

**Department of Homeland Security
Preparedness Directorate/U.S. Fire Administration
National Fire Academy Board of Visitors
Meeting Minutes
April 4-5, 2006
Building H, Room 300**

Attendees:

The following National Fire Academy Board of Visitors (NFA BOV) members were present for the meeting:

Dr. Robert S. Fleming (Chairperson)
Professor, Rowan University
1406 Heather Lane
West Chester, Pennsylvania 19380

Ms. Helen Johnson (Vice Chairperson)
Executive Consultant
State Firemen's and Fire Marshals'
Association
5810 Charles Schreiner Trail
Austin, Texas 78749

Dr. Sandy Bogucki
Associate Professor
Section of Emergency Medicine
Yale University School of Medicine
464 Congress Avenue
New Haven, Connecticut 06519-1315

Chief Art Cota
Shasta College Fire Department
11555 Old Oregon Trail
Redding, California 96003

Chief Donald R. Oliver
Wilson Fire/Rescue Services
307 West Hines Street
Wilson, North Carolina 27893

Mr. Gary Tokle
National Fire Protection Association
1 Batterymarch Park
Quincy, Massachusetts 02169-7471

The following members were not present for the meeting:

Chief Warren McDaniels (Retired)
100 City Park Avenue
New Orleans, Louisiana 70119

Captain Jack Reall
President, Columbus Firefighters Union,
IAFF 67
1380 Dublin Road, Suite 103
Columbus, Ohio 43215

U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) staff in attendance:

Mr. Charlie Dickinson, USFA Deputy Administrator
Dr. Denis Onieal, Superintendent, National Fire Academy (NFA)
Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, NFA
Mr. Ron Face, Director, NETC Management, Operations, and Support Services
Mr. Bill Lewis, Chief, Prevention and Leadership Section, National Fire Programs
Ms. Cindy Wivell, Secretary, NFA
Ms. Terry Gladhill, Program Analyst, NFA
Mr. Bob Bennett, Training Specialist, NFA
Mr. Ed Kaplan, Education Specialist, NFA
Mr. Rob Neale, Training Specialist, National Fire Programs

April 4

CONVENE BOV MEETING/WELCOME

Dr. Bob Fleming welcomed everyone, convened the meeting, and reviewed the agenda.

USFA will be undergoing a review using Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Program Assessment Rating Tool. A kick-off meeting is scheduled for the afternoon of April 5.

Dr. Denis Onieal explained that the Academy had three pieces: 1) preparedness, 2) partnership, and 3) performance. This review will be used to determine funding.

Mr. Charlie Dickinson addressed the group and spoke of the challenges encountered with USFA moving from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to DHS Preparedness Directorate, specifically issues related to Human Resources, Information Technology, and Procurement. For the 2007 budget, there will be a 13 percent decrease for tax purposes; a proportionate share would be taken from the components across the Preparedness Directorate. Certain support staff (HR and IT personnel) will be transferred to other FEMA facilities, either Mount Weather or downtown. It is hoped to make EENET a star for DHS. There was discussion on Mr. David Paulison serving as Acting FEMA Director, and some ongoing issues related to the Katrina catastrophe. Mr. Dickinson acknowledged the importance of course development and keeping the courses current.

FOLLOWUP FROM FEBRUARY CONFERENCE CALL

Dr. Fleming asked for a motion to approve the February meeting minutes—Ms. Helen Johnson moved to approved, seconded by Mr. Gary Togle. All were in favor.

FACILITY: Mr. Ron Face

The budget was appropriated by Congress, but it is unknown how much money USFA will have for this fiscal year. There may not be enough money to pay FEMA for services or pay the tax, for which costs are estimated to be approximately \$5 million. So for FY2007, which begins in

October, USFA is looking at a 13 percent rescission. Salary expense, travel, and program are the three budget categories. If there is a 13 percent hit, then that would be \$5.3 million out of the total \$44 million budget. That equates to the entire NFA budget. There would be no resident classes or off-campus delivery for the program category. Even if there are cuts in all three categories, it would be crippling. USFA hoped to increase their budget by another \$16 million to cover expenses for support staff—that would be for status quo, nothing increased.

A lot of campus deferred maintenance is in progress. The work will last at least another 2 or 3 months before completion. Campus maintenance costs are about \$2.5 million a year. If there is money at the end of the year, the air conditioner pumps will be replaced this year.

Mr. Face discussed the struggle to keep the support staff here on campus and the loss of the on-campus HR department. The Preparedness Directorate is looking to expedite action on obtaining HR support for USFA. The plan was for the Procurement staff to stay with FEMA, but now they will transfer into DHS/Preparedness. It is hoped that the same can be done for the on-campus IT positions.

For campus security, FEMA had been paying any costs over \$800,000. However, that is no longer the case. As a result, the Preparedness Directorate is working on a reprogramming action that could take 6 months. Should that action not be approved, USFA may come up short \$500,000. The 2007 budget is already in place, and security was not in the USFA budget because FEMA had taken the security contract and placed it in their budget. Also money is needed to finish perimeter security for the campus; to do so would cost a few million dollars. The FY2008 budget will include money for security.

There was discussion on the DHS-wide Smart Card DHS has not found a system that meets the department's needs. The card should give a user access into facilities, have capability of being used as a credit card for travel, contain medical information for the cardholder, and give access to assigned dorm rooms, meals, etc. Once the card has been swiped for spending purposes, it records the expenditures.

Dr. Fleming asked Mr. Face about the status of the DHS facility inventory. Currently a third contract is in place. The first two were fixed price, and the money ran out. It is a complex process. To expand this campus, the inventory would have to be completed, and the funds provided. If that occurred, there could be new classrooms and such on campus in 2 years.

ACADEMY UPDATE: Drs. Denis Onieal and Kirby Kiefer

A critical issue is still budget for curriculum. Dr. Onieal reviewed a handout on USFA's Traditional Training Costs (based on FY2004 Data).

With regard to the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) Applied Research Papers, if they are to be posted on the Web, they must comply with the American Disabilities Act. The cost to make all the text, charts, etc., comply would be \$25,000.

The Credentialing Report has gone to the National Incident Management System Integration Center. The National Capitol Region is using our credentialing system as a model for their credentialing system.

The Academy is looking for a Learning Management System (LMS), a software package that manages the learning process for each student—recording progress and storing test scores. LMS will be used for blended learning.

Dr. Onieal spoke to the group about a student who may come to take classes here from another country. A foreign student's country pays for airfare, etc. Foreign students may take two courses back to back and stay on campus the weekend between classes.

In February, Dr. Onieal attended the Black Chiefs conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. During his time at the conference, Dr. Onieal spoke to the attendees about increasing diversity at NFA.

ENDORSEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT: Dr. Robert Fleming and Mr. Bob Bennett

Dr. Fleming participated in the Endorsement subcommittee meeting in March. Four people from the North American Fire Training Directors (NAFTD) were brought together to review 57 courses for Endorsement. They were Gary Wilson, Russ Strickland, Steve Sloan, and Jerry Schroeder. Two individuals reviewed each course; the two had to agree, either approved or denied. If there was no agreement, then it was sent to a third party for review. Forty-two courses were approved, four were conditional, and eleven were denied as submitted.

For the "denied as submitted" courses, the reviewers noted the specific reasons why the course was being denied. Those courses can be re-evaluated should the agency submitting the course for review make the recommended changes. An example of a denied course is one submitted by the University of Illinois. The online course was meant to be self-paced; however, it required some instruction from a teacher; therefore, it was denied.

The approved course titles went forward to the Admissions Office to have course codes assigned and will be posted to USFA's Web page. During the last review, 62 courses were submitted, and the acceptance record was not as good.

The criteria that were used to evaluate these 57 courses are the same criteria that the American Council on Education uses to evaluate NFA courses.

The Endorsement Program encourages States to submit courses for review because they can issue a NFA certificate, use grant money to implement the course, etc.

There are 148 endorsed courses available at this time.

The BOV were interested in the number of students who take the endorsed courses. A report from Admissions will be provided to the BOV members.

An issue that was raised during the review was how you stop States from using an old course when a revised course has been approved for endorsement; this topic will be discussed at the NAFTD meeting in October.

Mr. Bennett will provide to the BOV members a total list of endorsed courses and a list of those recently endorsed.

TRAINING RESOURCES AND DATA EXCHANGE (TRADE) CO-CHAIR MEETING: Mr. Robert Bennett

The TRADE Co-Chair meeting was held March 13-14. Discussions included Critical Infrastructure Protection, the Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education Program, and ICS 300-400. The dates for the national TRADE conference were set and an agenda developed. The conference will be held October 29-November 1; the theme, "9/11 to Katrina—What's Next?" This conference is held every other year. Mr. Bennett will send the BOV members a copy of the Co-Chair meeting summary.

REGIONAL DELIVERY: Mr. Robert Bennett

Mr. Bennett reported that 21 of 30 regional delivery dates have been confirmed for 2007. He hopes to have the schedule published by May 1.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES HIGHER EDUCATION: Mr. Ed Kaplan

Mr. Kaplan presented an update on the completed National Professional Development Matrix. The matrix has been presented informally and is now set up for online use.

The 2006 FESHE conference will be held June 3-5. Mr. Kaplan reviewed a draft of the agenda. At the conference there will be a FESHE node placed at the bottom of the steps in front of K building. Surrounding the node will be the marks of colleges, State training agencies, etc. that are FESHE representatives in some way. Students also may purchase bricks to be placed by the node.

Mr. Kaplan talked about the Degrees at a Distance Program courses that are being converted for online delivery. Three are completed, two are being worked on, and another seven or eight should be completed by the end of the year. The three courses that have been converted are *Managerial Issues in Hazardous Materials*, *Fire Protection Structures and Systems*, and *Applications of Fire Research*. He walked through the *Fire Protection Structures and Systems* course with the group, going over the different components of the modules--showing the objectives, readings, activities, as well as where to insert responses and how to send written papers.

ONLINE EVALUATION SYSTEM AND PROGRAM ASSESSMENT RATING TOOL (PART): Ms. Terry Gladhill

Ms. Gladhill first discussed the Online Evaluation System. Phase I is the online Web-based reporting module for course evaluation/application. Final approval by Preparedness IT is anticipated by May 1. She showed the group the online system and walked everyone through some of the steps of the process. The system was designed to be as user friendly as possible. The demographics piece has been removed from the student evaluation section so that no one

could be singled out. As far as the comments section, anything offensive will be removed. There is 100 percent usage of this system for resident courses. Students complete the evaluations before leaving campus. The turnaround for the reports is expected to be 1 week. Phase II of the process is the long-term evaluation; right now, this is still paper-based, but is scheduled to start online no later than July. BOV members will have access to the online system; Ms. Gladhill hopes to have the accounts set up by next month

Dr. Fleming asked about using this evaluation system for pilot deliveries. It would help to get a sense of how things are going. Dr. Onieal responded that it could be done. Ms. Gladhill added that they would like to use this system with the State Weekend Program, but for now, those evaluations will continue to be paper-based.

The next topic of discussion was the PART, a systematic review. This process is new to the USFA, and Ms. Gladhill has been asked to take the lead. Handouts explaining the PART were distributed. It is part of the President's Management Agenda and the Government Performance and Results Act. This assessment consists of 25 questions in four different sections. The questions, when answered, must have evidence to support the response. The PART review will be tied to the FY2008 budget request. The findings will be published on ExpectMore.gov, probably by the end of the year. Ms. Gladhill offered to provide the 25 questions to the BOV members.

Last in the presentation from Ms. Gladhill was the FY2006 proposed spending budget for NFA. A handout showing the Academy's proposed budget was distributed. She noted the amounts budgeted for Blended Learning Delivery and computer support – J lab. The amount for the computer support nearly doubled and includes IT and classroom personnel support

April 5

COURSE DEVELOPMENT/REVISION INITIATIVES: Mr. Bill Lewis and Mr. Rob Neale

Mr. Neale discussed the Strategic Transition Plan for the Fire Prevention: Technical curriculum. Students are opposed, as are the contract instructors. The common theme from the students is that they want to continue the Emmitsburg experience with a more hands-on approach to learning/training instead of virtual reality training. The contract instructors do not share the vision of transitioning entry-level training to State and local partners, and do not predict hand-off or regional deliveries will be successful. Mr. Lewis stated that there needs to be feedback from elsewhere, other than students/instructors here on campus. We need to reach out for other solid feedback such as from fire chiefs, fire marshals, the IFC, etc., who are the ones who have to implement the local training. Mr. Neale appreciates the Board's positive response to the transition plan. Funding is also an issue in implementing this plan. He briefly covered different aspects of the plan with the Board members. Mr. Neale discussed "Coffee Break," which are 5- to 10-minute online training vignettes. They are posted every Tuesday morning. There has been a very positive response.

Mr. Bill Lewis spoke on the following items:

- Conversion of selected 2-week resident courses to 1-week (6-day) format is still on track for 2007.
- The EFOP curriculum instrumentation is changing; eventually there will be no cost or a lost cost for instrumentation. Mr. Chuck Burkell is working this issue. They have come up with an idea where they create their own questionnaire and have it placed on a Web site. Mr. Burkell is following a firm from Canada that has tried this. This would be within the budget. Trouble with procurement is being 508 compliant. He is going to have the cost of current instrumentation as well as development of the new idea until it is implemented.
- Copies of the “Four Years Later – A Second Needs Assessment of the Fire Service” study were handed out. This study was just recently released and is now available on the Web. A similar study had been conducted 4 years ago and had a higher level of response. Mr. Lewis reviewed some of the statistics highlighted in the document.
- NFPA 472 changes and DHS TCL: a change at the Operations level, changing from single operations course to a core curriculum with a bunch of supplemental items.
- Graphic Simulation Prototype: limited availability for training. The idea is to have material that would sit around a department, place, etc., that are typical, like your publications; and then, if interested after reading, to be able to go to a Web site and take a small test and receive a certificate after passing the test. A problem to overcome is that in a department, how often does a firefighter leave the group to go and get on a computer? This is not something that happens very often. So how are they going to be reached?
- Response Partners Prototype: training Federal employees to know who they are supporting in their everyday job. Develop a course for Federal employees to teach them about the fire service, law enforcement, EMS, etc. The methodology for the course is 45-minute lecture on the fire service (values, how it is organized, challenges, etc.), then they play a "trivial pursuit" game where participants have to answer basic fire service questions. This would be followed with a lecture on EMS, game is played, etc. Mr. Lewis showed the group a smaller stereotype of the game board that would be played in the classroom. This is an unfunded project. The Coast Guard became interested in it, and they are turning it in to something they can use after they remove all the fire service information from the game board. Dr. Bogucki recommended that the game board be changed from a funny to a more serious aspect. Since the presentation and the questions have a serious aspect, then the game board should have the same serious content.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Dr. Fleming asked if there were any comments in reference to any of the information heard at the meeting. Chief Art Cota (via phone) commented on what our focus is at the NFA. How do we reach out and get feedback? Chief Cota didn't hear any mention about TRADE or PARADE.

Dr. Kirby Kiefer replied that there are lots of proposals and bids, but the budget again is an issue. Once there is funding for projects, they will be implemented.

There was concern among the Board members regarding Mr. Neale's issues with the Strategic Transition Plan. Dr. Kiefer reassured the Board that Mr. Neale will continue to strive on this issue.

A question was brought to the attention of the group regarding the updating of information in campus courses. Dr. Kiefer stated that many Training Specialists are constantly updating their courses with new information. Those who aren't are being reminded that their courses need ownership. When students find that the course is outdated, they specify page number and paragraphs in their evaluations. Dr. Bogucki added that there are courses that need to be updated more frequently, while some may need to be reviewed only every 5 to 10 years or so. Dr. Kiefer reinforced that the overseer over the Training Specialists is Cortez Lawrence, and that he, Dr. Kiefer, is uncomfortable answering some of these questions because this is Mr. Lawrence's priority area. Chief Cota reminded the group that to make these updates, there sometimes need to be outside sources of input; and at this point the money is not there.

Mr. Gary Tokle asked Dr. Kiefer about the PART evaluation and on what aspect it focused. The PART evaluation is looking at the USFA in total. A preliminary meeting for USFA staff is scheduled for this afternoon.

NEXT BOV MEETING

The next meeting will be a conference call meeting sometime in June. Dr. Fleming will send out a few tentative dates to the members.

ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Fleming asked for a motion for adjournment. Chief Don Oliver moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Johnson. All were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m. EST.