



Announcing the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice

June 29, 2023

As part of a university-wide realignment process spanning the 2022-2023 academic year, a new School of Criminology and Criminal Justice will officially open at Missouri State University on July 1, 2023. Dr. Brett Garland will lead the new school as the founding School Director, while Aida Hass will serve as Graduate Director.

“This is an exciting time,” Dr. Garland said. “We are incredibly fortunate to possess such a vibrant and accomplished faculty committed not only to uplifting criminal justice education but also to utilizing its expertise in innovative ways to help agencies and communities reduce crime and strengthen public safety.”

Dr. Craig Hemmens, founding head of MSU’s Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice and former President of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, emphasized this is more than just a name change.

“Becoming a school should improve the visibility of criminal justice at MSU and help recruit talented students from around the country,” Dr. Hemmens said, who now teaches at Washington State University. He also observed that several elite criminal justice programs are already utilizing a school model, making the move even more meaningful and significant.

A DOZEN YEARS OF PROGRESS

Since 2011 when the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice was established, ongoing advancements and expansion have elevated the unit’s profile on campus and beyond.

Examples of department accomplishments which helped to acquire school standing include:

- Averaging 450 undergrad majors and growing the master’s program to one of the largest regionally
- Expanding curriculum options to exceed 70 undergraduate and 25 graduate courses
- Sponsoring 10 criminal justice certificates, with the Criminal Investigation Undergraduate Certificate now the largest on campus
- Forming the MSU Mock Trial Team that has won over 30 team and individual awards in just its short three-year history
- Sending honors students to national conferences who regularly place highly in quiz bowl, scholarship, and other competitions

- Launching criminology-themed study away trips to Washington, DC, London, the Balkans, and soon to Western Europe
- Receiving over \$1 million in external funding to support projects

The impact of the last few years has been especially pronounced.

Paula Rector, a senior instructor in criminology and criminal justice at MSU for more than 16 years, who happened to be among the small group of students in the first criminology bachelor's degree graduating class in 1999, has multiple decades of perspective. Looking back just five years, she said that "the pace we've acquired new faculty, the level of community engagement, and the quality of research is like no other time in our history."

A NEW ERA OF PARTNERSHIPS

The significance and range of the department's off-campus collaborations have reached an unprecedented level, earning it an invitation to speak at a February 2023 meeting of the MSU Board of Governors. At the meeting, Dr. Bill Sandel's cooperative agreement with the Missouri Department of Public Safety and the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center was the featured topic. This partnership supports free active shooter training for Missouri law enforcement utilizing the most advanced strategies and techniques available.

Another spotlighted partnership was Drs. Jennifer LaPrade and Ethan Amidon serving as lead researchers on a large project with the Missouri State Supreme Court through the state's Commission on Racial and Ethnic Fairness. This project has gained national attention and is analyzing millions of statewide court records, as well as hundreds of surveys and in-depth interviews.

When the new School of Criminology and Criminal Justice was announced at an MSU administrative meeting during spring semester, these two partnerships were highlighted as primary examples of how the unit is distinguishing itself.

WHAT IS ON THE HORIZON?

The criminology and criminal justice faculty at Missouri State is not one to rest on its laurels. The faculty is brimming with excitement to launch this new school forward. Plans for the near future include:

- Proposing a research and training center housed in the new school
- Building up a crime scene processing center for use by local and regional agencies
- Hosting our first live MSU Mock Trial Bear Brawl Invitational in November 2023
- Integrating virtual reality into student use-of-force simulations
- Setting up a criminal justice podcast
- Organizing advisory groups to help chart new directions

DEBT OF GRATITUDE

Every success story has its origin, where much of the appreciation for today's accomplishments is owed.

In the fall of 1987, at then Southwest Missouri State University (later to be Missouri State University), an associate professor with a sociology and gerontology background received permission to teach a new class in Hill Hall. The professor was Dr. Michael Carlie; the class was An Introduction to the American Criminal Justice System.

Fortunately, the course was a hit. It filled to its capacity at 106 students, with many hopefuls on the waiting list.

Professor Carlie's teaching created a buzz across campus. That same year when his introductory course launched, a crime and society minor was approved. Criminology and criminal justice from then on was headed on an upward trajectory. Decades later in 2020, Dr. Michael Carlie would be honored as one of MSU's all-time most beloved educators, receiving his well-deserved place on its Wall of Fame.

"We thank Dr. Carlie for lighting the spark and supplying much of the fuel that made this moment possible," Dr. Garland said, "and we look forward to all the new opportunities that becoming a school will bring."

CONTACT US

We invite anyone interested in learning more about us or pursuing partnerships to contact us at:

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