

Message From the Chair

Welcome to the latest issue of Criminal Justice News! In this issue we highlight some of the department accomplishments during the 2016-2017 academic year. It is hard to believe the Fall 2016 semester is already behind us and we are well into 2017. It seems each academic year goes by faster—either this is a sign that we are all very busy here at WSU, or I am getting older (or both).

The Fall 2016 semester was marked by a number of highlights. In August, we welcomed a number of enthusiastic and hard-working MA and PhD students. The number of undergraduate majors continues to grow with our advisees now totaling over 700 in Pullman and 150 online. We saw more than 50 undergraduates graduate in December, and anticipate more than 100 will graduate in the Spring. Interest in the major continues to grow, spurred no doubt by wonderful recruiting and advising provided by Sis Keopanapay and Andrea Butcherite.

We have endeavored to improve our undergraduate program in a number of ways. We have completed a revision of the curriculum which goes into effect in Fall 2017. This “new and improved” curriculum will allow students to take additional criminal justice courses and ensure that all of our majors are exposed to all aspects of the criminal justice system. We reduced the size of our undergraduate classes and added more sections to our required courses, to improve the classroom environment and facilitate student matriculation. We have taken advantage of the smaller class sizes to increase the number of writing assignments in our classes—something that our students need and prospective employers want. We offered additional seated and online Summer classes, and several online classes during the December Intersession, in an effort to help student matriculate in a timely manner.

Our graduate program is also evolving in many positive ways. Every eligible PhD has been provided funding of some sort—either as a Research Assistant on a grant or as a Teaching Assistant. This financial assistance makes it easier for graduate students to focus on their coursework and to move through the program in a timely manner. We have also increased the stipend for our PhD students so they can focus on their studies and are less likely to need to seek additional employment outside of WSU or to take out large student loans. We continue to have great success placing our PhD graduates in academic positions—all of our PhD graduates in the last three years have accepted faculty or criminal justice agency researcher positions.

Department faculty continue to conduct fascinating and important research. The Washington State Institute for Crime and Justice Research continues to collaborate with the Washington Department of Corrections and the

department has established a working relationship with the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA). The OYA is generously providing the funds to support one PhD student a year as a Research Assistant, and this student works on projects of mutual interest to the OYA and the department. The department obtained grant funds for several new research projects, including a study of traffic fatalities in Washington that involved drivers with THC in their bloodstream, and a three-year, \$1 million grant from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to study the impact of marijuana legalization on policing and the criminal justice system.

Faculty and graduate students presented their research at several conferences, including the American Society of Criminology meeting in November. Faculty (and graduate students) published several books and a number of articles in peer-reviewed academic journals.

Last Fall was very busy and very productive. This semester looks to be every bit as busy and even more productive. In March, Dr. Neuilly will again take a group of students on a one-week Study Abroad trip to London. The annual department awards ceremony, hosted by Alpha Phi Sigma, will be held in April, and at that event our faculty will have the happy opportunity to hand out more scholarship funds than ever before, thanks to several very generous donations by our alumni. This year, the department is soliciting funds for a new graduate student scholarship.

I look forward to working with everyone to make the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology one of the leading departments at Washington State University and across the country.

Craig Hemmens

