

Dean's Response to the Program Review of the Criminal Justice Master's Program

I appreciate the thought and effort that went into the Program Review Team's February, 2012, report, and into the Criminal Justice faculty's self-study and response to the report.

The Review Team identified a number of considerable strengths possessed by the Program: highly qualified and collegial faculty, satisfied students, an adequate budget, a plan to improve admissions standards, and a developing plan to improve outcomes assessment. The Team's report identified as well several challenges for the Program, and made a number of recommendations related to these challenges. The Team noted two complicating factors: first, they suggest that faculty members' sense of program ownership may have been affected by inadequate discussion at the time of the program's inception, and by inadequate information about its budget since inception. Second, the faculty was in the midst of discussions of the program's future and direction at the time of their visit. As the faculty's response indicates, some fundamental decisions were arrived at after the committee's visit and report, though the faculty found the Team's input helpful in reaching their decisions.

Several interconnected issues were the focus of the Team's concerns:

Scheduling and staffing: The Team's report recommended more systematic scheduling in order to make student and faculty planning more predictable and orderly. The faculty has responded with a plan for a cohort format with a two-year course cycle, with faculty committing in advance to teach specific courses. The report also recommended that the department secretary receive additional compensation for the work she does for the graduate program. This issue has a complex history. When the graduate program began, the associated clerical work was added to the responsibilities of the department secretary; later, these responsibilities were transferred to a part-time staff member, and finally, during recent budget cuts, the part-time position was cut, and the graduate program responsibilities were transferred back to the department secretary. I will work with the chair and graduate director to find an equitable solution to this situation that is compatible with Human Resources policies. The graduate program's budget can be a resource in this case.

Assessment: The report notes that the plan for assessment of student learning has been inadequate. As detailed in the faculty response, the Graduate Director and the faculty have been working closely with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness to develop and implement a solid plan.

Graduate curriculum: The faculty response indicates that as they revise the graduate curriculum, the faculty are following through with the Team's recommendations that the

curriculum emphasize quality over quantity, and that a graduate statistics course be added to the curriculum. They are also addressing the disparity noted by the report in the workloads of students who opted for the thesis option as opposed to those who took the non-thesis option.

Workload: The Review Team found problematic the combination of a 4-4 teaching load, faculty service and scholarship work, a large number of undergraduate majors, and the need to staff a graduate teaching and mentoring schedule. The Graduate Director is working on a proposal to use funds from the Program's budget to hire adjunct faculty to teach some undergraduate courses in order to provide a course release to faculty teaching graduate courses. I look forward to discussing the proposal with him.

I can note as well that a search is underway to replace a faculty member who went on long-term leave in 2010, and thus to bring the faculty back up to its prior staffing level.

Major changes to graduate curriculum: After careful thought and discussion, the faculty decided to move the graduate program online, beginning in Spring, 2013. I believe this is a good decision, given national trends in criminal justice programs, and imperative to serve the needs of our students, many of whom we anticipate will be working criminal justice professionals. I applaud the department's requiring faculty to receive online teaching instruction, and encouraging faculty to complete the Master of Online Teaching Certificate. I have met with the program director to discuss the marketing plan for the online program, and have committed \$3,000 in College funds in support of the initial effort.

Department focus: The report challenged the faculty to more clearly define the role of the Master's program in the overall work of the department. Was the graduate program an "add-on?" The faculty's discussions resulted in a clearer focus: while the undergraduate program necessarily consumes most of the work of the department because of its size, an excellent graduate program should be a vital component of the department. Discussions continue on issues such as the primary target population of the program, but the faculty are resolved on the most important issue.

Budgetary priorities: The Graduate Director is at work on a proposed budget for the graduate program that addresses the issues discussed above, and I anticipate discussing it with him over the summer.

I believe that the Review Team report correctly identified and stressed the considerable strengths of the Criminal Justice Master's Program, and made a number of useful suggestions. I support the positive responses of the Program to these suggestions.

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