THE BUTTE COLLEGE FIRE ACADEMY

The Butte College Fire Academy has been training future firefighters for over 30 years. The standards of the program are founded on the belief that only intelligent, skillful, strong, and adaptable people of good character are suitable for the fire service. The life-saving services provided by modern fire departments demand these abilities; and we are dedicated to providing the necessary preparation to augment the natural talents of our students.

Without exception every Butte College Fire Academy Cadet finds the program to be extraordinarily challenging. Accepting a position in the academy is a commitment to an endeavor that will consume almost every waking hour of every day of the week. In 19 weeks students earn 29 units of college credit – a pace unmatched in any other discipline in the college system. There are 50 individual written examinations on fire and emergency medical technician subjects, each with a minimum passing score of 80%. There are a host of physical manipulative skills which are tested to the highest standards. The physical training portion of the academy is aimed at lifelong fitness and is tested through a comprehensive agility course consisting of eight real-life firefighting skills modeled after the toughest departmental entry-level exams to be found. The academy is carried out in a paramilitary style; students wear uniforms, stand for inspection, and operate in a strict chain-of-command structure. There is a certain formality to the academy but it will evolve into a family. Students make lifelong friends here. Every fire agency in our area and surrounding counties boasts graduates of the program. Our teaching assistants, many of our instructors, and much of the staff are also graduates.

Our students are expected to adhere to a strict honor code, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Nothing but absolute honesty is tolerated and violations result in immediate dismissal from the academy. Words have meaning here; and principles such as honor, respect, courage, and tradition are taken seriously. We are not concerned with race, color, national origin, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. We are only concerned with your performance and character.

Tradition also has meaning here. For over 200 years members of the American Fire Service have cultivated a reputation of service and self-sacrifice. A weighty responsibility comes with that excellent reputation. We are charged with maintaining and enhancing that image and we must do nothing to tarnish it. On the local level we must uphold the reputation of the Butte College Fire Academy. We have graduated over 2,000 cadets, many of whom are now employed in fire departments across the country and have risen to the highest ranks in the service. These cadets worked hard to be successful in the academy and they expect us to uphold those same standards.

The difficulty of the program is best reflected in the failure rate of the students, which currently averages around 35%. In the real world, only your ability and performance count; there are no points for trying and no second chances. People will live or die based on your success or failure. Because of these simple facts, we know that not everyone has what it takes to do the job. The academy pace is lightning-quick, the standards are high, the rules are strict, and the program is uncompromising. You are expected to perform at the highest level.

Success in the academy is dependent on preparation. The academic, physical, and social demands of the program are well beyond that of normal college expectations. Applicants with only a high school education or below-average GPAs are likely to struggle in the academy. Butte College offers a 2-year plan for obtaining an Associate’s Degree in Fire Technology, in which the final semester is completed in the academy. Similar courses of study are offered at many community colleges in the United States. This preparation can be invaluable when entering the academy and is strongly recommended.

Serving your community as a firefighter is one of the most beneficial and satisfying careers one can choose. The sense of accomplishment and self-worth one feels are hard to match in other occupations. The challenges are extreme and the stakes are life and death. You need a solid base of knowledge and a commitment to lifelong learning to be successful. The Butte College Fire Academy is proud to provide that knowledge.