

The College of New Jersey
Department of Criminology
Strategic Plan 2022

Context

In AY 2020-2021, the Department of Criminology conducted its self-study and external review (delayed from AY 2019-2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic). A central issue noted in the self-study, and reiterated by our external reviewer Dr. Addrain Conyers (Marist College), was the imbalance between the number of majors and tenure-track faculty. The number of majors has increased approximately 60% over the last decade; however, the number of tenure-track lines has decreased by .5, from 5 lines to 4.5 lines. The Department will be conducting a tenure-track search in AY 2022-2023; as such, we anticipate a new tenure-track colleague joining us in fall 2023. At that time, the number of tenure-track lines in the Department will increase to 5.5. Nonetheless, given the increase of majors from 142 to 231 from 2010-2022, a .5 increase in tenure-track faculty lines is of concern. At present, Criminology has the fourth largest number of majors in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and the second largest among the social science disciplines. At 51 to 1, we have the highest student to tenure-track faculty ratio in the School. As points of comparison, the average ratio in HSS is 19 to 1, and behind Criminology, the second highest ratio is 32 to 1. Not only has our Department experienced sustained growth in recent years, but it is forecasted to increase its student enrollment. As evidence of this projected growth, the fall 2022 admission target for our Department was 50 (first-year and transfer students); we are welcoming approximately 80 new students (first-year and transfer) next semester—far surpassing the target. In addition to serving a large number of majors, the Department has also experienced a sizable increase in the number of minors in the last decade, a 75% increase from spring 2010 to spring 2022.

The imbalance between majors and tenure-track faculty is a central issue that guides our Department's strategic plan as we negotiate its implications for students and faculty (e.g., student progress to degree and advising demand).

In his external review report, Dr. Conyers provided valuable feedback that we began to promptly implement. In summer 2022, we revised our Department's Mission Statement and crafted a Vision Statement. Both documents have guided our decision-making in critical areas, for example, curriculum modification and hiring. They also reflect the values of the faculty, for instance, the teaching of criminology from a social sciences perspective and the importance of increasing department efforts pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

With completion of this phase of the planning cycle (i.e., self-study, external review, and department retreat), the Department now moves to the next phase of the cycle: the implementation of its strategic plan to guide its future. While we seek to preserve our self-identified areas of strength (e.g., research and internship opportunities available to students; close mentoring of and individualized attention to our students), we focus our efforts on the successful achievement of the following objectives outlined in detail below. With progress in these areas, the Department will be

on firmer footing to achieve not only our mission, but also the missions, visions, and strategic plans of the School and College (recently expressed in two reports: *Transformation 2.0: Extending our excellence* and *We are TCNJ: A strategy for inclusive excellence, 2022-2027*).

(1) Modify Major Requirements and Increase Liberal Learning Designations

There are two major streams of curriculum modification that the Department will complete in the near future: (1) major requirements and (2) Liberal Learning designations. In AY 2021-2022, the Department began a comprehensive revamp of its major requirements. Among the changes already implemented were: (1) the reduction of the number of required courses in the major from 8 to 4 and (2) the creation of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Requirement. In AY 2022-2023, the Department will seek approval for the remaining modifications (e.g., a reworking of the research methods sequence and inclusion of a qualitative methods course [CRI 319] as a technology elective). These curriculum modifications reflect a curriculum that is more consistent with the study of criminology (rather than criminal justice) and our department's efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in our curriculum; both are major themes reflected in the Department's Vision and Mission statements. Additionally, the modifications will allow students greater flexibility as they proceed through the major. They will also increase the ability of internal and external transfer students to complete the major requirements in a truncated period of time (a priority identified by the College). At the same time, a reduction in the number of required courses will allow the Department to offer new courses to ensure that the curriculum is up-to-date and to offer courses based on faculty interest and expertise. The Department will periodically assess whether these curriculum modifications are achieving these expressed goals.

In the second stream of curriculum modification, the Department will expand the number of its courses that meet Liberal Learning designations. In AY 2021-2022, the Department increased its Liberal Learning courses as five courses were approved for the Behavioral, Social, or Cultural Perspectives domain and one course was approved for the Civic Responsibility of Gender. In AY 2022-2023, the Department will apply for Liberal Learning designations for additional extant courses in the curriculum (e.g., CRI 303 White Collar Crime and CRI 305 Criminology and Mental Health) and new courses in development (e.g., qualitative methods, cybersecurity, and the school-to-prison pipeline).

(2) Increase Collaboration with Other Departments, Programs, and Offices at the College and in the Greater Trenton and New Jersey Areas

The Department will continue to strengthen its existing partnerships with various departments, programs, and offices at TCNJ. At present, the Department contributes to a variety of interdisciplinary curricular programs at TCNJ including: Social Justice, Pre-Law, Quantitative Criminology, and the Master's in Business Administration program. Additionally, faculty are involved in community engagement through the Center for Community Engagement and study abroad through the Center for Global Engagement. In the Greater Trenton area, faculty are involved with local organizations (e.g., Campaign to End the New Jim Crow Greater Trenton Chapter) that engage in social justice advocacy around pressing criminal justice issues (e.g., mass incarceration). Faculty also contribute to statewide efforts to expand reentry awareness and services to citizens returning from incarceration through the New Jersey Reentry Corporation Ambassador Program started by former governor of New Jersey, Jim McGreevey.

The Department will continue to build on these relationships and also seeks to cultivate new ones. In the near future, the Department will have an opportunity to contribute to forthcoming programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, for example, the Master's in Public Policy program, the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Graduate Certificate, and the Cybersecurity Specialization in the Computer Science Major.

Beyond these, and consistent with the objectives expressed in the College's plans, the Department will continue to develop partnerships at the undergraduate and graduate levels that align with the expertise and interest of its teacher-scholars, the various capacities of the Department, student interest and demand, and the needs of the school, college, and the Greater Trenton and New Jersey regions. Since 2019, students have partnered with a local journalist from the Asbury Park Press on various research projects. In the fall of 2022 this effort is expanding with a new partner: New Jersey Advanced Media.

(3) Strengthen Investment in Faculty Resources

Criminology is a high-demand program as reflected by the steady increase in the number of majors and its anticipated continued growth. The Department must have the required faculty resources (e.g., tenure-track, full-time faculty, and adjunct faculty) to support: (1) our Vision and Mission; (2) our students so they can progress toward the degree in a timely manner, and (3) our partnerships with other departments, programs, and offices on campus and in the community.

Related, it is critical that the Department receive additional resources to address the extremely high advising loads of its faculty. According to data collected by the Advising Task Force, the average advising load at TCNJ is 25 per faculty member. With an average advising load of 60 per faculty member, Criminology faculty have the highest advising load on campus. In order to ensure that pre-tenure faculty have sufficient time to focus on teaching and scholarship, the Department caps their advising loads at 25. It is important to note that the junior faculty advising load of 25 in Criminology is higher than the average advising load of 17 in HSS (including tenured-faculty in other departments). Additionally, the advising loads of tenured Criminology faculty are approximately 3-6 times larger than the average advising load in the School, given variation from year to year based on faculty sabbaticals and leaves.

The high advising loads of faculty has a deleterious impact on our abilities to successfully perform other required aspects of our positions (e.g., teaching, research, and service) and directly undermines a self-identified Department and College strength: close mentoring of and individualized attention to students.

The Department will work with the Dean of the Humanities and Social Sciences and Academic Affairs to identify strategies to ensure it has sufficient resources to support its students, faculty, and staff.

(4) Enhance Alumni Engagement

Increased alumni outreach was recommended by our two most recent external reviewers (Ratcliffe, 2013; Conyers, 2021) and in our 2014 Strategic Plan. While the Department has made some progress in this area since 2014, additional dedicated effort is needed. Our alumni are a valuable resource that we are not fully utilizing, for example, to provide feedback on the curriculum and student experience and to provide internship and employment opportunities and career support and mentorship to current students. While some of these activities are already occurring, a more systematic approach is needed. The Department will explore strategies to survey graduating seniors and alumni, track the post-graduate careers of our alumni, and increase their presence in our Department.

(5) Expand Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts at the Department Level

At a time when there are major efforts underway to address deep-seated racial injustice in our nation's criminal justice system, the Department recognizes the critical need for us, *as criminologists*, to implement and support diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice efforts in all aspects of our work and personal education and growth (e.g., curriculum, department-sponsored programming, recruitment of students and faculty, advising, etc.) for our current and future students, alumni, faculty, and staff.

In *We are TCNJ: A strategy for inclusive excellence, 2022-2027*, the College put forth three major objectives related to this work (p. 6):

Strategy 1: Increase the diversity and inclusion of students, staff, and faculty, and cultivate diverse community partnerships.

Strategy 2: Create and sustain an inclusive and equitable campus environment.

Strategy 3: Enhance campuswide diversity, equity, and inclusion accountability, effectiveness, and collaboration.

The Department will actively support these strategies as they are closely aligned with the objectives noted in this strategic plan pertaining to its curriculum, the recruitment and retention of students and faculty, building and strengthening partnerships and collaborations, and alumni engagement. For example, the department recently added a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Requirement for majors.