

# workplace with U of A Criminology practicum program



Up close and personal at Remand Centre

"some students find out that they don't know what a Criminology degree is. They know what BSW means and what a Grant MacEwan Certificate is," but they need better exposure. "There are students out there studying programs and people should consider the program as well as a degree."

The students basically have a common feeling towards the theoretical side of the program in relation to the practicum. Antoniuik feels that courses such as Abnormal Psychology helped. "Criminology and psychology books have nice classification stuff, but you learn more about the practical side of it by doing the work." Capri found that the introductory and Law courses were helpful, while the options ("fun courses") were not as applicable.

"Any program can be theory," says Jalbert, "but the criminal justice system involves common sense." The "placement really opens your eyes from the theory," says Joyn.

Capri found that her eyes were opened, expectation-wise, with her first placement. "I wanted to change the world, but now, in my second placement, I am more realistic with my abilities," says Capri. Jalbert was "surprised that (she) got a project, and was not only on the sidelines observing." Course-wise, Antoniuik found that sociology and criminal justice are specialized, while a lot of the courses are open to other students.

The practicum program is very helpful in deciding the type of career to go into. "You're given an idea of what the job involves," says Antoniuik, "you're trying to get a gist of how everyone else fits in; getting a perspective of what other people do in other jobs. It prepares you for a job in the outside world."

"Hands-on experience is important," says Capri. "It is a mistake to go into a program, to a PhD, without experience. Talking with people is different from the real thing."

As far as any problems in the program, such as with respect to the treatment of females, there seem to be few.

Capri says that it is "challenging to work there. It's intimidating to deal with the type of comments (whistles, cat calls, ...) you get. The male staff admits that they (inmates) treat females differently."

The inmates say "good morning" in a nice tone, because she is female, says Capri, but she learns to deal with that. "Some male staff members feel that females should not be working in these institutions, since it is a tease for the men; showing them what they can't get," says Capri. But she goes on to say that she "talked to some inmates about

"It's one of the more unpleasant sides of every job, you're not prepared for what will happen," says Antoniuik.

The students feel that some changes could be made in the program. Joyn feels that since the criminology program is in arts, it is restricted in the amount of sociology and criminology courses offered, and that it should be set up like the education program with a number of days — it is hard to only be there two days a week and readjust with the clientele.

Capri wishes that they had more practicums and that they were available in all the years — not just third and fourth, "it's helpful practical experience," says Capri.

Despite the drawbacks, Capri's feelings towards the program, like her fellow students, are positive. "You get to know influential people, yes, that makes a difference; you make contacts for the future. You get experience and references," says Capri.

This positive attitude is summed up by Antoniuik when he says "career placement is a very good idea."

**"The criminal justice system is a large employer and the university responded to the job market."**

females, and they said that the women are more calming and understanding." In all, "everyone was helpful and supportive."

Jalbert "at first thought that because she is female, she couldn't do some stuff," but soon learned that "as long as you can do the job, it doesn't matter if you are male or female."

A problem Antoniuik had to deal with was when a patient became uncooperative with the staff and patient restraints had to be used.

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