



BENEFITS AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE CPE PROGRAM

Certified Public-Safety Executive courses broaden participants' outlook and their connections.

By Charles M. Vitale

You may have heard of APCO's Certified Public-Safety Executive (CPE) program but may not be entirely sure what it is or why you should consider it. The six-month program (www.apcointl.org/cpe) is designed to help public safety communications professionals develop executive leadership skills through self-discovery and discussion, scholarly readings and case studies. But beyond that, I will share my personal experience and dive a little deeper into what you can expect from the CPE program.

I have taken leadership programs in the past, but, as I'm sure many of you have experienced, most of these courses, seminars and webinars were primarily on the managerial aspect of the business world. CPE was the first program I found that focused specifically on public safety communications.

Becoming a CPE is a big commitment. First is the monetary cost of \$3,500 plus travel, in addition to the time out of your day to complete the course. There are requirements you must meet prior to applying. You must be a current APCO Registered

Public-Safety Leader (RPL) and have six years of experience as a supervisor, managerial or director level; or have graduated with an associate's degree or higher.

Once you have decided that the CPE program is for you, you must complete the application form. The application is in-depth and requires you to closely inspect your career accomplishments. It is designed to help you think through what you want to get out of the CPE program.

With the application, you must submit a \$250 fee, which will be deducted from your

invoice if you are accepted into the program. The CPE program is held twice per year: one begins in January and the other in July. There are separate application deadlines for each session so coordinate the timing of your application submission with these dates. APCO has a scholarship program dedicated specifically to CPE; the application period runs from January 1 to February 15 each year. You can learn more at apcointl.org/scholarships. Many APCO chapters also now offer scholarships that can help offset program costs.

Once you have been accepted and the program begins, you will participate in two 12-week online classes. Expect to spend about three to four hours each week completing assignments.

The first course, CPE 101 - Introduction to Executive Leadership, is where you meet your classmates online and dig into what leadership means. The class explores topics such as the difference between being a manager and being a leader. It looks at the different types



Graduating Certified Public-Safety Executive program students gain valuable public safety communications knowledge and connections.

of leadership — servant, situational, adaptive and other leadership theories. These are the styles that leaders can use to motivate their employees, and they can be used for different situations and employees.

Assigned readings relate to online classroom discussion topics. This is also where I started to bond with my CPE classmates. We had different backgrounds, centers, levels of experience and ideas of what leadership

was, but the thing that connected us all was becoming CPEs together. Our assignments included online posts, and meaningful discussions ensued among classmates. We had a really great group, and I enjoyed my time with our class as we touched on topics and investigated them together. The part that stuck with me the most about this course was that we all had similar struggles and issues in our centers, and it helped bring our class together and form a lasting bond even today.

After a short break, we began the second course, CPE 202 — Defining Leaders, with Robert “Bob” Miller, an organizational development expert and instructor. This portion of the program focuses on how your organization works. It isn’t just reading your organizational chart; it is understanding your organization’s culture. How do you fit in? What can you do to change it? The course explores how to provide a vision to those you lead, which can be very difficult. You work even more closely with your classmates in the course. We took the theories we had just learned and applied them in practice.

Next was CPE 303 — Leadership in Action, the capstone course at APCO

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headquarters in Daytona Beach, Florida, with Steven Edwards. Edwards has expertise in leadership development, criminal justice and policing and served as a faculty member at various universities.

This is where you start to really practice what was discussed online in the last two courses. This is also the first time we met in person. This portion of the course is perhaps the most dynamic and challenging because it pushes you out of your comfort zone. The capstone is where your goals and motivations come to light, and you see how close they match what you thought your goals were when you applied to the course.

As the capstone progressed, the work became more intense. We dissected case studies and reported on daily readings that applied to the case studies. We were asked to share personal stories that challenged or inspired us. This was the most memorable experience as it was very moving and inspiring. It helped us all to hear where we each came from and what drives us.

Throughout the capstone, the CPE class bonded over the work. We spent time not just studying together but sharing meals and supporting one another as we moved along this journey.

One of our more active discussions during the capstone revolved around our strategic framework and organizational structures. We came from different areas of the country, and some of us were from civil service agencies, unions, at-will or combinations of all of the above. This created an interesting learning experience as we listened to how other agencies work and some of the challenges. We even started trying to work out some of those challenges.

All three classes were terrific, but the camaraderie built by the capstone class was the best part of the experience. We grew closer as colleagues and friends, and most of us keep in touch still today including via our own CPE Alumni groups on Facebook and PSConnect. This group includes all CPE graduating classes and enables us to bounce ideas off each other.

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Finally, separately from the core courses, there is CPE 404, which takes place during APCO's annual conference where we meet other program graduates. Last year's 404 event was a great discussion about what has been happening in centers across the country. The friendships built have helped leaders from all over be the best we can be.

Benefits from the CPE program include the friendships and networking that developed during the class. The graduates of each group have a Facebook page where we can share resources, ask questions and

bounce ideas off each other. Perhaps the most crucial benefit of the class is personal growth. Throughout the CPE program, participants push each other to ask hard questions. Why are we here? What are we doing well? What can we do better? These are challenging questions to answer honestly but much easier when you have the support of your class.

If you consider taking the CPE course and have questions, reach out to any of the CPE graduates. We are happy to discuss our experiences. Look for the CPE pin or

reach out via PSCConnect. (<https://www.apointnl.org/training/leadership-programs/certified-public-safety-executive-program/cpe-graduates/>). While the program is not easy, nor is it intended to be, it helps drive all of us to be our best selves and the best leaders we can be. ●

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CDE EXAM #61712

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which of the following is not one of the requirements to take the CPE course? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Registered Public-Safety Leader Certification and six years of experience as a supervisor or above. b. Associates degree or higher c. Fill out the application d. 40-hour basic PST certification 2. What is the time frame for applying for a CPE scholarship each year? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. December 1 - January 31 b. January 1 - February 15 c. January 15 - February 15 d. January 1 - March 15 3. Which is one of the courses is not a part of the CPE program? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. CPE 101 - Introduction to Executive Leadership b. CPE 202 - Defining Leaders c. CPE 303 - Capstone Course d. CPE 102 - Leadership By Example | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. How many courses make up the core CPE program? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. 2 b. 3 c. 5 d. 6 5. Where is the capstone seminar held? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Alexandria, Virginia b. Orlando, Florida c. Washington, D.C. d. Daytona Beach, Florida 6. How long does the CPE Program take to complete? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. One year b. Three months c. Six months d. 18 months 7. One piece of the capstone course work is case studies. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. True b. False | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. What does CPE stand for? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Customer Premise Equipment b. Certified Public-Safety Executive c. Certified Program Executive d. Continuing Professional Education 9. The CPE certification needs to be recertified every four years. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. True b. False 10. The CPE program is a first of its kind program in public safety communications. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. True b. False |
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