

**Detailed Assessment Report for
2006-2007 Criminal Justice MS**

MISSION

The mission of the Department of Criminal Justice is to generate and disseminate knowledge and information that is theoretically driven and policy relevant for the fields of criminal justice and criminology. This is accomplished by (1) engaging in research and scholarly activities to address issues of crime and justice affecting diverse populations in urban settings; (2) producing students who are critical and ethical thinkers, knowledgeable about the issues of crime and justice, and prepared for leadership positions in public and private sector agencies that address crime and justice problems; and (3) collaborating with public and private agencies through education, training, and research ventures that enhance our understanding of, and response to, issues associated with crime and the administration of justice. Through these activities, the Department strives to promote basic principles of justice that enhance the criminal justice profession and benefit the community at large.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Outcome/Objective 1:

Understand Theory

Full Description:

Students will demonstrate a working understanding of the theoretical knowledge base in criminology and criminal justice.

A Student Learning Outcome? Yes

Strategic Plan Initiatives:

- [A-3](#): Graduate Experience

Institutional Priorities:

- [PRO-2](#): Excellence in the liberal arts and sciences

Related Measures:

- [M. 1](#): Knowledge Assessment Survey of Thesis Students
- [M. 2](#): Knowledge Assessment Survey of Non-Thesis Students
- [M. 3](#): Alumni Survey

Related Actions:

- [A. 1](#): Capstone Seminar Review
- [A. 2](#): Finalization of Alumni Survey

Outcome/Objective 2:

Critical Thinking

Full Description:

Students will critically analyze crime and justice issues and/or information utilizing theoretical, methodological, and statistical skill bases.

A Student Learning Outcome? Yes

Strategic Plan Initiatives:

- A-3: Graduate Experience

Institutional Priorities:

- PRO-2: Excellence in the liberal arts and sciences

Related Measures:

- M. 1: Knowledge Assessment Survey of Thesis Students
- M. 2: Knowledge Assessment Survey of Non-Thesis Students
- M. 3: Alumni Survey

Related Actions:

- A. 1: Capstone Seminar Review
- A. 2: Finalization of Alumni Survey

Outcome/Objective 3:

Apply Terminology and Theory

Full Description:

Students will apply learned terminology and theory to real-world situations that both relate to and expand outside the fields of criminology and criminal justice.

A Student Learning Outcome? Yes

Strategic Plan Initiatives:

- A-3: Graduate Experience

Institutional Priorities:

- PRO-2: Excellence in the liberal arts and sciences

Related Measures:

- M. 1: Knowledge Assessment Survey of Thesis Students
- M. 2: Knowledge Assessment Survey of Non-Thesis Students
- M. 3: Alumni Survey

Related Actions:

- A. 1: Capstone Seminar Review
- A. 2: Finalization of Alumni Survey

Outcome/Objective 4:

Communicate Effectively

Full Description:

Students will communicate effectively, in oral and written form, their understanding and analyses of crime and justice issues as they apply their knowledge to real-world problems and questions.

A Student Learning Outcome? Yes

Strategic Plan Initiatives:

- A-3: Graduate Experience

Institutional Priorities:

- PRO-2: Excellence in the liberal arts and sciences

Related Measures:

- M. 1: Knowledge Assessment Survey of Thesis Students
- M. 2: Knowledge Assessment Survey of Non-Thesis Students
- M. 3: Alumni Survey

Related Actions:

- A. 1: Capstone Seminar Review
- A. 2: Finalization of Alumni Survey

Outcome/Objective 5:

Discuss Integration of Systems and Processes

Full Description:

Students will discuss an integrated view of crime and criminal justice systems and processes and how the components interact and intersect to provide coordinated justice administration.

A Student Learning Outcome? Yes

Strategic Plan Initiatives:

- A-3: Graduate Experience

Institutional Priorities:

- PRO-2: Excellence in the liberal arts and sciences

Related Measures:

- M. 1: Knowledge Assessment Survey of Thesis Students
- M. 2: Knowledge Assessment Survey of Non-Thesis Students
- M. 3: Alumni Survey

Related Actions:

- A. 1: Capstone Seminar Review
- A. 2: Finalization of Alumni Survey

Outcome/Objective 6:

Apply Research and Statistical Skills

Full Description:

Students will apply acquired research and statistical skill bases to evaluate the quality of scholarly products and their contribution to the fields of criminology and criminal justice.

A Student Learning Outcome? Yes

Strategic Plan Initiatives:

- A-3: Graduate Experience

Institutional Priorities:

- PRO-2: Excellence in the liberal arts and sciences

Related Measures:

- M. 1: Knowledge Assessment Survey of Thesis Students
- M. 3: Alumni Survey

Related Actions:

- A. 2: Finalization of Alumni Survey

MEASURES

Measure 1:

Knowledge Assessment Survey of Thesis Students

Measure Full Description:

The Capstone knowledge assessment survey is a 21-item faculty-rated questionnaire that measures the degree to which students who defended their thesis successfully have met the student learning outcomes. The questionnaire is completed by the student`s thesis supervisor.

Related Outcome(s)/Objective(s):

- Obj. 1: Understand Theory
- Obj. 2: Critical Thinking
- Obj. 3: Apply Terminology and Theory
- Obj. 4: Communicate Effectively
- Obj. 5: Discuss Integration of Systems and Processes
- Obj. 6: Apply Research and Statistical Skills

Target Level:

The desired performance is to have at least 80% of students with averaged rating scores of 4.5 or higher (on a 5-point scale) for each of the six student learning outcomes, as well as for the total measure of learning outcomes.

Findings:

There are no findings to report since no theses were completed during the 2006-2007 academic year. Consequently, no comparison of findings is warranted at this time.

Target Level Achievement: Met

Further Action Planned? No

Measure 2:

Knowledge Assessment Survey of Non-Thesis Students

Measure Full Description:

A shorter version of the capstone knowledge assessment survey is used for the non-thesis students. The 18-item faculty-rated questionnaire is to be completed by the instructor of the capstone seminar shortly after the completion of the course.

Related Outcome(s)/Objective(s):

- Obj. 1: Understand Theory
- Obj. 2: Critical Thinking
- Obj. 3: Apply Terminology and Theory
- Obj. 4: Communicate Effectively
- Obj. 5: Discuss Integration of Systems and Processes

Target Level:

The desired performance is to have at least 80% of students with averaged rating scores of 4.0 or higher (on a 5-point scale) for each of the five student learning outcomes, as well as for the total measure of learning outcomes. Note: For the 2005-2006 review cycle, the target level performance criteria for thesis and non-thesis students were set at the same level; that is, 80% of the students were expected to have averaged rating scores of 4.5 or higher for each of the student learning outcomes, as well as for the total measure of learning outcomes. After further consideration, it has been determined that the criteria

set for non-thesis students was too stringent and that a new target level was needed to reflect more appropriately the expected competencies of the non-thesis students. Thus, the decision has been made to lower the target performance level from 4.5 to 4.0 for non-thesis students. Therefore, two significant distinctions in the target level performance criteria are made between thesis and non-thesis students. First, thesis students must meet all six of the learning outcomes, while the non-thesis students must meet the first five learning outcomes. The non-thesis students are not required to demonstrate an advanced application of research and statistical skills. Second, the non-thesis students must score an average of a 4.0 or higher (i.e., equivalent of an 80%) on the five learning outcomes, while the thesis students must score an average of a 4.5 or higher (i.e., equivalent of a 90%) on the six learning outcomes.

Findings:

Ten non-thesis track students completed the Capstone Seminar during Spring semester, 2007. The average ratings for the five individual learning outcomes ranged from 4.08 to 4.50 (on a 5-point scale). Specifically, the average rating for learning outcome #1 is 4.18, with 90% meeting the desired target performance level of 4.0 or higher. The average rating for learning outcome #2 is 4.08, with 80% meeting the desired target performance level of 4.0 or higher. The average rating for learning outcome #3 is 4.40, with 100% meeting the desired target performance level of 4.0 or higher. The average rating for learning outcome #4 is 4.43, with 100% meeting the desired target performance level of 4.0 or higher. The average rating for learning outcome #6 is 4.50, with 100% meeting the desired target performance level of 4.0 or higher. Finally, the average overall rating for the five learning outcomes is 4.26 (on a 5-point scale), with 80% of the students having average rating scores of 4.0 or higher for the total measure of learning outcomes. No comparison of findings are warranted at this time since the capstone seminar for non-thesis track students was not offered or assessed during the 2005-2006 review cycle.

Target Level Achievement: Met

Further Action Planned? Yes

Measure 3:

Alumni Survey

Measure Full Description:

Graduate alumni will be asked to complete a questionnaire, assessing their satisfaction with the program's contribution to their learning in the related outcomes, as well as assessing their satisfaction with the value of their degree for their job placement, future career aspirations, and personal goals. Finally, the survey also will evaluate graduate program recruitment practices; the capstone experience, including the thesis and capstone seminar; and graduate admissions and program services.

Related Outcome(s)/Objective(s):

- **Obj. 1:** Understand Theory
- **Obj. 2:** Critical Thinking
- **Obj. 3:** Apply Terminology and Theory
- **Obj. 4:** Communicate Effectively
- **Obj. 5:** Discuss Integration of Systems and Processes
- **Obj. 6:** Apply Research and Statistical Skills

Target Level:

No target performance levels have been set for the different areas since the survey has not been finalized and piloted. More detailed information about the progress of this project is reported in the Action Plan.

Findings:

The graduate coordinator for the master`s degree program has compiled preliminary questions for the alumni survey. There are no specific findings to report at this time. More detailed information about the progress of this project is reported in the Action Plan.

Target Level Achievement: Partially Met

Further Action Planned? Yes

ACTIONS

Action 1:

Capstone Seminar Review

Full Description

Despite the fact that the capstone seminar provided instruction and assignments that met the learning outcomes for the non-thesis students, the graduate committee has suggested that an assessment of the seminar is necessary before it is taught again in Spring, 2008. To accomplish this task, the graduate coordinator will first meet with the instructor of the capstone seminar to review the instruction plan and course requirements to determine the degree to which the requirements are congruent with the student learning outcomes. Additionally, it must be determined the degree to which the course provides a comprehensive review of the core knowledge in the criminal justice and criminology fields. Next, the graduate coordinator will present the findings from this review to the graduate committee for further discussion and possible changes to the instructional plan and course requirements. The graduate committee will develop a revised course syllabus for the capstone seminar and present it to the department faculty for review and approval. Finally, the syllabus will be submitted to the CHHS Academic Affairs committee for review and approval, followed by its approval at the college`s faculty and staff meeting during the Fall semester, 2007.

Related Objectives:

- Obj. 1: Understand Theory
- Obj. 2: Critical Thinking
- Obj. 3: Apply Terminology and Theory
- Obj. 4: Communicate Effectively
- Obj. 5: Discuss Integration of Systems and Processes

Related Measures:

- M. 2: Knowledge Assessment Survey of Non-Thesis Students

Person/group responsible for the action

Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Committee

Target date to implement the action

End of Fall Semester, 2007

Priority

High

Action 2:

Finalization of Alumni Survey

Full Description

During the 2006-2007 academic year, the Department of Criminal Justice conducted an external search for a new department chair. Dr. Brian Payne was hired and will join the department as the new chair effective July 1, 2007. It is reasonable to expect that Dr. Payne will conduct an evaluation of the B.S. and M.S. programs, as part of a comprehensive assessment of the department's current strategic plan. To this end, the graduate committee would like to allow Dr. Payne the opportunity to review the survey instrument and offer suggested changes and additions to it. Presently, the graduate coordinator has already developed a preliminary draft of the alumni survey. While the major objective of the survey is to serve as a supplemental assessment tool for the student learning outcomes, we also are interested in evaluating recruitment practices, the capstone experience, and graduate admissions and program services. The target date for mailing the alumni survey has been delayed in order to solicit input from Dr. Payne. Once his input has been provided, the graduate committee will finalize the survey and specify the target level performance criteria for the different assessment areas. Then, the committee will present the proposed survey to the department faculty for discussion and approval. Our plan is to have the alumni survey completed and ready for mailing by the end of Spring semester, 2008.

Related Objectives:

- Obj. 1: Understand Theory
- Obj. 2: Critical Thinking
- Obj. 3: Apply Terminology and Theory
- Obj. 4: Communicate Effectively
- Obj. 5: Discuss Integration of Systems and Processes

- [Obj. 6](#): Apply Research and Statistical Skills

Related Measures:

- [M. 3](#): Alumni Survey

Person/group responsible for the action Graduate coordinator and graduate committee

Target date to implement the action End of Spring semester, 2008

Priority Med

Additional resources

The graduate committee will compile an alumni directory database, containing current contact information collected from the GSU Alumni Office.

ANALYSIS

Strength

Our students demonstrated competence in all five of the learning outcome areas, but especially with regard to applying learned terminology and theory to real-world situations, communicating effectively through their capstone paper (i.e., Final Report) and committee reports (i.e., oral defenses), and discussing an integrated view of crime and criminal justice systems and processes and how the components interact and intersect to provide a coordinated justice administration.

Attention Needed

Although the target level criteria were met for the first two learning outcomes, there is evidence that one or two students had difficulty demonstrating a working understanding of the theoretical knowledge base in criminology and criminal justice and/or difficulty critically analyzing crime and justice issues. Specifically, one student did not have a strong working understanding of explanations of the correctional responses to crime and criminality (i.e., having a rating score of 3 on a 5-point scale). Additionally, two students had difficulty critically analyzing the research problem using qualitative and legal methods (i.e., having rating scores of 3 on a 5-point scale). The analysis suggests, although not significantly, that some monitoring of the Research Methods in Criminal Justice (CRJU 8610) and Legal Aspects in Criminal Justice (CRJU 8710) courses may be necessary to determine the degree to which the course content and homework assignments (i.e., research proposal) contribute to students' ability to critically analyze their research problem using qualitative and legal methods.