

Department of Criminal Justice
Weber State University

Graduate Program Review Response
Spring, 2012

Dr. Bruce Bayley
Graduate Director

On February 15, 2012 a Program Review Evaluation Team, consisting of Drs. Andrew Giacomazzi and Lisa Growette Bostaph from Boise State University and Drs. Sara Dant and Don Davies from Weber State University, conducted a five-year accreditation review of the Masters in Criminal Justice program at Weber State University. As noted in the Program Review Evaluation Team Report, the graduate program is currently in a state of revision. This restructuring was necessitated by the department's desire to improve the quality and content of the program, as well as reflect the strengths and diversity of its current faculty. To this end, we appreciate the thoughtful and detailed report provided by the review team and wish to address the items listed in the "Recommendations" portion of their report.

Scheduling and Staffing:

The review team recommends a more structured scheduling design that allows professors to effectively build upon previous work and gives students a more organized sense of program offerings. Graduate faculty concur with this recommendation and beginning in Fall, 2012 (pending adequate enrollment), the graduate program will implement a cohort format that supports a scheduling structure consistent with this recommendation. Classes will be offered in a two-year cycle (Fall and Spring) and as enrollment increases, additional coursework may also be offered during the summer semester (in line with the university's desire to integrate the summer session as a full semester). All tenured and tenure-track faculty have been asked to commit to teaching two different courses over the two-year cycle, thus guaranteeing the program is internally viable and not reliant on the assistance of adjunct faculty. In addition, all core courses will have both a primary and secondary professor to ensure these classes are taught as scheduled (secondary professors will step in and teach the course should the primary professor be unable to do so during the semester assigned). An updated program format with new coursework will be submitted to the university review process during the Fall, 2012 semester with proposed implementation beginning in Fall, 2013.

A second recommendation of the review team focused on compensation for the department's administrative assistant, Faye Medd. Ms. Medd has been invaluable to the graduate program and since losing our part-time graduate secretary two years ago, she has been taking on the additional program duties without any supplementary pay or compensation. Graduate faculty wholeheartedly agree with the need to fairly compensate Ms. Medd for these additional duties and I will be working with our Department Chair (Dr. David Lynch) and College Dean (Dr. Francis Harrold) to find a fair and equitable method of establishing such compensation.

Outcomes Assessment:

As outlined in our five-year report and highlighted by the review team, an adequate method of effectively assessing the graduate program has been problematic. After much discussion, graduate faculty rejected the possibility of a qualifying exam in favor of focusing our assessments efforts on the four proposed core courses (MCJ6100: Contemporary Criminal Justice, MCJ6120: Theories of Crime and Delinquency, MCJ6110: Research Methods In Criminal Justice, and new course in graduate statistics). Gail Niklason of Institutional Effectiveness has approved this assessment plan and I will be working with her over the summer to formulate the best way to gauge the success of our program learning outcomes, program mission statement, and current/proposed coursework.

Major Changes to Graduate Curriculum:

In light of dwindling enrollment numbers, a the desire to reach out to a larger applicant pool, and a refocus on making a graduate education more feasible for those currently working in the criminal justice system, faculty voted to move the entire graduate program on-line beginning in Spring of 2013. New cohorts will be admitted each fall, spring, and summer and faculty will be required to attend training in on-line teaching methodologies offered by WSU Online (the Masters On-line Teaching Certification will be encouraged, but not required). In addition, graduate faculty also

agreed with the review team's recommendation to integrate a graduate level statistics course and this modification will be reflected in our pending program change.

A final curriculum recommendation of the review team was the need to address a disparity in the workloads between those selecting the thesis/project option and those taking additional courses. To address this problem, we are adding to our program revision the transfer of six units for those selecting the thesis/project option from the coursework requirement to thesis/project and directed readings credit. As proposed, students electing the thesis/project track will complete 27 units of coursework, three units of directed readings (designated for their literature), and six units of thesis/project credit. Those preferring the non-thesis/project option will complete the standard 36 units of coursework.

High Teaching Loads:

The burden on faculty of servicing an undergraduate and graduate program has been a problematic dynamic identified in numerous reviews. In short, the challenges of maintaining a growing and robust undergraduate degree, a developing graduate curriculum, research expectations, and service obligations are in direct conflict with our faculty's professional development and growth. As such, graduate faculty unanimously agreed with the review team's observation that something must be done to address overall teaching loads. To help alleviate this problem, I will be working with our Department Chair to develop a proposal that includes the allocation of graduate funds to cover the cost of hiring adjunct instructors for undergraduate courses so professors who are actively teaching in the graduate program receive release time each year to engage in academic pursuits.

Department Focus and M.S. Program Audience:

After much discussion, graduate faculty have decided the graduate program should remain a vital component of our department. The primary focus of our target graduate audience is still under debate, but this direction should become clearer as our program revision nears completion.

Budgetary Priorities:

As highlighted by the review team, the current revelation of an actual graduate budget allows the program to address many of the above concerns. To-date, program funds have been used to increase faculty pay, add two new graduate scholarships, a new teaching assistantship, and continued funding for two graduate research positions. In addition to maintaining the above allocations, further funding proposals will include such items as additional compensation for administrative assistant Faye Medd, hiring adjunct instructors to cover undergraduate courses so graduate professors can receive release time, travel scholarships for graduate students to present at conferences, and the expansion our teaching and research assistantship opportunities.

In closing, I would like to thank the review team members for their time and thoughtful contributions to the development and improvement of our graduate program. Graduate faculty are excited about the future of our degree and the promise of making our curriculum one that we can all be proud of.

Sincerely,

Dr. Bruce Bayley
Graduate Director
Department of Criminal Justice
Weber State University