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Ensuring Quality in Criminal Justice Education: Academic Standards and the Reemergence of Accreditation

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In 2005, the Executive Board of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences approved policies and procedures for the *academic certification* of criminal justice and criminology programs. Academic certification is anticipated to lead to a rebirth of accreditation which was first initiated in the mid-1970s and abandoned shortly thereafter as a means to redress the quality concerns in criminal justice education. This article highlights the general use of accreditation and standards as a means to ensure quality in higher education. The emergence and growth of criminal justice/criminology programs, questions regarding quality, the development and implementation of academic standards, and the record of initiatives in preparing for *accreditation* in criminal justice education are explored. The authors review issues and obstacles in the evolution of criminal justice standards and discuss the impact and importance of academic review to the pursuit of quality in criminal justice higher education. The authors examine the salient contribution of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education in establishing a compliance review process for criminal justice programs and the promise of *accreditation* as a vehicle for ensuring quality in criminal justice education.

In May 2005, the Executive Board of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS or Academy) approved standards and procedures for the academic certification of associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree programs in criminal justice and criminology. The first certification visits were conducted in mid-2005. The Academy's decision to embark on academic certification was an important milestone in the evolution of criminal justice and criminology education. In this article, the authors briefly review the history of criminal justice programs and the Academy's and one state's role in establishing standards and

certification. They contend that certification is part of the discipline's evolution which ultimately may lead to a rebirth of accreditation.

The Emergence, Growth, and Evolution of Criminal Justice Education

Emergence and Orderly Growth (1893-1965)

Criminal justice education had its beginnings in 1893 "when the University of Chicago School of Sociology was established with a component on crime and deviance in society" (Hale 1998:387). Chicago also became the venue for the first National Conference on Criminal Law and Criminology held by Northwestern University in 1909 (Stephens 1976) which led to the founding of the American Institute of Criminology and Criminal Law (Walker 1998). The next year, the Institute inaugurated the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* which became the "most important platform for the latest thinking in criminal justice reform" (Walker 1998:124). Yet virtually all historical pieces on criminal justice education begin with Vollmer.

August Vollmer is credited with establishing, in 1908, the first educational program designed specifically for criminal justice personnel—the Berkeley Police School connected to the University of California. The relationship was formalized in 1916 when the Berkeley campus offered its first crime-related courses (Pelfrey 1978). Recognition of the new academic specialty came in 1923 when a Berkeley policeman earned a baccalaureate degree with a major in economics and a minor in criminology (Swank 1972).

From the late 1920s through the 1930s several institutions developed programs emphasizing the administrative aspects of policing and criminal justice. All these programs included a strong training component (Pelfrey 1978; Swank 1972). The leaders of these programs were convinced that higher education was the proper mechanism to raise police personnel standards by developing intellectual skills and imparting knowledge in modern management and scientific methods for criminal investigation.

The period following World War II until 1965 was one of "orderly growth" (Foster 1974). By 1965 there were 64 colleges and universities offering such educational programs in criminal justice (IACP 1968). On average, two programs were developed per year.

Explosive Growth (1965-1978)

The period 1965-1978 was one of uncontrolled, rampant growth of criminal justice higher education. By 1970, the number of degree programs had multiplied nearly eightfold with the total number reaching just under 500 (Morn 1995). An additional 200 were added by 1973 and by 1978 the number had almost doubled again, reaching 1,200 (Ward and Webb 1984). Ward and Webb

estimate that in 1978 at least 1,500 institutions of higher education offered some course of study in criminology or criminal justice. Exact counts are not possible because of different methodologies for counting and reporting, but the estimates provide a reasonable representation of the explosive growth in the number of programs and institutions housing these programs.

Stabilization (1990-2006)

Recent data evidence significant stabilization within the field from 1990 to 2006, particularly as related to baccalaureate degree programs. Morn (1995) documents 687 baccalaureate and 157 master's degree programs in 1990. A spring 2006 search of college catalogs using *College Source Online* (1971-) to identify degree programs in any area of the field of criminal justice/criminology yielded 1,989 programs: 692 degree-granting baccalaureate programs. As these programs began to stabilize in numbers, doctoral programs in criminal justice and criminology experienced a significant growth period. Clearly, the discipline is in a different place in 2006 than it was in the 1970s when accreditation standards were first promulgated.

Evolution

Though the first program in the field, the Chicago School, was criminological, the vast majority of early higher education programs focused on police education and practical solutions to criminal justice problems. By the early 1920s, there were serious questions about the practice of criminal justice. A number of city and state crime commissions repeatedly recommended a better qualified workforce as the remedy (Walker 1998). Higher education was heralded as the means to qualified workers.

The federal government also weighed in through the Wickersham Commission (U.S. National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement 1968, orig. 1931). The 14 reports of the Commission were the first to examine American criminal justice both nationally and systematically. *The Police*, written by Vollmer, called for higher personnel standards for police. Overall, the Commission reports had little visible impact on criminal justice practice, but a two-volume report, *The Causes of Crime*, may have contributed to the educational focus on criminology (Walker 1998).

Morn (1995) presents a rich history of the competing philosophies during the 1960s and 1970s regarding the nature of criminal justice higher education as a pursuit of professionalism versus academic study. From 1960 to 1966, an interdisciplinary faculty at SUNY-Albany negotiated regarding the type of graduate programs to implement. They concluded that graduate criminal justice education would be an academic endeavor valuing the study of criminal justice practice. The experience in establishing the School of Criminal Justice at

Albany, New York seemed to have blazed the trail for Berkeley's transformation. In 1971, the historic Berkeley School of Criminology, having grappled with the issue for more than three years, abandoned the professional school model and embraced the academic discipline model. The issue appeared to be settled. Nevertheless, by the late 1970s, the theory versus practice debate remained a serious stumbling block to developing a consensus on the objectives and curricula of criminal justice education (Simpson 1979). Another philosophical disagreement concerned the use of "criminology" or "criminal justice" as the moniker for the field, which was best exemplified in the decision regarding a name for the School of Criminal Justice at SUNY-Albany. According to Eliot Lumbard:

The word criminology was political anathema and this school could not be created if it had such a tag nor could it be seen as another label for sociology; that if it was to be interdisciplinary it had to be that in fact and it couldn't be confined to sociologists. (Morn 1995:129)

The level and emphasis of criminal justice programs represent another progression in the field. From the late 1920s to the end of the 1930s, new criminal justice courses "tended to address administrative matters, whereas criminology courses generally centered on the study of crime and delinquency from a sociological perspective" (Ward and Webb 1984:26). From 1930 to 1950, new programs emphasized police education at the community college or two-year level, while four-year and graduate-level programs typically focused on corrections and were located in departments of sociology (Foster 1974; Karacki and Galvin 1968; Simpson 1979). Programs instituted in the 1960s were much less likely to be associated with a sociology department or to offer courses at graduate level. Older programs were geared toward the needs of academic sociologists while newer programs were geared toward the concerns of practice in criminal justice (Karacki and Galvin 1968).

The end of World War II brought an emphasis in training for law enforcement personnel. New York and then California, in 1960, established formal training programs and implemented Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). State after state followed their lead. As a result, most higher education programs established from 1960 to 1978 were implemented at the two-year community college level to provide for minimum training for law enforcement personnel (Stephens 1976).

Renewed National Call for Higher Education

Governmental commissions during the 1960s recommended higher educational standards as the best way to improve the caliber of criminal justice personnel and to professionalize their functions (Beckman 1976). The national reports in 1967 (U.S. President's Commission on Law Enforcement and

Administration of Justice; U.S. Task Force on the Police) and 1973 (U.S. National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals) renewed the call for higher educated criminal justice personnel. These reports stimulated a legislative response that, through an influx of federal funds from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) and the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP), influenced widespread growth of criminal justice programs in the early to mid-1970s. Several universities were identified and provided funds through a National Criminal Justice Educational Consortium to develop doctoral programs in criminal justice (Simpson 1979). Federally funded fellowships for graduate criminal justice education were established to develop a cadre of faculty academically prepared at the master's and doctoral level.

The explosive growth of the discipline prompted questions from academic institutions, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations. A question was: the value of a criminal justice/criminology major, the quality of the academic programs, and the standardization and viability of the evaluation process used by regional higher education accrediting for ensuring quality criminal justice programs. These quality challenges stemmed largely from the belief that institutions had been motivated by economic rather than academic interests. The temptation of readily available federal funding appeared to prompt some institutions to develop programs they had neither the expertise nor the inclination to plan or properly resource (Sherman and the National Advisory Commission on Higher Education for Police Officers 1978). These programs became "cash cows" which generated federal funds, through large enrollments, that were then siphoned off to support traditional disciplines with small enrollments (Bassi and Rogers 1976). Because the programs had both a part-time faculty and a part-time (working) student body, there was virtually no one to complain or protest (Ward and Webb 1984). Full-time faculty needed to bind together to obtain equal treatment for criminal justice students. The faculty within ACJS would lead this effort.

Development and Implementation of Academic Standards

ACJS Accreditation Guidelines

As early as 1967, academics within criminal justice education were concerned about ensuring quality criminal justice education and by 1969 they had developed accreditation guidelines to achieve that purpose (Felkenes 1980). The early work was abandoned in 1970 and an effort begun to obtain the cooperation of regional higher education accrediting bodies to implement a set of less challenging minimum standards "for use by the institutional evaluation teams when evaluating an institution that had a criminal justice component" (Felkenes 1980:78). Myren (1973) found that these regional accrediting agencies were not interested in working with any group such as ACJS to study

a program within an institution. They were in the business of accrediting institutions, not programs. As a result, Myren called for ACJS to turn again to the pursuit of accreditation.

From 1967 until 1975 ACJS annual conferences and committees considered "establishing guidelines that would serve to improve the quality of postsecondary criminal justice education programs" (Bassi and Rogers 1976:245). The reports of these committees were ignored within the academic community because there was no compelling reason to make change "as long as [federal] financial support was available to fund practically all [criminal justice] programs regardless of their quality ..." (p. 245). Nevertheless, late in 1974, ACJS formed a working group that was formalized in March 1975 as the Academy's Accreditation and Standards Committee.

The Academy's first formal commitment to pursuing accreditation of degree programs occurred with the drafting of "Accreditation Guidelines for Postsecondary Criminal Justice Education Programs." After much debate within the committee and consideration of feedback from the membership on proposed standards, the ACJS membership unanimously adopted accreditation guidelines in 1976 (ACJS 1976a, 1976b; Bassi and Rogers 1976). Procedures for the accreditation of postsecondary programs in criminal justice education were adopted the next year (ACJS 1977). Accreditation was expected to result in administrative and qualitative benefits for programs and systemic benefits for criminal justice.

The members of the Academy were striving to attain the goal of quality education, but ultimately controversy surrounding accreditation within the field caused the Academy to put aside its accreditation efforts in favor of conducting a national study on the quality of criminal justice education (see Hale 1998:392). The Joint Commission would be in charge of this project and its final report *Quest for Quality* would have a significant impact on the future of accreditation. In the meantime, shortly after the ACJS Accreditation Guidelines were adopted and before the initiation of the Joint Commission, a scathing report on the quality of higher education for police education was released.

The Sherman Report: Recommendations for Quality

Though generally not considered in discussions of standards for criminal justice education, the recommendations of the Sherman Report (1978) were designed to direct significant change within police higher education. Simpson (1979) and Ward and Webb (1984) discuss the relevance of such recommendations to the implementation of standards and both posit that such recommendations serve as quality standards for evaluating progress toward desired results. The Joint Commission sought to examine the state of the field and provide a basis for standards that could be broadly implemented.

Joint Commission Standards and Implementation Strategies

Joint Commission Standards

The Joint Commission on Criminology and Criminal Justice Education and Standards was formed as a result of the efforts of several members of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) and ACJS. The Joint Commission's goal was to provide a mechanism for sponsoring research that would provide answers to many questions and provide the basis for development of standards for criminal justice education.

The Commission's final report (Ward and Webb 1984) resulted in a set of recommendations for the improvement of criminal justice higher education. The new "minimum standards" that were "designed to correct present deficiencies and to prescribe future performance" (Ward and Webb 1984:51) were presented as recommendations in the first chapter.

Implementation Strategies and Institutional Decisions

Webb and Ward (1984) conclude that it was not necessary to end the debate between criminology and criminal justice, nor to decide whether crime-related programs should be vocational, professional, or narrowly academic. Assessments of criminal justice programs could begin "if people in the field can agree on a basic body of knowledge, a body of literature, and methods" (Ward and Webb 1984:54). The research conducted through the Joint Commission found an existing body of knowledge, body of literature, and methods. Standards could be implemented. Ward and Webb (1984) examined four means of implementing minimum standards that had been explored more thoroughly by Simpson (1979): specialized accreditation, voluntary peer review, standards for program development, and professionalization. The Joint Commission left it to the field to determine the direction to take regarding implementation of the minimum standards recommended in *Quest for Quality*.

The concept of specialized accreditation, though popular among many in ACJS and ASC, was fraught with the attendant fears of strict inflexibility and constraints on future innovation. The potential problems of attempting to formulate and apply universal guidelines to programs of varying types and academic levels had been well documented. Fabianic (1977) and Misner (1975) warn that such guidelines should be rigorous, yet they must be flexible enough to permit diversity and innovation. Simpson (1979) concludes that the "proposed guidelines developed by the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences have recognized this principle" (Simpson 1979:80) of rigor and flexibility. Academics within the field were not convinced. Perhaps the field was too diverse and too young to take the risk required to embark on accreditation. The Joint Commission also explored professionalism as a means to implement minimum standards but it held little hope that it was a viable alternative for implementing the standards.

Without agreement from ASC and ACJS regarding the pursuit of specialized accreditation (a requirement of the national accrediting bodies at that time), the effort could not continue. ASC was not willing to go forward. The ACJS Executive Board gave up the quest by voting to discontinue the pursuit of accreditation. Without accreditation, the ACJS Accreditation Guidelines were moot. Though ACJS had already concluded that using standards for program development solely through self-evaluation had not been successful, this approach was chosen by default. The minimum standards promulgated by the Joint Commission without the institutional support of ACJS and ASC were to be implemented intermittently and only through informal self-evaluation. It was not long before leaders of ACJS, dissatisfied with progress under self-evaluation and unwilling to resurrect accreditation and associated standards, embarked on a new path.

ACJS Academic Review

In 1989, the Academy formalized an external peer review process for criminal justice and criminology programs. ACJS established the Academic Review Committee (ARC) to facilitate the program review process by selecting peer reviewers and serving as the primary contact for administering academic reviews. Program reviewers were nominated by members of the ACJS Executive Board but, in practice, the Board invited individuals to self-identify and then they nominated for Board approval those who met the established criteria for peer reviewers. It was within this context of national academic review not based on national standards that other efforts were initiated to reestablish standards for the field.

Regional and State Associations Take Up the Standards Gauntlet

The Southern Criminal Justice Association (SCJA) explored regional accreditation in the 1970s and again in the late 1980s. The SCJA membership eventually voted in 1988 not to proceed, waiting instead for the results of an Academic Peer Review process that was under consideration and would later be initiated by ACJS. The issue of standards and accreditation did not resurface within the SCJA, which was looking for national leadership by ACJS. Nevertheless, this did not hinder the efforts of one of the southern state associations.

In response to the abandonment of the national accreditation movement, "the North Carolina Association of Criminal Justice Educators (NCACJE) decided to implement the program and stepped into a very lengthy and political process" (Vogel 1988:40). By 1988, the State of North Carolina had become the first state to legislatively adopt accreditation guidelines for postsecondary criminal justice education programs. As it embarked on

implementation of the guidelines, the term "accreditation" was changed to "certification." The North Carolina Education Training Standards Commission, responsible for implementation, was not an accrediting agency and would not seek such approval but it was a legislatively approved certification body for criminal justice education. Thus NCACJE was instrumental in the revitalization of national standards through a state-supported certification process (Vogel 1988).

As SCJA ceded the standards issue to national leadership and North Carolina began its own certification program, the northeast region engaged the standards issue. In 1988/1989, Albanese became president of the Northeastern Association of Criminal Justice Sciences (NEACJS), a regional group of 13 states and Canadian Provinces, affiliated with ACJS. He conducted a review of academic criminal justice programs in New York State including associate, bachelor's, and master's degree programs. Several programs were found that still awarded academic credit for firearms training, self-defense, and other vocational, non-academic experiences. Recalling Sherman's warning about the quality of education in the field 10 years earlier (Sherman and the National Advisory Commission on Higher Education for Police Officers 1978), it was shocking that some institutions had not taken notice and were "laundering" academic credit, i.e., community colleges were granting college credits for completing basic police training (at academies often physically connected to their institution) and these credits were transferred in a "block" to a student's transcript and counted toward graduation. When the student subsequently entered a four-year college, the new institution often accepted all credits from the community college, perhaps afraid to look too closely at the quality of some of the credit-bearing experiences or required to do so by an established agreement. In this way four-year colleges became complicit in awarding academic credit for vocational, non-academic experiences.

Teaching in New York State at the time, a lingering fear hung over Albanese that a reporter from *The New York Times* might call one day and ask: "We have found that some colleges award academic credit for things like firearms training. Aren't there any standards in the field?" Knowing that an answer of "no" would tarnish the emerging reputation of an entire academic field, Albanese established a NEACJS Committee on Education and Standards consisting of faculty members from criminal justice programs at all levels. Relying on the work from the *Quest for Quality* project on improving criminal justice education (Ward and Webb 1984), on Sherman's work (1978), on academic standards in other fields of study, and a survey of existing criminal justice programs, a draft version of standards was developed and debated over the next few years at various professional meetings (Albanese 1989, 1992, 1994). The Minimum Standards for Criminal Justice Education were adopted by NEACJS in 1995. There was no enforcement mechanism; the standards were simply a statement of principles adopted by criminal justice educators. Standards had been adopted by one region and one state, but national standards were non-existent.

Reemergence of National Standards

In 1995, ACJS president Albanese appointed a national committee on standards and education to use the Northeast Minimum Standards as a model in the development of national standards for criminal justice programs in the areas of curriculum, students, faculty, and administration. The need for academic standards in the field was widely discussed, as large "cash cow" and adjunct-driven programs were widely criticized, but violated no generally accepted standards or principles of criminal justice education. In addition, faculty in these programs began looking in earnest for professional standards to defend against administration pressure to teach large numbers of students without proper resources (Albanese 1995). The proposed standards were subjected to two years of review, discussion and revision. Drafts were widely distributed (Southerland 1995, 1997, 1998) and modified based on feedback. National minimum standards were ultimately adopted by ACJS in 1998.

The ACJS Minimum Standards became the guidelines for all peer reviews through the ACJS Academic Review process, and served to provide an objective basis upon which empirical judgments of academic quality could be made (see ACJS n.d.). Yet voluntary standards and peer review as conducted by ACJS were not sufficient to meet the needs and challenges regarding quality. Massachusetts embarked on a new direction and the impetus was economic.

Development of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Standards

Initial Review of Criminal Justice Programs (2000/2001)

In November 2000, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (MBHE) approved an unprecedented statewide review of criminal justice degree programs. The review was prompted by two primary factors: a dramatic increase in the number of public and private institutions seeking MBHE authority to offer criminal justice degree programs in the Commonwealth, and continued public concerns, often highlighted in *The Boston Globe*, regarding the quality and standards of existing criminal justice programs (see Boston Globe Spotlight Team 1985a, 1985b).

The heightened attention in the Commonwealth to criminal justice program quality was directly related to the Quinn Bill, passed in 1970 (Massachusetts General Laws 1970) in response to a 1967 report that found Massachusetts police officers to be some of the least educated in the country (Massachusetts Committee on Law Enforcement 1967). The bill established the Police Career Incentive Pay Program (PCIPP), which provided an economic incentive for law enforcement practitioners to pursue and complete academic degrees in law enforcement. The program, which cost the Commonwealth almost \$100 million in 2001, was the target of media and legislative attention, as were some programs that officers attended. Cartoons depicting policemen in the "drive through" lane of a

fast-food restaurant ordering criminal justice degrees and periodic “spotlight” pieces in the media continually focused public attention on the perceived problem. Although the MBHE expended considerable staff resources to administer the program, it had no statutory role in assuring program quality and the PCIPP statute was devoid of academic program quality considerations. Any criminal justice program at an institution accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) was “automatically” approved as a PCIPP participant.

Review process

At the time that the external review was commissioned, 55 New England institutions were eligible under the PCIPP. Over a five-year period (1995-2000), these institutions had awarded 14,487 degrees in criminal justice: 4,128 associate degrees, 7,417 bachelor’s degrees, and 2,942 master’s degrees, approximately 1,900 of which were awarded by two institutions. All 55 institutions, regardless of location or sector, were asked to participate, and 43 institutions (78%) agreed to participate—six based outside Massachusetts.

Owing to timing and budgetary constraints, the review was designed to be implemented in two stages. First, campuses would complete a self-study, which would be reviewed by a team of external experts. Second, programs found to be in need of more in-depth assessment would have on-site external reviews.

The Review Committee, comprising 18 leaders in criminal justice education from throughout the United States, used the documents submitted by each institution to assess program quality, the level of responsiveness to industry and state needs and standards, and the current impact, if any, of the PCIPP on the program’s quality. The criteria that guided the review were the Standards of the regional accrediting body, NEASC, and, where appropriate, those of ACJS.

Findings

The Review Committee stated clear limitations at the beginning of its report:

The limitations of a review based solely on printed materials submitted by the institution, the variation in the quantity and quality of the materials submitted, and the absence of any information from 12 institutions with criminal justice programs hampered reviewers from confidently arriving at conclusions about the quality and effectiveness of criminal justice programs. (MBHE 2001:3)

The Committee requested that its findings be considered as preliminary and its recommendations understood in the context of the limitations of the review format. The Committee’s findings included the following:

- perceived wide variation in the quality of criminal justice degree programs at all levels and in both the public and private sectors;
- enrollment demand created by the Quinn Bill's economic incentives might be responsible, at least in part, for making criminal justice an academic "cash cow" for some institutions, and for concomitant concerns about program quality;
- institutions provided limited evidence to demonstrate graduates' and employers' satisfaction with programs and that program content would meet future societal needs.

Initial recommendations

The Committee recommended that the MBHE, as the designated higher education coordinating authority for the Commonwealth, be given authority to monitor the quality of academic programs eligible under the PCIPP statute and have control over new criminal justice programs seeking Quinn Bill program approval. Quality of the academic program should be a precondition for approving criminal justice programs for eligibility. The Report also recommended that guidelines be developed and used for a statewide, on-site program review of every criminal justice program whose graduates are eligible for the PCIPP and had not undergone external review in the past five years.

Response to the External Review Report (2002)

In February 2002, the MBHE formally accepted the external review report and made a public commitment to address issues raised. In March 2002, the MBHE officially appointed an Academic Program Advisory Committee to develop standards and a new review process for programs participating in the PCIPP. The Committee met for several months, drafted guidelines, sent them out for comment to all institutions with criminal justice programs, held regional meetings throughout the state, and presented its work to a high-profile Criminal Justice Advisory Committee created by the MBHE to review its work.

In response to the increased public concern about criminal justice program quality and the MBHE's lack of authority to improve quality, in July 2002 the Legislature amended the statute governing the PCIPP, giving the MBHE authority to develop and implement quality guidelines (program standards and a review process) for programs seeking to participate in the PCIPP and to certify for funding only those officers completing degrees from approved programs. The statute specifically prohibited the MBHE from certifying programs that grant credits for life experience, courses taught by instructors lacking appropriate educational degrees, and courses lacking appropriate concentration on academic and scholarly research. This new authority provided the MBHE with the necessary leverage and authority to bring the standards beyond minimal expectations to a level

that reflected high program quality and to require, not suggest, compliance with the standards. Aspiration to comply is insufficient.

MBHE Implementation of Standards (2003-spring 2006)

In February 2003, the MBHE approved the guidelines for criminal justice and law enforcement programs pursuing police career incentive pay increases. The standards were derived from NEASC and ACJS standards, the results of several major studies over the past three decades on criminal justice education (Pearson et al. 1980; *Proceedings of the National Symposium on Higher Education for Police Officers* 1979; Sherman and the National Advisory Commission on Higher Education for Police Officers 1978), and the MBHE's own evaluation of more than 400 PCIPP participant transcripts. Under the guidelines, all institutions seeking approval for participation in the PCIPP must conduct an internal self-study and undergo external review by teams of experts from outside Massachusetts. For each of its programs, the institution must demonstrate that it has met the standards.

Impact of Quality Guidelines

At the time the guidelines were adopted, 80 criminal justice programs from 55 institutions throughout New England were on the "approved list" for participation in the PCIPP. In the initial year of review (2003), 49 criminal justice or law enforcement programs at 36 institutions submitted applications. Thirty-four programs at 28 institutions were approved. Fourteen programs withdrew following a review. In the second round of reviews (fall 2005), six programs from four institutions were submitted, and two programs were approved by the end of April 2006.

The Commonwealth's list of criminal justice programs approved for benefits under the PCIPP decreased from 80 to 36 in three years, representing a 55% reduction. Most satellite campuses were closed. Articulation agreements between two- and four-year programs increased. Many new, well-qualified faculty members were hired. Institutions are required to submit annual reports reflecting changes that have occurred in their programs each year; and the reports are carefully reviewed by MBHE staff to ensure that the programs remain in compliance with the standards. Complete program reviews will occur once every five years. The Commonwealth's compliance review initiative helped to provide the impetus for the Academy to pursue certification.

ACJS Certification of Academic Programs

The ACJS Executive Board's decision to approve the "Certification Standards for Academic Programs" (ACJS 2005) was an important milestone in the organization's

history. Although the idea of accreditation had been posited in the late 1970s, it had also been abandoned. In 2005, the Academy seemed poised and ready. The MBHE's decision to conduct reviews of associate, baccalaureate, and master's programs to determine whether they were in compliance with recently established standards influenced the Board's deliberations. Massachusetts had already completed some of its reviews, the process was relatively straightforward, and certification was seen as an attainable goal for the Academy.

Certification was viewed as the next logical step after the Academic Peer Review process based on national minimum standards. Prior to the Board's decision to implement the Certification process, there had been a series of ad hoc committees that had examined and reported on these issues for at least six years. Typically, the committee members investigated, evaluated, and recommended certain actions for the organization. For example, in 2001/2002, an ad hoc committee focused on the steps the Academy would need to take to become an accrediting body in the discipline. Ultimately, the research into accreditation helped to inform the development of the Certification Standards. In 2004/2005, an ad hoc committee focused specifically on certification, and prepared a draft document of the Certification Standards for the President and the Board to consider. The Committee utilized the work of the MBHE, with the Commonwealth's permission. The Board posted the draft document on the ACJS website to enable members to review it and enter comments. These comments were incorporated or addressed in subsequent iterations of the Certification Standards. After the Board approved the final document, it was posted on the ACJS website along with procedures for applying for ACJS Certification, the self-study, and the site visit.

According to the materials disseminated by the Academy, "The ACJS Certification is designed to evaluate evidence-based compliance with the Certification Standards" (ACJS 2006:1). In particular, the ACJS Certification Standards require the institutions to present "substantive, credible evidence" that the program under review "meets or exceeds all parts of the standard" (ACJS 2006:1). In short, the decision to certify a program is based on evidence and documentation about the present, what currently exists or occurs, versus future initiatives that may be in various stages of planning (ACJS 2006). Once the institution has successfully completed the ACJS Certification, it is valid for 10 years.

The Certification Standards differentiate associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree programs. There are nine different sections in the Standards that are utilized to determine whether an institution is in compliance. They range from the existence and dissemination of the program's mission and purposes, history, and congruence with the larger institution's mission and goals statements, to its curriculum, goals, outcome assessments, full-time faculty, articulation agreements (if appropriate), resources, integrity, and evaluation. For those institutions that decide to undergo ACJS Certification, a team of Board-approved and Board-trained peer certification reviewers read and evaluate the materials submitted by the institution, and then conduct a site visit.

In the fall of 2005, the Academy began training reviewers for the ACJS Certification process. The training process was developed to ensure uniformity in the execution of all program reviews conducted under the auspices of ACJS. These training sessions have been conducted at the national office, the annual meeting, at regional meetings, and at the meetings of other organizations. The goal is to have a cadre of members who can be dispatched to conduct associate degree, baccalaureate degree, and master's degree certification reviews when requested. Through the Executive Director and the ARC Chair, institutions that request ACJS Certification will be matched with academics in the discipline having the expertise and credentials to successfully represent the Academy. All reviewers must complete the mandatory training session and endorse and execute the review process according to the protocol established by the Academy.

When the Academy embarked on the accreditation path approximately 30 years ago, the discipline was not as firmly established as it is now. There appears to be consensus that the membership is ready for Certification. Additionally, it is consistent with the institutional academic accreditation guidelines of the regional accrediting bodies for colleges and universities.

Conclusion

From "cop shop" to certification, the evolution of criminal justice education has been characterized as a quest for "credibility and legitimacy" (Finckenauer 2005:415). This article has reviewed the benchmarks of that journey and underscored the emergence and establishment of criminal justice standards. The impetus provided by LEEP in 1968 to improve the effectiveness and professionalism of criminal justice (i.e., policing) through higher education of police practitioners has concentrated efforts in defining the academic discipline and in designing a core curriculum. In 1998, ACJS adopted minimum standards as guidelines and linked them to the previously established peer review process; seven years later, in 2005, the Executive Board approved "much more rigorous standards" and implemented a certification protocol (Finckenauer 2005:420). When Southerland assessed curricula in baccalaureate criminal justice programs in 1999/2000 compared to her earlier findings (1991), she proposed that ACJS "... embark on a process of academic accreditation" (2002:599). Similarly, Finckenauer reiterated that theme in his presidential address when he stated: "the ultimate goal of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences is to institute the requirement that all programs must be accredited" (2005:422).

The bar has been raised for criminal justice education and the discipline has benefited from the adoption of standards. The MBHE experience in using a compliance review process has contributed greatly to restoring confidence in criminal justice programs in that state (Greenberg 2006). As administrators and criminal justice program directors ponder the implications and consequences of

certification and accreditation, the value of participating in these initiatives is easily recognized. The process of self-evaluation intrinsically benefits programs and provides faculty an opportunity to examine the various dimensions of their programs. The collegial engagement in preparing for and conducting the site visitation also enhances the assessment experience.

A second benefit of participating in the process is the ability to compare a program's curriculum, resources, faculty, and policies with nationally accepted standards. Programs can determine their progress in addressing curriculum issues such as diversity, ethical decision making, and critical thinking. They can also evaluate their progress in recruiting and retaining qualified faculty. As evidenced by the experience of other academic disciplines with accreditation, standards for accreditation provide programs a basis for requesting parity with other programs at their institution in terms of faculty and other resources.

Finally, when criminal justice programs successfully complete certification, the recognition of their accomplishment by the Executive Board of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences will enhance the reputation and status of programs. As more programs are added to the list, the imperative will increase for other institutions to meet the standards and join the directory of distinguished criminal justice programs.

What remains to be determined is what effect this commitment to improving criminal justice education has on the quality of education and what impact criminal justice education has on the profession of criminal justice. In her presidential address on the state of "assessment" in criminal justice education, Moriarty "found no studies that focused solely on Criminal Justice programs" (2006). But with the Massachusetts and the ACJS Standards, "outcomes" are incorporated in the criteria and are a salient component of review. As an evidence-based process, ACJS certification has clearly identified the importance of outcomes in determining the quality of criminal justice programs.

Since 1916, when August Vollmer offered "courses for in-service police officers at the University of California at Berkeley" (Greenberg 2006:2) to 2005, when 33 doctoral programs in criminal justice or criminology have been established (Finckenauer 2005:418), criminal justice education has emerged as a recognized and respected academic discipline. As Clear noted in his Presidential Address: "Academic criminal justice *has* come of age, and the ACJS is the home for the mature product" (2001:726). If the Academy is serious about accreditation, it must develop a strategic plan for establishing an independent accrediting organization and positioning it to be recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation to conduct specialized accreditation for the discipline. A review of the recently revised policies and procedures for recognition of accrediting organizations (CHEA 2006) by the authors indicates that ACJS Certification incorporates many of the requirements and is on the appropriate path to ensure academic quality and accountability and to encourage improvement.

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