

# Dean's Response to the Program Review of the Undergraduate Program in Criminal Justice

April 26, 2017

I appreciate the work of the program review evaluation team (Dr. Lish Harris and Dr. Branden Little), and of the Department of Criminal Justice in compiling their self-study, and preparing a response to the review team's report.

The review team's report, after initially noting that the program is "one of strength within the College," went on to identify strengths, challenges, and weaknesses of the program, and concluded with recommendations to address the challenges and weaknesses. I will address their main points, as well as the department's responses to them.

## Strengths

The review team identified as strengths the department's diverse and committed faculty, its deep community ties, its balance between practitioners and theoreticians, and the many opportunities it provides for meaningful experiential learning. I concur with the review team's assessment. The faculty of the Criminal Justice department are active scholar-teachers who, despite the large numbers of their students, provide solid experiential learning experiences for them.

## Challenges

The review team suggested several challenges facing the program: advising over 600 majors; supervising and evaluating over 20 adjunct faculty members; and the issue of whether to offer fully online A.S. and B.S. degrees. The program's faculty, and I, agree that these are all issues that the department needs to address.

## Weaknesses

The review team concluded that there are three weaknesses that the department should address. Two are related: the paucity of oral and written communication assignments in courses in the major, and the lack of culminating projects or papers in the senior capstone course. The third weakness proposed is that of low enrollments in the "forensic science program," which the department response clarified, is the forensic laboratory science degree (and not the crime scene investigation degree). Here again, the department response and I concur that these are significant issues that the department should address.

## Recommendations

To preface the discussion of the review team's recommendations, I note that most of the issues identified in their report are results of the department's very success; the Criminal Justice major is a popular one that prepares students for varied careers in the criminal justice system, and attracts the largest number of majors in the College.

The review team's first recommendation is to "rotate and incentivize" advising. The department will discuss and address this issue in the upcoming academic year. They will examine this option, but also wish to consider centralizing advising, with one faculty member (or perhaps two?) handling advisement and receiving course release for doing so. They note that this model

appears to work well in the College's second-largest undergraduate program, Psychology. They may also wish to examine the advising systems of other large Criminal Justice programs to see what models have been shown to succeed. I would support an appropriate adjustment of teaching load in support of the advising model that is adopted.

The second recommendation concerns a possible online A.S. and B.S. program, which the Division of Continuing Education has been encouraging the department to consider. The review team does not recommend for or against an online program, but rather suggests that the department carefully consider the implications of adoption as well as of non-adoption, and then make a decision. The department replied that it has discussed the issue based on a careful analysis and decided not to pursue an online option at this time. One concern voiced was that an online program might cause a shift in enrollment from face-to-face classes, rather than simply attract new majors. The department might then face the stress of maintaining two full programs (online and face-to-face) while not seeing much of an increase in total SCH. I will want to discuss this analysis with the department chair, but I agree that a program initiative that does not have solid support among the faculty should not move forward. Utah Valley University is starting an online Criminal Justice program; we will want to keep an eye on how it fares, and whether it has an impact on our Criminal Justice enrollments.

The third recommendation is to "create a schedule of adjunct evaluation." The department agrees with this suggestion, and will form a committee to devise a system to accomplish this end. The review team's fourth recommendation is to designate two courses as writing-intensive, and one as an oral communication course. Despite the practical challenge of the large number of students involved, the department will work to develop a way to increase writing and oral communication assignments for their students.

In response to the fifth recommendation to "disassemble the forensic science degree," the department will develop a plan to phase out the laboratory science degree due to low enrollments and graduation numbers. I look forward to receiving a report from the department detailing the rationale for discontinuing the program, the data that support the proposal, and a plan for phasing it out.

The review team's final recommendation is a rethinking of the capstone course, CJ 4995. They recommend that, to continue as a capstone, it should include a "substantial, concluding project." The department's assessment committee will tackle this issue in the coming year, investigating whether this course could include a true capstone requirement (and thus be relevant to recommendation #4). I agree with the review team and the department response that if the course does not include a substantial culminating project or paper, it should not be termed a "capstone course."

I concur with the review team that the Criminal Justice undergraduate program is a fine one, whose greatest strength is its faculty. The review team's thoughtful report has identified both strengths, and concerns that the department should address. The department's response acknowledges these issues, and indicates that good-faith efforts will be underway in the coming year to address them. I will be prepared to lend my support where it is needed.