

SPEA – CRIMINAL JUSTICE
3RD YEAR REPORT
MAY 2008

Assessment Contact Person: Barbara Peat

Annual reports for 2004 and 2006 are attached. Program completed a 3rd year report in 2005 and was not required to submit a separate annual report at the time.

Department Assessment Plan is attached.

Educational Goals:

1. Exhibit an understanding of and the ability to apply criminological theories in explaining social policy and crime
2. Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze public policy issues as they pertain to criminal justice issues
3. Increase knowledge of the structure, function, and operation of police, courts, and corrections
4. Apply basic techniques of research methodology in the study of criminal justice
5. Understand how criminal justice agencies function from a broader perspective of public affairs
6. Demonstrate the ability to apply communication, computer, and mathematical skills to content specific information in criminal justice
7. Demonstrate the ability to integrate various learning experiences from required core courses

Changes to Goals since Third Year Report in 2005:

The goals were changed to reflect discipline specific goals. The goals contained in the third year report of 2005 reflected the broad goals of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs. We decided that in order to more appropriately assess outcomes specific to the discipline we needed to make the goals specific as well.

Assessment Technique Changes:

In the past we used a pre/post test method to determine department wide learning from the beginning of the program (J101 – Introduction to Criminal Justice) to the end (J439 – Crime and Public Policy – considered to be the program capstone course). We discontinued the use of this test in 2005. In 2006 we initiated a course-embedded testing strategy whereby we use a short multiple choice test (15 questions maximum) in seven of the eight required criminal justice courses (J101, J201, J202, J301, J306, J321, and J331). We use a short essay test in the J439 course. We pretest students using these tests the first day of class and we post test students in these courses toward the end of the semester, using the same tests.

We continue to use the senior exit, alumni, and employer surveys, with a few minor modifications to the wording. The senior exit survey is administered every fall and

spring semester near the end of the J439 course. The alumni and employer surveys are administered approximately every 3rd year.

Assessment instruments:

Survey instruments are attached to this report. For confidentiality purposes, the tests are not attached.

Data Analysis:

Testing - The goal of this project was to assist faculty in determining whether course objectives are being met for the eight required core courses as demonstrated through significant improvement in test results from pre to post. The results indicated, overall, that course objectives were being met. However, the results also provided us valuable information on where some weaknesses exist in conveying information in a manner that improves student learning outcomes. For example, in two classes the test results indicate that student learning is not accomplished for one of the course objectives. (A complete analysis of the results from each course is available upon request).

Surveys –

Senior Exit Survey

We only started using the exiting senior survey in the fall of 2000, therefore no “first round” data is available for this assessment strategy. We changed some of the questions on it starting fall 2003. It is predominately a student satisfaction survey of the whole program including questions about course content, time and days of offering of required and elective courses, advising, availability of faculty, participation in and opinion of internship program, and intended job choice.

Fall 2003-spring 2007 Results:

There were a total of 129 completed surveys.

30 students indicated that they participated in an internship during their years in the program (23%).

Overall, students indicated the major strengths of the program were class size (98%), course content (93%), and availability of faculty (86%). Assistance in job placement upon graduation was indicated as the weakest component of the program (61%).

Alumni Survey

The goal of the alumni survey is primarily designed to determine whether the graduates of the program have found work that they are satisfied with, whether the work is in the area of their degree, and to gather feedback about the SPEA criminal justice program. We want to know if they felt academically prepared for employment and/or graduate school.

Fall 2003-Spring 2007 results

181 surveys were mailed of which 44 (26%) were returned.

A little more than half of the alumni who were employed indicated that their jobs were in the criminal justice field (52.3%). 72% indicated that they felt academically prepared to enter the workforce (54% sufficiently and 18% to a great extent). 16% indicated that they are currently enrolled in a graduate program. Of those enrolled in a graduate program, the overwhelming majority (85%) indicated that they felt academically

prepared to enter graduate school. Alumni indicated that the greatest strengths of the program were availability of faculty, class size and course content. They indicated that the major weakness of the program was assistance in job placement upon graduation (59%).

Employer Survey

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 how important they feel specific areas are for employee success. We also want to determine their use of interns and their hiring trends of our students.

65 surveys were mailed of which 23 were returned (35%).

Employers indicated that the most important areas for employee success were general education, written and oral communications, computers, teamwork and awareness of social responsibilities. They indicated that the area of least importance was grant writing, math and science. They went on to indicate that the areas where IUSB students were the best prepared were in general education, written and oral communications, computers, teamwork, and awareness of social responsibilities. Employers indicated that students were the least prepared in grant writing, math, and science.

30% of the respondents indicated that they had used IUSB criminal justice interns.

On a scale of 0-4, the respondents' overall mean of IUSB criminal justice preparedness to be successful employees was 2.76.

In comparison to other graduates they hire, they rated IUSB criminal justice graduates 2.06 (with 0 being less and 4 being better).

Conclusions drawn from analysis

Testing - The goal of course embedded assessment strategy using pre post testing in the core required courses was to assist faculty in determining whether course objectives are being met. The results indicated, overall, that course objectives were being met. However, the results also provided us valuable information on where some weaknesses exist in conveying information in a manner that improves student learning outcomes. For example, in two classes the test results indicate that student learning is not accomplished for one of the course objectives. Having this information we engaged in a review of the results to determine if the course objectives, class assignments, text required, and/or the test questions need revisions. In a broader sense, this project has provided valuable information relevant to pedagogy. For example, in comparing the results from one semester to another we were also able to examine the impact of other variables that may influence learning including class schedule (day versus night class and two day a week versus one day a week format), assignment protocol, testing protocol, class size, and course text used. It is through our review of the results of this project that we are able to assess our teaching strategies and make needed modifications to improve expected student learning outcomes.

Surveys - It was rewarding to determine that in the third round of survey responses (the previous two rounds were in 2000 and 2003) from employers there is agreement between what employers stated were the most important areas for employee success and the areas where IUSB students were the best prepared (general education, communications, computers, teamwork, and social responsibilities). In the previous two rounds of assessment, there were disparities between what employers had indicated were the most important areas for employee success and the areas where IUSB students were the best prepared. Unfortunately, in rating IUSB graduates in comparison to graduates they employ from other institutions, the rating has consistently been decreasing (2.68 to 2.46 to 2.06). This is an area that needs additional exploration in order for our Program to plan any corrective actions.

On a positive note, although assistance with job placement has consistently been noted as a weakness by exiting seniors and alumni alike, the percent indicating it as a weakness has steadily declined (exiting seniors: 78% to 61% and alumni: 100% to 78% to 59%). Class size and availability of faculty were indicated to be the greatest strengths of the Program by exiting seniors and alumni alike with course content and advising also seen as strengths by more than 75% of the respondents.

Changes made as a result of data analysis

We have completed three rounds of assessment analysis of employer, alumni, and senior exit survey results. In comparing the responses we find that the changes that we made to improve on student preparedness to meet employer expectations have succeeded. Several years ago we had a faculty retreat that focused on how to improve student writing skills and, incorporating various strategies appears to have had positive outcomes. Faculty incorporated a variety of assignments into the course requirements in a number of classes which focus on knowledge of current events specific to criminal justice and this appears to have improved student awareness of social responsibilities. Assignments in a number of courses also require demonstrations of proficiency in computer programs such as word and excel spreadsheets. Requirements for team activities have also increased in a number of courses.

Four years ago a career development class was added to the spring course rotation of classes. The Criminal Justice Association, with assistance from the Criminal Justice faculty, hosted a career fair specific to the field, in the spring of 2007. Five years ago we began placing job announcements on a bulletin board in a centralized location. All of these efforts appear to have improved the students' (both exiting senior and alumni) ratings of the assistance they are provided in job placement. We will continue to explore ways through which we can provide better assistance in job placement.

The course embedded student learning outcome assessment strategy utilizing pre and post testing has only been in effect for one complete year. In three years, when we have more data, we will be able to report on the results of this strategy and compare the impact of corrective actions taking place to improve student learning outcomes where needed. Based on the first year of results the faculty have already met and planned changes in

assignments and lecture to improve in specific areas noted, through data results, to need improvement.

Future changes to the program and assessment techniques

As a result of the elimination of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at IUSB the Department of Criminal Justice has been created and will be housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. It is anticipated that there may be some programmatic changes that will occur in the next one to two years but those plans have not been finalized. It is anticipated that the current assessment activities (pre/post testing in core courses and senior, alumni, and employer surveys) will continue. Based on the results of data gathered through this protocol we will continue to make programmatic changes to improve any weaknesses noted.

Involvement of stakeholders

Faculty – all of the faculty teaching core criminal justice courses were involved in the planning and implementation of the course-embedded testing strategy. We met to develop common course objectives and test questions. We also met after the first year of data analysis was complete to plan any needed corrective actions. We will meet again this summer to discuss the results of the 07-08 test responses.

Students – students are involved in the assessment activities in two ways: (1) as respondents to the pre and post testing and (2) as respondents to the senior exit survey.

Alumni and employers – these stakeholders are involved in the assessment activities as respondents to the surveys. In addition, I make frequent contact with employers at career fairs and throughout the year in reference to job postings and they are aware of our assessment efforts as well as the opportunity to provide feedback in reference to the performance of our graduates in the employment setting. Alumni continue to be involved in our program through their presentations and discussions with current students in the career development class.

Sharing of assessment information with stakeholders

Students – current students in the program are advised of previous assessment results in the core courses at the time of test administration. Survey results are shared with students in the career development class.

Faculty – all faculty of the Program, full-time and associate, are provided the summary report and the results are discussed at our meetings to plan the next year's assessment activities. We have commonly had these meetings once a year during the summer.

Administration – the Dean of SPEA is given the summary reports of all assessment activities. I have provided brief verbal reports to several campus committee groups about our assessment strategies.

Alumni and employers – verbal reports have been provided to the Community Advisory Council which consists predominately of employers of our graduates and some alumni of our programs.

Impact of student learning on the Program

The impact of the assessment results is multifaceted. The planning of the course-embedded assessment strategy led to beneficial discussions of course objectives and prompted reflection on Program goals and course objectives, assignments, testing, and teaching strategies. The meetings to discuss assessment results have given us an avenue to discuss strategic planning and pedagogy. The analysis of the survey results has impacted teaching strategies as well. One of the most significant impacts of our assessment activities has been the beneficial faculty group discussions during which we share ideas about course materials and objectives, we reflect on the Program goals, and we plan beneficial curriculum changes.