



Photos by Chanel Davis

Chief Barry Rountree (right) speaks.

51 percent white, 34 percent black and 15 percent Hispanic. The Police Department, on the other hand, is 77 percent white, 18 percent black and 5 percent Hispanic.

"I have attended every police recruitment graduation over the last five years and have seen more diversity and minorities in those recruiting classes than ever before," Taylor said. "We haven't quite hit our mark but we have been extremely progressive."

Williams, who has experience in the corporate diversity arena, said that the public will never be able to mirror its community in organizations like the police department without the proper training.

"Being a police officer is a skilled occupation. If we don't have people in the community that have those skills, then you will not mirror the community. I do commend the department for increasing those numbers, though," he said.

Rountree also told the attendees that the community has a responsibility as well. He charged them with figuring out what the community needs to do to work better with the police.

"We have these forums all the time. You have some responsibility also," he said. "We need the communities to help to solve crimes. We come in and out but the citizens are there 24/7. They know what's going on. This is a two-way street."

Kimya N. Dennis, assistant professor and coordinator of Criminal Studies at Salem College, said that she feels Chief Rountree is extremely passionate about making a connection with the community.

"He wants to dispel some myths, stereotypes and some rumors about law enforcement officers. I also took from it that the people who attended are interested in bridging that gap between them and law enforcement," she said. "This (the panel) is going to be an ongoing process that needs to happen more frequently."



Don Williams contributes to the discussion.

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