

# Department of Criminal Justice Program Review Response

2023-2024 Program Review Cycle

On February 23, 2024, Dr. Lish Harris, Dr. Rieneke Holman, and Dr. Mark Bigler conducted their cite visit for the Department of Criminal Justice. They met with stakeholders in the department including current students, alumni, faculty, support staff, and community partners. The report they provided discussed our program's strengths, challenges, weaknesses and provided a few brief recommendations for change. In this departmental response report, we plan to spend the bulk of our time/energy discussing how we plan to address their recommendations for change.

## Strengths

- Diversity and Competency of the Faculty
  - Faculty were praised for their training, experience, and competency in both content and pedagogy.
- Collective Online Preparation and Investment
  - Faculty were commended for their extensive online pedagogical training which they did in order to ensure they were offering a quality online bachelor's degree.
- Student Preparation
  - Current and alumni students said they felt well prepared to be successful in their field of choice and appreciate the mentoring they received from faculty.
- Relationships with Community Partners
  - Community partners expressed their appreciation for the strong relationship they had with the Department of Criminal Justice. Namely, they enjoyed having the opportunity to have CJ student interns and stated they often hired CJ graduates.
- Department Chair
  - Dr. Molly Sween was described as ambitious, thoughtful, and that she had a strong work ethic. Faculty felt supported by her and staff and administration praised her leadership and vision.

## Challenges

- Shrinking Enrollment
  - Like many CJ program across the country, CJ has experienced a reduction in majors. Faculty expressed frustrations over cancelled and smaller face-to-face classes (amidst growing online course offerings).
- Online Program/Courses
  - The program offers a fully online master's degree and now a fully online bachelor's degree. A challenge expressed was offering quality online classes,

balancing the right number of online and face-to-face classes, and implementing high-impact practices. Online was recognized as convenient to students, but likely one of the bigger challenges that the department need to work through.

- Increase Internal Support
  - In meetings with those who interact most with the faculty (i.e., students, support staff, administration) they were praised for their effort and dedication to student success. However, faculty indicated that they felt like they worked in silos and that there was a feeling of distance among the faculty. External buy-in felt strong, now internal buy-in needs to be better fostered.

## Weaknesses

- Advising
  - The CJ Program's advising is strong in effort and organization. The weakness noted here was the lack of institutional support. "It is untenable to place the entire burden of major advising on the shoulders of a busy faculty." It was proposed that the department explore different advising models.
- Site Feedback for Internships
  - The internship program is a strength; however, internship coordinators asked for more frequent interaction with the program. They wanted to insure they were providing best experience for students, and more periodic check-ins would support this goal.
- Connectivity and Collaboration with Other Programs
  - The program offers many exciting curricular experiences for students. Partnering across campus will allow for strengthening these experiences.

## Recommendations for Change

- Explore and Implement New Advising Models
  - Explore different models. Some suggestions were expanding administrative assistant duties, building a student mentorship program, hiring a full-time advisor, using new technologies to guide students, having faculty with cancelled classes pick up advising, etc. A call was made for the institution "to find ways to support advising in ways it currently does not."
- Connecting to Other Programs
  - The committee observed potential curricular connections such as Political Science moot court, partnering with the MSW program, and CJ/health endeavors (to name a few). These connections could help to strengthen the balance between face-to-face offerings and help with decreasing enrollments.
- Increase Interaction with Internship Sites
  - More guidance and feedback to internship sites "will reinforce an already hearty program that greatly benefits the student participants."

- Create an Advisory Board
  - An advisory board comprised of some faculty, community members, students and staff can help to build internal support. This may help to give faculty the chance to lead, advocate, and take ownership in the direction of the program. This could also aid with centralizing workload and divide labor in a more accommodating way.

Recommendation	Department Response/Plan
Explore and Implement New Advising Models	<p>The Department will explore the following program review suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiring a full-time (staff) advisor</li> <li>• Using a peer-mentor structure</li> <li>• While not suggested, we will explore centralized advising with a buy-out</li> </ul> <p>The Department appreciates the other suggestions that were floated by the Program Review Team, but they felt like short term fixes rather than long term solutions</p>
Connecting to Other Programs	<p>The Department will explore the following program review suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a joint or co-curricular MCJ/MSW program</li> <li>• Opportunities for joint-venture co-curricular endeavors with other undergraduate programs in the College or across the University</li> </ul>
Increase Interaction with Internship Sites	<p>The Department will implement the following program review suggestions by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having our current Internship Director (Professor Michelle Jeffs) engage in more frequent check-ins with internship sites. At a minimum, she will include mid-semester check-ins with internship sites via email or a phone call</li> <li>• Administer a survey to all active internship sites to gather feedback on what additional resources or support they need from us</li> </ul>
Create an Advisory Board	<p>The Department will implement the following program review suggestions by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating an advisory board comprised of a few faculty members, students, community members, and staff</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The timeline for this is to form the committee by Summer 2025 and start holding meetings by Fall 2025 (if not sooner)</li></ul>
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