

THE HISTORY OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

THE BEGINNING YEARS

In one sense, Washburn University has had a long interest in understanding and responding to the crime problem. In the early 1920s, when he was an adjunct professor, Dr. Karl Menninger taught courses in criminology and penology. In reflecting on those days, Dr. Karl was pleased that he was able to take his students to the Kansas State Penitentiary at Lansing, not only for tours, but also for extended periods of interaction with inmates.

In 1970, federal funds became available to the states to address the crime problem and prepare personnel for employment in the criminal justice system. Washburn University was invited by the Governor's Committee on Criminal Administration, headed by the late Tom Regan, to submit a proposal for offering a correctional degree program. A faculty and administration committee was formed to conduct a study and develop a plan for implementation of a four-year degree program in corrections.

Principle members of the committee were Professor George Simpson and Dr. Harry Wade of the American Citizenship Department (history and political science), Dr. Arthur Markendorf, Chair of the Sociology Department, Dr. Hugh Leach, Business and Economics, and Dr. Jim Young, Dean for Special Instructional Programs. George Simpson served as the staff member for the committee as it surveyed the potential market for a corrections degree program, developed its curriculum, and submitted a proposal through University channels to the Governor's Committee.

In retrospect, the Washburn University Committee did a very good job in planning for Washburn's first academic major in criminal justice. The Committee combined existing courses with new ones needed to prepare students for careers in the field. From the outset, the Committee seemed committed to blending practice and academic concepts in its new program. The Committee recommended that the Criminal Justice program require an internship for all students, an innovative approach in 1971. The Committee also was committed to recruiting faculty with substantial experience in the field of criminal justice—a commitment the program has retained to this day.

Over the next several decades, the Department of Criminal Justice moved to the forefront of criminal justice education in Kansas. In the late 1970s, a law enforcement option was added to the existing corrections degree.



Above: Original Criminal Justice faculty gather for a working lunch to discuss department news. Left to right: Dr. Karl Menninger, Ted Heim, Martin Ahrens, Michael Barbara and Dean Strickland.

THE GROWING YEARS

The success of the criminal justice department is in large part credited to the work of Ted Heim during the beginning years. Anyone who was associated with criminal justice in the 1970s and 1980s (student and practitioner alike) equated criminal justice education with Ted Heim and vice versa. As with anything, though, change was inevitable and Ted decided it was time to hand the reigns to someone else and assume Emeritus status.



Criminal Justice Association (1987)

In 1993, Dr. David McElreath was selected chair of the Department of Criminal Justice, and a new era of program growth began. Dr. McElreath came to Washburn University from Southeast Missouri State University. His background and interests were grounded in criminal justice and military service. It's not surprising that a military and strategic studies minor was added to the criminal justice program.

During the 1990s, additional faculty were added to the Department and opportunities were created in the Kansas City area to reach out to distance learners. A Master of Criminal Justice degree was introduced in 1996 and faculty began teaching online.

In March 2004, Dr. Gary Bayens was appointed chairperson of the Criminal Justice Department. Dr. Bayens had been a full-time faculty member since 1996. During the next two years, several changes were made to the undergraduate and graduate curricula and many of the operational practices to strengthen the criminal justice program. At the same time, a concerted effort was made to hire several new faculty members who were well-known for their scholarly activity and teaching experience. As a result, Dr. Angela Crews, Dr. Rich Johnson, Dr. Gordon Crews, and Dr. Sam Newland joined the criminal justice faculty in 2006 and 2007. Coupled with a group of seasoned faculty in Dr. Cliff Roberson, Dr. Ron Tannehill, Professor Emeritus Ted Heim, Dr. Phyllis Berry, Mr. Michael Manske, Mr. Joseph Ruskowitz, and Mr. Terry Knowles, the Criminal Justice Department employed some of the most respected and highly sought after faculty members in the country.

During this time period, the department also engaged in an outside program review by the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) and pursued certification of its Graduate Program. The ACJS Certification is designed to evaluate evidence-based compliance with the Certification Standards. This 2+ year academic review culminated in September 2007, when the department was notified that the MCJ graduate degree was approved for full certification. [The Department became the first criminal justice graduate program in the country to be certified under the new ACJS National Certification Standards.](#)

In June 2006, the Criminal Justice Department established a study abroad and exchange program with The University of the West of Scotland in Hamilton, Scotland. Since then four student groups (2006, 2008, 2011, 2013) have traveled to Scotland to study comparative justice issues for two weeks and visit many historical sites in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and other cities in Scotland. In addition to this international opportunity, the department began developing other educational prospects for students in Belize (Central America) and Ghana (Africa).

In October 2006, the Department celebrated its 35th anniversary. University officials, community leaders, former faculty, and students attended many of the activities that coincided with Homecoming and Alumni Fellows Weekend to commemorate this achievement. Two new student scholarships were established through the support of the adjunct instructors and emeriti professors. Later in the year, a Criminal Justice Lecture Series was established to bring national and international speakers to Washburn University for public lectures, classroom appearances, and interaction with students.

THE CURRENT YEARS

In the spring semester of 2007, a Criminal Justice Lecture Series was established to bring national and international speakers to Washburn University for public lectures, classroom appearances, and interaction with students. The series opened with Professor Geraldine O'Donnell, Director of the Justice Program at The University of the West of Scotland, Scotland,

UK and closed with Deputy Commissioner George Asiamah, Ghana's Police Service, Ghana, Africa.

In the spring semester of 2008, Criminal Justice Lecture Series continued at WU. The Military & Strategic Studies Program, with the assistance of the Campus Outreach Lecture Program of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, sponsored a presentation by Dr. Geoff Megargee. Later that year, students who had traveled to Scotland to participate in the Comparative Justice International Program made a presentation at the Day of Transformation.

In 2009, Sam Houston State University conducted a study to assess the leading criminal justice book authors and ranked their institutional affiliation. The number one ranking was awarded to Washburn University Criminal Justice Professor Cliff Roberson in four of five measures (e.g. number of publications and prestige ranking with the numbered edition of the publication). When measures of averaged per capita, weighted contribution, prestige and edition were taken on book publication productivity by institution, Washburn ranked sixth (6th) in the nation. The important finding of the study as it relates to Washburn University can be summed up in one major point - books are widely read and reviewed by peers in the academic community and only the best are adopted to disseminate criminal justice knowledge to students. Congrats to our colleague Dr. Cliff Roberson.

Later in 2009, programs in legal studies were merged with criminal justice and military & strategic studies programs to form a new Criminal Justice & Legal Studies Department. Longtime faculty members Professor Kay Rute and Associate Professor Richard Martin continued to share their expertise as legal scholars to students pursuing para-legal certificates, 2-year associate degrees, and 4-year baccalaureate degrees.

During 2010-2011, the department continued its efforts to develop online courses for distance students. Additionally, new internship placements were secured through articulation agreements with agencies in federal, state, and local law enforcement, the legal system, corrections, loss prevention, and forensics. In the Masters of Criminal Justice degree program, a new non-thesis option was approved to offer more flexibility to graduate students.

In 2012, an effort to increase the mentoring of undergraduate students in community service and scholarly activities was spearheaded by Dr. Harrison Watts (Associate Professor of Criminal Justice). During the year, the WU Criminal Justice Student Association grew to 120 members and students completed many service learning projects in the community. Moreover, 40 students presented poster and panel presentations at regional conferences and national Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences conferences. Also, new student scholarships were established and students interested in study abroad, scholarly activity, and community service were supported financially to pursue their interests through funding by WU's transformational experience program.

In 2013, Dr. Patricia Dahl (Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice) established the first Kansas state student chapter of the American Correctional Association. Also, a partnership was forged with the Kansas Bureau of Investigations to create opportunities for students interested in CSI as the new Kansas Crime Laboratory is being constructed on the WU campus and scheduled to open in 2015.