The external review of the Department of Criminal Justice at Georgia State University was conducted on February 1-2, 2010 and included Professors Lauritsen and Bishop. Professor Steve Mastrofski had intended to join the external review team, however a family emergency prevented his involvement. The External Review team was provided a thorough set of materials and participated in extensive meetings with students, faculty, program directors, and administrators. We also met with representatives from the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies and the GSU Law School to examine the extent of, and possibilities for, cross-unit collaboration and synergies. This report is based on the results of the site visit and the team’s review of the unit’s self study and supporting documents.

1. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Criminal Justice Program

The External Review Committee finds that the quality of instruction, research, and service in the GSU Department of Criminal Justice is strong in all three areas. We also find that this Department has engaged in comprehensive self-evaluation and that the improvements made since the last self-study have been notable. Furthermore, these efforts have been taken seriously by the faculty. Our overall assessment is that the Department of Criminal Justice is likely to have a very bright future if given sufficient resources to achieve their goals. This is a promising program worthy of University attention.

We note in detail below the strengths and weaknesses of the unit in the areas of instruction, research, and service. Generally speaking, we found the B.S. and M.S. programs to be well developed and comparable in quality and rigor to those available nationwide. We were impressed by the careful efforts in recent years to update and improve the B.S. and M.S. programs. The newly developed and approved Ph.D. program is promising. The scholarly research activity of the faculty is high, and has notably improved since the last self-study. This is especially noteworthy given the fact that the unit contains relatively few full professors. Service involvements among the faculty are excellent overall, and include important work with other units at the University and with the community and beyond. The challenges that this unit faces are solvable, and below we discuss how these issues may be addressed by the unit and the University.

Centrality of the Department of Criminal Justice to the University

The viability of the Department of Criminal Justice is excellent. The unit’s undergraduate program enrolls a large number of students, and the Master’s degree program is of
sufficient size. The unit’s expectation that the number of Master’s degree students will increase as the new Ph.D. program begins this fall is consistent with the experiences of other urban university criminal justice programs. Criminal justice programs typically thrive in urban settings; thus the unit’s viability is likely to remain very strong.

The unit’s goals are consistent with key aspects of the GSU Strategic Plan for 2005-2010. For example, the unit’s goals include: attaining the highest quality in teaching, research, and service; increasing grant and contract support; attracting and retaining high quality faculty; and developing and leveraging relationships with other GSU programs. In each of these areas, the unit has experienced success.

The unit’s financial resources include monies for faculty and part-time instructors, Master’s degree students, administrative staff, and travel and supplies. These monies come from state budget allocations as well as from course buy-outs and indirect returns on grants. The department’s ratio of revenue generation to cost based on student enrollment and the above monies finds that that unit generates roughly 2.4 times more revenue than costs, making the unit very cost-effective. However, the University is not offering reliable financial support for the new Ph.D. program that begins in Fall 2010. Existing Ph.D. programs in criminal justice routinely offer incoming students stipends ranging from $10,000 to $15,000 per academic year, over several years, with financial support for those students coming directly either from their University, Graduate School, or College. The new monies for the GSU Ph.D. stipends are expected to come from unit resources that are determined to a great extent by external grant success. Although the unit currently has sufficient funds to support a small cohort of Ph.D. students during the first 2-3 years of the program, it is unknown whether this financial strategy is sustainable. Relying on external support is a very risky way to fund a Ph.D. program, and we recommend that the unit and University develop a model to ensure at least a minimal level of continued funding for stipends for the Ph.D. program. Without sufficient financial resources, this promising Ph.D. program will be unable to admit sufficient numbers of students each year, and will fail to compete and thrive.

2. Historical and Current Context

The Department of Criminal Justice at GSU has been in existence for more than forty years. It began with a two-year Associate of Arts program in the late 1960s, and quickly expanded to offer a Bachelor of Science degree. By 1970, it began offering graduate courses: a concentration in Criminal Justice was established within the Master of Science program in Urban Life. All degree programs in criminal justice gained in popularity during the 1970s, and, by the early 80s, the department had become the largest unit within the College of Public and Urban Affairs. In 1996, as part of a broader reorganization within the university, it became part of the College of Health and Human Sciences. The department currently offers B.S. and M.S. degrees and is poised to launch a doctoral program. The Board of Regents in 2009 approved the initiation of a PhD program in Criminal Justice and Criminology, to begin in the fall of 2010.

In the early years of the Criminal Justice program at GSU, the curriculum was heavily focused on policing, and included a significant number of practical or vocationally-oriented courses. Like many other criminal justice programs around the nation, GSU has catered primarily to pre-professional and in-service students, most of them aspiring to or already holding jobs in state and local law enforcement. In the ensuing years, the focus of the department has expanded—mirroring the growth in criminology and criminal justice as fields of study—and the
student population has become much more diverse. Today the programs offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels engage students in the multidisciplinary, theoretically-driven, empirically-based study of a broad array of crime and justice issues, and prepare students for a wide variety of careers in criminal and juvenile justice, research and policy development, and law. The faculty are active scholars engaged in quantitative and qualitative research in such areas as urban violence, offender decision-making, drugs and crime, neighborhoods and crime, sexual victimization, domestic violence, elder abuse, terrorism, comparative criminal justice, problem-oriented policing, specialty courts, sentencing, restorative justice, corrections research, law reform, and criminal justice education.

Currently, the undergraduate program is thriving. The department has 560 undergraduate majors, which speaks to the interests of students, the quality of the faculty, and the needs of the community. Most students come from the broader Atlanta metropolitan area. The program receives students who enter GSU as freshmen, as well as a sizeable number of transfer students from two-year programs. The undergraduate population is culturally and racially diverse. A substantial proportion of the undergraduate population is comprised of non-traditional students who decided to resume their education following a break in their studies. Many have considerable work experience. The diverse nature of the undergraduate student body means that students bring a wide variety of perspectives to the classroom. Students and faculty alike report that classes tend to be highly interactive, with students actively engaged in the learning process. At the undergraduate level, the department also offers three courses that were recently added to the university’s core curriculum. These courses are heavily enrolled and appear to be drawing new majors to the criminal justice program.

Twenty-five students are currently enrolled in the department’s two-year master’s program. Although admissions declined somewhat in the 2009-2010 academic year, this does not appear to be a cause for concern. During the last two years, the department has focused greater attention on the preparedness of applicants to the graduate program, scrutinizing more carefully than before their grades in undergraduate courses, including research methods and statistics. The drop in recent admissions—13 new students in 2009—reflects greater selectivity. The numbers of students compare favorably to two of the four peer institutions chosen by the faculty for comparison. Further, with the initiation of the doctoral program in the fall, 2010, it is reasonable to anticipate an increase in the number and quality of applicants to the master’s program.

There are 16 faculty members in the department, including three full professors, seven associate professors, and six assistant professors. During the last three years, eight new faculty have been hired—three as replacements for outgoing faculty, three as additions to the faculty complement. They include six assistant professors, one associate professor, and one full professor who is also the new department chair. The department has succeeded in hiring some of the best talent in the field from top research universities. (See Section 6, Quality of the Faculty.)

The External Review Team was struck by the fact that, despite the many recent hires, the faculty is a very cohesive group. This is attributable in part to the care taken during the hiring process to emphasize collegial fit as well as excellence in scholarship. In addition, the faculty has come together on multiple joint ventures in the past couple of years: redesigning the undergraduate curriculum, preparing the PhD program proposal, preparing the Self Study, and collaborating in grant writing, research, and publications. These enterprises have undoubtedly helped to solidify the group. They are a vibrant, talented, and research-productive faculty, and all seem very enthusiastic about the upward trajectory of the department. Notwithstanding these
strengths, the External Review Team has some concern about whether the number of faculty is sufficient to support the bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral programs. One of the three full professors in the department will be retiring at the end of the current academic year, and a search is not currently underway to replace him. The other two full professors are heavily involved in administrative duties: Professor Mary Finn is Associate Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, and Professor Brian Payne is Department Chair.

Our concern about faculty numbers and composition relates to 1) the vitality of the doctoral program. Students are attracted to doctoral programs in part because they have a desire to work with a particular faculty member. Members of the senior faculty who have national visibility and scholarly acclaim will attract the best students. Our concern about faculty numbers is also related to 2) the numbers of courses that can be offered, especially in the initial years of the doctoral program before doctoral students are available to take on teaching responsibilities. We also have a concern about 3) the amount of committee and other service work that falls on associate professors, especially. We are also concerned about 4) the faculty’s ability to generate external funding to support faculty research and graduate assistantships. Junior faculty cannot be expected to be successful in obtaining major research grants at the same rate as senior faculty, especially given the diminished resources at a key national agency supporting research in criminal justice (the National Institute of Justice). The Self Study document indicates that the assistant and associate professors in the department have made repeated and unsuccessful attempts to obtain external research funding. In the last few years, Professors Topalli and Guastaferro have been the only members of the GSU faculty to receive major ($100,000 or more) state or federal funding for research (from the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Justice, and SAMHSA). Finally, senior faculty can serve an important mentoring role to untenured faculty. Among other things, they can educate and advise them regarding the tenure and promotion process, help them to identify the most appropriate outlets for their research, help them to respond to peer-reviewed journals’ “revise and resubmit” decisions, and bring them on as CO-PIs on grant applications so that they build their records of obtaining funded research. In short, we see a vital need to hire additional senior faculty.

We have been asked to comment on the relevance of criminal justice programs and the degree to which they serve various needs. We find that, especially in light of the redesign of the undergraduate curriculum that took place last year, and the recent planning of the doctoral program, the programs in GSU’s Criminal Justice Department are timely and relevant to meet student needs. The department is preparing students for graduate education, for law school, for positions in law enforcement, courts, and corrections, and for numerous other justice-related careers (e.g., victim advocacy, private security). The graduate programs are (or will be, once the doctoral program is underway) preparing students for leadership positions in public and private sector agencies that address crime and justice problems, as well as preparing future scholars in the profession. The PhD program in criminal justice and criminology at GSU will be the only program of its kind in Georgia and much of the Southeast region. The faculty regularly collaborate with a number of agencies (e.g., drug courts, mental health courts, law enforcement agencies, correctional agencies) to provide training and to conduct research that is responsive to community needs. The department has partnerships with more than 200 agencies for internships.

---

1 Professor Finn also received a large award (completed January 2009), however her current position in University administration inevitably means that she will have less time to continue to prepare and manage large external criminal justice grants.
that benefit both students and the agencies in which they work. Most recently, the department has begun to develop a strong relationship with the Governor’s Criminal Justice Coordinating Council through the university’s new Center for Crime and Violence Prevention Policy—a center that represents a joint effort between criminal justice faculty and faculty of the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. The department provides research for public sector agencies that lack the in-house capacity to conduct the kinds of data analyses that are needed to inform decision-making.

The peer institutions selected by the unit are appropriate for comparison. Selection criteria included being part of the Southern University Group (one institution), the Urban 13 Group (two institutions), the Board of Regents Proposed Aspirational Institutions (one institution), the Board of Regents Proposed Peer Institutions (one institution), and the U.S. News and World Report Rankings of Doctoral Programs in Criminology (four institutions). Selection criteria also included having a large, urban, and diverse student population; having recently acquired a PhD program; and having a similar number of faculty with similar or better levels and standards of productivity. Four of the five peer institutions are public institutions. All have strong undergraduate and master’s programs. Two have new doctoral programs and two have more established doctoral programs. Four are major research institutions in urban locations, where faculty have been successful in establishing partnerships with public and private agencies at the state and local levels. All have research-active faculty.

3. Progress Toward Goals and Objectives
Since the last program review in 2002, the department has made substantial progress in responding to the nine concerns expressed in that review. Five of the concerns had to do with the faculty. In particular, the external reviewers observed that:

1. “Faculty do not publish enough;”
2. “Based on citations, with two exceptions, the faculty have had relatively little impact;”
3. “There is no faculty strength in advanced statistics;”
4. “The Department has lost strong faculty to other institutions.”
5. “Faculty have not obtained as many large grants as would be expected;”
6. They also recommended “two strategic hires at the senior level.”

Our review of the Self Study documents and discussions with faculty and administrators indicates that the department has responded to the first four of these concerns, in some instances, in exceptional fashion. Regarding 1) above, the faculty are publishing at a high rate, most often in first and second tier journals. A recent article in the Journal of Criminal Justice ranked the department eighth in the nation in terms of average number of publications per faculty member. Regarding 2), a recent analysis showed that citations for the department have increased from 348 at the time of the previous program review to 1288 today. Regarding 3), the department now has nationally recognized scholars with expertise in advanced statistics. Regarding 4), while it is true that the department lost strong faculty to other institutions, it has succeeded in recruiting and hired strong faculty from the top criminal justice programs in the nation. With respect to 5), the Self Study reports that the total amount of grant funding received last year compares favorably to other institutions. However, a substantial portion of these grant monies($1.4 million per year) fund GILEE, which provides law enforcement executives from Georgia with hands-on learning about fighting terrorism from experts in Israel. This is an outstanding training program but it does not involve research, lead to publications, or support graduate research assistants. In our view, securing external funding for research remains an area of concern.
In our judgment, it will take a multi-pronged approach to increase significantly the amount of external funding for research. The External Review Team feels that the hiring of senior faculty with strong records of obtaining external research funding should become a top priority. In addition, the department, the college, and the university need to improve the infrastructure that supports research. At the departmental level, there are currently only two staff members to serve the needs of 19 full-time employees (tenure track faculty, plus non-tenure track and part-time instructors). The addition of a third staff member—in particular, a business manager—would be helpful in providing support to faculty in grant writing (especially budget preparation) and post-award grant administration. In discussions with the faculty during our site visit, much dissatisfaction was expressed with regard to the support provided by the College Research Office (pre-award) and the university’s Sponsored Programs Office (post-award). There were complaints that these units are very slow in processing, that when things go wrong—like meeting a submission deadline—staff try to shift responsibility for their errors back to the faculty, and that staff responsible for grants management “police us” but “don’t help us.” Faculty feel frustrated that the college and university are not facilitating their efforts to obtain and manage external grants nearly as much as they might.

With regard to 6) above, the Self Study reports that the department has made three hires at the senior level in the past four years. However, only one of these is a full professor. The others are associate professors. An unsuccessful effort was made last year to recruit another full professor: An offer was made but the individual declined for salary reasons. The department has not done any recruiting during the current academic year, which means they will be short one senior person upon the retirement of a full professor in September of this year. They plan to begin recruiting for a replacement at the senior level next year.

The Self Study document also reports progress toward 11 strategic objectives. The first three have to do with the undergraduate program. The department successfully redesigned the undergraduate curriculum to assure more choice in the selection of elective courses, and appointed an Undergraduate Coordinator as well as an Internship Coordinator as point persons on a number of undergraduate issues. It also used a variety of strategies to enhance the quality of the pool of undergraduate students majoring in criminal justice. Among these, they added a Legal Studies track to attract students interested in law school, who typically are higher quality majors. They also took a number of steps to improve student performance and retention. These include developing a Sophomore Learning Community, introducing course sequencing, and using supplemental instruction to improve comprehension and reduce DWF rates in the challenging required statistics course.

Four additional objectives relate to graduate programs, each of which was met or exceeded. The graduate program was changed to ensure a smooth transition for students completing the MS program and entering the PhD program. A capstone course was introduced as an option to the master’s thesis and the scheduling of required courses was staggered to provide students greater access. These strategies will also permit the department to operate its graduate programs within current faculty and staff limits. Two Graduate Coordinator positions were created, one for each of the masters and doctoral programs. The objective of producing a proposal for a PhD program was completed in 2007. Finally, the objective of increasing the number of graduate student assistantships has been met—at least modestly—through a combination of efforts. However, we anticipate that there may be a shortfall if external funding does not increase significantly. The External Review Team is especially concerned that the department may not be able to recruit top
doctoral students if it is unable to provide multi-year stipends that are competitive with those provided by other doctoral institutions.

Another strategic objective, to obtain new faculty slots, has also been achieved. In 2002, the department had 12 faculty members. It now has 15. As noted above, one senior faculty member is about to retire and a search for his replacement will begin in the fall. In addition, the department hopes to apply for at least one more senior faculty position under the university’s Second Century Initiative.

The attainment of three additional objectives has been hampered by budgetary constraints and changes in university policy. The first of these involved reducing the teaching load to 2/2 for the academic year. This objective was met from 2002-2006. Thereafter, course reductions for teaching large classes and “intensive” courses were disallowed as a matter of university policy, the only course reductions allowed were officially-approved administrative releases, and the standard load for units that had only masters-level graduate programs was increased to 2/3. (Units with doctoral programs would remain at 2/2.) Since 2006, faculty have been on a 3/2 load to remain compliant with university guidelines. With the introduction of the doctoral program, the department anticipated that the teaching load would be reduced to 2/2. However, it is unclear whether the 2/2 load will apply to all faculty in the department, or only to those who are teaching doctoral-level courses. This issue needs to be resolved. At most large research universities, the standard teaching load is 2/2, and faculty can buy down from that with grants and administrative appointments. But if the perception is that faculty start with a 2/3 load, it can send a negative signal to the kinds of scholars the department will want to recruit as it continues its efforts to enhance its position among major criminal justice programs in the country.

The final objectives include adding a staff member to provide grant management support and addressing space needs of the department. Due to budgetary constraints, the department has not been able to address the first of these objectives. The department was able to obtain offices to accommodate the four additional faculty hired since 2002, but will soon have significant space needs with the advent of doctoral students, the potential addition of new staff, and the anticipated increase in the number of faculty.

The progress that the department has made toward its objectives is wholly consistent with the college and university Strategic Plans. The department is offers undergraduate programs that promote interdisciplinary, intercultural and international perspectives, and those with an urban focus. It has made significant strides toward establishing premier graduate programs and that will produce students who are proficient in their disciplines and prepared for leadership roles. The level of research and publication among the faculty, and faculty member’s determination to obtain external funding, demonstrates promise that they will soon achieve national and international recognition. Finally, there is no doubt that department faculty and programs are contributing in significant ways to improving the quality of justice in the city, the state, and the region.

4. Quality of the Curriculum

The Undergraduate Program: Since the last program review, the department has redesigned its undergraduate curriculum in an effort to improve student learning outcomes and to ensure that course offerings are consistent with research interests of the faculty. The new curriculum, which will go into effect in fall, 2010, is the focus of our comments here.

Students majoring in criminal justice are required to complete 45 credit hours of CJ courses. While the nature of the courses and structure of the curriculum is similar to that of peer
institutions, GSU’s credit hour requirements are somewhat higher. (Peer institutions typically require between 33 and 42 credit hours.) Within the major, students may opt for either the Crime and Justice Track or the Legal Track, which is geared more toward students who are planning to enter law school.

The program is structured to encourage students to complete Criminal Justice Core courses (policing, courts, and corrections, and communication/cultural diversity) and Foundations of Analysis courses (ethics issues, methods, statistics and criminology) before taking more advanced electives in the discipline. This sequencing structure is new, and is designed to ensure that all students taking advanced courses have the sort of preparation that will enhance their likelihood of success. The structure means that students will bring to their elective courses a body of foundational knowledge and skills which will make them more capable of applying 1) knowledge, 2) critical thinking, 3) communications, and 4) scientific reasoning and analysis skills (key learning outcomes) to their upper level coursework. The department is to be commended for the design and structure of the new curriculum—which has tied learning outcomes to curricular modification. The External Review Team feels that the new curriculum structure is very likely to improve student performance and enhance rates of retention.

It is also noteworthy that eight faculty in the department have received the training to offer Writing Intensive Courses (WAC) and twelve have received training in Critical Thinking through Writing (CTW). In the past three years, 21 courses with these designations have been offered. The department has also established a Sophomore Learning Community. All of these efforts are designed to enhance student success.

At the upper division level, the department offers a wide range of electives which match faculty research interests. This means that faculty can bring their research (questions, methodologies, analyses and findings) to the classroom, demonstrate to students the relevance of current research to topical issues in the course, and facilitate student interest in and appreciation of research and its implications for policy.

The Capstone of the undergraduate curriculum consists of a required internship (Criminal Justice Field Instruction) at one of approximately 200 different agencies that is paired with an Internship Seminar. Our review of course syllabi suggests that assignments in the Capstone course do an excellent job of integrating classroom and experiential learning.

The department has received awards for its assessment of student outcomes. These assessments indicate that high proportions of students are demonstrating attainment of departmental learning outcomes. Further, our reviews of student and alumni surveys, and our discussions with undergraduate students during the Site Visit, indicate a high level of student satisfaction with both courses and faculty. At the time of the last program review, students expressed concerns about the timing of required courses. In response, the department formed a scheduling committee and has worked to offer courses in a variety of time slots to improve availability to working and non-working students. Students now express a desire for greater availability of upper-division courses. While the department is unable to offer every upper-division elective every semester, the scheduling committee is working to ensure that an adequate number of upper division courses are configured from semester to semester to facilitate students completing their degrees in a timely manner.

A few concerns remain, as noted in the Self Study report and mirrored in the comments of students and faculty. These include the following:

1. Weaknesses have been noted with advising. Undergraduate students reported to us they do not know who their advisor is; that they have to take the initiative to actively seek out
their advisor, rather than their advisor contacting them, which means that students too shy
to do this do not receive timely advising; and that they receive advising too late in the
program, usually when they are close to graduation. At that point, they may learn that
they need a specific course to graduate that is not currently being taught, or that they are
3 credits shy of what they need, etc. The department acknowledges that the advising
system needs improvement and they are working to improve it. Thus far they have
appointed an Undergraduate Coordinator, who is a point person for this issue.

If advising is an issue at the College and University levels, the university might consider
adopting an advanced online advising and registration system, such as the SASS system
(and the larger ISIS system of which it is a part) at the University of Florida. The system
allows students to track progress toward their degrees online and register for courses
online. They receive prompts from the system with regard to prerequisites, courses they
should be scheduling now, how their selections will affect both their overall plan of study
and time to completion of degree, and the like.

2. Some courses are very large. For example, CJ courses offered in the university core
regularly enroll somewhere between 120-240 students. It is reported that there are
insufficient numbers of graduate assistants to assist faculty teaching these courses.

Courses in the CJ core and in CJ electives enroll 40-50 students. Even in courses of this size,
the faculty we spoke to require term papers/ writing assignments, and give essay exams, which is
a credit to their dedication to high quality instruction. This is, of course, also very labor
intensive, and as such, has implications for the amount of research and grant writing faculty can
be expected to do. It is hoped that this burden might be lightened some with the advent of the
doctoral program. Doctoral students could serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants right from the
start, and can offer their own course once they reach an advanced level in the program.

The Graduate Programs: The program leading to the master’s degree in criminal justice
consists of 36 credit hours, completed over four semesters. There is a “standard” program as
well as an optional area of specialization in Public Administration, which includes four courses
offered by the Department of Public Administration and Urban Studies. For those in the
“standard” program, the department offers both a thesis and a non-thesis option.

All students in the masters program take six required courses that provide them with a
strong foundation in criminological theory, criminal justice system, organization and
management theory, legal aspects of criminal justice, research methods, and statistics. Those not
in the Public Administration Concentration then choose 4 or 5 specialized elective courses (4 if
they choose the thesis option, 5 if they do not) from 16 that are listed in the catalog. The
program culminates with a capstone seminar or a thesis. The structure of the program, the course
offerings, and the offering of a thesis or non-thesis option, are similar to those found in masters
programs offered in peer institutions. Students who graduate from the program are prepared for
management/leadership and research/planning positions in criminal justice agencies at the local,
state and federal levels. Some number will go on to pursue doctoral education.

Since the last program review, the department has appointed a Graduate Coordinator for
the master’s program, has instituted student orientation sessions and formal advising procedures,
and has recruited faculty with significant research agenda with experience in mentoring graduate
students. The External Review Team was very impressed by the numbers of graduate students
who have made conference presentations and/or have published their work in collaboration with faculty members. This speaks to the faculty’s ability to generate interest in research and to mentor their students successfully.

Outcome assessments at the graduate level are carried out using faculty-generated knowledge assessment surveys, which are completed by students in the final semester. In 2009, performance goals for each of the learning objectives were met or exceeded.

Results of graduate student and alumni surveys, and our meetings with graduate students during the Site Visit, showed high levels of satisfaction with the program overall and with the faculty. There are a couple of areas of concern:

1. In order to conserve limited faculty resources and ensure that classes have sufficient enrollments to satisfy College criteria for them to be run (minimum, 15 students), required courses are staggered and run in alternate years. This is a creative solution and one that appears to be working fairly well. It places first and second year students together, but there were no reports that this created problems. However, it becomes imperative that students receive good advising so that they do not miss a rotation, resulting in delayed completion of the degree.

2. More problematic, in order to meet the 15-minimum class size requirement, some courses are cross-listed for both undergraduate and graduate student credit. Students consistently reacted negatively to this arrangement, feeling that it both diminished the quality of their learning and put a strain on faculty. In cross-listed courses, it is common for faculty to assign different readings to undergraduate and graduate students. (Otherwise, a graduate student might be repeating a course that s/he had already taken as an undergraduate.) As is easy to imagine, this strategy created real problems for class discussion. Graduate students also felt that the faculty were forced to pitch these classes more toward the level of the undergraduate students, who usually comprise the majority of students in cross-listed courses. Although the solution to the problem of meeting class size requirements in elective courses is unclear, the External Review Team strongly recommends that the department eliminate the cross-listing of courses for both graduate and undergraduate credit.

Graduate student stipends are very low in comparison with those offered at peer institutions. The typical assistantship at GSU includes a tuition waiver and a $4,000 stipend per academic year. The typical assistantship at peer institutions includes a tuition waiver and a stipend ranging from $9,000 to $15,000 per academic year, although not all programs offer stipends for M.S. students. The External Review Committee is especially concerned about the impact of low stipends on students who might eventually be entering the doctoral program. PhD programs are very competitive for quality students. Doctoral students are not nearly so tied to a geographical area as M.S. graduate students tend to be. If the doctoral program in criminal justice at GSU is to succeed, it must provide competitive stipends and also provide guarantees to incoming students that stipends will continue for a minimum of three years, pending successful progress.

The proposal for the PhD program in Criminal Justice has been carefully prepared and thoroughly vetted through administrative channels at the College and University levels, and approved by the Board of Regents. Briefly, the curriculum of the doctoral program will consist of 39 hours of coursework beyond the master’s level, 15 semester hours of directed research, a
single comprehensive exam, and a dissertation. The courses include 27 hours of required courses (9 hours of methods and advanced statistics, a criminological theory course, a criminal justice policy course, and four seminars—graduate orientation, professional development, directed teaching, and comprehensive); and 12 credit hours of electives. Because the coursework beyond the master’s can be completed in two years, it is expected that those who enter the program with a master’s degree will receive their doctoral degrees within 3–5 years. The curriculum requirements appear to be consistent with other top Ph.D. programs in substance and coverage.

As noted above, the addition of the doctoral program will meet a critical need for a doctoral program in criminal justice in the state and the region. The program will strengthen the ability of the CJ faculty to engage in basic and applied research, prepare students to teach in criminal justice and criminology degree programs offered in higher education, and produce highly trained researchers to do crime and criminal justice research and policy planning to address human and social welfare issues related to urban crime. These goals are all consistent with GSU’s strategic plan.

The External Review Committee anticipates that, in the initial three years of the program, there will be a significant additional strain on faculty resources. Six new courses will need to be added in the first year. Twelve courses, three of which are new, will need to be offered in the second year. And thirteen courses, one of which is new, will need to be offered in the third year. After that point, doctoral students will be able to teach in the undergraduate program, relieving some of the burden on the faculty. Some of these courses may also include M.S. students. Still we project that the department will need to make several strategic hires—at least two at the senior level—to attract top quality students, teach new courses, serve on dissertation committees, and help to bring in the external funding that will be needed to sustain the program.

5. Quality of the Students

The unit does not have sufficient data to assess the quality of incoming undergraduates because there is no formal application process from which such data may be derived. Students must maintain a C (or C-) in the major to graduate, thus the unit can do a partial assessment of the quality of students by examining grade point averages and graduation rates. There is evidence that graduates of this program are able to attain good jobs with state and federal criminal justice agencies and that some graduates have been accepted into good Master’s and Doctoral programs at other institutions. We were impressed with the quality of the undergraduate students that attended one of the program review meetings. They were articulate and thoughtful about their experiences in the program, and appeared to be fully engaged with the education process and making the most of their coursework, particularly the internship and capstone experience. During the meeting the students engaged in a debate about whether additional “applied” courses would be helpful, and we were impressed with their level of understanding about both the strengths and limitations of such coursework for their future careers.

The unit has much more information about the quality of incoming graduate students because the application process requires GRE scores, transcripts, letters of recommendation, and a statement of goals. The quality of students admitted to the M.S. program appears to be comparable to the quality of students admitted to many other criminal justice programs. The mean GRE scores for those admitted (roughly 970-990) are similar to mean GRE scores at other universities offering the M.S. in criminal justice. (The national mean among test-takers across all
fields of study was roughly 1050). Unit faculty have high standards for students in their M.S. program and recently began increasing the requirements for admission so that they can attain these standards. Consequently, somewhat fewer students were admitted in recent years. We were also impressed with the quality of the M.S. students that attended the program review meetings. They were ambitious and engaged, and some had achieved success either in their profession, or through research experiences including conference presentations and publications. Some were hoping to continue their education in the new Ph.D. program. The M.S. students themselves felt that the unit used appropriate quality standards for admission. However, they were unhappy about the inclusion of undergraduates in some of their courses. The M.S. students we spoke to felt that high standards could not be maintained in such classes because the discussion of materials inevitably regressed to the abilities of the B.S. students. Students reported feeling that such classes were “not really” graduate-level classes.

According to the data we received and the information that could be gleaned during the meetings with students, the unit is using appropriate quality standards for students in both programs, and their standards are comparable to other strong programs across the nation. However, the addition of B.S. students to some M.S. classes appears to be undermining some of the efforts to maintain quality in the M.S. program.

6. Quality of the Faculty

The unit has a total of 15 faculty, of which 3 are full professors, 7 are associate professors, and 5 are assistant professors. All are members of the Graduate Faculty. One of the full professors is retiring at the end of this year and another is currently committed to a university-level administration position. Consequently, at the end of this academic year, the unit will be left with only one full professor, who also serves as unit Chairperson. The external review team met with all members of the faculty except for the full professor who was retiring and the full professor with the university administrative appointment.

We judge the CJ faculty to be strong in all essentials, and the quality of the faculty to be very high. The level of scholarly collaboration is very high, and there is an atmosphere of collegiality. The faculty understand the norms for scholarly contribution to the discipline and are working hard to achieve those goals. The assistant professors are committed to establishing a strong publication record so that their research has a notable impact on the field and their future success for obtaining highly competitive external grants is increased. Several faculty members have been awarded external grants and contracts, and some of the more experienced faculty are mentoring other faculty. The development of a new research center with faculty in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies is an important new initiative that is likely to create new synergies for high quality research of value to the region, and to increase the likelihood of success for external grants and contracts. The fact that the unit is also working hard to improve the infrastructure in which they conduct research and obtain grants is highly commendable. Unit faculty have also begun to establish some ties with faculty in the GSU Law School.

Unit faculty are also highly engaged with the curriculum and their students. They have done a great deal of work recently to fully assess their B.S. and M.S. programs, and they have also developed a new Ph.D. program. They evaluate the outcomes of their classes and appear to be continuously searching for possible improvements. They take their educational mission seriously and have assigned directors and committees for each of their programs. They are developing ways to improve the advising system for their students. They are also working to engage students through various social functions and research opportunities. We were
particularly impressed with their creative internship/capstone experience and the end of year social function that accompanies this undergraduate experience. The fact that these extremely important activities occur in the context of a highly active research environment reveals a high level of commitment and energy among the faculty, and serves the students of GSU very well.

Faculty service work is at an appropriate level for assistant professors who are working to establish publication records that have an impact on the field and that will increase the likelihood of future grant success. However, we agree with the unit’s assessment that the level of service commitments is excessive among associate professors, and is, in part, due to the lack of senior, advanced scholars in the department with which they might share that burden. Simply put, the lack of full professors means that the associate professors are doing more service work than is the norm in the discipline. This is particularly true in light of the fact that they have been working hard to evaluate and improve their B.S. and M.S. programs, to develop and implement a new Ph.D. program, and to produce a set of departmental By-Laws. They also have a large number of other service obligations ranging from university and community service, to serving as program coordinators, and producing continuous assessment reports. Our meetings with them revealed that at least two full days per week are spent on service-related activities. Because an additional two full days or more are spent on teaching activities, relatively little time is left for producing high quality scholarly publications, developing and obtaining research grants, preparing for professional meetings, serving the larger profession, editing journals and reviewing scholarly papers, and mentoring and working with junior faculty. If the GSU program is to attain national recognition, the University, College, and unit will have to find ways to decrease this service burden. If it does not, the most productive and committed research faculty are likely to be lured away by other Universities, and the GSU criminal justice programs will suffer.

7. Resource Adequacy

Aside from the precarious state of the financial resources for the Ph.D. program discussed above, we found that the unit resources are generally adequate, although improvements certainly can be made. Faculty resources (office space, computers, and the availability of internal grants) are generally adequate. There was concern about the reliability of some technological resources, and several faculty noted the difficulties that occurred when the University site license for a critical piece of statistical software (SPSS) was allowed to expire several times over the past year. This meant that for several days, faculty and students could not do their work. University administration should work to ensure that this kind of problem does not happen in the future. Space resources appear to be adequate for now, however the unit will need more space beginning in Fall 2010 when the Ph.D. program begins. Ph.D. students must be accessible and proximate to faculty to fulfill their teaching and research obligations. GSU library resources are good and we found there to be no problems in obtaining necessary materials.

We did hear about resource problems associated with the administration of research grants at the University (this problem was noted by the faculty we met from other units as well). Responsiveness of staff and timeliness in processing grant activities in the research office appears to be a problem. Although some faculty believed that there had been some improvement recently, they were uncertain whether necessary improvements would continue. As noted earlier, the emphasis in the research office appears to be on compliance activities and not on assisting faculty with the large paperwork and report burdens during the application and award
process. Improvements in the services of the research office are likely to increase the success of competitive grant applications from CJ (and other GSU) faculty.

One resource that we believe will benefit the unit and GSU is the nurturing of strong relationships between the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies and the CJ unit. The development of the new research center (the Center for Crime and Violence Prevention Policy) is an important undertaking. Such a center has the potential to serve as a key resource for local and state legislators interested in evaluating the effectiveness of government resource and program allocations on crime and violence. Once established, the Center can also serve as an ongoing source of state contracts to gather and provide crime and criminal justice data to the federal government (e.g., FBI Uniform Crime Reports, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics). The Andrew Young School already has in place resources that are necessary for criminal justice policy research such as monthly state agency data, unemployment and business information, human resources and welfare program data, and soon, a Census Bureau Regional Data Center. The School also has a solid cadre of faculty with methodological expertise in policy analysis. These kinds of data and expertise represent the new frontier in advanced crime and criminal justice policy research, and strengthening the linkages between CJ and the School has the potential for greatly expanding the number and size of external grants and contracts to the University.

8. Goals and Objectives

The unit has developed an ambitious set of goals for improving its research, teaching, and service. These objectives are well thought-out and are designed to improve the effectiveness and national and international reputation of the unit. They include becoming a highly ranked Ph.D. program and increasing the amount of external funding, which, in turn, will elevate the reputation of the University. We believe these goals are attainable if the unit is able to hire some additional senior faculty who can provide additional leadership, mentoring, guidance, and relieve some of the service burden on associate professors. The unit also seeks to improve the quality of its undergraduate program by developing a new advising system and increasing the number of full-time, non-tenure track faculty (FT-NTTF). These goals are consistent with disciplinary trends and many top programs in criminal justice and criminology use FT-NTTF to teach classes in which professional expertise is most valuable (e.g., criminal justice system courses on policing, probation and parole, corrections, etc.). The unit also wants to enhance its emphasis on international issues related to criminal justice by renewing its commitment to international scholarship by recruiting more international students to its graduate programs and by increasing the impact of The International Criminal Justice Review (a scholarly journal housed at GSU for almost 20 years and edited by an associate professor in the unit). Finally the unit seeks to increase and improve its state, local, national and international partnerships. The unit already has some very strong partnerships, particularly its relationships with more than 200 agencies that permit student internships, and the GILEE, and is expected to add more through the new Center for Crime and Violence Prevention Policy. The unit’s goals are reasonable because they build on existing accomplishments, and they have a high likelihood of success.

Overall, this is a department of highly committed researchers and teachers. The challenges that they face are not insurmountable. With continued commitment from the University, we anticipate a bright future for the programs of the Department of Criminal Justice at GSU.