

The School of Criminal Justice and the Strategic Plan 2015

September 2015

Having recently celebrated our 40th Anniversary as a School, the School of Criminal Justice is taking active steps to improve the quality of our work that are very much in line with the Rutgers University – Newark Strategic Plan [“Where Excellence Meets Opportunity.”](#) Some representative, but by no means exhaustive, examples of these on-going efforts are listed below:

1. Collaborative Academic and Research Programs



From our origins, the SCJ (and indeed the entire field of criminology) has been committed to an interdisciplinary and applied mission. Our faculty and students come from a diverse range of academic and professional backgrounds with degrees and expertise in clinical psychology, anthropology, political science, sociology and geography, just to name a few. That said, in the past four decades, the field of criminology/criminal justice has grown so rapidly that it is becoming an established and institutionalized field of academic study. As a result, a sizable proportion of our applicants for jobs and graduate places at the SCJ are

now coming from other criminology/CJ programs, and we are competing against a huge number of such schools to attract the best of these candidates. In order to re-capture some of the intellectual vibrancy that characterizes cross-disciplinary academic and research programs, the School is now investing in new, formal efforts to collaborate across academic areas, universities within the Rutgers system and beyond in both our research and our teaching provision.

Example 1a: Discussions led by Prof. Andres Rengifo are underway regarding collaboration with the School of Social Work’s MSW with its 1500 enrolled students (400 based at RU-N). Beginning initially as a certificate (similar to current certificates the SSW offers in addiction counseling or aging to its MSW students) consisting of a cluster of related electives in the MSW and a two-year dual-degree MSWMA in SW and CJ, the collaboration will hopefully grow into a

fully new joint degree program delivered by the two schools (including new jointly taught, cross-disciplinary courses) that would draw on our complementary strengths. For example, SW faculty have considerable expertise in case management (notably lacking in the SCJ), but currently offer no courses in offender rehabilitation or psychology of violence (both strengths of the SCJ).

Example 1b: Although not as fully developed as the above partnership, the School is also planning to develop collaborative MA opportunities with a variety of other schools. The School is currently developing a new executive track in our MA program in criminal justice administration in dialogue and collaboration with the School of Public Affairs and Administration (Example 3c, below). There is considerable, further potential for collaboration between SPAA, the Rutgers School of Public Health (SPH) and the SCJ. The SPH and SPAA already collaborate in the delivery of a Master in Public Health degree, and we would like to develop a degree path in Criminal Justice and Public Health that could be delivered in collaboration between the two schools. A dual degree in Law and CJ already exists on the books, but has been effectively dormant for years. The two schools have recently developed an MOU (currently under review by the SCJ's MA Committee) to reinvigorate this dual degree. We also have initiated a jointly taught course between the two schools on "Justice, Law and Policy." Another cross-disciplinary strand under discussion in the School would build bridges with the Global Affairs MA program in an effort to attract more applications from international students and domestic students interested in transnational crime, transitional justice and global security issues. Finally, capitalizing on the School's close relationship with Dr. Paul Boxer (psychology) and existing SCJ expertise in offender rehabilitation, a further cross-disciplinary strand of the MA in CJ could focus on the psychology of crime and/or juvenile justice involving cross-listing existing courses in adolescent development and psychopathology in the psychology department at RU-N.

Example 1c: Faculty and Ph.D. students in the School are involved in numerous studies involving collaboration across disciplines. One current example is the collaboration between SCJ Professor Andres Rengifo and Professor Kitaw Demissie (RBHS, Dept. of Epidemiology) involving small-scale pilot studies in Latin America that seek to unpack substantively and methodologically intersections between, law, social justice and public health. Additionally, a proposal by Professors Joel Caplan and Les Kennedy of the Rutgers Center on Public Security (with partners across several disciplines) was recently selected for an Initiative for Multidisciplinary Research Teams (IMRT) Award for the "Forecasting Crime Emergence and Persistence" project.

2. Invest in Our Students



The SCJ is internationally known as a research power house and we are making every effort to maintain and improve upon that reputation. However, we want to develop an equal reputation for undergraduate teaching excellence, and we see this as no contradiction but rather a natural combination. Our research excellence should shape and enhance the way we deliver our undergraduate program, and working with our undergraduate students should also shape and enhance the

research that we do. The School plans to greatly increase our efforts in this regard and can build on some of the new developments of the past semester. For instance, the 2015 undergraduate awards ceremony held in the atrium of the Center for Law and Justice (see Section 5, below) in the days before graduation was a tremendous success this year attracting a large and diverse group of our graduating seniors' parents, children, friends and supporters (see photo).

Example 2a: For the first time, the School organized a series of “Agency Talks” with leading professionals to expose undergrad (and also smaller numbers MA students) to job opportunities in organizations such as the FBI, federal probation, NJ Parole, etc. The attendance at these workshops was high and the students greatly appreciated the opportunities to interact. Building on these experiences and lessons learned, next year, we plan on inviting a more diverse group of speakers representing not just criminal justice agencies, but also reform and advocacy organizations.

Example 2b: The School has had remarkable success with sending undergraduate students to the Law Enforcement Career Development Course developed by Sheriff William Schievella and the New Jersey Police Community Affairs Officers Association (NJPCAOA). For the first time, this non-credit course will now be hosted by the School of Criminal Justice on the Rutgers University-Newark campus. The 5-week comprehensive series is designed to prepare college students for careers in law enforcement by giving participants a closer look at law enforcement by exposing them to practical scenarios and hands-on instruction, and networking with top professionals in the field.

Example 2c: SCJ Professor Mercer Sullivan has taken the lead in developing in a cross-school undergraduate minor organized around the theme of social justice, the first cross-school initiative of this sort (see also Section 1, above). Likewise, the SCJ are playing a leadership and organizing role in the development of the development of the Social Justice Learning Community in partnership with nearly every school in the University. The Social Justice Learning Community

will include an inaugural cohort of approximately 60 first-year students in the Fall 2015 semester in a cohort-based community-engaged, cross-disciplinary learning program involving team-teaching across academic units and in partnership with the community (see Section 1, above). Of course, the theme of social justice was specifically chosen for both of these ventures as it is very much in line with both the Strategic Plan and long-standing values within the SCJ (see Section 6, below).

Example 2d: The SCJ undergraduate internship experience, now coordinated by Professor Elizabeth Griffiths, has recently been revamped and improved, and the School is expanding efforts to involve undergraduate students in faculty research experiences as well (see especially Example 6a, below)

Example 2e: The SCJ is revisiting our undergraduate curriculum and is working hard to include our criminology courses among the University's core curriculum options. One new course developed in the spring and being offered in Autumn 2015 is called "Cutting Edge Criminology" (Prof. Jody Miller) and will showcase the current research of our faculty.

3. Invest in our Faculty and Graduate and Professional Students



The SCJ is deeply committed to investing in our faculty and our graduate/professional students. We have two, new assistant professors (Valerio Bacak from the University of Pennsylvania and Sarah Lageson from the University of Minnesota) beginning in Fall 2015, and were able to retain all of our current faculty despite heavy recruitment from competitor schools. One faculty member was strongly supported in his application for promotion to full professor in 2014-15, and several more will be supported in their applications for promotion this year.

Example 3a: The SCJ offers an extremely competitive, four-year support package for incoming Ph.D. students. In addition to this financial support, of course, we invest heavily in terms of our time and effort into helping these students develop into leading academics and researchers in the field. For example, at the most recent American Society of Criminology meeting, the SCJ paid for the travel and expenses of over 30 graduate students (including both MA and Ph.D. students), but we also provided the students with the opportunity to make their presentations to the faculty and their peers at the SCJ. The School has been very successful in the past year in nominating our tremendous graduate students for recognitions and honors. Among the many SCJ students recognized for their achievements in 2014-15 include (but are not limited to): Ntasha Bhardwaj,

who won the inaugural Feminist Criminology Graduate Research Award, given by the American Society of Criminology's Division on Women and Crime; Janet Garcia, recipient of the 2014 ASC Minority Fellowship; and Maddy Novich who won the inaugural Larry J. Siegel Graduate Fellowship awarded through ACS's Division on Women and Crime.

Example 3b: Over the last few years, the SCJ has revisited and revamped our MA degree curriculum and internship program with outstanding results under the leadership of Prof. Andres Rengifo, MA Coordinator. We have also strategically invested in MA scholarships, prizes, and (especially) research funding in a way that emphasizes how much the MA students are valued in the School.

Example 3c: The School has begun a process of needs assessment and market research (coordinated by Lori Scott-Pickens) among New Jersey-based criminal justice agencies regarding their interest in executive-level master's provision from the School. So far this has included 30+ interviews with agency leadership and personnel at the Newark Police Department, Essex County Probation, NJ State Parole, and other agencies. We found uniformly strong support for an EMA that would increase skills in leadership and management, utilize selection criteria based on experience not GRE scores, feature a strong cohort-model of similarly experienced peers, and scheduled outside of traditional office hours. In response to these needs, the SCJ is developing a cross-disciplinary Executive track MA in Criminal Justice Administration (coordinated by Prof. Joel Miller) based around the existing MA core curriculum (5 core classes) and create and offer new electives (5 courses) that are in line with market demand for provision in performance management and leadership development. Additionally, existing courses will be delivered in non-traditional ways (e.g. co-teaching between pairings of CJ professionals and CJ academics) for maximum synergy between theory and practice. We are also exploring the potential for hybrid (in-class and online) learning opportunities within this strand as it develops into a stand-alone Executive MA in Criminal Justice Administration. We will also offer in-person classes on a less traditional schedule (Friday night and weekends) and at off-campus locations that may be more accessible to community groups. Finally, core to the success of the Exec track will be the development of an Advisory Board consisting of the thought leaders from Newark- and NJ-based criminal justice agencies, which will help cement the anchor function of the EMA (see Section 6, below).

4. Value our Professional and Support Staff



The School is strategically investing in both new and continuing administrative positions in line with the University's Plan. The School is delighted to welcome a new Associate Dean, Ms. Kenya Tyson, to the School. In addition, we plan on creating a new research grants administrator post to assist faculty and students with pre-award and post-award administration on externally funded research grants.

Example 4a: In the past year, the School created a new staff position focusing on Student Support Services, Transfer Students and Academic Advisement, filled very impressively by Alexandra Charles. Ms. Charles primary assignment involves developing the transfer process from community colleges to the SCJ, including improving recruitment, transferal of credits, formal and informal agreements with area colleges, and transfer student experience.

Example 4b: The School also was very successful with the recent hire of Jane Balbek, JD, the new Assistant to the Dean. The post carries considerable responsibility as the “voice” of the School, so we sought to find a candidate with strong communication skills and were extremely lucky to find Ms. Balbek in that regard. Already, Ms. Balbek has been instrumental in designing four, new School brochures (on the Ph.D. fellowships, the visiting professor program, faculty achievements, and the Gottfredson Library), and completely reinvigorating the School’s social media and web presence (see examples 8a and 8b, below).

Example 4c: The School has also invested heavily in continuing staff members and positions. One example is the role of Director of Community Outreach, filled very ably by Lori Scott-Pickens. The value of Director Scott-Pickens’ work is well known throughout Rutgers University-Newark, and more importantly, throughout the city of Newark and its criminal justice agencies in particular. However, her work was not always well integrated with the faculty at the SCJ, some of whom could not previously explain what she did for us. As such, a great deal of time was spent in re-defining her role in the School. Among her other new roles, Ms. Scott-Pickens will be taking primary responsibility (with Professor Joel Miller) for the development of the School’s Executive MA course, working with Newark-based criminal justice agencies and reform organizations in creating the right program for the needs of the city and beyond (see Example 3c, above).

5. Invest in Places and Spaces



The School moved in to our current premises, the landmark Center for Law and Justice building at 123 Washington Street, over a decade ago. Efforts are being made to utilize this hugely impressive space in more creative ways that can make students at every level (from first-year undergraduates to Ph.D. students) as well as community partners feel welcome in the space.

Example 5a: On May 28, 2015, the School hosted the first conference by Mayor Baraka’s Office of Reentry team, “Disconnecting with Crime, Reconnecting with Community,” which also helped the SCJ reconnect with community as well. The turnout was tremendous with around 200 participants, including ex-prisoners, halfway house treatment staff, parole officials, police officers, city workers, students, and many others. At the Dean’s welcome, he asked how many of the attendees, almost all of whom hailed from or worked in Newark, had been in the Center for Law and Justice before. Only a smattering of hands were raised. The Dean promised to have them all back and outlined a variety of upcoming public lectures and opportunities in the School, including the Annual Ron Rice Lecture, the Dean’s Distinguished Lecture Series and the like. SCJ and Mayor’s Office volunteers took names and email addresses of attendees and promised to put them on our mailing list for invites to these future events.

Example 5b: The School is limited in the amount of office space available on the 5th Floor of the CLJ, but has a tremendous resource in the (somewhat hidden) Gottfredson Library on the 3rd Floor of the Law Library (Phyllis Schultze, Librarian). This tremendous collection (internationally renowned in criminology) has been under-utilized in recent years. However, the SCJ is making an effort to promote a sense of “ownership” of this warm and welcoming space for visiting scholars, affiliated researchers, students and community members. A chief example of the success of these efforts has been the 2014-15 cohort of Criminal Justice MA students who have adopted the Gottfredson Library as their home for studying and collaborating to the delight of the Library’s longtime chief librarian.

Example 5c: As part of the Paul Robeson Galleries, the SCJ’s wall space has been converted into a one-of-a-kind art gallery, displaying a different artist’s work every semester. Most recently, the Gallery is exhibiting a powerful and engaging collection of works by two Newark artists Gerry Gant and Bryant Lebron titled “[I Might Be Next](#).” The moving works are a response to the Black Lives Matter movement and the tragic events of 2014-2015 in cities such as Ferguson, Missouri and Baltimore, Maryland. Previously, the SCJ Gallery featured the work of Clark Stoeckley recounting the extraordinary drama of *The United States vs. Private Chelsea Manning*, one of the most important trials in American history. Previously, we featured “Cooking for Change,” a collaborative exhibition with photographer Steven J. Riskind and writer Doris Friedensohn,

documenting the work of the Community Food Bank of New Jersey and the Food Service Training Academy in training and employing Newark-based ex-prisoners in the work of the restaurant business. The SCJ commissioned the Community Food Bank, itself, to cater the launch of the exhibition, and the food was so tremendous that we commissioned them again to cater the subsequent launch of the Stoeckley exhibition as well as our undergraduate awards ceremony at the end of the year.

6. Invest in Anchor Institution Collaboration



Of all of the important aims of the Strategic Plan, the one that corresponds most powerfully with the mission of the SCJ is the vision of the University as an anchor institution for the greater Newark community. The School is passionate about playing a leading role in Newark's renewal, and is investing in

a creative agenda of research, teaching and service that serves this goal.

Example 6a: The School has developed a robust array of internship placements for students at both the undergraduate and graduate level, designed to inspire a service orientation to the practice of criminology from the earliest stages (see examples 2e and 3g, above). Students in these roles are both able to learn about the applied practice of criminal justice first-hand, but also can make genuine contributions to the community for academic credit. However, there is a limit to the contributions students (or any of us) can make acting on their own. As such, the SCJ is also developing a new project known as Criminal Justice and Community Building (coordinated by Prof. Elizabeth Griffiths and Lori Scott-Pickens) that would draw on the talents of our students, graduate students and faculty acting *collectively* with community partners in Newark to address issues of safety and justice. The plan works like this: In the fall of each year, in collaboration with a graduate fellow, the SCJ will consult with and solicit project proposals from local agencies. Three of these project proposals will be chosen for completion during a spring semester course on CJ and Community Building (CJCB), which will be limited to 16 promising senior undergraduate criminal justice majors. This course will combine classroom mastery of research skills and the key theoretical foundations for community building with the practice of community engagement in the field as students collaborate in hands-on group projects for criminal justice and reform agencies, under the close supervision of SCJ faculty and a Ph.D. student. The course will culminate in a CJCB Conference where the student groups will present their work for agency personnel, school personnel, and course participants, providing a platform to communicate project results and deliverables to local stakeholders and further solidify university-community relationships.

Example 6b: Much of the School's research is conducted in (and with) the city of Newark and the surrounding areas. In one of many examples, Professor Johnna Christian is leading a public engagement project around prisoner reentry that will involve rigorous research and a strategy of knowledge translation to help to change the dialogue around prisoner reentry in cooperation with the Newark Office of Reentry. Professors Anthony Braga, Les Kennedy and Joel Caplan and their students have all worked with the Newark Police Department leadership in various research projects aimed at strengthening public safety in the city. Another outstanding example of place-based SCJ research in Newark is the Newark LandCare Greening Vacant Lots project (see photo, above) led by Dr. Bernadette Hohl, Professor Bonita Veysey and Professor Joel Caplan of the SCJ along with partners in the Rutgers Newark School of Public Health (see Examples 1b and 1c, above). Blighted vacant lots are associated with a variety of criminal justice and health issues. In order to address these and increase the economic viability, public safety and overall community well-being in these areas, this action research project seeks to implement a land stabilization program based on successfully tested models in other cities such as Philadelphia.

Example 6c: The SCJ's Office of Community Outreach/Community-based Learning (COCBL), led by Director of Outreach, Lori Scott-Pickens (see Example 4c), who is also involved directly in Example 6a, above, provides various opportunities for SCJ students, faculty and staff to be engaged with the community by working with partners across the criminal justice continuum. Most recently, the SCJ Office has taken the lead in coordinating a Rutgers-Newark multi-disciplinary team in the Mid-Atlantic Engagement Academy (May 28-30, 2015) designing the University's strategy for working with the children and families of incarcerated family members living in the Fairmount area of Newark in partnership with the Provost, School of Law, School of Social Work, School of Nursing and the School of Public Health (see also Example 1c), as well as SCJ faculty like Prof. Sara Wakefield.

7. Leverage our Diversity



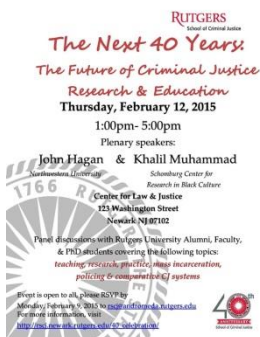
The SCJ is very proud of our diversity as a School and a University, and we have sought to build on this foundation in furthering our own mission and indeed influencing the wider field of academic and professional criminal justice.

Example 7a. With considerable help from the University, the School has made a substantial investment in the nationwide Racial Democracy, Crime and Justice Network (RDCJN), coordinated by Prof. Jody Miller and Prof. Rod Brunson. Recently re-funded by the National Science Foundation, the purpose of the RDCJN is twofold: (1) advancing research on issues of citizenship and democratic participation at the intersection of race, crime, and justice; and (2) promoting racial/ethnic democratization of academe by supporting junior scholars of color (racial/ethnic minorities) in advancing their academic careers. To achieve these goals, the

RDCJN hosts an annual Summer Research Institute in which young scholars are provided with resources for completing research projects and are given tools that facilitate growth in academia. The annual summer workshop will bring some of the most talented young, minority scholars from all over the country as well as a tremendous diverse group of senior mentors to the Rutgers University-Newark campus for the first time in 2016. The SCJ could not be more honored and excited to be hosting this group and showcasing our wonderful campus and city.

Example 7b: The SCJ has also made considerable contributions to enhancing the experience of LGBT students and LGBT awareness/acceptance across the wider Newark community and indeed in the academic field of criminal justice studies. For instance, the SCJ (coordinated by Prof. Jody Miller and Dr. Vanessa Panfil) has a long-standing research collaboration with Rutgers University Newark’s LGBTQ and Diversity Resource Center, the Hetrick-Martin Institute of New Jersey, and Newark Public Schools regarding student experiences of homophobic violence and bullying in Newark schools. Moreover, SCJ student Danielle Shields was named the 2015 recipient of The Welcoming Project's Graduate Scholarship. This award recognizes a graduate student who has provided outstanding contributions to LGBTQ activism. Danielle's research investigates Newark LGBTQ community members' experiences with the Newark Police Department. She is also a member of the City of Newark's LGBTQ Advisory Commission, which advises the mayor and city council on LGBTQ-related issues. Finally, the SCJ offered one of the country’s first-ever courses in “Queer Criminology” (Dr. Panfil) and SCJ scholars Miller and Panfil introduced this concept to the wider field of criminology through the American Society of Criminology newsletter in 2015.

8. Tell the Rutgers University-Newark Story



Like so many schools and departments at Rutgers University-Newark, the SCJ has a tremendous story to tell. Born as an enlightened response to the urban unrest and rising crime rates of the 1970s, the School was among the first Ph.D. granting schools of criminal justice in the nation. Forty years later, we are now one of dozens of such programs across the country, but we are working to maintained our distinctive reputation for excellence and opportunity.

Example 8a: We have recently had the opportunity to tell this story in print for the first time with our 40th Anniversary school history. This important book has been distributed widely within the field of criminology, to our alumni, and among our partner programs in the Rutgers system and beyond, and is available online for downloading (<http://rscj.newark.rutgers.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/40th-Anniversary-Book.pdf>).

Example 8b: We are also investing heavily in improving our website and our social media presence as a School (see Example 4b above). For the first time, the School now has a presence on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Revitalized only in the past few months with the help of Jane Balbek and both faculty, students and visiting scholars, the Facebook page has grown from a virtual community of a dozen or so faculty members and Ph.D. students, to a vibrant discussion-forum for over 200 students and alumni, see <https://www.facebook.com/RutgersSCJ>. Our goal is to see the number of “friends” on this page grow to over 500 in the next year. The Dean’s Twitter feed (@Criminology) has nearly 6,000 followers including alumni, students, criminal justice practitioners and international colleagues.

Example 8c: Until recently, the SCJ had an unfortunate absence of quality, up-to-date brochures and fliers to distribute at events explaining who we are and what we offer as a School. This lack is now being addressed with new brochures on the MA program, the PhD program, and other aspects of the School finished, and new ones on our undergraduate degree in the works (see Example 4b above).

Example 8d: Finally, the School is making more of an effort to formally recognize and celebrate the achievements and contributions of our internationally renowned faculty. Faculty members have won a variety of national and international recognitions in the past year. Without a doubt, the most notable of these was Professor Ron Clarke’s 2015 Stockholm Prize award. The School was honored to sponsor a lunch for all of the attendees at that international meeting and used the opportunity to “tell the School’s story” in both a welcome address and in the distribution of a variety of materials detailing opportunities at the School (see Example 8c, above). Just as importantly, the SCJ successfully nominated two faculty members for Rutgers system-wide recognitions – Professor Jody Miller for Scholar-Teacher Award and Professors Rod Brunson and Jody Miller for Diversity Champion recognitions. It was noted that Rutgers University-Newark “swept the board” for the Diversity Champion Awards, and we were proud to have played a key role in that.

Last word

Although this is a report about how the School of Criminal Justice is contributing to the University’s Strategic Plan, it has to be noted that almost all of the examples below involve partners outside of the School. Indeed, none of the examples above could be done without the considerable and generous support of the Chancellor’s Office. Rutgers University administration has contributed funding to initiatives ranging from our anchor institute initiatives to the “telling of our story.” We could not do any of it alone, and we greatly appreciate the University’s enormous support for our efforts.