

# School of Public and Environmental Affairs

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

### Third Year Review - March 2005

#### Indiana University South Bend

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## 1. Executive Summary

SPEA Criminal Justice has a well established assessment protocol stemming back to its initiation in 1994 with its original plan. The plan has been revised throughout the past several years to better meet goals of assessing student and program outcomes. A third year report in 1999 reflected some of these changes focused predominately on gathering feedback relevant to the criminal justice program. These changes included the development of an alumni survey, an employer survey, and a survey to be used with graduating students. Plans were also made to develop a template to be used to “faculty group grade” capstone portfolios (this has not been carried out). A second third year report was completed in 2002. This report included a summary of the data analysis from the survey information. This report also indicated other changes that had occurred during the previous several years relevant to advising and curriculum changes (prerequisites and sequencing of classes prior to the capstone course). Each annual report has reflected any modifications to the plan to better meet the goals of assessment as well as how data analysis has assisted in programmatic changes.

### a. SPEA Mission Statement

The School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA), at the undergraduate level, provides a liberal education with a professional orientation. The SPEA program at IUSB is part of the Indiana University system-wide School of Public and Environmental Affairs, the largest school of its kind in the United States.

The SPEA program represents a multi-disciplinary approach to education in the fields of public affairs and public service management. The academic program integrates the school’s mission – **providing relevant training, technical assistance, and other public service activities** – with its obligation to undertake both basic and applied research. This unique approach provides students with the opportunity to learn in situations beyond, as well as within, the traditional classroom setting. Students are encouraged to assist in research projects, participate in public service efforts, and seek on-the-job training through internships and practicums.

### b. Program Goals

The original SPEA assessment plan of 1994 included six core educational objectives expected of every student graduating with a SPEA degree as stated below:

1. Higher order thinking skills: Develop analytical skills, problem-solving skills, ability to think holistically and creatively, to synthesize and integrate, and to distinguish between fact and fiction.
2. Basic academic success skills: Improve writing, reading, mathematical, computer, speaking and listening skills; develop study skills, strategies, and habits.
3. Discipline-specific knowledge and skills: learn terms, facts, concepts, and theories and techniques and methods used to evaluate them.

4. Liberal arts and academic values: develop openness to new ideas and an informed historical perspective and concern for social issues, an understanding of the role of science and technology, an appreciation of other cultures, and the capacity to make informed ethical choices.
5. Work and career preparation: develop abilities to work productively with others; develop management and leadership skills and a commitment to accurate work; improve ability to organize, follow directions and use time effectively.
6. Personal development: develop respect for others, a capacity to think for one's self and make wise decisions; improve self-confidence and a sense of responsibility for one's own behavior.

In retrospect, it would probably have been more appropriate to state these as the “goals” of SPEA. In the past few years, these original “objectives” were reconfigured into five educational objectives as reflected on the annual report: (1) discipline specific knowledge and skills, (2) personal development and career preparation, (3) basic academic skills, (4) academic values, and (5) higher order thinking skills.

Recently, several learning objectives specific to the BSCJ in SPEA were developed using these 5 general goals as the foundation. They are as follows:

- a. Identify and describe the structure and basic functions of the three general criminal justice components – police, courts, and corrections
- b. Apply basic techniques of research methodology in the study of criminal justice
- c. Understand how criminal justice agencies function from a broader perspective of public affairs
- d. Demonstrate the ability to apply communication, computer, and mathematical skills to content specific information in criminal justice
- e. Demonstrate the ability to integrate various learning experiences from required core courses

## 2. Methodology for Measuring Attainment of Educational Goals and Objectives

In order to specifically measure goal attainment, SPEA Criminal Justice has historically used four methods of program wide assessment: testing, senior exit surveys, alumni surveys, and employer surveys. In combination these methods allow us to better understand whether students have gained discipline specific knowledge and skills, personal development and career preparation, and basic academic skills. Assessing the student's development in higher order thinking skills and academic values comes more from student outcome assessment through individual course assignments such as essays, papers, and projects. For example, the capstone course (J439) requires students to use higher order thinking skills and academic values in responding to essay questions designed to have them integrate information gained from previous courses, current events, and life experiences. It is also in this course that students are required to demonstrate the ability to apply communication, computer, and mathematical skills to content specific information in criminal justice. The research methods course (J202)

requires students to apply basic techniques of research methodology in the study of criminal justice. Both the public management course (V263) and the capstone course (J439) includes essay assignments to assess students' abilities to understand how criminal justice agencies function from a broader perspective of public affairs. Assignments (essay and team projects) included in the introductory course (J101), the policing course (J321), and the corrections course (J331) require students to demonstrate their understanding of the structure and basic functions of the three general criminal justice components – police, courts, and corrections. These are but a few examples of how individual course assignments are used to assess student achievement of specific learning objectives.

In order to conduct program wide assessment, we use the following four basic protocols:

- a. A pre and post **testing** technique was used until fall of 2004 at which time this method of assessing students' learning of specific knowledge was discontinued. Through a detailed analysis of the test items, it was determined that some of the questions may not be reflective of course objectives. We are currently in a stage of deciding how best to proceed with assessing the attainment of specific knowledge on a program wide level. Attainment of specific knowledge and skills on an individual course level for each of the required courses of the curriculum continues through a variety of assessment tools including objective and subjective testing, verbal presentations, and written assignments.
- b. The **senior exit survey** is used to gather feedback from graduating students relevant to their overall experience in the program including course offerings, course rotations, career preparation, advising, and extracurricular involvement.
- c. The **alumni survey** has proven valuable in gathering information from graduates relevant to preparedness for employment and/or graduate programs.
- d. Responses to the **employer survey** allow us to gather information about the preparedness of our graduates related to content specific knowledge and skills as well as feedback on the internship program.

### 3. Analysis of Results

An assessment grant allowed us to analyze data gathered from the pre/post test (administered every semester until fall of 2004) and senior exit surveys (continued administration every fall and spring semester in the capstone course) as well as to administer the alumni and employer surveys once every three years. A detailed report of this activity was submitted to the assessment committee in the spring of 2004. A summary of the results of our four methods of assessing our Program is provided below.

- a. Through the administration of the **pre/post test**, data analysis determined senior level students outperformed freshman level students on the content specific test (J01 average correct = 22.00; J439 average correct = 34.16). For reasons previously given, testing as a form of assessment was discontinued after spring of 2004. We are continuing to explore

our options of using a pretest with freshman of the major and a post test with seniors in our capstone course.

b. We started using the **senior exit survey** in the fall of 2000. We changed some of the questions on it starting fall of 2003. It is predominately a student satisfaction survey of the Program including questions about course content, time and days of course offerings, availability of elective criminal justice courses, advising, availability of faculty, participation in and opinion of internship program, and intended job choice. Consistently, results of the survey have indicated that the strengths of the program are class size, availability of faculty, and course content and the major weakness of the program is assistance in job placement upon graduation. However, the results of the survey over the past two years indicates that we are making strides to improve in the area of providing assistance in career planning and job placement.

c. There have been two cycles of **alumni survey** administration, the first being in 2000 and the second being in 2003. In 2003 168 surveys were mailed of which 66 (39%) were returned. This data has allowed us to gather feedback from graduates relevant to their sense of preparedness to enter the workforce and/or graduate school and where alumni are currently employed. Information is also gathered relevant to the students' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the Program. In summary, 48% of the alumni indicated they were employed in the criminal justice field, 72% indicated that they felt academically prepared to enter the workforce, and 71% indicated they felt academically prepared to enter graduate school. Overall, the greatest strengths of the program were class size, availability of faculty, and advising, and the major weakness of the program was assistance in job placement upon graduation.

d. There has also been two cycles of the **employer survey**, the first being in 2000 and the second being in 2003. The primary purpose of gathering feedback from employers of our graduates is to determine whether or not they feel that our students are prepared for employment in their agencies as well as to determine what content areas they prioritize. We also seek to determine their use of internships and their hiring trends of our students. In 2003 39 surveys were mailed of which 23 were returned (59%). Employers indicated that the most important areas of knowledge/skill development were teamwork, followed by awareness of social responsibilities and general education (predominately writing skills). The employers indicated that IUSB students were the best prepared in basic content knowledge areas such law enforcement, corrections, and courts but less prepared in the areas of teamwork and social responsibilities. Seventy-three percent of the 22 respondents indicated that they have used IUSB criminal justice interns and had hired 40 criminal justice graduates.

#### 4. Summary of Action Taken

##### a. Focus of Course Assignments:

Feedback from the alumni survey has been used to change the emphasis on course content in some of the required undergraduate classes such as the research methodology class and the capstone course. For example, in the research methodology course more focus has been placed on the student's development of writing and research skills in a content specific area (criminal justice, public affairs, or health service management). The capstone course has been changed to include career exploration and planning for marketability and/or admittance to graduate school. For example one assignment in the capstone course has students evaluate the program by looking at the classes they have taken and determining which classes provided them with critical thinking skills, writing skills, organization, time management, team work, communication skills (oral), problem solving, leadership, and computer skills. The students then seek to find matches between their knowledge and skill levels to career opportunities for which they are interested.

Feedback from the employer survey has been in providing us with direction on areas to focus classroom assignments. For example, based on this feedback, a greater emphasis has been placed on assignments requiring development of teamwork skills and awareness of current events, linking information to a sense of social responsibilities. In the J439 capstone course students are required to incorporate current events in answer to essay questions addressing social issues dealing with criminal justice. These assignments require students to not only incorporate information from news media but also to reflect on their positions on the issues. Teamwork activities are required in a number of classes including V263 Introduction to Public Management to develop skills in the areas of problem solving, decision making, leadership, and understanding of organizational theory. Teamwork has also been used in the J101 introductory criminal justice course in assignments which simulates the legislative process and sentencing procedures as well as in the J321 – introductory policing course – to help the students learn about the various facets of policing and jurisdictional issues.

##### b. Job Assistance

Feedback from both the senior exit survey and the alumni survey led to two major changes in career planning and job placement strategies provided by the Program. First, these topics are extensively covered in the senior level capstone course (J439) both through classroom discussions as well as through student assignments. Second, we have started offering a career exploration class (V252) with plans to schedule it every third semester (at the very least). The class was first offered spring of 2005 and is scheduled for spring of 2006.

##### c. Long Range Planning

The criminal justice faculty have met at least once a year to discuss course rotations, content, prerequisites, and make plans for new course offerings. The most recent meeting

was in March of 2005. We have also had similar discussions through meetings with associate faculty, the most recent having taken place in August of 2004. Our more recent discussions have focused on the possibilities of providing new courses in public safety management as well as discussions on offering a certificate in this area. To assist in these explorations the faculty developed a plan for surveying the students to determine interests and surveying area employers to determine marketability. In surveying the employers we also plan to ask employers for their input on educational needs of graduates and their interest and involvement in our internship program.

## 6. Proposed Next Steps

SPEA Criminal Justice will be developing a new assessment plan due December 1, 2005. In development of this plan we anticipate conducting the following:

- a. gather and analyze information from student interest survey
- b. gather and analyze information from employer “marketing” survey
- c. explore assessment options for determining student outcomes at end of program completion (i.e., testing, portfolios, etc.)
- d. continue gathering and analyzing data collected through senior exit survey
- e. finish analysis of data gathered for study on advising protocol
- f. re-examine the possibility of using a portfolio protocol for assessing student outcomes at time of graduation

## 7. Participation of All Constituencies

### a. Faculty

The criminal justice faculty meet in person at least once a year to discuss assessment issues. Meetings are scheduled once a month for SPEA faculty to discuss Division business and assessment has been on topic for discussion at several of these meetings. Part of the SPEA annual retreat for faculty was devoted to discussing student outcome and program assessment.

### b. Students

Feedback from students is gathered on a course by course basis through their responses on the course evaluations which are administered in each SPEA course. Student feedback relevant to Program assessment is gathered through use of the senior exit survey every semester in the J439 course. Periodically, students are asked to provide feedback in specific areas which assist us in assessing our Program needs such as through the recently planned survey to assess student interest in public safety management classes.

### c. Alumni

Feedback is gathered from alumni every third year. This helps us to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Program as well as to gather information from alumni about their placement after graduation and their use of the internship program.

On and off through the years there has been an Alumni Advisory Board. However, recently it has been inactive. There are plans for the Board to meet in May 2005. Its functions are to review policy, assist in recruitment of students, and assist in fund-raising.

d. Advisory Boards

Community Advisory Council

Meets 2-3 times per year and reviews policy , helps with plans for recruitment of students, and assists in fund-raising. They last met on February 4, 2005. Faculty provide the Council with updates on recent teaching, research, and service activities.

8. Record Keeping and Dissemination

All assessment related documents, materials, and communications are forwarded through the Dean as well as the liaison within the Division. The liaison conducts the analysis of responses, compiles the annual reports, maintains the files of information, submits the Third Year Reports, and conducts activities under assessment grants (two have been received over the past seven years).

All SPEA faculty were provided access to the report (2004) about the assessment activities resulting from the second round of data analysis as funded through the assessment grant. Those responsible for development of assessment in other SPEA programs were provided with copies of the report as well as surveys used for data collection. We are in the process of making the report available on our web page. We will also make this third year report available on the SPEA web page.

Presentations about assessment activities were given to members of the Community Advisory Council.

Students in the J439 capstone course are provided a verbal summary of past survey results from exiting seniors, alumni, and employers.

9. Attachments

- a. Departmental Assessment Plan adopted 1994
- b. Senior Exit Survey
- c. Alumni Survey
- d. Employer Survey
- e. SPEA course evaluation form