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WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY'S DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE:

- is one of the oldest Criminal Justice programs on the East Coast,
- has devoted over 30 years developing an outstanding program for students seeking careers in the multi-disciplinary field of criminal justice,
- employs faculty who have earned advanced degrees from respected academic institutions,
- employs only faculty who also have extensive experience in the field,
- employs experienced working professionals to bring specific areas of expertise to our program.

A hallmark of the program is the **Premiere Practicum Program**. It is unique among undergraduate criminal justice programs. The Premiere Practicum Program:

- is the capstone experience for our majors;
- offers students extraordinary opportunities to gain direct experience in the field;
- is NOT an "internship", but is a full-time , twelve week employment experience over the summer;
- includes a strong academic component that includes the writing of professional reports, and authorship of a scholarly research paper that demonstrates research and critical thinking skills which are essential to a successful criminal justice career.

PREMIERE PRACTICUM PROGRAM

West Chester University's Department of Criminal Justice offers its students an opportunity that is unique among undergraduate programs. Our students are required to work full-time over one summer for an approved criminal justice agency. Criminal justice is an applied discipline, so the advantages of such a Practicum Program are numerous. Students

- GAIN VALUABLE FULL-TIME WORK EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE PRIOR TO GRADUATION
- WORK AT FEDERAL, STATE OR LOCAL PUBLIC/ GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES, OR PRIVATE AGENCIES
- APPLY KNOWLEDGE GAINED IN THE CLASSROOM IN A REAL WORLD SETTING
- LEARN PRACTICAL SKILLS TO PREPARE FOR A CAREER IN THE PROFESSION
- DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS WITH PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN THE FIELD
- RECEIVE JOB OFFERS AND/OR EARN RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AGENCY SUPERVISORS AND COLLEAGUES
- LEARN ABOUT JOB OPENINGS AT AGENCIES BEFORE THEY ARE ANNOUNCED TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC
- EARN TWELVE ACADEMIC CREDITS TOWARD GRADUATION

PROFESSIONAL AGENCIES

We have established working relationships with over 400 criminal justice agencies over our thirty years of evolution. A small sampling of these agencies includes:

Federal:

- FBI Academy at Quantico
- U.S. Marshalls Office
- U.S. Department of State (Office of Diplomatic Security)
- ICE (Immigration, Customs and Enforcement)

State:

- Pa. State Attorney General's Office
- Pa. Department of Environmental Protection
- Pa. Sentencing Commission
- Pa. Department of Probation and Parole

Local/regional:

- County District Attorneys' Offices
- County Public Defenders' Offices
- County Detectives (Chester, Montgomery and Delaware counties)
- Local police departments throughout Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey
- Departments of Adult Probation in the tri-state area
- Department of Juvenile Probation in the tri-state area
- Regional Juvenile treatment and residential facilities - including one in Florida

Private:

- Private security firms in Pennsylvania and the tri-state area
- Private investigation firms in Pennsylvania and the tri-state area
- Retail security companies in the tri-state area
- Private law firms specializing in criminal defense
- Private insurance companies specializing in fraud investigation

PREPARING FOR THE PRACTICUM

- Students should begin preparation for this extraordinary experience as soon as they enter the program.
- **KEEP YOUR RECORD CLEAN.** Make sure you have no arrests or criminal records (although minor offenses won't preclude you from the program.) Do not drink underage; do not be in social situations where others are drinking underage; do not indulge in illegal drug use or socialize with those who do. Be very careful about your postings on such internet venues as MySpace, YouTube, Facebook, etc. Employers scour those sites when doing background checks.
- Talk to your academic advisor about your career goals. You'll want to secure a position with an agency that most closely matches your career aspirations.
- Watch the Practicum Bulletin Board for important announcements. Check the Criminal Justice Employment Bulletin Board regularly for job opportunities.
- Browse through the Department's Practicum Agency Database for ideas and information about the various agencies.
- Start looking for a placement early! Be aware that most federal agencies require applications to be completed and submitted a year in advance. Male applicants to federal agencies must have registered with the Selective Service. State, regional and local agencies often require applications to be submitted by February 15 for the coming summer.
- As you approach your junior year, touch base with the Practicum Coordinator.
- Attend all of the Practicum Preparation classes. (They will be posted on the Practicum Bulletin Board.) These classes help you learn about the Practicum requirements and policies, how to create a marketable cover letter and resume, and how to prepare for and conduct yourself during a professional interview. These are critical skills for securing the position you want.
- Tell the absolute, unvarnished truth on all of your job applications and in all of your interviews. Background checks will be thorough, and agencies are most interested in hiring truthful applicants, even if you have engaged in some youthful indiscretions.
- If you have questions about how to handle an awkward or embarrassing situation, or if you have an ethical dilemma to resolve, meet with the Practicum Coordinator for advice.

PRAISE FOR OUR PRACTICUM PROGRAM:

From agency supervisors:

Of all the prior students we have employed as interns, you are the first supervisor to take such intense personal interest in the student, and the first to insist on personal site visits to speak with us. This speaks volumes to me about the excellence of your program and University.

I believe the West Chester University has a fine Criminal Justice program. The Practicum Program is well structured and monitored and helps prepare the student for a future in law enforcement.

West Chester instructors did a great job preparing the student with general knowledge in criminal justice.

Please encourage your students to do their practicum here! Your students are a great asset to our department.

We love having your students working with us over the summer. They are a great asset, and provide us with a fresh and youthful perspective.

Your students are very well-prepared for this work. They had an excellent sense of the issues related to our agency, and a mature and respectful attitude. I was impressed by how engaged and motivated these students were.

We are accepting applications at our agency, and after such a positive experience with your practicum students, please encourage them to apply!

West Chester has a fine Criminal Justice program. The Practicum is well-structured and monitored. We are very impressed with the quality and professionalism of the program, its professors, and students.

The Practicum Program at the Department of Criminal Justice is a win-win as far as we're concerned. The student has the opportunity to gain real-world experience, and the agency has the advantage of assistance by well-educated and enthusiastic students. This is a great program all around.

West Chester's CRJ Department always sends us the best, most prepared, most professional and mature students. It is one fine program.

From students:

I chose West Chester's Department of Criminal Justice specifically because of its Practicum Program, and I'm so glad I did. I would recommend this experience to every student.

This has been the best summer of my life. I can't believe how much I've learned and how fast the summer went. I'm more excited about my career choice than ever.

I just found out that I received an appointment as a special agent with ICE. I would like to personally thank you as well as all of the faculty in the Department for the wonderful experience I received. If not for the Practicum and the classes that prepared me for the real world, becoming a federal agent right out of college would have been unthinkable. Thank you for helping me fulfill my dream.

This was an amazing experience! I learned so much, and I am actually sad that the practicum was only twelve weeks long. It gave me a great perspective of the whole criminal justice system.

This has been the best class/experience of my whole college career. It is why I chose WCU over other schools.

My practicum experience has helped me determine what I want to do with a criminal justice degree. I am now certain I want to be a police officer with aspiring goals of becoming a detective once I have enough street patrol experience.

I can honestly say that the West Chester University Department of Criminal Justice has done a great job in preparing me to work in this field. I had an unbelievable summer!

I feel I gained much more maturity and feel like a better person having had this opportunity to work with the less fortunate.

I learned so much from this experience. And I made a lot of friends and contacts who will be able to help me with my future career path.

The Practicum is a wonderful program. I was able to apply my education at West Chester University to real situations at the agency. It doesn't get better than that.

This was an extraordinary experience, and a wonderful grand finale to my undergraduate education. It offers a real insider's view of the system.

**WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE PRACTICUM
COURSE SYLLABUS**

- I. COURSE NUMBER: CRJ 490
- II. COURSE TITLE: CRIMINAL JUSTICE PRACTICUM
- III. CREDITS: 3 - 12 UNDERGRADUATE CREDITS

IV. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

The Criminal Justice Practicum Program provides qualified criminal justice majors with the opportunity to gain practical experience with an approved practitioner agency in a professional/academic relationship. Through this relationship the criminal justice student is able to learn the practical application of the history, theory, philosophy, law and methods s/he has gained in the classroom. This will also provide the student with a working knowledge of the criminal justice agency, its functions, and its position as a component of a larger and interrelated system. It will expose the student to the difficulties of practical application, and provide the student with an opportunity to contribute to the creative resolution of those problems. In the process, valuable professional experience in the student's chosen field is acquired.

- V. TEXTBOOKS: (May be optional - talk to your Faculty Supervisor)

Slade, Carole, Campbell, William G. and Ballow, Steven V.:
Form and Style, Research Papers, Reports, Theses,
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., latest edition.

VI. ELIGIBILITY AND RESTRICTIONS:

- A. Only criminal justice majors and minors are eligible to take this course.
- B. Students must be at least 18 years old, have earned a minimum of seventy-two credits and a gpa of at least 2.0 at West Chester University before beginning the Practicum.

C. Students must have earned a C or better in WRT200 (or above), CRJ110, CRJ210, CRJ300 and CRJ387 prior to taking this course.

D. Students must receive prior approval of the Practicum Coordinator to take this course.

VII. PROCEDURE:

A. The Criminal Justice Practicum is offered during the summer. Students must formally apply for the Practicum in the preceding spring or fall semesters.

The application process includes a careful reading and understanding of the Practicum Policy and completion of the Practicum Application.

Application will be reviewed, and accepted or rejected by the Practicum Coordinator.

B. Students are responsible for obtaining employment with an approved criminal justice agency. There are Practicum Placement Guidebooks located in the department office to aid the student in this endeavor. Agencies in the Guidebooks have been pre-approved unless noted otherwise. Students may work in an agency not appearing in the Guidebooks, but must receive approval of the Practicum Coordinator to do so.

C. After receiving approval from the Practicum Coordinator, students must formally register for this twelve-week course according to summer registration procedures promulgated by the University and the Practicum Coordinator.

VIII. REQUIREMENTS:

A. Practicum students must attend the introductory meetings held in the preceding Fall and Spring semesters. At these meetings, students will be provided with orientations and a Practicum Packet. That Packet will contain, inter alia, detailed course requirements, specific guidelines for required reports and papers, the supervisor's evaluation form(s), and performance rules and restrictions. These are mandatory meetings. Failure to attend may render the student ineligible to take the Practicum as scheduled.

B. Criminal Justice majors are required to work full time (at least 37-1/2 hours per week) for a minimum of twelve weeks. The student is expected to meet all of the professional expectations of the employer.

C. Students are required to attend all classes and meetings scheduled during the summer by the assigned Faculty Advisor.

D. Students must complete bi-weekly comprehensive reports. These reports must be completed according to the format delineated in the Practicum Policy. See that Policy for detailed guidelines.

E. Students must also complete a research paper related to the Practicum experience. This paper must follow the guidelines provided in the Practicum Policy.

IX. EVALUATION PROCEDURE:

The student's final grade is determined in the following manner:

A. **COMPREHENSIVE REPORTS** - Comprehensive reports will be grade by the Faculty Advisor in accordance with the standards and specifications set forth in the Practicum Policy. The average of these reports will comprise no less than 25% of the final grade.

B. **RESEARCH PAPER** - The research paper will be graded by the Faculty Advisor in accordance with the standards and specifications set forth in the Practicum Policy. The research paper will comprise no less than 25% of the final grade.

C. **PERFORMANCE EVALUATION** - The Agency Supervisor will complete a report evaluating the student's work performance. In addition the Faculty Advisor will make at least one on-site visit to observe the student in the work environment, and to meet with the student and the Agency Supervisor. From the Agency Supervisor's written and verbal evaluation, and from the Faculty Advisor's independent assessment, a performance grade will be calculated. This calculation will comprise no less than 50% of the final grade.

(N.B. Termination for cause from the Practicum Agency will result in a failing grade. Students who are terminated for cause may not retake the Practicum. This effectively terminates the student's status as a Criminal Justice major. In addition, students may be subject to University Disciplinary Action.)

D. OTHER FACTORS - Generally, the above three criteria will comprise the student's final grade. However, other factors (class attendance, professionalism, etc.) may impact the grading of these categories. Please refer to the Practicum Policy for details.

X. DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Department of Criminal Justice requires all students to possess the highest, most impeccable standards of honesty and integrity. Criminal justice professionals, in particular, must be exemplary role models in society. Students are expected to behave at all times in a manner which reflects the highest standards of ethical behavior, and which enhances the Department and the discipline.

XI. ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY - ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The Department of Criminal Justice has a zero tolerance policy regarding all forms of academic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating and plagiarism. Students engaging in behavior constituting academic dishonesty will be given a failing grade in the course. This is non-negotiable. In addition, the Department will file disciplinary charges with the Academic Integrity Board to have the student removed from the major, and suspended or expelled from the University.

XII. COURSE JUSTIFICATION:

Criminal justice involves the study of not only history, theory, philosophy, law and methods, but the practical applications of those studies. The Criminal Justice Practicum offers the student an invaluable opportunity to apply classroom knowledge to some of the most significant and perplexing problems facing our society. The graduate of this course gains knowledge of both theory and practice, and thus becomes a more valuable contributor to this important societal system.

The course benefits the practitioner agency by providing additional staff, and exposure to youthful enthusiasm and fresh perspectives. In addition, the agency is able to use the practicum as a probationary program for potentially permanent employees. The Practicum provides the Department, in turn, with the opportunity to develop and maintain close working relationships with criminal justice practitioners and to keep abreast of developments in the disciplines which comprise criminal justice.

