

May 16, 2009

Sherry F. Queener, PhD
Director of the Graduate Office, IUPUI
Associate Dean, Indiana University Graduate School

Dear Dr. Queener:

I have had the opportunity to review the proposal for a new Masters of Science in Criminal Justice and Public Safety to be offered by the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA) at IUPUI. As Director of the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University, a fellow CIC institution, and previously chair of the Department of Criminal Justice at Indiana University Bloomington, I feel qualified to offer this assessment. Additionally, I am familiar with the research of a number of the criminal justice faculty at SPEA and I have worked with criminal justice officials in the Indianapolis region for the last two decades.

The proposed program fills several needs. First, it is distinct from the masters degree program at IUB that is tightly coupled with the Ph.D. program. My experience at both IUB and at MSU suggests that criminal justice and public safety professionals seek a professionally-oriented masters degree, more akin to the masters degree in public affairs that integrates policy analysis and public administration. However, many criminal justice and public safety officials seek a degree specific to criminal justice and public safety as opposed to a general degree in public affairs. Thus, I do believe there is a demand for this degree. Perhaps more fundamentally, the management and leadership of our criminal justice organizations are in dire need of advanced educational programs that can prepare future leaders to deal with the complex and changing environment in which these organizations operate (e.g., Post-911 witnesses a significant expansion in mission and responsibilities as well as significant budget reductions due to the economic crisis). Additionally, the extension of the traditional criminal justice degree to link criminal justice and public safety reflects contemporary developments in the field as well as theoretical integration (e.g. risk analysis and criminal justice analysis).

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The proposed curriculum is logical, fulfills the goals of the program, and appears to build effectively on the strengths of both the criminal justice and public affairs components of the SPEA program. The only question I would raise relates to the eight required core courses. The courses make sense but it is a fairly rigid structure that will lock the program into a fixed schedule of course offerings. This is not a substantive criticism but rather a logistical question for the faculty. Are there adequate faculty resources to offer the eight core courses on a routine basis to allow students to progress through the program (e.g., what happens when a key faculty member is on sabbatical or research leave? Will substitutions be allowed?) I assume the faculty have discussed these issues and have an adequate plan for scheduling (the proposal indicates this to be the case). Finally, the curriculum matches the strengths and interests of the faculty.

In summary, this proposal is substantively sound, builds on the strengths and mission of the criminal justice and public safety faculty within the SPEA program, and meets a professional need in central Indiana. I am happy to offer my support.

Sincerely,

Edmund F. McGarrell, Ph.D.
Director and Professor