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CJPI PROGRAM EVALUATION

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by

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ACQUISITIONS

Criminal Justice Planning Institute

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This report is a critique of the Criminal Justice Planning Institute sponsored by Washburn University and held at Arlington, Texas on October 3 to 8, 1976. The format was based on previous conferences initiated previously by the University of Southern California. The following conclusions are based on conferences with members of the Institute's faculty, interviews with students, and observation of all sessions except for part of those held on Monday, October 3.

In addition, the literature on Criminal Justice planning was reviewed after the conference to determine whether the concepts in this Institute reflected current professional thinking.

General Evaluation

On an overall basis, this Institute was well above average in (a) pre-planning, (b) content, and (c) technique of presentation. Certain features as noted later were outstanding. The format is adaptable to several types of audiences and can be used as the basis for a major training program in Criminal Justice for either formalized off-campus credit courses or continuing education for planning and executive development training. Objectives were attained, as measured by observation of the students' progress during the week, and the University showed a capacity to identify the needs of a heterogeneous population in Criminal Justice administration.

In the following paragraphs, specific features of the program are described and suggestions made for future institutes on the premise that any program can be improved. Many of the suggestions are actually minor ones and reflect the fact that the institute is sufficiently sound that revisions for future presentations need be concerned only with the finer points of the presentation.

Pre -Planning of Institute-Orientation

The Institute was well developed and organized with each class session having a written statement of objectives and reading assignments. The amount and difficulty of the reading material was appropriate for the type of participants and length of the program. Reading assignments could be improved, however, by providing better transition statements from lesson to lesson so that the participants could determine the interrelationships of subjects. As presented, and accentuated by the speed of the institute, the subjects tended to be too discrete--the participants just did not have much time to absorb the total material and also mold it into a meaningful body of information for their use upon return to their offices. If this format is continued, and I believe it should be, the students should be given some help in this molding process.

An outstanding part of the planning of the conference and orientation of the students was the video-tapes on the first evening which depicted satirical vignettes on the problems of presenting a conference, and indirectly on planning itself. This method for orientation of diverse group of students is excellent as a way (a) to show the participants that the faculty recognizes the difficulties of a speeded-up conference and (b) yet to portray the seriousness of

the studies. The films should be developed further. It might be noted parenthetically that the tapes undoubtedly had special meaning for the students since part of the faculty of the Institute also did the acting. The use of the tapes with a group not knowing the faculty would probably not be as effective without some adjustments. Every student whom this writer interviewed agreed that the total orientation session process was excellent.

General Strength and Weaknesses

1. Faculty:

The faculty was well trained, qualified, reflected varying backgrounds, and was generally accessible to students outside of the class setting. In a one-week seminar, accessibility of the faculty is very important because there is very little time in a class to review material or to give students individual help; they must ask their questions between breaks, at meals, and in the evenings.

I felt that some of the faculty jumped into their subjects too fast, apparently assuming that the students had read the required material and were, in effect, ready for an advanced oral presentation. In adult groups, one can usually detect this kind of misjudgment by too few questions at the conclusion of a presentation or by questions which do not pertain to the immediate thrust of the class.

The weakest presentation, in terms of technique, was Lesson Module No. 6 on Developing a Plan: Determining Planning Goals and Objectives. The lecturer for this session was not able to handle the audience, largely because there were some students more advanced than he was; and he was

inexperienced in handling class situations. Lesson Module 7, a very important one, also suffered somewhat by the method of presentation. The lecturer in this case did not seem knowledgeable about criminal justice activities, hence overly apologetic about the possible non-applicability of some concepts as he described them.

The faculty is to be commended for its use of visual aids, but at times the use seemed to be artificial as a way to cover a lot of material in a short time. This is the wrong use of visual material. The directors of the Institute might want to watch this item in future presentations. Visual material should be used only when it is an immediate and direct help, such as to deliver an emotional message or to simplify a complex idea already presented in its entirety by some other technique. In one or two cases, a very dynamic lecture might have been better!

2. Reading Assignments - Material

The ideal amount and type of reading material for a one-week seminar have been debated for many years. Students and faculty seldom agree with each other or among themselves; and no test has been devised to measure the learning process associated with an "x" or "y" body of assignments. The only people who speak with assurance on this subject are evaluators who write post mortems-- the dead seem to be easier to describe than the living!

The students for this Institute were sent, in advance of the conference, excellent and comprehensive reading materials as background information. Although the selections were excellent, no pressure was placed on the students

to study the material carefully; a high percentage of them, as a result, had only perused the readings. In future institutes, the participants should be required to prepare themselves so that everyone will have a certain common fund of information on the first day of classes. As will be noted later, the students at the Arlington Institute had a fairly heterogeneous background, as would be expected in a newly growing profession, and I sensed on several occasions that discussions were too advanced for some students and puzzling to others. It should be emphasized that forced reading is one of the most difficult chores in continuing education* and these comments, therefore, are in no way a criticism of the organizers of the Institute.

The reading assignments distributed at the Institute were voluminous but reasonable and of excellent quality. A person who read the items seriously would have an exposure to the major concepts in planning and would recognize major authors in the field. Each lesson also had a short statement of objectives, an abstract (one or two paragraphs), and suggested collateral reading.

The only weaknesses I can note are actually minor and are offered here solely as the basis for future staff discussions.

1. More emphasis should be placed on required reading in the evenings. This would make for a very demanding week but I don't think it would be unreasonable. Other professional groups have made such demands successfully, particularly in management seminars. This emphasis would help the problem noted earlier of disparate backgrounds of

* And in on-campus credit course

the students, aid continuity in class presentations and help in the case discussions in the latter part of the week.

2. In an effort to expose the students to as much material as possible, and in a useful format, some of the "articles" are too condensed; and in others they foster mechanistic thinking. Module 7, for example, is so condensed that the amount of studying is increased even though the format is designed to simplify the material by presenting it in numbered steps, diagrams, etc. Also, part of Lesson 3 (last part) can lead one to believe that problem identification (systems approach) is an entirely mechanistic process in which an answer is produced if one follows the necessary steps. Lesson 4 material is difficult to follow because it is a composite of excerpts -- explanatory transitions are especially needed here.
3. Lesson 8, in many ways the most important problem in CJ planning, should be strengthened. The speaker was excellent, and should be used as frequently as possible, but the students need substantial reading to put his remarks in a context and to help them develop a body of useful working information for application in their own community.
4. If at all possible, in future institutes the students should be exposed, through reading material or class sessions, to the relationship of CJ planning to general social and physical planning. There is a very sophisticated body of literature on planning, of which CJ planning is

a small part. The sessions by Dr. Wamsley accomplished this objective in part, but not enough to give students a concept of how this planning relates to other types of planning. For example, Criminal Justice planners need to know that planning per se, in terms of United States development, is very often middle class in orientation and tends to stress or preserve the status quo. Innovative planning is rather unusual.

3. Case Discussion

The instructional sessions involving the case study (Gotham City) were by far the most effective feature of the total program. I have had experience for many years in this technique of teaching but have never seen it used more skillfully than in the Arlington Institute. The case itself appears to be very complex with numerous chances for a student group to become mired down in detail, but none of the groups had any serious difficulty identifying central issues. The three requirements of a good case were evident: (a) Different groups should move at different speeds in their analyses. (b) Different and conflicting values should be identified and expressed. (c) The content and format should permit easy identification by each participant with his own experiences but abstract and artificial enough that the participant cannot rely on experience alone for analyses and must engage in a rationalizing process. Continued use of this kind of case for CJPI's is recommended strongly. To strengthen its use, the following points might be considered:

1. More hours should be allowed for analyses by requiring evening sessions.
2. In this particular Institute, the groups arrived too fast at a position that burglary should be the target program. This was caused in part by the previous instructional sessions which tended to emphasize mechanistic analyses: What is the heaviest crime? In what area is it most prevalent? Is it amenable to a major "impact program"?

In almost all cities, burglary is the obvious crime to reduce. But it is quite possible that if other factors are considered, different and more alternative programs would be developed. The groups would have profited if they had to do more soul searching in selecting the best program/area for which to plan.

3. The facilitators need to have more orientation sessions for themselves before the case discussions begin. Although there was no major problem in this Institute, the role actually played by the facilitators varied tremendously -- from almost complete passiveness to frequent interruptions and fairly firm directions. The facilitator is important as a "tool" to (a) verify certain data and (b) not let the groups become totally unrealistic. In this Institute, two of the facilitators lead the group very fast to one conclusion. A staff meeting of facilitators mid-way in the case discussion would be useful.

4. The attempt to inject realism into the case by sending special late instructions to each group did not work. This technique can and should be employed, but it needs to be structured better. For example, even groups in an academic setting need to have a sense of pay-off when their goals or instructions are altered. One group ignored the new instructions completely because it sensed that the new instructions would not affect its final plan or evaluation in the Institute.
5. Some members knew the actual city represented by Gotham City and as a result tried to read more facts into the case. It is imperative in any case discussion that the identity of the original situation be unknown. I would urge that new cases be even more complex and that the group be required to outline a more complex planning program -- after all, complexity is the essence of planning.

5. Mock Board Presentations

Presentations of each group's plan before a policy board added realism to the case discussion, provided some needed entertainment, gave the students a sense of pay-off in that their analyses had to be made public in front of their peers. Structurally, this session was sound. I would suggest, though, that the board members not play their roles so vividly. The participants in an institute such as this one know how public officials and laymen act in real life. For a training session, the emphasis in this part of the instruction should be on penetrating questions to the group about its methodology, technique of

analysis, and social values. Each group would then learn from the reports of others. It seems to me that the goal at this time in the week's work is to force each member of the group to analyze his or her views rather than to give one person practice in presenting a formal plan. One possibility would be to have one presentation of a plan and then have it critiqued by the other groups in addition to the more academic presentations suggested above. For effectiveness, also, each group should be allowed a minimum of 30 to 45 minutes for a presentation. In some ways, this part of the program should be the hardest and most demanding intellectually of the entire week.

6. Students

The student body represented a good cross-section of persons involved in criminal justice planning. They were motivated and committed to the Institute at the outset. More persons representing the legal professions and probation penal institutions might have helped some of the discussions and avoided the tendency for both faculty and students to concentrate on the law enforcement part of criminal justice. An indication of the quality and commitment of the students is seen by the fact that only two students failed to participate actively in the entire program! For adult education of any kind, this low rate is almost unheard of!

Participants from more than one region is highly desirable, and in this Institute resulted clearly in the presentation of different views.

7. Final Evaluation

This was the weakest part of the program, but I do not have any recommendations for improvement. After five days of demanding work a concluding

session is anticlimactic; and my experience has been that there is no way to determine ahead of time exactly how such a session should be conducted: In this particular Institute -- had one known -- the presentation of Dr. Killinger would have been the perfect closing class. Some thought might be given for future institutes to scheduling such a dynamic national leader at the conclusion (in lieu of an effort at self-evaluation) and see what results are obtained.

Overall Conclusion

This program, in content, and format and quality, is well worth continued development. While the content is in the mainstream of planning, it did not reproduce traditionalism but had adaptive features to meet specific objectives of a particular training session.

If such a program were conducted by a department at U.T. El Paso, I would have no hesitancy in making a major commitment of university funds for its development.

END

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