

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Weber State University-- Department of Criminal Justice

Self-Study Document, Fall 2016

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The following is a summary of the self-study document, highlighting important points. For complete information, please refer to the full, self-study document itself.

Mission Statement:

The Department of Criminal Justice provides students with the professional and academic preparation necessary for entry-level positions throughout the criminal justice system and related professions. The program addresses the functions and organization of the criminal justice system, integrating critical thinking, decision-making skills and the understanding of different cultures, ethics and social problems into the curriculum. The program provides the student with the preparation necessary for successful graduate study, and further endeavors to provide criminal justice professionals with career-enhancing educational experiences.

Curriculum:

The Criminal Justice Department has six undergraduate programs available to students (plus a M.S. Degree program which is not part of this program review- it has been reviewed separately). The undergraduate programs offered are: the Criminal Justice Minor (18 credit

hours of CJ courses), the A.S. Degree (consisting of general education course work plus 21 credit hours of CJ courses), the Criminal Justice-related Bachelors of Integrated Studies degree (students essentially “minor” in three different areas of their choosing, one of which could involve completing course-work for the Criminal Justice minor), the “general concentration” B.S. degree in Criminal Justice (involving 46 credit hours of CJ course work plus a minor of the student’s choosing), the B.S. degree in Criminal Justice with a “Crime Scene Investigation” concentration (66-69 hours of criminal justice course and related work, but with no additional minor required), and the B.S. in Criminal Justice with a concentration in “Forensic Science” (87-88 credit hours of course-work, including courses in criminal justice, chemistry, biology, etc.— with no additional minor required).

The “general concentration” in Criminal Justice (B.S. degree) is our department’s largest program, involving hundreds of majors. It consists of 31 credit hours of mandated, criminal justice courses plus 15 additional credits of criminal justice electives. The “mandated” (or core) courses include Introduction to Criminal Justice, Criminal Law & Courts, Ethics, Corrections, Policing, Theories of Crime, Victimology, Statistics, Research Methods, Constitutional Rights, and a Senior Capstone course. There no longer are any “emphases” within this “general concentration.” At the time of the last program review (five years ago), we had a smaller core coupled with a choice of one of three “emphases” (policing, corrections, or law) that students had to pick. But since then we have revamped the major to do away with the “major within a major” idea (though our two forensics programs remain as separate concentrations within the department).

Our two forensics concentrations consist of a B.S. in “Crime Scene Investigation” and a B.S. in “Forensic Science.” Simply put, crime scene investigators are trained in physical evidence collection techniques while forensic scientists are taught to analyze the collected evidence after it has been delivered to the crime lab. Those majoring in the “C.S.I.” concentration take 9 credit hours of foundational criminal justice courses (Intro, Criminal Law, CJ Ethics), various support courses outside the major (biology, chemistry, etc.) plus many courses specific to crime scene investigations. Those majoring in “forensic science” take the same 9 credit hours of foundational courses as the C.S.I. students, an even larger number of courses in chemistry, biology, etc., plus various courses specific to forensic science.

All told, the Department of Criminal Justice at Weber State offers a plethora of criminal justice courses made possible by the large number of professors we employ. In total, we offer 37 different courses with a CJ prefix. This wide breadth of courses helps us to cement our reputation as a leader among criminal justice academic programs within the state and even the region.

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment:

Students in our program are expected to achieve 9 “Learning Outcomes.” Each student is expected to:

1. Recognize the key historical, theoretical, and practical components of contemporary corrections.
2. Identify the fundamental concepts of criminal law as they are applied in the courts.
3. Recognize the key historical, theoretical, and practical components of contemporary policing.
4. Distinguish between the major theories of crime causation.
5. Distinguish between the various types, consequences, and theories of crime victimization.
6. Recall the fundamental concepts of social science statistics.
7. Distinguish between the key constitutional rights that impact the contemporary criminal justice system.
8. Distinguish between the major theories of ethics.
9. Recall the fundamental principles of social science research methodology.

Our program makes use of a “Curriculum Grid” or map into which we match each of our core, required courses with one or more of the nine learning objectives above.

Basically, our overall assessment plan makes use of a comprehensive, objective, multiple-choice assessment exam administered through Chi Tester to all criminal justice majors prior to graduation. We make taking this exam a requirement of our Senior Capstone course which all students must take. Our strategy is to look for “patterns” revealed in the exam results that show weaknesses in our teaching.

In addition to assessment of our overall program, we also have a separate, special assessment for our sole, social science general education course. Learning objectives for that course are generated by the College. Assessment data for this course’s learning objectives are collected using a uniform, multiple choice exam reflecting each outcome as they apply to CJ 1010 (our “Intro” course which is the sole general education course). The CJ 1010 assessment exam is given every semester during the last two weeks of instruction. Review of these data takes place every fall semester.

Looking forward, we have recently identified some challenges/opportunities that we hope to soon address. For example, trends indicate that students consistently underperform on a few, specific assessment questions. As such, we have a plan in place to identify these questions, and either rework them or potentially identify these specific content areas as needing more focus in the classroom.

Regarding the assessment of the social science general education objectives in CJ 1010, we recently revised our assessment method. This was necessitated by a change in the objectives themselves from the Social Science general education assessment committee. There is likely to be another change in these objectives again in the near future, and we stand ready to rework our methods yet again if necessary.

Going forward, it should be noted that we have decided to change from a one-person “assessment director” in our department, as has been the pattern up until now. Starting in the spring of 2017, assessment will be overseen by a committee of four faculty headed by two co-chairs (one for undergraduate and one for graduate assessment). Among their charges will be to take another look at our methods overall and to make any recommendations for improvement.

Academic Advising:

All students are assigned an advisor on the basis on their last names. Flyers addressing this policy are posted in prominent locations. Students are encouraged to meet at least annually and are free to meet more often as they like.

Advising is done in a traditional manner. That is, students meet individually with a faculty member in his/her office to discuss course work, progress towards degree, employment, etc. Cat-tracks, an online utility, is often employed to help a student see where he/she is with regards to progress towards a degree.

Feedback on advising from the student perspective tends to be anecdotal. Both faculty members and the department secretary report hearing few complaints, which is interpreted to mean that most students are satisfied with our advisement process.

Feedback on advising from the faculty perspective is mixed. Recently, a survey of our departmental faculty was undertaken to reveal faculty-perceived strengths and weaknesses. Strengths included a feeling that having all faculty participate serves a beneficial function for both faculty and students. Faculty also expressed gratitude for the Cat-tracks advising tool that helps them see where students stand with progress towards a degree. Faculty-perceived weaknesses include concerns that advising is a very time-consuming endeavor and that not all faculty are equally committed to the process. Sometimes, faculty have to pick up some of the load of others who are not readily accessible due to limited hours of availability. Some faculty also noted some issues with the complexity of Cat-tracks.

The criminal justice faculty would like to improve our advising methods. We have identified this as one of our major goals going forward and in fact are making plans to establish an advisement committee early in 2017 to investigate opportunities for improvement.

Faculty:

The Department currently has a large and expertise-diverse faculty of nine tenured or tenure-track faculty plus three full-time, non-tenure (contract) faculty. In the past year, the department has also employed twenty-one adjunct faculty members, nearly all of whom teach courses in the evening on the main campus in Ogden, in our B.S. program at Salt Lake Community College, or at our program housed at the Davis County campus.

All of the tenured or tenure-track faculty members have Ph.D.'s and three of them have both the J.D. and the Ph.D. The areas of expertise are wide, covering the entire range of the criminal justice system from police, courts, and corrections, to criminology, forensics, law, ethics, theory, law and society, statistics, and research methods.

The department's non-tenure track faculty consist of three, full-time contract faculty, all of whom have either a Master's degree or a J.D., and twenty-one part-time adjunct instructors, all but one of whom have at least a Master's degree or J.D. (the one who does not is a professional who teaches Crime Scene Investigation). These non-tenure track faculty and instructors have a wide range of expertise, from international criminal justice, to forensics, law, corrections, policing, juvenile justice, and crime scene investigation.

Regarding diversity among faculty, the department's tenured and tenure-track faculty consist of seven males (four of whom are tenured) and two females (assistant professors). The three full-time contract faculty are all male, and of the adjunct faculty, seventeen are male and four are female. While, seventy-nine percent of the faculty identifies as predominantly white or Caucasian, the department has increased its racial and ethnic diversity since the previous program review. Of the department's nine tenure and tenure-track faculty, one individual identifies as Native American (tenured) and one identifies as Asian (assistant professor). The three full-time contract faculty identify as black, Asian, and white. The 21 adjunct faculty consists of 19 people who identify as white or Caucasian, one who identifies as Asian, and one as Hispanic.

All tenured and tenure-track faculty are reviewed annually as well as at the time specified for tenure and promotion. Contract faculty are hired to one-year appointments, renewed each spring by the Dean if they appear to be performing satisfactorily. Adjunct faculty

are hired on a course-by-course basis. The Chair reviews their appointments on a regular basis to determine their eligibility for reappointment.

The department supports professional development. Each year, the department offers generous funding for travel to professional conferences and also fully funds faculty attendance at the annual meeting of the Western Association of Criminal Justice. The department also instituted a Faculty Vitality Grant in 2011, and five faculty members have since received this grant which funds attendance at workshops and institutes. The department also pays membership dues for one professional association per faculty member each year plus annual dues for membership in the Western Association of Criminal Justice for those who are interested.

Program Support:

In terms of “staff,” we are fortunate to have Faye Medd as our able department secretary. She single-handedly staffs an office that serves a very large undergraduate program plus a master’s degree program. Ms. Medd has a B.S. degree in computer systems and is a great resource for faculty who are less technologically gifted. She is hard working and very approachable.

In terms of “administration,” the department has a Chair (Dr. David Lynch), as well as a director of our Graduate program (Dr. Bruce Bayley), a director of our forensics programs (Dr. Brent Horn), a coordinator of our B.S. degree, outreach program at Salt Lake Community College (Professor Jean Kapenda), and a coordinator of our program at our Davis County campus (Professor Brian Namba).

Regarding facilities, our department is housed in the Social Sciences building, an ageing facility which is slated next year to be completely rebuilt. The current building has its own computer lab and a testing center. The department also has, in the building, its own forensics lab endowed with many pieces of valuable equipment (listed in the full-report). This lab does have some serious safety issues which will be addressed in the new building. The department also offers classes at the Davis County campus (very modern) and at Salt Lake Community College. At both of these two sites, we have an on-site director.

The Weber State University Library, currently undergoing a massive renovation, houses a large and excellent collection. We have a great working relationship with Dr. Wade Kotter, the social sciences librarian, who is a helpful resource and who regularly offers a course on social science library research.

Relations with External Community:

The Department has many significant relationships with various external, criminal justice communities. These include such things as faculty sitting on the local Police Academy board, doing research for the Utah Sheriff's Association, working with the Utah State Crime Lab, providing leadership to the Utah State Science Olympiad, collaborating with the Ogden City Police Department in conducting community surveys, serving with the Utah Board of Juvenile Justice, and serving as an auditor for the Korean Society of Criminology in America. Additionally, faculty are very active in the Western Association of Criminal Justice (including serving as past presidents on several occasions) and faithfully attend and present at meetings of the Academy of Criminal Justice Science, the American Society of Criminology, and the Law and Society Association. One of our faculty also currently serves as editor-in-chief of a scholarly, criminal justice journal.

Student, Faculty, Contract/Adjunct Faculty and Staff Statistics

There are currently about 600 undergraduate students majoring in criminal justice. Our department graduates about 130 students each year with the B.S. degree, with an additional dozen or so with the A.S. degree. It is a "top ten" program at Weber State in terms of the number of undergraduates receiving a degree.

Faculty-wise, as mentioned above, we have nine tenured or tenure-track faculty, all of whom possess a Ph.D. Four of the nine are tenured with an additional two undergoing tenure review this year. We also have three full-time, "contract" faculty, all of whom possess either a master's degree or a J.D. We also employ, during the course of a year, about twenty adjunct faculty members, who mostly teach at night or off-campus. All but one of them have either a master's degree or a J.D.

Staff-wise, our departmental secretary works unassisted. However, she seems to be handling the work load quite well (thanks to her skills and strong work ethic).

Results of Previous Program Reviews

At the end of the last Program Review done five years ago, seven problems were identified and subsequent actions were taken to address these issues. A summary of each problem plus actions taken are provided, as follows:

1. Improve the Night program by making it less adjunct-dependent: During the past five years, first one, then a second, and then a third tenured or tenure track faculty member began teaching courses at night at least once per academic year.
2. Improve Integration of regular faculty at our Distance Campuses: We have increased the number of tenured or tenure-track faculty who regularly teach at one of our two Distance campuses (Davis Campus or Salt Lake Community College) from none to three.
3. Improve our Outcomes Assessment Methods: Faculty members completely re-invented our assessment program by jointly creating an objective, multiple choice test bank reflecting principles within their respective areas of specialization. This new and objective assessment instrument replaced the rather “squishy” methods previously used to assess undergraduate student outcomes. This assessment exam is given to all students during the senior capstone course.
4. Better integrate our two forensics faculty members into the regular major; and generally strengthen our forensics program: In addition to teaching forensics courses, our forensics faculty now often teach two “regular major” courses: CJ 1010 (Introduction to Criminal Justice) and CJ 2350 (Laws of Evidence). In addition, we have created the new position (with a stipend and other benefits) of “Director of Forensics.” This person (Dr. Brent Horn, now in his second, three-year term) has direct responsibility for creating the schedule of forensic courses, advising forensic majors, and overseeing the budget for our forensic program (including the collecting and spending of lab fees).
5. Reduce High Teaching Loads to facilitate research: Teaching loads remain the same for most of the CJ faculty pursuant to the legally binding contract with the university. However, we have managed to reduce the teaching loads of Dr. Brad Reyns (a one course reduction from the Dean for serving as chief editor of a criminal justice, academic journal) and Dr. Monica Williams (a one course reduction for her work in WSU’s Center for Community Engaged Learning). The Dean also has begun granting (on his own initiative but as authorized by the PPM), a one-time, one course reduction for each faculty member who successfully completes his/her 3rd Year Review, in order to facilitate research prior to gaining tenure. Two faculty have recently taken advantage of this new opportunity.
6. Update our Undergraduate Curriculum: At about the time of our last Program Review and shortly thereafter, we completely revamped and put into motion a revised curriculum. We did away with “majors within the major” (the so-called requirement that every major choose an emphasis of either policing, corrections, or law). The sole exception to this is that majors can still pursue an emphasis in forensics. For “regular” CJ

majors, a new and expanded core was developed (reflecting national standards) and students additionally take a total of five Criminal Justice electives in addition to the core.

7. Make the Primary Focus our Undergraduate Program (despite offering a Master's Degree): We have sought to bolster our undergraduate program by simplifying the major (no "majors within the major" as before), completely revamping the way we do outcomes assessment (development of an objective, standardized, global exam given to all graduating students), integrating more regular faculty (non-adjuncts) into both our Night program and our Distance Campus Programs, introducing more diversity issues into the curriculum (one tenure track, female professor now teaches a course dealing with sexual assault issues and another teaches a course on "women & criminal justice"), and expanding faculty participation in our undergraduate program decision-making (the number of department meetings has been significantly increased and the agendas for each meeting decided jointly).

Future Goals: Looking ahead, the Department Chair surveyed all full-time members of the department regarding what "future goals" we could propose and share with others evaluating our program. A listing of potential goals was thus produced and a final vote taken. Members of the Department have decided upon the following goals to suggest to outside reviewers involved with this Program Review as possible goals we could work on in the future. We, of course, can modify or add to or subtract goals from our list after we get feedback from the Visiting Team and other stakeholders in the current Program Review process. For now, we simply state our opinion of some potential goals important to us that we could address going forward, post-Program Review. These suggested goals are:

1. Further improve our methods for undergraduate assessment
2. Improve our Senior Capstone course (e.g., to include a project, writing component, etc.)
3. Explore offering our A.S. and/or B.S. degree completely online
4. Explore centralizing undergraduate advising to just one faculty member with course buy-out (to improve the quality and consistency of advising and to facilitate time for faculty research)
5. Investigate deleting our CJ forensics concentration (lab scientist track) and then create a program for Crime Scene Investigation track only.

Information Regarding Current Review Team Members:

For purposes of Program Review, all tenured and tenure-track faculty have participated in the drafting of the sections of the full, self-study document (with the exception of Dr. Bayley who is on sabbatical). Hence all are considered to be members of the departmental Program Review committee.

A two-person, visiting team of members outside our Department will constitute our extra-departmental reviewers this year. One is a faculty member at Weber State from outside our department and the other is a faculty member from outside of Weber State University entirely. Both of these reviewers were approved by our Dean. These two visiting team reviewers are:

1. Paul "Lish" Harris, Ph.D.-- Dr. Harris is Program Head of the Criminal Justice Program at Dixie State University in St. George, Utah. He has Ph.D. in Criminology & Criminal Justice from Florida State University. Email: lharris@dixie.edu; Telephone: 435-879-4423
2. Dr. Branden Little, Ph.D.-- Dr. Little is an Associate Professor of History at Weber State University. He has a particular interest in the area of human rights. He has a Ph.D. in history from the University of California at Berkeley. Email: jbittle@weber.edu; Telephone: 801-626-6710