

# ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS **AUDIT REPORT**

**TO:** Janet Addair, Associate Superintendent, Career & Technical Education  
Adelina Brann, Senior Director, Mid Florida Tech

**FROM:** Linda J. Lindsey, CPA, Senior Director, Internal Audit  
Jan Skjersaa, CPA, Auditor

**SUBJECT:** MID FLORIDA TECH - FIRE ACADEMY PROGRAMS

**DATE:** June 29, 2011

## **AUDIT OBJECTIVE**

To review processes and procedures and to ensure compliance with OCPS and State of Florida rules and regulations

## **SCOPE**

The audit covered Central Florida Fire Academy (CFFA) operations and activities at Mid Florida Tech (MFT) during the period from July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Our audit was conducted in accordance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* of the Institute of Internal Auditors and included such procedures as deemed necessary to achieve the objective.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Central Florida Fire Academy originated from a 1977 Interlocal Agreement among a consortium of several municipalities, Orange County and OCPS. It currently operates pursuant to Chapter 163 of the Florida Statutes and has the power to enter into contracts in its own name, to employ agencies or employees, to acquire, construct, manage, maintain, or operate buildings, parks, or improvements, to acquire, hold, or dispose of property and to incur debts, liabilities, or obligations. It has a fiscal year-end of September 30<sup>th</sup>.

The fire agency members of the Interlocal Agreement pay annual dues based on the number of certified firefighters and fire inspectors in their agency times a membership fee. For the audit period the annual membership fee was \$119.10 per firefighter.

Members of the consortium are able to use the training facilities and equipment for free, or at a reduced rate. Persons affiliated with member fire agencies are also permitted to take courses at a member-rate which is about 20% below the non-member rate.

The CFFA is managed by an Executive Director, who is a full-time OCPS employee who also receives compensation from CFFA. The Executive Director is appointed by the CFFA Board of Directors. The Executive Director prepares and manages the CFFA budget and is responsible for the daily operations of the Fire Academy and its programs.

Instructors at the CFFA are OCPS employees. Certain administrative and support staff are employed by CFFA.

The CFFA operates out of the second floor of the 1600 Building on the Mid Florida Technical Institute campus. The Administrative offices, classrooms, and most staff are located on the second floor. Other buildings used include a 3-story Live Fire Training Building where a variety of emergencies can be simulated, and a 4-story Training Tower where collapse simulations and rope rescues can be practiced.

Orange County Public Schools owns and maintains all the Fire Academy's permanent facilities. The Fire Academy owns and operates the mobile equipment and most of the fire training equipment.

On October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the CFFA added the Osceola County School Board as an additional member of the Interlocal Agreement. This allows CFFA to use some of the Osceola School Board's facilities and gives the Osceola County School Board an additional career program.

There are at least 10 programs and 16 classes offered. The career certificate programs provide rigorous content aligned with industry standards to prepare students to work in a specific occupational area: (examples are Emergency Medical Technical (EMT), and Fire Fighter); and classes for Continuing Workforce Education for Individuals who are required to have training to maintain, cross train, upgrade or attain certification renewal by a regulatory agency or credentialing body (examples are Hazardous Materials Technician, Vehicle & Machinery Rescue Technician, and Rope Rescue Technician).

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **TUITION RATES DIFFER FROM CATALOG**

The tuition charged by the CFFA to students for Career Certificate Programs, such as Firefighter I, differs from amounts stated in the OCPS Career and Technical Education Catalog, 2010-2011 (Catalog). For example, for the Fire Fighter program, which includes the Fire Fighter I and II courses, the Catalog tuition cost is \$1,057.50 plus a \$600.00 lab fee. However, the tuition charged by the CFFA to most students is \$2,200.00 plus a \$600.00 lab fee, plus other charges as well. The OCPS Career and Technical Education Catalog rates are those adopted by the School Board of Orange County in accordance with Florida Statutes under section 1009.22, F.S. These amounts are set annually by the Florida Legislature.

**Recommendation:** Charging students rates other than those adopted by the School Board pursuant to Florida Statutes is not permitted. We recommend that management of MFT work with the CFFA to revise rates for the upcoming year to bring them into compliance with Florida Statutes. The School Board attorney should be consulted to determine what steps, if any, might need to be taken to address the practice of charging non-compliant rates in prior years.

### **TUITION INVOICES TO CFFA USED INCORRECT RATES**

Some of the career certificate program tuition billed by MFT to the CFFA for school year 2010-2011 classes was calculated using the previous year's rates, namely, \$2.35 per class hour instead of the current year's rate of \$2.55 per class hour.

The same issue was noted with some of the Continuing Workforce Education invoices issued by MFT for the 2010-2011 school year. The previous rate was \$4.70 per class hour, but the current year's rate is \$7.00 per class hour as adopted by the School Board in June 2010.

It appears that both rate changes were implemented some time after the effective date of the new rate.

**Recommendation:** Invoices with incorrect rates should be revised so that the correct amounts are charged and collected for the current school year. Management of MFT should review invoices for CFFA tuition and fees for accuracy and verify rates/charges before processing them. See also our comment below under "Student Registration and Records Procedures."

### **PAYMENTS DUE TO MFT BY CFFA**

Students enrolling in Fire Academy classes register and pay their tuition and fees at the Fire Academy offices in Building 1600 on the MFT campus, rather than in the Registrar's office as do students enrolling in other programs at MFT. As a result, the CFFA holds all the cash collected from these students until the amount due to MFT is invoiced. In the past, entries were made to the student information system (CICS) to get the student information in the official student records of MFT. This process generated invoices from MFT to CFFA for a portion of the tuition and fees collected by CFFA from the students. The balance of the monies collected by CFFA from students is retained by CFFA.

Last spring and during the first part of the current school year OCPS was developing and testing a new student information system for the tech centers known as CampusVue. Training was conducted for tech center staff on the new functions and operations of the system which went live in October, 2010. The new system generates invoices in a different manner than CICS. Neither manual nor automated invoicing was conducted by MFT for this school year until late March, 2011. As of June 1, 2011, there were still a few classes that had not been invoiced.

No payments have been made by CFFA to MFT for any tuition or fees for the entire 2010-2011 school year as of June 1, 2011. The total estimated amount due is more than \$445,000, plus an additional amount for those classes not yet invoiced as mentioned above. The MFT Business Manager informed us that CFFA typically pays invoices 60-90 days after they are issued.

**Recommendation:** We recommend that management of MFT take steps to bill and collect amounts owed by CFFA in a timely manner and that it consider charging interest or late charges when payments are not made in a timely manner. See also our comment below under "Student Registration and Records Procedures."

### **DISCOUNT TO CONSORTIUM MEMBERS**

As noted earlier in this report, instead of charging the tuition and fee rates adopted by the Orange County School Board, the CFFA calculates its own tuition and fee rates based on an estimate of the costs associated with the programs and/or classes offered, and a projection of

student enrollment. When the tuition rates are calculated, a base tuition cost is determined based on estimated costs to provide the classes and the estimated number of students expected to attend; then a premium of approximately 20% is added to the price for students not sponsored by a member of the consortium. Thus, if all students paid only the member rates and, if all the estimated costs agreed with actual costs, then the direct costs of the classes would be covered. This method of calculating tuition and fees results in a premium rate of approximately 20% for non-members. The membership fees paid by member agencies provide a funding source for these discounts.

**Recommendation:** According to the School Board attorney a two-tiered tuition rate system is not authorized under Florida Statutes. It may be that a portion of the standard tuition could be “paid” by member agencies as a type of sponsorship award funded from membership fees, but it should be clearly documented and based upon the standard tuition rate, not on a separate or second-tier rate charged to any student.

### STUDENT RECORDS

As we were reviewing documentation to support students’ eligibility for the member discount, we became aware that the documents authorizing a student to receive such discounts for the EMT, Fire Fighter , and other certificate programs are not being retained after classes are finished. Therefore, it was not possible to determine whether those students who received the discount were eligible for it.

As a result of this inquiry we learned that student records are initially obtained and created at the CFFA offices. At a later time, the CFFA makes copies of those records believed to be required by MFT and sends the copies to MFT. The CFFA destroys certain documents once students have completed their courses of study. Management of CFFA represented to our staff that these records are destroyed pursuant to their understanding of student record retention guidelines.

**Recommendation:** As students of the CFFA are students of MFT, we recommend all student records be maintained on file at MFT and that they be maintained in accordance with the records retention requirements of Florida Statutes and the Records Management policies and procedures of Orange County Public Schools. Any destruction of records should also be handled in accordance with these same requirements. We further recommend that documentation of eligibility for any tuition charge other than School Board-approved rates be retained as part of students’ files.

### CLASS HOURS FOR FIREFIGHTER AND EMT CLASSES

For the 2010-2011 school year we noted a difference in the number of hours required by the Florida Department of Education for the Career Certificate Program (Fire Fighter and EMT) and the number of hours offered by CFFA. (See table below.)

Central Florida Fire Academy at MFT			Florida Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks		
<u>FLDOE Program Title for Career Certificate Program</u>	<u>CFFA Course # and Title</u>	<u>CFFA Course Length Hours</u>	<u>FLDOE Program Title for Career</u>	<u>FLDOE Course # and Title</u>	<u>FLDOE’s Curriculum Framework Course</u>

			<b>Certificate Program</b>	<b>Length - Hours</b>	
Fire Fighter	FFP 0010 Fire Fighting I	210	Fire Fighter	FFP 0010 Fire Fighting I	206
	FFP 0020 Fire Fighting II	240		FFP 0020 Fire Fighting II	192
				FFP 360 Fire Apparatus Operator	80
				FFP 363 Emergency Vehicle Operator	20
				FFP 0142 Medical First Responder	40
	<b>Total Program Hours</b>	<b>450</b>		<b>Total Program Hours</b>	<b>458</b>
EMT	HSC 0003 Basic Healthcare Worker	90	EMT	HSC 0003 Basic Healthcare Worker	90
	EMS 0159 Emergency Medical Technician	176		EMS 0159 Emergency Medical Technician	160
	<b>Total Program Hours</b>	<b>266</b>		<b>Total Program Hours</b>	<b>250</b>

This issue was previously identified by the Associate Superintendent for Career and Technical Education and it is being addressed by personnel with the CFFA, MFT, and the OCPS Career and Technical Education department.

### **STUDENT REGISTRATION AND RECORDS PROCEDURES**

As noted in the various comments above, a number of issues arise from processing students at the Fire Academy. Many of these issues could be addressed if Fire Academy students were processed and enrolled in the same manner as all other MFT students. Fire academy students, if processed through the MFT Registrar's office, would be charged School Board-approved tuition and fees and would have their records files established and maintained at MFT offices in accordance with Florida and School Board policies and procedures. Additionally, the need for MFT to prepare invoices and collect monies from CFFA would be eliminated.

For any additional costs incurred by CFFA to provide the Fire Academy programs, management of MFT and CFFA should work together to establish and approve a budget at the beginning of each fiscal year. As actual costs are incurred, the CFFA should submit documentation of such costs to MFT for payment or reimbursement. To the extent that these additional costs meet the requirements of F.S. 1009.22, they should be considered in establishing fees for Fire Academy courses.

### **INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT**

The Interlocal Agreement that established the Central Florida Fire Academy as a Section 163 separate legal entity was adopted in 2005 with an initial term of 10 years. We recommend that revisions be considered for the sections dealing with employment of the Executive Director, adoption of the FLDOE curriculum frameworks, student tuition, lab costs, and fees for career certificate programs, and all student charges and costs for the Continuing Workforce Education classes. Changes should also be considered to make the agreement transparent in its requirements in order to enhance the working relationship between the CFFA and MFT management and to adhere to requirements of the School Board of Orange County for delivering career and adult education courses and programs.

We wish to thank the staffs of the Central Florida Fire Academy and Mid-Florida Tech for their cooperation and assistance during the audit.

**Response from Mid Florida Tech**

**Fire Academy Audit**

**October 26, 2011**

## **Responses to audit recommendations from Mid Florida Tech**

### **Item 1 – Tuition Rates Differ from Catalog**

Florida statute 1009.22 governs the tuition and fees charged by school district boards for workforce education, including career certificate programs. The Career and Technical Education Catalog lists tuition costs consistent with rates approved through state statute. The fire academy tuition rate is correct and is consistent with rates approved annually by the OCPS School Board. Other CFFA costs related specifically to the CFFA are identified separately.

The EMT and Fire Fighter programs are job preparatory career certificate and follow tuition rates set in law by the Florida Legislature. The remaining courses offered are delivered through customized training utilizing an equitable fee schedule that has been developed by OCPS and CFFA jointly. A sample draft is attached to this response. The current schedule is housed at Mid Florida Tech with each course fee 20% or more paid to the tech center.

### **Item 2 – Tuition Invoices to CFFA Used Incorrect Rates**

The billing system at Mid-Florida Tech has been updated to reflect the current per class hour rate of \$2.66 for the purpose of billing service providers and students for the 2011 – 2012 school year.

### **Item 3 – Payments due to MFT by CFFA**

This has been corrected. Beginning in 2011-12, students will register for CFFA through the MFT registration system. Student tuition and fees will be collected through the MFT business office consistent with OCPS technical center procedures. See Appendix A.

### **Item 4 – Discount to Consortium Members**

All CFFA students will be assessed according to the tuition and fee rates approved by Statute 1009.22 and approved annually by the School Board. CFFA may charge a fire academy fee separate from fees charged by Mid Florida Tech. All students will be charged the same fees, regardless. See Appendix B.

### **Item 5 – Student Records**

All student records will be maintained at MFT consistent with the Records Management policies and procedures of Orange County Public Schools and the Florida Department of Education.

### **Item 6 – Class Hours for Firefighter and EMT Classes**

Class hours and course numbering will be consistent with the Florida Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks.

### **Item 7 – Student Registration and Records Procedures**

Student registration will be conducted in the same manner as established by OCPS technical center procedures. All student records, student fee structure and collection of student tuition and fees will be maintained and managed in accordance with OCPS policies.

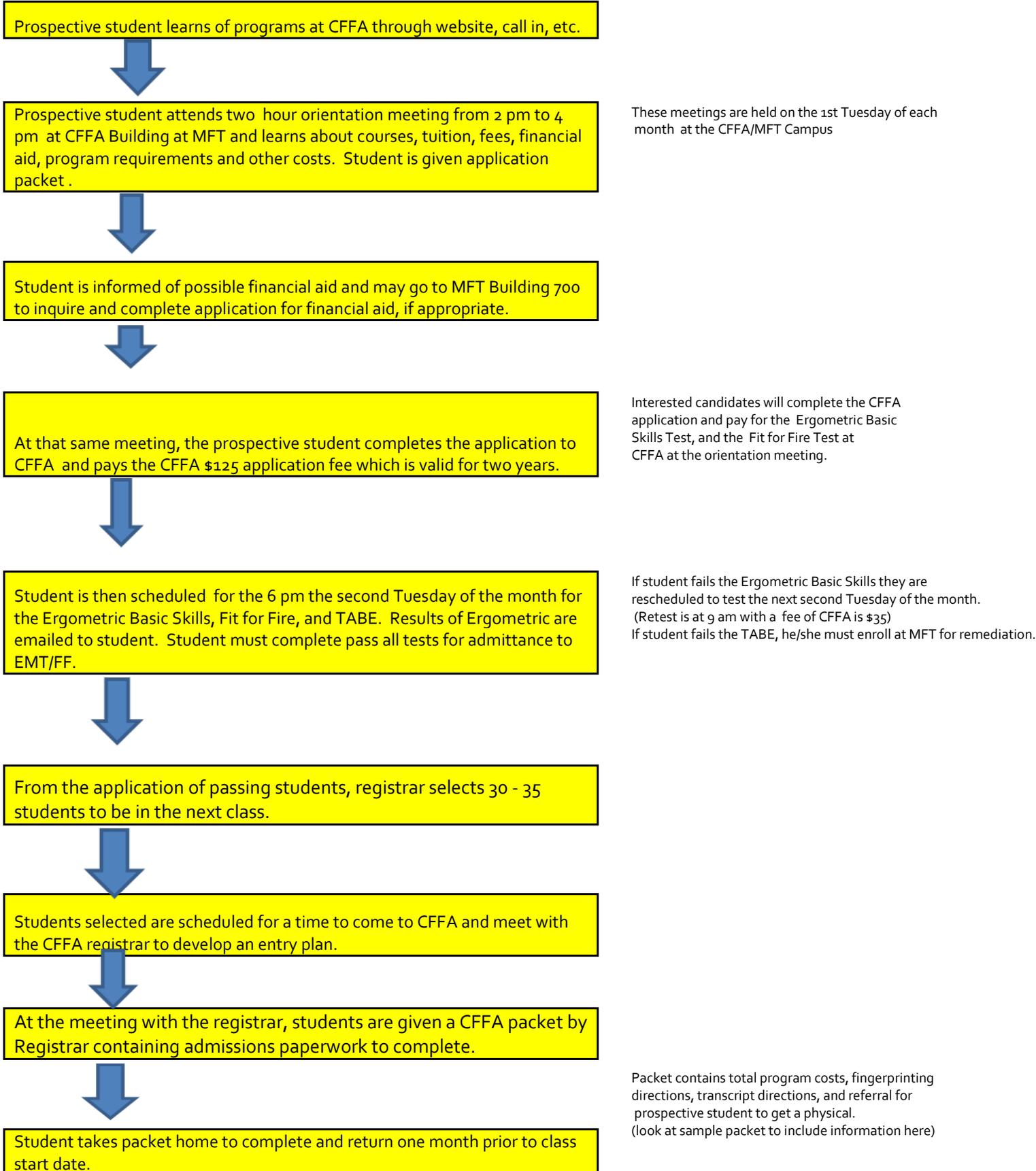
### **Item 8 – Interlocal Agreement**

The current Interlocal Agreement will remain in effect.

## **Appendix A**

### **Registration Process for EMT and Fire Fighter Students**

## CFFA/MFT Registration Process for NEW EMT/FF Students





After CFFA packet is returned to the CFFA registrar, an CFFA acceptance letter is sent to the student and a copy given to the MFT registrar. CFFA letter contains MFT enrollment information and fees required by MFT with deadlines from completing the registration process to enable the student to begin the next class.



Student takes CFFA acceptance letter to MFT and completes the process for enrollment, registration, tuition and other MFT costs (supplies, parking, etc.), and obtains class schedule.



On the scheduled class start date, student brings the MFT schedule to class and gives to the instructor as a class admit.

Student is enrolled into the CampusVue system at this point, ledger card and/or financial aid verified, and scheduled for the next available class. Student is given the schedule as an admit to CFFA for class.

All records are maintained on CampusVue for Department of Education Reporting for funding and accountability by MFT.

**Appendix B**  
**Customized Training Proposal**

**Mid Florida Tech and Central Florida Fire Academy**  
**Customized Training Proposal**  
 2011-2012 School Year

Draft 9-13-11

Course	Hours	Class Fee Non-Member/Member	
		Current Prices	
<b>Fire Inspector I</b>			
Fire Prevention Practices	40	176/141	157
Fire Prevention Practices Sys I	40	176/141	157
Building Construction	40	176/141	157
Codes and Standards	40	176/141	157
Construction Documents and Plans Review	40	176/141	157
Fire Inspector I Review	6	93/74	84
Fire Inspector In-service	6	67/53	60
<b>Fire Inspector II</b>			
Private Fire Protection System II	40	408/340	374
Fire Chemistry	40	408/340	374
Public Information Officer	40	408/340	374
Fire Origin and Cause	40	408/340	374
<b>Fire Investigator I</b>			
Private Fire Protection Systems I	40	176/141	157
Building Construction	40	176/141	157
Fire Chemistry	40	408/340	374
Fire Origin and Cause	40	408/340	374
<b>Fire Instructor I, II and III</b>			
Course Delivery	40	176/141	157
Course Design	40	408/340	374
<b>Fire Officer I</b>			
Fire Prevention Practices	40	176/141	157
Company Officer	40	176/141	157
Private Fire Protection Systems I	40	176/141	157
Firefighting Tactics/Strategy I	40	176/141	157
Building Construction	40	176/141	157
Firefighting Tactics/Strategy II	40	176/141	157
Course Delivery	40	176/141	157
Incident Management Intermediate	16	64/53	59
Fire Officer I Review	6	93/74	84
<b>Fire Officer II</b>			
Fire Chemistry	40	408/340	374
Course Design	40	408/340	374
Ethical and Legal Issues for the Fire Service	40	408/340	374
Public Information Officer	40	408/340	374
Fire Department Administration	40	408/340	374
Fire Origin and Cause	40	408/340	374
<b>Special Operations and Other Courses</b>			
Confined Space Rescue; Tech	40	490/405	448
EMS Bicycle Operations	32	400/330	370
Emergency Vehicle Operator Course	16	209/175	192
Firefighter Survival	40	460/384	422
HazMat Technician	160	1975/1645	1810
Rope Rescue Operations	40	490/405	448
Rope Rescue: Technician	40	490/405	448
Trench Rescue: Technician	40	590/490	540
Truck Company Operations	40	650/539	595
Vehicle and Machinery Rescue: Operational	40	755/628	692
Vehicle and Machinery Rescue: Technician	40	755/628	692
Driver/Operator (Engineer)	80	623/520	572
Driver/Operator Review Class	24	255/212	233
EMT Refresher	32	330/276	303

For each course the following activities will occur:

WHAT	WHO	NOTES
Students will complete a manual registration form the first day of class	Students	OCPS CTE standard enrollment form- CFFA will collect and submit to MFT Business Office during first class meeting
All students will be entered into CampusVue	MFT admissions personnel	Entered into CV as CCTS students
Letter of agreement sent via email to Central Florida Fire Academy, attn. xxxxxxx; approval email must be sent back within 24 hours	MFT CCTS coordinator	With copy to district CCTS Coordinator
OCPS Billing worksheet completed based on verified number of students	MFT CCTS coordinator	
Manual invoice is produced and sent to CFFA for payment within 5 days of class ending date	MFT CCTS coordinator	Standard formula to determine OCPS fees will apply; all students will pay the same fee

Expense protocols:

CFFA will be responsible for:

- providing an instructor(s) and paying for all costs associated with the instructor(s)
- assigning appropriate student teacher ratios according State Fire Board requirements for supervision and safety
- selling supplies, books and equipment to student enrolled in the programs/courses

OCPS/MFT will be responsible for:

- ensuring classroom and facilities are available as per schedule of classes
- CFFA classes are aligned to OCPS school calendar
- registering students into the correct program version in CampusVue
- OCPS/MFT will use the following expense calculation for each of the classes noted above

Summary of OCPS/MFT Fees to be charged to CFFA for the Customized Training Classes:

Calculation: For all classes offered as customized training (samples are shown on page 1), OCPS/MFT will invoice the CCFA for 15% of each students cost of the course excluding books, materials and supplies.

Examples:

COURSE	COST PER STUDENT	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	TOTAL REVENUE	OCPS FEE for 6 students
Rope Rescue Technician (40 hrs)	\$448.00	6	\$2,688	\$448/15% X 6 = \$ 403
Truck Company Operations (40 hrs)	\$595	6	\$3,570	\$595/15% X 6 = \$585
Fire Inspector Review (6 hrs)	\$84.00	6	\$505	\$84/15% X 6 = \$76

The total using these examples would yield \$6760 in revenue and an OCPS fee of 15% or \$1014