

Master of Criminal Justice (MCJ)
Department of Criminal Justice
Faculty Response to Program Review Evaluation Team Report
April 1, 2021

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This document provides the faculty response to the Master of Criminal Justice program review from February 1, 2021. The external review team was comprised of Anna Kosloski of the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and Blake Nielsen of Weber State University. They noted the following strengths of the program:

- Mission of the program. The review team found the mission of the MCJ program to be appropriate, clear, and in line with the mission, vision, and core values of Weber State University.
- Facilities and support. The review team noted that the combination of the newly remodeled Lindquist Hall, the access to materials provided by the Stewart Library, WSU Online support, and our Administrative Specialist II collectively represented a strength of the program.
- Learning outcomes and assessment. The review team concluded that the program's learning outcomes are aligned with the program's mission and meet the expectations of graduate education.
- Faculty. The review team identified the breadth of faculty expertise and student support as a strength of the program.
- Relationships with external communities. The review team noted that the faculty have relationships with a wide range of organizations across Utah, and considered this a strength.

The reviewers were also asked to identify areas for improvement, and provided us with a number of recommendations for change. The review team's report was distributed to the faculty in late February, and the program faculty met on March 22 and March 29 to discuss the report and the recommendations for change. The following outlines the recommendations for change from the external review team and the faculty response to each of these items.

Recommendations for Change:

1. **Curriculum:** The reviewers suggested creating either formal or informal emphasis areas to cater program needs to our diverse study body. We presently serve students who are in the field and seeking advancement through higher education as well as a smaller group of students who are interested teaching criminal justice and/or continuing to a PhD program. We agree that the curriculum needs to be updated.

Action: We will revise our curriculum to conform more closely with current trends in academic criminal justice.

Action: As part of this process, we will identify suggested "paths" for students based on their goals.

2. **Advising:** The reviewers suggested having a formal advising schedule to help students navigate the program. Formal advising would also help us to identify student needs and guide them toward an appropriate recommended path toward completing the degree (i.e., practitioner track, academic/scholarly track).

Action: We agree that formal advising will have numerous benefits and will implement formal scheduled advising for each student completing their first semester in the program.

3. **Program and Class Size:** The reviewers suggested having some strategy meetings to address program size and growth. This includes advocating with campus administration for more resources, including a faculty line, to meet long-term needs.

Action: Three meetings have taken place. First, the faculty met in March 2021 to discuss optimum class sizes. Second, the program director and department chair met with the college dean to discuss these issues. Third, the director, chair, and dean also met with the provost on 3/15/2021 to ask for a budget reallocation to create another faculty line. These conversations are ongoing and will be revisited through strategic planning reports.

4. **TAs and GAs:** The reviewers recommend that we consider utilizing teaching and/or graduate assistants. At the same time, the reviewers prefaced this recommendation with the acknowledgement that our ability to address this item may be contingent on funding.

Action: While we are willing to pursue opportunities to utilize TAs and GAs within the department, and acknowledge the benefits, our budget does not currently support doing so.

5. **Adjuncts:** The reviewers recommend that we identify a small group of qualified individuals who could serve as adjuncts in the program. We agree with this recommendation.

Action: As of 2020, we have been utilizing a faculty member from the sociology department to teach a course once a year. This seems to be working well, and the director will work on identifying other university faculty who may be interested in teaching in an adjunct capacity in the program.

6. **Cross Listing Courses:** The reviewers suggested that we explore the possibility of cross listing some of our courses with other disciplines.

Action: With the creation of the new master of social work degree within the college, we have the opportunity to potentially pursue such a partnership. So far, one meeting has taken place and all stakeholders remained open to the idea. We will continue this conversation to see if cross listing courses will be manageable and beneficial to both programs.

Action: We are interested in some interdisciplinary collaboration with other masters programs on campus, and would like to meet with some of the program directors and/or department chairs to explore the possibility of team teaching courses or other types of collaborations.

Additional Recommendations:

1. **Overload Teaching:** The reviewers expressed concern that the MCJ program is too reliant on overload teaching to staff the program.

Action: The department chair developed a plan and presented it to the provost and other stakeholders on 3/15/2021 to reallocate program budget toward a new faculty line. Doing so would allow for more courses to be taught as part of faculty load, while also continuing to allow for some overload opportunities. These conversations are ongoing and will be revisited through strategic planning reports.

2. **Alumni Data:** The reviewers suggested that the department would benefit in a number of ways from having alumni data.

Action: At present, and historically, we have not kept track of our graduates, but recognize the advantages of having these data. Collecting alumni data is a long-term goal of the undergraduate program, and whatever mechanisms are put in place to do so can be utilized for both programs.