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FROM: Richard Wright (W)
Regents’ Professor and Chair

RE: Academic Program Review

I wish to thank the Criminal Justice and Criminology (CJC) Department’s Academic Program Review (APR) Committee – Josh Hinkle (Chair), Dean Dabney, Mark Reed, and Eric Sevigny – for their diligence and hard work in producing the attached APR report. I also want to thank the rest of the Criminal Justice and Criminology faculty for their constructive criticisms and suggestions, which helped to strengthen an already strong report. The final report was voted on and approved unanimously by the faculty at a meeting held on December 1, 2017. In the paragraphs that follow, I will highlight both the current strengths and weaknesses of the department, and identify goals we have set for ourselves over the next few years.

Since the last review, the department has grown dramatically in terms of undergraduate majors, added a PhD program and, in collaboration with the Department of Public Management and Policy, launched GSU’s first fully online degree program, the Masters of Interdisciplinary Studies in Criminal Justice Management. We also have developed a number of undergraduate online courses, which have proven to be extremely popular. During this same period, the number of tenure-track faculty has declined by 25 percent, going from 16 to 12, while the number of non-tenure-track faculty has gone from a high of three to two; our undergraduate student to faculty ratio now stands at 43.7, far higher than any other department in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies (AYSPP).

We view the diversity of our students to be one of the department’s key strengths, contributing to GSU’s strategic goal of “demonstrating that students from all backgrounds can achieve academic and career success.” Of our 612 undergraduate majors in 2016, roughly 60 percent were African-American, 25 percent were White, 5 percent were Asian, and 9 percent identified as multi-racial. About 60 percent of our undergraduate majors are female, which is in keeping with national trends in the field. At the graduate level, approximately 60 percent of our students are White, 25 percent are African-American, and 10 percent are Asian. Roughly 75 percent of our graduate students are female.

Over the three plus years covered by this review, CJC Department members authored 141 publications, including 47 peer-reviewed journal articles, 12 books, 18 book chapters, and 64 non-peer-reviewed articles, editorials, or commentaries. Many of the peer-reviewed articles were published in top-tier journals. Likewise, many of the books were published by top-tier presses, including the University of
Chicago Press, Cambridge University Press, the University of California Press, and Oxford University Press. Publications by CJC faculty have been cited over 24,000 times, with almost 14,000 of those citations appearing within the past five years, which reflects department members’ increasing impact on the field.

Suffice to say that we are proud of all we have accomplished over the past few years, and even more so because we did this with far fewer faculty than we had at the time of our last review. But we are not complacent. We have a clear sense of what we need to do to become a top-ranked program in the field, and we continue to move in that direction. One of our major goals over the next few years is to further develop a highly-regarded PhD program. In order to do so, we must (1) increase external funding to support our doctoral students, (2) improve time to graduation for those students, (3) assist students in producing stronger publication records, and (4) place more of them in PhD-granting departments. Each of these goals is measurable and much of the responsibility for achieving them resides with the department itself.

Beyond the need to increase external funding to support our PhD program, we also need to do so to provide additional travel and professional development opportunities for faculty members, especially at the junior level, as well as to raise the department’s research profile and reputation. As noted above, this goal is measurable and much of the responsibility for achieving it resides with the department. However, it also can be fostered through more grant management support and user-friendly grant application and administration policies, including efficient IRB review.

Another of our major goals is to at least double enrollments in our online Master’s in Criminal Justice Administration Program, while also improving the quality of incoming students. To do so, we hope to attract more students from other states and nations. We already have established links with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Agency in an attempt to reach criminal justice officials in member countries. Significant progress in this arena likely will require the efforts of a designated program coordinator to serve as a dedicated recruiter with good connections to the national and/or international criminal justice community.

Yet another major goal is to build a program of teaching and research that remains relevant in an evolving criminal justice landscape. As more crime moves online and criminals exploit new technologies, there is a need for our field to adapt to keep pace with such developments, especially in a major financial hub like Atlanta. Toward that end, we already have met with representatives of several local financial technology (Fintech) companies and are in the process of developing a short introductory course on cybercrime and cybersecurity for Fintech employees here. In addition, the department, along with the Robinson College of Business and the College of Arts and Sciences, recently applied for and received NextGen funding to hire an interdisciplinary cluster of senior scholars and post-docs in the area of cybersecurity policy, with an emphasis on the local Fintech industry. This initiative also has great external funding potential.

Our final major goal is to continue to expand our list of online undergraduate courses, with an emphasis on keeping the cost of class materials to a minimum. In an effort to do that, department members have applied for and received four separate “Affordable Learning” grants to develop online undergraduate courses using open source materials, thereby avoiding the cost for students of textbooks and other readings. Key components of efforts in this area will involve working with the Office of Institutional
Effectiveness to make our assessment of student learning more structured and informative and to apply the results to enhance student outcomes and to pursue cutting edge pedagogy.