Academic Program Review

Central Connecticut State University

Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice

May 20, 2013

I. Summary

The Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Central Connecticut State University is a dynamic intellectual and service-oriented community of professors who are accomplished interdisciplinary teachers and scholars and undergraduate (criminology) and graduate (criminal justice) students who are dedicated to public service in Connecticut. With a modest increase in resources, the Department is well-positioned to meet the needs of students and the state of Connecticut.

Given the importance of criminology/criminal justice graduates to government agencies, the Department could continue to grow significantly. The Department has outlined several specific future goals, with a focus on increasing the number of students in the undergraduate and graduate programs. If the Department and University determine that the Department will grow, the Department will need additional significant support from the University. The primary recommendation in this Report is that the Department’s faculty members and University leaders decide on and define concretely specific future goals, keeping in mind that growth of any kind should be accompanied by additional resources. As discussed below, these resources should be in place at the beginning of any period of growth.

II. Introduction

This Report responds to the questions CCSU submitted to the external reviewer. The reviewer (the author of this Report) conducted the external review of the Department in May of 2013. The reviewer visited the University and met with faculty members, administrators, and students on May 5 and 6, 2013. To provide a context for this Report, the reviewer obtained information about similar programs at other CSU schools and the University of New Haven. However, it is not possible to make a direct comparison between or among the programs at those universities and the CCSU Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice because, as discussed below, the CCSU Department holds a unique position within the state of Connecticut. The reviewer considered standards for criminal justice programs in the United States, as promulgated by one of the two major criminal justice bodies in academia, the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. The reviewer was guided by the CCSU Provost’s standards for the external review, as well as other documents provided by the University, especially the Department’s Academic Program Review.
III. The University’s questions about the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice

1a. Does the program have clear student learning outcomes?

Yes. The Department’s student learning outcomes are laid out in logical fashion in the Department’s Program Review, page 21 for undergraduates (B.A.) and page 27 for graduate students (M.S.). The undergraduate outcomes focus appropriately on theory and the application of theory. For example, outcome 1 expects knowledge of the “criminal justice system” and “criminological theory” and outcome 5 expects “an understanding of diverse populations and cultures, and how their experiences differ throughout the criminal justice system.”

The outcomes for students in the masters program are similarly clear. The outcomes include the expectation that M.S. graduates will have the ability to analyze data, present research proposals and findings, and apply models of crime to offender populations. To evaluate the data it collects on these outcomes, the Department assesses M.S. students’ theses or special projects. In addition, the Department’s instructors complete discrete, clear evaluations of students’ research abilities for outcome 2 (regarding research proposals and findings). Also, the Department’s instructors complete assessments of students’ performance on specific exam questions and measure their performance on a particular paper to measure outcomes 3 and 4 (of 4), which pertain to students’ abilities to work in diverse systems and apply theoretical models to enable proper intervention in offender populations.

In evaluating outcomes, the Department has a significant advantage over many academic departments in that its undergraduate students work as interns and its graduate students are usually working in or have experience in the criminal justice system. This permits the Department to measure student outcomes in actual working circumstances prior to the students’ graduation.

Given the Department’s extensive internship program, a requirement for every major, and because the Department uses the internship program, in part, to measure student outcomes, the Department might add one additional outcome focused on the students’ internship program. For example, student interns working in the probation area might have to investigate an offender’s history before they can write or contribute to writing a probation report. A new outcome might state: “Demonstrate the ability to understand and apply theory in practical settings by examining to what extent the intern’s agency has adopted the intern’s work product, such as written reports or oral recommendations.” This outcome should not require additional resources because the students could often simply produce their work product. Student interns usually work in the public sector, where documents must be made public. If the students’ work product is not publicly available, the students could be required to summarize their work in a short report.

1b. To what extent do program faculty gather and present data on student learning?

The faculty presentation of data was clear and informative. The Department’s Program Review contains 11 pages on student learning outcomes, as well as the data the Department collected to measure the outcomes and an analysis of the data. The Department analyzed the data
objectively. For example, the faculty noted that undergraduate students writing performance appears to have waned because of a lack of faculty time to run a writing program. The Program Review was particularly precise in identifying a method by which to enable even more M.S. students to graduate (discussed below).

1c. To what extent do program faculty rely on direct measures of student learning that are aligned with program outcomes?

The Department’s methods of assessment extend well beyond final grades. This extension is attributable to the Department’s diligence and the nature of criminology and criminal justice, which involves significant work experiences early in a student’s or graduate’s career. This kind of academic/vocational discipline and the Department’s expectations create an environment where students learn and then quickly apply theory in practice circumstances.

It appears that graduate students have some difficulty completing the thesis requirement, which is understandable given that many of the graduate students have been away from academia for many years and do not have to produce comprehensive written documents as part of their full-time jobs. This probably indicates that the Department’s learning outcomes for graduate students can be evaluated, in part, by determining how many of the students complete the thesis. Broadly speaking, the Department’s requirement that criminal justice M.S. students complete a thesis seems to be a reasonable and effective means to measure graduate students’ learning. This requirement should be retained because students in criminal justice usually have many practice or field opportunities, but they need more exposure to theories, ethics, and standards in criminal justice and more opportunities to apply theory to practice. Exposure to theory and the application of theory can occur effectively through the production of a thesis.

2. To what extent are students meeting student learning outcomes as set by the program faculty?

The majority of students are meeting or exceeding expectations on all indicators. The undergraduate students are meeting the learning outcomes. The Department evaluates students on the basis of faculty ratings and supervisor ratings (that is, the student intern’s field supervisors).

The following is a summary of the faculty ratings in regard to the students who “exceed expectations:

- In 2011-2012, on the Demonstrate Knowledge outcome, faculty members found that 35% of students “exceed expectations.” They had found in 2009-2010 that 39% of students exceed expectations.

- In 2011-2012, on the Interpret and Apply outcome, faculty members found that 29% of students “exceed expectations.” They had found in 2009-2010 that 40% of students exceed expectations.
• In 2011-2012, on the Communicate in Oral and Written Forms outcome, faculty members found that 32% of students “exceed expectations.” They had found in 2009-2010 that 37% of students exceed expectations.

This appears to indicate a decline over the past three academic years in the percentage of students who are exceeding the faculty’s expectations. But, in regard to the percentage of students who “do not meet expectations,” in two of the three outcomes the percentage of students has decreased.

Most or all of the student interns meet or exceed the expectations of the agencies for which they work. The following is a summary of the supervisors’ ratings on three outcomes in regard to the percent of students who “exceed expectations” on supervisor ratings:

• In 2011-2012, on the Critically Evaluate Information outcome, the supervisors found that 65% of the students exceed expectations. They had found in 2009-2010 that 61% exceed expectations. They had found in 2006-2007 that 68% exceed expectations.

• In 2011-2012, on the Demonstrate an Understanding of Populations and Cultures outcome, the supervisors found that 53% of the students exceed expectations. They had found in 2009-2010 that 46% exceed expectations. They had found in 2006-2007 that 68% exceed expectations.

• In 2011-2012, on the Communicate in Oral and Written Forms outcome, the supervisors found that 51% of the students exceed expectations. They had found in 2009-2010 that 61% exceed expectations. They had found in 2006-2007 that 63% exceed expectations.

This appears to indicate, in two of three outcomes, an increase over the past three academic years in the percentage of students who are exceeding the supervisors’ expectations. This appears to indicate that supervisors’ ratings of the students who “exceeded expectations” declined on the three outcomes from 2006-2007 to 2009-2010.

Thus, over the past six years, supervisors saw a 3-year decline and then a 3-year increase in the percentage of students who “exceeded expectations.” The University should note well that a decline in student performance, as measured by supervisors’ expectations, occurred when the number of majors in the Department increased precipitously. The number of majors was just over 500 in the fall of 2006. By the fall of 2010, the number of majors jumped to 625. This is the time period when, according to the supervisors, a decline in the percentage of students who exceeded expectations occurred.

From 2009-2010 to 2011-2012, students’ performance, at least measured by their supervisors, improved. This is the time period when the number of majors decreased, from 625 in the fall of 2010 to approximately 550 in the fall of 2012.

A decrease in the number of majors is tantamount to an increase in Departmental resources, at least in relationship to resources per student. Nonetheless, it should be noted that even if the
Department had experienced an increase in faculty members and resources at the beginning of or during a temporary decline in student’s who exceed their supervisors’ expectations (beginning in 2006-2007), the increase in resources would likely be too late to meet student needs given the sharp surge in the number of majors in such a short period of time. The Department, in its Program Review (pages 26-27), has aptly indicated the adverse effects of the enrollment surge, absent an increase in resources.

In criminal justice, resources, such as new professors, should be added at the beginning of growth. Late resource allocations might not stem a decline in student performance, which can occur very quickly. Criminal justice faculty members must integrate into local and state bureaucracies and agencies over a period of years to meet the needs of students who will intern and, after graduation, work in those agencies. Faculty members, such as many of those in the CCSU Department, conduct work and research in those agencies and receive grants from those agencies, all to the benefit of Central Connecticut State University and its students. New faculty members might not be fully equipped for several years to help confront the challenges of a surge in the number of majors in the Department.

Regarding the Department’s graduate students, it appears that they meet or exceed the faculty’s expectations. This Report agrees with the Department’s assessment that more data and additional years are necessary to evaluate the graduate program. As noted below, the Department should consider whether some M.S. students should be allowed to remain in the program and graduate seven or more years after first entering the program. A long time between beginning and ending the program might be an indicator that some M.S. students are not meeting expectations.

3. To what extent do program faculty use student learning outcome data to inform their curriculum and/or make adjustments? Is this use of information appropriate?

The Department has been flexible and innovative in using data to make adjustments to the program and the curriculum. The Department has responsibilities that seem unique. These responsibilities can create pressures that might not exist within other departments at the University. Upon graduation, the goal of the Department is that each graduate will be employable immediately or prepared for graduate study. This is an ambitious but appropriate goal. Unlike many college graduates today, criminal justice graduates, such as police officers, have relatively good employment prospects. On the first day of work, they will have great responsibility to criminal offenders, crime victims, probationers or parolees, judges, and prosecutors and defense attorneys, as well as to the state of Connecticut generally.

The Department seems to have responded exceptionally well to the needs of students, the University, and Connecticut. On a programmatic level, the Department has modified its undergraduate curriculum to meet a burgeoning student population; has created a “cohort” model for graduate students so that they may study together; has taught the cohort’s students where the students are (a police department); and has taught courses in Waterbury. The Department will teach courses online during the fall 2013 semester.
At the course level, with the large influx of undergraduate students, the Department added a “gateway” course, in which students had to earn a grade of “B” to enter the major. This course was abandoned. The Department added a new course, Foundations in Criminology, which is aimed at helping prepare first year and transfer students for their work in the Department. The Department now requires the philosophy course, Moral Issues, to help prepare students for the ethical issues they will confront in the criminal justice field.

The Department had integrated a writing program into the curriculum but withdrew the program for lack of resources. Probably as a result of eliminating the writing program, the Department’s faculty members and the students’ internship supervisors, respectively, found a 6% and 14% decrease in students written communication skills in just one year. It is recommended that if the Department does not receive additional resources to re-integrate the writing program the Department should consider dropping other requirements so that the writing program may be reinstated. The Department is considering increasing the Research Methods to a 4-credit course, which might provide an avenue for additional writing, although the Department is considering reinstating the “gateway” course as a method of emphasizing writing.

4a. Do the program courses have sufficient enrollment?

Yes. The University and Department recognize that the Department has experienced a large increase in the number of students after becoming a discrete department in 1999. In about only 10 years, the Department expanded to a high of 625 majors; it has 550 majors now after limiting enrollment. In contrast, most academic departments will gradually gain students as the general population increases and arrive at their maximum number of majors after many decades or generations. The following metaphor might be mixed, but it will make the point. A human will reach her or his maximum weight at about age 60, and perhaps an academic department will reach its maximum number of students in a generation or two or three, perhaps 60 years after its inception for the sake of argument. The Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice reached its maximum weight at about age 10. Such rapid growth is unique and requires appropriate attention and resources.

To say the least, the Department’s courses have sufficient enrollment.

Simultaneously, the Department has increased its graduate student enrollment to meet the needs of working criminal justice professionals in Connecticut. The Department has done this with the “cohort” concept, in which the Department enrolls a cadre of students based on the agencies for which the students work. The first, and current, cohort contains 15 graduate students. The Department’s faculty members travel to the students to teach, that is to the police department where the students work. The cohort program seems like a truly significant and important undertaking for the University and the state of Connecticut. The Department is willing to extend the cohort program, to include probation officers, parole officers, and case managers.
4b. What contribution does the undergraduate program make to the general education program?

The reviewer has to qualify this answer with the caveat that he is not well acquainted with the current CCSU general education program. Nonetheless, the Department’s courses appear to contribute significantly to a general education program. The Department offers a minor in Criminal Justice. Four specific courses in the Department contribute to the General Education Program. They are Introduction to Criminal Justice; Law Enforcement and Society; Ideology and Violence or Gender, Crime, & Criminal Justice; and Diversity & Criminal Justice. The Introduction to Criminal Justice course is part of the First Year Experience program. Two additional Departmental courses are part of the Social Justice minor.

These course offerings seem to constitute a large undertaking by the Department on behalf of the University. That is, Criminal Justice is not usually considered a department where "fundamental" general education courses are offered, such as courses in English, Math, and Psychology. Thus, the Department is providing service to the University wherever students are collecting credit (general education, minors, majors, and internships).

4c. If applicable, what contribution does the program make to interdisciplinary programs?

The Department makes very significant contributions to interdisciplinary programs. Criminal justice is by nature interdisciplinary, from examining the origins of human behavior to regulating or promoting that behavior. The faculty members hold degrees in criminal justice, law, psychology, and sociology. The undergraduate curriculum and graduate curriculum contain courses in every discipline. Criminal justice is one of the most interdisciplinary majors. The Department is representative of that model.

5a. Do a sufficient number of students complete the program?

Yes. As the number of students in the program has increased so has the number of students who have graduated. Increased numbers of graduates might seem like a logical consequence of an increasing enrollment. But, where a program is experiencing explosive growth and dynamic change, more graduates do not necessarily follow from more students. That the Department has continued to increase the number of graduating students indicates the high quality of the program.

In 2003-2004, the number of undergraduates awarded degrees was 60. In the 2011-2012, the number of undergraduates awarded degrees was approximately 148. From 2005 to 2010, the number of majors has ranged from about 550 to 625 (with about 550 now). This indicates that the Department has doubled the graduation rate of students over the past 10 years.

These graduation numbers surpass the guideline for this Report. [“To determine “sufficiency” use the guideline of an average of...10 students completing an undergraduate program over a five-year rolling average.”]
Over the past 5 years, the average number of graduates in the M.S. program is 7.8. From 2006-2007 to 2011-2012, the number of graduates per year was 4, 8, 9, 10, and 8. These numbers surpass the guidelines for this Report. [To determine “sufficiency” use the guideline of an average of five (5) students completing a graduate program over a five-year rolling average.]

5b. Are they graduating in a timely fashion?

Yes, but with a qualification for graduate students. Over the past six years, the average time, in years, that an undergraduate student took to graduate was 4.2, 4.1, 3.9, 3.7, 3.9, and 3.8. This is timely under the guidelines for this Report. [“To determine ‘timely fashion’ use the guideline for time to degree as...4–6 years for an undergraduate program.”]

Regarding the graduate program, the guidelines read: “To determine “timely fashion” use the guideline for time to degree as two-four years for a graduate program.” In the past five years, 39 students obtained the M.S. degree. Of these students, 24 of them completed the program in four or fewer years. Thus, 64% graduated in a timely fashion.

Of these students, 15 of them completed the program in more than four years. Of these 15 students, seven of them took seven or more years to complete their degrees. Thus, 36% graduated in an untimely fashion.

The percentage of students not graduating on time should be closely monitored. Those students consume disproportionate resources. The Department should strongly consider requiring all M.S. students to graduate in a maximum of four years.

6. In what ways do program faculty engage students in curricular activities and those beyond the classroom that include undergraduate research, graduate research, community engagement, and international education?

Outside the courses, one of the most significant and impressive way in which the faculty members engage students is through the internship program, which is required of every student. This requires faculty members to make myriad contacts with agencies throughout Connecticut, especially in the Capital region, and link students with those agencies. The faculty members spend significant time linking the students and the agencies. Faculty members then visit the students at their agencies.

The Department also sponsors The Institute for the Study of Crime and Justice. This is a research arm of the Department that provides students with opportunities to conduct research with faculty and professionals outside the Department. Also, over the past five years, the Department’s professors have obtained over $1 million in funding, which inures to the benefit of students who might be interested in research. Also, the Department has obtained approval to conduct a summer course in Europe for its students. The Department might consider programs in which students can obtain credit by studying abroad for a semester or two.
7a. What future plans does the department report?

The Department has an ambitious and appropriate plan for expanding its undergraduate and graduate programs. The Department wishes to increase the number of students in the undergraduate and graduate programs; increase the graduate students’ completion rates; enhance its web and electronic presence; create international opportunities for students; and continue to develop the Institute for the study of Crime and Justice. These goals seem reasonable and are consistent with the growth of the Department.

7b. Is there a solid rationale for those plans that aligns with the university’s mission and strategic plan?

The Department’s plans seem very consistent with the University’s goals: a focus on international education; workforce and economic development for the state; community engagement; and interdisciplinary studies. With great distinction, the Department is meshing its work with the goals of the University. It appears that the Department could do more to promote international education opportunities, and, as noted above, it has a plan to do that.

As noted in 7a, the Department’s plans are ambitious and appropriate. The number of students who want to become majors in the undergraduate program and study for the M.S. in the graduate program appears to outpace the Department’s ability, for lack of resources, to meet the needs of additional students.

7c. What faculty, space, and financial resources would be needed?

Generally, the Department can meet the needs of its current students with a modest increase in resources. Absent an increase in resources, the Department probably should decrease the enrollment of undergraduate students in the Criminology major. The Department’s current resources are not sufficient to meet any increase in the number of undergraduate or graduate students.

Please also see the Summary Report below for an answer to this question.

For External Reviewers only:

Is the allocation of resources appropriate for each of the department’s programs, i.e. sufficient number of faculty, direct instructional expenditures, etc.? What resource allocations or reallocations appear necessary?

Please see the Summary Report below for an answer to this question.

To what extent does overall faculty creative activity contribute to the discipline?

All evidence shows that the Department’s faculty members are eminently productive and creative. They seem to far surpass their peers at other colleges. It will suffice to refer readers to the Department’s Program Review for a list of book and article publications, conference
presentations, and grants, which total over $1 million in the past five years. Any discipline in Arts and Sciences or Liberal Arts at any university with CCSU’s mission would have difficulty finding a more productive faculty. In criminal justice, this production is extremely important because the state of Connecticut and, in some instances, the nation and other nations look to the professors in this Department for their expertise.

Please also see the Summary Report below.

IV. Summary Report

American society’s keen focus on and support for the topics covered within criminology and criminal justice mean that the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice will have the opportunity to grow almost as much as the University wants it to grow. Despite declining financial support for government, society continues to support the agencies connected to the criminal justice system. Also, the private sector will continue to need employees with experience in the justice system and employees with the skills of a criminal justice graduate. This means that criminal justice graduates will have very good employment prospects.

The Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice is unique in Connecticut. The Department is the only public “full service” criminology and criminal justice department in the state. This includes the University of Connecticut. The Department is centrally located geographically and metaphorically. Near the center of the state, the Department can reach every resident. Near Hartford, the capital, the Department’s students and faculty members have many opportunities with state agencies that are unavailable to students and professors from any other college, public or private.

Thus, it is difficult to overestimate the importance to Connecticut of broadly educated, ethical criminal justice graduates from CCSU. To use a simple example, on her of his first day of work at a police agency, a CCSU criminal justice graduate will be issued a handgun and perhaps a rifle, and also a government automobile. On that first day, at age 21 or 22, that graduate is expected to make complicated life decisions while employing a high degree of legal, ethical cultural, and social judgment, everything that this Department teaches well.

The Department probably can meet its current goals and grow slightly with modest additional resource allocations. A professor to help offset the increased work created by the cohort program seems essential. Several adjunct lines were withdrawn in the past two years. Several adjunct professors would add disciplinary depth to the Department and relieve full-time faculty members who are handling the administrative work of the cohort program. Thus, to meet current needs or grow slightly, the Department should add:

1. One tenure-track professor;
2. Three to four adjuncts per semester; and
3. One administrative person to help with the cohort program.
The Department could grow in several areas. The Department and the University will have to decide which areas, if any, to emphasize. An electronic society needs more graduates with criminal justice skills to meet the needs of business and government. As a result, the Department has available several avenues of growth:

1. Increase the number of majors (B.A.) by simply permitting more students to enroll;

2. Increase the number of cohorts (M.S.), each of which might contain 15 students, by creating cohorts for probation officers and case managers, and other professionals;

3. Add a program or courses concerning computer crime and/or security;

4. An example of where jobs might exist in the computer crime/security area is taken from the job titles of the panelists at a conference from May of 2013:

   a. Deputy Chief for Cyber of the Complex Frauds Unit (prosecutor’s office);
   b. Senior Supervising Examiner of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York;
   c. Vice President, Chief Privacy Officer, Oracle;
   d. Founder & CEO, Cylance (a computer security company);
   e. Deputy Chief of National Security and Cybercrime (prosecutor’s office);
   f. Managing Director, Compliance, Bank of America/Merrill Lynch;

5. Develop programs with the School of Business and/or the Department of Computer Science in regard to numbers 3-4 above;

6. The United States is preparing to revise its immigration laws. This will probably create jobs for criminal justice professionals to regulate immigration, and immigration reform will create opportunities for additional international students to study in the United States;

7. Thus, the Department might recruit international students or develop student or faculty exchange programs with universities in other countries.

Numbers 1-7 above require significant additional resources. The resources that would be needed will depend on what the University wants the Department to become.

Respectfully submitted,

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