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Students faces challenge in work

**The University of Alberta
Criminology Department
has a successful
innovation. This
university is the only one
in the province to have a
criminology field
placement practicum
program; the only one of
its kind in arts.**

"This is the sixth year of the program... it was hard to get approved initially. A couple of universities had programs that had field practicums. The government was hiring people outside Alberta; U of A did not have students with the needed experience. The criminal justice system is a large employer and the university responded to the job market," says Mr. Keith Spencer, who has over 20 years experience in criminology and is presently the head of the criminology field placement practicums at the U of A.

The students take courses such as psychology, sociology, criminology, criminal justice administration, political science of administrative behavior, etc. ... to get a broad based background related to the criminal justice area.

The textbook cannot capture the first hand experience, such as counselling, but provides the background and understanding of what is going on, says Spencer.

In their third and fourth years, the selected applicants begin their practicums.

They are placed in different areas, such as the Edmonton Police, the Remand Centre, Alberta Mental Hospital, Counterpoint, Penitentiary, etc. ... There are two placements in total, one semester (16 hours) each (ie. work two days a week).

"We try to give the students one experience working in an institution and one in working in the community," says Spencer.

The placements are "a foot in the door, employment-wise," says Spencer. So far, "U of A students have been successful in their job placements; people have been satisfied with them... the careers in the justice system are a challenge and pay well," says Spencer.

Some students presently working on their practicum are Ward Antonuk (Alberta Mental Hospital, forensic unit), Kim Capri (Remand Centre), Laurie Jalbert (RCMP), Gloria Jent (Penitentiary), and Brendan Walsh (Counterpoint, halfway house for young

offenders). These placements vary in the type of experience they offer.

At the Alberta Mental Hospital, Agtonuk is observing psychotherapy. It is "group therapy where patients learn how to understand and cope with violent tendencies; come to terms with the crimes," says Antonuk.

He participates in the psychiatric analysis of Remand people, before their trial. He also manages and controls patients in recreational areas, does close observation (where patients are accounted for every 15 minutes) and does staff supervision in the patient school.

Antonuk finds it interesting in "treating the young offender as part of the team."

Capri, who works in the psychology department of the Remand Centre, interviews mentally disturbed inmates. "I try to diagnose short-term treatment for them, ensure that they are coping and make out small reports (critical notes)... These notes help in knowing how to monitor the case," says Capri.

It's interesting, says Capri, to "go in with predictions, even though I have limited knowledge in psychology. It is interesting to see if the predictions turn out."

Currently, she is doing computer tests involving intelligence, tests distinguishing between I.Q. and mental health, and multi-personality tests, says Capri.

Meanwhile, Jalbert is working with the RCMP on a theft case which has been going on for two years. She lists her several objectives, starting with finding out who is involved, taking preventive measures, distributing pamphlets and doing computer checks.

**"Any program can be
theory... but the
criminal justice
system involves
common sense."**

Jalbert says that she also does office work, such as typing, and that "for myself, I really enjoy riding with the guys; they are tolerant of all the questions I ask."

Walsh says he works in the "treatment facility for young offenders, observes how the operation happens, does counselling, and group therapy." He is a "Residential Counsellor." He also says that "the group dynamics are fascinating."

Antonuk finds it troubling that the program is still relatively new. He feels that



Some students are posted at Remand Centre