

1971

Survey of Criminal Justice Subject-Matter Baccalaureate Programs

Charles A. Tracy

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/jclc>

 Part of the [Criminal Law Commons](#), [Criminology Commons](#), and the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Charles A. Tracy, Survey of Criminal Justice Subject-Matter Baccalaureate Programs, 61 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 576 (1970)

This Criminology is brought to you for free and open access by Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology by an authorized editor of Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons.

SURVEY OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SUBJECT-MATTER BACCALAUREATE PROGRAMS

CHARLES A. TRACY

The author is an Associate Professor of Law Enforcement and Department Chairman at Southern Oregon College, Ashland, Oregon. Prior to this he had been an Associate Professor at San Jose State College and the Acting Department Chairman. For eight years he was affiliated with the San Jose Police Department. Professor Tracy holds a M.Crim. degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and is currently completing requirements for the D. Crim. at this same university.—
EDITOR

The United States has been witness to one of the most remarkable success stories of this decade without being totally aware of it. From a small handful of 17 colleges and universities, which offered police science programs in 1965, the baccalaureate criminal justice educational profession now involves over 44 institutions across the nation—a 260 per cent growth! The efforts of these senior colleges have had a definite positive impact upon the quality of criminal justice in our country. All components of our justice system have benefited in various degrees from contact with educated individuals who have brought with them new concepts and approaches to old problems. As a result law enforcement agencies, courts, and correctional services are entering into a developmental phase that was thought impossible only a short time ago. The efforts of those involved in this success story, which include not only professional educators, but also individuals from the highest levels of the federal government to concerned citizens in small communities, have done much to make our country a better place in which to live.

As with many success stories, however, the negative side of rapid growth is often overlooked. Quality may often be sacrificed for quantity. The number of students may become more important than providing superior instruction. Administrators of new criminal justice programs may find themselves playing the "numbers game" with their academic competitors, often without realizing it. Success may often be measured by the number of "happy" students rather than the achievement of positive educational goals. Unqualified personnel may often be employed on the basis of local popularity rather than professional and academic experience.

These negative aspects of uncontrolled growth, which represent only a small number of the possible side-effects, can not only slow, but in some in-

stances completely reverse, the upward climb towards true professional status. Does an overview of criminal justice education reveal a negative image? Have we grown too fast without adequate quality control? Are we in need of self-evaluation and establishment of realistic professional guidelines, as other academic disciplines have found it necessary to do? Is it possible that we might find our educational activities suffering from the same lack of quality and excellence that a significant number of our citizens find in our criminal justice system? If a poorly operating criminal justice system depends upon an inadequate educational system to improve it, what might be the eventual outcome?

How can such questions be answered? Obviously some attempt must be made to evaluate the total story, rather than separate chapters—some of which relate great success, while others portray less positive achievements. Numerous surveys of criminal justice educational efforts have been conducted during the past five years. The majority of them have used mailed questionnaires to gather data for practical reasons. Such surveys, the most recent of which was conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police in early 1968,¹ have done much to chart the growth of the field, but often fail to provide the necessary information required to make an objective evaluation of the total instructional effort. Questionnaires must be limited in scope if they are to be read by busy program administrators, let alone completed and returned. A more significant weakness, however, involves the tendency of some of those questioned to respond in a rather subjective manner and supply data which may not completely reflect the overall institutional picture.

¹THOMPSON S. CROCKETT, LAW ENFORCEMENT EDUCATION. Washington: International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1968.

A more practical and objective source of evaluative information has long been overlooked—the academic catalog. This document often serves as a quasi-legal contract between the student and the institution and must, therefore, contain relatively accurate information. It represents the total college, along with the various departmental disciplines, to both prospective students and watchful alumni and probably comes closer to realistically portraying the characteristics of institutional activities than any other single source of available information. Too many operational activities are dependent upon the data contained in such publications to purposely distort its contents.

Recognizing the inherent weaknesses of questionnaires and the inability to personally interview and observe at all the participating institutions, an attempt was made to investigate and evaluate the total story of criminal justice baccalaureate activities by conducting a thorough content analysis of current institutional catalogs supplemented by portions of the most recent IACP survey.² Some interesting characteristics were revealed.

Program Titles. There appears to be a rather large number of program titles which attempt to describe the major orientation of the various instructional efforts. Unfortunately, these titles do not necessarily reflect the objectives of the program nor follow any uniform system of definition. For example, in one state a theoretical approach to criminal behavior in one institution and a practical development of basic police entry skills in another were both referred to as criminology programs. Some attention must be directed towards a more intelligent labeling system. As a starting point the following suggestions are offered:

Police Science Programs: Instructional activities directed towards the development of skills and knowledge associated with the enforcement, investigative, and preventive activities of municipal law enforcement agencies.

Law Enforcement Programs: Instructional activities directed towards the development of skills and knowledge associated with the enforcement, investigative, and preventive activities of agencies involved in control or correctional functions at all governmental levels—municipal, state, and federal.

Criminology Programs: Instructional activities

directed towards the development of knowledge related to the overall study of crime and criminal behavior, but not necessarily oriented towards the fulfillment of vocational objectives.

Criminal Justice Programs: Instructional activities directed towards the development of knowledge related to the total process of administering criminal justice without specific emphasis being placed upon one particular component of the system.

Organizational Status. Approximately one-half of the programs have achieved departmental status within their respective institutions. Such status may not seem important to many, but in the academic community it is often viewed as something less than a full franchise. Criminal justice programs must become permanent residents in the total college community, accepting their responsibilities and exercising their rights, rather than programs within existing non-criminal justice departments.

Organizational Location. Perhaps one of the most controversial questions concerning criminal justice instruction involves its proper location in the college structure. There are those within the academic community who feel, with adequate justification in some case, that such programs do not meet the "pure" standards of the social sciences and, therefore, belong to the "applied" side of the campus. The investigation revealed that the current programs may be "purer" than some academicians think. At any rate the major portion of them were located within the non-applied arts and sciences. Whether this is the proper organizational location only time and experience will tell. But if these programs are to remain in this particular area of higher education, where the vast majority of their supporting courses originate, then their faculties must recognize the fact that career competition will be keen. The vast majority of criminal justice instructors do not yet have the academic tradition that have long motivated their arts and science colleagues. They must develop the traditionally recognized academic skills if they are to be truly accepted as serious educators, rather than semi-retired practitioners.

Special Entrance Requirements. Should baccalaureate criminal justice programs act as screening agents for potential employers by establishing admission requirements which differ from the normal college requirements? Many of them do. There are good arguments for both sides of the question, but the final answer will largely depend upon the objectives of the particular program. It must be

² A detailed report of this investigation is available upon request from: C.A. Tracy, Associate Professor of Law Enforcement, Southern Oregon College, Ashland, Oregon, 97520.

remembered, however, that one of the major obstacles to the establishment of a true law enforcement career has been the negative approach to recruiting manpower. The educational programs which hold the solutions to many career problems must not contribute to this obstacle.

Program Objectives. Most of the college catalogs contained a brief description of program objectives. Some appeared to be the result of considerable planning and realistic curriculum coordination; others were so vague as to be of little value in determining the direction of the program's instructional activities. Honest objectives should certainly be developed; if not for ethical motives, then for practical academic reasons. Self-evaluation and continued improvement is practically impossible without realistic goals.

The stated objectives indicated that the question of whether to educate or train is still apparently unresolved. The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice should have settled that problem when they stated: "Although there is a need for vocational training, it is not and can not be a substitute for a liberal arts education."³ It would seem that the problem really involves the designation of certain instructional areas as training and others as education. This determination should not be as difficult as some criminal justice educators would have it appear. Perhaps they are also suffering from the *Omnicompetence Complex* that some authorities feel is the governing principle of police personnel policies.⁴ Is one educational setting competent to handle *all* areas of instructional responsibilities? Some programs would appear to be oriented towards this objective. Is the senior college better equipped to assume certain instructional tasks than the junior college? The establishment of realistic objectives can offer comfortable guidelines and remove much of the confusion that currently surrounds the roles of many of the criminal justice instructional programs.

Part-Time Faculty. Far too many part-time personnel staff our senior college programs. This is not meant to downgrade their contributions. There would not be a success story without their assist-

ance when it was needed. But that assistance should be temporary, not permanent. There is little justification, or for that matter, good reason, to maintain a large part-time faculty in relation to the full-time staff. Most instructional and administrative activities suffer in this type of arrangement.

Faculty Degrees. Lack of academic achievement among criminal justice faculty has been one of the profession's major millstones and will continue to be so until more full-time professional faculty members recognize and accept their responsibility to act as intellectual and ethical examples to their students and colleagues. This responsibility should carry with it a commitment to actively pursue the highest academic achievement possible. There are not enough doctorates teaching in the field of criminal justice. Why? The only acceptable reason must involve individual initiative. There are few acceptable excuses!

Curriculum. Examining curriculum from college catalogs is a risky business at best. Anyone who has spent but a short time on a college campus quickly realizes that what is taught in the classroom and the catalog description of the course are quite often incompatible. Nevertheless, some general observations can be made. A wide range of subject-matter concentrations was revealed. Some programs required less than ten per cent of the total instructional units to be in criminal justice areas, while others required as many as one-half. Set rules can not apply to all instructional situations, but some general guidelines should be agreed upon. Four years in college is not a long time. When it may be the last formal instruction for many people, it becomes a very short time in which to provide them with the best intellectual experience possible. A more realistic balance between criminal justice, behavioral science, and communicative courses should be achieved. The first two areas generally make up at least one-half of the total instructional units, but how effective is a well-trained and well-educated individual who can not adequately communicate his professional knowledge to others? Is five per cent of the total college experience enough time to develop sufficient communicative skills? How much time is spent communicating within the criminal justice system? Should not those individuals charged with the responsibility of administering justice in our society be the best communicators our colleges and universities are capable of producing?

³ President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, TASK FORCE REPORT: THE POLICE. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967, p. 127.

⁴ GEORGE V. HIGGINS, Omniconpetence and Omnibus Crime Control: The Police as Specialists, THE JOURNAL OF CRIMINAL LAW, CRIMINOLOGY, AND POLICE SCIENCE 121 (March, 1969).

We have come a long way in a short time. We must not be content with what might appear to be instant success. The concluding chapters in the criminal justice educational story have not been written. In fact only the introductory chapters have been published. This new instructional venture is still pliable enough to mold into whatever

shape its creators desire. It has shown definite evidence of its capability to make a lasting and valuable contribution to society. This contribution can become a reality only if the individuals who have assumed the responsibility for finishing the story will accept nothing less than excellence from themselves and their students.