

Criminal Justice Department to Hold 4th Annual Networking Event

Written by KIERA LANI | PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR
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The Criminal Justice Department will invite all students to attend their fourth annual networking event at Wilson Hall on Wednesday, March 9 from 5 to 9 p.m. Students will get to explore a variety of criminal justice careers, and get the chance to network with professionals in the field.

Dr. Michele Grillo, criminal justice professor and spearhead for the networking event, created the event for students to understand what their prospective career entails and to meet, interact, and learn from professionals in the criminal justice field.

“Real life professionals can provide the insight not found in job descriptions or websites of agencies” she said.

The event will begin at 5 p.m. with networking and light refreshments. At 6 p.m., after opening remarks, students will break out into one of five concurrent breakout sessions, which will rotate every 45 minutes.

Criminal justice instructor and advisor, Nicholas Sewitch, a former prosecutor of 29 years, said the event “is like a smorgasbord where students get to really see and sample every career in one evening.”

The five categories students can sample include:

1. Federal law enforcement (FBI, DEA, Secret Service, US Border Patrol, Office of Inspector General, etc.)
2. State, County, and Local Law Enforcement (State Police, County Prosecutor’s Offices, Municipal Police Departments, NJ Transit Police, Port Authority Police)

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3. Homeland Security (FBI, US Coast Guard, FEMA, NJ State Police, Major for Homeland Security)

4. Corrections, Parole, and Probation (both state and federal

5. Rehabilitative Services and Victim Assistance Services (Victim Advocates/Counselors,

Addiction Treatments Specialists, Sex Offender Therapists, etc.).

Presenters will introduce themselves and explain their careers. After that, the floor will be open to questions by students and faculty facilitators.

After one session is over, students will get the chance to visit two other agencies out of the five available. Finally, at 8:30, everyone will gather back at the main room so students can seek out the professionals they would like to speak to further. Sewitch said, "Suppose you were intrigued by the FBI agent and you wanted to talk more about opportunities, now you have the chance to talk one-on-one with them."

The networking event was also created to allow students to get their foot through that ever competitive door. Professor Sewitch said, "It's a great opportunity to meet people that they might not have to opportunity to meet, and get a glimpse of a career that maybe they hadn't thought about."

Professor Grillo agrees that this networking event will expose students to areas of criminal justice they might not have considered before.

She said, "I learned most students believed that the primary options for employment were law enforcement, probation or parole officer. However, there are a myriad of other positions, as well

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as fields that coalesce with criminal justice and homeland security, such as accounting, political science, computer science, sociology, biology, chemistry...I could literally go on and on.”

Senior criminal justice major Regina Strugala helped to plan the networking event. She made many, many phone calls and sent many, many emails to get commitment from speakers. As of now, there are about 40 speakers for the event.

The Criminal Justice Honor Society president uses the event to discover opportunities for experience. Strugala wants to work with the FBI in the future, but knows that the FBI doesn't hire graduates straight out of college without previous experience. “You need to be open to the different opportunities out there,” she said.

The networking event will allow students to learn about both sides of the criminal justice coin. Sewitch said, “We're going to have both ends of the criminal justice system: the end of it that wants to enforce the law and see that the guilty are brought to justice and punished, and the end of it, that once that happens, let's help these offenders become healthy, productive citizens and reintegrate into society.”

Just about a discipline could have a criminal justice application, which is why all majors are invited to attend the networking event. Students will learn of opportunities tailored to their majors they might not have known about before.

Senior criminal justice major and Marine veteran, Mike Simon, feels that every student should make the effort to check out the event. He said, “Anybody that wants to work in or around the criminal justice field, whether it be social workers, psychiatrists, CJ majors themselves, they should attend this event, not only to get a clear perspective and a more in-depth look at the different agencies that are out there, but to network.”

Additionally, Professor Grillo said that the event is a good way to find out about internships. She said, “The criminal justice major requires the completion of an internship at a CJ or HLS [homeland security] related agency. The networking event includes agencies, law firms, and companies that offer internships to our students. Thus students can explore internship opportunities and begin preparation for their internship as early as freshman year.”

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Professor Grillo also stresses the importance of planning for the future. She created the networking event in part to make students aware of the lengthy hiring process the law enforcement has. In many cases, it may take a year or more to complete the process. By starting the process junior and senior year, students will have a better chance of employment after graduation.

Professor Sewitch wants students to attend just to open their eyes to new career goals. He said, “We feel one of our chief responsibilities is career mentoring. We want to educate our students, but we also want to help them realize their career aspirations.”

This is an informal event, so students are advised to dress business casual. Students are also invited to, but not required to, bring handouts, business cards, and résumés.

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