

# **MICHIGAN STATE'S SCHOOL OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE CELEBRATES 50th ANNIVERSARY**

By Robert C. Trojanowicz

Michigan State College - now Michigan State University - approved an undergraduate degree curriculum in police science and formed the School of Police Administration and Public Safety in 1935. Some 50 years later, the School still addresses the needs of the criminal justice community. The School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University is the oldest continuous professional program focusing on the justice system in the United States.

## **The Early Years**

The School's formation and early development came in response to several events both on the national level and within the State of Michigan:

- The National Crime Commission, chaired by George Wickersham, met in 1925 and published its report in 1931. Authored by the reform-minded August Vollmer, the report's review of police practices stressed the need for professionalization of the law enforcement profession.
- This issue was also addressed at the 1934 National Crime Conference in Washington, D.C., chaired by U.S. Attorney General Homer S. Cummings and attended by a large and enthusiastic delegation from Michigan - where the state police and the State Association of Chiefs of Police had pioneered cooperative efforts to improve police training.
- Through the efforts of Dr. LeMoyné Snyder and Oscar Olander, commissioner of the Michigan State Police, the Michigan Crime Commission, founded in 1929, also became intensely interested in the concept of college-level police courses. Dr. Snyder approached Michigan State College with a proposal to establish a police administration program within the college. The college accepted, and in September 1935, a small group of students transferred to the new major. The first three students - A.F. Brandstatter, Edgar Jones and Ralph Orka - graduated in 1938.

The original bachelor of science program with a major in police administration required three years of liberal arts and professional coursework on campus; students capped their academic experience with a full year of training with the Michigan State Police. This curriculum reflected the influences of both the land grant philosophy and the concepts forged by Vollmer in Berkeley and O.W. Wilson in Wichita, Kan. In addition to the year-long field service training, Michigan State College required students to participate in the Reserve Officer Training Corps program. (Presently, both the field service and ROTC options are elective.)

In 1935, Donald Bremer, an intercollegiate athlete at State during his undergraduate years, served as the school's sole faculty member and administrator. A former motorcycle police officer

who possessed a law degree, Bremer taught courses in criminal law and evidence. His efforts were supplemented by the Michigan State Police's practical instruction of students during the final year's field service. Thomas King, another attorney, succeeded Bremer as head of the school in 1942 and recruited A.F. Brandstatter in 1946. Brandstatter, head of the campus police, taught a course in law enforcement administration, marking a shift in teaching responsibility away from the State Police and toward on-campus faculty. While continuing to serve as the administrator of the University's Department of Public Safety, Brandstatter assumed the additional responsibility of directing the school upon King's retirement in 1947. George Felkenes followed Brandstatter.

Ralph Turner, a criminalist, joined Brandstatter on the faculty in 1947; Robert Scott, a lawyer with experience in both law enforcement and corrections, came to the school in 1948. Gordon Sheehe, who eventually founded the University's Highway Traffic Safety Center, became a faculty member in 1952. From modest beginnings, the faculty grew in both quantity and breadth of perspective; the school now averages 17 full-time faculty and a number of support staff.

## **Broader Horizons**

Where the original curriculum focused entirely on law enforcement, the growing faculty felt the need to respond to the rapid social changes that took place in the decades following World War II. Course content began to change and areas of specialization emerged as new developments occurred. Juvenile delinquency, corrections, industrial security, traffic safety and criminalistics joined law enforcement as legitimate areas of academic and professional pursuit.

Recognizing the continuous nature of professional development, the School added a master of science degree to its offerings in 1958; in 1969, it developed, in cooperation with the College of Social Science and the university as a whole, a doctoral program. In 1970, the School of Police Administration and Public Safety became the School of Criminal Justice. Both the name change and the expansion of the curriculum anticipated and accelerated the profound changes occurring in crime-related education in the United States. In some respects, they acknowledged the obvious: crime and justice administration were complex social issues that required a more thorough response than simply providing police with a liberal education.

The School's holistic approach to the study of criminal justice is reflected in the four degree programs now in existence: bachelor of arts with a major in criminal justice; bachelor of science with a major in criminalistics; master of science with concentrations in police, juvenile, corrections, security, and planning; and doctorate with a concentration in criminal justice and criminology. Each program integrates professionally focused courses with courses that have a system-wide perspective.

Drawing on the school's interdisciplinary tradition, the faculty attempts to adapt and apply the theoretical constructs and knowledge of sociology, psychology, political science, economics and the physical sciences, as well as many other related disciplines and professions. Independently, these disciplines and areas of study do not systematically focus on crime or criminal justice

management and administration; that is the job of the faculty. Consistent with the holistic and interdisciplinary character of the School, each faculty member has an area of specialization but is involved in instruction and research that transcends traditional agency boundaries.

### **Linkages with the Professional Community**

The School and its faculty have always attempted to maintain links with the professional community and agencies in an effort to develop applied research, to improve criminal justice practice and training, and to facilitate the collaborative identification of problems and the refinement of thinking. All faculty members must perform research and public service in addition to teaching. The school itself has institutionalized linkages through its training and practicum programs, both of which date back far in the School's history. The alumni Association is a more recent, but very productive, formal linkage with the professional community.

The training program provides a mechanism for technology transfer and program evaluation. It not only disseminates new skills and knowledge to practitioners; it also serves to identify criminal justice issues and concerns through the participatory interaction between academe and agencies. The most recent and successful training efforts include the renowned Forensic Pathology Conference, Suicide Prevention in Jails and Lockups, Interviewing for Integrity, Investigative Techniques, Women in Criminal Justice, and Retail Mall Security Seminar.

The practicum program also expands the school's interaction with the criminal justice system. By placing students in an agency setting while simultaneously providing academic supervision, a qualitatively valuable and mutually productive symbiosis occurs: agencies benefit from the knowledge of the student interns and their faculty supervisors, and the students and faculty supervisors learn from their effort to translate theory into practice. Perhaps the most concrete and tangible results are those produced by graduate-level interns. Since each graduate student is required to produce a piece of research, field placements focus on the analysis of agency-based policy issues. Through such placements, graduate students and their faculty advisors provide continuous consultation to agencies. They also produce "policy change papers", which agencies can use to implement or revise programs. The graduate-level internship model seems to work particularly well in the school's off-campus satellite programs.

The Criminal Justice Alumni Association has become instrumental in maintaining and developing new linkages. Almost 6,000 people have graduated from the School of Criminal Justice since 1935, and alumni are in careers covering all phases of the criminal justice system, many of them having risen to the pinnacles of their profession. The Association serves as a matrix through which the alumni can communicate their professional needs to the school in an organized and effective manner. The Association has been especially effective in serving as a network and in developing training, practicum and research opportunities.

### **Research and Other Accomplishments**

The School of Criminal Justice's first externally funded research project was awarded in 1949; it brought together a team of faculty from the School and the University's Department of Psychology to study the physiological and behavioral impact of alcohol on human beings. In

1955, the School's faculty, with the support of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, offered the first annual Institute on Police Community Relations. The Institute became the springboard for many pieces of research, effectively creating a sub-specialty within law enforcement. Today, the School houses the National Neighborhood Foot Patrol Center, funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation, and the National Polygraph Center, funded by the American Polygraph Association. Both centers produce and disseminate ongoing research. Some other recent applied research projects have included the National Criminal Justice Manpower Planning Project, funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, and the Juvenile Detention Project, sponsored by Michigan's Office of Criminal Justice.

The School of Criminal Justice has been evaluated by several sources. Both the university and the State of Michigan have evaluated the School's mission and its productivity, and the School has been given generous support by the university. Resources from the state have also been consistent. In 1973, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration designated the School a national center of excellence. Only seven schools in the United States have received such an honor. In 1979, the *Journal of Criminal Justice* published a series of articles dealing with quality criminal justice education in the United States, concluding: "Michigan State University has the highest known reputation" among the almost 1,200 criminal justice programs in the country. Furthermore, in a study conducted by the Joint Commission of Criminology and Criminal Justice Education and Standards, the School of Criminal Justice was consistently ranked as one of the top two programs in the country.

The School's reputation and stature have assumed international dimensions. A number of alumni have come from European, Asian, African and Middle Eastern countries. Recognizing its international constituency, the School now offers a compatible criminal justice program in Cambridge and London, England. It is cooperating with the Department of Anthropology on an overseas program in forensic anthropology. Faculty members of the School have been the recipients of many awards, including Fulbright fellowships. The School is presently hosting a Fulbright Scholar and an AMIDEAST Peace Fellow, both of whom will be earning degrees from the School.

## **Conclusion**

The School of Criminal Justice has a long-standing commitment to improving the quality of justice through education, research and public service. The School has consistently demonstrated a high level of quality, as evidenced by its graduates, research, and public service activities. The School will continue its proud heritage in the next 50 years and build upon the strengths of the past. It will continue to update its teaching, research and service aspects to meet community needs, advance knowledge, and work cooperatively with other criminal justice educational institutions and criminal justice agencies to solve crime and people problems.

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