

PROGRAM PLANNING SUMMARY
State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education

1. **College:** Greenville Technical College
2. **Award:** Associate Degree in Public Service
3. **Major:** Fire Science Technology
4. **Designation:** New Program Proposal
60-68 Semester credit hours
5. **Proposed Implementation Date:** Spring 2009
6. **Justification of Need:**

In 2000, the National Fire Academy established the Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education committee (FESHE) to address the need for curriculum and content uniformity within two-year fire science programs. The committee consisted of fire chiefs as well as college and fire educators from throughout the United States. After extensive study, these experts developed a model curriculum, with both core and non-core courses, for an associate degree in fire science. Core courses for the program include Fire Administration, Fire Prevention, Legal Aspects of the Fire Service, Strategy and Tactics, and Leadership and Ethics and will focus on the specific needs of the fire service industry (www.usfa.dhs.gov/nfa/higher_ed/feshe). Greenville Technical College (GTC) proposes to adopt this curriculum through the implementation of an Associate Degree in Public Service with a major in Fire Science Technology. The college recognizes that most fire and emergency service personnel have difficulty pursuing a college degree through traditional methods due to their erratic schedules. Therefore, to meet their needs, the courses comprising the proposed program will be available online.

The program is designed to provide a program of study specific to the duties of the professional fire service officer, working professional firefighters, and those desiring to pursue a career in fire science technology. This program supports the college's mission to drive personal and economic growth through learning.

Presently, there are no college-level fire science programs in South Carolina's two- or four-year colleges. Firefighters across the state are trained by GTC in Fire Service Technology certificate programs and by the South Carolina Fire Academy (SCFA). The SCFA does not offer any college-level credit for the courses they provide. Of the more than 16,500 firefighters in South Carolina, approximately 3,300 work full-time and approximately 13,200 serve as volunteers (www.scfiremen.com). These firefighters would benefit from a specifically designed degree program that provides the critical thinking skills required by fire service personnel and offers certification with academic credit.

In July 2007, at the South Carolina Firefighters Conference, an informal survey was conducted by GTC faculty to determine the interest in an Associate Degree in Public Service with a major in Fire Science Technology. Seventy-three signatures were obtained within a matter of hours from firefighters expressing the desire to obtain such a degree. Additionally, the Greenville County Fire Chiefs' Association strongly supports the implementation of an associate degree program.

7. Anticipated Program Demand and Productivity:

The Employment Needs Survey was mailed to fire chiefs in 44 counties in South Carolina and included both paid and volunteer departments. Written permission was obtained from 14 technical colleges before the survey was conducted. Twenty-six (26) fire chiefs responded to the survey. Based on their responses, it has been determined that there is a need for a fire service degree program in the state. To demonstrate that need, thirteen (13) responding departments stated that they would provide tuition assistance to employees enrolled in this program. Survey results revealed the following anticipated openings:

	2008	2009	2010
Full Time	113	149	182
Part Time	24	28	17
Total	137	177	199

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the national median annual salary for fire service personnel is \$48,875. Based on the survey, annual full-time starting salaries in South Carolina ranged from \$25,989 to \$28,307. Part-time salaries for fire service personnel vary tremendously throughout the state. Some departments pay a stipend per call while others pay by the hour. The average stipend is approximately \$25 per call. Departments paying hourly rates range from minimum wage to \$10 or more per hour. Since 85% of the fire fighters in the state are volunteers, most do not receive a salary.

The proposed associate degree is expected to generate an enrollment of 50 full-time students the first year. Program enrollment for the second and third years will be 25 full-time freshmen and 20 sophomores each year. These numbers are based on an attrition rate of 10%.

8. Assessment of Extent to Which Proposed Program Duplicates Existing Programs in the State:

GTC is the first technical college in the state to propose offering a Fire Science Technology degree.

9. Relationship of Proposed Program to Existing Programs at Proposing Institution:

GTC currently offers a Fire Service Technology certificate and a Fire Service Technology Advanced certificate. These programs allow students to complete the basic general education and firefighter courses that will feed into an Associate Degree in Public Service with a major in Fire Science Technology. The advanced certificate contains four of the

core FESHE recommended courses. Currently, students interested in advancing their careers in fire science through academic study are advised to enroll in GTC's Associate Degree in Business, which articulates to Memphis State University's Bachelors Degree in Fire Service Administration. This business degree focuses on the administrative role of the fire service industry. The proposed degree is designed for those who want to maintain an active role in fire fighting while advancing through the ranks from the entry-level fire fighter to the rank of Chief.

10. Relationship of the Proposed Program to Other Institutions via Inter-Institutional Cooperation:

GTC will seek one-plus-one articulation agreements with each of the state's fifteen other technical colleges. Students will be able to complete their general education requirements at these institutions and then transfer to GTC to take the fire science courses required to complete the degree. All of the fire science courses will be offered online or at the GTC's Brashier campus. Since there is no four-year fire science degree in South Carolina, students wishing to pursue a four-year degree in this field must go out of state to further their education.

Currently, the SCFA recognizes GTC's fire science certificates and supports the expansion of the program to an associate degree.

11. Total Costs Associated with Implementing the Proposed Program (General Estimates Only):

Classroom space, equipment, and adjunct instructors are currently available as part of the Fire Science Technology certificate programs. The department head for the Fire Science Technology program is also in place. Two additional full-time faculty and additional adjunct faculty will be needed as the program continues to grow.

	1st year	2nd year	3rd year
Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0
Operation Budget	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Library Supplies	\$500	\$200	\$200
Personnel	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Total Projected Costs	\$160,500	\$160,200	\$160,200

Dr. Thomas E. Barton
President

Date