

“The History and Evolution of the Ohio Council of Criminal Justice Education: 1971-2011”

Edited by

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Executive Summary

Some members of the Ohio Council of Criminal Justice Education (OCCJE) for years had voiced the need to archive the Council’s records in order to preserve its history. That process began with the acquisition and cataloguing of Council documents and the writing of this monograph.

OCCJE was founded May 12, 1971 with an institutional membership of 13 colleges and universities in Ohio. At that meeting were representatives from the following institutions: Bowling Green State University, Cleveland State University, Columbus Technical Institute, Cuyahoga Community College, Cuyahoga Community College, Western Campus, Kent State University, Kent State University, Stark County Branch, Lakeland Community College, Lorain County Community College, Marietta College, Ohio Dominican College, University of Toledo, and Youngstown State University

The original mission stated: “The general purposes of this Council are to promote education and research in the broad area of criminal justice in institutions of higher education; to bring together institutions actively engaged in teaching criminal justice programs; to encourage understanding and cooperation among those engaged in teaching and research in criminal justice; to promote professional criminal justice education at the university and college level; to actively engage in the elevation of the ethical and personnel standards of the component parts in the criminal justice system.”

The 1972 Annual Meeting reported the following members: Columbus Technical Institute, Cuyahoga Community College, Kent State University, Lakeland Community College, Lorain County Community College, Muskingum Area Technical Institute, Sinclair Community College, Tiffin University, Tri-County Technical Institute, University of Akron, University of Dayton, University of Cincinnati, University of Toledo, and Youngstown State University.

During the 1970s (Chapter 2), membership was limited to institutional membership for purposes of voting; it was not until March of 1978 that individual membership was approved in addition to institutional membership. The decade was very dynamic for the criminal justice community; there were considerable debates and competition for federal and state resources. This often strained relationships between practitioners and academicians. Emotions and passions ran high and the differences among professional associations, institutions, and individuals created considerable legitimacy issues within colleges and universities regarding the mission and focus of their programs. However, throughout all of this, the Council continued to grow and to confront the issues. It became a forum to share thoughts, ideas, and concerns. Younger members were mentored by seasoned academicians. Membership fluctuated with some institutions and individuals participating for a short time, while others stayed and helped the organization to persevere.

The 1980s were very challenging years for the Council. LEEP funding was no longer a primary focus for the institutions in Ohio. A downturn in the state and national economies contributed to an unstable environment in academia. Council liaison efforts with Ohio Criminal Justice Services and the Ohio Peace Officer Training Council & Academy were moderately successful.

Outreach efforts to various correctional agencies and legislators along with visitations to prisons, the conducting of mini-workshops on child abuse and private security, and greater visibility in national and regional criminal justice organizations helped the Council to remain viable and meaningful to its membership.

During the 1980s (Chapter 3), a number of “firsts” were achieved: 1) the renaming of the organization and other major Constitutional changes such as opening membership, 2) the publication of a regular newsletter, 3) the initiation of faculty and student awards, 4) the initiation of the annual career/job fair, 5) sponsorship of mini-workshops across the state, 6) the first Council meeting held out-of-state at Eastern Kentucky University, 7) scholarly presentations by our own members and guests, and 8) involvement in ACJS Meetings and Regional Association meetings. All of these efforts were significant developments in the history and viability of the organization.

Chapter 4 describes the Council’s activities during the 1990s. The focus of efforts centered on sponsoring one-day conferences or seminars throughout Ohio, but primarily in the central region to increase attendance. Topics of these conference included: Minorities in Criminal Justice, Child Molestation: An Emphasis on Occult and Satanism, Klanwatch Program of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Psychiatry and Violent Offenders, Violence in the Schools, Robert Ressler on Serial and Sexual Killers, Ohio Firearms Legislation, Klanwatch and the Militia Task Force of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Ohio Correctional Issues, and Cyberspace Crime. The 90s also witnessed the Council’s debate on issues related to the proposals of ACJS Accreditation and minimum standards for Criminal Justice Programs (“Minimum Standards for Criminology and Criminal Justice Education initially adopted by the Northeastern Association of Criminal Justice Sciences) and Tech-Prep programs in Ohio. Also during this time period, the Council moved to two general meetings during the academic year, a fall and spring meeting, with the Executive Committee meeting as needed. The OCCJE 1997-98 Membership Directory listed 52 names.

During the last decade (the 2000s), the Council’s activities continued the two meeting format with the fall meeting being the job/career fair and the spring seminar or research conference focusing on academic presentations similar to the format used by regional and national associations. An observer might assess this decade as being more student-centered for institutional members. There was less outreach to practitioners and policy-makers during the last half of the decade when the spring seminar transitioned into the education-research conferences. The Council also added two student seats to the Executive Committee. The financial assets of the Council fluctuated very little during this decade which began and ended with about \$12,500. The treasury did climb to around \$15,900 during 2001, but gradually fell when costs exceed revenue for a couple of seminars and when a paid administrative assistant was utilized. Since 2003, the Research Conferences have been less risky and generally speaking, the dues and other revenues have off-set the costs and award expenses associated with Council activities. The decade brought other challenges such as improving a presence on the web for the Council, initiating an online journal, and maintaining/enlarging the membership base. There were improvements in the operations of the Council to be sure. Electronic communications, recruiter/job fair mailing lists, creation of a website to facilitate conference registrations and resource material was achieved. The Council also moved into the social media arena.

Chapter 6 identifies some general reflections of responding Executive Committee Members from 2011 and lists their perceptions of the role of OCCJE today, along with the challenges and visions for the organization as it moves into the future.

Included in the monograph are several appendices that reflect general timelines of the organization, recollections and statements of selected past and present members, officer lists, award recipients, and selected obituaries of former members. One appendix identifies the academic institutions that offer criminal justice-related programs in Ohio.

Acknowledgements

The bulk of the content of the monograph has been made possible by many former and present members of OCCJE who retained various documents over the years. A special “thank you” goes to Istvan (Steve) Domonkos who collected and retained numerous documents dating back to the founding and the first decade of the organization. Another member, Dan Ponstingle (current Assistant to the Executive Committee) deserves special recognition for his relentless determination to have the Council’s records archived and organized. Dan and Past President John Hazy have been involved with this monograph since the first drafts were prepared. Graduate student Ashley Kilmer assisted by cataloguing many of the Council’s documents before any writing occurred. The initial draft was prepared during mid-2011 which was the 40th anniversary of the official founding of the Council (originally called the Council of Higher Education in Criminal Justice). It was then shared with current and former members for editing and for triggering new or additional information that was not available initially. Other members of the Executive Committee assisted as needed when selected information was needed to fill-in some of the gaps in the records.

Overall Purpose of the Monograph

Successful organizations evolve over time; mission and objectives change as past goals are accomplished or environmental conditions force re-evaluation of current operations. Volunteer organizations reflect their history and the desires of current membership. Over time, those desires also change. Unfortunately, newer members of organizations often do not know or fully understand from where the organization came. The accomplishments and struggles of their predecessors are often unknown or hazy at best. The monograph attempts to fill that vacuum for the Council and honor those individuals who contributed to its founding, growth, evolution, and continuance over the last forty years.

Availability of the Monograph

Beginning on the day of the annual OCCJE Research Conference, April 18, 2012, the monograph will be available in both PDF format (free for OCCJE members and \$7 for nonmembers) and hard copy (\$15). Email John Hazy (jmhazy@ysu.edu) a request in order to obtain a copy.