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A CORE CURRICULUM FOR UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC POLICE TRAINING

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For some years, the leaders in the police career group in the United States have been attempting to persuade colleges and universities to offer academic training in the police field. This attempt has been quite successful. Full four year programs leading to a specialized degree are now in operation at eleven colleges and universities from coast to coast. In addition, academic programs of shorter duration are offered in some forty additional institutions. These programs are all relatively recent in academic circles, with new programs appearing almost yearly. One of the problems with which this growth is plagued is lack of any definite agreement among institutions on what curriculum such a program should offer. This article proposes both a framework for solution and a possible content for that framework.

Some standardization is needed for several reasons if there is to be continued growth in this new academic field. One current pressing reason is to make course credit transferable from one institution to another. Our country is a nation on wheels. There are any number of situations in which it becomes necessary or desirable for a student to transfer from one school to another. When this occurs, the problem of credit to be allowed by the new institution for courses already taken arises. Although administrators in these programs are already facing this problem, it is bound to grow by leaps and bounds as the field expands.

Another reason for some agreement on content in police undergraduate programs is the need for acceptance at graduate schools. Graduate training in law enforcement is currently offered by at least four of the eleven degree offering institutions and is planned at a fifth. Most graduate programs draw heavily on the undergraduate programs of other schools for their students. The theory behind this generally accepted academic practice is that it

makes the student prove himself with two faculties rather than just one. This is a broadening experience which minimizes the danger of provincialism. For proper planning of a graduate program, there must be at least a modicum of common academic experience among those who come to the graduate school.

Despite these needs, there has been no effective coordination of academic programs leading to solution of these problems. Perhaps, there are logical reasons why this has not occurred. Programs have been widely separated and few in number. Students have not been attracted in any large numbers because of greater promise in other fields for those able and willing to provide themselves with a college education. Some programs have been set up to serve specific large city police departments and tailored to meet the needs of those departments. But these conditions are changing. Academic police training programs are becoming more numerous. Students can now be assured of a promising future in law enforcement. The police career group is becoming more and more mobile, with opportunities no longer limited to the organization with which service begins.

To meet this standardization need, a two step solution is proposed. The first step would be for academic administrators as representatives of their faculties to agree to establish a minimum core curriculum which would be basic to all programs and credit for which would be freely transferable from one institution to another. Courses offered beyond this minimum core would be at the option of the local institution. Credit for such additional courses would be given by individual institutions according to published general standards and specific agreement with other institutions.

After agreeing that a specified number of freely transferable credit hours should be offered by each

institution, the next step would be to decide what the content of those hours should be. To serve as an illustration of this plan and as an expression of personal opinion, a concrete proposal is now made as to what both the framework and its content should be.

It is first proposed that the standard core curriculum be made up of twenty-seven semester hours. This minimum is recommended in deference to those institutions which insist that the police program be in a liberal arts setting which assures a broad general education in addition to career orientation. The merit of this point of view will not be discussed here. To set the suggested minimum higher than twenty-seven hours would preclude participation by institutions with this philosophy. For those schools which offer specialized degrees requiring a greater number of police courses, this would be only a minimum. There would be nothing in the agreement to prevent them from offering a larger number of hours and requiring their students to take them. Nor should this minimum be lowered. To allow any student to receive a degree without this minimum police orientation would be to emasculate the program.

If this minimum were to be accepted, it is proposed that three semester hours be devoted to a course in criminology or some related sociology course stressing study of crime causation and prevention. The remaining twenty-four semester hours should be devoted to four broad areas of law enforcement. Those suggested are police management, criminal investigation, traffic regulation and control, and police law. There would be no intention in this broad definition to restrict individual professors to specific texts or teaching outlines. The courses agreed upon would be defined only as to general scope, as to statement of their goal. It still would be the privilege and responsibility of each professor to plan the achievement of this goal in his own way. Nor would there be any thought of influencing personal opinion on controversial problems with which the courses would deal. The traditional spirit of academic freedom for each teacher to reach the goal of the assigned or chosen course according to his own lights would be preserved. It would be expected that there would be some uniformity in the matters discussed but not in the manner of discussion.

This proposal includes six semester hours in police management to make the student familiar with the different types of law enforcement agen-

cies currently in existence, and to give him some appreciation for the problems encountered in their operation. There is bound to be disagreement as to what a student in any social science field should be taught first, but there is much to be said for beginning academic police training with this course. As planned, such a course would give a student the big picture of public policing, with discussion of particular agencies as well as of the class to which they belong. It would also study the organization, management, and administration of these organizations to the extent possible in an introductory course. This would give the student a good base on which to make his final judgment as to whether he wanted to plan a career in law enforcement. Offered as a beginning course, this would also be popular among students who are not sure in what they wish to major and would attract some of these to a police career. There might be argument as to whether this course should come first, but there can be little argument with spending twenty-five percent of the time of the police major in this area. Even with this time allotment, there will be enough left unsaid to make any instructor's heart bleed.

Another area in this core curriculum would be criminal investigation. This is also fundamental to police training. Such a course would stress the basic investigative techniques as well as special approaches to specific categories of crime. Here again, the student will actually continue to study these matters throughout his entire career.

A third core course would be in traffic regulation and control. This is basic to both state and local police operations. It is not as directly important to candidates for certain federal agencies but even then has enough indirect interest to be of value. In addition, a student can seldom predict with certainty just where in the broad field of policing his future lies. This and the criminal investigation course should be taken in the year following the management course.

Last among these core courses is the one in police law. Here also is a vital area. As recommended, the course would thoroughly cover the nature and sources of law, and court and executive organization for the trial of criminal cases. This would be followed by stress on the substantive criminal law itself. Study of the rules of criminal procedure and of evidence would round out the course. Because mobility, moving from one college and jurisdiction to another, is one of the reasons for establishing a minimum core curriculum, this course cannot deal

with the law of any one jurisdiction alone, but there would be no objection to illustrating the general discussion with examples drawn from the jurisdiction of the state in which the college is located. A text has been written and compiled especially for such a course which draws on the specific law of seven jurisdictions to illustrate a general discussion. This book, which is now in a temporary mimeographed edition, will be published shortly.

As the reader may have guessed, this core curriculum has not sprung full blown from anyone's head. It has the merit of adoption by a currently existing program, that of Indiana University. After careful consideration by the entire faculty of the Department of Police Administration at I.U. for many months, modifications in the program resulting in the adoption of this core proposal were last spring presented to and accepted by the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences. It is now in effect.

It cannot be overemphasized that this proposed core curriculum is a minimum only. It does not represent the entire offering of the I.U. program and probably never would be the entire program of any adopting institution. There would still remain the problem of standardization of additional courses. It is doubtful that there could ever be complete agreement on the content of additional courses, but each institution could formulate and publicize certain broad policies. One of these would certainly deal with the acceptability of what proponents call "practical how to" courses and what opponents characterize as "trade school mechan-

ics' " courses. Typical of this type of course would be instruction in gunnery and hand-to-hand combat. An institution might choose to accept all such work, a limited amount of it, or none at all. Nothing would prevent any department from thinking through its philosophy, deciding on its position, and publicizing it as such. The same might be said of courses specifically tailored to the needs of a given agency from which the academic institution draws a large number of students.

But there are also possible a large number of police courses of the traditional academic type, in addition to those in the core group, which should be completely acceptable to other institutions. One of these might be on the psychology of interrogation. Another might deal philosophically with mechanisms of achieving internal state security. Many others will come to mind. However, each institution would probably wish to set a maximum on the number of such hours that it would accept.

This article has suggested a core curriculum for academic undergraduate police programs leading to a degree in four years. It is suggested that 27 semester hours be required—three in sociology, six in police management, six in traffic regulation and control, six in criminal investigation, and six in police law. It is also suggested that institutions offering such programs each adopt and publicize its policy as to police skill courses and as to the total number of police courses which it will accept toward a degree in its program. Such a development would facilitate transfer of credit from one institution to another and would establish a base on which graduate programs could be built.