



## **UCC Program Review Committee summary of review**

### **Program – Criminal Justice**

This program includes the following degrees, minors, and certificates:

- B.C.J. Bachelor of Criminal Justice

### **Recommendation**

This program is found to be **viable**, see report for commendations, concerns, and recommendations.

**Date of last review – AY 2009**

**Date of this review – AY 2017**

This review has been sent to program director and the dean. The Dean's response is attached. The program director concurs with the comments of the Dean.

**Bachelor of Criminal Justice**  
**Program Review**  
**October 25-26, 2017**

Review Committee Members:

External: Dr. James Wells, Eastern Kentucky University

Internal: Dr. Orianna Carter, OU-Southern; Dr. Miriam Shadis, OU-Athens

*Summation: The reviewers find the Bachelor of Criminal Justice to be viable.*

**The program as a whole.**

The Bachelor of Criminal Justice (BCJ) is an undergraduate degree completion program housed in University College. The program, in existence since 1976, was designed for students who have completed an applied associate degree program related to criminal justice, and are seeking a baccalaureate for career advancement. The majority of enrollments are Regional Higher Education (RHE) Law Enforcement Technology (LET) students, however, expanding online accessibility options has broadened BCJ matriculation across Ohio universities and community colleges. The multidisciplinary BCJ curriculum comprises a broad range of courses from the social and behavioral sciences, humanities, communication, natural sciences, and professional disciplines. The junior and senior year studies in liberal arts and professional education provides students, who have already earned two-year technical degrees, with a contextual understanding of sociopolitical factors in the broad scope of criminal justice. Introductory and capstone BCJ courses have recently been added to the program, covering dedicated content in criminal justice research methods, data computation and career training.

This is the first program review of BCJ in sixteen years, a period in which the UC-housed program has experienced seven directors. Challenges observed by this committee include limited program data available for review and deficits in communication among the diverse faculty and campuses upon which the program operates. Nonetheless, strong enrollments (228% increase since 2002, with 361 F2017 BCJ enrollments across OU campuses) and positive impact among graduates, indicate a thriving program that is an important asset to Ohio University.

The BCJ does not have full-time dedicated faculty, adjuncts or administrative staff. However, advisors and classified staff are provided by University College to aid its overall program mission. A one-year part time faculty fellow hire in 2017-2018, Dr.

Jennifer Steele, has been tasked with developing two BCJ courses (BCJ2000 'Introduction to Criminal Justice' and the BCJ capstone, Tier III, 'Drugs Society and Crime'). University College Director of Degree Programs, Julie Cohara, manages and coordinates BCJ as one of UC's two completion degree programs and maintains a 25% advising load, which overruns workload responsibilities on a regular basis. Service responsibilities regarding advising and committee work appear heavier than usual, given the staffing situation vs. high number of enrollments. Research and scholarship activity is minimal within BCJ, and is explained by the lack of funding for dedicated faculty. There is no evidence that external funding has been explored.

As a part of UC, the BCJ program has access to its facilities, financial resources, library resources and technology. Aside from the recent Faculty Fellow, however, there does not appear to be any funding specific to the program, neither for research activities, nor adjunct hires, graduate assistants, internships, or student related activities.

According to the minimum standards of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, the deficits in program chair and faculty staffing in BCJ would prevent C.J. B.S. accreditation, should this avenue be pursued in the future.

### **Undergraduate Program:**

*A. Is the Department fulfilling its service role, adequately preparing non-majors for future coursework and/or satisfying the needs for general education?*

The program does not have a service role, inasmuch as it is not available to non-BCJ majors. This is a consequence of the fact, however, that all BCJ courses (apart from the capstone) appear in other departments and programs, such as Psychology, Sociology, or Political Science.

*B. Is the program attracting majors likely to succeed in the program? Is the number of majors appropriate for the program? Is the program attracting a diverse group of students?*

The program steadily attracts student who are committed to their own success in it. The number of majors across the e-campus, regional and Athens campuses is significant and growing. The student body is appropriately diverse; non-white students made up 17.6% of the student population, and a majority are women, reflecting

general trends across university enrollment. A majority of BCJ students are nontraditional and part-time.

*C. Does the undergraduate curriculum provide majors with an adequate background to pursue discipline-related careers or graduate work following graduation?*

The Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice (BCJ) at Ohio University is an upper-division program exclusively designed for students who have previously completed an associate's degree program in a technical area related to criminal justice, such as law enforcement, corrections, or a related human services field. Currently, the undergraduate curriculum for a BCJ at Ohio University, when including the Associate of Arts in Law Enforcement Technology, seems to be providing its majors with an adequate background that meets the primary needs of the profession. Although the program has only recently taken steps to meet the minimum standards of the Academy of Criminal Justice, the prerequisite for entry into the BCJ of an associate of arts in Law Enforcement Technology seems to satisfy the basic requirements for both essential and discipline specific skills. Three regional campuses, OU–Chillicothe, OU–Lancaster, and OU–Southern, offer a two-year program leading to an Associate in Applied Science in Law Enforcement Technology. These regional programs prepare students for entry level employment in law enforcement agencies, corrections, and juvenile justice. In addition, these same programs provide academic credit which may be applied toward the Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice at Ohio University. Combining the two-year associates program with the multidisciplinary courses offered during the junior and senior years of the BCJ seem to meet current ACJS standards of providing a balanced presentation of the issues of the field as well as in educating students to be critical thinkers who can communicate their thoughts effectively in oral and written form.

ACJS standards requires coursework in the following content areas to be met: Administration of Justice, Corrections, Criminological Theory, Law Adjudication, Law Enforcement, Research and Analytic Methods. The BCJ curriculum, when including the Associate of Arts in Law Enforcement, seems to satisfy this standard. Furthermore, and in accordance with ACJS standards, the BCJ undergraduate curriculum includes courses that provide a systematic examination of diversity and ethical issues in criminal justice. In sum, the undergraduate curriculum for a Bachelor in Criminal Justice (BCJ) at Ohio University, when including the Associate of Arts in Law Enforcement Technology, appears to meet ACJS standards of the primary objectives of all criminal justice programs: the development of critical thinking; communication, technology, and computing skills; quantitative reasoning; ethical decision-making; and an understanding of diversity.

With respect to the four-year degree, at face value, the undergraduate curriculum for a BCJ at Ohio University, including an Associate of Arts in Law Enforcement Technology, seems to be providing its majors with an adequate background to pursue graduate work. However, whereas ACJS standards do not specifically state that a B.S. or B.A. degree should be a requirement for admission into a Master's degree in Criminal Justice or Criminology, some graduate programs, particularly those of high standing where students have to compete for acceptance, may take pause and even weight applicants with non B.S. or B.A. degrees significantly lower than the rest of the applicant pool.

*D. Are the resources and the number of and distribution of faculty sufficient to support the undergraduate program?*

The resources are potentially there. However, because the program depends upon online teaching and extra-departmental offerings for the bulk of its coursework, the consistency of course offerings leaves something to be desired. Students asked for more psychology and sociology courses; courses developing interpersonal communication – such as interviewing technique – are also a desiderata and probably not best taught online. Faculty already teaching in departments participating in the BCJ must be made aware of their role in the program, and encouraged to develop or regularly offer courses needed by students, including regular rotation of required courses online.

Students have access to the library resources available to all Ohio University students; improved communication about Honors Work and undergraduate research opportunities would enhance the program.

*E. Are pedagogical practices appropriate? Is teaching adequately assessed?*

Given the unique nature of the BCJ program at Ohio University, which not only includes its exclusive upper-division nature, but in addition a curriculum with course work that could be taken in multiple formats (online and on-ground settings at both regional and main campus locations), a question was raised by the committee on assessment of pedagogical approaches and teaching practices that can be fairly and consistently evaluated. Furthermore, whereas most, if not all, courses offered in the above-mentioned formats are being evaluated by students, the anonymity associated with student evaluations, also makes it impossible to track what BCJ students thought of the pedagogical approaches and teaching practices utilized in the extra-departmental courses they participated in. It was understood that assessment of pedagogical approaches and teaching practices are currently being planned in the

development of new base BCJ courses using the ACJS standards rubrics. This assessment will include both peer and student review of pedagogical approaches, teaching practices, and course materials.

In addition, given the questionable validity of using student evaluations to assess teaching performance, there is interest in the University College in examining student performance in follow-up courses as a gauge of teaching effectiveness in prior courses. Assuming the logistics of tracking students in a multi-disciplinary program involving online and on-ground courses in a variety of geographic locations can be met, this could prove to be one mechanism of assessing, at least in part, pedagogical approaches and teaching practices utilized in the BCJ program.

*F. Are students able to move into discipline-related careers and/or pursue further academic work?*

At the current time, there are no available data to demonstrate that degree BCJ graduates are able to move into discipline-related careers and/or pursue further academic work. Reviewers did learn that a new exit survey, administered to graduating seniors when they pick up their cap and gown, contains questions that address post-graduation plans. Reviewers learned that these data have not yet been made available to the University College. Reviewers also learned that the University College believes that tracking BCJ graduates into graduate programs, especially those at Ohio University, is something not currently being done, but could be conducted.

**Areas of concern and Recommendations.** *Program concerns were considered interrelated.*

A. Limited or uneven course offerings. Because the majority of students are enrolled part time, and yet the expectation is for them to finish in two years – course planning is problematic.

§ Recommendation: better communication among program director, advisors, and departments offering courses. The University College Dean should give chairs and directors a “wish list” for two year course rotation so that students can plan their enrollment. NB: BCJ students significantly contribute to OU course enrollments across the university.

B. Advising. Students need help integrating into the university culture. Because some students are coming from two-year programs outside of the OU system, they may not come from a culture which emphasizes academic advising. As mature and/or continuing students, BCJ students may feel they should decide curricula for themselves, rather

than seek help strategizing course selection. Students also have no idea of where or how to voice concerns or complaints about instructors, or to resolve conflicts while a course is happening. They have no idea of policies governing procedures for appeals. Especially in the online environment of most BCJ coursework, extra effort must be made to communicate such policies and procedures to the students.

§ Recommendation: A dedicated BCJ advisor and a program orientation manual.

C. Different tuition rates (RHE vs. Athens, online vs. brick and mortar vs. e-university) discourage students from choosing the best courses for their programs.

§ Recommendation: Develop a consistent rate for cost of course credit across the university for the program's curricula.

D. Communication between all constituencies, students, advisors, faculty, and administrators, is problematic. We observed this in the course of the program review -- participants in the review did not always know their role in the review process itself. Faculty in program courses are unaware they are teaching BCJ students, and so on. The online nature of many of the courses aggravates the disconnection students have with faculty and administration. The reviewers believe that without dedicated resources this problem will neither be fully identified nor solved.

§ BCJ has recognized this need, and are in the process of improving gaps in communication through visiting resources and dedicating more training on advising with LET campus directors. Reviewers felt it was essential to dedicate resources to complete this task on a consistent basis.

§ Recommendation: Representatives from LET and BCJ should be included, as well as the different types of students (on-line, on-campus, e-university).

E. A sense of program identity, community and culture is absent across campuses and constituents. Students do not identify as part of a cohort because they are spread out, working, and don't have time to socialize. At the same time, students identified a need for discussion boards, newsletters, volunteer opportunities, and internships which would cultivate their collective identity.

§ Recommendation: The promotion of the Criminal Justice National Honor Society (Alpha Phi Sigma).

§ Recommendation: Faculty who teach in the program need to be aware that they are in fact teaching in the program.

F. Funding. BCJ does not have its own budget

§ Reviewers strongly recommend a dedicated budget for the BCJ program. Funding resources would facilitate outside speakers to attract students, increase attraction for the program and overall connectivity

§ Reviewers emphasize the need to aid in securing internships.

G. Regarding the curriculum, the reviewers note a lack of courses needed to improve student marketability, dealing with current and future trends in Criminal Justice.

§ Recommendation: Courses on GIS, Social Justice, Re-entry related to Mass Incarceration, Opioid Epidemic (general addiction), Child and Domestic Abuse, Race, and Global perspective should be incorporated into the program. Faculty at Ohio University, such as Dr. Solveig Speldnes in Social Work, are eager to partner with BCJ to teach such courses. The BCJ program could also more effectively partner with the Center for Law, Justice and Culture in the College of Arts & Sciences to address these issues.

H. UC Director of Degree Programs, Julie Cohara, is overworked and has too many responsibilities.

§ Recommendation: BCJ needs a dedicated Program Director.

§ Recommendation: The Faculty Fellow, with partial teaching and advising loads at OU-Lancaster, needs to be continued to be funded. The remaining regional campuses need similar positions rather than burdening regional LET program Directors to facilitate advising for BCJ students.

§ Recommendation: Secure a Junior Fellow (GA, for example) from one of the contributing Athens departments to help with teaching, advising and planning. Reviewers recommend that an ABD in Psych, or MA in Soc/Crim, SW, or related field could compete for this opportunity (and be compensated).

I. There is limited capacity for growth and expansion in BCJs current structure, which has not evolved in its 50-year history, apart from its transition to online teaching. There is a stigma associated with the BCJ degree (not particular to OU); students may have difficulty entering graduate programs. There is a stigma associated with the BCJ degree (not particular to OU); students may have difficulty entering graduate programs.

§ Recommendation: Establish a School within University College for Criminal Justice Studies. A separate School would allow the University College to carry out its current mission as well as allow the BCJ program to develop more autonomy and grow.



§ Recommendations: Consider seriously adopting a BS degree in Criminal Justice, and highlight the academic nature of the program.

**Other Recommendations.**

- A. Explore using the Dublin Campus for weekend courses and/or regular courses for students. Consider the Executive MBA model.
- B. Build a connection to the Center for Law, Justice and Culture; include BCJ students on CLJC mailing list, for example.

**Commendations.**

A. Growth of Program.

The program is financially viable and has the ability to sustain its own growth, if it were allowed to under a different budgeting model.

B. Positive Impact.

Interviewee responses were mostly positive. Conference calls with students (not a representative sample) generally indicated they were very happy with instructors and the college experience, e.g. responsive, quick feedback, online classes well-structured, appreciation for availability of the online aspects of the program. The general consensus was the program aided professional development in the field and in job mobility.

C. Quality of Interdisciplinary Instructors.

eCampus advisors felt OU was successful in attracting good instructors willing to teach online, and were able to find classes students needed, even though choices may be limited. Enthusiastic, active, and highly respected faculty on the OU Athens Campus are eager to see more done and participate in the program in their teaching and research.

D. Motivation of BCJ students.

Student body appear to be hardworking, with several educators giving favorable opinions that, 'BCJ students are notably different from other students and more dedicated to completing work.'

E. Two-plus-Two Collaboration with RHE.

Two-year programs and regional campuses are successful in getting students involved and we see potential for growth here with the Baccalaureate.

F. OU Mission.

The program meets a vital role in meeting the needs of the student population in our service area, helping parents, people working fulltime and part-time jobs in South-Eastern Ohio needs people educated in Criminal Justice, especially social justice issues.

**Overall judgment.** The program is considered viable as a whole.



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Dear Dr. Ingram,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the program review report for the Bachelor of Criminal Justice. I appreciate the careful attention provided by the committee in their review of the documents submitted, and in their visit with the program. I strongly concur with their assessment that the Bachelor of Criminal Justice (BCJ) is a viable program with “strong enrollments and positive impact among graduates, indicating a thriving program that is an important asset to Ohio University.” Below is some additional context for the recommendations that are included in the report.

As a degree completion program, the BCJ is structured differently from traditional four-year programs: the bulk of the professional disciplinary content is acquired through the Associate degree, which is then “completed” by the BCJ with general education courses as well as selected upper-level courses and a capstone related to the major. As such, we use the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) standards to guide our curriculum (as the program review notes, our curriculum meets the ACJS standards), but we do not plan to seek accreditation through ACJS, because they typically only accredit traditional four-year programs. In addition, while the program has grown and diversified in recent years, the number of students cited in the report—361—is the unduplicated number of students. Because of the nature of the student body, students take courses at multiple campuses as well as on online. If we remove the double counting of students who take courses at more than one campus, the number of unique students in the program is 210. Many of the recommendations are based on the larger, duplicated enrollment number.

The program director has already started creating a two-year rotation for upper-level BCJ courses, and will consult and coordinate with the regional campuses to make sure staffing and offerings are appropriate. We anticipate this will be finalized by the end of summer for fall 2018. In fall of 2017, the program director reached out to all instructors teaching courses that count toward the degree (these courses are from many disciplines), and has reconstituted the faculty advisory committee for the program, which will also help with communication. In addition, the director is exploring programming, online discussion options, and the promotion of the Criminal Justice National Honor Society to create a deeper sense of identity for the program (a challenge when majors are spread out between multiple campuses and online). While the enrollment at the Athens campus does not warrant a full-time director, we would like to continue a position similar to this year’s BCJ Faculty Fellow, and/or a graduate student position to help support these initiatives.

The report raises the concern that the BCJ program does not have its own budget. This is not accurate; there has been funding available to support the program, including

professional development for the director. However, those funds have been held as part of a larger overall budget in University College that includes advising and student services as well as degree programs, which has made the availability of resources less transparent than ideal. Under the new chart of accounts, BCJ funds are clearly earmarked and can be tracked more easily by the director.

We agree with the reviewers that the BCJ program has a lot of potential, both in terms of enrollment growth and in filling a distinct niche among BCJ programs by collaborating with other areas on campus to include courses related to diversity, culture, justice, and similar areas. We have recently added rigorous introductory and capstone courses to the program. The online program has been growing modestly, even though we have not invested in advertising because we want to make sure we are able to meet the needs of the students we have. We are proud of our graduates—in the last year, several students have gone on to graduate school, including two that have gone on to law school. As a degree that supports both full-time students and students who are already working in the field, we believe we can provide a high quality and high impact degree to even more people.

Thank you for the constructive feedback, and I thank you, your committee, and the reviewers for the time and expertise that you all have brought to the review process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Sayrs". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Elizabeth Sayrs  
Dean, University College