

# **CRIMINAL LAW CERTIFICATE ASSESSMENT PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORT May 2020**

Students focusing on criminal law can earn the Criminal Law Certificate if they maintain GPA requirements and complete of a certain number of criminal law or procedure related courses. This Certificate was implemented in the 2014-2015 academic year. Since its inception, sixteen students have successfully completed the program, with recognition both at graduation and on their transcript. This Assessment will elaborate on the following: program goals, student learning outcomes, student learning assessment, and changes in the program.

Program Goals: In order to enroll in the Certificate program, a student must have an overall GPA of 2.75 with a 3.0 in Certificate Courses in the 2L year. Students are required to take Trial Advocacy and the Criminal Practice Clinic. Additionally, a student must take four elective courses involving various aspects of criminal law or procedure. Obtaining the Certificate at graduation requires an overall GPA of 2.75 with at least a 3.2 in certificate courses, and a minimum of a B+ in the Clinic.

A primary goal of the program is to ensure those students who complete the Certificate have the practical skills necessary for employment in criminal law related jobs. Whether a graduating student becomes a local or federal prosecutor or defense attorney, handle appellate work or local, state or federal policy work, the student will have engaged in critical analysis and casework focused on this area of the law. A rigorous focus on criminal law and procedural classes equips Certificate students with the legal knowledge and skills making them more marketable and competitive with employers.

Going forward, a programmatic goal is ensuring that more students successfully complete the Certificate. Ten students who initially applied for the Certificate were unable to complete it. Currently, there are four faculty members who oversee the curriculum requirements for the Certificate, and for more students to successfully complete the Certificate, the criminal law and procedure faculty will work toward more consistent advising. Further, the faculty will interview past students who completed the program to get better insight into other ways to improve the Certificate.

Student Learning Outcomes: Once a student declares interest in the Certificate in her 2L year, she will alert the registrar and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Both administrators begin tracking the student to ensure she is completing the requisite classes and maintaining the required GPA. The criminal law and procedure faculty recognize the need to coordinate academic advising so that students have clarity about class offerings and understand proper sequencing of classes so that they can enroll in the two mandatory classes. With more coordinated advising, there should be a higher rate of students successfully completing the Certificate.

While the Certificate is available to non-juris doctorate students who satisfy certain conditions, at this point there have been no applicants. This is a second area where the criminal law faculty

and administration must discuss whether more efforts should be made to draw interest from outside parties to the Certificate program.

Student Learning Assessment: Students who successfully complete the requirements for the Criminal Law Certificate will:

- (a) demonstrate proficiency in analyzing constitutional issues, interviewing clients, and litigating on criminal matters;
- (b) be able to draft motions and pleadings relevant to typical criminal practice; and
- (c) demonstrate an understanding of the role of counsel in criminal matters, including the state and federal constitutional and ethical obligations of prosecution and defense counsel, in various stages of criminal proceedings, including pretrial, trial, direct appeal, and collateral proceedings.

The mandatory GPA and grade requirements ensure that participating students are learning and engaged in the core criminal law and procedure criteria that distinguishes them from other students who take one or two classes in this concentration. Many graduating Certificate students are still employed primarily in criminal law or procedure practice positions.

Changes in the Program: A few years after the Certificate's initial implantation, a few applicants requested to take a position in the prosecutor's office as an equivalent skills requirement as the Criminal Practice Clinic. After the criminal law faculty and administration discussed the core skills and learning outcomes that were mandatory, a prosecutor externship was permitted.

The criminal law faculty are in discussions to change the number of classes that may qualify as electives for students to make it easier for students to complete the Certificate. Current efforts are underway to broaden the number of classes that qualify along with giving some flexibility for courses that are criminal law-related. The goal is for these changes to be adopted in the Fall 2020 semester for implementation in the Spring 2021 if possible.

Further, the criminal law faculty will survey Certificate graduates to obtain their feedback on the pros and cons of the program. This survey will be conducted over the summer 2020 with feedback to the criminal law faculty in the Fall 2020. Additional changes may be made to the Certificate based upon those results.