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Harr, S. (2008). Concordia criminal justice highlights. *Minnesota Police Journal*, 81(3), p. 41-43

Concordia Criminal Justice Program Updates . . .

CONCORDIA RECOMMENDED FOR ANOTHER TEN YEAR REACCREDITATION BY HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

One of the most important considerations when selecting any college program is that it be regionally accredited. Not all colleges are which can result in credits not being able to be transferred to other colleges or being recognized by some licensing agencies and employers. Accreditation and reaccreditation is a very involved and challenging process assuring academic excellence.

The visiting review team of the Higher Learning Commission (the regional accreditation organization) has recommended that Concordia University St. Paul's accreditation be renewed for another ten years. Their final report will be voted on this summer by the Higher Learning Commission Board.

Concordia prepared for reaccreditation for three years prior to the Higher Learning Commission's visit and review. Online programs must meet the very same accreditation requirements as traditional face-to-face programs. Concordia University St. Paul is pleased to continue over 115 years of providing recognized and accredited educational programs to younger traditional and returning adult students alike.

CONCORDIA CRIMINAL JUSTICE ONLINE PROGRAM START DATES CONFIRMED

BA Criminal Justice degree completion program begins with two day on-campus orientation on *September 11 & 12, 2008*.

BA Public Safety & Security degree completion program begins with two day on-campus orientation on *March 5 & 6, 2009*.

MA Criminal Justice Leadership degree program begins with two day on-campus orientation on *September 25 & 26, 2008*.

CONCORDIA CRIMINAL JUSTICE CHAIR SCOTT HARR RECOGNIZED BY BOARD OF REGENTS

In addition to Professor Scott Harr being promoted in professor rank, the Concordia University Board of Regents granted Harr permanent tenure. Scott was hired to

design Concordia's program for criminal justice practitioners wishing to return to complete their degree. Scott's background includes having been a police officer for the cities of Chaska and Edina, as well as serving as Public Safety Director for Chanhassen. He is in his second term representing higher education on the POST Board and chairs the POST Training Committee.

Admission does not require any testing and the admission fee will be waived for anyone hearing about the program from the MPPOA Journal. Further information can be obtained by contacting Criminal Justice Department Chair Scott Harr at harr@csp.edu or 651-603-6277 or department recruiter Mike Conner at conner@csp.edu or 651-641-8249 and by visiting www.csp.edu/cj. ■

Concordia Highlights — Spotlight On Faculty

BY SCOTT HARR, CONCORDIA CRIMINAL JUSTICE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

As explained in past articles, it's not that Concordia's fully accredited bachelor's and master's degrees are entirely online (following the two day on-campus orientation) and designed for the busy lives of working criminal justice professionals that make them unique. It's the rich learning environment our students and faculty create together which sets Concordia's program apart.

By design, the majority of Concordia criminal justice faculty are "adjunct faculty," meaning teaching is not all they do. They are sought after in our program because they aren't just "book-smart," but know their topic from experience. In this edition of Concordia Highlights I am pleased to feature instructor Ray Mattix.

Professor Mattix grew up in Texas and lives in Ft. Worth, being able to teach because of the online format Concordia uses. The ease and frequency of contacts students have with faculty might lead one to assume he was right here on the St. Paul campus when in fact he's teaching from Texas.

Ongoing program assessment earns Ray high marks from his students. Concordia student Sergeant Sue McMahon, Woodbury Public Safety Department, explains, "Professor Ray Mattix is insightful and committed to providing students with an educationally rich environment by encouraging learning through a blend of occupational and life experience. He is the kind of person who fosters academic



Professor Ray Mattix in attendance at Concordia's 2008 commencement.

success and embodies the mission and vision of Concordia University."

Another Concordia criminal justice student, Jonathan Corwin, Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Station / Senior Nuclear Security Consultant, says of Mattix, "Ray is blessed with the gift of being able to connect with students on many levels. His knowledge, experience, and character are of great credit to him, the law enforcement profession and Concordia University. Working with teachers like Ray makes it clear why I chose Concordia's criminal justice program."

Ray's Texas police service includes work with the Constable's Office in Hunt County; the Hunt County Sheriff's Department in Greenville; the West Tawakoni Police Department and the Burleson Police Department. Friend and former colleague, Com-

mander Cindy Aaron of the Burleson Police Department, states, "Ray started as an officer at the age of nineteen. The Texas laws have changed now with a minimum age of twenty-one for officer licensing. However, it was soon clear he was mature beyond his age. He possessed exceptional leadership skills and was quickly promoted up the ranks, becoming a patrol sergeant at the age of twenty-one. He held numerous positions of prominence, including range master, tactical commander, accreditation manager, and jail warden. He also served as a leader outside the department in associations and labor

organizations. Ray Mattix has used his vast law enforcement experience to mentor many officers over the years. I am excited he continues to do so through the education field."

Ray describes his philosophy of law enforcement as, "*The exercise of discretion is an art, and one of the most important things a police officer can do in many instances; sometimes good people do bad things and how you respond to it may change their life and their family forever. Always do your job, but never stop having compassion.*"

No doubt Ray's personal life has helped reinforce this humane approach to criminal justice. His father, Gene Mattix, with whom Ray was very close, an International Representative for the United Auto Workers Union, was tragically killed in a car accident in 1985 when Ray had only been in

the police academy a few weeks. In turn, he and Angela, his wife of 18 years, asked Ray's mother to live with them which she has ever since. Ray's perspective of criminal justice, family and friends reflects his experiences, values and priorities.

Ray is a skilled online instructor (which in the opinion of many is considerably harder than traditional face-to-face teaching) for reasons that include he earned his master's degree online at Concordia St. Paul after researching what he believed the best of numerous options. Professor Mattix's master's research focused on online pedagogy, which is another reason he has been a leader in creating new ways of teaching online that students and faculty colleagues benefit from. Associate Dean Craig Lien says about him, "Professor Mattix's contributions to our college are evident in the enthusiasm he brings to his teaching and creativity in his course design."

There's a personal element Professor Mattix brings to the program that those who haven't experienced online learning may not be able to fully appreciate because of the incorrect assumption online means impersonal. Nothing could be further from the truth as evidenced by Ray in the various classes he

teaches. His commitment and personal connection with students is clear from the start of each course, spiced by the added humor and he's fond of interjecting.

One of his favorites is challenging such regional terms as "pop" for soda, educating his students that "it's all Coke, with the question being which flavor Coke you want? – 7Up, Dr. Pepper or Mountain Dew. Or Coke." Students quickly catch on, asking him (if he hasn't pulled it on them first) to repeat something online because of the accent, to which he's quick to point out he's not the one with an accent.

Ray emphasizes keeping priorities in life, of which education is but one. He is an avid hunter, having experienced big game hunting in Africa, holding several international records.

Ray's observations about online learning have evolved, like most people's, from doubt to questioning to embracing. "The effectiveness of the cohort delivery model is truly remarkable. Admittedly, I had some personal reservations about how this would work when I started the Concordia program myself, but those concerns were quickly put to rest when I participated in the process. For me it was much more productive than sitting in a class-

room listening to a professor lecture on and on, with limited student interaction."

Mattix goes on to say, "I believe some critics are motivated by personal agendas, while others simply have a skewed perception of how the online process works. In the first instance, opposition is frequently rooted in the paradigm that a college degree earned differently than theirs is somehow inferior. Other skeptics simply fail to grasp that advancements in technology and creativity have created a virtual classroom that is every bit as effective as the traditional setting."

As to the concern of maintaining a balance during already busy lives, Ray offers, "Having attended other colleges during my academic journey this is where I found Concordia very unique. Although the program takes commitment and dedication, the faculty acknowledges and promotes the importance of learners having a well balanced life that includes family, work, and school."

As chair of the Concordia Criminal Justice Department, it's important to me that students know when they begin their studies with us they are considered members of the family, and remain so. That applies to our teaching staff as well. "Ray Mattix exemplifies the characteristics we seek in our faculty. Imagine the commitment of an instructor from Texas flying here to attend commencement ceremonies to honor the students he's worked with. The perspective and commitment Ray shares is equally appreciated by the students and Concordia University," says Concordia University President Rev. Dr. Robert Holst.

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Ray in Africa shown with his record Gemsbuck trophy.