



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Debra Figone

**SUBJECT:** CONSORTIUM FOR POLICE  
LEADERSHIP IN EQUITY (CPLE)

**DATE:** March 17, 2009

## INFORMATION

The purpose of this Information Memo is to inform the City Council that, on March 9, the Police Chief signed a Letter of Intent with the *Consortium for Police Leadership in Equity* (CPLE), an independent group of researchers from leading academic institutions across the country. This independent research initiative will help the City better understand the complex issues related to arrest data. The City will use the results of the CPLE work to evaluate the need for any potential changes or improvements to the Police Department's policies, procedures, and/or training. This Information Memo provides background on this effort.

As the City Council is aware, a number of questions have been raised over the past few months regarding San Jose arrest statistics and whether or not these data reflect biased-based actions by members of the Police Department. Recent news articles have pointed to the number of Hispanics among those arrested for various offenses, and some community members have suggested that these numbers are disproportionately high and reflect patterns and practices of bias-based actions by the Department. This concern has been the subject of much discussion by some members of the Public Intoxication Task Force. While at first glance these numbers are of concern, this must also be coupled with a more in-depth understanding of their significance before any conclusions can be drawn. As a result, the work of the CPLE, which just formed this past January, could not be better fit at this time. My expectation is that the Consortium's effort in San Jose will not only provide insights regarding the questions being raised, but will also identify opportunities to make improvements. The goal of this effort is to ensure that the San Jose Police Department retains the best practices in policing, as well as community credibility and trust.

### Background

In 2005, Stanford University Professor Jennifer L. Eberhardt organized an important gathering of law enforcement practitioners and social science researchers. Entitled *Stanford University's Policing and Racial Bias Conference*, the goal of the Conference was to develop collaborative relationships among high-level law enforcement officials and academicians. The Police Chief attended and participated. Growing out of the productive work that occurred at the initial gathering by both law enforcement and researchers, a second conference, in which San Jose Police Department staff also attended, was convened in 2007. These initial gatherings led to the creation of the CPLE in January, 2009.

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The CPLE is a research consortium that promotes police transparency and accountability by facilitating innovative research collaborations between law enforcement agencies and world-class social scientists. Through these facilitated collaborations, the CPLE seeks to improve issues of equity—particularly racial and gender equity—in policing both within law enforcement agencies and between agencies and the communities they serve. The CPLE is committed to research transparency and, as such, does not charge participating law enforcement agencies for access to expert researchers. CPLE researchers are never funded by participating law enforcement agencies and are able to render both expert consultations (for law enforcement) and scholarly publications (for the academic and general public) without any question of coercion or incentive. Consequently, the structure of the CPLE is, itself, an innovation designed to further the interests of transparency and accountability in equity matters.<sup>1</sup>

In February of this year, the San Jose Police Department was invited to attend a Police Summit hosted by the CPLE in New York City entitled *The Police Summit for Leadership in Equity: Creating Research Partnerships that Matter*, hosted by the Russell Sage Foundation, which is one of CPLE's underwriters. The Police Chief attended, along with other law enforcement representatives from the Denton, Denver, Houston, Milwaukee, Nashville, Newark, Portland, Salt Lake City, Virginia Beach, and Seattle Police Departments, and members from the Toronto Police Services, Edmonton Police Services, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, and the Department of Justice.

The conference provided law enforcement attendees with general information on the purpose and goals of the CPLE, which include:

- Top-level scientific support at no cost to participating agency
- Research independence/objectivity
- Cutting-edge researchers spanning across numerous fields (social sciences, statistics, etc.)
- Strict guidelines for research and data controls
- Commitment to a long-term process

The full program agenda, basic CPLE organizational information, and scholar biographies and research interests from the New York conference are attached to this memorandum. Some additional information from the CPLE website<sup>2</sup> is provided below:

***What methods does the CPLE use to collect its data?***

The CPLE tries to match the methodology with the research question, working to address targeted problems through a variety of means. These range from interviews to surveys to experiments to reviews of departmental records. CPLE engages in both short-term and long-term (longitudinal) data collection.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://cple.psych.ucla.edu>

<sup>2</sup> <http://cple.psych.ucla.edu/how-it-works/>

*Who does the CPLE collect data from?*

Surveys are simply distributed to officers and officers in training. For experimental research, off-duty, sworn personnel are paid for their voluntary participation. Non-sworn personnel often participate as a form of training. Records are accessed in a manner that assures complete confidentiality for participating officers.

*Who does the data CPLE collects belong to?*

Research data belongs to Principal Investigators (PI) and the CPLE—and not to the law enforcement agency from which the data was collected. Upon publication of a given dataset, the PI must produce electronic copies of his or her dataset for the CPLE to archive. Should another researcher be interested in doing comparative data, either longitudinally within the agency or comparatively across agencies, they must approach the CPLE. The CPLE will then approach the initial PI about such a collaboration. The initial PI will then have the opportunity either to collaborate with the interested researcher, or remain neutral to the new project.

On March 9, 2009, Police Chief Robert Davis, in coordination with the City Manager's Office and the Office of the City Attorney, signed a Letter of Intent to participate in the CPLE. Through participation in this Consortium, the City is now positioned to move forward, proactively working on a coordinated basis to better understand these complex issues.

It is anticipated that the resulting research information will help the Department in better assessing current issues related to the City's public intoxication arrest statistics as well as issues relating to the assessment of other arrest statistical reports.

I believe that participation in the CPLE provides an opportunity to better understand the complex issues related to recent statistical reports and to work with top professionals in this field. Additionally, the opportunity exists for representatives of the CPLE to assist the Police Department in assessing current issues and identifying opportunities to make improvement to policies, procedures, and/or training.

I look forward to sharing this effort with the City Council, workforce, and members of the public. Questions regarding this effort should be directed to Police Chief Robert Davis at 277-4212.

  
Debra Figone  
City Manager