

California State University, Fullerton
Criminal Justice PPR Committee Response to External Reviewers' Report

We are grateful to the time and attention given to our program by the external review team. Their assessment of the CSUF Criminal Justice is an accurate one and the recommendations they provided are timely and necessary. Most importantly the external review committee articulated the critical need for additional resources for this department to best serve the needs of our students. Absent getting the support we need, we must significantly reduce the number of students who come to us each year because the status quo this is not sustainable.

There are four key issues that need immediate attention:

- **Program Mission, Vision, Goals & Curriculum**
- **Program Governance and Leadership Workload**
- **Program Resources**
- **Program Culture**

These four key issues are multifaceted and interrelated. We address each key issue separately before addressing the four main recommendations made by the external reviewers.

I. Program Mission, Vision, Goals & Curriculum

In the Self Study and in the External Reviewers' Report it is clear that our program lacks a clear mission and vision. While many of the full-time faculty members are poised to shift to a more social justice-oriented program, we do not all agree on what that means. Though we began discussions about a mission statement and subsequent curriculum changes in the beginning of the 2021-2022 academic year, our talks failed to render any agreement or progress to that end. Given that we have made no movement forward on mission, vision and curriculum, it is hardly surprising that we do not have clearly articulated and measurable learning outcomes for the major.

In the 2020-2021 academic year, an *ad hoc* committee rewrote the learning objectives and course descriptions of our required courses moving the program to a more critical perspective of the criminal justice system. We are proud of this effort but recognizing that we lack a clear overall mission, it was hard to see how and whether these new course outcomes align with the goals of the program. We agree with the External Review Committee that aggregating our new core CLOs gives us the framework for creating program SLOs, and perhaps even a mission statement. One way to frame future conversations about program SLOs and a mission statement is to approach it inductively. Our new core CLOs give us a story of who and what we have decided to become. It may be the way we begin framing future discussions.

It is clear in the Self Study that we have been thinking critically about the future of the required curriculum. An *ad hoc* committee was convened during the course of the Self Study to review the entire curriculum and to consider several new curricular models. Some ideas were to make CRJU 385: Race, Inequality, and the Criminal Justice System a required class, to move CRJU 310:

Criminal Law out of the core, to change the number of required courses, and/ or to sequence courses. We appreciate the consideration of requiring two general survey-type courses and can make this discussion part of a larger departmental conversation. However, we want to stress that without the proper resources to adequately staff these courses, our students will pay the price. The external reviewer's note that such a decision must be contingent on the availability of proper resources for staffing and advising. Departmental growth and change is also being thwarted by departmental culture and communication styles, with some faculty members unwilling to have constructive debates and conversations about moving the curriculum to reflect changes to criminal justice education across the United States.

Importantly, the external reviewers rightfully articulated that curriculum redesign is hampered by the fact that we have not hired a Tenure Track faculty member in 5 years. One of the two faculty members hired in 2017 will be leaving CSUF at the end of this academic year. Since the last faculty search was authorized we have lost two tenured faculty to retirement. While we were granted an opportunity to search for a new Tenure Track faculty member in 2020 and had found a candidate we wished to hire, the search was canceled due to COVID. Despite FTE percentages, **we are in dire need of at least two Tenure Track faculty lines.** Last year, we were only able to offer 82% of the seats necessary to serve our majors. Similarly, while the student/tenure track faculty ratio at CSUF ranged between 39-42, Criminal Justice is at 103. We cannot move forward with any innovation, course and program development without increases to our tenure track faculty lines.

Finally, we agree with the external review team that we must dedicate significant time and attention to quality assessment. We began conversations about changes to the assessment process this year. We have plans for continued discussions in the upcoming year.

II. Program Governance and Leadership Workload

The external reviewers noted that the governance structure of the program needs serious attention. The Criminal Justice Program is the second largest major in the college and also one of the largest and most popular majors at CSUF. Yet, we are housed within the Division of Politics, Administration and Justice, where our resources are consolidated with two other programs. Despite the fact that we have 1300 majors and the other programs, combined, have roughly 600, there is little departmental oversight or autonomy regarding governance structure or documents. Similarly, there is distinct and often unspoken discrepancy in workload between coordinators, if only because of the number of students and sections Criminal Justice must focus on. While we have recently found ways at the Division level to address this inequity, it is the first time in over a decade that it has been addressed. We agree with the external reviewers that the College must address this as well.

There is hidden and unrecognized work for the Criminal Justice Program Coordinator. Because of this, the coordinator focuses on the work that has to be done and cannot spend time visioning and planning for the future of the program. However, it is worth noting that in the

2021-2022 academic year, we created the role of vice-coordinator that has been beneficial to the coordinator and the program.

III. Program Resources

We are chronically and significantly under-resourced. The response to the external review report in the PPR written in 2014 wrote that, “the serious understaffing of the Division office has had and continues to have major consequences¹” in the areas of faculty hiring, academic advising, staffing and space. This problem has not abated, and perhaps, is currently more problematic than it was eight years ago. The 2022 external reviewers stated that “students, faculty, and staff report deep strain, including feelings of burnout. The reviewers delineated six specific areas where we are under-resourced and under-staffed.

1. *Hiring Faculty and Lecturers*

We currently have 13 tenured faculty members. In the next academic year, we will have 12. Tenure density calculations are based on the ratio of tenure-track faculty to FTEF, but administrative assignments outside the Division lower our tenure density substantially in practice. This is both a conundrum for us and a nod to the service that our faculty provide to the university.

As such, we rely heavily on lecturers and we have a difficult time finding qualified people to teach. While some majors are able to find quality lecturers by reaching into the field of practitioners in the local region, Criminal Justice is different. Criminal justice practitioners often lack the critical perspective that is necessary for teaching in this program. Our law classes are more easily staffed by qualified attorneys, but other courses are much more difficult to staff. Classes become a series of “war stories” from the field. This is highly problematic for us and increases our concerns about whether our students are receiving a quality criminal justice education. We are in desperate need of **at least two tenure track faculty lines** to ease this burden and to help us grow.

2. *Retention*

The external reviewers noted that “Issues related to faculty retention include: unhealthy workplace environment, lack of intra-program and inter-division collegial support, inequitable division of service, and inequitable distribution of benefits (i.e., course releases and assignment of graduate assistants). There is a lack of transparency relating to service load, which is catalyzing intra-program and inter-division resentment. Taken together, these items negatively impact retention of high-quality faculty members, particularly junior faculty and faculty of color.”

We agree with their assessment.

3. *Lecturers*

¹ See page 2 of the Chair’s Response to the 2014 External Review Report.

How we engage part-time lecturers is critical for the health of our program. We recognize that our part-time faculty whom we heavily rely on feel undervalued. It is not only difficult to find qualified part-time lecturers, it is difficult to retain them. Onboarding of part-time lecturers, including mentoring and creating opportunities for inclusion in the Department, are important. This will remain an ongoing conversation.

4. *Advising*

As noted in our Self Study, we recognize that issues with student advising must be addressed. A significant portion of the Self Study was dedicated to advising. We learned through that process that we can hire a part-time lecturer to serve as an advisor. However, this alone will not fix the advising problem we have. We agree with the external reviewers that our current model is not meeting the needs of students. We have discussed how to engage students in more pro-active ways. However, current service demands make it exceedingly difficult to engage students in the ways we would collectively like to do.

The external reviewers suggested that we reconsider ways to disseminate information through things like group advising, creating advising related videos, and/ or sending advising-related newsletters to majors. However, all of our experiences with group advising have been unsuccessful. We are open to considering creative ways to make advising more successful, but in the long run this requires the resources to better serve our students.

5. *Staff*

We are in desperate need of an additional staff hire that serves the Criminal Justice Program.

IV. Program Culture

The external reviewers correctly noted four critical issues related to program culture that must be addressed if we are to ever move forward in a productive and collegial way. There are four ways that program culture is currently being impacted and they are all intertwined and layered. During the external site visit, the review team experienced what they referred to as “quickly voiced strong opinions”, “abrasive, catching the committee by surprise”, and “evident that some faculty felt entitled to harshly dismiss the views of others”. This comes as no surprise to us. Being subject to this kind of treatment by colleagues day in and day out has absolutely impacted junior faculty, faculty of color, and the majority of the female-identifying faculty. When vulnerable faculty members have spoken up to address their concerns, they have been told they are wrong or worse leaving them feeling silenced and unheard. Some faculty fear retaliation for using their voices.

This issue derives, in part, from tension in the division as a whole and over the future of the program. While most faculty support a shift toward a more critical, social justice-oriented program, some are uninterested in conversations about changes to the program. We are unable to collectively move forward because some people voice very strong opinions while others feel unable to speak up at all. As such, we remain stagnant.

Not surprisingly, the same faculty who feel particularly vulnerable or silenced are also experiencing inequity and overall burnout.

It goes without saying that racial and gender dynamics are at the heart of addressing program culture. It is these dynamics that have led to the loss of one of our newest hires. We will be unable to hire or retain quality, committed tenure-track faculty if the culture of this program does not change.

Recommendations from the External Reviewers' Report

As a faculty, we have decided that the first and most important thing we can do is create a mission statement and a values statement to determine who we are/ who we want to be. We are committed to this conversation and will begin that work this academic year. Everything we do regarding curriculum development and strategic planning stems from the creation of mission and values statements.

Racial and gender dynamics continue to negatively impact junior faculty, but in particular the women of color in our department. We recognize the need to address these issues without relying on women of color to be a part of the solution. We agree with the external facilitators that we be provided the resources to hire a professional facilitator to help allies and potential allies to engage the work necessary to create the conditions necessary to fully support and value colleagues who have historically been marginalized.

Strategic, long-term planning cannot begin when there remains a lack of trust with accepted and understood working rules of communication. This begins with the work we will engage around our mission and values statement. It continues with strategic planning, curriculum development, and governance. One place we believe an external facilitator can be quite helpful is around creating the types of documents and policies that lead to better shared governance and transparency. It is our hope that will be given the funds necessary to bring in someone who can address both the issues stated above and can help lead formal conversations around strategic planning.

The emphasis on administrative placement within the Division and College is also unsurprising given that we have had discussions about this before. These conversations have typically started by colleagues in the Division but outside of Criminal Justice, and have occurred without transparency and collective rules of engagement. We are open to conversations both within the Department and across the Division about how and whether our current governance and

administrative structures serve or hinder us. However, these conversations must happen in open, transparent ways, where all voices are at the table.

We must also engage in the process of building documents and systems for transparent service allocation and equity. This can be part of work we do with an external facilitator.

Both administrative placement within the Division and the authoring of transparent governing documents and systems brings up an important issue for the short term. It is important that the current communication channels between the Division Chair and the Criminal Justice Program Coordinator be strengthened and, where possible, built in a way that provides more autonomy for the Criminal Justice Program. One example of where this might be beneficial is in conversations about assigned time, which are assigned at the Division level, but may be more appropriate in conversation with the Coordinator.

We know that we must continue grappling with meaningful program assessment. The vice-coordinator has been working on this issue for most of the current academic year, but larger conversations have stalled, in part because of our focus on our Program Performance Review. The external reviewers' suggestions are helpful and they will serve to better inform our process, overall.

Finally, we are grateful for the recommendation that the College provide additional resources to our program. We are in critical need.

1. **Hire two new tenure track faculty members**
2. **Hire a dedicated staff person**
3. **Hire a facilitator to help us navigate racial and gender dynamics, strategic planning, and visioning around governance and administrative structure.**

Despite the internal problems we face, we are excited about the possibilities for future growth. Given the right investments in our program, we can become a leading, cutting-edge program that benefits the College, the University, the local community and beyond. We can become the kind of program that other programs seek to emulate. The return on investment the College would see by providing the resources now cannot be understated.