

# CAREER LINKS



Career Development  
Center

Conversations about Career Success...with Faculty



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**Assistant Professor/Chair, Fire Science**

**What was your college major?**

B.S. and M.S. in Education

**Did this major lead you to your current career?**

Yes and No. Yes, in that I have taught within and for the fire service for 40 years. No, to become a firefighter I had to learn a different skill set. I became interested in firefighting when I was a 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in Missouri. Several of my friends were volunteer firefighters, and I thought it looked interesting. I became a volunteer firefighter while I was a teacher and then an elementary principal. I served one year as a firefighter with the Independence Fire Department and one year as a fire investigator with the State Fire Marshall's office. Then I was the instructor/coordinator of the Metropolitan Community College (MCC) Penn Valley Fire Science Technology program for 10 years. I continued teaching part-time and served as Assistant Chief of the Grandview Fire Department for seven years. I was Fire Chief for 15 years at the Liberty Fire Department and also taught part-time at MCC Blue River. I retired in 2003, but still taught part time and then became Assistant Professor/Chair of the JCCC Fire Science program in August, 2009.

**What are the characteristics that your most successful students possess?**

They must like to work in a team atmosphere and be open to new and different ideas. They should have the type of personality that gets along well with people because they will work and live together in 24-hour shifts. They also need to care about helping people, especially with the EMT responsibilities required now.

**Name three things a student should know when exploring this career.**

This is a “hands on” career. They will work with their hands using different types of hand tools that enable them to open doors, pull down ceilings, get into cars and rescue people in a variety of environments. It is physically challenging and requires upper body strength. It leads to profound personal satisfaction.

**What skills will a student learn when pursuing this career?**

They will learn how to utilize over 100 types of tools and equipment, as well as all aspects of firefighting and Emergency Medical Services. They will work in a tight team atmosphere and learn how to manage emergency incidents.

**For a student needing part-time employment while in college, what types of jobs provide the best experiential learning opportunities?**

Any job that puts you in a position of serving the public or using various types of tools would be useful. A background in carpentry, bricklaying, and masonry is good. It is helpful to know how something is built so that you can better understand how to take it apart in order to perform a rescue.

**If a college student is unable to find related work experience in this career field, how do you suggest he/she prepare for the workplace?**

Volunteer at a local Fire Department that accepts volunteers. It is competitive to become a volunteer firefighter. It costs approximately \$2000 for a fire department to outfit a volunteer with a helmet, jacket, pants, masks, etc.

**Is there a selection process for entering this program?**

Yes. JCCC offers a Fire Academy 12 credit, one semester course and an A.A. Fire Science degree. The first step is to be state certified as a firefighter. JCCC offers a Fire Academy 12 credit, one semester course. To be eligible for the Fire Academy, students must score 70% or higher on a written entrance exam and be in the top 24 of an oral interview process.