief Promotional Requirements – Education and Training (N = 24)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
Graduate degree		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	5	20.8
Four-year degree		
Required	16	66.7
Desirable	4	16.7
Two-year degree		
Required	5	20.8
Desirable	0	0.0
Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Designation		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	3	12.5
Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	7	29.2
California State Fire Marshal's Office Chief Officer Certification		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	3	12.5

Table 16

*Deputy Chief Promotional Requirements – Experience (N = 24)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
Years as a battalion chief		
1	3	12.5
2	8	7.1
3	3	12.5
5	3	12.5
Years as a captain		
2	1	4.2
4	2	8.3
5	3	12.5
8	1	4.2
Off probation	1	4.2



Table 17

*Division Chief Promotional Requirements – Education and Training (N = 17)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
Graduate degree		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	1	5.9
Four-year degree		
Required	8	47.1
Desirable	5	29.4
Two-year degree		
Required	7	41.2
Desirable	0	0.0
Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Designation		
Required	0	0.0
Desirable	1	5.9
Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program		
Required	1	5.9
Desirable	4	23.5
California State Fire Marshal's Office Chief Officer Certification		
Required	3	17.6
Desirable	8	47.1

Table 18

*Division Chief Promotional Requirements – Experience (N = 17)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
Years as a battalion chief		
2	1	5.9
3	3	17.6
Off probation	1	5.9
Years as a captain		
2	3	17.6
3	4	23.5
4	2	11.8
5	2	11.8
6	1	5.9

Upon reviewing the job flyers (Tables 11 through 18), and then comparing the position requirements – training and education, as well as experience, to those of the SCCFD (Table 4), there were no significant differences. The overall requirements to promote into the SCCFD A-Staff chief officer ranks appear to be reasonable when compared to other fire departments, with the only exception being some fire departments placing some value on the completion of the EFO program and CFO designation. Although the SCCFD does not currently require any certifications such as completion of the EFO program, CFO designation, or even California State Fire Marshal’s office certifications of either Chief Officer or Fire Officer, a sizeable number of

departments are requiring those certifications, or at least stating they are desirable or highly desirable. While the SCCFD does not require California Chief Officer or Fire Officer certification for A-Staff chief officer ranks, to promote into the captain or battalion chief ranks, a candidate must possess those certifications or at least a portion of the required coursework.

#### *Research Question 5*

Research question 5 asked *What can the SCCFD do to encourage personnel to promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks?*

Item 7 of the internal survey asked the respondent to identify techniques the SCCFD could employ to encourage personnel to participate in future A-Staff Chief Officer promotional examinations. Thirty-four (44.7%) of the respondents answered *that the SCCFD should implement a mentor program and provide a better understanding of the job of an A-Staff chief officer*. Sixteen (21.1%) of the respondents answered *that the SCCFD should accommodate education in the sense of either providing opportunities on or off duty, allowing more flexibility to attend educational classes*. Sixteen (21.1%) of the respondents answered *that the SCCFD should modify the promotional requirements to allow some flexibility if a candidate did not currently meet the requirements*. Fifteen (19.7%) of the respondents answered *that the SCCFD A-Staff chief officers should improve communications and integration with the line personnel*. Thirteen (17.1%) answered *unsure*. Ten (13.2%) of the respondents answered *that the SCCFD should provide positive reinforcement and encourage personnel to promote*. Four (5.3%) of the respondents answered *that the SCCFD should make the A-Staff chief officer positions more desirable, either with more pay or less project/program responsibility*. Two (2.6%) of the respondents answered *that the SCCFD should make the promotion to battalion chief easier*. One (1.3%) of the respondents answered *that the SCCFD should open the A-Staff chief officer*

*recruitment up to all employees, and not just limit it to battalion chiefs or acting battalion chiefs* (Table 19).

Table 19

*Summary of Responses to Survey Item 7 (N = 76)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
7. How the SCCFD could encourage participation in future A-Staff promotional exams		
Mentoring programs / provide better understanding of the job	34	44.7
Provide on or off duty educational opportunities	16	21.1
Modify the promotional requirements to allow flexibility	16	21.1
Improve communications and integration with line personnel	15	19.7
Unsure	13	17.1
Provide positive reinforcement/encourage personnel to promote	10	13.2
Make the positions more desirable (more pay/less projects)	4	5.3
Make promoting to Battalion Chief easier	2	2.6
Do not limit the pool to battalion chiefs/acting battalion chiefs	1	1.3

Item 9 of the internal survey asked the respondent to identify options the SCCFD should consider if there are insufficient numbers of personnel interested in future A-Staff Chief Officer promotional examinations. Twenty-seven (35.5%) of the respondents answered *open up the recruitment to outside personnel*, 22 (28.9%) of the respondents answered *decrease the A-Staff chief officer educational requirements*, 21 (27.6%) answered *other*, 17 (22.4%) answered *unsure* and 4 (5.3%) answered *decrease the A-Staff chief officer experience requirements*. Other

significant responses provided by respondents included 13 (17.1%) who answered *encourage personnel/offer mentoring and educational assistance*, and 11 (14.5%) who answered *adjust educational requirements/allow flexibility to take classes* (Table 20).

Table 20

*Summary of Responses to Survey Item 9 (N = 76)*

Item	<i>f</i>	%
9. Options the SCCFD should consider if insufficient personnel interested in A-Staff promotions		
Decrease the A-Staff chief officer educational requirements	22	28.9
Decrease the A-Staff chief officer experience requirements	4	5.3
Open up the recruitment to outside personnel	27	35.5
Unsure	17	22.4
Other	21	27.6
Additional comments offered by respondents		
Encourage personnel/offer mentoring and educational assistance	13	17.1
Adjust educational requirements/allow flexibility to take classes	11	14.5
Hiring from outside could be beneficial	6	7.9
Don't modify requirements, they are reasonable	5	6.6
Hiring from outside could be harmful	3	3.9
Decrease experience requirements	3	3.9
Allow flexibility to meet promotional requirements	1	1.3
Increase experience requirements	1	1.3

## Discussion

An individual filling an A-Staff chief officer rank at any fire department has a tremendous amount of personal and professional responsibility, not to mention liability, to ensure the fire department is providing the highest quality of service, in a very safe and efficient manner, and for a cost-effective price to the individuals and the community it serves.

The SCCFD is going to have a challenging time recruiting personnel to participate in future A-Staff chief officer promotional processes. Only 11 (14.5%) of respondents actually committed to having any interest to participate in future promotional process. Question #3 of the internal survey asked respondents “are you interested in promoting to the A-Staff chief officer ranks (now or in the future), even if you don’t qualify?” Nearly half of the respondents, 33 (43.4%), stated they had no interest in promoting to the A-Staff chief officer ranks. On the bright side, 18 (23.7%) of the personnel responding to the survey stated they were unsure if they would be interested and 14 (18.4%) of the personnel stated they were not currently interested, but that they may possibly interested in the future. That makes a little over 42% of respondents who would not commit a firm yes or no, and could potentially be convinced to participate in future promotional examinations for A-Staff chief officer ranks.

While it is understood that people have the right to change their mind, it is at least encouraging to see the numbers of personnel with at least some interest in promoting to the A-Staff chief officer ranks. Obviously everyone cannot rise to become the fire chief or the assistant chief, primarily because of the very limited number of openings, and the large potential pool to draw from. Have we as an industry even discouraged personnel from promoting up the chain of command? Coleman (2008) believed so, primarily because the working conditions at the lower ranks (firefighter, engineer, and even captain) have been made much more glamorous and

enticing than those higher ranks (chief officer). In some ways, it is hard to fault personnel for not wanting to leave their comfort zone, especially if we do not pay any attention to future A-Staff chief officer promotions at the time we hire personnel as entry-level firefighters.

The literature review exposed numerous instances of authors encouraging fire departments to start identifying their future executive officers early in their careers, shortly after getting hired or even during the entry-level firefighter hiring process if possible (Bruegman, 2005, Graner, 2006, Coleman, 2008 and Haigh, 2010). Why is this critical? Because if we wait until personnel have obtained the rank of company officer or even the entry-level chief officer ranks in positions such as battalion chief, these personnel are more than likely well into the second half of their career and have already been well established within their family and lifestyle. Some may even be so close to retirement that they do not want to go through the hassle of attempting to complete the necessary training, education and experience to compete in the A-Staff chief officer promotions. By capturing and identifying potential future key leaders within an organization earlier as opposed to later, we allow them to slowly, and progressively participate in career development opportunities as opposed to having to rush them through the process when they are already overwhelmed on the home front managing their personal life.

Of the current A-Staff chief officer positions, the rank of deputy chief appears to be the most appealing to respondents of the internal survey who were asked on question #4 which A-Staff chief officer position they would like to aspire to at some point of their career. Twenty-one (27.6%) stated that deputy chief would be their choice if they were to be an A-Staff chief officer with 4 (5%) adding that the deputy chief of operations would be their ideal position and 3 (4%) adding that deputy chief of training would be their ideal positions; no respondents added that they would enjoy being the deputy chief of support services or of fire prevention. Of equal desire

were the assistant chief and fire chief positions, where in both cases 2 (2.6%) of the respondents stated they would like to aspire to those positions. Since there is only one assistant chief and one fire chief, as compared to four deputy chiefs, these numbers at face value do not appear to be a significant challenge. Just having some personnel state they would be interested in those positions is half the battle. Now the other half of the battle is doing what it takes to get those personnel prepared for the future promotional examinations; unfortunately not everyone who has a desire to do something will ever get that opportunity, for a variety of reasons.

Bruegman (2005), Smeby (2006), Williams (2006), Cusack (2010), Fenton (2010) and Wilmoth (2010) all echoed the ever-increasing challenge fire departments across the country are having getting personnel to promote into the A-Staff chief officer ranks. In today's litigious society, being an A-Staff chief officer is not as glamorous as it may have been in previous years. Ever-increasing responsibility, liability, workload, longer work hours, stress, lack of union protection, and the potential for the compensation not being worth the hassle of working in an administrative capacity – without the ability to make overtime, were commonalities noted over and over again by the various authors.

What are the advantages to being an SCCFD A-Staff chief officer? When asked about the advantages of being an A-Staff Chief Officer, a majority of respondents, 66 (86.8%), believed a compilation of making a difference in the department, being able to affect change, being involved in the future of the department and the big picture, and the potential for having leadership ability to guide the department in the right direction were the primary advantages. The next item stated to be an advantage by 17 (22.4%) of the respondents was wages, benefits and working conditions. The results from the internal survey mirrored what was discovered during the literature review. Cusack (2010) and Johnson (2010b) both identified those items mentioned



by the SCCFD personnel as reasons why an individual would want to promote into ranks equivalent to the A-Staff chief officer ranks.

What are the disadvantages of being an SCCFD A-Staff chief officer? When asked about the disadvantages of being an A-Staff Chief Officer, the items most noted were a compilation of not being able to respond to emergency calls, being separated from the customer and the crews and a lack of camaraderie, was noted by 33 (43.4%) of the respondents to the internal survey. Next most noted items included 25 (32.9%) of the respondents who stated potential communication issues and the disconnect from line personnel as being disadvantages and 22 (28.9%) of the respondents who stated that the 40-hour work week and not being able to work 24-hour shifts were disadvantages. The results from the internal survey mirrored what was discovered during the literature review.

Maybe the type of individual we recruit or hire for the position of firefighter needs to be evaluated? It would be a safe bet that if you were to walk up to the majority of candidates who are applying for firefighter positions across the country and asked them why they wanted to become a firefighter, they would probably have an answer similar to I want to fight fire, save lives, and go on emergency responses. Then within that conversation it would probably come out that they like the idea of working 24-hour shifts as many fire departments do, and that they like the generous wages, benefits, and even retirement plans that many firefighters are fortunate enough to have. I say this because I hear this on a regular basis when I talk to prospective candidates who want to work for our department or any fire department, as well as prospective candidates at the community college where I have been teaching fire science and related courses for over 17 years. Very rarely do I hear someone who actually wants to eventually become a fire

chief or some other A-Staff chief officer; that is usually the last thing on most individual's minds when they decide to become a firefighter.

Here lies the problem: if you really evaluate each of those items mentioned above, they are the primary disadvantages noted by not only personnel responding to the internal survey, but also within the literature review. Many of the personnel we may be hiring today do not even have A-Staff chief officer positions on their radar screen, nor do they even have the desire to ever have them on their radar screen.

If a fire department such as the SCCFD wants to start identifying and preparing future A-Staff chief officers, then it may be ideal to start looking for those leaders shortly after they have finished their entry-level probationary period of 18 months after the recruit academy has finished. One tool that could be used to assist with a standardized approach to career development could be the Officer Development Handbook, whereas all four levels of Officer Development are discussed and examples of how to progress through the chain of command from the Supervising Fire Officer (company officer) all the way up to the Executive Fire Officer (fire chief) are provided (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2010). There is a catch and a potential problem with identifying key leaders too early in their careers in that they may be enticed or even pushed to go up the chain of command too quickly, which could possibly lead to burnout or even being placed into a position they are just not ready to step into, which could lead to irreversible damage to their confidence, their reputation, and their overall credibility.

Upon reviewing the 123 A-Staff chief officer job flyers (Tables 11 through 18), and then comparing the position requirements – training and education, as well as experience, to those of the SCCFD (Table 4), there were no obvious differences or variances to note. The requirements to promote into the SCCFD A-Staff chief officer ranks appear to be reasonable when compared

to other fire departments, with the only exception being some fire departments placing some value on the completion of the EFO program and CFO designation.

Although the SCCFD does not currently require any certifications such as completion of the Executive Fire Officer Program, Chief Fire Officer Designation, or even California State Fire Marshal's office certifications of either Chief Officer or Fire Officer, a sizeable number of departments are requiring those certifications, or at least stating they are desirable or highly desirable. While the SCCFD does not require California Chief Officer certification for A-Staff chief officer positions, to promote into the lower captain or battalion chief ranks, a candidate must either possess those certifications or at least a portion of the required coursework.

What happens if the SCCFD does not have sufficient numbers of personnel ready to step into the A-Staff chief officer ranks in the future? That is a question that does not have an easy answer. Question #9 of the internal survey asked respondents "if there are insufficient numbers of personnel interested in promoting to the A-Staff chief officer ranks in the future, what options should the SCCFD consider?" Over one-third of the respondents, 27 (35.5%), answered that the SCCFD should open up the recruitment to outside personnel who meet the current qualifications. It is interesting to note, that to the best of the author's knowledge, the only time the SCCFD has ever opened up an A-Staff chief officer recruitment to outside personnel was in 2002 when the fire chief vacancy was opened up for a nationwide recruitment of personnel. However, this situation resulted in the current assistant chief, who had been acting as the interim fire chief since the retirement of the previous fire chief, being promoted to fire chief. Thus, there has never been an outside candidate selected for an SCCFD A-Staff chief officer position.

Is it wrong to have to open up a recruitment to the outside to get additional candidates to apply for A-Staff chief officer positions? Not necessarily. Graner (2006) felt opening up A-Staff

chief officer positions to the outside would assist with ensuring that the best candidate is selected and that the process does not appear to be simply a political appointment. While opening up the recruitment may not be a bad thing in itself, a progressive fire department should find themselves with multiple in-house personnel who have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to step into the A-Staff chief officer positions and more importantly, successfully compete with those outside candidates (Graner, 2006). The last thing a fire department should do is end up hiring personnel from the outside, or even worse, hire from within someone who is either unprepared or unqualified as this may force those internal candidates who may be talented and with aspirations of becoming A-Staff chief officers to leave for other opportunities, or become disenchanted with the department (Cochran, 2006). A progressive and proactive fire department will ensure there are more than enough A-Staff chief officer candidates to select from, to provide as large of a candidate pool to draw from, so that it is not stuck with having to promote the only person who put in for the position and may not be the best fit.

What are some barriers to getting personnel to step into the A-Staff chief officer ranks? Well, one can look at the disadvantages of being an A-Staff chief officer as discussed above as a starting point. To take it a step further, if we look at the internal survey, particularly question #7, which asked how the SCCFD could encourage participation in future A-Staff chief officer promotional exams. Almost one-half of the respondents, 34 (44.7%), added that the SCCFD should offer a mentor program or some form of similar program for prospective A-Staff chief officers to get a better understanding of the job. The need for a mentoring program was also documented in the literature review by participants in the 2010-2014 SCCFD strategic planning process as a critical issue and as a service gap (SCCFD, 2010c). Other strong responses by respondents included 16 (21.1%) suggesting the SCCFD provide on or off duty educational

opportunities, 16 (21.1%) suggesting the SCCFD modify the current promotional requirements (including the battalion chief requirements) to allow flexibility in obtaining the qualifications, and 15 (19.7%) of respondents suggesting that the SCCFD senior staff improve communications and integration with line personnel.

In today's world, it is hard to argue against requiring formal education and training, not to mention significant experience for senior executives of any public or private organization, especially fire departments. Increasing numbers of fire departments are requiring their A-Staff chief officer candidates to possess a variety of educational or training accomplishments, such as a four year degree, a graduate degree, completion of the EFO program, and even CFO designation (Barr and Eversole, 2003; Bruegman, 2005; Carrizzo, 2005; Buckman, 2006; Graner, 2006; Smeby, 2006; Carter, 2007; Harmes, 2008; Poulin, 2009; Wallace, 2009; and Snodgrass, 2010).

While some of the respondents to the internal survey did suggest lowering or even modifying educational and/or experience requirements to allow flexibility and to even increase the potential pool of qualified candidates, it would be in the best interest of the SCCFD to not necessarily lower the qualifications that seem to be on par with at least the 123 job flyers that were reviewed in Tables 11 through 18. A more appropriate technique might be to possibly either modify the requirements – which could include allowing personnel to participate in the promotional process, but not be promoted until they complete the requirements, or allowing personnel to participate in the promotional process and actually get promoted if they score well enough, but have a required timeline to complete the necessary education and training they may be lacking.

The fire service is not the only industry having challenges with recruiting personnel to promote into the senior, executive level ranks. In an interview with a high school principal,

Cusack (2010) discovered that the increased workload and additional hours, not to mention the other administrative responsibilities such as increased paperwork and responsibilities, and the resulting stress appeared to be barriers faced by school districts when attempting to recruit teachers into the senior administrative ranks, are keeping teachers from promoting into the senior executive ranks; this is very similar to the challenges the fire service is facing. The fast food conglomerate McDonald's had a valuable lesson for the fire service when it comes to succession planning and preparing personnel for future A-Staff chief officer equivalent positions, specifically do not put all of your eggs into one basket, by relying on one or two personnel to be the future senior executives, especially the individual who is currently serving as the number two in command when looking at the number one in command position. Instead, branch down the chain of command early in the careers of personnel to encourage and prepare personnel for promotions, and also attempt to maintain a pool of qualified and prepared individuals who could step into the senior executive ranks at a moment's notice, to ensure a seamless transition (Neuman, 2009).

Johnson (2010b) summarized it best when he compared successful businesses and athletic dynasties, and specifically how those that are successful are continuously performing and practicing succession planning "because their executives know that leading a team to success is only half the formula. The other half is filling the pipeline with the next generation of top performers" (p. 84).

### Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to identify solutions to ensure there are sufficient numbers of personnel interested and qualified to promotion into the SCCFD A-Staff chief officer ranks in the future.

Based on the responses to the internal survey, the information obtained from the literature review, and the analysis of the results of those processes, the following recommendations are offered to act as a starting point to assist the SCCFD with developing a plan to ensure there are sufficient numbers of personnel interested and qualified to promote to the A-Staff chief officer ranks in the future, especially the near future when it is anticipated larger than normal numbers of A-Staff chief officers will be retiring.

The first recommendation for the SCCFD is identify key personnel from both the labor organization (Santa Clara County Firefighters Association Local 1165) and the management organization – A-Staff and B-Staff chief officers, to be a part of a committee to evaluate the current succession planning, career development and mentoring strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The make-up of the committee should include personnel of various ranks, as well as various levels of experience (from newly hired personnel to senior personnel) to ensure an objective balance of opinions and ideas. This committee should be an on-going committee, not an ad-hoc committee, as this topic is not going to be solved over the course of a year or two; it will more than likely be an on-going issue to address and modify as needed. There is already a sufficient amount of information the committee could use as a starting point, including the information contained within this ARP, the recent SCCFD strategic planning process, as well as additional follow-up to SCCFD personnel.

The second recommendation is to resurrect the SCCFD Mentor Program that was implemented in 2005, but never really gained any interest and has laid dormant without any obvious participants or experiences to build upon for the future. For whatever reason, the program was not initially successful. However, based on the number of respondents within the internal survey that stated there should be some form of mentoring program in place, now is a

good time to see what can be done to get the personnel to actually buy into and utilize such a program. Mentoring is an on-going process that in theory should begin with newly hired firefighters and continue all the way up the ranks to the A-Staff chief officer ranks.

The third recommendation is to create a formal succession plan that will identify the necessary education, training and experience required for the A-Staff chief officer ranks, in addition to providing a road map for someone with the aspiration to be able to successfully promote into those ranks. Since there is no one-size-fits-all approach for everyone, this plan should provide a variety of alternatives to allow flexibility in completing. A number of respondents to the internal survey made mention of the need for flexible time off to attend classes, of the need for the SCCFD to offer more training and education in-house, and to create on-the-job experience opportunities to better prepare and inspire personnel to promote to the A-Staff chief officer ranks. Once a succession plan is created for A-Staff chief officer ranks, the author suggests then working to include the rest of the ranks and/or career paths within the chain of command to ensure that there is a plan to address the needs of every rank and position within the SCCFD.

The fourth recommendation is to reevaluate the results that were discovered during the author's first applied research project, "Future Chief Officer preparation needs for the Santa Clara County Fire Department," (Prziborowski, 2007), and use those as a baseline for taking this research to the next level. Since the future A-Staff chief officers will primarily come from the current battalion chief ranks as well as those on the current battalion chief promotional eligibility lists, it is critical to also determine why more personnel are not participating in the battalion chief examinations and work on increasing those numbers of personnel since that promotional examination is directly tied into the A-Staff chief officer promotional examinations.



While the SCCFD is challenged with having interested and qualified personnel to take future A-Staff chief officer examinations, the issue of not having sufficient battalion chief candidates is another critical issue that needs to be eventually addressed, especially since the battalion chief promotional examination is the gateway to the A-Staff chief officer ranks.

The SCCFD has prided itself in being a progressive fire department with the employee being the greatest asset. To ensure the continuity of those ideas, it is critical to create a succession plan that will ensure there are more than enough interested, qualified and prepared SCCFD personnel that could step into the A-Staff chief officer ranks on a moment's notice, should the immediate need ever arise.

## References

- Barr, R., & Eversole, J. (Eds.). (2003). *The fire chief's handbook* (6th ed.). Tulsa, OK: Pennwell.
- Broman, J. (2009, July). Leadership skills: career builder. *Fire Rescue*, 27, 58-60.
- Bruegman, R. (2005). *The chief officer: a symbol is a promise*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Buckman, J. (Ed.). (2006). *Chief officer's desk reference*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.
- Butler, K. & DiDomenico, J. (2009, 3rd). New deputy chiefs command course. *With New York Firefighters*, 11.
- Carrizzo, R. (2005, August). More than merit. *Fire Chief*, 49, 140-143.
- Carter, H. (2007, August). What higher education means for my fire service career. *Firehouse*, 32, 114-128.
- Carter, H., & Rausch, E. (2008). *Management in the fire service* (4th ed.). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.
- Cochran, K. (2006, October). Passing the torch. *Fire Rescue*, 24, 84-86.
- Cochran, K. (2007, July). Parting ways. *Fire Chief*, 51, 38-42.
- Coleman, R. (2008, June). Today's grunt may be tomorrow's chief. *Fire Chief*, 52, 34-37.
- Compton, D., & Granito, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Managing fire services*. Washington, DC: International City and County Managers Association.
- Cusack, C. (2010, May 9). On the job. *The San Jose Mercury*. Retrieved August 13, 2010, from [http://www.mercurynews.com/ci\\_15669966?IADID=Search-www.mercurynews.com-www.mercurynews.com](http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_15669966?IADID=Search-www.mercurynews.com-www.mercurynews.com)

- Fenton, J. (2010, July 24). City fire chief seeks raise for top officers. *The Baltimore Sun*. Retrieved July 25, 2010, from <https://secure.pqarchiver.com/baltsun/access/2090745151.html?FMT=FT&FMFS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Jul+24%2C+2010&author=Justin+Fenton&pub=The+Sun&desc=CITY+FIRE+CHIEF+SEEKS+RAISE+FOR+TOP+OFFICERS>
- Graner, R. (2006). *The fire chief's toolbox*. Tulsa, OK: Pennwell.
- Haigh, C. (2010, August). Legacy leadership: hiring the right people and developing them for the future. *Firehouse*, 35, 76-81.
- Harmes, J. (2008, February). A higher calling – why every fire officer should have an advanced degree. *Fire Rescue*, 26, 80-84.
- International Association of Fire Chiefs. (2010). *Officer development handbook*. Fairfax, VA: Author.
- International Fire Service Training Association. (2004). *Chief officer*. Stillwater, OK: Fire Protection Publications.
- Johnson, J. (2010a, June). Cultivating leaders. *Fire Rescue*, 28, 62.
- Johnson, J. (2010b, August). Planning today for tomorrow's leaders. *Fire Rescue*, 28, 84.
- Neuman, W. (2009, December 31). At McDonald's, a retirement stirs questions on succession. *The New York Times*, pp. B1-2.
- Pierce, E. (2008, April). Chief fire officer training. *Firehouse*, 33, 138-140.
- Poulin, T. (2009, March). Professional image. *Fire Chief*, 53, 42-46.
- Prziborowski, S. (2007). *Future chief officer preparation needs for the santa clara county fire department*. Emmitsburg, MD: National Fire Academy.

- Santa Clara County Fire Department. (2005). *Santa clara county fire department mentor program*. Los Gatos, CA: Author.
- Santa Clara County Fire Department. (2010a). *Santa clara county fire department policy 1-2*. Los Gatos, CA: Author.
- Santa Clara County Fire Department. (2010b). *Santa clara county fire department business plan*. Los Gatos, CA: Author.
- Santa Clara County Fire Department. (2010c). *Santa clara county fire department strategic plan*. Los Gatos, CA: Author.
- Smeby, L. (2006). *Fire and emergency service administration*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.
- Snodgrass, P. (2009, August). Competition puts new emphasis on adding a degree to your resume. *Firehouse*, 34, 108-114.
- Snodgrass, P. (2010, August). From research to administration, FESHE's new bachelor's degree core. *Firehouse*, 35, 114-122.
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2009). *Executive fire officer program operational policies and procedures, applied research guidelines, frequently asked questions*. Emmitsburg, MD: Author.
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2005). *Executive leadership: Student manual* (5th ed.). Emmitsburg, MD: Author.
- Wallace, M. (2009, August). Strategic planning for training and professional development. *Fire Engineering*, 162, 111-116.
- Williams, B. (2006, January). The glass partition. *Fire Chief*, 50, 48-54.
- Wilmoth, J. (2010, January). Sighs of the times. *Fire Chief*, 54, 66-78.

## APPENDIX A

## A-Staff Equivalent Job Flyers Reviewed

*Fire Chief*

Alameda (CA)	Garden Grove (CA)
Arlington (TX)	Hayward (CA)
Atlanta (GA)	Hemet (CA)
Aurora (CO)	Hermosa Beach (CA)
Benicia (CA)	Houston (TX)
Burbank (CA)	Huntington Beach (CA)
Carpenteria-Summerland (CA)	Imperial County (CA)
Central Santa Cruz County (CA)	Kern County (CA)
Chandler (AZ)	Las Vegas (NV)
Charleston (SC)	Little Rock (AK)
Chico (CA)	Livermore-Pleasanton (CA)
Chula Vista (CA)	Long Beach (CA)
Compton (CA)	Los Angeles (CA)
Contra Costa County (CA)	Lubbock (TX)
Coronado (CA)	Manhattan Beach (CA)
Costa Mesa (CA)	Manteca (CA)
Des Moines (IA)	Milpitas (CA)
Dixon (CA)	Milwaukee (WI)
Fairfield (CA)	Modesto (CA)
Fort Lauderdale (FL)	Montebello (CA)

Moraga-Orinda (CA)	Rialto (CA)
Mountain View (CA)	Rio Vista (CA)
Newport Beach (CA)	Saint Paul (MN)
Oakland (CA)	Salinas (CA)
Oceanside (CA)	Salt Lake City (UT)
Orange (CA)	San Antonio (TX)
Orange County (CA)	San Diego (CA)
Pasadena (CA)	San Jose (CA)
Peoria (AZ)	San Rafael (CA)
Piedmont (CA)	Santa Ana (CA)
Rapid City (SD)	Santa Barbara (CA)
Redding (CA)	Santa Barbara County (CA)
Redlands (CA)	Santa Clara County (CA)
Reno (NV)	Santa Monica (CA)

*Assistant Chief*

Berkeley (CA)	Oceanside (CA)
Central Santa Cruz County (CA)	San Bernardino County (CA)
Contra Costa County (CA)	San Jose (CA)
Dixon (CA)	San Ramon Valley (CA)
Eureka (CA)	Santa Clara County (CA)
Newark (CA)	Tualatin Valley (OR)
North Las Vegas (NV)	Vashon Island (WA)

*Division Chief*

Benicia (CA)	Orange County (CA)
Chico (CA)	Poway (CA)
Coronado (CA)	Redondo Beach (CA)
El Cajon (CA)	San Bruno (CA)
Gilroy (CA)	South Lake Tahoe (NV)
Half Moon Bay (CA)	Tracy (CA)
Hemet (CA)	Vacaville (CA)
Livermore-Pleasanton (CA)	West Sacramento (CA)
Merced (CA)	

*Deputy Chief*

Baltimore (MD)	Redding (CA)
Berkeley (CA)	Sacramento Metropolitan (CA)
Burlingame (CA)	San Jose (CA)
Chino Valley (CA)	San Mateo (CA)
Clovis (CA)	Santa Clara (CA)
Compton (CA)	Santa Clara County (CA)
Goodyear (AZ)	Santa Rosa (CA)
Livermore-Pleasanton (CA)	Scottsdale (AZ)
North County (CA)	South San Francisco (CA)
Pasadena (CA)	Vista (CA)
Peoria (AZ)	Woodinville (WA)
Rancho Cucamonga (CA)	Woodland (CA)

APPENDIX B

Internal Fire Department Survey

MEMORANDUM

June 19, 2010

TO:  
FROM: Steve Prziborowski, Battalion Chief  
SUBJECT: Executive Fire Officer Program Survey

I am completing the last year of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. One of the requirements of this two-week a year, four-year total program is to complete an Applied Research Project within six months of completing each year's curriculum, applicable to the student's own organization. In order to complete this research, I am asking your assistance by requesting you complete this feedback instrument found below.

The Santa Clara County Fire Department is facing significant turnover at all chief officer ranks, especially the A-Staff chief officer ranks (Deputy Chief, Assistant Chief, and Fire Chief) in the near future. To help ensure a smooth transition into the future and to assist our Department with succession planning and career development, it is essential to have sufficient numbers of personnel aspiring to, interested in, preparing for, and qualified for those A-Staff chief officer ranks.

I would like to identify solutions to increase the numbers of interested (and successful) A-Staff chief officer candidates in the future, to ensure there are sufficient, interested and qualified personnel to choose from for our future A-Staff chief officer openings.

The results of this feedback instrument will be confidential. While the results will be shared in the final applied research project, the names of the respondents will not be published or related to each answer in the final results. If you would like a copy of the final ARP, feel free to contact me and I will be happy to send you one when it is completed.

This by no means commits you to anything in the future; your answers will be used to develop recommendations I will present to A-Staff, to ensure we have sufficient numbers of qualified and interested A-Staff chief officer candidates in the future.

Please answer the questions below by Monday July 12, 2010. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation with this project!

---

Approved for Distribution:  
Ken Waldvogel, Fire Chief



FIRE DEPARTMENT  
SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Executive Fire Officer Program – Applied Research Project Survey

1. How many years have you been in the fire service (County Fire and any other fire department experience)?

Less than 5    5 to 9    10 to 14    15 to 19    20 to 24    25 or greater

2. What is your current rank?

<input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Fire Marshal	<input type="checkbox"/> Firefighter / Engineer
<input type="checkbox"/> Battalion Chief	<input type="checkbox"/> Firefighter / Engineer - Paramedic
<input type="checkbox"/> Decline to State	<input type="checkbox"/> Haz Mat Program Supervisor
<input type="checkbox"/> Deputy Fire Marshal	<input type="checkbox"/> Haz Mat Specialist
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Captain	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Protection Engineer	<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Deputy Fire Marshal

For the following questions, the term “A-Staff chief officer” is meant to include the ranks of Deputy Chief, Assistant Chief and Fire Chief.

3. Are you interested in promoting to the A-Staff chief officer ranks (now or in the future), even if you don't currently qualify?

Yes  
 No  
 Unsure  
 Not at this time, but possibly in the future.

Additional Comments:

---

---

4. Of the following A-Staff chief officer positions, which would you like to aspire to at some point in your career? (Check all that apply).

Deputy Chief  
 Assistant Chief  
 Fire Chief  
 Unsure  
 None – I have no desire to promote to the A-Staff chief officer ranks.

Additional Comments:

---

---

5. What do you believe are the advantages of being an A-Staff chief officer?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What do you believe are the disadvantages of being an A-Staff chief officer?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What can the SCCFD do to encourage personnel to participate in future A-Staff chief officer promotional examinations?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you feel the current promotional requirements to apply for the SCCFD A-Staff chief officer ranks (see below) are reasonable for what is expected of those ranks?

Deputy Chief:

- 4 year degree
- 6 years fire service experience
- 4 years first-line supervisor experience

Assistant Chief:

- 4 year degree
- 8 years fire service experience
- 3 years administrative experience

Fire Chief:

- 4 year degree
- 10 years fire service experience
- 4 years administrative experience

- Yes                       No                       Unsure

Please explain below what you feel should be added, modified or deleted (if anything) in the way of education and/or experience for the A-Staff Chief Officer ranks.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. If there are insufficient numbers of personnel interested in promoting to the A-Staff chief officer ranks in the future, what options should the SCCFD consider? (Check all that apply).
- Decrease the A-Staff chief officer educational requirements (listed above in #8)
  - Decrease the A-Staff chief officer experience requirements (listed above in #8)
  - Open up the recruitment to personnel working for other fire departments that meet the current requirements.
  - Unsure
  - Other (please provide details below)

Please provide additional solutions for the SCCFD to consider to ensure sufficient numbers of personnel are qualified and interested in promoting to the A-Staff chief officer positions in the future:

---

---

---

---

10. Is there anything you would like to add?

- Yes
- No

Additional Comments:

---

---

---

- Thank you very much for your assistance and cooperation!

Please complete this form by Monday July 12, 2010.

APPENDIX C

Internal Fire Department Survey Results

1. How many years have you been in the fire service (County Fire and any other fire department experience)?

Less than 5	(9)	11.8%
5 to 9	(16)	21.1%
10 to 14	(14)	18.4%
15 to 19	(9)	11.8%
20 to 24	(13)	17.1%
25 or greater	(15)	19.7%

*Number answering question = 76*

*Number skipped question = 0*

2. What is your current rank?

Assistant Fire Marshal	(1)	1.3%
Battalion Chief	(6)	7.9%
Decline to State	(0)	0%
Deputy Fire Marshal	(3)	3.9%
Fire Captain	(31)	40.8%
Fire Protection Engineer	(0)	0%
Firefighter/Engineer	(16)	21.1%
Firefighter/Engineer-Paramedic	(17)	22.4%
Haz Mat Program Supervisor	(1)	1.3%
Haz Mat Specialist	(1)	1.3%
Other	(0)	0%
Senior Deputy Fire Marshal	(0)	0%

*Number answering question = 76*

*Number skipped question = 0*

3. Are you interested in promoting to the A-Staff Chief Officer ranks (now or in the future, even if you don't currently qualify)?

Yes	(11)	14.5%
No	(33)	43.4%
Unsure	(18)	23.7%
Not now, possibly in the future	(14)	18.4%

*Number answering question = 76*

*Number skipped question = 0*

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “There are a few A staff positions that are attractive. EMS Chief, Ops Chief and Training Chief are as high as I would like to promote in my career.”
- “I have never been asked or encouraged to apply. My general impression is that any promotion above BC is basically a popularity contest. Why bother going through the process if no one above you is encouraging you to do so?”
- “I participated in the process 4 times so I believed there was a possibility that I would serve in that capacity. I know that the role of B/C suited me better so I am relieved that I was never selected. That said, not much time left in my career and the future of the department deserves younger and better educated candidates.”
- “The human relations department is a joke. The incompetence of staff mires the organization in a swamp of damage control which denies the organizations ability to mature.”
- “I am now just interested in the BC position.”
- “I have 5 to 10 years max before I retire. I need at least 2 years to complete the educational requirements for BC. Not sure if it’s worth it now.”
- Past my time to promote. No comment.”
- Still very, very early on in my career. Have very small view of the "whole" fire service yet. Need some time to gain some perspective.”
- “At this time I have no interest in promotion to A-Staff. Battalion Chief would be an interest but not A-Staff.”
- “One needs to find what motivates them to aspire into an A staff position. Hopefully it is not simply ego, but a sincere altruistic desire to promote to a position where one feels he or she can do the most good for the organization. Like with any other demanding position, it is this motivation that will carry you through the tough times over the course of a long career.
- “I do not want to work a 40 hr. week.”
- “Soon to retire so have chosen to stay at rank.”
- “An A-staff position is, in many ways, counter to the very reasons many of us got into the fire service. Most firefighters have a hard time connecting the daily routine of an 8 to 5 work week to the challenges of being a line firefighter. Leaving the line forever is a huge step to overcome. To do so, one would truly have to put the needs of the organization ahead of their own.”
- “At this stage in my career I am not sure if I would like to promote off the line. I have 20 years ahead and you never know.”
- “I am 'early' in my fire career, and cannot say whether I would like to someday pursue an A-Staff position. At this point in time, I am trying to improve my understanding and performance at the the current position, as well as gradually learn that of the next position above me in rank. The A-Staff positions are significantly outside of my experience, so I do not know if I would enjoy or excel at these positions. Time and on-line experience will hopefully answer this question for me.”
- “I am very new and trying to become a better firefighter. Becoming a Chief Officer is not even on my radar at this point.”

- “I have never had interest in a A-Staff position. I like to be hands on with the patient, or involved at ground level in an incident. I feel this is my strongest asset.”
- “From my vantage point, there are other obvious qualified candidates who would likely compete for the position of Deputy Chief, Fire Prevention assignment when a vacancy occurs. With my tenure in the department and considering my current age, it is doubtful that I would be in a realistic competitive position.”
- “I’d like to concentrate on successfully completing probation, but in the future, the challenges of serving an A-staff position are intriguing.”

4. Of the following A-Staff Chief Officer positions, which would you like to aspire to at some pointing your career?

Deputy Chief	(21)	27.6%
Assistant Chief	(2)	2.6%
Fire Chief	(2)	2.6%
Unsure	(22)	28.9%
None	(35)	46.1%

*Number answering question = 76*

*Number skipped question = 0*

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “Promote what I think are core values in the fire service that I believe that we are losing in today's work force.”
- “Same comments as above.”
- “Employees are subject to management by gossip and innuendo.”
- “It's my only opportunity.”
- “Training and Operations is the only two positions that would interest me.”
- “No comment.”
- “?”
- “Don't have enough knowledge of what the positions entail to make a decision at this point in my career.”
- “At this point in my Career promoting past a Battalion Chief does not seem desirable.”
- “At this point in my career and education level I am "behind the 8-ball" in regards to catching up and making up for my lack of educational requirements.”
- “If promoting I would want to be a Deputy Chief position that would have a direct influence on line operations.”
- “If there was an A-staff position that I would be interested it it would be a Deputy chief position. Either training or operations. Each of those positions holds with it the ability to direct the department’s future. Or at the very least stay engaged with the conditions the line firefighter faces, and help them be prepared to face those challenges.”

- “Unsure, but Deputy Chief of Training is one of the most important positions in the department to me. That position can shape the current and future line personnel into employees that meet the needs of SCCFD.”
- “Working at the stations, and with the public is what I enjoy.”

5. What do you believe are the advantages of being an A-Staff Chief Officer?

*Number answering question = 76*

*Number skipped question = 0*

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “I believe some advantages of being an A-Staff Chief Officer include understanding the way the department is run from an overhead view, and planning and executing a multitude of actions that better serve our customers. I think that it would give a more global understanding of the role of the F.D. I also believe that after some amount of time being the one carrying out set duties and responsibilities on the line, It would be a logical growth and transition to use past experience and knowledge gained, to manage and enhance those duties and responsibilities at a higher level in the Dept.”
- “None.”
- “A greater authority to effect and enable changes in the department. Increased income.”
- “Being able to affect change in the department.”
- “Building a foundation for the present and future so the department is successful.”
- “I believe the advantages of being an A-Staff Chief Officer include but are not limited to the following: 1) provides the individual with an active position in setting or maintaining the course of the department service delivery philosophy, 2) provides the individual with a means to seek out succession candidates (or mentoring opportunities) for the future, ensuring that a consistent and proactive operational philosophy is maintained or amended to grow the department through various means, 3) provides the individual with a sense of accomplishment by observing activation of the individual's goals and objectives in performance of his/her division assignment specifically through encouragement and empowerment of division employees and use of new technology.”
- “Ability to make, inspire, implement policy, procedure, protocol; ability to influence many facets of department such as recruitment, training, equipment, apparatus.”
- “You have the ability to change the department, to make the department better. You can mold and inspire future officers.”
- “If you take action you could really affect the course the department takes. Haven't really seen an example of that with our department..”
- “Having more of a say in shaping the direction of the Department. As line personnel we can give our suggestions in the Strategic Plan workshops and other forums but often those suggestions can be abruptly shot down by current staff as opposed to staff participating in active listening. This can discourage future

involvement and interest in providing suggestions for improvements in the Department.”

- “Holidays off, more pay, better retirement package, not exposed to products of combustion, no lifting heavy objects and people, a regular sleep schedule, comp time off, personal vehicle, respect and admiration.”
- “I believe there is a great ability to shape the department, however there is the responsibility of owning your actions if the decision is not accepted by the masses.”
- “Policy changes. Continue to keep department running profitable.”
- “Some of the tasks assigned to suppression personnel are best suited to (relatively) younger members. These employees are paid for what they can physically DO. This is an oversimplification, but I feel that A-Staff make an enormous contribution by what they KNOW, not just what they can do. With a career's worth of education and experience, these senior members of a department are a benefit to their agency through managerial and leadership roles, and not their ability to perform progressive hose lays up the side of a mountain.”
- “Ability to develop policies which affect the present and future of County Fire.”
- “Being able to make a difference, organization wide changes, as long as we have decent FC and AFC that let us do our job...”
- “Potential for larger influence within an entire division and the ability to have some degree of input on overall organizational subjects (A-Staff meetings).”
- “As a member of the line, I often feel that my voice is not heard or does not count. It appears that the only way for your voice to be heard, and/or to be taken seriously, is to become a Chief Officer. Although I think our Department is definitely one of the best in the nation, there are always places for improvement. Unfortunately, the people in charge of making decisions, implementing new programs and/or policies often are the people that are not on the line, nor have they been for several years (in some cases, decades) We all know, the Fire Service is a fluid, dynamic industry and to stay on top and be able to provide the community with the best possible services, we need to be able to remain flexible and open-minded. My motivation for promoting to the rank of A-Staff is for no other reason than to be able to offer my ideas and expertise to the Department to ensure its future success.”
- “Pay.”
- “The ability and opportunity to make organizational decisions.”
- “The power to influence the future and direction of the department. The pay.”
- “I believe that there are many advantages to being an A-Staff Chief Officer. The first is the opportunity to mentor, coach and motivate your colleagues. As A-Staff you are more likely to encourage others to constantly improve themselves and push themselves harder. I feel that as a leader it would be my responsibility to promote the success of the department as well as all of its members. I also strive to be a role model for my two boys and feel that by succeeding and constantly setting new goals for myself and my career I will accomplish that.”
- “The major advantage is having the opportunity to influence decisions based on personal experience.”



- “Ability to make decisions which can benefit a department in the long run. With an open mind, A-Staff Officers can truly make a department work at its best. Hearing what line personnel have to say, and staying connected to the line can really benefit a Chief Officer and help the department as a whole.”
- “See above.”
- “Direct influence and support of daily operations. Ability to effect change. Ability to effect District reputation and morale.”
- “Being able to steer/guide/expand the department as the it grows..”
- “There is no advantage to being an A-Staff Chief Officer under this current Administration. I believe an influx of new Chief Officers will allow more progressive thinking with a sorely needed re-evaluation of priorities and less "us vs them" mentality.  
The advantage of becoming an A-Staff Chief Officer with a new administration would be the ability to actually APPLY THE BRAKES TO THE BUS.”
- “Not getting up at night and less physically taxing on the body.”
- “1) Directly leading a division; 2) Responsible for shaping the future of that division; 3) Direct interaction with other A staff members including the Fire Chief; 4) More direct involvement with the various cities we serve and the community.”
- “Greater ability to impose positive change. If remembering where you came from, improvements on perceived weaknesses and communication between the ranks.”
- “One advantage would be to effect change for the better. And by that I mean to keep County Fire on its current path of being one of the most desired departments to work for.”
- “Aside from a sense of accomplishment within the profession, enhanced personal compensation and being home for holidays/weekends, the biggest advantage I see would be being in a position to facilitate the most change for the good of the fire department - an example of formal or positional power.”
- “Having more of a direct impact on the operations of the department.”
- “You're in a position to make decisions that will effect change in the department.”
- “Advantages are that you get to see and work in a part of the Fire Service/Fire Department that most line company ranks do not see or understand. The behind-the-scenes perspective is nothing short of unique and eye opening. Lower ranks questions are mostly seeking a straight forward, get it done answer. Where as the A-Staff Chief has to look at how the question impacts the delivery of service, moral, budget issues and political impacts to name a few. You, as a Chief Officer get to shape the direction of the Department and now have a bigger arena to sell our product in. As a Chief Officer your decisions have a wider range and can make positive or negative impacts on the department as a whole. It is always with the best intentions to make the department stronger and more effective in delivering our product; prompt and professional service to the customers. This to me is and exciting position to be in. Being allowed to be part of change in the Fire Service/Fire Department.”
- “1. Opportunity to participate in long range planning. 2. Career achievement. 3. Leadership impact. 4. 40 Hr. schedule. 5. Administrative functions.”

- “Having a better overall understanding of the 'behind the scenes' of our Organization. When you work through all the ranks of an organization, you can develop a better understanding of each level (versus, as a new Firefighter like myself, one doesn't know how things in the upper ranks work because we haven't been around long enough nor have we ever been in our Supervisors shoes). Having a better understanding of how an organization works may allow an A-Staff Chief Officer to make informed and hopefully better decisions that benefit our Department.”
- “The advantage of being an A-Staff Chief Officer, Is that you have a opportunity to improve and make positive changes for our organization.”
- “The advantages would be to lead this department in a positive direction. The direction we have been going in the last few years is a benefit to this organization. As the current staff leave we need to continue to progress in that direction. At the A-Staff level you can make a change. That change does not always seem possible at the line level.”
- “I believe one of the advantages to being an A-Staff officer is having a stronger influence in the direction the Department is heading. Being able to utilize your experiences from the line, and effect positive changes with regard to Training, and the Operational needs of the line Firefighters.”
- “The opportunity to shape and direct your department for the future and help foster the careers of the new generations of firefighters.”
- “1. To become a leader and have a direct impact on department operations for betterment of the department. 2. Opportunities for greater career development and challenges.”
- “?”
- “I think having the opportunity to lead the department in the direction you think it should go would be important. To be part of the team that runs one of the states best departments would be rewarding. To be an A-staff Chief you would be putting all you education and experience to work to function at a high level. The job would be very challenging but rewarding.”
- “The ability to lead and influence the course of the department.”
- “More power in decision making, pay, retirement benefits, and vacations on holidays.”
- “A chance to make changes.”
- “Unsure.”
- “Making key decisions in the department’s future.”
- “The ability to help lead this fire department in a positive direction.”
- “I believe that you have a huge opportunity to make change within our organization that will positively impact our customers and department. It would be nice to not work nights and weekends.”
- “For those who are motivated by the right reasons: Increased chance to changes at an administrative level. Increase in pay - should not be an overriding factor. Opportunity to see many different facets of the fire service.”
- “Possibly able to effect change. Retirement.”

- “Department is based a lot on tradition. That is a good thing but we cannot overlook the benefits of it being 2010. We need to take advantage of what today offers us in technology, management philosophy, apparatus, etc.”
- “Keeping the department moving forward.”
- “As a chief officer one has the ability to assist in the future development of the department and lend to its direction.”
- “Pay.”
- “You have the ability to ensure positive forward motion within the Department. I believe that it is essential the all of the people that make up the lower end of the pyramid have a strong assurance that as they look upward, they can be confident that we are moving forward in a progressive forward motion. Anyone that has the fortitude to assume the responsibility of an administrator realizes that they are caught in the middle of trying to profitably run a business, and appease their subordinates enough to keep them productive. Facing that challenge can bring real rewards when you see the positive outcomes that please both sides of the table.”
- “Making positive changes for the future of this department. Pay. Benefits.”
- “Get to shape the Division, solve some long-standing problems, build a team, and develop training standards.”
- “Ability to help chart the path the Department takes into the future.”
- “None. If the lack of support and leadership at the line level is any measure of what can be expected at the executive officer level, there is no reason to aspire to that level of responsibility/liability...”
- “The main advantage is a solid platform to transform your experience, institutional knowledge and education into viable solutions to the future of the organization.”
- “Effect improvements in service and maintain programs that already meet the customer needs. Get a staff vehicle to commute in.”
- “Personally- None. Professionally- possible ability to effect change in the organization. Ability to obtain employment in another fire department or municipal government department on a rank transfer basis.”
- “Ability to influence the Department for good and effect change on an organizational level.”
- “The advantages of being an A-Staff Chief Officer are that you have a better ability to help influence change in the fire service for the better. I think that an A-staff officer should be a very dynamic position with the ability to accept change. Also with the assistance of the workforce together can help create a more efficient fire service for the future including higher quality medical care and transport, better communication, and more in house resources.”
- “Greater ability to steer the department.”
- “Challenges as far as both personal and professional. Having Challenges and having to problem solve are fundamental qualities in a job that are both thrilling and rewarding. Thriving to be a step or two ahead of the current trend rather than playing "catch up" is a challenge that I feel I could excel and would both benefit the line personnel, the department as a whole as well as my myself personally. Being accountable for the actions and lack thereof would encourage someone like

myself to want to make sure our line personnel are given the best tools possible to enable them to do the best job they can do. For example, there isn't a significant accountability for medics. Making the change in the future for medics to want to be medics (and not just for the pay) and rewarding good medics while providing a place for weak medics to become stronger medics or a place where they can give their medic license up without feeling shamed would make our department immensely better. Being able to make that change would be such a tremendous challenge and rewarding. The same would be true for training in fire fighting skills especially in regard to building more teamwork and rapport with line personnel."

- "The ability to affect change within the department. More money/status/power. Less wear/tear on the body compared to working on the line. You get to go home every night. Better working knowledge of how the department works."
- "The ability to make decisions that will have a positive affect on the organization."
- "Develop long term programs that will benefit the department and region."
- "I do not see any."
- "Unsure."
- "The ability to make a positive difference on a larger scale, being involved in the bigger picture."

6. What do you believe are the disadvantages of being an A-Staff Chief Officer?

*Number answering question = 76*

*Number skipped question = 0*

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- "The first thing I think of is not running calls or working out of a firehouse anymore. I would miss the excitement and camaraderie. It would be hard to give up an exciting and dynamic work environment to work a 40-hour office position. It would also be difficult to give up all of the personal interactions with the people we serve and the people we work with."
- "None."
- "-You have to drink the kool-aid to get there!  
-Your actions are more public therefore, subject to be scrutinized and judged."
- "For those individuals who desire to become an A-Staff Chief Officer, there is no disadvantage."
- "Becoming further away from maintaining a pulse on the needs of the communities represented by the types of calls requiring emergency response and the foresight and training needed by our crews to continue to meet the needs of the communities served."
- "I think the biggest disadvantage is the personal time commitment in "giving" to the department more of the individual's self. The challenge is to ensure that the individual does not become "married" to the job. There is a much higher priority in life than even steering the ship of a modern, progressive fire department.

Specifically, family and personal life beliefs and pursuits must be accounted for in the personal life of an A-Staff Chief Officer to remain a balanced personality. Nonetheless, it is obvious that the Chief Officer must be available at a moment's notice in emergency response and may bear the burden of extended operational periods in certain times of his/her tenure. But the routine, day-to-day operations of the A-Staff Chief Officer demands a keen sense of attention to duty and consistency in our ever-changing business world. New tools/innovations/methods and materials/personnel rules & regulations and labor laws may mandate that the candidate be a master of all based on their position within the A-Staff. Continuing education (often times away from home) is a consideration for the A-Staff Chief Officer as laws and techniques change frequently. To be clear, I have mentioned here a couple sides of time commitments: One, the individual must remain balanced in his/her lifestyle while being a leader in the department and two, the individual must assume that there will be time kept away from family and home in performance of his/her job. Both a challenge to maintain and a charge to learn and disseminate knowledge.”

- “Simply being away from the daily hands-on activity of customer and patient interaction, as well as, firefighting activity; the traditional five day work schedule; less than dynamic work environment, in an office/behind desk for majority of time.”
- “Becoming disconnected from the line personnel, don't get to work with firefighters anymore. The stress.”
- “The strange occurrence of forgetting where you came from . . . AND that even though by rank they are near the top of the organizational chart, they have the clout and NEED to support the line personnel. Having to deal with line personnel who can't seem to act like adults. Having to run an organization whose hiring practices have been determined by people who don't know what it means or is required to be a professional firefighter.”
- “Long hours in the office. Many people enjoy the job of a firefighter with the ever changing work environment. This could be a tough transition for many in this profession.”
- “Longer work hours when required, being on call on days off, more responsibility to the chief, being in an office, attending meetings, the relationships of station work, responding directly to citizen complaints, 8 to 5 days.”
- “Stated prior.”
- “A disconnect from line.”
- “For the individual who may have joined the fire service to work on the line, suppression may be the more desirable position, and as that person promotes through the ranks, they will find less and less time working in those situations. By the time a person is at the A-Staff level, they have relinquished that aspect of the job to others, for a position that is much more managerial in nature. To be sure, this may be an outstanding job, but it's quite different from what they may have joined for, and individuals must decide if they can give up one job description for another.”

- “-Inability to respond to individual calls and interact directly with public; Multitude of difficulties inherent in developing policies and ensuring compliance by line employees.”
- “On our Department?? We are run by the top two people only... Deputies really don't have much to say in what direction we travel...”
- “A-Staff officers are, by virtue of our organizational structure, too far removed (for my liking) of the end product . . . which is customer contact. This is the nature of the beast but it is the major thing that is unattractive to me.”
- “The obvious disadvantage is the inability to respond to the emergencies. Responding to emergencies, working directly with the public, interacting with crew members would be something that I would miss the most. Another disadvantage would be the obvious conflicts that would arise out of the need to compromise between what I, as an individual feel is best for the Department, and what others in Management believe to be the best.”
- “Liability.”
- “The schedule, especially for those individuals who commute and/or have families. Very few families have the ability or desire to have a single income sustain their family. Parental obligations and spousal/partner career paths are difficult to juggle with two-income families. (In particular, when required classes, educational prerequisites, committee work, political obligations, etc., are part of the job description for administration members.). In addition, the loss of connection with the suppression personnel, make it a difficult choice for many members to aspire to.”
- “The schedule. Removed from the "line" and the associated issues. The disassociation that exists between A-staff and their "old friends". The perceived mistrust by line personnel. (Room gets quiet when the Chief walks in). I like to be able to BS with my coworkers. No more time to exercise at work. Lots of paperwork and no Emergencies. No more Fire Engines.”
- “Some of the disadvantages are that employees may not be as open to candid conversation with you if they see a gold badge. You may not always be given the chance to really get to know some individuals. While in these positions, you must constantly remind yourself that you need to lead by example because others are looking to you for guidance.”
- “The major disadvantage appears to be the amount of time and energy the job takes away from one's private life.”
- “I believe there is a separation from the day to day duties of emergency responding. I personally enjoy firefighting for the hands on aspect, and dealing with citizens personally on a daily basis.”
- “1. Office Job; 2. No longer a line firefighter; 3. The disconnect that can develop between the line and A-staff.”
- “Unending work load. Not being able to continue as a first responder. Detachment from the line operations.”
- “Trying to work/negotiate with the Public/Board of Supervisors, and work to satisfy the different communities that we serve.”
- “None.”

- “The work schedule. Lack of work gratification. Too many extra classes to take on your own time with the slight chance that you might be promoted. It appears from the outside that A-staffers are promoted on politics and fit with other A-staffers rather than skill sets.”
- “1) Additional time commitment to the Department; 2) Dealing with more politics both internally and externally; 3) More time in the office; 4) Additional personnel issues to deal with.”
- “Losing the crew bond; Going on calls; Separation between on line personnel Office "politics;" Not on shift schedule.”
- “Overtime, I believe that there is a certain disconnect from the line personnel. Some have forgotten from whence they came.”
- “When things go right it’s good but when things go wrong the buck has to stop somewhere and it is usually at the top level positions. In our department, A staff officers must deal with not just one but many different governing city bodies with regard to the delivery of fire services. This can be an advantage where we are not tied to the whims of one city but also a disadvantage in that A staff must deal with many different groups and personalities. Another disadvantage of A-staff positions may be losing touch with the rank and file not just physically but in an organizational sense as well. One does not want to be perceived as managing from an 'ivory tower.' Our Officer's meetings can help to dispel this but I also recall Chief Sporleder using a video format 'Eagle Speaks' to keep in touch with the troops as well.”
- “Not having day to day interactions with our customers and line personnel.”
- “??”
- “I believe one of the major disadvantages is communication with the line personnel. There is a gap that we have a hard time bridging due to both perspectives of the job. Both sides do not think the other is either listening or looking at how the decisions that are made will impact the line personnel. Even with a good trusting relationship, communication and change are very hard to accomplish, especially the bigger the size of the department. Another disadvantage is that the further up the chain you go, the further away from the job you will be. Keeping the focus that human beings work every day on fire engines doing the job and that one decision from you can alter not only how the job is done, but greatly effect moral of the troops. It is at times a definite balancing act when one side feels that A-staff is not listening or out of touch with line personnel and the other side (A-Staff) feels that change is like pulling teeth.”
- “1. Increased responsibilities. 2. 40 hr work week.”
- “There is separation from the 'line personnel' and current issues that line personnel deal with day-to-day, from the calls we run to crew member issues, etc. It would also be difficult for an A-Staff Chief Officer to inter-mingle socially with Firefighters/Captains, etc, as they are in a much higher rank role. There appears to be a definite division (socially and otherwise) between A-Staff and Line Personnel, much of which is due to the para-military structure of our department.”
- “The disadvantages of being an A-Staff Chief Officer, is that you may not be able to implement positive changes because of politics or bureaucracy.”

- “Being removed from the emergency scenes. We all got into this job to be firefighters; I do not think any one came to the job to be and office person. Also being a politician would not always be that interesting. Having to deal with the different cities.”
- “Having a disconnect from the line Firefighters. Few open lines of communication, and a perceived unwillingness to make decisions without input from people that are affected.”
- “Being removed from the "line" and "firehouse" interaction. Can become disassociated with the actual service level (rubber meets the road) and lose the connection with the line personnel. The disconnect can possibly hinder decision making at the A staff level.”
- “1. Separation from fire station life such as camaraderie, schedule, comfort level, etc. 2. Increased responsibility/liability.”
- “?”
- “Your decisions, right or wrong, will have a much greater impact. You are the person responsible for your division and with that responsibility comes liability, departmental and possibly personal. Heavy work load. Being "off-the-line"
- “Long term time commitments. Leaving shift work. Different culture. Trapped in an office.”
- “Desk job, no hands on, lack of camaraderie, work schedule (minus Holidays), and difficult decision making.”
- “40 hour work week. Overworked, to far removed from the line.”
- “Unsure.”
- “Minimal exposure/interaction with line personnel. Most of the time the A staff is seen is during a staff inspections, or captain's meetings. The A Staff seems to be confined to headquarters.”
- “Loss of the crew mentality and station dynamic. Fear of the unknown, it would seem that most people who work in our HQ are not happy. It's hard to balance family, work and further education. It could be easy to loose touch with the day to day line operations and the affects your decisions have on the personnel. This job is fun and it would be hard to knowingly change that for the worse.”
- “Our organization has always been short staffed administratively and while positions have been added the A-staff work load seems to be insurmountable. That appears to cause a great deal of stress within our Chief Officers. I will quote a current A-staff Chief. "It doesn't matter if you're drowning in 100 feet of water or 10, you're still drowning." I don't want to have the feeling that I'm drowning in meetings, paperwork, and then constantly get assigned new things to further sink me. The potential assignments as an A-staff officer are also concerning. Functioning as he Support Services Deputy Chief is not even remotely desirable to me and yet it may the position that's drowning least. I've gained perspective about A-staff positions talking to everyone there before, during, and now since my Captain's test. I just don't think I would enjoy the administrative challenges like I do emergency response.”
- “Dealing with internal and external politics. More difficult to "leave work at work" on days off. Immediate "team" of co-workers is no longer line personnel. Peers are other A staff members.”



- “40 hour week; added stress and workload ( If you truly are doing your job).”
- “The disconnect of being on the line. Most of us got into the fire service because we wanted to make the difference directly with the public. The office is an integral part of the 911 system. We cannot function without the efforts of everyone working at headquarters from the clerical staff to the fire chief. Interaction with the public is one of the biggest perks to working on the line. Generally, the public loves us. There are the occasional mishaps when a citizen is unhappy. But generally, they do like us. The A Staff positions can be relentless at times. There is far too much work for any one person to do in one day. I would like to think the people holding those positions do it for the betterment of County Fire.”
- “No 24 Hour shifts. Disconnect from what really is going on from the line.”
- “8-5 hours. No longer have the camaraderie with the line personnel. are out of touch with day to day happenings.”
- “I don't really know, but they always seemed to be buried in work they do not enjoy.”
- “Due to the wide scope of responsibilities that an administrator is weighted with, there are many misconceptions as to what their true intentions are. Many believe the administrators to be the "Hammer", and "No-Man/Woman". The wide expanse between the line staff, and the administration does not lend itself to close ties. Even though our line and management work in a less than adversarial fashion, there is still some level of skepticism shared between both ranks. Although not asked, this is where the B-Staff level is also difficult, as they are caught between two battling factions. Lastly, complete separation from line activities really is a cause for loss for some. The culture in our organization does not identify that a Deputy Chief or higher assume command of an incident upon their arrival. That relegates them to a lowly bystander position, when they have a history of being the "doer". Unless we had a cultural shift that recognizes their advanced command level training, and made it a factor in their daily duties (change job spec. wording from "may assume command" to "assumes command", being an A-Staff officer all but seals your "active" duties for the rest of your career. Of course, this is just my opinion.”
- “Having to take over problems that have existed in the department for some time. Working to with other staff members hired by past administrations that do not conform to your values, work ethics or are poor performers.”
- “More of a 24/7 job, stress, dealing with politicians.”
- “??”
- “See my answer to question 5.”
- “Loss of close working relations with the line. The best days of my work are going to jobs with the admirable people we have responding to our incidents. This is where I feel most effective.”
- “Separation from the basic services provided to the customer.”
- “Working with/for some members of the present administration. No longer deployable/dispatched to incidents. Uncompensated work assignments outside of regular business hours. Disassociation with our core services. Lack of communication within the present staff.”

- “Stress, responsibility and the likelihood of losing touch with first-line operations/personnel.”
- “The biggest disadvantage of A staff is the work schedule and absence of fire house comradeship, maybe its there and I don't know.”
- “Less contact with the day to day operations. Not being able to make direct contact with the public on a regular basis.”
- “The amount of "red tape" and varying levels of approval that are needed before even a small change can be made. Dealing diplomatically with the egos within our department as well as neighboring departments can make the job frustrating as well as downright disappointing. Also, speaking as a woman in the fire service, it feels very difficult now being heard and respected, let alone being in a Chief's position (as well as perhaps the Captain's position).”
- “40 hour week instead of 24s. Separation from line personnel both physically and psychologically. No "instant" gratification from running calls and helping those in need. Less control over your environment (working at HQ instead of at a fire station). Horizontal and vertical movement within positions based on relationships/politics (seemingly) rather than the results of a test.”
- “Not working on the line.”
- “High divorce rate. Never see family. No quality time with family when you are home. Distraction of true job with minor and frequently benign issues.”
- “Unsure.”
- “It is an administrative job that is no longer engaged in the field operations of the fire department.”
- “40 hour work week, the increased liability, the increased stress.”

7. What can the SCCFD do to encourage personnel to participate in future A-Staff Chief Officer promotional examinations?

*Number answering question = 76*

*Number skipped question = 0*

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “At this point in my career, I really am not familiar enough with the process to critique it.”
- “I'm not sure.”
- “From the online point of view A staff feels very removed. This may be a necessary component of the position. However, I enjoy the family like environment of the fire service and would rather not give that up. If A staff felt more integrated with the rest of the department it might be more of a career aspiration, for me personally.”
- “Don't limit the application pool to just Battalion Chiefs and those who have taken the Battalion Chief examination. There may be some Captains who don't desire to be Battalion Chiefs, but would desire to become an A-Staff Chief Officer.”

- “It would be inappropriate for me to answer this question because I don't know what SCCFD currently does to encourage participation.”
- “If it does not already exist...  
I would suggest that the promotional process not only include the standard cadre of knowledge and ability assessment, but that the process also include a means for the applicant to express HOW they would foster and encourage the growth and stimulus of the department through their own personal traits and background. In other words, let the applicant show how they would instill a part of themselves into the growth of the department. Most candidates with secure personalities and good people-skills and a good amount of life experience should be proud to show how they can apply those traits from simple tasks to complex, long-term projects.”
- “Promote a better understanding of the job/position and its responsibilities; promote more communication/interaction between the line personnel and HQ staff since the future A-staff candidates will arrive from the line.”
- “Not sure.”
- “Get rid of the red tape when trying to make change in the department. It makes no sense to me why anyone would want to move into a position that is bogged down by so many restrictions. Maybe if we just ignored all the restrictions and said this is how we are going to run our department . . . with common sense. . . more people would find the position more attractive. Others have hand cuffed our profession (like they have done with Police officers) because they operate from a place of fear of the unknown. So let's just do nothing because we know no one will get hurt if we do nothing, how could you feel good or even want to lead an organization that has to operate under restrictions that severely limit its effectiveness. Can we get back to the common sense approach . . . how about we make that the norm instead of the current fearful state of affairs we are operating under now?”
- “I believe the A-staff positions could be more desirable if their daily duties/projects were made more transparent. I know that we have the ability to review the A-Staff meeting notes but these are often very brief and can sometimes be published two months after the meeting occurred. This allows time for misconceptions or rumors of Department business to circulate and leave impressions on the line. People strive for information on our status good or bad and if it doesn't come out, a disconnect is felt which creates a perceived barrier between the line and A-staff. The Department can also encourage interest in promoting to all levels of the command staff by working with the employee on furthering their education or experience. I understand that these positions require people that are willing to go above and beyond the basic or minimum job duties but I personally struggle with finding the time to attend the necessary classes. As it stands currently, it is on the employee to use his/her vacation, juggle days off, or secure and repay trades in order to attend qualifying classes. This may not be a challenge to someone without a lot of family or non fire service hobbies but the selection pool of candidates could be deepened if accommodations could be made to meet these challenges.”

- “Help set up programs with an individual or better yet two or more people to study with. Have a "ride along", "tag along" program so that people can talk to a chief but also understand and find out about the position. Captains are supposed to ride with a Battalion Chief after becoming a Captain to understand the Battalion Chief's job. Speaking with an A-Staffer directly you may find it an inviting position in the future to work towards.”
- “I am very unfamiliar with this situation, however I would suspect providing the required training and education IN HOUSE may help.”
- “Lower requirements for promotional and add years of service and commitment to the growth of department.”
- “This is only a guess on my part, but mentoring Captains and Battalion Chiefs for future A-Staff positions might help interested individuals and increase the levels of success when such members are actually candidates for those positions.”
- “Solicit interest from current company officers and assist company officers who are interested in obtaining required and desired training to promote to the rank of chief officer and beyond.”
- “Allow CO's to be more interactive with the top two. Rely less on education a little and put some more weight on time in grade and use the experienced logical minded people to run our Department.”
- “That's a tough one. Probably the only thing that would spur more interest is if employees could somehow SEE the benefits of the position. This would need to be projected by the incumbent chiefs upon those employees they see as having potential. A blanket plea for "more people" to apply for these positions would probably not yield the proper fit. The adage proves true " It ain't for everybody."
- “I can only speak for myself, but I know as a potential A-staff Chief Officer (and even Battalion Chief)...I look at the current A-Staff as potential supervisors and/or co-workers. As I mentioned earlier, due to the fact that A-Staff Officers are largely responsible for the future direction of the Department, the make-up of that Staff would have a large influence on my decision to want to be part of that group. I feel like we are nearing a "cross in the road" and who we have at the helm will play a HUGE part on what direction we are heading. If we develop a Staff that has a vision that I (personally) could be an advocate for, I would be inclined to pursue that career path.”
- “Don't know.”
- “Provide opportunities to shadow/mentor A-staff members (while on shift duty), to learn more about the positions. Bridge the "disconnect" between "the line" and the A-Staff members by having administrators interact with suppression personnel more frequently. (Not just at captain's meetings or during Class "A" inspections.)”
- “Maybe change the schedule to 4 10 hr days (like Cal Fire) and more emphasis on a daily Duty Chief. Allow a paid hour in the morning or afternoon for exercise. A more open and less mysterious dialog between HQ and the line. More station visits by A-staff (if they call before coming so they crews aren't surprised) to remove some of the uncomfortable formal feelings. They could remind us they were Firefighters too (culturally speaking).”
- “I feel that education is the key to success. Therefore, we should offer more of an incentive for completed educations. If individuals feel confident that they will be

successful on the exams then they will take the promotional examinations without hesitation. I have seen a lot of people struggle with different aspects of the exams. We should consider offering tutorials or they could create their own study groups. I noticed that we have/had a mentoring program, this would be a method of increasing participation in the examination as well. If individuals truly understood what the positions consisted of and knew what it took to be successful in those positions, they might be more likely to strive for the next level.”

- “Ensuring that adequate time off is provided for these positions.”
- “Provide more classes, or raise the tuition reimbursement amounts allowed per year. Many people limit the amounts of classes they take in a time period based on the out of pocket cost.”
- “1. Make the position more attractive, not money, but prestige / honor of the position. 2. Better communication with the line. 3. Bridge the gap between the office and the line.”
- “More delegation of assignments throughout the organization beginning at the Firefighter level. Battalion Chief projects should be delegated to station captains for exposure to staff operations.”
- “I feel that people choose to stay "On the Line" because it is such a great environment. Having been from another department, I have seen how happy people are to work in the field.”
- “There will always be people willing to become A-Staff Chief Officers as long as firefighters have egos. There will never a lack of people willing to be called "Chief". The question should be stated as: What can the SCCFD do to encourage THE RIGHT personnel to participate in future A-Staff Chief Officer promotional examinations? The real decision is to how the Fire Chief will select those people when the time comes.”
- “Probably offer the prerequisite classes in house on a firefighter's schedule or lessen the requirements for taking the examination. Inform the ranks of what A-staff actually does on a daily basis.”
- “1) Provide a mechanism where current A staff member(s) could meet with potential candidates (a forum ?) to discuss exactly what each A staff members does and how a candidate could prepare to promote into a Chief Officer position. This does not necessarily mean the next promotional opportunity but maybe one in the future to encourage younger members to participate. 2) Take promotional classes while on duty.”
- “For all required promotional classes at all levels, staffing should be covered by the department to encourage higher education and wanting your personnel to continuously network and learn more about the job. It seems we could increase our training budget to help accomplish this idea. Not only for A-staff but for all promotional exams this department needs to have a formal mentorship program and an ability to have acting positions. For interested parties, giving those people a taste of what the position entails. Even for captains testing, you pass the testing process and get promoted and have never sat in the seat before and are in charge of a crew, being thrown into the fire per say. The ability to have interested parties work under the system under close supervision is one idea.”

- “Change the current educational reimbursement policy so that required courses are covered either by monetary means (i.e. more than 50% for non college courses), or by covering shift work so personnel may attend classes on duty without having to payback shift trades. Many of the classes required are not affiliated with colleges, or receive college credit, which means more out of pocket from the employee.”
- “Perhaps query those recently or currently in those positions to find what motivated them. What were/are the highs and the lows? Was it what they expected? What happened that they did not anticipate? Once these answers are comprised they can be made available on the department server for any who may be interested at some point in their careers. Look at departments that do not have an issue with this. See what they are doing that may be different and what might work to help our organization.”
- “Encourage more job shadowing and mentoring.”
- “Offer programs to assist the average employee with getting their education. Offer classes on shift schedule. Offer college courses to assist individuals in obtaining their four year degree.”
- “First of all...stop telling your line personnel that the department is open to change, and encourages people to go out and get training or product info and then shutting them down when they are ready to incorporate it. Its like having a committee of different personnel, having them go out and get the info and then telling them that all that was for nothing as you had one product in mind. It is the most demoralizing aspect of this dept... you are made to believe that you are encouraged to make change...but really...you are not just because an A-Staff officer can override and popular decision that may have us do the job better and more efficiently...My perspective is that our A-staff is changing but their are still "Dr No's" in the Chief level ranks who do not want to change...keep business as usual which is easy and no stress...With this bad taste....who would want to promote...just to fall into the same mold...bang their head in frustration...we are heading in the right direction...it will just take time and positive leadership to erase some bad tastes... RE-MOTIVATE...Don't just placate individuals....make them feel like an asset....Take a survey and see who might be interested in promoting to A-staff level...and give them an inside insight to your level...let them see what your job is....and how they can make an impact...don't make it a closed society...”
- “The SCCFD should continue succession planning activities and potentially increase educational assistance to internally motivated persons.”
- “Due to my limited experience in the fire service, I don't think I have the knowledge to give a solid answer here.”
- “I think that if we were able to use and break up our vacation time for professional growth. It would allow more people to seek fire training classes and further their education in preparation for any promotional position. It seems that some people get hung up on the educational requirement and that may keep quality person out of the pool of qualified candidates.”
- “Maybe make education requirements different. If the education is not there have deadlines to have the education completed by. There is no educational incentive

on the line. You have to use trades. If we had a tour of vacation we could pick and choose I would use that to take classes. Also have we looked to see if classes can be held in house? That would attract more people.”

- “In my opinion SCCFD does not provide a positive environment for the up and coming leaders in the Department. From the Firefighter level upward advancement is discouraged, by having a poor/unwilling training program. I personally have heard a Battalion Chief state "we pay to have the first stringers in the seats" when asked about a seasoned Captain helping to groom a Firefighter for promotion. When experiences like that occur it sours peoples excitement for advancing and making this Department even better. There should be situations when an experienced person can share his/her knowledge and help provide the best possible candidate for promotion. The school of thought of pass a test, get a badge in my opinion is absolutely absurd. I feel like you should invest the time and train your employees to the next position, and if possible provide real world experiences in a controlled environment. If advancement is promoted early in a career, I believe it will be continued throughout the career.”
- “A promotional "mentoring" program could be used to get the future leaders more involved and see the benefits of having "in house" personnel move up through the ranks as opposed to "outsiders" being brought in to fill positions. I don't feel "outsiders" should be excluded as they bring a different set of experiences and ideas to the department. Also, if through the "mentoring" program more day to day tasks were being accomplished by the prospects under the supervision of the existing officers, then maybe a skill set would be formed and the job wouldn't seem so daunting all at once.”
- “1. Positive reinforcement directed to those that show potential or interest. 2. Workshop/article/memo with discussion about the positions that include responsibilities, challenges, experiences, as well as preparation guidelines for an interested candidate.”
- “More opportunities should be opened up for personnel to see what these jobs look like. Whether open invitation, or private invitation, there should be an informal method of having personnel shadow a chief for a day to see if it is something they would like to pursue. We all have a general idea of what the job is, but a more involved view would give a clear picture of the job. Of course, sensitive situations would warrant the person excuse themselves but in general it would not be difficult for someone to come in and see what is done for a few hours in the morning, or allow someone to accompany a Battalion Chief for a day. For people to buy into this, it needs to be informal and voluntary. The more formal it is, with forms, stated goals, and progress reports, the less people will be involved. No hard-sell should be made to potential "buyers" either. This is a personal decision that should be made by the individual, and their family, without undue pressure. And, a declined invitation should not be taken personally or held against someone.”
- “I think County Fire should continue the current trend toward mentoring individuals that aspire to promote. I am very new to County Fire and I feel like everybody has gone out of there way to mentor, inspire and motivate me to promote. One thing that may help would be to create a Operations Battalion

Chief. That individual would be a liaison between Training, EMS and Operations. He or she would be in a position to work closely with both the Operations Chief and the Training Chief. The Deputy Chiefs would be in a position to further groom that individual for the future transition to Deputy Chief. The position could help supervise the big projects occurring in both the operations division and the training division, coordinating both divisions to ensure a smoother running department. It would have a close link with the B.C.s in the field and could help facilitate and implement changes and maintain current procedures. The EMS coordinators position would be a paramedic captain under the supervision of the Ops B.C.. That would give more decision making responsibilities to the O.P.s B.C. which would intern help to further develop that person. This person would be writing policy and overseeing the training that supports the policy. In addition that person could respond to emergencies in the field and fill in as overhead staff. If implemented I think this position would be very desirable for those aspiring to become A-Staff.”

- “There is a log jam of senior officers with longer than 30 yrs. The ripe fruit needs to be trimmed so that new opportunities have time to season. Mentor, encourage and reinforce the need for folks to promote in a positive way. Stay positive. Oh and did I say positive. Yeah be aggressively positive, encouraging. Give opportunities to lead whenever possible.”
- “Don’t know, enhance package possibly.”
- “Start with teaching people to be leaders, starting with the captain’s position.”
- “Unsure.”
- “I think there is a large division between the rank and file. I think the A Staff needs to get out to the stations more, and have more interaction with line personnel. Most people have the thought that it is hard to approach, or even address A Staff. Some don't even know our names without looking at our name tag.”
- “Help to make communication between A-Staff and all levels of the department an open and easy option, a bit more personal would be a nice thing too. Many of us have not met all members of A-Staff, we all know how busy the jobs being done at our administration level are. Most don't know what really goes on at our HQ or what some of the rationale behind many policies and decisions are..... it would seem to me that some of these things keep people from viewing A-Staff as a viable option of future rank.  
Just from my view.”
- “It is difficult for anyone attempting to promote to balance work, family, and education. If you want to enable people to educate themselves you must offer a way to take time off above and beyond our trade policy. Educational days off which are taken from your vacation bank would do that and may only cost the administrative time required to enter those days. Remember that wildland classes are in the winter and vacation double and triple ups are in the summer. More winter days off is less triple ups and potentially less overtime cost.”
- “I believe that this is a decision that has to be reached by the individual and their family. I believe that those aspiring to A-staff positions need to be highly self motivated and should not necessarily "be encouraged". For those who are



interested, they should find a mentor (either formally or informally) and take the appropriate classes.”

- “Provide mentoring that offers someone not necessarily interested in the job right now to work in the job category and gain experience and possibly a better sense of the job. This would let the individual better commit to a known job instead of a perceived job. This is the same path that should be followed for all promotions Captain through Chief Officers. Give a person the chance to compete in a non appoint able position. They could be used in special circumstances to aid the organization and gain experience for future advancement. A captain position assigned to all DC positions that could step in when needed and has the authority to make decisions. This would aid in day to day issues that are not able to be resolved when a chief is out of town, on vacation or other reasons. We typically see numerous delays when a chief is away and not able to conduct business.”
- “Allowing rotation through the captain’s positions within the office (training captain, operations captain, etc.) is a definite perk to understanding just how things work down there at HQ. Having a task book perhaps for future candidates may also help the process. If you are interested in promoting, pick up a task book and meet with all of the folks at HQ. This should be done BEFORE you take the test. I had to complete a task book when I promoted to Captain. Looking back, this should have happened before I even took the test. Knowing what is in store for you within a position will either encourage you to continue in the process. Or, have you realize that position is not for you. I know everyone is extremely busy. A venue for what it is like to be a chief officer may increase the interest in the positions.”
- “Make promoting to BC position easier!”
- “Management by walking around. A staff can show up to stations more regularly than only once a year or there is an issue pending.”
- “Talk more about the good work you can do in that rank. A-staff positions have an image problem that has been created by generations of previous unhappy A-Officers.”
- “Your guess is as good as mine. How about figuring out how to get folks to promote to Battalion Chief while we're at it (I say that tongue in cheek - there are plenty of younger company officers that are preparing to make the move as they become eligible. I don't see there being a great difficulty in filling the Battalion Chief ranks in the near future)?”
- “Removing current A-Staff members that are deadwood and make way for upcoming fresh personnel with proven positive attitudes, good work ethics, and lack the influence from past administrations.”
- “I think A-Staff is pretty far removed from the consciousness of our line staff, so it would be good for them to get to know current A-Staff officers and see what they do.”
- “We should do a better job of anticipating the inevitable retirement of current A-Staff members and help prepare those interested in promoting. As it is now, it seems to staff that it is a mystery as to when any A-Staff member may retire and little if any preparation is done to help smooth transition.”

- “Provide support and leadership. The mentoring program has no depth or substance. Fire Service training and educational opportunities are non-existent. Ambition is rewarded instead of competence.”
- “Continue to encourage those who aspire. Continue to sell the need of the organizations talent to step up and lead.”
- “Communicate why we need them, what roll they play in service delivery. Currently, the opinion is they work on abstract issues that have little to do with the needs of the customer both internal and external. They need to connect with the line staff.”
- “As far as I can tell, there has been very little if any mentorship between the A Staff and Battalion Chiefs. It is fairly obvious that your next promotions will come from the BC's but very little attention has been paid (maybe until now) to this group. Our issues with encouraging people to promote into staff positions are not that of individual qualification and ability, they have to do with organizational culture. Why would you expect a group who is at best ignored and at worst abused to all of a sudden be interested in promoting? As a Battalion Chief, I identify strongly with the line personnel and very little with the A Staff. That needs to be reversed if you want a person to transition from one group to another.”
- “Offer some type of "job shadowing" opportunities to cross train/expose personnel to Chief Officer responsibilities.”
- “I think to encourage personnel to participate in A staff exams you need to show the workforce that when you promote you don't loose touch with where you came from. I think people are scared that if they promote they still wont have a say in what goes on in the dept and the fire chief will still do what he wants even if the consensus is not to. This stems from older regimes not necessary the one in place right now, but there is still a trace of that.”
- “Unsure, don't fully understand the actual day to day activities of these positions.”
- “Streamlining some of the processes in the office. The office has such a different feel. Even within the A staffers, there seems to be little jovialness and camaraderie between A staffers. I understand there needs to be a strong sense of leadership but sometimes things feel too serious at Headquarters.”
- “Two things: 1) Find the people within the organization (regardless of rank) who have the personalities/skills sets that lend themselves to A-Staff type work and groom those folks for the positions by including them in events/groups where this type of work is being done (for example, the recent accreditation committees that were formed). 2) There is a separation between line personnel and A-Staffers that is inherent to our structure. Out of the relatively small percentage of line personnel who would be willing to, at some point in their careers, give up "running calls" to work as A-Staffers at HQ, there are probably some who are turned off by this separation. I'm not sure what the solution is, but I think part of one solution would be to build a bigger "bridge" between line personnel and A-Staff. Certain A-Staff are more "popular" with line personnel because they are seen more often at the stations and work to maintain friendships with line personnel (not just seen during A-staff inspections). This is just one person's opinion. I've noticed that some (but not all) of the best A-staff folks seem(ed) a

little out of place on the line. This makes sense because their skill sets are better suited to "the office". A few gifted individuals can be great at both. But finding someone who is equally psyched to be a firefighter or an Assistant Chief is hard. The differences between the two (schedule/duties/workplace) are massive, and I believe that there are only a small number of people who would be willing to sacrifice one for the other.”

- “Have some kind of developmental program.”
- “Offer complete level 1 and 2 officer programs. Show value of rank to line personnel.”
- “Hire professional business managers to run the business side of the department.”
- “Unsure.”
- “Not sure.”

8. Do you feel the current promotional requirements to apply for the SCCFD A-Staff Chief Officer ranks (see below) are appropriate for what is expected of those ranks?

Deputy Chief:

- 4 year degree
- 6 years fire service experience
- 4 years first-line supervisor experience

Assistant Chief:

- 4 year degree
- 8 years fire service experience
- 3 years administrative experience

Fire Chief:

- 4 year degree
- 10 years fire service experience
- 4 years administrative experience

Yes	(41)	53.9%
No	(21)	27.6%
Unsure	(14)	18.4%

*Number answering question = 76*

*Number skipped question = 0*

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “Both Assistant and Fire Chief positions should also require first-line supervisor experience.”
- “I don't believe that the Assistant Chief position or Fire Chief position should require administrative experience. Due to timing of filling these positions, it may limit exclude individuals who are more qualified than the limited pool that it creates.”
- “Some personalities and abilities can excel at administration positions. The four year first-line supervisor experience requirement for the Deputy Chief position could hinder some employees’ advancement position. Some people can be great administrators without being good line supervisors.”

- “I agree with the education and administrative/supervisory experience. I believe the amount of fire service years of experience however, need to be accounted for within the Santa Clara County Fire Department.”
- “In my humble opinion, the positions of Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief are the CEO and COO of a major corporation. These positions should require extensive management experience and study (i.e. MA/MS degree) to acquire the skills, leadership, and managerial expertise to lead a world class fire agency.”
- “For all position up the years in the fire service to 15 years. Formal education is a good thing so I have no problem with the 4 year degree. But that is not the end all beat all. Having a 15 year requirement would give the applicants more life experience. It would also (hopefully) create a situation where people would stay in a position longer and really learn their job. So when they arrive at or near the top of the organization not only would the have the book smarts but also hands on life experience smarts.”
- “I'm not entirely certain of what all is expected of the A- staff ranks but I believe more fire experience would improve credibility for the position. In talking with many employees on the line, many feel that some A-Staff doesn't remember or understand challenges that face us in the field and how these challenges can be impacted by some decisions made at the administrative level. A couple simple examples include disappointment in having done zero inspections for a quarter. While at first glance this may appear unacceptable but trying to operate a crew at a busy house with a new probationary firefighter can impact the times at which we choose to prioritize our fire inspections. It doesn't mean that they will not get done or that we don't feel that they are important. Another example is when an A staff officer calls out firefighters on why certain equipment is still on apparatus. To that officer that piece of equipment may seem obsolete or irrelevant. Perhaps that officer didn't experience the need for that piece of equipment during their short time on the line. Whichever the case, it shouldn't immediately be presumed that the firefighter is being defiant by continuing to carry that piece of equipment on the rig. Lastly, it more than likely wasn't the firefighter that made the decision to carry it and now that firefighter's personal dealing with A-staff was not desirable.”
- “Add a point system or a percentage of total score for candidates that have worked in our department longer than ten, fifteen or whatever amount. Allegiance and time served in the department should count towards your final score. Kind of like our volunteers taking our test for firefighter. Keep the requirements fire department related. Do not open it up to anybody with a management or business degree. We need people who have done the job and are our peers to understand the employees.”
- “It seems to me that SCCFD is a fairly large department, and I would think that a person considering the Fire Chief position would have more than 10 years of fire service experience. I would think that 15 years would be a more appropriate minimum for a successful candidate.”
- “For some of us, going back to get a four year degree will be a long endeavor. It would be a nice to have and I haven't seen any big change in the difference in the

people that are promoted with or without a degree. A little more credence to weather we can really do the job or just have the credentials.”

- “As a believer in the value of "street credibility" for leadership positions I feel the requirements for Deputy Chief are somewhat upside down. To require a 4 year degree but only 6 years fire service experience is ridiculous. I can't imagine someone promoted to D/C with only 6 years experience and assigned to supervise all the B/Cs as Operations Chief. On the other hand, I can think of a number of people who don't have 4 year degrees who could be successful in the same position.  
The listed requirements for Assistant and Fire Chief seem more in line with reality except that the years of fire service experience is too low in my opinion.”
- “I think 6 years experience in the fire service, for a deputy chief position, is not enough experience.”
- “I think the Fire Chief should probably have a minimum of Masters Degree. Any private business with a budget like ours would have a very educated CEO or President. I also feel that A-Staff personnel should promote through the ranks they are going to manage so they truly understand the jobs of those they will manage (ie. Prevention Deputy stays in that position, Training Deputy has been FF, Capt, BC, in Training or at least considerable experience there.) I also feel that A-Staff candidates should have equal emphasis between experience and Education/Training.”
- “Because I am not in a supervisory position at the moment, I can not answer what a minimum time frame as a supervisor should be. As for a degree, I do not believe that a 4 year degree in 'Recreation' should qualify an individual over another with a different background. However, I do believe that many 4 year degrees are very beneficial for the positions of A Staff Officers.”
- “The requirements should allow flexibility to promote those rare individuals that have the natural ability of a strong work ethic and ability to lead. There should be a process for district employees to have input into promotions in the way the Chief currently uses with Captain promotions.”
- “I think Deputy Chief should require the 4 year degree to be acquired by at least the second year after appointment. This will allow for more personnel to apply, allowing a "larger net" to be cast for selection of the right people in the right spots.”
- “I have a four year degree and think it is over-rated. Many extremely intelligent people do not have 4 yr. degrees for whatever reason and they are excluded. I think the two main requirements are intelligence and passion for the job/position.”
- “The acceptance of any degree from paper mill colleges should be ended. One of the key aspects of an advanced degree is critical thinking and that skill can not be achieved online or meeting once or twice a semester or year. If an advanced degree shall be required to promote, the degree should be more than a piece of paper if it is really important to have the requirement, otherwise remove the requirement.”
- “ I feel that it may be more important to have more fire service credentials rather than a generic 4 year degree. What gives someone with a 4 year degree in Spanish

the ability to perform fire administrative work? An example would be NFA chief officer classes.”

- “Some yes, some no. You can have all the book smarts, and still be a complete idiot, and disconnected from what goes on at the line level. I understand that this is a business. There are certain positions that a degree in the appropriate subject is beneficial to the department. However, there are personnel out there that don't have a four year degree and would do well in an A staff position. For those folks that did not get a four year degree at an early age, obtaining one in the somewhat latter stages of their career is a daunting task.”
- “I feel the requirements are fair.”
- “Fire Chief and Assistant Chief experience requirements should be increased to 15 years of experience.”
- “More years of fire service experience. 8 years for deputy chief; 10 years for asst chief; 12 years for fire chief.”
- “?”
- “Education is as important as ever. On line instruction is everywhere. Line people need to be reinforced to educate and promote.”
- “10 years should be minimum for any of them.”
- “I don't know enough about the position to comment.”
- “Fire Service experience for each position should be increased by at least 2 years. While I see the value of a 4 year degree (and have one myself), I would rather follow someone with experience and innate leadership abilities. A piece of paper that states someone has a degree does not particularly impress me.”
- “Experience is without a doubt one of the best tools one can possess in the fire service. We hope that this would also incorporate some good common sense. In the upper ranks within the fire service, one could not function without formal education. It not only makes us smarter, but it also gives us more credibility. We know that there are some folks out there that don't have a lot of formal education but could run this fire department on experience, work ethic and good common sense. At a glance, I wonder if it is too lenient.”
- “I think a person's time in department and experience should be considered most. Although, education is important, nothing takes the place of really doing the job.”
- “I think all should have ten years fire experience. If the top leaders are lost than you are backfilling with less experience. Not an ideal situation if it can be avoided. Which it can. The less disparity the better the transition or succession can be implemented.”
- “A-Staff should have 15 years of line experience.”
- “I believe that a Deputy Chief should have management experience. Jumping from Fire Captain to Deputy Chief (although not likely, our history shows it happens more than we think it would) leaves out a vast amount of "big picture" experience that would be gained at the Battalion Chief level. Our job specs. allow that jump to happen.”
- “It depends on what is meant by "administrative experience". If the expectation is that you need to be a Deputy Chief for 3 years in order to be an Assistant Chief or four years as a Deputy and/or the Asst Chief to be the Chief, that may keep the best candidates out of the competition.”

- “Experience levels for all, both in Fire Service and admin seem awfully low.”
- “I like the 4 year degree requirement. Putting hard and fast requirements for experience sometimes is counter productive as capable candidates may be eliminated from consideration.”
- “Change the BC requirements.”
- “We presently have persons functioning in these ranks that do not meet these requirements. What is the definition of "First-line experience"? One of our biggest administrative problems is that the majority of staff have never worked as a 56 hour Battalion Chief for an appreciable amount of time. Staff has very little understanding of what the supervisors of the majority of our employees really do. The experience requirement should apply to the rank immediately below the rank you seek. Consider at least 2 years in the rank below before promoting, preferably more.”
- “Deputy Chief: More than 2 years of non-supervisory first-line experience should be required for example 4 yr minimum.”
- “A 4 year degree is necessary as it provides the needed exposure to other topics and other concerns that Chief Officers need to be exposed to especially in dealing with outside agencies. The experience levels seems to be a moot point as so many of our folks who get to the ability to eligible for deputy chief have the fire line and first-line supervisor experience.”
- “For Deputy Chief, 4 years of company officer experience are required. Minimum requirement to become a company officer is 4 years of Firefighter experience. So the minimum should be 8 years of fire service experience. This carries on to Assistant Chief. Add three years of admin experience would mean 11 years of fire service experience. Fire Chief would need 12 years of fire service experience. Since A-Staff is a managerial position, I feel an MBA should be the minimum education requirement.”

9. If there are insufficient numbers of personnel interested in promoting to the A-Staff Chief Officer ranks in the future, what options should the SCCFD consider?

Decrease A-Staff education requirements	(22)	28.9%
Decrease A-Staff experience requirements	(4)	5.3%
Open up to outside personnel	(27)	35.5%
Unsure	(17)	22.4%
Other	(21)	27.6%

*Number answering question = 76*

*Number skipped question = 0*

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “Increase the years of service and set a five year goal after passing the testing process (even if your not promoted, but are on the list, your time starts). Also, the list does not expire, but after 18-24 months a new list will be established and the old merged into it.”

- “It's going to take a cultural change. Some individuals don't want to join A-Staff because of the perception of having to conform to their ideals. Fresh thinking is good and should be welcomed. It doesn't appear to be the case with A-Staff.”
- “Decrease the first line supervisor experience and the administration experience. The education requirements and fire service requirements are key to having a solid foundation in the fire service.”
- “IF the inability to attain a candidate pool is strictly due to the inability for interested candidates to conform to the requirements, then I believe it would be within the best interest of the department to have the Personnel Division and Chief collaborate on what decrease of a combination of education/experience it would take to obtain a fair and equitable candidate application pool.”
- “Quit reducing the requirements . . . as a society we keep making it easier and easier on people and you can see how well that has worked . . . here is a novel concept why don't we strive to make people push themselves and if they don't measure up . . . then either get your butt in gear or just go away and quit standing there with your hand out whining. Reducing requirements would be a huge step backwards and lead to the downfall of this or any organization.”
- “I'm not sure that having a four year degree should be mandatory. While it is highly desirable it shouldn't prohibit an interested candidate from applying to the competitive process. That candidate may have started their career at a young age in the fire service and never made it to a four year university. While it is possible to get the degree online, having that piece of paper doesn't necessarily mean that they achieved and obtained quality education.”
- “Sometimes a person from another agency can bring new ideas to a department.”
- “A possible solution to getting more of our current members involved in the promotional process would be to have a more interactive, established "acting" or "career development" program/process. I understand that we have the "Mentoring Program", but it is obviously not the solution (by looking at the participation). Again, just speaking for myself, if there was an established 6 month or 1 year or some other term of an "internship" or something similar program for preparation to the next rank, I would definitely participate. Preparing for the next rank is more than simply promoting. Preparation requires much more than simply studying for and passing a promotional exam. We do a much better job preparing our firefighters/engineers and paramedics than our captains and above. Expecting a member to be successful with the responsibilities of a captain and or chief officer without any "on-the-job training" is not reasonable. Especially, specifically what the Department expects out of these employees. A person can read all of the books, take classes, etc., yet still be unprepared when it comes to the role of captain and/or chief at COUNTY FIRE.”
- “Provide the opportunity (within specified time limits), for individuals to obtain their required educational requirements.”
- “If we opened up the lower A-staff positions to outside agencies I think we could get some "new blood" in our ranks and it might encourage our own employees to pursue promotion.”



- “I don't feel that they should decrease the requirements, consistency is very important in my opinion. If it requires them to go outside of the department to meet those standards then that is what they should do.”
- “I think opening the position to the outside could be harmful to the department. We have a very unique culture, that culture has been crafted from the inside and by slowly contracting/merging with other departments. An outside influence may not understand or appreciate what a good thing we have. Depending on the position a 4 year degree may not always be applicable or needed. Time in the trades, or time in grade, past experience, should play a larger part of game.”
- “Here is a simple solution. Encourage employees. Have a continuous message to all employees of our obligation to better the organization. Continue to provide opportunities and responsibilities to employees at all phases of their careers. Recruit those employees that show the ability to lead. Make a staff environment that is inviting. Move away from keeping members on staff just because they have followed the process. Treat the District like a business in which if you are not the best person for the position you are reassigned. The Chief should never be resistant to make a change that improves the organization. A weak or ineffective employee at staff level has the ability to cause greater harm to the organization and its morale.”
- “As it appears now, (please note the word "appears"), people that are working 10-20 feet or less down the hall from one another, DON'T communicate. There is a perception that HQ cures cancer. Somehow loose that stigma. Have a little fun and communicate. I understand that decisions made are not always favorable or understood by line personnel. I believe that going to the "outside" would be a mistake. We have a certain culture here that works pretty well. We are passing this culture onto the newly hired employees. A person from the "outside" may try to change the culture. Not a good idea.”
- “The nature of the administrative job is in a way almost diametrically opposite to a line fire fighter position.”
- “Not sure if we would have a choice to go out side or not. We need the positions. Set educational goals for people who do not qualify under the current plan.”
- “I believe the Educational requirements are nice to have, but should be able to be negotiable depending on the candidate. If you have someone that has dedicated themselves to learning and advancing in the Fire Service, and can offer real life experiences instead of just book smarts, that should count for something.”
- “Programs to groom and mentor candidates that show potential for leadership identified through their daily work ethic in their current positions.”
- “The problem is not a lack of experience or education. The problem is motivating people to have a desire to jump through all the hoops required for the position; four-year degree, State courses, admin support jobs, two years of exhaustive study for the test, and endure the stress of the test itself. All of this for something that may or may not even happen this test or next. I believe the job culture has changed in the last decade where people or more motivated toward putting their time and effort into their marriages and the lives of their children. It is not to say they do not love their jobs or value those who do promote. I do not think employees are willing to put their families aside, and put forth the effort necessary

for a promotion unless they have a sincere desire for that position. Sharing more of what the job is, and does, would go a long way toward bringing people along. With that said, I would also suggest a reduction in the amount of textual resources drawn from for the promotional tests. The sheer volume of material necessary to study and retain is staggering, and frankly descends into trivial pursuit. How could anyone digest and retain ten or twelve different books, for a test they may, or may not even pass. I know they are all important resources, but can you narrow the field down to some key materials for a more focused and applicable study? I believe this would make the travel toward the destination of A-Staff, and company officer, a little more palatable.”

- “Keep the requirements the same just seek out new B.C.s and make sure that they are taking full advantage of the departments educational policy. Provide mentorship and reimbursement so that those individuals seek out higher education. Also be sensitive to workload for those that are seeking a four degree.”
- “We heading to critical point but we still have time to turn around our culture. Adding a personnel evaluation system that is integrated into the promotional process in a positive way is essential to develop excellence in our future leaders. Currently we have officers that should have been vetted better and personnel are losing credibility in the process. Soon we may have to hire from the outside. It is not too late to focus on this issue but I hear a lot of frustration and I see very little effort in regard to the issue by the department. This study is one of the few examples of interest I have seen on the topic other verbal discussion. Is it in the 5 year plan?”
- “Maybe increase the staffing at the administration level so that people could survive and be happy in those positions, allow vacation use for education.”
- “Educational days off to promote education. Motivation comes from within but we can still enable our motivated.”
- “Require the educational requirements lacking to be gained in a finite time line prior to permanent appointment. A good person from within is a valuable tool for moral. Sometime education is secondary to a qualified person.”
- “Do not decrease the standards/requirements because there are insufficient individuals to fill positions. Allow a program to exist that will allow for the requirements to be met. If standards/requirements are lowered just to "fill" a position is that doing a justice to the department?”
- “No administrative experience should be required. On the job training should be sufficient once position is filled. Educational requirement should be reduced along with pay. To receive top step pay a Bachelor's must be obtained; but, not made a requirement to fill position.”
- “We, as in any agency, have a culture that is best realized from those that have experienced it for some time. Being able to gather individuals from the inside allows a smooth transition, and keeps the ball rolling. Someone that comes from the outside could have quite a learning curve depending on where they have come from (e.g. an adversarial municipal management/line staff environment). However, if the position needs to be filled, we need to keep the train running. That may mean going outside.”

- “Lower standards for in-house personnel but also open position up to outside personnel with the current requirements.”
- “Work to mentor existing staff at all levels. If I had to choose one above, it would be open recruitment to outside. I think both the educational and the experience requirements are minimal as they are. We need administrators who are trained professionals at management.”
- “Provide educational and training opportunities for all, not just a select few favorites. Pay for and provide staffing for any approved professional development.”
- “There has never been a time when there were not enough candidates for A staff positions even when there were fewer B/Cs to attempt the step. This is not to say that we will not see this in the future. I would hope that is not the case since none of the options above are appealing.”
- “Plenty of personnel have the minimum education requirements; however, the Department comes up short in career development. This is evident by how much money the department has committed to career development in the MOA, not much. The Department has failed to acknowledge a generation of captains and employees, those with 15 years on the Department. This group of leaders have been at the operational end of all of the Department's new programs; Paramedics 15 years ago; Special operations (meeting the ed requirements), CICCIS, and while not a program were mid career when a coworker was killed on duty, the Department's first. This group has been shut out of the promotion process above the rank of Captain. The mid career increase in BC requirements will have profound negative consequences to the Department. There is a large sub-group that has the formal education in addition to meeting the challenges set forth by the Department. They have the operational experience to make good A and B officers but don't have all of the chief officer classes. We run the risk of encouraging people to seek non-specialized positions within the Department to solely take classes to meet the new promotion specs. In my opinion this practice will make weak officers. As a result, they will not gain the trust of their subordinates, and more importantly not make sound decisions.”
- “Actively pursue contracts with other agencies within the county. PAF, MTV, SNY all have qualified staff officers that could certainly contribute to our organization.”
- “Implement cross training and similar programs as listed above.”
- “We have to make the positions more attractive as there are more than qualified individuals within our department to lead our department. Bringing folks from the outside, I believe, will take away from who we are at County Fire. I love our department even with all it's dysfunctional issues, but how the folks we have hired and smart, hardworking folks. A chief's position is one that should be difficult to attain. It shouldn't be something that is just handed out just because we are lacking interested folks. There are folks here that I believe would do a great job, but need encouragement to take the required courses and take the tests for promotion. There is a lot of mumble grumble from the line personnel of why folks are taking even the Captain's test with only 6 years experience, but leadership starts from the top and it should be made clear from the Chief and the Assistance

Chief and Deputy Chiefs that we have great department and that the jobs are challenging and rewarding and that we want folks to step up and truly welcome them regardless of time on and education to serve our department in a capacity that is changing from the way it was perhaps even 10 years ago.”

- “Make job more attractive. A staff personnel are doing too much and don't have the support themselves for their own programs and projects. Give them an expanded staff so the line personnel will feel that an A staff position is a position where an individual can do actual change with support. It is expensive to hire more staff but I feel that Captains look at Battalion Chief and A staff personnel as a position of being overworked and unsupported. Line personnel who are used to getting complex problems solved in '30 minutes or less' and have lots of support on the fire line can't see immediate benefits of an office job where there seems to be no finality of a finished project(s).”
- “Hire non-safety management. Staffing, budget and regulation requirements are common business functions. Hire business professionals to run the business side of the department rather than requiring firefighters to significantly change their career focus.”

10. Is there anything you would like to add?

*Number answering question = 75*

*Number skipped question = 1*

Yes	(25)	33.3%
No	(50)	66.7%

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “Better preparation for up and coming Captains by the department.”
- “Years of experience beyond the minimum requirements should be considered in place of a B.A. for the Deputy Chief position only.”
- “Hard for me to evaluate some of these questions as a new employee but I wanted to contribute and intriguingly look forward to reading your results.”
- “Thank you very much for allowing me to participate in the survey. Good luck on the evaluation of the data Steve. Regards.”
- “I applaud your efforts. The quality of A-staff candidates in the future will determine the success and course of our department. Being proactive in this cause is essential and somewhat of a change from our (often) reactionary practices.”
- “Not all employees are capable or interested in the challenges and responsibilities of A-staff. I believe more interest can be created by deteriorating that perceived barrier between A-staff and the line. I know that many people on the line have this perception and feel that their input to this questionnaire will go unnoticed. Some will not do it for that reason others will not due to no interest in the first place or maybe just laziness.”
- “I apologize for my weak answers. I am very new to the fire service and lack experiences in these situations.”

- “Please take all of these comments with the respect they were intended. I truly am so happy and proud to be a member of County Fire. I would not want to work anywhere else and I am very thankful for all this Department has done for me and my fellow firefighters. My motivation for my comments is purely constructive and anything that may be taken as criticism is meant to be just that...constructive. Best of luck to you with your project! Thank you for taking the time to do this!”
- “I would like to see the mentor program be promoted. In addition, I would also like to see a leadership program implemented into the department. Many individuals strive for A-Staff due to its prestige and pay, I feel that it is critical to fill those positions with leaders and not just managers. This would promote teamwork and make our department stronger as a whole.”
- “I think as the department continues to grow it is crucial that more time, energy, and money is put into the departments infrastructure. This could be a B/C, a 2nd captain, 2nd FF/E, and 2nd FF/E-P. It could also mean, if we continue to get larger, a separate Chief rank between B/C and Deputy Chief. This could be a district chief with a department broken up into several larger districts. A north district and south district for example. The last part of the puzzle is the disconnect between the line and A-staff. The line personnel are busy, the A-staff is busy, but we all need to be able to have open dialogue. If the A-staff doesn't trust the line folks to be active participants, and the line doesn't trust the A-staff to have their best interests in mind, then the whole thing could fall apart. We need more informal communication between both parties, be it lunch at the station, or chief officers coming by to chat. Kind of like the Class A inspection question and answer period without the stress.”
- “This is a premier fire department. Many people have given their best to shape this organization into what it is. It is my opinion that the upcoming changes in staff will make us even better. Leadership must always quell those traits that cause harm to the organization. Those traits would be selfishness, stubbornness, elevated ego, poor communication skills. The promotional process should never allow these traits to reach the Officer levels.”
- “Good luck with your project. I would like to see the final result of this assignment if possible.”
- “This department is the BEST to work for. Just look at what is happening to other departments near us. There is a reason we are still keeping our heads above water while others drown. Good luck Steve.”
- “Same with BC's a four year degree for a BC? Not sure if that is important for that position. Once you promote to BC set goals to complete degrees so you can be ready for the next level.”
- “I feel like it will be a mistake to hire from the outside. My opinion of an organization is to build strong employees that can continue to improve, and advance throughout a Career. This profession has a certain pride, and culture that is taught at entry and continues throughout your career. I think the upper management would be more effective if they can relate with the experiences from the bottom up.”
- “I think a great portion of this has to do with the new "generational" gap in the fire service. Fewer and fewer new employees are coming in from "working"

backgrounds and don't have the same sense of commitment to the department. The feeling of "I got mine, and that's all I need" leads to complacency and lack of motivation to continue to grow as an individual in the department. The attitude towards the job is shifting with every new class of recruits. I don't know if it is a matter of the individuals being picked up or those of us here not pushing each other to take a more active roll in the department."

- "Is doesn't matter if you are drowning in 10 feet of water or 100 feet, your still drowning....Many people view our HQ as the puzzle palace, we all need to do all we can to chance that for the better of the organization."
- "We've had this discussion before. Not really sure what we came up with. I hope we will get a glance at your paper when it's done. Thanks Chief."
- "Reduce the education required to apply for the BC position. There is a large pool of people here at County Fire that would do a great job, but can't take the test. San Jose Fire Department only requires that a person be a Captain for three years to test. I feel that time period is too short, but it is an example that we need to look at our testing requirements. Is County Fire really getting the best person for the job. There is more needed than "Book Smarts" to run a fire and keep people safe! This would also help getting people ready to and increase the pool of people wanting to move up in the organization."
- "County Fire needs to be a leader not a follower. We, County Fire, need to take a hard look at our selves. Not have someone else look at ourselves. Our internal customer service is broken to non-existent. We need to communicate better throughout all ranks, departments, stations, HQ, and take advantage of the technology that is currently available to us. We do not have to have things perfect for them to be effective, useful tools. Let us stop watering everything down, i.e., special operations "jack of all master of none...." It is time that the ICS system be used as a truly rankless system as it was intended. We are a great fire department with our own unique needs. Let's focus on those needs and let every asset be truly valued."
- "Good luck with your project Steve. I hope it will serve to broaden your education as well as better SCCFD."
- "The fire service (in general) in Santa Clara County is stagnant. Many of us would do this job for alot less money for the opportunity for meaningful education, sincere respect and equal chance at work assignments. While the line personnel are professional and enthusiastic when working together, The County Fire Chiefs association posture and bicker endlessly which is oppressive in any work environment. Grow a sack and lead, coach and mentor. Say what you mean and mean what you say. i.e.; 10 years or more to codify/implement the county RIC policy....Lead, follow, or get out of the way... If any of my answers here are offensive to you and whoever else reads this, they should be. These answers are offensive to me as well. I am merely mirroring my experiences and saying what others will not."
- "One of the hindrances to promoting above Captain has been the lack of Union representation. I see no reason that the BC's and DC's should be in a management bargaining unit. This would alleviate a lot of the fear of stepping into a position with so many personal legal and financial pitfalls. OR Staff should consider

incorporating BC's into their staff duties to provide for some mentorship. As a start: BC's should attend A Staff meetings on Tuesday AM. BC's should attend Meet and Confer sessions with the Union. How else can your most viable present candidates become better prepared to understand and take over the duties for retiring A Staff officers.”

- “I wish the department would do surveys like this for other problems in the department.”
- “While in theory I'm against going outside our agency to fill A-Staff positions, I have to acknowledge that it's been done successfully at other departments. Maybe we should try it for one position and see how it goes.”
- “Best wishes with your paper.”