



WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Social & Behavioral Sciences

May 13, 2024

Dean Response to Criminal Justice 2023-2024 Program Review

I have read the “Criminal Justice Program Academic Review”, the “Criminal Justice Program Review Recommendations and Responses” and the “Criminal Justice Program Review Department Response”. I would like to thank Dr. Lish Harris, Dr. Rieneke Holman, and Dr. Mark Bigler, and the Chair of Criminal Justice, Dr. Molly Sween, for the time and effort in providing a thorough review of the program.

Strengths: The Criminal Justice (CJ) program exhibits several strengths, including a diverse and competent faculty, collective online preparation, effective student preparation, and strong relationships with community partners. The faculty's diverse backgrounds enrich students' learning experiences, and their dedication to online education is commendable. Students feel well-prepared for their careers, thanks to both classroom instruction and informal mentoring. Additionally, the program maintains valuable partnerships with community organizations, enhancing students' opportunities for internships and employment. Dr. Molly Sween, the department chair, is praised for her leadership and supportiveness.

Challenges: The program faces challenges such as shrinking enrollment, the complexities of online education, and the need for increased internal support and collaboration. Enrollment decline has led to canceled classes and smaller class sizes, impacting the program's vitality. Balancing online and face-to-face courses while maintaining quality instruction is a concern. Internally, there's a perceived lack of cohesion among faculty, highlighting the need for greater collaboration and support.

Weaknesses: The weaknesses of the program include advising and feedback for internships. Faculty feel overwhelmed by advising responsibilities, leading to gaps in student guidance. Internship site coordinators desire more interaction and feedback from the program to better support student interns.

Program Recommendations: I appreciate the thought and time that went into determining the recommendations for improvement as outlined by the external review committee and note the faculty/chair response to their analysis. To address these areas needing improvement, my recommendations are as follows:

1. Explore new advising models to alleviate faculty burden. A full-time advisor may help. I would recommend adding this request to the program's Strategic Planning Report (SPR) for

2024. I fully support building a student mentorship program and would advise exploring other institutional models to guide the department on how to create this program.

2. Foster connections with other programs to enhance opportunities for students. My recommendation is to continue having conversations with Social Work about a combined Master's degree. It normally takes a full academic year to launch a new program. I would suggest that serious conversations with the Social Work department begin fall 2024 to determine community need for this type of degree. Other programs mentioned by the review team such as curriculum in CJ Health. Incorporating CJ Health curriculum into the program needs to be fully explored. Be mindful about which collaborations will strengthen the department and meet community needs.
3. Increase interaction with internship sites to strengthen the program. Please ensure that the faculty member that oversees the internship program is aware of the need to reach out for feedback and then intentionally incorporate pertinent information that will benefit the students. I support surveying internship sites to gather feedback - it is an excellent idea.
4. Establishing an advisory board is important to help guide the future of the department. The department response to this recommendation by the review team was to form the committee by summer 2025, I would recommend that this timeline be accelerated and that the members be selected by the end of fall 2024 and the first meeting held spring semester 2025. This would help with strategic planning that occurs toward the end of the academic year.
5. Mitigate the perceived lack of cohesion among faculty, by discussing ways to collaborate and build a better support system. I would also recommend encouraging faculty to spend more time in the department to build community. Offer a retreat at the beginning of the school year where the future of the department is discussed and where faculty can openly communicate on how to build cohesion.

In summary, while the CJ program boasts several strengths, including faculty diversity and community partnerships, it faces challenges such as enrollment decline and advising deficiencies. By implementing the recommendations like new advising models and enhanced collaboration with other programs, strengthening internships, establishing an advisory board, and building faculty cohesion, the CJ department can mitigate the challenges and weaknesses and build a stronger program while continuing to provide quality education to its students.

Best regards,



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