



March 31, 2016

To: Rebecca Aanerud
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Planning
The Graduate School, UW Seattle

Melissa Lavitt
Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Office of the Chancellor, UW Tacoma

From: Diane Young
Director
Social Work and Criminal Justice Program, UW Tacoma

Re: Response to Final Report and Recommendations of External Review Committee

Dear Associate Dean Aanerud and Executive Vice Chancellor Lavitt,

The Social Work and Criminal Justice Program would like to thank Dr. Divya McMillin and each member of the External Review Committee for the time and effort given to the review of our degree programs. We deeply appreciate the interest they showed in us and the many opportunities for reflective conversations that took place throughout the two days of the site visit. We found both the review process, beginning with the development of the self-study and culminating with the site visit, and the feedback provided in the final report informative and helpful as we plan for the next decade.

It is affirming to see the many strengths cited – strengths with which we agree and endeavor to build further upon. It is also particularly significant that the Committee noted with great excitement our unique configuration. Although we are of course aware that our programs are positioned in a way that most social work and criminal justice programs are not, the clear and deep focus brought to this aspect of our Program during the review resonates with the challenges we face and have been discussing for the past year or so. We believe we can use the findings and recommendations of the Committee to guide our discussions as we strengthen and clarify the connections between social work and criminal justice curriculums, faculty, and students.

The faculty agree with the spirit of the recommendations and are committed to developing the common ground between social work and criminal justice. Some of the suggestions made by the Committee are already underway. For example, we are working to identify opportunities for greater communication and connection between our disciplines, recognizing this is an essential step (#8). In addition, a revision of our promotion and tenure guidelines is in process by a working group that includes social work, criminal justice, and lecturer and tenure track/tenured ranks. A discussion with the full faculty, spearheaded by a criminal justice assistant professor and a senior social work faculty member brought to light disciplinary-specific preferences for books versus journal articles and how the faculty might meaningfully include multiple perspectives particularly at the junctures of merit review, promotion and tenure. In relation to helping students transition better to practicum environments (#7), we have already approved a BASW curricular revision to do this, and are in process of finalizing one for MSW students. We also currently have an internship elective course for criminal justice students that we would very much like to expand (#5 and 6). To do so will require faculty resources, both for cultivating internship sites and supervising students. We will need to identify ways to target resources toward this goal to make progress in this area.

There is widespread faculty support for the recommendation to hire a senior criminal justice faculty member who can share the vision for joint programming, help develop the unique aspects of our criminal justice program and mentor and support junior faculty (#1). The recommendation to revisit our governance structure and curriculum decision-making processes (#4) will require more time and discussion to achieve consensus. Although faculty recognize the greater need for communication and information sharing across disciplines, there is not agreement about joint decision-making and the best pathways toward these ends. It makes sense that creating points of curriculum connection (#5) would be part of this discussion. One idea that we are seriously considering is to invite an external consultant, one who values our unique configuration and would engender the respect of both disciplines, to assist us as we think through these issues. We are very clear that we do not see bringing in a consultant as a replacement for the senior criminal justice faculty hire.

There is some concern expressed by the faculty that hiring "bridging thinkers" will restrict our ability to hire discipline-specific experts in areas of curricular need (#2 and 3). As a faculty we will need to define "bridging thinkers" for hiring purposes, in a way that maximizes our ability to draw in disciplinary expertise and also brings in faculty who value a deep connection between social work and criminal justice. We do not want to be solely reliant on new hires to do our bridging work. Perhaps there are additional ways to forge these connections that we might devise in addition to those recommended in the report.

We concur with the findings of the Committee in regard to the challenges experienced in the campus context. We are committed to working with partners across campus to address faculty workload expectations, resolve course scheduling difficulties, recruit and retain diverse faculty and staff, better engage part-time lecturers in the life of the program and campus, and support grant activity.

On behalf of the faculty and staff, I thank the Chair and each Committee member for their careful review and final report.

Sincerely,



Diane Young
Director, Social Work and Criminal Justice

cc. Michaelann Jundt
Associate Dean
Undergraduate Academic Affairs, UW Seattle

Augustine McCaffery
Senior Academic Specialist
Academic Affairs and Planning
The Graduate School, UW Seattle