Florida Gulf Coast University Board of Trustees
January 17, 2006

SUBJECT: New Degree Proposal: Master of Science (M.S) in Criminal Forensic Studies

PROPOSED BOARD ACTION
Approve new M.S. in Criminal Forensic Studies.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
FGCU is requesting permission to offer an M.S. in Criminal Forensic Studies as described in the Executive Summary.

Supporting Documentation Included: (1) Memo from the Provost, and (2) Executive Summary of Degree Program.

Prepared by: Joseph L. Ravelli, Director of General Education
Legal Review by: N/A
Submitted by: Provost Bonnie L. Yegidis
December 12, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Trustee Larry Hart, Chair
    Academic/Student/Faculty Affairs Committee
    FGCU Board of Trustees

FROM: Bonnie L. Yegidis
      Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Master of Science in Criminal Forensic Studies

The College of Professional Studies is proposing to initiate a Master of Science (M.S.) in Criminal Forensic Studies. Building on the strength of the B.S. in Criminal Forensic Studies, the master’s program will advance the theoretical perspectives and practical applications that broaden the preparation of such practitioners as criminal investigators, medico-legal death investigators, human identity and trauma analysts, and forensic behavior analysts. The program was approved by the College and University curriculum committees.

The proposed program is 42 credits in length and includes two concentrations: Forensic Behavioral Analyst and Death Investigator. Students who take the Death Investigator concentration will be able to sit for the Medico-Legal Death Investigators Certification Examination, which will qualify them to make scene of the crime determinations and decisions.

No additional full-time faculty are required for implementation of the program. An additional faculty line is requested for the second year. Laboratory facilities are adequate for initiating the program, though additional laboratory space will be needed as the program grows. In the first year, $24,000 will be required to strengthen the library collection, with $5,200 needed annually thereafter. The program is consistent with FGCU’s mission and strategic plan and will serve an identifiable need. The resources needed for the additional faculty line and library resources will be funded through existing sources. I recommend approval.
Executive Summary

New Program Proposal

Degree: Master of Science

Major: Criminal Forensic Studies

College: Professional Studies

Department: Justice Studies

Anticipated Implementation Date: Fall 2006

Suggested CIP: 43.0111

Program Description

Criminal Forensic Science and Criminal Forensic Studies programs deal with the application of science to questions pertaining to civil and criminal law. However, whereas Forensic Science stresses scientific activities that take place away from the crime scene and in the controlled environment of the laboratory, Criminal Forensic Studies concerns actions taken when evidence is first identified, recorded, and recovered at the crime scene. Thus the two areas complement each other in that Criminal Forensic Studies ensures that evidence obtained in the field is recovered in a manner that will allow successful analysis by crime laboratory personnel receiving the evidence.

The proposed Master of Science (M.S.) in Criminal Forensic Studies is an interdisciplinary master’s degree that blends a number of disciplines including constitutional criminal law, psychology, anthropology, and sociology. Building on the strength of the University’s Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Criminal Forensic Studies, the master’s program advances theoretical perspectives and practical applications that increase the effectiveness and professionalism of criminal investigators, medico-legal death investigators, human identity and trauma analysts, and forensic behavioral analysts.

The proposed curriculum consists of 42 credits including: core coursework (24 credits) taken by all students; two separate concentrations, Forensic Behavioral Analyst (12 credits) and Death Investigator (9 credits); and, electives (6-9 credits).

Forensic Behavioral Analyst Concentration: Students who complete this concentration will possess advanced skills for utilization as crime scene investigators and criminal investigation detectives in local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, as well as in offices of state and federal prosecuting attorneys.
**Death Investigator Concentration:** The St. Louis University, School of Medicine, Department of Pathology pioneered the development of a curriculum and certification process for the purpose of standardizing the training of qualified medico-legal death investigators. The Death Investigator concentration follows exactly the St. Louis curriculum and prepares students to sit for the certification exam of the American Board of Medico-Legal Death Investigators. Certification by this board is recognized in 37 states, including Florida. Students who achieve certification are legally qualified to make the determination of death as accidental, natural cause, suicide, or wrongful. Only physicians or medico-legal death investigators can legally make a “death call.”

**Consistency with FGCU Mission and Strategic Plan**

The program flows naturally from the College of Professional Studies mission, which emphasizes providing curricula oriented toward professional and personal development, and the integration of theory, practice, and technology. In addition, the program, which is unique to Florida, supports the University’s vision of an institution with expanded recognition of selected graduate programs. Finally, the program is consistent with FGCU’s strategic plan which emphasizes the development of innovative academic programs that attract the best students and faculty. An example of the future quality and importance of the program can be seen in the program’s relationship to the national effort, supported by the U.S. Attorney General, to develop Child Abduction Response Teams (CARTs) in every region of every state. The director of the proposed program has developed and trained proto-type CARTS across the U.S. and is himself a member of the South Florida CART. Graduates of the program who take the Forensic Behavioral Analyst concentration will be exceptionally qualified to develop CARTs.

**Need and Demand**

Data provided by the Federal Bureau of Justice Statistics demonstrate that there is a strong need across the nation for graduates of the M.S. program in Criminal Forensic Studies. For example, in 2005 the Bureau reported that in the previous year there were over 2.1 million inmates in state and federal prisons, the number having grown at the rate of 3.5% since 1995. Every prison employs numerous forensic behavioral specialists in a variety of capacities. Graduates of the program who take the Forensic Behavioral Analyst concentration will be well qualified for these positions.

Students who take the Death Investigator concentration and pass the Medico-Legal Death Investigator Certification Examination will be in obvious demand since St. Louis University and FGCU would be the only institutions preparing students for the certificate. The master’s degree is particularly valuable for federal law enforcement jobs. The Bureau of Justice Studies reports that employment in law enforcement as a profession is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through 2010. The master’s degree would be valuable for those who wish to work in prosecuting attorneys offices.
With respect to student demand, evidence from baccalaureate-level FGCU students indicates strong interest in the master’s program. In spring 2005, students in the undergraduate programs in Criminal Justice and Criminal Forensic Studies programs were surveyed regarding their interest in the M.S. in Criminal Forensic Studies. Forty-eight students (nearly all juniors and seniors) indicated definite interest. In addition 12 recent graduates of these programs, employed in criminal justice agencies, have indicated intent to enroll once the program is approved.

Enrollment

Consistent with the need and demand data provided above, the program anticipates that 40 to 60 students would apply for admission in fall 2006. As an indication of the program’s future selectivity, only 30 full-time students would be admitted at that time. The program is anticipated to double in size in the second year with the admission of a second class and to remain at that level (60) through year five. Given that 15% of students in the BS program in Criminal Forensic Studies are from minority groups, the program anticipates it will be able to attract a diverse student body.

Resources

The program has sufficient faculty to implement the program with the addition of some adjunct support. To strengthen both the undergraduate and graduate program, one additional faculty line is requested in the second year. All faculty will meet SACS requirements for teaching in graduate programs. Grant funds have been secured for the purchase of laboratory equipment. The program has worked with the College of Arts and Sciences to ensure the availability of laboratory space in Whitaker Hall. However, with growth, the program will need a dedicated laboratory and storage space. Laboratory space is expected to be less tight once the engineering building comes on line. The program has developed good relations with external agencies for internship/practicum sites, particularly in Lee and Collier Counties, for the mutual benefit of the University and the agencies. Approximately $24,000 in funding for library materials will be needed in the first year and $5,200 in subsequent years in support of the program.