



Fairmont State University
Board of Governors

Board Action Item Approval

Date: 05/05/2022

Action Item: Approval of M.S. in Criminal Justice Program Review

1. Approve above action item as presented.
2. Approve above action with the following stipulation:
3. Table the above action item until _____
(next Board of Governors' meeting)

FSU President

5/5/2022

Date

FSU Board of Governors' Chair

5/5/22

Date

PROGRAM REVIEW
Fairmont State Board of Governors

Program with Special Accreditation Program without Special Accreditation

Date Submitted 6/10/21

Degree Program: Masters in Criminal Justice

INSTITUTIONAL RECOMMENDATION Approved by the Board of Governors (§ 5.2.8)

The institution is obligated to recommend continuance or discontinuance of a program and to provide a brief rationale for its recommendation:

- 1. Continuation of the program at the current level of activity, with or without specific action;
- 2. Continuation of program with at a reduced level of activity (e.g., reducing the range of optional tracks) or other corrective action
- 3. Identification of the program for further development; or
- 4. Development of a cooperative program with another institution, or sharing courses, facilities, faculty, and the like.
- 5. Discontinuation of the Program

Rationale for Recommendation:

Affirm the recommendation of the Graduate Program Review Council. This program is well-regarded and has a reputation for graduating knowledgeable and well-prepared students. Enrollment and graduation rates have remained steady over time. This program remains responsive to need and makes program adjustments when appropriate. We will continue to monitor and make investments as opportunities arise.

Chris Kast and Joshua Smallridge

Signature of person preparing report:

6/10/2021
Date

Chris Kast
Signature of Dean

6/10/21
Date

Oliver B. Phillipin
Signature of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs:

3/10/22
Date

Signature of President:

Date

Signature of Chair, Board of Governors:

Date

Executive Summary for Program Review

(not to be more than 2-3 pages)

Degree Program: Masters of Criminal Justice
College or School/Department: College of Liberal Arts
Chair/Program Coordinator: Chris Kast
External Reviewer:
Reviewer Email:

A. Synopses of significant findings, including findings of external review (include the external reviewer(s) information).

External Reviewer: Dr. Renee Lamphere, Associate Professor, UNC Pembroke

The external reviewer holds a PHD in criminology. Dr. Lamphere gave the program a favorable review. Noting that the program prepares students well for careers in the area of criminal justice and criminology. Dr. Lamphere did have a few recommendations for the program. Notably, that the program should do a better job tracking graduates to keep better data on student success. Steps have already been made in this regard since the time of the external review. Dr. Lamphere noted that the program is certainly advancing the profession. However, more could be done to advance the discipline. Meaning the knowledge base related to criminal justice in criminology. Dr. Lamphere noted that the publication rate of the faculty was somewhat low but reasoned this is likely due to the faculty being stretched thin. Noting, that the number of faculty for the program is small when you consider that they are also part of a large undergraduate program. It should be noted that scholarly output has increased some since the external review was completed.

The self-study of the program demonstrates that the program is performing well. The enrollment and graduating rates have remained steady with some minor fluctuations over time. It has been found that if enrollment gets too high the resources of the program are stretched thin. Due to the nature of graduate level classes class sizes should remain lower than what would be expected in an undergraduate course. Below twenty students is desirable, but classes sizes are usually closer to twenty-five or thirty for required classes. When enrollment hit a high of forty-two students during the 2016-17 academic year additional sections of required classes had to be offered which stretched the resources of the program thin.

Based on the data collected, our students are successful in the field, and some have gone on to pursue PHD programs. In addition, students have consistently met the standards set for student success as part of our assessment process. In addition, the assessment process has consistently been improved. Faculty have also engaged in more scholarly activity and in some cases have published with our students.

B. Plans for program improvement, including timeline:

Between the external and self-study a few areas have been identified for improvement. First, as noted above the program needs to track graduates more closely. The survey conducted as part of this review is one of the first major efforts to track students in the program. This process will

continue on a regular basis with steps taken to increase the alumni response rate and collect richer data. To collect richer data the survey will be adapted to collect data on a more granular level. The most recent survey simply asked respondents if they work in the field. In the future, more detailed data will be collected. To increase response rates a multi-model approach will be used when sending out surveys. Alumni will be contacted through email and traditional mail. If resources are available, the use of incentives will also be considered. This data will be collected every five years at a minimum. It would also be good to follow up with recent alumni one year out from the program.

Second, the program is situated to grow if we implement a few desired changes. The faculty have been developing a 4+1 track for a few years now. This would allow students to finish their undergraduate degree and master's in five years. It is expected that this change will contribute to growth in the master's program. However, as made clear above, the program will need additional resources to grow. The program is currently at a bottleneck, where it cannot feasibly grow without additional resources. There are many paths forward available, but the faculty and graduate coordinator need to develop a plan to move forward. Due to increasing competition from other master's programs the 4+1 track is desired. However, if enrollment increases to the levels seen in 2016-18 additional resources are needed. There are many ways to address this issue moving forward. To address this issue faculty will need to meet with the graduate coordinator and develop an action plan. A goal has been set to finalize plans by the end of the Fall 2021 term.

If the faculty decide to move forward with the 4+1 there are still a few hurdles to implementing it. The biggest issue is that students cannot take enough graduate courses during the senior year to progress at the desired rate. There are a few possible ways to address this issue. One solution would be to change the program to make the summer term and winter terms official parts of the degree progression. However, doing so would require a change in faculty contracts, and student interest in such a change would need to be assessed. That is just one path moving forward. If the faculty decide to move forward with the 4+1 a plan should be finalized by the end of the Fall 2021 term.

Third, as noted by the external reviewer the program could do more to contribute to the discipline. Faculty output has increased over the last few years. Faculty publish often and contribute significantly to the discipline in other ways, such as serving as journal editors and on external committees. That being said, student contributions to the discipline could be improved. Faculty will address, this issue by encouraging students who show interest in research to pursue the thesis track. In addition, faculty will encourage students to present work at conferences.

C. Identify weaknesses or deficiencies from the previous review and describe how these have been addressed.

The last review was conducted in 2012. No weaknesses or deficiencies were identified in that review.

D. Five-year trend data on graduates and majors enrolled is provided in the table below. (Data was provided by the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness). The five-year data is provided below.

			HEPC Series 10		
AY	*Enrollment	**Degree Awarded	Productivity Standards Programs are required to meet at least one of the indicators listed below.		
2015-16	32	12	Average of Five Most Recent Years		
2016-17	42	23			
2017-18	41	22			
2018-19	34	15			
2019-20	32	16			
2020-21	22	9	Degree Level	*Enrollment	**Degree Awarded
***	34.2	17	Baccalaureate		
5-YR AVG			Masters	6	3
* Official fall census headcount					
** IPEDS Graduation data (July 1 - June 30)					
*** Fall 16 – Spring 21 Average					

E. Summary of assessment model and how results are used for program improvement (A full Assessment Report is in TaskStream and can be downloaded or viewed by academic year for summation).

The criminal justice program engages in the collection of assessment data each semester in the program courses. This information is discussed during department meetings at the end of each semester. An overall report is currently being drafted based upon last year’s assessment data (academic year 2019-2020). The report will be used to highlight progress toward program goals by identifying areas in student learning outcomes that are failing to reach the target threshold. This information will then be used to generate improvements in measures or realignment of student learning outcomes in preparation for the next cycle. This process is supported by an advisory board. The board greatly assists with the continued evolution and development of the curriculum. The members of the advisory board consist of well-respected leaders from various specializations in the field of criminal justice. These individuals include, but are not limited to, representatives from local county Sheriff’s Departments, state and federal correctional administrators, and federal, state and local judges, attorneys, probation officers, law enforcement officers.

F. Data on student placement (e.g., number of students employed in positions related to the field of study or pursuing advanced degrees).

A survey was sent out to Alumni of the program via email to collect information on student placement. In total ten alumni responded to the survey. The results demonstrated that nine of the Alumni are currently working full time, and one is working part time. One responded indicated that they had attended a Ph.D. program since they finished their degree at Fairmont State University. Based on this data, it can be determined that our student’s go on to succeed in the field. In the future, the program will need to track graduates more closely. It would be good to send

surveys via email and other survey modes such as the mail to maximize our response rates. Although, the data collected is favorable, the program should strive to collect more detailed data with a larger response rate in the future.