

May 15, 2009

Dr. Sherry F. Queener
Director of the Graduate Office, IUPUI
Associate Dean, Indiana University Graduate School
620 Union Drive, UN 207
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Dear Associate Dean Queener,

This letter provides my overall assessment of the proposal to offer a Master of Science in Criminal Justice and Public Safety in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at IUPUI. I have some expertise in this field. I have been involved in graduate education in the field of criminal justice for 23 years and have served as Director of Graduate Studies, Department Head, and Dean, with both MA and PhD programs. I have participated in graduate programs in the states of Illinois (University of Illinois at Chicago) and New York (SUNY-Albany).

Need for the Program

Based on the available data, there is little question that this program will fill a large educational need in Indiana. There is substantial support for this type of program among criminal justice agency personnel in central Indiana and throughout the state, as reflected in the letters of support. It will meet the needs of employees who are seeking advancement within their organization or are considering other options in the private sector or with educational institutions as teachers/professors. Furthermore, the undergraduates who take SPEA criminal justice courses are enthusiastic about this masters program. There is a strong preference for this type of graduate education and 9 out of 10 students see the program as helpful for advancing their careers. More generally, I find that there is a clear-cut need for graduate programs that can fill a large void between academic, theory-based PhD programs and training programs that teach "Handcuffs 101". Masters-level students need training in management and leadership, information systems, research and program evaluation, and numerous public safety issues. This program will give students the opportunity to critically evaluate these issues, strengthen their problem solving skills and adopt evidence-based approaches to decision making.

Relationship to Other Programs in Indiana and Elsewhere

I am somewhat familiar with the CJ programs on the Bloomington and Indianapolis campuses. This new program is distinctive because of its emphasis on the practices of criminal justice agencies and its new focus on public safety more broadly. Furthermore, linking the students to agencies via an

experiential learning/internship is a vital part of the educational process. Students learn by reading and doing. At the graduate level, they need to be involved with agencies to observe processes and decision-making in the field. Similarly, the link to the CJ research center will allow students to learn about CJ agencies and how to generate knowledge and to evaluate programs through an apprenticeship model. Working closely with researchers and practitioners in agency settings is an optimal learning strategy.

At the national level, there are many masters-level CJ programs that vary in quality. Because of the caliber of faculty at the School of Public and Environmental Affairs and the national reputation of the IU system, I expect that the new SPEA program will be easily ranked in the upper tier of programs and will attract students throughout the Midwest. It should be able to compete successfully with masters programs in Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska and Michigan while first serving the needs of Indiana residents.

Curriculum Content

A two-year 36 hour program is fairly common. What is not so common is the selection of courses. The proposed MS degree is comprehensive, flexible and addresses key issues in the field. The core courses, in combination, provide a coherent and integrated picture of the field from a management and public safety perspective. In the real world, managers must learn about everything from community participation in public safety to budget management to disaster preparedness. We are living at a time where criminal justice and public safety agencies must be accountable to the public for providing effective and fair services, while at the same time, be prepared to handle any crisis that emerges in a post-911 environment. Executives must be able to manage "learning organizations" that are in the business of collecting, analyzing, and responding to real-time data in both their internal and external environments. CJ and public safety leaders are required to have a deeper understanding of their organizations, as well as the communities they serve and the problems they are expected to solve. They must be equipped with the management and technological skills to identify and respond appropriate to existing problems, as well as forecast future problems and develop strategic plans for preventing them. In a nutshell, the proposed curriculum appears to be capable of achieving all of this. I am impressed. Last year, I conducted a large focus group with criminal justice professionals in Illinois to query them about the types of masters-level courses that would be useful in today's environment. The overlap of their ideas with the course proposed in this program is remarkable.

As a psychologist interested in organizational behavior, my only recommendation is that the management coursework includes some coverage of supervision and leadership skills. (I'm not suggesting that it won't -- only that this topic is critically important). Too often CJ organizations are poorly managed and operate within outdated military models of command and control that provide (ironically) limited accountability for employees' behavior. Frequently, this contributes to serious morale problems, poor productivity, cultural cynicism, negative relations with the community, and expensive law suits. Effective leaders and supervisors are able to avoid these problems by building work environments that are respectful of individual employees with diverse backgrounds, provide employees with the training and resources they need, provide positive role models, reward excellence, identify and assist problem employees, etc. The program objective of providing a MS degree with a management focus is very sensible, so my hope is that the human factors in the work environment and the work-family balance are addressed.

Summary

In sum, the decision to support this program should be a "no-brainer." Criminal Justice is the fastest growing academic field in the nation, but between the BA and the PhD, there is a critical gap in educational offerings, especially in certain states. Too often MA programs are designed as a prerequisite or introduction to a PhD program and lack the skill-focus that professionals and professionals-to-be are looking for. This program will fill that gap, but do so in a rigorous manner that forces students to critically analyze individual and organizational behavior in a larger theoretical and management framework. Furthermore, this program offers a distinctive concentration on public safety. As co-chair of the public safety committee for the Go-To-2040 Project -- with the goal of developing a long-term strategic plan for the year 2040 for the seven-county region of northern Illinois -- I am convinced that we need leaders who have the skills to manage uncharted waters. With rapid changes in the global economy, technologies, community structures, and the nature of criminal activity, we must be prepared for the future with managers who understand these realities. The MS program in Criminal Justice and Public Safety appears to be on the cutting edge of preparing students to assume these management positions.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

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