

May 11, 2016

Program Review  
Master of Criminal Justice Program  
Weber State University

## **Dean's Response**

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I have read the MCJ Program Self-study, the Report of the Evaluation Team, and the program's response to the report. I thank MCJ Director Bruce Bayley and his department colleagues, as well as the Evaluation Team, for their valuable work on this review.

The evaluation report identified several strengths of the MCJ program, including its appropriate coursework, its affordability, its dedicated director, and its highly qualified faculty. I fully agree with this finding.

I will address the program's challenges as reported by the evaluation team, through discussion of the report's recommendations meant to address those challenges, and the department's response to those recommendations.

The first two recommendations ("Explore the idea that online graduate students may differ..." and "Explore the appropriate curriculum for the target audience...") I will consider together, as they are closely related. It is important to note that the MCJ curriculum closely follows the recommendations of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. At the same time, I think that the department's response indicates appropriate openness to adjusting curriculum to student needs. I applaud their plan to survey graduating students; this will provide good information on how well students feel their needs are being met. I agree with the department's point that they do not want their curriculum to overlap too much with the technical training that law enforcement officers receive in their professional development classes. As a program aimed at professionals seeking to rise in administrative ranks, the MCJ properly provides the theoretical base and research skills that law enforcement administrators need to analyze and evaluate data and make strategic decisions. I agree with the department as well that providing the education needed by these professionals should not entail lowering academic standards.

Regarding the report's third recommendation, we of course must recognize that the very aspect of the program that allows most of its students to enroll in it – its online flexibility – inevitably precludes some of the close faculty-student (and student-student) interaction that characterizes a face-to-face program. That said, I agree that the program's faculty need to keep exploring ways to make the program more interactive. The department response indicates agreement with this recommendation. Videoconferencing would seem to be a promising avenue in this area; perhaps, for instance, the faculty could consider mandating individual faculty-student videoconferences at some appropriate frequency, to facilitate student-faculty rapport.

In response to the fourth recommendation, concerning compensation of the department secretary, I have contacted the Associate Director of the Human Resources Office. She will review the secretary's duties for both the MCJ program and the undergraduate program, in comparison to the situations of other secretaries of graduate programs across campus, and in relation to the Non-Exempt Staff Pay Scale and Career Profile, to see whether an adjustment in her grade and/or compensation is appropriate.

Recommendations 5 and 6 concern the linked issues of faculty attitudes toward the MCJ program, and incentives to teach in it. Regarding the first issue, I believe that the majority of department faculty accepts, as do I, that the transition to the online program was the right decision. I suspect that, once the program had satisfied the pent-up demand in WSU's catchment region for MCJ degrees, the continuing demand going forward was insufficient to sustain the program in its original format. The report notes some reservations among faculty regarding the online nature of the program, but it is my sense that the majority value the program and the service it provides to law-enforcement professionals. Regarding incentives, I have inquired into incentives in other graduate programs across campus, and those in the MCJ program rank among the more generous. Nonetheless, within the confines of the MCJ program budget (which the evaluation report describes as adequate), some alternative incentive arrangements are possible, including "non-monetary incentives (e.g., course reduction)," as the evaluation report puts it, for those teaching in the MCJ program. I encourage Dr. Bayley to engage his colleagues in discussions of what the most desirable arrangement of incentives, monetary and/or non-monetary, would be.

While I see the MCJ program as emerging from a sometimes-difficult period of transition, and while I am encouraged by recent gains in admissions and enrollments, I agree with the report's final recommendation that faculty should again assess the program, and its future, in two years.