Chair's Notes, Brian K. Payne, PhD

It seems like I start every column of this newsletter with a statement to the effect of “It’s an exciting time to be in the Department of Criminal Justice at Georgia State University.” This statement rings as true as ever. So many exciting things are going on in your department and you will be able to read about them in this newsletter. Perhaps the most significant development that will have long-lasting influences on your Department and criminal justice departments across the region, and the nation, is the creation of our doctoral program in Criminal Justice and Criminology.

As you may have heard, the Board of Regents recently approved the creation of a PhD program in your department. The program is scheduled to begin in Fall 2010. This development reminds all of us of the importance of developing a quality education for all students – undergraduate and graduate alike. I know that by strengthening our graduate program, we will also strengthen our undergraduate program.

When we developed our PhD prospectus, we used data available from GSU and the Association of Doctoral Programs in Criminology and Criminal Justice to compare our Master’s program with programs from universities that already had PhD programs. Here are four things we found: (1) Across the PhD programs, in 2006-2007, the median number of Master’s students that enrolled in the department was 20. At GSU, 20 students were enrolled in the Master’s program in the same timeframe. (2) In 2005-2006, the average number of Master’s students graduating in the doctoral programs was 13. At GSU, 13 students graduated with Master’s degrees in criminal justice during the same timeframe. (3) In 2006-2007, the average number of faculty members in doctoral programs was 18. Our department will have 16 tenure track professors in Fall 2009. (4) In 2005-2006, the median amount of federal government grant/contract dollars received in criminal justice doctoral programs was $823,000. During the same timeframe, faculty in the Department of Criminal Justice at GSU received $805,292.

Along these lines, we recently learned that an article scheduled to appear in the March issue of the Journal of Criminal Justice Education ranked our department third among MA/MS programs in terms of the number of grants and contracts received by faculty members between 1997 and 2007. Incidentally, if the PhD and MA/MS lists were combined in this article, we would have ranked 11th among all CJ programs.

I share these findings for two reasons. First, I am proud of our department and want you to know that even before we developed our PhD program, we already “looked like” a PhD program in many ways. Second, I want you to know that our Master’s program is very strong. Myself, I was a first-generation college student. I had no idea what graduate school was all about until Dr. Imogene Moyer, a professor who turned me on to the study of crime, basically ordered me to go to graduate school. While I will hold off on ordering any of you into graduate school, I will encourage those of you considering graduate school to consider our program as an option. Of course, if you are looking into other options, we are all happy to discuss those future choices as well. Just stop by and see us!

Study Debunks Rumors of Rampant Violence

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, initial media reports characterized New Orleans as a snakepit of anarchy, with tales of storm victims raping and killing one another and shooting at rescue crews. A new study finds that, while some acts of violence undoubtedly occurred in New Orleans, initial media reports greatly exaggerated the problem.

The finding is based on a unique survey of New Orleanians who were hardest hit by Katrina, many of whom were stranded for days at the crowded Superdome and Convention Center. When asked about their experiences during the disaster, most of them denied having been threatened by violence—although many endured hardships, such as going without food or fresh water.

Dr. Timothy Brezina, lead author of the study, has spent the last few years studying Katrina in an effort to sort fact from fiction. He hopes the findings will dispel persistent rumors that storm victims had descended into an “animalistic state.” These rumors slowed down rescue and evacuation efforts and may have cost many lives. The rumors have also stigmatized the victims of Katrina by portraying them as violent and almost less than human, adding further pain to their plight.

The study (with Joanne Kaufman of SUNY-Albany) was published in the December issue of Justice Quarterly and is based on data from a poll conducted in Houston-area shelters by The Washington Post, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and the Harvard School of Public Health.

Recent Faculty Awards and Honors

Dr. Leah Daigle’s co-authored paper, “Exploring the Gender Differences in Protective Factors: Implications for Understanding Resiliency,” received the William L. Simon/Anderson Publishing Outstanding Paper Award for 2009. The award is given to the outstanding paper presented at the 2008 Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences meetings.

Drs. Volkan Topalli and Barbara Warner are cited in an upcoming study as the 8th and 9th top scholars receiving research funding from national foundations.

Dr. Robbie Friedmann received the Governor’s Public Safety Award in recognition of exceptional service to public safety in the category of “Outstanding Job Performance.” He received the award this past October. Also, in recognition of the accomplishments of the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE), Dr. Friedmann was invited by President and Mrs. Bush to attend a White House Hanukkah Reception held on December 15th, 2008.

Dr. Sue-Ming Yang presented “Do Broken Windows Cause Violence?” at a Congressional briefing focused on “Reducing Violent Crime at Places” on February 3, 2009 in the Senate Russell Office Building in Washington D.C. Yang’s research critically examines a theoretical debate regarding a police strategy called zero tolerance (or broken windows) policing. The results show that while disorder and violence are spatially clustered at the same places, no longitudinal relationship between violence and disorder appears to exist.
Greetings from CJSA President, Laura Ryan

With graduation nearing for many of us, it is getting closer to that time—the time when we venture out into the real world and begin our careers. Thankfully, the Criminal Justice Student Association has been working diligently to put together a Career Fair just for you! Agencies in attendance will include the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the Georgia Department of Corrections, and various other local, county, state, and federal agencies. This event will be held on Wednesday, February 25th from 11:00AM-4:00PM in the House/Senate Salon Ballroom on the first floor of the Student Center. There is no charge to attend this event and no appointments are necessary. With the hiring freeze that we are experiencing, I would really appreciate it if you would stop by and speak to the representatives who have taken time out of their busy schedules to accommodate you. Agencies have been known to recruit students in the past upon graduation that they met at this Career Fair. Again, I would strongly encourage you to make it a point to visit the event at some point throughout the day.

The CJSA also plans to host two other events this semester. The first event, to be held some time in March, will focus on nontraditional jobs in the Criminal Justice field. Representatives from Target, the Army, and possibly even the Georgia Innocence Project, will serve as guest speakers and give presentations relating to their line of work and how it ultimately ties into Criminal Justice. The second event, to be held in April, is titled “Judges, Juries, and Justice.”

For those of you who are graduating I would like to congratulate each of you. It has been a long four (or five, or six) years but we have finally made it! I wish that the rest of you keep up the hard work and do not forget to properly register for your internship. It is very important that you stay in touch with the department and that you read your mail. As they say, “all good things must come to an end.” It has been my pleasure to serve as your President and I wish each and every one of you the very best in your future.

Tips for Going to the Career Fair

- Dress for the job you want. Don’t show up in shorts or your casual wear
- Visit the career center ahead of time and use their resources strategically
- Bring an updated copy of your resume
- Show up early
- Don’t ask employees how much you will be paid – or you will likely never be paid
- Avoid complaining about past or current jobs/colleagues
- Review the agencies participating ahead of time
- Visit all of the agency representatives
- Don’t make rude comments about any of the agencies
- Ask questions such as “What kinds of employees are you looking for?, What are the opportunities for advancement?, Can you tell me more about benefits such as the retirement plan and health care benefits?, What interested you about this agency when you began your career?, Did you know that the Department of Criminal Justice at Georgia State University is one of the best criminal justice departments around?”
- Remember – your peers and the department will be judged by your actions.

Journal Awards Established in College

The Criminal Justice Review (CJR) and International Criminal Justice Review (ICJR) are peer reviewed journals that have long been housed within in the Department of Criminal Justice and published by the Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences; the CJR is entering its 34th year of existence and the ICJR is entering its 19th. Beginning with the 2008 volumes, each journal will annually recognize the scholarly contribution of select authors. The Richard J. Terrill Paper of the Year Award, named in honor of the individual who conceived of the journal and served as its editor for three different terms, will honor the highest quality scholarship published in the International Criminal Justice Review. The most meritorious work appearing in the Criminal Justice Review will be acknowledged via the James L. Maddex Jr. Paper of the Year Award, an honor named after one of the journal’s earliest editors and the individual who conceived of and oversaw this publication’s “Recent Legal Developments” feature for several decades.

Profs Explore Education and Job Satisfaction Ties

At the most recent meetings of the Southern Criminal Justice Association, three criminal justice professors from Georgia State University described a study in which they examined how perceptions about course work were related to career satisfaction. The authors of the study—Drs. Brenda Sims Blackwell, Sue Carter Collins, and Brian K. Payne—described the results of a survey they did with criminal justice alumni and graduating seniors completing their internships. Their study calls into question past studies that suggested that the presence of an education automatically contributes to increased career satisfaction. According to the author team, rather than asking if the presence of an education is related to career satisfaction, researchers should ask whether the quality of an education is related to career satisfaction.

In the article accompanying their presentation, they wrote, “Determining the ties between education and career satisfaction for criminal justice professionals is necessary in order to help criminal justice agencies decide how to use education in hiring decisions and as an incentive for personnel.” The results are being used to fine tune the undergraduate curriculum in Criminal Justice. The authors plan to expand their research to focus on professionals with various levels of degrees.

CJ Professor Investigates New Prevention Program

Dr. Brent Teasdale is involved in a collaborative project investigating the effectiveness of the “Take Charge of Your Life” program. This program is a new substance abuse prevention program that is designed to build resistance skills and reduce perceptions of normative beliefs surrounding substance use. The researchers include scientists from across the United States. Among other things, results of the research project show that D.A.R.E. trained officers implemented the program as designed and that control group contamination (exposure to prevention messages in control schools) is increasingly making it difficult to design randomized controlled trials in Prevention Science. Teasdale and his co-authors have published findings from this project in several journals including Prevention Science, Health Education and Behavior, and Health Education Research. According to Teasdale, “This research will continue to inform Prevention Science in to the next decade.” Teasdale’s research interests include violence, substance abuse, public health, and quantitative methods.
Alumni/Student News

This past year, members of the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Parole elected L. Gale Buckner (B.S. in Criminal Justice, 1991) to serve as Chairperson of the Board. Buckner was appointed to the board in January 2005 by Governor Sonny Perdue. She served 24 years as a Special Agent with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation in various positions to include Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge of the Atlanta field office for death investigations, child abuse, fraud and other criminal activities and Director of Personnell for the agency.

Forsyth Sheriff Ted Paxton, (B.S. in Criminal Justice, 1993) recently learned that the Sheriff’s Office he oversees won three awards from the International Association of Chiefs of Police. His office was named a finalist for the Webber Seavey Award, which is presented each year to law enforcement agencies worldwide for promoting standards of excellence that demonstrate law enforcement’s contribution to the quality of life in local communities. Paxton’s agency was also awarded Second Place in the Championship Class in the IACP Law Enforcement Challenge Program. His office also received a Special Category Award for its efforts in promoting motorcycle safety.

Craig Watson (M.S. in Criminal Justice, 1988) recently led the development of a Threat Assessment Team at Emory University, where he serves as police chief.

On January 6th, the Board of Corrections unanimously approved the Governor’s recommendation of Brian Owens as new Corrections Commissioner. Owens was subsequently sworn in January 8th by Governor Perdue at the Capitol. Owens has taken graduate courses in criminal justice at GSU.

Researcher Evaluates Drug Court Program Expansion

The DeKalb County Superior Court Drug Court Program was awarded $1 million by SAMHSA to expand services to people at risk for addiction and criminal behavior. Dr. Wendy P. Guastaferro co-authored the grant and is the program evaluator. The research and practice plan includes implementing and evaluating evidence-based practices in the areas of client assessment and treatment services. Multiple measures over time will be used as part of a larger measurement system designed to examine treatment progress and program effectiveness.

You Heard it Here Second…Quotes from the Media

“If you want to make a difference, values need to be clearly articulated, laws have to be clearly articulated,” Robbie Friedmann, AJC January 27, 2009.

“These types of units (i.e., VIPER units) are very popular in metro areas, they are out there to make a statement,” Dean Dabney, AJC, December 22.

"Crime does pay, and it is the victim that is paying," Brian Payne, Florida Times Union, April 21.

“Public concern is completely at odds with the numbers, and that's troubling.” Louis Arcangeli, AJC, January 10.

"In the winter, no one leaves their home because it's freezing...Just as you're less likely to fall in love in the wintertime, you're less likely to be a victim of a crime." Volkan Topalli, AJC, April 13.

Important Dates/Reminders

- Application deadline for Spring 2010 interns—May 15th
- Mandatory meeting of Fall 2009 interns—March 20th
- Graduation application deadline for Fall 2009 graduates—June 1. Go to 231 Sparks Hall to apply.
- The department’s Internship Fair will be held April 22nd at 4:30 on the second floor of Urban Life. Come see what you can expect to be doing when you intern your last semester. Graduating seniors will present posters describing their efforts and they will be honored for their accomplishments.
- The deadline for students to apply for criminal justice scholarships is Friday, February 27, 2009, at 5:15pm. Students may turn in their completed application packets to Dr. Sue Collins directly or leave them at the front desk in 1201 Urban Life. The Awards Committee will select scholarship and award recipients during the first two weeks of March. Information is available at www.cjgsu.net.
- Applications for graduate school are due by May 15th. Contact Dr. Barbara Warner if you have any questions about the application process.

Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader? Criminal Justice Quiz

1. Which professor’s spouse is an actor who has been in movies with Tom Cruise and Paul Newman?
2. How many professors currently in the department were not born when the Department of Criminal Justice was formed?
3. How many alumni have graduated from GSU’s Department of Criminal Justice?
4. True or False. Judge Penny Reynolds, from the syndicated show Family Court, is a graduate of GSU’s Department of Criminal Justice.
5. True or False. Dr. Volkan Topalli has been compared to an agile high school wrestler in “Creative Loafing.”
6. True or False. Dr. Dabney has a tattoo that says “Criminal Justice Rules” on his left arm.
7. True or False. Dr. Collins and Dr. Camp are the only two professors in a criminal justice department in the state of Georgia to hold both a law degree and a PhD in Criminal Justice /Criminology.
8. What are Dr. Teasdale’s cats’ names?
9. Who did the department hire as a new assistant professor to begin in Fall 2009?
10. True or False. Dr. Reed recently won a poetry contest for a poem titled “Life is a Dog.”
11. Who is our graduate program coordinator?
12. How many criminal justice majors are there at GSU?

Answers: 1. Dr. Guastaferro, 2. seven, 3. about 3,700, 4. True, 5. True, 6. False, 7. True, 8. You’ll have to ask him yourself, 9. Dr. Joshua Hinkle, University of Maryland, 10. False, 11. Dr. Warner, 12. about 450

Grading Scale: 12 correct – you can be chair for a day
10-11 correct – consider our graduate program
7- 9 correct – you’re on the ball
Below 6 – schedule your advising appointment!
Faculty Spotlight: Leah Daigle, Ph.D.

I must admit to always having been a crime junkie. Not that I participated in a lot of crimes, but I have always been fascinated with crime, criminals, and criminal justice. So much so that when I was growing up, I would force my friends to play—not teacher—but court. Yes, I actually would create fake crimes that would be prosecuted “to the fullest extent of the law” in my basement in Roanoke, Virginia.

Each of my friends who were “lucky” enough to be invited over would have a role – prosecutor, witness, judge, criminal—but I was ALWAYS the defense attorney. Boy would I get upset when my “witnesses” did not answer the questions the way I had intended, because I, of course, had apreset notion of how the trial was supposed to transpire.

I always thought I would go to law school and play out, on a more serious level, my courtroom dramas, but I was sidetracked by my desire (or so I thought) to work with at-risk youth. During my senior year, I interned at the juvenile detention center in Roanoke. Trust me, I know now the importance of doing an internship and how it can truly shape your career choices. Mine, however, did not propel me long-term. I also quickly realized I better come up with an alternate plan. Hence, graduate school applications were filled out and sent off.

The decision to get out of Roanoke and attend Northeastern University in Boston for my Master’s degree was one of the best I ever made. I rightly suspected that Roanoke was not the “real world” and for the first time I was exposed to different cultures and was around highly motivated, intelligent people.

I made it through teaching my first class without fainting, getting sick, or dying, which I considered a true achievement. Along with working with my professors on research, which I found to be extremely rewarding, I took this “accomplishment” to mean that I may be able to be a professor. Off to the University of Cincinnati I went.

There, two fortuitous events transpired. First, I took a Life-course Criminology course that caused me to reconsider what I had traditionally thought caused criminal offending. From this class, I learned the importance of how our biological makeup interacts with our environment and it led me to appreciate an integrated, biosocial approach to the study of crime and victimization. I went on to co-author a book on life-course criminology with the professor of that class, Dr. John Paul Wright. Second, I worked on a project examining how colleges respond to the crime reporting requirements of the Jeanne Clery Act. Through this project, I developed an interest in victimization generally, and more specifically in the study of sexual and recurring victimization.

I am fascinated by what factors place individuals at risk of being victimized, not only once, but multiple times. As I complete my first year here at Georgia State University, I realize that I am lucky to be in a department in which I will be able to continue to pursue these interests through my teaching as well as research.

Recent Publications

Our faculty published more than 30 scholarly journal articles in the past year alone. Here are some of those articles:


