

Criminal Justice and Criminology Action Plan Memorandum of Understanding

Status of Action Items from Prior Action Plan

- Produce a PhD proposal in Criminal Justice. **Completed**
- Redesign the graduate curriculum, especially with the plan to assure more choice in the selection of courses **Completed.**
- Increase the number of graduate research assistantships. **Completed.** We increased the number of graduate research assistants, though we have relied on graduate teaching assistantships to support our PhD program and we now need additional graduate assistantships for this new program.
- Increase number of faculty. **Partially completed.** We increased number of faculty lines from 12 in 2002 to 16 in 2009. We now have 15 tenure track lines and 2 non-tenure track lines. With nearly 200 more majors and a 50% increase in credit hours since 2007, additional lines are still needed.
- Address space needs. **Not completed.** While we created a computer lab for graduate students in Kell Hall, we have outgrown our current space and will even have faculty sharing offices in the fall.
- Redesign the undergraduate curriculum. **Completed.**
- Appoint undergraduate coordinator as the point person for undergraduate issues and graduate coordinator to administer the graduate program: **Completed.**
- Hire staff member. **Partially completed.** With our move to AYSPS, we hired an administrative assistant to help with duties done in the past by our former college. We have not yet hired a grant administrator in our department.

Major Findings in Review

External Review Committee

- “The viability of the department is excellent...the scholarly research of the faculty is high, and has notably improved since the last self study”
- An adequately resourced PhD program will allow the program to thrive and compete nationally with top programs.
- “[The faculty] are a vibrant, talented, and research productive faculty, and all seem very enthusiastic about the upward trajectory of the department.”
- “The hiring of senior faculty with strong records of obtaining external funding should become a top priority.”
- “The new monies for the GSU Ph.D. stipends are expected to come from unit resources... without sufficient financial resources, this promising PhD program...will fail to compete and thrive.”
- The department should nurture its relationship with AYSPS with the development of the Center for Crime and Violence Prevention Policy.

Academic Program Review Committee

- The Department’s programs “are central to the life of the University and the City of Atlanta.”
- “Faculty members have increased their research output...and the number of citations has risen dramatically.”
- “The size of the faculty and limited availability of senior faculty members raises concerns about the prospects for the doctoral program.”
- “The Department needs to become more successful at obtaining external research funding.”
- The advising structure should be reviewed and restructured to better serve students.

Specific Research Action Steps Over the Next Seven Years to Improve the Department

The Department will become one of the top urban PhD granting criminal justice/criminology programs in the country by continuing to recruit top scholars and producing competitive graduates from our PhD program. In doing so, we will help the university reach its strategic goal of becoming “one of the nation’s premier research universities” (GSU Strategic Plan). While focusing on all areas related to criminal justice and criminology, the department specifically strives to understand crime and violence within community contexts to inform theory and policy, particularly in urban areas. Faculty members routinely publish in top criminal justice/criminology journals and in top journals in their specialty areas. Past studies have ranked the department high in terms of scholarly output. Four of our faculty members have been highlighted in journals based on their publishing rate/quality and three have been hailed for their external funding amounts. A handful of faculty members have been successful in securing grants and contracts, supporting about a third of our doctoral students on external funds. With the development of our PhD program, the department recognizes the need to become more competitive in securing external research funds.

Also, faculty in the department have already begun to publish regularly with doctoral students, demonstrating the interest that faculty members have in helping their doctoral students to become competitive in their own career searches. As we move forward, we recognize the need to increase our research productivity, place our research in top journals, and carve out our niche in the area of policy-relevant and theory driven violence research. To enhance our research portfolio, the department will carry out the following activities:

- *Set collective targets for total number of publications by the department and external funding.* The targets will be informed by university benchmarks, reported in the department’s annual report and tied to workload.
- *Develop a formal and transparent evaluation system that supports and promotes scholarship, particularly publications in high ranking journals and external funding.* This evaluation system will be developed by our by-laws committee and incorporated as part of our department by-laws.
- *Develop a department workload policy that permits variable allocation of research, teaching, and services responsibilities for individual faculty.* Using the evaluation system as a guide, and with consideration given to the faculty member’s stage of career and overarching departmental need, faculty may be assigned decreased or increased teaching or service loads based upon their research productivity.
- *Develop department-focused initiatives and working groups that will target and acquire external funding for scholarship.* This effort will result in more competitive proposals being submitted and success at procuring external funding for research by bringing together faculty members who have overlapping research interests. Ideally, the working groups would be facilitated by faculty members who have demonstrated success at procuring external funding in the past. In addition to increasing external support for scholarship, this has the additional benefit of mentoring faculty in grantsmanship.
- *Seek senior faculty members and competitive graduate assistantships through the 2CI process and opportunity hires.* The department has submitted 2CI proposals in the areas of Crime and Economics (with Sociology and Economics) and Violence Prevention (with Psychology and Public Health). The department will continue to seek research-active faculty through this hiring mechanism.
- *Use mini-semesters to devote more time to research.* Where feasible, faculty members will be given the opportunity to build their schedules in ways that provide them larger blocks of research time.
- *Explore initiating the Center for Crime and Violence Prevention Policy at the College level with the goal of creating a university center.* The department approved this initiative approved in Spring 2009. It was put on hold due to broader university and college changes. With the department transitioned to AYSPS, this initiative can now be fully developed.
- *Develop additional formal partnerships with criminal justice and community-based agencies.* These partnerships will help in our efforts to acquire federal funding. In line with the university’s strategic plan and the department’s identity, these partnerships will focus on urban agencies.

Specific Teaching Action Steps Over the Next Seven Years to Improve the Department

Our department serves approximately 600 students in our undergraduate program and 50 students in our graduate program. While the programs are separate, we recognize that in order to have a strong graduate program, we must first have a strong undergraduate program. A strong undergraduate program creates a foundation of graduates who will bring name recognition to the program from across the region, while a strong graduate program will enhance the department's national reputation. Consistent with the University's strategic plan, we aim to produce students who are critical and ethical thinkers, knowledgeable about the issues of crime and justice, competent in understanding the tools used in the development of scientific knowledge, and prepared for leadership positions in public and private sector agencies that address crime and justice problems. To ensure that we are providing an education to our students that is consistent with the University's strategic plan and allows them to graduate in a timely manner, we will engage in the following steps:

- *Identify appropriate course sequencing to enhance time towards degree.* Students often take introductory courses too late in their academic career. Our statistics and research methods courses continue to have high DWF rates. The undergraduate committee will determine how course sequencing can be used to reduce the DWF rates in these courses.
- *Develop a curriculum map.* An ad hoc committee will develop a curriculum map to demonstrate how the courses fit together and reduce redundancy between courses.
- *Develop/revise evaluation system for PTIs and Graduate Teaching Assistants.* With the development of our PhD program, we have increasingly relied on doctoral students to teach undergraduates and we have always relied on PTIs. The Department will implement a structured evaluation system for GTAs and revise its system for evaluating PTIs.
- *Clearly define advising structure that utilizes tenure-track faculty for career mentoring and professional staff and non-tenure track faculty for academic advising.* Department advising changed with the transition to AYSPS. The new advising system appears to be far better than the original system. However, the department needs to clearly define the advising process for students, faculty, staff, the undergraduate coordinator, and the graduate program coordinator. These activities will be coordinated with the AYS Office of Academic Assistance and AYS Career Services.
- *Expand use of Alpharetta campus for criminal justice courses.* We recently began offering courses at Alpharetta. Enrollments have been low. We will improve our marketing and recruitment strategies to draw students to Alpharetta in order to offer more scheduling opportunities for our majors.
- *Determine need for a professional master's track, executive graduate degree, and training institute for public safety professionals.* We will explore how the department might better reach potential students through creative programs and formats. Ad hoc committees will explore different strategies that can be used to educate public safety professionals and make recommendations to the department.
- *Develop hybrid courses to determine if part of program should be placed online.* The department will begin to offer select courses through a hybrid format. The aim will be to determine whether additional courses should be offered through this medium.
- *Develop a study abroad program in the department.* The department will develop a study abroad program for criminal justice majors to increase the number of majors participating in study abroad experiences.
- *Develop additional PERS courses.* We will develop two additional Perspectives courses to be offered in the University core. These courses will help the university to have enough courses in the core and will replace Perspectives courses we no longer teach.
- *Balance reliance on PhD students as GTAs.* We have potentially overburdened some PhD students as instructors. We must not increase their use as GTAs in the future and should limit their use as GTAs where feasible.

Approved

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