Graduate Center’s Criminal Justice Ph.D. Program Assessment Report

The Criminal Justice Ph.D. program convened a three-person committee, which included Valli Rajah, Amy Adamczyk, and Kevin Wolff, to assess our mentoring and advising practices. Below we respond to the Graduate Center’s questions about our current practices and future plans.

I. Current advisement and mentoring process

a. Do you have a system of academic advisors concerned with academic progress and professional development in place? Do you have individual advisors for individual students, or one or more faculty (e.g., EO, DEO, DGS) who serve this function for all students? Which do you think is optimal?

The Criminal Justice Doctoral Program has two faculty members serving in formal mentoring and advising positions. This year Professor Amy Adamczyk was assigned the role of faculty research mentor and Professor Kevin Wolff was given the role of academic advisor for the program. Because of our special relationship with John Jay College of Criminal Justice, we are able to compensate these faculty members with one course release each per semester. This arrangement greatly aids in getting faculty involved in advising and mentoring students. It is highly unlikely that we would be able to persuade faculty members to devote substantial time to either of these activities without courses releases given the high course load at John Jay College and the fact that our program relies almost exclusively on consortial faculty. (We have one faculty member who splits her time between the Graduate Center and John Jay College.)

In addition to these two designated positions, the program assigns an individual faculty mentor to every incoming student. These faculty mentors are asked to regularly meet with their first-year mentees to not only monitor their academic progress, but also to ascertain how the first year students are acclimating to the Graduate Center and New York City.

b. Do you have a system of individual mentors for individual students, who can serve as counselors as well as guides for academic and professional development? Are these faculty members or students, or both?

As noted above, incoming students have a designated faculty mentor with whom they meet on a regular basis during their first year in the program. Additionally, we assign a student mentor to each incoming student.

c. How are faculty/students assigned as mentors/advisors?

The DEO typically makes these assignments. She assigns faculty mentors based on a couple of criteria. First, she makes sure that the faculty mentor is an active member of the program so that the students will regularly see him/her. Secondly, she tries to assign mentors based on student
and faculty research interests. If a student indicates in his/her application package that they are interested in a given area of criminology, such as corrections, then we assign a faculty member who is doing work in that area. Likewise, if a student indicates that he/she would like to work with a given faculty member, we try to align them accordingly.

The Criminal Justice Doctoral Student Association (CJDSA) assigns student mentors to incoming students by matching first-years and matriculated students based on shared research interests.

d. How often do students meet with their mentors/advisors throughout the semester? Does your program have a policy on this? Do you think the current frequency is optimal?

The majority of the individual faculty mentors are faculty members who, in exchange for their service to the Criminal Justice Ph.D. program, receive a reduced John Jay College teaching load. When they become core faculty, professors sign an agreement, which outlines various facets of their program service. This agreement states that, as part of their duties, the faculty member must meet with his or her mentee on a regularly basis, which we consider to be about twice a month. We feel that this is an optimal amount of time for the students to meet with their mentors.

In addition to the individual faculty mentors, each student in the third, fourth, and fifth year cohorts has an annual meeting with the faculty research mentor to discuss their scholarly activity, which extends beyond their classes and dissertation-related work. If students want additional guidance, they are able to schedule further meetings with the research mentor. We strongly encourage our students to come to these meetings, and each year approximately 95% of our students do attend.

Finally, each year during the spring semester all doctoral students are asked to meet with the faculty advisor to discuss their progress in the program. During this meeting, students discuss their recent research and teaching activities, as well their academic progress. Often during this meeting, timelines to graduation are discussed as well as details on the formal process of choosing a committee and defending a proposal and/or dissertation. The faculty advisor also takes the time to discuss students’ post-graduation job aspirations (i.e. an academic or applied research position) and makes some suggestions on how a student’s efforts may be focused to achieve these goals.

e. Does advising/mentoring continue when students select a supervisor for their dissertation/capstone/thesis project? Or does the supervisor take on the role of mentor/advisor?

The individual faculty mentors are only assigned to incoming students and for the most part, the regularly scheduled meetings end after the first year. We have found that this is the right amount of time for having an assigned individual faculty mentor since, after the first year, many students start to work informally with faculty members. Also, during their first year students are assigned a professor for whom they must complete about 7.5 hours of research
each week as part of their GC work requirement. Even after their first year, many students will continue to work with these professors. In some cases, these research partnerships last for the duration of a student’s training.

As noted above, both the advisor and faculty mentor meet with everyone who has been in the program for five years or less on a regular basis. After five years, many students graduate or have gotten as much advice as they are willing to take. Hence, we have found that there is less of a need for advisors and mentors in these later years, though they are available to more senior students if they want to schedule a meeting. In addition, in a number of instances, the faculty advisor maintains contact with students who have completed more than 5 years in the program to receive some indication of whether or not they are continuing to make progress.

f. What system do you have in place to ensure that advisors/mentors (and students generally) are aware of what is expected of an advisor/mentor, and of academic requirements and regulations?

As noted above, the individual faculty mentors are typically core faculty who receive a reduced John Jay College teaching load. We make all of our core faculty members sign an agreement, which outlines a set of expectations and includes a statement that they must meet with their mentees on a regularly basis, which we consider to be about twice a month. And as noted above, the faculty research mentor and advisor are part of the core faculty. They too sign core faculty agreements indicating the service they will do for their reduced teaching load, which is a strong motivation for completing their assigned tasks.

Both the faculty research advisor and the faculty mentor provide documentation of their activities. At the end of each year, the faculty research mentor provides information on all of the students with whom she met and some details about their discussions. The report from last year is included in Appendix A.

The faculty advisor completes a short progress report for each student he meets with during the course of the semester. A sample report is included in Appendix B. These reports capture the basic information discussed during scheduled annual meetings, outlines goals for the following year, and highlights any advice or guidance the advisor may have. Although time intensive, the information gathered and recorded during the advising process gives the faculty advisor a chance to identify students who may need additional guidance as well as report back on all the progress which is (or isn’t) being made by students in the program.

g. What system do you have in place to ensure that advisors/mentors (and students generally) are aware of resources and support services?

We have a well-developed website with information on where to get certain resource and support services. We also have a listserv where we disseminate information. We have a faculty handbook, which provides relevant details. Depending on the specifics, we may also send emails directly to our faculty so they may share important information with students. When there is an urgent need to disseminate information, the EO and DEO will set up a meeting with the students.
h. Do you have systematic procedures in place for student and advisor/mentor reports on student progress?

Yes, as noted above the faculty research mentor produces a yearly report with information on all student meetings. The faculty advisor also completes a short progress report for each student she meet with during the course of the semester.

In addition to information provided by the advisor and research mentor, the core faculty have a meeting each semester to discuss students’ progress. Since all of the first-year students are taking the same core courses, multiple faculty members are able to comment on the same set of first-year students. Faculty tend to take these meetings particularly seriously because, as noted above, they are receiving additional course releases in exchange for being core faculty members.

i. Do you have annual (or semester) evaluations of student progress, and how is this administered? By individual mentors/advisors, or a specific tasked committee? How is feedback communicated to students?

Each student is assessed yearly by his or her advisor, the faculty advisor, and, in the case of 3rd, 4th and 5th year students, by the faculty research mentor. Additionally, during the bi-yearly core faculty meetings, professors discuss students who appear to be experiencing some challenges. In the latter case, as a group, we decide who would be most helpful to convey information to a particular student that needs additional support.

j. Do you have separate teaching mentors? Faculty or students? How are these assigned?

During their second year, most students work at teaching assistants as part of their GC work requirement. Teaching Assistance and the faculty members they assist sign a TA agreement, which outlines expectations regarding TA responsibilities and faculty mentorship. The professor for whom they are a teaching assistant is regularly available to work with them on teaching-related challenges. Being a teaching assistant helps students transition into being a teacher in their third and fourth year. Our program also offers a series of professional development sessions on teaching. The students will sometimes also ask for advise from individual faculty members, especially those with whom they worked during their first year as a research assistant.

k. How are your policies on mentoring/advising made available to students and faculty (e.g., are they made available in your student handbook or online)? Are such policies discussed at orientation?

The program’s policies are discussed during orientation and recruitment events. During their first year in the program students and their faculty mentors are given an email indicating who their mentor/mentee is going to be for the year. Faculty are instructed to initiate contact with their assigned student. Additionally, the advisor and faculty research mentor will email and follow up
with each student throughout the year. Finally, the EO and DEO hold bi-yearly meetings with the first-year cohort as well as bi-annual full student meetings. Mentoring and advisement is often discussed during these sessions.

II. Future plans and areas for improvement

We are happy with many of our current practices. But we recognize that there are areas in which we might improve our advising and mentoring practices. What follows is a list of areas we plan to work on in the coming year.

Student feedback
At this point, we have relatively little student feedback. In this year’s survey of doctoral students, however, we did include a question regarding student’s satisfaction with the support and mentoring they have received. Specifically, we asked:

“Thinking about your time in the PhD program, do you feel you have received adequate support and mentoring from The Program and affiliated faculty? Do you have any recommendations for the program in this area?”

The vast majority of responses were positive, stating that students feel they have received the support and mentoring they need to be successful. There were a few students who felt they have not connected with any one faculty member during their time in the program, and that this has made it difficult at times to make these connections with the broader faculty. We believe these responses, although relatively rare, highlight the importance of admitting students who have a high likelihood of working well with those faculty members who are active in the program and are willing to take on additional students at the present time. This is a current focus of the admissions committee to be sure that incoming students have the support of the faculty who are actively involved in the program as well as in research.

To obtain additional student feedback, next year we plan to use a tool that is similar to The Mentor Competency Assessment provided by the GC in their instructions for writing this report.

Establishing clear learning outcomes
While we have a fairly well-developed sense of what we are trying to accomplish through our various mentoring and advising efforts, we plan to develop a set of learning goals in the hopes of further clarifying what we are trying to achieve and delineating the ways in which our approach is or is not sufficient to accomplish our goals.

Providing more informal points of contact
While students differ, we have observed that some of our first-year students could benefit from more informal contact with faculty members and other students. We have a party at the end of each semester. We also have at four invited speakers each year. Following these sessions, we provide coffee and cookies so that students may linger and talk. We hope to increase opportunities for faculty-first year student interaction by scheduling a set of lunches between first year students and the EO, DEO and faculty advisor.
Proseminar course
Mindful that students need assistance with several areas of professional development, we have designed a new course, which will be a required class for all first-year students beginning next year. This class, entitled Proseminar in Criminal Justice, provides PhD students with training in professional activities that are central to a successful career in the field of criminal justice. The class will focus on some of the following topics: planning one’s graduate career, creating a vita, developing a research agenda, exploring employment opportunities, obtaining a professional position, interviewing for jobs, and navigating inherent demands and politics present in a professional career within academia or applied research.

Offering more academic support for dissertating students
We are discussing ways that we might provide better support for dissertating students. One idea we are considering is having the research advisor check in with each student who is at least one year past completing his or her dissertation proposal. We are also thinking about other possible models to implement.
Appendix A: Summary of Research Mentor Meetings

- Professor Amy Adamczyk, Research Core Faculty for the Ph.D. Program in Criminal Justice
- Sent 8/22/2017
- Over the academic year I had 16 one-on-one meetings with Ph.D. students, who were not my mentees or working on papers with me. I met with five additional students to discuss papers we were coauthoring and met regularly with one student who was my mentee.

Research mentor notes on one-on-one meetings with Ph.D. Criminal Justice students during 2016-2017 school year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of meeting</th>
<th>Student (All names have been redacted)</th>
<th>Topic of discussion</th>
<th>Year in program</th>
<th>Meeting number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/12/2016</td>
<td>Challenges with dissertation. Will meet again in two weeks.</td>
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<td>9/13/2016</td>
<td>Discussion focused on dissertation, which she is about to defend, and future publications.</td>
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<td>9/27/16</td>
<td>I read his paper ahead of time and provided comments. He is going to submit to a journal. Spoke about touching base again in four weeks. He has several pieces in the pipeline and should go on the market with 3-4 papers under review or accepted. J.Freilich is also working with him on papers. During the Spring term he sent me one of his papers for potential publication to read. I provided comments.</td>
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<td>9/28/2016</td>
<td>Continuing discussion about dissertation challenges. Seems to be moving forward with an idea.</td>
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<td>10/5/16</td>
<td>She is working with Preeti on her project. Right now she has two reports with her name on them and she anticipates that at least two articles will come out of the project where she will be listed as a coauthor. She has a full plate where she is also teaching two classes and is still doing coursework herself. At this point it did not seem like she could fit much more in, though the project with Prreti is likely to lead to some results. We talked about meeting next term, especially if she needs some help in converting her current class papers she is preparing now into potential</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>10/26/16</td>
<td>She has a lot of ideas, but not really any true research paper in the works. We spoke about when she is likely to graduate and also her interest in going on the academic. We spoke about secondary data and how she may be able to design a study using that since we would hope for her to have something under review by the second part of her third year. Her and Daria also had some joint interests and we spoke about them possibly doing something together.</td>
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<td>At this meeting I learned that she had again changed her dissertation topic, related, in part, to a talk she had with Candice. She has now asked George A. to be the chair of her committee.</td>
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<td>11/15/16</td>
<td>Came in to talk about how to publish. He is very nervous about the publishing process. He mentioned concerned even about how to submit something. The meeting was relatively short, but we agreed that he would show me a paper that he had written for a class and an article in a journal he really liked. He is going to send it to me on 11/29 and we are going to meet again on 11/6 to discuss the paper and I will provide direction on how it might be cultivated.</td>
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<td>He ultimately sent me the paper early in the Spring semester. I read it and provided feedback.</td>
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<td>11/29/16</td>
<td>She seems to have about four articles published in Korean journals and two more in other journals. We spoke about the volunteer work she is doing with Freilich. Much of her previous work focuses on psychology and she is trying to expand her research areas. In terms of publications she seemed in a good place. We spoke about her publishing in better ranked English language journals</td>
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<td>11/29/16</td>
<td>Great conversation. He has lots of interests. Sounded like there were technical reports published and two journal articles on the way with one of those being coauthored with a fellow student. We spoke about rankings and authorship and being spread too thin. He is also interested in religion work and I sent him links for several websites that have small grants and travel support.</td>
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<td>2/2/17</td>
<td>He dropped off a paper for me to read and I made comments and gave back to him.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interests -corrections, reentry, He has one paper published. He has a couple of projects that he is thinking about, but neither one of them is off of the ground. He is taking a multivariate class now and we talked about him possibly producing a paper from it and showing me. We also spoke about a paper he previously wrote, but the data were old, from the 1980s. He is working with Hung-En, but thought that this would only lead to a pub with many authors. He does not yet have anyone that he wants as a dissertation advisor and we tossed around some ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/2/17</td>
<td>Interests -GIS, spatial, environmental He already has two papers with Eric Pisa, and he has three more in the works. He seems to be on the right track and is working closely with Pisa, who will likely be his dissertation advisor. We spoke about him aiming to get some articles that are solo or first authored. During the Spring term he sent me one of his papers for potential publication to read. I provided comments.</td>
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<td>2/7/17</td>
<td>Interest: juvenile corrections and reentry. She has several projects going on. She is working with Debi, Preeti (on the reentry project) and Wolfe. She has secured two publications from the latter two collaborations with a coauthored article with Wolfe. She did not have a master’s degree, feels she has a lot going on, but is excited about the projects. She would like to go into policy and we spoke some about that.</td>
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<td>2/15</td>
<td>We had a long discussion about his research interests and also the challenges in coauthoring with a faculty member. In one case he wasn’t sure if he was a coauthor on an article and we discussed how he might delicately ask the faculty member about his status.</td>
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She has two papers that she is coauthoring with Lila and Debi. She has two more on drug use that sounds really interesting. One is from an MA thesis and the other is from a class with Maxfield. She has two other articles that she could send out related to drug/cigarette use. We spoke about getting those latter two papers moving and also about some data sources for her dissertation.

We spoke about the various projects she is working on. She has two papers with Jeff Mellow and is in the process of starting to get something moving with Preeti. She is interested in international research and we also spoke about several funding programs I knew about. She has a paper in the works that she says she is going to share with me either this semester or next.

Below are the students that I regularly met with regarding joint publications. These students are involved in coauthoring four different journal articles. One manuscript was accepted for publication with *Sociological Perspectives* this summer (2017), another manuscript is under review at *Social Science Research*, and two more are currently being prepared for submission.

1. Chunrye Kim
2. Maggie Schmuhl
3. Chris Thomas
4. Margret Valdimarsdottir
5. Leevia Dillon

I was a formal mentor to the following student with whom I met regularly:

Nathan Connealy
Appendix B
PhD Faculty Advisor/ Core Mentor Faculty Review of Progress Form

Student Name:
1. Comments regarding student progress over the past academic year.

2. Student progress in developing a program of research.

3. Student progress in preparation for teaching.

4. Student’s career aspirations and steps taken to achieve them.

5. Other comments / concerns / recognitions regarding student progress.

Faculty Signature Date:
I have read these comments and discussed them with my adviser.

Student Signature Date: