

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Farah Muscadin  
Director, Office of Police Oversight

Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde  
Deputy City Manager

FROM: Kroll Associates, Inc.

DATE: February 26, 2021

RE: Preliminary Assessment of Austin Police Training Academy

### Introduction

On November 12, 2020, the City of Austin's Office of Police Oversight (OPO), in consultation with the City Manager's Office (CMO), retained Kroll Associates, Inc. (Kroll) to review and evaluate the Austin Police Department (APD) on the extent to which forms of racism, bigotry, and discrimination are present in the protocols, practices, and behaviors of the APD. The initial phase of Kroll's review is limited to an assessment of the APD Training Academy (Academy), including its ability and readiness to prepare cadets for policing in a multi-ethnic, diverse urban population consistent with best practices.<sup>1</sup>

We understand that the City of Austin (City), as expressed through City Council Resolution 66 and the work of the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force, and as articulated in the 2020 Strategic Plan of the APD Training Academy, seeks a transformational police academy that transparently addresses issues of racial and gender equity, emphasizes de-escalation tactics that minimize the use of force, and moves away from a regimented, paramilitary culture into a learning academy that "promotes effective, innovative, and inclusive instruction that advances sustained learning for current and future officers by utilizing the most current evidence-based strategies and incorporates diverse perspectives through community partnerships."<sup>2</sup>

In assessing the Academy to date, we have examined a series of independent reports (listed below) concerning various aspects of the training academy pertaining to culture, teaching methods, racial and gender equity, and course content; interviewed APD and Academy leadership, instructors and other active and retired personnel, former APD cadets, community leaders and activists, outside consultants and academic experts, and City personnel in the CMO, OPO, and Equity Office (further details below); and begun researching best practices in police training academies. We have also requested, received, and started reviewing a large volume of documents from the APD, including: Academy curricula, course content and lesson plans, instructor CVs, organizational charts, policy manuals, procedures and protocols, statistical data, cadet manuals, class schedules, recruitment materials, employee rosters with race, gender and other demographic breakdowns, and other documentation and data.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kroll's retention is pursuant to contract MA 4400 PA21000018.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Dr. Sara Villanueva ("Review Analysis and Strategic Plan"), page 13 ("2020 Strategic Plan"), May 2020.

<sup>3</sup> The proposed curricula for DEI-related courses in the 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class are currently being developed by the Academy, pending the anticipated assistance of the new Organizational Training and Development Manager (ODTM), once onboarded.

In carrying out our mandate, we have specifically reviewed the following independent reports and assessments:

1. APD Training Academy Review and Strategic Plan by Dr. Sara Villanueva (May 2020)
2. APD Training Academy Curriculum Review by Dr. Miguel Ferguson (June 19, 2020)
3. Community + APD Equity Assessment Series: APD Training and Recruiting Divisions, The Peace Mill Research and Communications (December 14, 2020)
4. Racial Inequities and Institutional Racism, Joyce James Consulting (November 2020)
5. Community Report: Video Review Panel (January 18, 2021)
6. Community Video Review Panel (CVRP): APD Training Academy Videos, Final Report (January 14, 2021), and CVRP Summary Reports from July 2020 to November 16, 2020 (noting APD's concurrence with CVRP's recommendations).

We have also conducted over 45 interviews and meetings with a broad array of stakeholders (more than 70 individuals) over the past two months, including:

- Dr. Sara Villanueva ("APD Training Academy Review Analysis and Strategic Plan");
- Dr. Miguel Ferguson ("APD Training Academy Curriculum Review");
- City of Austin Equity Office staff ("Community + APD Equity Assessment Series");
- Community Video Review Panel ("Community Video Review Panel Report");
- Joyce James Consulting staff ("Racial Inequities and Institutional Racism");
- Austin community leaders (Just Liberty, NAACP, Austin Area Urban League, Austin Justice Coalition, and Texas Appleseed);
- Greater Austin Crime Commission;
- Civilian Police Review Commission;
- APD leadership (Chief Brian Manley and Chief of Staff Troy Gay);
- Academy leadership (Assistant Chief Brent Dupre, Commander Mark Spangler, and Commander Catherine Johnson);
- Academy supervisors – Training and Recruiting Units;
- Academy Instructors;
- Representatives of the Austin Police Association and its various affiliates (Austin Police Women's Association, Lesbian and Gay Peace Officers Association, and Texas Peace Officers Association);
- Former APD Training Academy cadets; and
- City of Austin officials and staff.

Additional interviews and meetings are ongoing.

Although our work remains in the developing stages, we offer this preliminary set of findings and recommendations at the request of the CMO given the sense of urgency facing City stakeholders in deciding whether and when to re-open the Academy for the 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class, which was originally scheduled to begin on March 29, 2021. The findings and recommendations in this memorandum are preliminary in nature and are based only on the information we have gathered and reviewed to date. As additional work and analysis remain to be done, the below findings and recommendations are subject to modification and revision as we gather and review additional information and as the Academy further updates and refines its preparations for the 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class.

## Preliminary Findings

Based on our work to date, we highlight the following findings and observations that reflect on the readiness of the 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class in light of the City's stated objectives:

### **Diversity**

- Academy leadership and supervisory staff currently reflects a significantly improved level of gender, racial, and ethnic diversity than in years past.
  - The ten APD personnel who make up the ranks of Academy supervisory staff in the Cadet Training Unit (Commander to Corporal) include three females (Commander, Lieutenant of Cadet Training, and Sergeant of Learned Skills); two African American males (Sergeant of Cadet Training and Corporal of Learned Skills); and one Latino male (Sergeant of Cadet Training). One of the females is also of Pacific Islander descent.
  - Similarly, the Recruiting Unit supervisory staff presently consists of five APD personnel from Commander to Sergeant, including two females (Commander and Sergeant of Recruiting) and two African American males (Lieutenant of Recruiting and Sergeant of Recruiting II).
  - The Recruiting Unit also includes significant racial, gender, and ethnic diversity at the officer and civilian ranks.
- Academy instructors on the whole are far less diverse. Although there is a sprinkling of female, African American, and Latino instructors, the officer ranks continue to be dominated by white males (although this appears to be slowly improving).
  - Leadership is well aware of the need to further increase racial, gender and ethnic diversity among the ranks of Academy instructors, and they are actively in the process of recruiting diverse officers to fill the ranks of current vacancies.
  - There seem to be a variety of reasons why the Academy has had difficulty increasing diversity among its pool of instructors, including financial disincentives (a loss of overtime and shift differential pay), physical fitness requirements, and a perception that instructor positions lack prestige or a pathway to promotion. Kroll notes, however, that other professional benefits counter these perceived disincentives, including better work schedules, additional training opportunities, access to Academy exercise facilities, and the satisfaction of teaching future officers.<sup>4</sup>
  - Although the Chief has authority to unilaterally order transfers to the Academy in an attempt to increase diversity, he has traditionally been reluctant to do so.
- The APD Recruiting Unit contains a diverse team of recruiters and background investigators and has developed a broad and effective outreach program that extends to other cities and states targeting historically black colleges and universities, Latinx organizations, military veterans, and women's organizations, among others. As a result, the list of 95 eligible candidates who are

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<sup>4</sup> See APD Training Academy Curriculum Review, page 4 (discussing Instructor Surveys) (June 19, 2020).

currently expected to attend the 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class consists of one of the most diverse group of recruits in recent APD history, as reflected in the below chart (updated 12/10/2020):<sup>5</sup>

Gender	Asian/Islander	Black	Hispanic	Other	White	Grand Total	Percentages
<b>Female</b>	1	3	2	0	10	16	17%
<b>Male</b>	4	10	29	3	33	79	83%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>95</b>	
<b>Percentages</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>45%</b>		

- These future cadets are undoubtedly being recruited by other sources of employment. It would be a lost opportunity in addressing long-term diversity goals if this diverse cadet class were to become diluted.
- In addition, the 143<sup>rd</sup> cadet class, which graduated in October 2020, was 50% white, 33% Hispanic, 12% Black, and 2% Asian. This compares somewhat favorably to the 2019 census estimate, which shows Austin as 48% white, 34% Hispanic, 8% Black, and 7% Asian.
- There are recent indications that APD leadership is making an intentional effort to enhance knowledge and understanding of racial equity issues. Within the past year, APD leadership attended multiple anti-racism workshops in an effort to address and better understand issues of systemic and institutional racism within the department. For example, in February 2020, Academy leadership and cadet instructors attended *Beyond Diversity: Courageous Conversations About Race*, led by Dr. Glenn Singleton. In September 2020, 18 APD leaders attended a two-day “Groundwater Analysis of Racial Inequities” workshop led by Joyce James Consulting LLC. By all accounts, both seminars were well received, with some talk among APD leadership of possibly incorporating one of these workshops into cadet training or annual training for Academy instructors.
- The Academy appears to do a good job of training cadets on LGBTQ issues, with two hours each of course content devoted to policing and transgender issues taught by an openly transgender instructor, and an introduction to LGBTQ issues taught by Sergeant Michael Crumrine, the president of the Austin Lesbian and Gay Peace Officers Association and a nationally renowned advocate for the LGBTQ+ community within law enforcement. The Academy also appears to do a good job recruiting in the LGBTQ community. The APD as a whole, however, needs improvement in training and educating officers on a department-wide basis.
- The Academy has developed a valued mentorship program for women cadets to help prepare and guide them through the Academy.

<sup>5</sup> Data and classifications provided by APD.

### **Paramilitary Culture**

- The Training Academy remains a predominantly paramilitary training model, albeit with a greater emphasis than in years past on a classroom-based, learning-institute style of teaching.
  - Although most Academy leaders describe the Academy as a “hybrid” model closely associated with a paramilitary model but tampered with a mix of adult-learning courses, the reports of Dr. Villanueva and Dr. Ferguson, and interviews of Academy supervisors and instructors, suggest the paramilitary model continues to predominate.
  - Three frequently cited examples of the Academy’s transition away from a paramilitary format include: First, the Academy has eliminated the requirement that cadets “make a hole” whenever an instructor or supervisor walks through the hallway (cadets were formerly required to stand at attention against the wall so that senior personnel could get through). Now, cadets are encouraged to extend a handshake, introduce themselves, and engage in conversation. Second, cadets are no longer required to wear camouflage, military-style attire as the uniform of the day in Academy. Third, there is less one-on-one, in your face stress actions (yelling and screaming), which are now more group focused.
  - Cadet surveys administered by Dr. Miguel Ferguson after the 141<sup>st</sup> and 142<sup>nd</sup> cadet classes suggested that most courses continue to be taught in a highly formalistic manner, with cadets yelled at, berated, and degraded by instructors in certain classes. Moreover, according to Academy instructors and supervisors with whom Kroll spoke, the Academy continues to impose behavioral modification exercises (i.e., group calisthenics and exercise drills at the sandpit) as collective discipline for cadet mistakes and compliance failures.
  - To date, it appears that the adult learning-style of teaching as discussed in Dr. Ferguson’s and Dr. Villanueva’s reports is not in widespread use and that efforts to update course content with adult learning strategies are on hold pending the hiring of Dr. Villanueva’s replacement as Organizational Training and Development Manager (ODTM).
- APD leadership has expressed its belief to Kroll that a paramilitary structure is an essential component of police culture and paramount to ensuring cadets are attuned to the chain of command and know what to do and how to respond in crisis situations.
- The majority of APD and Academy leadership have questioned the assertion in Dr. Villanueva’s report that paramilitary academies do not align well with the principles of community policing and problem solving and contribute to a “warrior” mindset, which leads to an “us vs. them” mentality of officers on the front lines fighting crime.
- Although APD leadership dislikes the “warrior vs. guardian” nomenclature, the new Commander of the Academy said she believes APD should train its cadets to be “70% guardians and 30% warriors.” “We are guardians, but we have to maintain a warrior mindset to stop immediate threats when they occur.”
  - As an example, the Commander suggested to consider an officer assigned to protect school children. The officer is there as a guardian, but if a school shooting occurs, the officer needs to know how to become a warrior on the spot. That can only be learned at the Academy.

- The Academy has modified some past abusive practices, such as “Fight Day” and Stress Reaction Testing (SRT), in an attempt to reduce cadet injuries, lower the rate of attrition (which disproportionately impacted females and cadets of color), and create an environment more conducive to success and graduation.
  - Following the 141<sup>st</sup> cadet class, “Fight Day” was changed to “Will-to-Win” and is presently more structured and controlled than in years past, according to Academy leadership. The sparring instructors in the boxing ring are instructed to fight at 50% capacity (all cadets wear protective gear) and with no intent to injure cadets. The stated purpose of Will-to-Win is to ensure that cadets develop the mental fortitude and courage to keep fighting no matter what and to not give up, such as when encountering an acute situation while waiting for backup. The Will-to-Win exercise requires cadets to fight back and not quit for at least three minutes, the average time it typically takes for backup to arrive (the boxing component occurs after a series of other intense physical exercises designed to tire and stress cadets prior to entering the boxing ring).
    - Although the name has been changed, the essence of the exercise has not materially changed. It occurs prior to cadets being taught any self-defense or other hand-to-hand defensive tactics, which places them at a distinct, and arguably unrealistic disadvantage against skilled and experienced sparring instructors.
    - APD believes it is essential that cadets who have not experienced being physically assaulted or punched before arriving at the Academy should experience this for the first time in an Academy-controlled environment, and not in a hostile situation while on patrol after graduation.
    - Kroll notes, however, that APD personnel were unable to provide a persuasive rationale as to why such an exercise could not reasonably occur towards the end of Academy after cadets have received all essential defensive tactics training.<sup>6</sup>
  - Two white male instructors who were the most abusive during “Fight Day” (prior to the 142<sup>nd</sup> cadet class), especially to female cadets, have been removed from the Academy and replaced. The Learned Skills Unit now has a highly regarded (within APD) female sergeant and African American corporal in supervisory roles.
  - The Academy has eliminated SRT, a series of intense physical exercises that occurred on day one and pushed cadets to their physical and psychological limits to see how they acted under extreme stress. This frequently resulted in a number of cadets dropping out and appeared to operate as a sort of hazing ritual to force out cadets who “could not take it.” Because Academy leadership determined that cadets were not being provided the tools to succeed and must be allowed to build physical capacity gradually, SRT was replaced with TBX – team building exercises.
    - According to the lesson plan, the goal of TBX is “to create a physically and mentally stressful environment through exercise and problem solving,” which “will serve as an important introduction to the importance of teamwork and the need for strong

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<sup>6</sup> In interviews with civilians who had accompanied APD officers on ride-alongs, it was noted that one officer commented that, if a physical conflict were to occur, he was going to “win” the encounter. Statements such as these give the impression of a “warrior” mindset among APD patrol officers.

leadership in law enforcement” consistent with the “philosophy, values, vision, and mission of the Austin Police Department.”

- The Academy has also eliminated a steep hill climb that was used for SRT and disciplinary purposes and which caused a lot of ankle injuries. This has been replaced by TBX and modified discipline that requires cadets to carry a 15 or 20-pound sandbag to classes for a day if they fail an exercise, as well as collective discipline (behavioral modification exercises) in which all cadets perform extra physical fitness drills when any one cadet fails (this occurs in the first trimester of the Academy as a way of demonstrating that, when one officer messes up, it affects all officers).<sup>7</sup>
- The report of the Community Video Review Panel (CVRP), released on January 18, 2021, also highlighted concerns regarding the Academy’s paramilitary culture as reflected in many of the Academy’s training videos. A few of these concerns are highlighted in the below excerpts:

*The us-versus-them bias was explicit in some of the videos --i.e. police work is “the deadly game of cops and robbers”; however, much of it was implicit. This bias manifested in the following ways:*

- *An enhanced focus on officer safety over the safety of the community as a whole,*
- *A “warrior” versus “service” mentality in which officers see themselves as the “good guys” and the public they interact with often as “bad guys,”*
- *An emphasis on a kind of impossible objectivity and “professionalism” in which officers are expected not to have or show emotions and to view emotions from members of the public as problematic, and*
- *Most importantly, a view of the profession as primarily concerned with exercising and maintaining control, where officers are the agents of control and the public stands in need of being controlled.*

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*We also observed evidence of the growing militarization of policing in the videos. The significant number of military veterans serving as police officers has influenced police/community relations in ways evident in the training videos. Many police organizations actively propagate the idea that our cities are a kind of “war zone” rather than communities in which (mostly diminishing rates of) crime takes place, and the public contains a significant number of “bad actors” which must be treated as enemy combatants rather than citizens with shared rights. Such a dramatic and important shift only exacerbates the us/them dichotomy.<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> These collective discipline sessions are sometimes referred to as “smoke sessions.”

<sup>8</sup> “Community Report: Austin City Council Resolution 66: Austin Police Department Training Video Review Panel” (January 18, 2021).

**Curriculum Review/ Incorporating Adult Learning Theories**

- Dr. Miguel Ferguson's preliminary curriculum review report of June 2020 urged the Academy to develop and design curriculum that adopts more of an adult learning or active learning model of teaching and move away from the rigid, formalistic, lecture-and-listen format that dominates many Academy classroom courses.<sup>9</sup>
  - Dr. Ferguson is awaiting guidance from Dr. Sara Villanueva or her replacement as ODTM before completing the final report, which he says will contain a comprehensive set of resources for instructors.
  - APD and Academy leadership have had little, if any, follow-up with Dr. Ferguson (with the exception of his co-leading a teaching symposium in December) concerning how to better incorporate adult learning theories and creative teaching methods into course content for the upcoming 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class.
- The report completed by Dr. Villanueva in May 2020 affirmed the need for the Academy to better develop and incorporate adult learning theories into its curriculum and teaching methods.
- The Academy is in the process of revising Cadet Training Instructor job descriptions (as recommended by Dr. Villanueva) to include appropriate expectations, duties, and responsibilities around teaching effectiveness.
- Although Academy instructors are actively in the process of revising course content and lesson plans in preparation for the 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class, Kroll has been informed that the focus is on ensuring that all course content is compliant with state-mandated TCOLE and BPOC requirements.
  - The sergeant and lieutenant in charge of Cadet Training are actively reviewing all course content for DEI-related courses; however, their reviews are likewise limited to ensuring that TCOLE and BPOC mandates are met, and do not pertain to whether lesson plans and curriculum content incorporate adult learning and other effective teaching strategies.
- The schedule for the 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class includes large blocks of time devoted to such courses as Penal Code (40 hours in Week 3), Arrest Search and Seizure (40 hours in Week 5), and Traffic Code/Crash Investigation (40 hours in Week 7), which requires instructors (often the same instructor) to teach non-stop for much of that time, and requires cadets to absorb a huge amount of information in a condensed period of time.
- When asked if the Academy is proactively revising the existing curriculum and lesson plans to incorporate more adult learning (active learning) strategies recommended by Dr. Villanueva and Dr. Ferguson, the answer provided is that Academy instructors and supervisors are awaiting further guidance and input from the new ODTM, whenever that person is hired to replace Dr. Villanueva.
- Nevertheless, a majority of Academy instructors and supervisors attended two teaching seminars within the past few months that addressed how to more effectively present course content and teach in ways that enhance learning. In particular, Academy instructors and supervisors recently attended:

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<sup>9</sup> Dr. Ferguson's report specifically focused on course content for the following courses: Cultural Diversity, History of Policing, Professionalism and Ethics, Fair and Impartial Policing, Services for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired, Multiculturalism and Human Relations, Spanish, Transgender, LGBTQ, and Racial Profiling.

- A teaching symposium in December (co-led by Drs. Ferguson, Villanueva, and Sloan) that provided additional guidance on adult learning methods as applied to courses related to diversity, equity, and inclusion;<sup>10</sup> and
- A Transformational Training seminar led by a team of instructors at Command Presence (<https://commandpresence.net/>), a police instructional training firm. The 8-hour seminar provided ideas and methods for evidence-based teaching methods designed to counteract “death by Power Point” and other uninspiring teaching techniques. This was well-received by Academy staff, and the Academy plans to require this training annually for all Instructors.
- Academy instructors with whom Kroll spoke noted that many Academy courses already include a lot of scenario-based and role play content that is effective at teaching cadets how to apply what they are learning.
- Although APD and Academy leadership have expressed a willingness to work with outside civilian content experts from local colleges and universities in appropriate courses (such as the History of Policing and Race in Austin), it is unclear how much work is being done at present to bring in outside content experts and other community voices. For the most part, Kroll has found APD reluctant to incorporate a lot of community/civilian input and distrustful of non-police personnel (including academic experts such as Dr. Villanueva and Dr. Ferguson).
- Academy leadership is currently in the process of selecting and purchasing an automated Learning Management System (LMS) to help facilitate better organization of course materials, allow for more efficient curriculum planning (including updates and modifications) for current and future cadet classes, ensure accurate TCOLE and BPOC planning, and make it easier to transition to new instructors when staff leave the Academy. However, APD is yet to finalize selection and procurement of such a system and appears to be leaning towards funding a less robust system due to budget concerns.

### **Community Input and Participation**

- The length of the planned 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class has been cut from 32 weeks to 28 weeks. In doing this, the Academy plans to (a) cut all intermediate courses, which will be taught over the first two years following graduation from the Academy, and (b) add 30 hours of Community Engagement programming that was not previously included. The 28-week training program will include all state-mandated TCOLE and BPOC requirements and some additional tactical training courses.
  - Although Kroll has not yet seen the precise details of the planned 30-hours of community engagement programming, the stated intent is to expand upon the level of participation and input from community leaders who will be invited to speak to the cadets. The Academy had previously devoted seven one-hour blocks of time to guest appearances from community leaders, which purportedly will be expanded to 30 hours.
  - Some of the organizations APD is currently seeking to engage with are noted below:
    - Life Anew Restorative Justice
    - Measure Austin
    - Citizen Led Austin Public Safety Partnership (CLASP)

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<sup>10</sup> According to Dr. Ferguson, although many instructors expressed openness to further transitioning to an adult learning environment, the feedback from the symposium was disappointing (survey results were mixed with only nine surveys completed).

- Mobile Loaves & Fishes
  - Mexican Consulate
  - Refugee & immigrant Outreach
  - President for the Texas Association of the Deaf
  - Transgender and Gender Marker Project
  - Austin Justice Coalition
  - Reimaging Public Safety Task Force
  - National Alliance on Mental illness (NAMI)
  - The Settlement Home for Children
  - Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)
  - The Jeremiah Project
  - The African American Youth Generation
- Community Video Review Panel (CVRP): The recently completed Community Report of the Video Review Panel found that the vast majority of the approximately 110 training videos reviewed over a seven-month period were not only outdated and “disappointing in quality” but also contained “unprofessional or sensationalistic commentary” and perpetuated harmful stereotypes “against Black and Brown communities.” The report echoed concerns expressed by many of the community leaders we spoke with that APD trains its cadets to reflect an “us vs. them” mentality that potentially escalates encounters between police officers and the public, particularly encounters with people of color, homeless individuals, and people with mental health issues.
  - Although difficulties were encountered initially in attempts to establish trust and communication between the APD and community representatives, the end result demonstrated a healthy collaboration, with several Academy leaders and instructors actively participating in the review panel’s work. As a result of that approximately seven-month effort, the Academy has accepted all the CVRP’s recommendations concerning the video content and is actively making changes to its video library in response to the panel’s recommendations.
    - The Academy is currently in the process of eliminating all videos that were found to be offensive or insensitive to community concerns and replacing them where possible with more up-to-date and non-offensive depictions of subjects interacting with more diverse officers.
    - In addition, Academy instructors are actively searching for appropriate replacement videos that more effectively depict the right way to do things, as opposed to videos demonstrating what not to do, as was the case with many of the videos reviewed by the panel.
  - APD is currently in the process of establishing a formalized system to comprehensively review, with community input, all future video content that has not otherwise been reviewed by the CVRP.

### **Professionalism and Passion of Instructors**

- Kroll has been uniformly impressed with the passion and commitment to teaching and the mission of policing exemplified by the Academy’s current leaders and instructors. They appear genuinely open to ideas that will help make them better instructors and want cadets to succeed and develop into first-rate police officers.
- Kroll notes that changing the culture of an institution and long-term notions embedded into the way things have always been done is no easy task. While most instructors and supervisors state they

are open to working with content experts and incorporating active learning strategies, they are passively awaiting guidance and input from leadership, including the hiring of a new ODTM, to help advise them on changes to teaching methods and course content.

- Nevertheless, Academy staff appears open to incorporating outside civilian content experts as instructors in certain courses (e.g., History of Policing and some DEI-related courses), if done in coordination and partnership with APD personnel.
  - At present, however, except for History of Policing and Race in Austin (discussed below) there does not appear to be any intentional or clearly-articulated plans to incorporate outside content experts (e.g., criminal defense attorney to talk about search & seizure law from a defense perspective; homeless advocate to discuss issues faced by the homeless population; mental health expert to address relevant issues, etc.)
  - The Academy has agreed to schedule eight hours to the History of Policing, including four hours on the History of Policing and Race in Austin, a new course designed by two University of Texas law professors and recommended by OPO. We understand that APD is currently in the process of arranging for an outside content expert to co-teach this course to the 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class with an African American member of Academy staff.

**Cadet Injuries**

- According to Appendix I of the Community + Equity Assessment Series report, and as confirmed by Kroll through APD-provided data, cadet injuries over the past five years have fluctuated as follows:

Nature of Injury	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Absorption, Ingestion, Inhalation	11	5	11	4	3	0
Contusion	12	13	16	12	23	1
Concussion	0	1	0	1	0	0
Cut, Puncture, Scrape, Laceration	4	2	0	0	0	3
Dermatitis	0	0	0	21	5	0
Dislocation	0	0	0	0	1	1
Electric Shock/Taser	0	0	0	0	2	0
Foreign Body	0	0	0	0	1	0
Fracture	0	2	1	1	2	1
Hearing Loss	0	0	0	1	0	0
Heat Exhaustion	8	13	9	10	10	2
Inflammation	3	3	3	0	1	0
Laceration	2	4	3	1	5	1
Multiple Physical Injuries Only	0	5	2	4	5	0
Sprain/Strain	50	75	32	61	40	3
Covid-19	--	--	--	--	--	56
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>68</b>

- According to data provided by APD, from 2015 to 2020, at least 509 cadet injuries occurred at the Academy. The racial and ethnic breakdown shows that, of these 509 injuries, 348 (68.37%) were to white cadets, 85 (16.7%) to Hispanic cadets, 57 (11.2%) to Black cadets, and 19 (3.73%) to Asian cadets. As noted in the Equity Assessment report, “[w]hile the percentage of injuries sustained by white cadets reflects the percentage of white candidates that graduate from the academy, the

percentage of injuries sustained by Black cadets (11.2%) is more than twice the percentage of Black cadets that graduate (5.19%).”<sup>11</sup>

- Academy leadership noted that better reporting and documentation of cadet injuries may have contributed to the increased numbers of reported injuries in recent years.
- The Academy requires a healthy dose of physical fitness and defensive tactics in an effort to prepare cadets for any number of crisis situations they may confront at some point in their careers as police officers. As noted by Chief Manley, “we pepper spray our cadets because officers need to know what it is like. We have our cadets engage in boxing because we hire people who have never fought before, and we want them to be okay when this happens after they become officers.”

**Graduation Rates**

- Graduation rates at the Academy over the last five years show similar racial and gender disparities:

**Academy Graduation Rates by Race and Gender, 2015 - 2020**

Race	Gender	Graduation Rate
White	Men	81.6%
Black	Men	48.5%
Hispanic	Men	83.4%
Asian	Men	65.6%
White	Women	66.76%
Black	Women	52.5%
Hispanic	Women	52.78%
Asian	Women	100% <sup>12</sup>

- APD’s data illustrates that Black cadets are less likely than their peers to graduate from the Academy, and more likely to be injured, than any other race. Female cadets also have lower graduation rates than white and Hispanic male cadets. As a result, Black and female cadets graduating from the Academy are underrepresented when compared to the population of Austin as a whole.
  - In terms of statistical significance tests (Chi-square analyses) overall Black cadets are significantly (p < .01) less likely than Non-Black cadets to graduate over the entire period

<sup>11</sup> “Community + APD Equity Assessment Series: APD Training and Recruiting Divisions, The Peace Mill Research and Communications,” page 9 (December 14, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> According to the Report of the Community + APD Equity Assessment Series, City of Austin Equity Office, December 14, 2020, page 8, APD has recruited one Asian woman who has successfully completed the Academy within the past five years.

examined here.<sup>13</sup> This pattern was only true for Black cadets and not any other racial/ethnic group.

- As noted elsewhere, however, there appears to be a shift in this long-term pattern. The race differences were not significant in the last two cadet classes (142M and 143). Thus, the overall race-graduation differences (particularly Black cadet failure patterns) were driven by pre-2020 patterns.
- Overall, female cadets are also significantly ( $p < .01$ ) less likely than male cadets to graduate over the entire period of study. However, the gender differences were not significant in the last two cadet classes (142M and 143). Thus, the overall gender-graduation differences were driven by pre-2020 patterns.
- Limited statistical power inhibits our ability to determine whether Hispanic females and Black females fail to graduate at a divergent rate than all other groups. However, each factor alone (race and gender) were clear predictors of graduation in the pre-2020 trends.
- Kroll notes, however, that the positive changes in the diversity of Academy leadership and to some of the more physically and psychologically intense components of the Academy (i.e., elimination of SRT and modification of “Fight Day” to “Will to Win”), as well as a distinct philosophical shift among Academy leadership to actively encourage all cadets to succeed, suggests that the Academy is conscious of and working to eliminate these inequities.
- The unique relationship that develops between APD recruiters and cadets is currently underutilized. Recruiters typically get to know cadets well and develop a more personal relationship with them than do Academy instructors. In the past, APD recruiters would reach out to a cadet if he or she left the Academy to obtain feedback and discuss what happened. We are told that this practice has been discontinued.

### **Crisis Intervention Training**

- The Academy has greatly improved its crisis intervention team (CIT) training in recent years. The 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class schedule includes an entire week devoted to CIT training, which according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), helps “create connections between law enforcement, mental health providers, hospital emergency services and individuals with mental illness and their families.” Combined with collaborative community partnerships, effective CIT training “improves communication, identifies mental health resources for those in crisis and ensures officer and community safety.” ([https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Crisis-Intervention/Crisis-Intervention-Team-\(CIT\)-Programs](https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Crisis-Intervention/Crisis-Intervention-Team-(CIT)-Programs)).
- The CIT model is a police-led, collaborative response for behavioral health crises that involves training patrol officers to recognize and de-escalate situations involving individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis and to refer those individuals to appropriate services, as opposed to conducting an arrest, when possible. The goals of CIT programs are to increase the safety of police interactions with individuals experiencing a crisis, to improve access to behavioral health services

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<sup>13</sup> The Chi-Square results were derived from the Pearson Chi-Square statistic. Chi-square analyses is based on the null/alternative hypothesis counterfactual framework that assesses whether there are differences across categorical measures (e.g., race and sex with graduation). The corresponding p-value follows the conventional framework of .01 (or 99% confidence). Thus, significant findings suggest the differences across categories (e.g., Black vs. non-Black with graduation) is beyond chance where  $p < .01$ .

for individuals in crisis, and to reduce reliance on the criminal justice system in addressing behavioral health-related challenges. These programs have most traditionally been used to address individuals experiencing mental health- or substance use-related crises.

- CIT training not only provides officers with more tools to do their jobs safely and effectively, but also improves their knowledge of mental illness and community resources.
- Several evaluations have found that CIT training improves officer knowledge surrounding behavioral health-related challenges, reduces stigma associated with behavioral health, and increases officer empathy and confidence in their ability to successfully intervene in a crisis incident.
- Researchers have found that CIT training successfully increases officer awareness of behavioral health services within their communities and their support for referring individuals in crisis to these services.
- Evaluations show that CIT training increases officer familiarity with de-escalation techniques and support for de-escalating crisis events.

### **De-escalation / Use of Force Training**

- Within the past year, APD has incorporated ten hours of *Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics* (ICAT) training into its curriculum.
- ICAT is an evidence-based best practice designed by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to help police officers “safely and professionally resolve critical incidents involving subjects who may pose a danger to themselves or others but who are not armed with firearms.” (<https://www.policeforum.org/assets/icattrainingguide.pdf>). In its original format, ICAT training is designed as a 16-hour training block.
- ICAT training instructs police officers in de-escalation tactics and critical thinking skills for the management of potentially volatile police-citizen encounters, encouraging the integration of crisis recognition and intervention, communication skills, and operational tactics in police responses. This training is designed for patrol officers responding to circumstances involving persons in crisis – that is, individuals that may be behaving erratically due to mental health concerns, substance use, situational stress, and/or intellectual/developmental disabilities.
- The ICAT training is the only police de-escalation training that has been shown through independent, empirical research to significantly reduce use of force, along with officer and citizen injuries (Engel et al., 2020).
  - Although officers have fewer options when dealing with threats involving firearms, ICAT is a training guide designed to fill a critical gap in training police officers how to respond to volatile situations in which subjects are behaving erratically and often dangerously, while unarmed or armed with a weapon other than a firearm (e.g., knife, baseball bat, rock, etc.). As explained by PERF, the ICAT Training Guide “includes model lesson plans and support materials (including Power Point presentations, videos, and other resources) in the key areas of decision-making, crisis recognition and response, tactical communications and negotiations, and operational safety tactics. ICAT then integrates these skills and provides opportunities to practice them through video case studies and scenario-based training exercises.”

- ICAT's course content includes Legal Concepts, Critical Decision-Making, Crisis Recognition, Communication, and Tactics. Students learn to demonstrate key verbal communications skills that are critical to defusing (de-escalating) tense situations and gaining voluntary compliance. Students also learn to explain concepts such as "tactical pause," distance plus cover equals time, tactical repositioning, and continual assessment, all of which are essential to de-escalating encounters with citizens in crisis.

### **Preliminary Recommendations**

As noted above, the APD and Training Academy have implemented a number of steps to address issues raised by the City, the community, and independent consultants. The Academy has made significant strides in diversifying its leadership and instructors to better reflect the community APD serves, although it has more work to do at the instructor level. The group of leaders and instructors presently at the Academy are highly professional, passionate about what they do, and genuinely interested in making the Academy a best-in-class institution.

That said, APD has been reluctant to embrace some of the recommendations provided to date concerning course content and teaching methods, and an even stronger reluctance to change the paramilitary nature of the Academy in any fundamental way. The relationship between APD leadership and certain segments of the community remain tense and broken, with several community activists unwilling even to engage with the current Chief. As with many police departments across the country, the police professionals feel like they are under constant attack and not given credit for much of the good work and public service they do, while the many and varied community voices most engaged in criminal justice and police reform efforts feel disrespected and unheard.<sup>14</sup>

But there are moves in the right direction. First, creating the Organizational Development and Training Manager (ODTM) position, so that an educational expert can review curriculum and work with instructors to develop ways to incorporate creative adult learning strategies into the training, was a proactive, positive initiative that should pay long-term dividends. Moreover, providing the ODTM with the civilian equivalent rank of Commander, if backed by leadership, will help further transition the Academy into a true adult-learning educational institution. Second, the collaborative work between APD and the Community Video Review Panel (CVRP), while difficult and turbulent at times, ultimately produced an excellent example of police-community collaboration that can and should form the foundation of future relationship building between APD and the citizens it serves. Kroll knows of no other academy in the United States that has evaluated its training videos for instances of bias and inappropriate content in this manner. The lessons learned and hard work by the Austin community and police officials in this effort is an example and practice that every police academy in the nation should emulate. Third, the decision to expand the planned 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class to include approximately 30 hours of outside community input and participation in cadet training, and the addition of course content such as The History of Policing and Race in Austin – to be taught in part by a locally-based subject matter expert – are concrete steps that further demonstrate a commitment by APD to improve its community relationships and train cadets in a manner more attuned to the community policing, guardian model that the City and the community desire.

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<sup>14</sup> Kroll notes that Chief Manley has expressed to Kroll a willingness to engage with the community despite resistance from some vocal community activists. Additionally, the Acknowledgement section of the Joyce James Consulting Report commended the willingness of the Chief and his command team, and other sworn and civilian staff, to engage in open and honest dialogue that her team facilitated about institutional and structural racism. This would appear to be a step in the right direction for APD to begin honestly addressing racism institutionally.

There are a number of additional and necessary measures that can be addressed in the short run, including teaching methods and incorporation of adult learning strategies, substantive course content, community engagement, input and participation, and increased use of civilian content experts. Other more fundamental issues, such as significant changes to Academy culture, philosophy, shifts in attitudinal thinking, and tackling long-term racial and gender inequities and issues of systemic racism, are matters that require a longer-term strategy and commitment. Although some improvements to culture and philosophy can be made in the short run with existing leadership, fundamental change cannot realistically be expected to happen overnight.

For these reasons, we have divided our preliminary recommendations into short-term and long-term measures, as noted below.

### **Short-term Measures**

To begin addressing the key concerns expressed by the community and the findings, analysis, and recommendations of the reports and assessments conducted to date, and based on our preliminary findings noted above, the following steps should be completed before the start of the 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class:

- The City of Austin should immediately hire a replacement for Dr. Sara Villanueva as the Academy's ODTM. This person needs to have a clearly articulated mandate to assist Academy instructors in implementing and incorporating adult/active learning models throughout the ten courses examined as part of Dr. Ferguson's curriculum review and as set forth in the Level 1 and 2 recommendations in his June 2020 report, as well as implementing the recommendations of Dr. Villanueva in her Review Analysis and Strategic Plan report of May 2020, pages 10-11.
  - To help facilitate the transition to a new ODTM, the City should arrange contractually for Dr. Villanueva to assist the new ODTM in getting fully acclimated and on-boarded (Dr. Villanueva has expressed a willingness to assist in this manner). Although the position is officially ranked as the civilian equivalent of Commander, there was significant friction between sworn Academy staff and the ODTM position this past year. Although we understand state law currently prevents sworn personnel from being directed by civilian personnel, and while legislative efforts should be made to change that law, in the short term APD leadership needs to make clear that the ODTM speaks on behalf of leadership.
- The City should also, as soon as practicable, hire and on-board a Training Specialist to work with the ODTM and Academy Commander in updating and standardizing curriculum and support materials to better reflect adult and active learning strategies and eventually help transition the Academy to a blended civilian and police-led training academy with outside civilian instructors and APD Academy instructors teaching cadets, individually or jointly as appropriate for the course content.
- APD should expedite the procurement process to begin implementation of an automated Learning Management System (LMS) that will facilitate better organization of course materials, allow for more efficient curriculum planning (including updates and modifications) for current and future cadet classes, ensure accurate TCOLE and BPOC planning, and make it easier to transition to new instructors when staff leave the Academy. As noted by Dr. Villanueva in her May 2020 report, a reliable LMS will allow the contents of every course, including lesson plans, lecture slides, video clips, assignments, activities, exams, collaborative work and grades, to be securely stored in one place and made accessible to anyone with the proper credentials. The use of this technology is a

best practice in police training academies across the United States. APD should set as a goal full implementation of an automated LMS prior to the start of the 145<sup>th</sup> cadet class.

- The Academy should formalize an internal review panel responsible for reviewing each instructor's syllabi and curriculum and suggesting ways to improve each class in the Academy. The panel should include the ODTM and Training Specialist, along with selected Academy and field supervisors, instructors, officers, and community representation. The panel could start with reviewing and evaluating video presentations of the training that is intended to be presented to the next cadet class.
  - With the assistance of the ODTM and Training Specialist, and in coordination with the Commander and Academy supervisors, all course content, including courses taught by the Learned Skills Unit and Cadet Training Unit, need to be evaluated for ways to incorporate DEI content into all aspects of training. The current siloed approach, which essentially isolates DEI courses from police tactical training, should be modified to ensure consistency of messaging and a fundamental emphasis on the humanity and complexity of the citizens APD serves and protects. "Checking the box" once a course is completed needs to be resisted. Teaching about multiculturalism and the importance of community relations in week one will be undermined if we then train "warriors" to counter all threats in later weeks. All courses should be reinforced, formally and informally, throughout the cadet training program.
  - Cadets must be thoroughly and effectively trained on all proper defensive tactics, arrest and control techniques, crowd control, and so on. But the messaging throughout the Academy needs to consistently emphasize the ethical responsibilities of policing, teach a sensitivity to legitimate community fears that are based in history, and recognize the complexity and nuance of the human beings that cadets will interact with on a daily basis. Cadets must understand that more than 95% of day-to-day policing is more akin to social work than policing. The single most important skill that a police officer can develop is the ability to effectively interact with and relate to a diverse community of people in ways that are honest, authentic, and transparent. Implicit messages, whether from training videos or course content, suggesting that certain people or neighborhoods are more "dangerous" than others, must be resisted and countered.
- Establish a formal process to continue a community review of police training videos that were not reviewed previously by the recently concluded Community Video Review Panel. This should include a process to re-review training videos every two years or so. Once a process is formalized, ongoing consultation should occur between APD and the CVRP concerning any new training videos proposed for use in future training courses to ensure that full community input is embedded into Academy planning and implemented in training.
- "Will-to-Win" should be converted to a "Self-Defense" exercise near the end of Academy training, after cadets have been properly taught and tested on all appropriate defensive tactics, hand-to-hand encounters, and similar tactics.<sup>15</sup> This "Self-Defense" session should be video recorded to ensure that appropriate levels of force are being used by the assigned instructor according to Academy protocols. We understand and agree with the need to prepare cadets for aggressive and hostile encounters, but "Will-to-Win" sends a message that implicitly affirms the "us vs. them"

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<sup>15</sup> APD leadership informed Kroll on February 3, 2021, that this recommendation will be implemented.

mentality that must be eliminated. There is a difference between properly preparing cadets for certain types of encounters and giving them the tools to protect themselves, but another thing to message that the object in hostile encounters with a member of the public is to “win” – which implies that someone must “lose.” Officers must be trained on how to properly protect themselves and others, but proper messaging is crucial to ensure that the training exercise does not overtake the fundamental purpose of policing.

- Kroll recommends a defensive tactics program that has cadets learn the basic skills starting early on in the Academy, where cadets work with instructors and other cadets to learn proper defensive tactics before they are tested near the end of training, either with a controlled/supervised period of time in a ring or other scenario-based training. This will assist in team building and allow cadets to learn and build the skills to succeed.
- APD spends hundreds of thousands of dollars to recruit and conduct background investigations of cadets. Accordingly, every effort should be made to have cadets succeed by giving them the tools to do so. Self-defense testing and challenges should occur after PT training when recruits are warmed up and stretched out to help reduce injuries.
- Ensuring use of the phrases “defending oneself” and “self-defense” will also help address the “warrior vs. guardian” issue.
- The use of the sandpit and having cadets carry sandbags as punishment for “messing up” should also be modified or eliminated.<sup>16</sup> The shift from SRT to TBX is a positive development; team building exercises are important and necessary, as is physical fitness and conditioning. We understand that there is a certain level of physical and psychological stress associated with policing and with training. But the old-school manner of incessantly yelling and screaming at cadets, and other humiliation tactics, serve little purpose other than to instill a military-like, bootcamp atmosphere that is counterproductive to preparing officers to serve as guardians of the community.
- Physical fitness, team building, and applying stressful situations to cadets should be completely separated from any academic training. Having cadets do extra pushups, sit ups, and other exercises while properly attired in athletic gear during formalized physical training programs (when cadets have properly stretched and warmed up) will reduce injuries. Once PT is concluded, the cadets should be in an academic learning environment in classrooms free of physical and unnecessary psychological stress. The rigors of learning course work are stressful enough. Instead of carrying around sandbags for mistakes or shortcomings, for example, cadets could be required to write an administrative report about their failure and how they plan to address it. This will incentivize cadets to correct their mistakes while helping develop the skill most officers will be spending considerable time doing throughout their careers (writing reports), while also documenting a non-subjective review of the cadet’s progress.
- As part of its community engagement programming, the Academy should proactively reach out to a wide variety of community leaders and activists who are willing to work productively with APD in presenting genuine community perspectives and concerns about policing. This sort of community participation can be a mutually beneficial exercise that begins to slowly break down barriers of communication and enhance the learning experiences of the cadets.

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<sup>16</sup> APD leadership informed Kroll on February 3, 2021, that this recommendation will be implemented.

- To its credit, the Academy has scheduled “The History of Policing and Race in Austin” into the 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class curriculum and has arranged for a locally based subject matter expert to co-teach the course with an African American APD sergeant. APD should ensure that the course covers the content outlined in the OPO-approved curriculum and is reinforced in other courses throughout the Academy.
  - Serious consideration should be given to coupling this training with community outreach and immersion strategies, such as having cadets spend time in a food pantry or homeless shelter, attend community meetings out in the neighborhoods, meet with local community leaders, and spend time visiting mental health and substance abuse programs.
- The Academy should thoroughly review all other DEI-related courses and determine which may benefit from an outside, more academically oriented civilian content expert or a community perspective. Most of the DEI courses can be taught more effectively pursuant to a co-facilitation model that includes input and perspectives of civilian instructors and/or community members in both the design and delivery of the training. These courses should be co-taught by APD instructors in cooperation with appropriate subject matter academic experts or community allies who can provide direct community examples, round out perspectives, and foster valuable community partnerships. It is important that the people presenting in these courses have credibility with both the community and law enforcement.
- Chief Manley should consider tapping into the resources of his existing officer base to temporarily assign some diverse officers of exceptional skills to assist with Academy instruction, particularly in courses where a diverse perspective would be beneficial and worthwhile (one of the recurring criticisms of the cadet surveys conducted by Dr. Ferguson was that the Academy often had non-diverse instructors teaching classes like multiculturalism and cultural diversity). For example, there is currently a diverse pool of officers in the Recruiting Unit who know and have existing relationships with cadets and who, with some additional training, could easily supplement training staff and enhance the diversity of instructors teaching these courses.
- The Academy should consider the feasibility of incorporating Beyond Diversity by Dr. Glenn Singleton or the Groundwater Analysis training workshop by Joyce James Consulting LLC into the Academy curriculum and/or as part of annual training for Academy instructors and supervisors (and eventually all officers).
- The Academy should reinstitute the practice of following-up with a cadet who leaves the Academy for any reason. The recruiter who had developed the relationship with the cadet might be able to identify an opportunity for the cadet to return to the Academy in a later class if circumstances allow. It also provides an opportunity for feedback to identify any changes needed in the training or recruiting process to ensure future success.
- The Academy should develop a mentorship program for all cadets, especially recruits of color, that will provide additional support for cadets and help them succeed at the Academy. These efforts would assist Commander Johnson with her stated desire to see Academy staff become more supportive and encouraging in helping all cadets succeed.
- The City should require an ongoing, independent review of the Academy by an outside monitor once the 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class begins to ensure implementation of the above recommendations and to help ensure that further adjustments and improvements are made moving forward.

- Kroll understands that many would like to see a completely revised training program that has addressed all issues before another class starts. We caution, however, that until instructors are actively training recruits, it will be difficult to fully assess whether the changes and recommendations currently being made or adopted are sufficient.

### **Long-Term Measures**

To address some of the cultural and attitudinal concerns expressed by the community leaders we spoke with, and as set forth in the CVRP report, Equity Assessment report, and the other consultant reports addressing APD training, we recommend that, absent exceptional circumstances, the following measures be implemented prior to the start of the 145<sup>th</sup> cadet class:

- To build on the positive collaboration between the APD and the community in evaluating for bias and other inappropriate content in the APD’s training videos, APD and the City should consider working with a professional media literacy educator to help develop effective teaching videos moving forward that will have positive effects on knowledge, perceived realism, behavioral beliefs, attitudes, self-efficacy and behavior. While it’s one thing to analyze what one sees and hears, it’s another thing to develop effective teaching videos as tools to undo engrained bias, worldviews and attitudes that we all are born into, and how we have come to “interpret” living realities. It will take real knowledge and skills to overturn what is so embedded in the recruits that come to the Academy. This will be true regardless of race, gender, or class status.
  - A renowned national leader in “media literacy” (e.g., Professor Renee Hobbs, founder of the Harrington School of Communications and Media at the University of Rhode Island or a similar expert from an Austin-area college or university) could help bring credibility to this process.
- APD and the Academy should consider ways to incorporate current Academy instructors into the Field Training Officer (FTO) program for new officers. A common problem in many police departments is that, once certain practices are taught in the Academy, the new officer learns a “different way” of doing things on the street. This undermines what is taught at the Academy and compromises an academy’s efforts in staying up to date with best practices and any positive reform measures implemented at the cadet training level.
- APD should develop an intentional strategy to further enhance the long-term diversity of Academy staff, including at the Instructor level, to increase the number of African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian, and female instructors assigned to the Academy.
- Academy class schedules should be revised to eliminate 40-hour blocks of course content to such things as Penal Code, Traffic Code, and Arrest Search and Seizure. These courses should be spread out over the length of the Academy, so that no more than two to four hours per day, three days a week are devoted to these important, but often dry and legally important subjects.<sup>17</sup> Cadets need the opportunity to study and absorb the material that is taught, with an opportunity to ask questions and be tested in a progressive, cumulative manner.

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<sup>17</sup> We understand that this recommendation may require approval from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE), and thus we have not included it as a short-term recommendation to be implemented prior to the 144<sup>th</sup> cadet class.

- The Academy should expand its physical fitness training to a daily regimen, to be scheduled first thing in the morning (and separated from all academic content – except for physical training associated with self-defense and other defensive tactics).<sup>18</sup>
- Based on Kroll’s initial review, we have learned that the physical fitness requirements at hire may not be predictive of the physical fitness requirements in the Academy, and the physical fitness requirements in the Academy may not positively correlate with the physical fitness requirements of police officers post-graduation. For example, we have been told that many female applicants pass the initial physical fitness test and many African American male applicants fail the initial physical fitness test, yet both of these groups seem to struggle with the physical fitness requirements at the Academy. We also understand that there are essentially no physical fitness requirements of police officers once they have graduated from the Academy. As such, further analysis and adjustments of these relationships are required to ensure that pre-Academy, Academy, and post-Academy physical fitness standards are consistent with successful job performance. These potential inconsistencies lend further credence to Kroll’s suggestions about physical training requirements and sequencing at the Academy, although this will only partially address questions about the physical fitness required by APD.
- The Academy should develop a properly credentialed and supervised program to allow for all cadets, as part of a two-week orientation program prior to officially starting at the Academy, to immerse themselves into community programs and organizations as “neighborhood liaison officers” for APD district representatives.
- Although we understand that the ICAT training has been adopted department wide as required in-service training for all sworn personnel, APD should require ICAT or other effective de-escalation training as part of mandatory in-service “refresher” training every two years. Departments that have widely adopted and implemented ICAT in other parts of the country have seen a marked decrease in use-of-force incidents.
  - Up-to-date de-escalation training needs to be delivered department wide, reinforced through use-of-force policy, supported by field supervisors, and included as a component of use-of-force reviews. Without a holistic approach, training in the academy will be “undone” once cadets graduate and are in the field.
  - We also recognize the importance of the Community Video Review Panel recommendations to this training. Some of the videos used in the Academy’s existing ICAT training were offensive to the community because it reinforced stereotypes involving Black women and communities of color overall. PERF emphasizes that ICAT training is flexible and adaptable, encouraging that agencies be creative in how they incorporate the training modules into new or existing programs on de-escalation, tactical communication, or crisis intervention. Many agencies use different videos and scenarios that better fit within their organizational and community context. These videos could easily be changed without losing any training content.
  - The ICAT training provides comprehensive instruction on critical thinking, crisis recognition, tactical communications, continual assessment, and scenario-based training.

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<sup>18</sup> Kroll understands that the current training facility supports all three of the City’s public safety departments and does not currently have the capacity to implement this recommendation without the creation of more lockers and shower space. Accordingly, we have placed this as a long-term (as opposed to short-term) recommendation.

As the Academy is in the process of implementing the CVRP's recommendations regarding use-of-force videos, once there is a consensus among the CVRP that the videos used are gender and racially appropriate, it will enhance the existing ICAT curriculum and provide an appropriate equity lens to APD officers during de-escalation training.

- To promote instructor wellness and avoid burnout, low morale, and reduced job performance, there needs to be some recovery time built into the intervening period between cadet classes. We recognize police departments always strive to reach their complement of new sworn officers, but it is important to be mindful that instructors have little down time from teaching between the end of one cadet class and the beginning of another (see Dr. Villanueva report, page 9).
- Although achieving perfection is not possible, as the Academy and APD are human institutions, building a long-term system of internal and external review of training methods and Academy effectiveness is essential to institutionalizing the search for excellence. Training police officers to become community-oriented, empathetic, and compassionate guardians of the public in a dynamic and diverse city, while promoting officer health and wellness, is a constantly evolving process. For this reason, police academies should be in a constant state of review and improvement.