

## Message from the Chair

Welcome to the latest issue of *Criminal Justice News*!

In this issue we highlight some of the department accomplishments during the 2014-2015 academic year. It is hard to believe the Fall 2014 semester is already behind us, and we are well into 2015. It seems each academic year goes by faster — either this is a sign that we are all very busy here at WSU, or I am getting older (or both).

The Fall 2014 semester was marked by a number of highlights. In August, we welcomed a number of enthusiastic and hard-working MA and PhD students. The number of undergraduate majors continues to grow, with our advisees now totaling over 650 in Pullman and 150 online. Interest in the major continues to grow, spurred no doubt by the creation of a stand-alone department and the wonderful recruiting and advising provided by Sis Keopanapay and Kelli Laxson.

We have endeavored to improve our undergraduate program in a number of ways. We reduced the size of our undergraduate classes and added more sections of our required courses to improve the classroom environment and facilitate student matriculation. We have also taken advantage of the smaller class sizes to increase the number of writing assignments in our classes — something that our students need and prospective employers want.

Our graduate program is also evolving in a number

of positive ways. For the first time, virtually every eligible PhD has been provided funding of some sort — either as a Research Assistant on a grant, as a Teaching Assistant, or as a Grader. Our goal is to be able to provide funding for every PhD student, as well as qualified MA students. This financial assistance should make it easier for graduate students to focus on their coursework and

to move through the program in a timely manner. We have also revised the PhD exam and dissertation process. We changed the Comprehensive Exam to a Qualifying Exam (modifying the topics covered and the length of the exam period), and we added a Publishable Paper requirement. These changes align the department more closely with current trends in the discipline and we believe will better prepare our students for a career in academe.

Department faculty continue to conduct fascinating and important research. The Washington State Institute for Criminal Justice continues to collaborate with the Washington Department of Corrections and other state agencies, the Spokane-based Simulated Hazardous Operational Tasks Lab and Sleep & Performance Research Center continues its sponsored research, and department faculty are actively engaged with the Spokane Criminal Justice Commission. Several faculty have recently received grants from state agencies to work on a variety of projects that will assist state criminal justice agencies. Faculty and graduate students presented their research at several conferences, including the American Society of Criminology meeting in San Francisco. Faculty (and graduate students) published several books and a number of articles in peer-reviewed academic journals.

Last Fall was very busy and very productive. This semester looks to be every bit as busy and even more productive. I look forward to working with everyone to make the Department of Criminal Justice

and Criminology one of the leading departments at Washington State University.

[Craig Hemmens, JD, PhD Professor and Chair](#)

