



Office of the Acting Vice President
For Academic Affairs

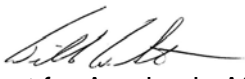
P.O. Box 6910
Radford, Virginia 24142

Phone (540) 831-5404
FAX (540) 831-5142

Email: wstanton@radford.edu

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Isaac Van Patten
Chair, Department of Criminal Justice

FROM: Wilbur W. Stanton 
Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Graduate Criminal Justice Program Review

DATE: 21 August 05

COPY: Dr. Paul Sale, Chair of the Academic Program Review Committee
Academic Program Review Committee Members
Penelope W. Kyle, President
Dr. Ivan Liss, Dean, College Arts and Sciences
Dr. Carole Seyfrit, Dean, College of Graduate and Extended Education

Introduction

Academic program review is designed to assure regular examination of the University's curricula and academic structure and guide recommendations for improving academic quality. In addition, the process guides the effective allocation of resources, encourages continuous faculty and program development, and provides a rationale for making decisions about maintaining, enhancing, reconfiguring, or phasing out programs as required by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and/or as indicated through other analyses and by other criteria. Further, the Program Review process provides a tool for working with departments and academic programs to implement the University's Strategic Plan. For the process to be fully effective, departments and programs must commit themselves to following through after the initial self-study and analysis by responding to the recommendations and/or required actions of the Academic Program Review Committee (APRC), the appropriate dean, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, the APRC and the academic programs under review worked with program review criteria that were approved in April 2003. I commend the Academic Program Review Committee for the diligent, thoughtful review of academic programs and for the

report detailing its study and recommendations. Moreover, I commend each of the academic programs that undertook the self-study required to develop and present reports that allowed the APRC to complete its work.

This memorandum completes the first stage of the Academic Program Review process. Included in this memorandum are the APRC's specific program recommendations for the Graduate Criminal Justice Program. Also included are the APRC's overall recommendations.

Observations Pertaining to All Programs in General

I have several general observations that come from the reading of all the program review materials:

1. While graduate programs need not make specific references to the QEP (since implementation of the QEP has an undergraduate focus), graduate programs should discuss responses to recommendations for programmatic changes and improvements, giving special attention to those program modifications designed to enhance student engagement.
2. We need to continue efforts to collect alumni data. For example, helpful information may include alumni employment data, satisfaction with the program, and recommendations for improvement. This information is burdensome for individual programs to collect and maintain. Therefore, I am working with the Division of Institutional Research to enhance University coordination with programs and thus facilitate centralization of the data for program use during review processes. The APRC committee recommended that this information be gathered in possibly 1, 3, and 5 year intervals. While this would be robust and useful for program enhancement, the ability for the university to implement this will be dependent upon faculty workloads and the capacity for Institutional Research to design, gather, analyze, and disseminate resulting data. At a minimum, however, this must be part of every program review cycle meaning that alumni data must be collected once every five years as part of the self-study.
3. Finally, programs continue to make good cases for faculty and staff needs. It will remain increasingly important in a continuing environment of constrained resources that Radford University use the academic program review process to contribute to the determination of how to most effectively deploy available resources. We will continue to use the state's rubric (Schedule M) as a major determinant of workload expectations, but this metric alone cannot fully capture the uniqueness of a program and its centrality or contribution to the mission of the University. During the next academic year, I will work with the Council of Deans to explore a more inclusive set of workload criteria while retaining the state's workload principles.

Observations for the Graduate Criminal Justice Program

The following observations, recommendations, and conclusions are based on my review of APRC's analysis and Program Review Report, the self-study of the Graduate Criminal Justice Program submitted by the Department of Criminal Justice and the comments and recommendations submitted by Deans Liss and Seyfrit.

The Committee and Deans Seyfrit and Liss noted several strengths of the Graduate Criminal Justice Program. I concur with these.

1. Since the previous program review in 1997-98, the department has carefully and thoughtfully considered and reacted to the recommendations that emerged from that review. As a result, several actions have been taken that have moved the program forward.
 - a. The faculty have made increased efforts to maintain appropriate professional activity and visibility within the criminal justice community.
 - b. Study Abroad programs in the department have given some graduate students opportunities for international study and experience.
 - c. The internship program has received greater attention, although most students taking internships are undergraduate students.
 - d. Further attention has been paid to recruiting and to the availability of extended campus graduate programs. Unfortunately graduate enrollment suffered a dangerous decrease for a period after the previous program review. However, with a change in program coordinators and careful attention paid to this concern, enrollments are rising.
 - e. An accelerated master's degree program has now been initiated. Given the large undergraduate criminal justice program at RU, this accelerated program has the potential of substantially increasing graduate enrollment.
 - f. The core curriculum for the graduate program has been changed, new courses have been added to the program, the comprehensive examination process has been changed, the use of technology in teaching has been expanded, and interdisciplinary courses with the departments of Geology and Psychology have been created and offered.
2. The department has carefully considered and acted in offering extended campus programs. Such a program was developed at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon. Because of a lack of ongoing enrollment, this will be phased out after the current cohort finishes.
3. The department is emphasizing participation in service learning and research activities for its graduate students. This will include encouraging students to complete the thesis option of the graduate degree. Students taking this option will then be better positioned to present their research at professional conferences or in scholarly journals. Such emphases are noted in the department's Quality Enhancement Plan.
4. The faculty have shown a willingness to examine all aspects of their program (recruiting, curriculum, course sequencing, viability of extended education programs, etc.) and make improvements. Examples include but are not limited to delivering the master's program to Abingdon, then proactively reassessing the program's viability to sustain another cohort (resulting in the decision not to begin another cohort); active involvement of faculty in graduate recruiting; development of an accelerated program; and initiating weekend scheduling in the Roanoke program.

5. The faculty have developed an accelerated bachelor's/master's program. This program appears to be an attractive opportunity for undergraduates. It should positively affect the number of graduate students over the next few semesters as the students complete their bachelor's degrees and move to graduate status. More than a dozen undergraduate Criminal Justice majors have applied to date.
6. Identification of service learning and research participation as QEP objectives. This strengthens the already positive focus on combining theory, research, and practice.
7. The department's participation and cooperation in interdisciplinary opportunities and extended education activities. There are many examples including the 2+2 undergraduate program at VWCC, crime analysis courses with geographers, discussions of an interdisciplinary forensic studies certificate; submission of a CGS/Ford Foundation grant; and collaboration in investigating the feasibility of professional social science master's degrees.

The Graduate Criminal Justice Program has made a positive contribution to the Graduate College, the College of Arts and Sciences, and to Radford University as a whole.

As noted by the Committee, Dean Liss, and Dean Seyfrit, there are three areas that raised some concern, and I concur with these.

1. The growth in and size of the undergraduate program is constraining and reducing the department's capacity to deliver the graduate program. Given the current number of full-time faculty members, the department is overextended.
2. Limited resources are currently allocated to support a forensic studies, certificate, concentration, and/or courses. There is documented student interest in forensic studies and crime analysis. There are faculty from a number of departments interested in collaborating in this field. However, resources are needed in the form of appropriate instructional space, secure storage for instructional materials, and more faculty capacity in forensics (either new faculty with related expertise or qualified adjuncts for other courses allowing current faculty to offer forensic studies courses).
3. Teaching loads for graduate faculty are high, especially if a goal is to increase the number of theses completed. Page 39 lists teaching loads, but it isn't clear what constitutes "a course" given that five faculty members are listed as teaching more than four courses in the fall, including Dr. Atwell who has two courses for reassigned time. Are directed studies and thesis supervision included as individual courses? Regardless, the number of students taught and the number of courses taught are very high when one considers the degree of interaction and individualized attention needed between faculty and graduate students.

Recommendations and Conclusions for the Graduate Criminal Justice Program

The APRC made six recommendations, and I concur.

1. The Committee noted that enrollment demands have stretched faculty resources and recommend that current enrollment and staffing issues must be addressed. I concur. The Department of Criminal Justice has continued to support enthusiastically their graduate program while coping with more undergraduate majors. They continue their commitment to extended education at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. In

order to continue to develop and strengthen the graduate program and increase the service learning and research participation of graduate students (as noted in the QEP), this department needs more faculty. I encourage you to monitor enrollment trends carefully, and to work with your dean to proactively address faculty and related staffing needs. Last year Dean Liss was authorized to hire an additional faculty member in Criminal Justice, and that faculty member will begin this fall. In addition, I have authorized Dean Liss to open a search for another faculty member to begin in the fall of 2006. I concur with the recommendation of Dean Liss in that the "department should develop a long range staffing plan that reflects its needs in its undergraduate and graduate programs and in its service to the region and state."

2. While the faculty in the department are all contributing to the success of the Program, only one tenured/tenure track faculty member holds a terminal degree in Criminal Justice. As noted by Dean Liss, the remainder of the faculty hold terminal degrees in related fields (anthropology, political science, history, psychology, sociology, etc.). It seems appropriate to have a balance of faculty with degrees in Criminal Justice and related and supporting disciplines. Therefore, the next faculty hires should require a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice or Criminology. As the program builds its faculty, consideration should be given to the forensic studies minor and associated coursework.
3. I concur with the APRC in that I encourage the Criminal Justice Program to pursue plans for garnering resources adequate for building a forensics and/or crime scene lab to support the forensics studies minor.
4. When faculty teach graduate courses, their teaching loads should be adjusted relative to faculty teaching no graduate courses. Working with the deans and department chairs, departments should consider ways to recognize thesis direction, thesis committee membership, and comprehensive examination committee time in graduate faculty workloads.
5. There should be a closer collaboration with the Graduate College to develop more proactive recruiting plans and targeted activities. Although the department and the graduate college have increased program specific recruiting in Criminal Justice, more can be done to create opportunities in a more deliberate and targeted fashion. An important element is for the department to clearly articulate why their program should be the program of choice.
6. I concur with Dean Seyrit's recommendation that the Graduate Criminal Justice Program should continued work with other departments in developing post-baccalaureate certificates. These efforts will also address to some extent the need for more flexibility in the electives available to master's students majoring in criminal justice.

I commend the APRC for making recommendations whose intentions are clearly to strengthen the Graduate Criminal Justice Program.

It is essential that that faculty in the Graduate Criminal Justice Program immediately undertake the work required to secure these improvements. In doing so, the Department Chairperson and the faculty members in the Criminal Justice Program should work collaboratively and persistently with the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to make the changes and improvements that are recommended.

Following the Program Review Guidelines, “the Department Chair or Program Coordinator will submit a report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and appropriate Dean(s) on or before April 1 [2006], indicating how the program has addressed recommendations of the Academic Program Review Committee and any recommendations from the Dean(s) or Vice President for Academic Affairs.”

In conclusion, the graduate program in Criminal Justice is doing commendable work with strong enrollments. The faculty are professionally active and remain current while the major remains very attractive to new students. Therefore, the Graduate Criminal Justice Program should be maintained.