Letter from the Chair, Brian K. Payne, PhD

The Brady Bunch song “Time to Change” includes the lyrics “Day by day, it’s hard to see the changes you’ve been through.” I suppose that what Greg and Marcia Brady mean in these lyrics is that change is best seen and understood over time. This is particularly true when you consider all of the changes that have been occurring in the Department of Criminal Justice at Georgia State University.

It has been three years since I arrived at Georgia State University. In that time, our department has undergone many significant changes, some of which are beginning this semester. For example, this semester we welcomed our first cohort of PhD students into our PhD program in Criminal Justice and Criminology. This is an extremely exciting change for us in the department. These PhD students bring with them an energy that has invigorated the rest of us. You will be able to read more about the PhD students on page 3 of the newsletter.

Another change that began this semester is the revision of our undergraduate curriculum. In addition to restricting the required courses, we also made course titles more up-to-date and course descriptions more relevant to the current needs of the community. You can read more about this in Dr. Blackwell’s article on page 4.

Change is also evident in the nature of our faculty. While we have lost a few talented faculty members to retirement, we have made some tremendous hires of new faculty and our “older” faculty have challenged themselves to continue to serve as leaders in their areas of study.

Still another change has to do with our plans to expand our course offerings. In the future, we hope to offer our program at the Georgia State University Alpharetta Campus to provide additional opportunities for criminal justice coursework that otherwise would not be available. We also are looking for ways to improve our advising process so that it is more responsive to your needs. In addition, we are expanding our focus on violence prevention research through the Crime and Violence Prevention Policy Initiative, led by Dr. Volkan Topalli and Dr. Erdal Tekin (from Economics).

We have also seen the quantity and quality of scholarship by criminal justice professors change in the past three years. Consider that between 2004 and 2006, the department published 29 articles. This is a respectable amount of scholarship and is more than most criminal justice departments across the country. Our department does not rely on the status quo, however, to guide our scholarship. Between 2007 and 2009, we produced 79 articles. Very few criminal justice departments across the country maintain this level of scholarship. We have changed.

It is natural for some people to resist change. Another lyric in the Brady Bunch song comes to mind, “And if you want to reach your destiny, here’s what you’ve got to do.” They go on to sing about change. For all of us, if we want to reach our goals we have set ourselves, we will need to continue to change. Embracing this change will increase the likelihood that our goals will be fulfilled. I look forward to watching you change and meet your goals.

Faculty Accomplishments

At this year’s Southern Criminal Justice Association (SCJA) meeting, associate professor emeritus Dave Camp was awarded the Richter H. Moore Jr. Founders Award. This is the association’s highest honor and it is given only rarely. To put this in perspective, the association has been in existence for 38 years and this award had only been awarded to three individuals prior to Dr. Camp receiving it.

Also, three students presented papers at the SCJA meetings – Charles Hogan, Donald Hunt, and Erin Marsh. Hunt was also honored as the recipient of the SCJA Outstanding Undergraduate Student Award.

Brent Teasdale was recently named editor of Social Problems Forum, which is one of the official publications of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSP). His term will begin in January 2011. Congratulations!


Dean Dabney, Wendy Guastaferro, and Volkan Topalli organized the Forum on Youth Violence: A Strategic Response to Gangs and Guns. Held October 5-6th, the event brought together officials from several different criminal justice and social services agencies to discuss ways to curb gun violence in Atlanta. Funded by the Governor’s Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, experts from Cincinnati were called upon to discuss the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence and share their experiences with developing violence prevention efforts. More than 170 participants attended various parts of the forum.

Brian K. Payne was recently named president of the Southern Criminal Justice Association, after serving as vice president for SCJA. Among other things, in this role he will organize the association’s 2011 meetings, to be held in Nashville, Tennessee.

From the Publication Arena...

Our department continues to maintain a strong presence in contributing to the production of criminological and criminal justice research in journals in our discipline. In addition to publishing Criminal Justice Review and International Criminal Justice Review, our department has faculty members serving on the editorial boards of ten different journals. These include:

1. American Journal of Criminal Justice -- Dean Dabney
2. Criminal Justice Policy Review -- Brian Payne
3. Feminist Criminology -- Brenda Blackwell
4. Journal of Criminal Justice -- Brian Payne
5. Journal of Criminal Justice Education -- Leah Daigle, Brian Payne, Volkan Topalli
6. Journal of Drug Issues -- Dean Dabney, Volkan Topalli
7. Justice Quarterly -- Brian Payne
8. Open Journal of Criminology -- Volkan Topalli
9. Western Criminological Review -- Lisa Mufic
10. Women and Criminal Justice -- Brenda Blackwell
Pop Quiz

Fact or Fiction: Read the statements below. Determine if the statement is fact or fiction. Answers are below.

1. In our 2004 Academic Program Review, it was reported that our faculty had been cited approximately 350 times. In our 2010 Academic Review, it was reported that our faculty had been cited more than 3,400 times.

2. Judge Gregory Adams, a criminal justice alum and DeKalb County Superior Court judge, was the first African American judge to have a government building named after him in DeKalb County.

3. According to several of her fan websites, Pauley Perrette, the actor who plays Abbie Sciuto on NCIS, studied criminal justice at Georgia State University.

4. Dr. Dabney was born the same year that the Rolling Stones were formed.

5. Dr. Guastaferro is continuing in her role as a Fellow in the Center for Teaching and Learning.

6. Dr. Daigle once wrestled a bear cub at the Cincinnati zoo after a young girl got trapped in the bear’s exhibit area.

7. Three CJ faculty have tattoos.

8. Drs. Mark Reed and Barbara Warner went to the same graduate school at the same time and they studied under two of the top criminologists in the discipline.

9. The average age of Criminal Justice faculty at Georgia State University is 34.

10. In a recent issue of Criminology, our discipline’s top journal, six GSU CJ faculty had their research cited by authors publishing in the journal.

Answers: The following statements are fact: 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 10.

Making a Difference in the Classroom

Dr. Wendy Guastaferro recently invited Genarlow Wilson to her American Criminal Courts class. In 2005 Wilson made national news when he was convicted of having sexual relations at age seventeen with a fifteen year old. Wilson was sentenced to ten years in prison and faced sex-offender status; a sentence that surprised many of the jurors who had convicted him. After appeals and changes in state law to prevent such disproportionate sentencing in the future, Wilson was released after serving three years. Wilson received rave reviews from students. Here is a sample of the feedback:

When Dr. G. first told us that we would be having a guest speaker I was excited, but when I found out that it was Mr. Genarlow Wilson I was shocked and speechless. I was amazed with how Mr. Wilson does not have any hatred to society or any other factors that were against him during his trial. I appreciated the part in Mr. Wilson’s speech when he said, "Don't ever let anyone tell you that you can't do something, or that you are not beautiful." He also said, "If you have a true deep feeling in your heart, follow it." This is a remarkable statement and it can relate to EVERYONE...

This was the best class I have ever had in all of my three years of college!

When Dr. G. announced that Mr. Genarlow Wilson was coming to class I thought it was a joke. I can honestly say that was the best class of my whole life. I know I will remember this forever. I actually did not know what to expect. Mr. Wilson was so down to earth... He made so many connections with all of the people he met along his journey. It is like they say, everything happens for a reason. He has such a great outlook on life and the future. I felt like he was such a wise man because he has been through so much, and he is only a few years older than me...Dr. G., that was one of the highlights of my college career!

Today’s class was very rewarding for me. I feel like I got an experience of a lifetime. To have someone come out and speak in a class that I am in was great, especially someone that was involved in a high profile case. Mr. Wilson made me look at things a little differently concerning the justice system. His experience put me in the mind of what Gideon had to go through. Both of them chose to fight against a system that is very powerful. Listening to him made me have a personal self reflection, his life changed in an instant, and I have taken so many things for granted.

This was one of the most thought provoking classes I have been to in my college experience. It was incredible to hear a firsthand account of what Genarlow has experienced in his life. I was amazed at what a positive person he is despite all the hardship he faced at such a young age.

Congratulations to our Honor’s Day Award Winners:

Graduate Academic Honor Award—Beverly Reece & Ryan Coble
Undergraduate Academic Honor Award—Geneva Ramsay
James L. Maddex Scholarship—Beverly Reece
Greater Atlanta Chapter of the ASIS Scholarship—Janay Davis
Larry E. Quinn Memorial Award—Reginald Moorman
Phil Peters Memorial Scholarship—Nigil Phiri
Bobby Jo Chancey Sr. Memorial Scholarship—Monica Garcia
Distinguished Alumni Service Award—Weldon L. Kennedy

Congratulations to Dr. Robbie Friedman who retired as professor and Distinguished Chair of Public Safety Partnerships September 1. Awarded professor emeritus status, Dr. Friedman will continue to serve as director of the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange.
Meet Our PhD Students

Mindy Bernhardt received her Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice through Auburn University and the City University of New York, John Jay College. She plans to do research on criminological theory, as well as violent career criminals. She is also interested in serial killers and serial rapists, more specifically the social psychological factors contributing to these behaviors.

Beverly Crank entered the Ph.D. program at Georgia State University during Fall Semester 2010 as a member of the first cohort of doctoral students in Criminal Justice and Criminology. Prior to the Ph.D. program, Beverly received a B.S. in Criminal Justice with a Concentration in Forensic Behavioral Science from Kennesaw State University in 2008. Beverly also obtained a M.S. in Criminal Justice from Georgia State University in 2010 where she completed her Master’s thesis entitled: Adapting to Incarceration: Inmate Perceptions of Prison Life and Adjustment. Beverly is currently working as a Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. Timothy Brezina and she plans to develop a co-authored article that will be based on research from her Master’s thesis, along with other relative findings. In addition to this research, Beverly’s areas of interest include criminological theory, corrections, and juvenile delinquency.

Jennifer Cruze attended the University of Louisville where she received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology with a minor in Justice Administration in December 2006. She then went on to earn a Master of Sciences degree in Justice Administration from the same university in May 2010. Her research interests have been in cyberbullying and bullying prevention programs. In the future she would like to continue to research cyberbullying and would like to explore the area of domestic violence concentrating on domestic homicide.

Nancy Dickinson, LMSW, is focused on intimate partner violence issues, particularly personal agency, teen dating violence and fatality risk factors. She currently serves as editor/designer of the Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review. After a twenty-plus year career in corporate communications/creative direction, she appreciates the clarity and purpose of this academic pursuit. Honored to be a member of GSU’s first Criminal Justice & Criminology PhD cohort, Dickinson anticipates future work in research.

Shila Rene’ Hawk Tourtelot received her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Criminal Justice and her Master of Arts in Sociology from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. Her research interests are focused on areas that can contribute to policing and corrections reform. The reviews and work she has done thus far suggest both policing and corrections are complex systems facing unique and formidable challenges. Her goal is to be a part of the rigorous research and data-driven policy decisions that are critical for social progress.

Sadie Mummert received her Bachelor’s degree in Psychology with a minor in Sociology from Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio in 2008. She attended Georgia State University and earned her Master’s degree in Criminal Justice in 2010. Ms. Mummert’s research interests lie in the realm of sexual victimization and sexual revictimization shown through a M.S. in Criminal Justice from Georgia State University in 2010 where she completed her Master’s thesis entitled: Adapting to Incarceration: Inmate Perceptions of Prison Life and Adjustment. Beverly is currently working as a Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. Timothy Brezina and she plans to develop a co-authored article that will be based on research from her Master’s thesis, along with other relative findings. In addition to this research, Beverly’s areas of interest include criminological theory, corrections, and juvenile delinquency.

Criminal Justice Student Association, Christopher Coronado

The Criminal Justice Student Association is honored to represent the Criminal Justice Department as the official club for all criminal justice majors. The purpose of CJSA is to create a more unified and professional criminal justice community for all students at Georgia State University. The CJSA will achieve this goal through facilitating networking events, community service activities, and judicial forums.

Our two largest events this academic year will be the Judicial Forum with Justice Harold Melton from the Georgia Supreme Court in early November and our annual Criminal Justice Career Showcase in February. Joining CJSA will allow you to create connections with a myriad of students who are following similar career paths as yourself. Many of our members are the potential judges, lawyers, federal agents, or law enforcement agents of the future. There are two ways to get through college, to float your way through or get involved. The CJSA is your chance to network with fellow future professionals while building the strong resume you will need for the challenging and demanding job market of today.

For more information, contact me at ccoronado1@student.gsu.edu. I look forward to seeing you at our events. Have a great semester!

Christina Policastro received her Bachelor’s degree from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in Criminal Justice where she also received her Master’s degree in Criminal Justice. Ms. Policastro’s interests include victimization, violence against women, and family violence. Her interests are reflected in her thesis entitled, Views of Justification and Blame of Violent Interpersonal Dating Relationships. She plans on continuing within these areas of research while pursuing her doctoral degree at Georgia State University.

John Prevost returned to GSU 29 years after receiving his MPA, and now, with over 30 years experience working for Georgia’s Board of Pardons and Parole. John and his wife Stephanie (MS ’82), an elementary science teacher, are long time, in-town residents of Atlanta’s Grant Park neighborhood. They have two children, both graduates of UGA. John and daughter Rachel are avid cyclists who completed their first ‘century’ ride (100 miles) this summer.

Shyam K. Sriram is a political scientist by training, but “converted” to Criminal Justice in 2009 after completing an internship with Men Stopping Violence and becoming involved in domestic violence prevention work in Atlanta. He is the coordinator for Muslim Men Against Domestic Violence and the founder of the Muslim Suicide Survivors Association. He is a part-time doctoral student, but teaches full-time at Georgia Perimeter College. He received his B.A. in Political Science from Purdue University and his M.A. in Political Science (conc. in Public Law) from Georgia State University. His areas of interest are intimate partner violence, mental health violence and criminal justice policy.
From Your Undergraduate Coordinator, Brenda Blackwell

What an exciting semester!!! Georgia State University launched the new year with more students on campus, new buildings, new programs, and our inaugural football team (Go Panthers!). It is thus appropriate that the Department of Criminal Justice also rolls out our revised curriculum and program requirements for undergraduate majors. We believe these changes will improve student academic success and help students as they progress in their careers. Students should be mindful of changes and the need to ensure that they are following the appropriate catalog requirements. Both internal and external curricular changes have the potential to impact students, so it is more important than ever that students take note of their catalog of entry as they track their progression through the major. Students also are encouraged to seek advisement early and regularly as one method of staying on track.

Students entering in the Fall of 2009 and later are reminded that they must successfully complete two Critical Thinking through Writing (CTW) courses. For those entering in 2009, either Research Methods in Criminal Justice (CRJU 3020) or Ethics in Criminal Justice (CRJU 4060), along with the Internship Seminar in Criminal Justice (CRJU 4930) are designed to meet this requirement. It is noted that beginning in Fall 2010, students will be required to take Ethics (CRJU 3060 or CRJU 4060 if taken in the 2009 academic year), and the Internship Seminar (CRJU 4930) to meet this requirement.

Another notable change is the switch to plus/minus grading. Majors should be aware that they must have a 2.0 GPA to register for 3/4000 level courses. With the shift to +/- grading, students must be even more mindful of their academic efforts, for academic requirements do vary across the catalogs, a necessity to accommodate the changing academic environment.

Students are directed to the Department’s website during registration periods. The review of course and program content led to the renaming and/or renumbering of courses, changes which are highlighted on the website for your review as you register for your courses. It is strongly recommended that students complete a majority of lower-division courses (Areas A-F) prior to enrolling in upper division courses (3000-4000 level). As well, we encourage students to complete “tools” courses – Methods (CRJU 3020), Statistical Analysis in CJ (CRJU 3610), Ethical Issues in CJ (CRJU 3060), and Criminological Theory (CRJU 3410) – early in the program as they provide foundational materials for upper level courses.

Finally, I want to remind students to invest in their own education. To this end, you are reminded to attend class (on time), actively engage the materials, come to class prepared, and work hard. In the words of Vince Lombardi, “Leaders aren’t born, they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work. And that’s the price we’ll have to pay to achieve that goal, or any goal.”

Graduate Student Forums

A series of forums have been organized by Timothy Brezina in an effort to provide students and faculty access to top scholars to whom they otherwise would not be exposed. In the first forum, held on September 10th, Kirk Elifson (a current professor at Emory and a former Sociology professor at Georgia State University) talked about his funded research on drug use and the life course approach. On October 8th, Ron Simons (Distinguished Research Professor of Sociology at the University of Georgia) talked about his research on violence. Nearly 30 students and faculty were in attendance at each forum. Future forums will be announced in the upcoming weeks.