



Division Chair's Corner

We're looking forward to gathering with our Division members this November in Washington, D.C.! The DCS Board has been working behind the scenes to organize our annual breakfast, social event, and panel sessions.

Our Program Committee has also put together a great lineup of sessions throughout the week, and we'll have a presence at our Division table during the conference. Don't forget to sign up for a shift at the table – it's a fun, low-effort way to get involved and meet fellow DCS members.



Eileen Ahlin
DCS Chair

Mark your Calendars!

(Please check the ASC app for any updates)

Wednesday, November 13th, 6:00–8:00 PM

DCS Social | City Tap Penn Quarter, 901 9th Street NW

Thursday, November 14th, 8:00–9:20 AM

DCS Breakfast Meeting | Georgetown – Meeting Level 1

*Be sure to purchase a breakfast ticket when registering — this event sold out last year!

Friday, November 15th, 7:30 AM

Trauma-Informed Yoga Session | Capitol Hill – Meeting Level 3
Join DCS member and yoga instructor Dragana Derlic, along with Lily Shih, for a peaceful, grounding session. Bring a yoga mat or just come to learn techniques that support well-being in our work around corrections and sentencing.

Follow Us on Social Media!



A huge thank-you to our generous sponsors who make these events possible each year. Conference costs can vary widely by city, and we're committed to using your feedback from the recent membership survey to plan events that are meaningful, inclusive, and impactful.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in the nation's capital!

Warmly,
Eileen

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Research Note

Deterrent Effects of Legal Punishment: A New Theory of Deterrence for Identifying Research Gaps, Predictions, and Ways to Improve Criminal Justice Policy

Daniel P. Mears and Mark C. Stafford

Despite the fact that deterrence has been a central focus of criminological research and a primary justification for criminal justice policies, there is much about deterrence and its effects that remains unknown. In reviewing the state of the literature, we discovered that one reason is that the classical articulation of deterrence theory—expressed over 250 years ago by Beccaria (1764)—was incomplete. In turn, much of the research since then is also incomplete or its significance is difficult to interpret. This situation led us to reconceptualize the theory, which we present in a recent book, *Comprehensive Deterrence Theory: The Science and Policy of Punishment* (Cambridge University Press). Here, we identify some of significant questions about deterrence that exist, predictions that comprehensive deterrence theory (CDT) makes about them, and why answers to questions, and tests of the predictions, are important.

Questions that Remain Largely Unanswered

The most significant question that to date remains largely unanswered in the literature is this: To what extent do legal sanctions deter? When all is said and done, a central motivation for studying deterrence is an expectation, or hope, that legal punishments deter crime. This was Beccaria's (1764) expectation, and it is the primary rationale for sentencing policies in many countries, and certainly in the United States. Since his time, there have been many interesting developments in the study of deterrence. But frequently these have no direct bearing on whether a given type of legal sanction will deter crime. As one example—any study that surveys college students might generate insights about deterrence, but it would not provide an assessment of the impact of a given sanction on crime or whether the impact arises through deterrence. Another example—studies might correlate some type of punishment, such as the death penalty or incarceration rates, with crime rates, but they rarely provide any assessment of the extent to which deterrence played a role in any observed association.

Beyond the general question of the extent to which legal sanctions deter are a range of specific questions that center on what can be termed the intrinsic elements of deterrence. These are dimensions that always inhere to the deterrence process. Critical questions include:

- What is the relationship between the costs and rewards of crime and non-crime (i.e., conformity to law) in the deterrent effects of legal sanctions?
- How do certainty, severity, and celerity of legal sanctions interact in deterring crime?
- What is the functional form (e.g., linear or curvilinear) of the relationship between punishment certainty, severity, and celerity and deterrent effects of legal sanctions?
- What are the relative and combined effects of objective punishment and perceived punishment on the extent to which legal sanctions deter crime?
- What are the relative and combined effects of personal and vicarious costs (and avoided costs) of crime and non-crime in deterring crime?
- What are the relative and combined effects of personal and vicarious rewards (and missed rewards) of crime and non-crime in deterring crime?
- How do the durations of punishment costs, rewards of crime, and costs and rewards of non-crime influence the deterrent effects of legal sanctions on crime?
- How do levels of punishment, changes in punishment, and combinations of levels of and changes in punishment influence the deterrent effects of legal sanctions on crime?

Guidance on Possible Answers to These Questions

The development of CDT arose in part from identifying contributions of, and limitations in, extant work on deterrence. At the same time, as we developed the theory, it became a foundation for identifying insights about additional contributions and limitations. One example: We realized quickly that work on the personal and vicarious experiences with punishment had helped to advance knowledge about deterrence processes. But then we realized that this insight had not been systematically extended to conceptualizing the importance of personal and vicarious experiences with the rewards of crime or the cost and rewards of non-crime.

CDT is built around a set of principles, each one centered around the intrinsic elements of deterrence. For example, one principle is that deterrent effects of legal sanctions depend on the weighing and balancing of the costs and rewards of crime and non-crime. The theory's most general principle is that deterrent effects of legal

sanctions depend on the configurations of the intrinsic elements (Mears & Stafford, 2025a, p. 113). This principle recognizes that the elements are always a part of the deterrence process, and may combine in different ways to influence the extent to which punishments may deter.

The theory consists of this general principle and a series of element-specific principles, and associated corollaries, or predictions. For example, one prediction is that the deterrent effects of punishment will be greater when there are fewer personal and/or vicarious rewards of crime (p. 115). Notably, the theory anticipates that the effects of changes in punishment depend not only on the level of punishment but also on the configuration of other intrinsic elements. The implication is a stark one—it is unlikely that there is any absolute deterrent effect of a given level of, or change in, punishment. Everything depends on the configuration of all the intrinsic elements of the deterrence process.

Why Answers to These Questions Matter

Answers to the many questions about the deterrent effects of legal sanctions matter for many reasons. First, without a strong theoretical foundation, there is little likelihood of an appreciable or consistent effect of deterrence-based punishment policies on crime (Mears & Stafford, 2024). Second, without answers to these questions, it remains unknown how best to deter crime through various legal sanctions or other dimensions of the deterrence process, such as policies that might alter the rewards of crime or the costs and rewards of non-crime. Third, the questions point to the critical importance of research that can better capture the nature and degree of punishment associated with legal sanctions. Studies to date rely on no standardized metric of punishment, and the end result is that little is known about just how much punishment results from the diverse array of sanctions that the criminal legal system imposes (Mears & Stafford, 2025b). Finally, without attention on the deterrent effects of legal sanctions on crime, there will be no credible evidence-based foundation for policy. Policymakers, practitioners, and the public increasingly have called for policy that is based on credible evidence (Welsh et al., 2024). The only way to address this call is to develop a robust body of theoretically-grounded, empirical research studies that can identify the precise conditions under which legal punishments deter crime.

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Featured Panels and Papers

Wednesday, November 12

A STEP in the Right Direction? Evaluating a Specialty Court Targeting Violent Crimes
(8:00am to 9:20am, Marquis Salon 7 - M2)

Issues Related to Victimization in Correctional Settings (11:00am to 12:20pm,
Treasury - M4)

Contemporary Review of Parole: What's the latest? (5:00pm to 6:20pm, Mint- M4).

Thursday, November 13

DCS Handbook on Lived Experience: Lived Experience as a Research Tool (11:00am to
12:20pm, Marquis Salon 10 - M2)

Qualitative Research on Psychology and Decision-making in Courts (2:00pm- 3:20pm,
Marquis Salon 12 - Meeting Level 2)

Taking a Second Look at Life without Parole: Where it's imposed and mechanisms for
reform (3:30pm to 4:50pm, Marquis Salon 4- M2)

Disruption and Regrouping: Learning about Prisons and Moving Beyond What's
Always Been (3:30 to 4:50pm, Independence Salon H - M4)

DCS Handbook on Lived Experience: Exploring the Possibilities of Lived Experience
(5:00 to 6:20pm, Marquis Salon 1 - M2)

DCS Handbook on Lived Experiences: Studies of Lived Experience (5:00 to 6:20pm,
Marquis Salon 2 - M2)

Featured Panels and Papers

Friday, November 14

Expanding Carcerality (2:00pm to 3:20pm, Marquis Salon 8 - M2) (Co-sponsored with Division of Qualitative Research)

DCS's AltAc Series: A Panel for Job Seekers - Navigating into AltAc Careers (2:00pm to 3:20 pm, Judiciary Square - M3)

Contemporary Issues in Courts and Punishment (3:30pm to 4:50pm, Mount Vernon Square - M3) (Co-sponsored with Division of Qualitative Research)

We Need Help: Research-Practitioner Partnerships to Improve Drug Court Practices (3:30 pm to 4:50 pm, Catholic University - M1)

Saturday, November 15

Advocacy, Activism, and Performance (11:00am to 12:20pm, Judiciary Square - M3) (Co-sponsored with Division of Qualitative Research)



Social

Wednesday, November 12
6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
City Tap House



Breakfast Meeting

Thursday, November 13
8:00 am to 9:20 am
Georgetown - M1

Join us for a

TRAUMA-INFORMED YOGA SESSION

Lily Shih & Dragana Derlic

This session integrates trauma-informed practices to support well-being, balance, and resilience.



Open to all levels – no prior yoga experience required.

Where & When

Capitol Hill – Meeting Level 3

Friday, November 14

7:30 – 9:20 am (Yoga session begins at 8:00 am)

Research Note

Building Capacity for Impact: Findings from an Evaluability Assessment of an Education-Focused Reentry Program

Hannah G. Cortina, PhD (hcortina@rti.org), Samantha A. Tosto, PhD, Ryan M. Labrecque, PhD, Nicole Jaspersen, MS, Samantha Lako, BA, Alicia McKay, MS
RTI International

Over the past several decades, criminal legal scholars, practitioners, and policymakers have increasingly prioritized the implementation of evidence-based practices to guide correctional programming and policy (Latessa et al., 2020; Mackenzie 2006; Taxman & Bouffard, 2012). To improve resource allocation and enhance the quality of services for justice-involved individuals, empirical evaluation has become a widely desired strategy for identifying which interventions warrant continued investment and expansion. Such evaluations, however, are only as effective as the programs they assess. When a program lacks evaluation readiness—marked by clear implementation protocols, sustained fidelity, and measurable outcomes—evaluations may yield inconclusive or misleading results.

Evaluability assessments (EA), defined as “assessing whether the program is ready to be managed for results, what changes are needed to do so, and whether the evaluation would contribute to improved program performance” (Shadish et al., 1991, p.225), have long been used in public health, education, and other applied fields as a diagnostic tool to determine a program’s readiness for evaluation (VanVoorhis & Brown, 1997). Increasingly, EA is paired with capacity building, wherein researchers not only assess existing practices but also engage in collaborative efforts with the organization to strengthen and sustain them (Mahoto et al., 2023). This dual approach has been shown to be effective in other sectors but remains underused in criminal legal research and practice.

Conducted by RTI International, this research note presents findings from an Ascendium Education Group-funded evaluability assessment of an education-focused prison reentry services organization, the Reentry Campus Program (RCP). The program supports currently and formerly incarcerated individuals in accessing postsecondary education through services such as academic counseling, peer mentoring, reentry case management, digital literacy training, DANTES Standardized Subject Tests (DSST) (i.e., earning college credit through testing), and prior learning assessments.

Below, we detail the assessment process, key organizational findings, and subsequent collaborative efforts aimed at building capacity and strengthening evaluation readiness. We organize the findings by the two phases of the project: Year 1, Assessment and Preliminary Capacity Building; and Year 2, Ongoing Capacity Building.

Year 1: Assessment & Preliminary Capacity Building

The initial phase of the assessment involved a multi-method review of program materials, site visits to correctional facilities, and interviews with staff, board members, and participants. Several key barriers to evaluation readiness were identified, including inconsistent service delivery, an underdeveloped theory of change, limited data infrastructure, informal or undocumented interagency partnerships, and the absence of clear staffing protocols or standard operating procedures. While these findings indicated areas of substantial needs, they also reflected common structural constraints in emerging nonprofit organizations, rather than a lack of commitment.

In Year 1, capacity building efforts focused on addressing RCP's immediate needs while laying the groundwork for long-term growth. We collaborated with RCP to develop a theory of change and logic model, ensuring staff alignment on goals, inputs, outputs, and intended participant impacts. We also delivered security trainings to build buy-in around the importance of consistent, secure data collection and management. This work culminated in the selection of a data management system, identification of key variables to be built into the platform, and hands-on support for system implementation.

Year 2: Ongoing Capacity Building

Over the course of the second year, RTI engaged in a series of technical assistance and planning activities to strengthen the organization's evaluation infrastructure. These efforts included:

- Expanding the program's logic models across its three primary services areas (education access, peer mentoring, and digital literacy),
- Delivering customized trainings for peer mentors and case managers, which incorporated evidence-based strategies for rapport-building, goal setting, and the use of lived experience to promote trust and engagement,
- Operationalizing internal processes with the development of role-specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs),

- Facilitating the formalization of external partnership collaboration, including establishing formal data sharing agreements (DSAs), and
- Enhancing the organization's data infrastructure by supporting internal monitoring of data collection in their new data management system (secured in Year 1) and establishing protocols for secure, consistent data entry and storage.

Conclusion & Additional Recommendations

The findings from this EA highlight the critical importance of organizational infrastructure, implementation fidelity, and sustained capacity building in achieving evaluation readiness within criminal legal contexts. Even programs that are mission-aligned and client-centered can face substantial barriers to evaluation when foundational elements—such as logic models, staff protocols, and data systems—are underdeveloped or inconsistently applied. These structural gaps do not reflect a lack of commitment or potential but rather underscore the need for intentional investment in the organizational processes that undergird sustainable and scalable program delivery. Indeed, efforts to strengthen case management protocols, deliver tailored training for peer mentors, develop standard operating procedures, and implement secure data practices all contributed meaningfully to improving the organization's readiness for future evaluation and expansion. These activities require time, resources, and significant collaboration between the research team and the organization, underscoring that capacity building is not a passive process but one that demands deep engagement and shared commitment.

As the field continues to prioritize evidence-based practices, it is essential to recognize that methodologically rigorous evidence cannot emerge without the organizational conditions to support it. The integration of EAs with targeted capacity building efforts offer a promising approach to strengthening justice programs from the inside out. Researchers, funders, and policymakers should seek to invest their time and resources accordingly, not just in evaluation, but in creating an infrastructure that makes more rigorous research possible.

References

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Congratulations to our 2025 Award Recipients!



Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr. Jodi Lane
University of Florida



Distinguished Scholar Award

Dr. Ryan Labrecque
RTI International



Distinguished New Scholar Award

Dr. Peter Lehmann
Sam Houston State University



**Marguerite Q. Warren and Ted B. Palmer
Differential Intervention Award**

Dr. Jill Viglione
University of Central Florida



**Edward J. Latessa Practitioner
Research Award**

Dr. Kimberly Collica-Cox
Pace University

Congratulations to our 2025 Award Recipients!



**Pamela K. Lattimore and RTI
International Dissertation Scholarship**

Ellie Lynn

University of Missouri, St. Louis



**Ben Steiner Excellence in Corrections
Student Paper**

Iolanthe Brooks

Northwestern University



**Dr. Kimchi Memorial Graduate Travel
Award**

Maya Moritz (UPenn)

University of Pennsylvania



**Dr. Kimchi Memorial Graduate Travel
Award**

Carl Reeds (USF)

University of South Florida

Teaching Note

Ungrading in a Sentencing Classroom

Clare Strange, Drexel University

Invoking my friend Rhys Hester’s book, “Sentencing Without Guidelines” (Hester, 2024), I have finally embarked on a long delayed journey: Teaching Without Grades. Simply put, ungrading is an umbrella term for many assessment practices that depart from traditional or normative grading systems (Sorensen-Unruh, 2024). These practices commonly focus on iterative feedback, student self-determination, and evaluations that are oriented towards learning over performance—all of which promote student wellness, mastery, and equity gains in the classroom (Mickelson & Schaffer, 2025). There are many levels of ungrading, ranging from individual activities to an entire course. I tend to go big, so this year I overhauled my undergraduate Sentencing course at Drexel to be entirely ungraded. It is now about halfway through the quarter and—I have some thoughts! First, let me set the context.

In 2023 and 2024 I had the same student ace two of my courses. He was bright and an excellent test-taker, but rarely attended class. When he did attend (because I changed my attendance policy), he did not meaningfully engage with the content nor with his colleagues. As someone who cares deeply about the teaching and learning process, he drove me nuts. I decided to restructure my courses such that students were less likely to treat them as a checkbox on a transcript.

Fast forward to Fall quarter 2025. I welcomed 29 undergraduate students of all years and majors into my ungraded classroom. On day one I asked them to share something that they’ve learned very well (for example, a skill, a subject, or a hobby). We had musicians, martial artists, multilingual folks, crocheters, history buffs, and everything in between. I then asked, “How did you learn it?” They inevitably described techniques that we know enhance learning: modeling, practice with graduated difficulty, and self-pacing (as examples). Last, I asked, “What grade did you get?” Confusion spread through the room—had they really mastered something without external pressures like grade point averages?

With the tone set, we then co-developed a learning contract to guide how they are assessed in the absence of letter grades. They provided concrete examples of ‘evidence of engagement’ (the key metric), named the elements of a safe and collaborative learning environment, and outlined our shared responsibility to uphold them.

Four weeks into the quarter I have several observations:

- Ungraded learning requires a significant and ongoing time investment. I spend more time than ever with their writing assignments, but I find this time more enjoyable and personally fulfilling. I also feel that my feedback is better because I have to genuinely engage with what they've written instead of skimming and assigning 'X' out of 10 points. Ungrading also emphasizes the value of peer feedback, which I use when appropriate to increase their skills in this area and reduce my workload.
- Students may require some level of academic deprogramming. Even with the quarter underway, students still sometimes ask me, "I missed class, can I make it up?" My reply is, "What does 'make it up' mean to you?" Clearly, we cannot recreate the classroom experience that they missed, nor can I award points for a makeup assignment. In an ungraded classroom, however, we have the leeway to collaboratively decide how they can digest the material and reflect their learning back to me. This also seems to work well for students in need of academic accommodations. As the weeks pass, I notice my students' questions shifting from the surface level and practical to the deep and conceptual.
- My students are holding me accountable. In weekly reflections I prompt the students to address questions about content and their learning process. They are forthcoming (though gentle—remember the contract!) with critiques about lectures and activities, and I feel better poised to receive them because we have established a respectful and honest feedback loop.
- My students are holding themselves accountable. When students respond to learning process prompts they are taking more responsibility than before. For example, one student noted, "Next time I want to engage earlier in the discussion and push the conversation deeper." With this student-defined metric of sorts, I will make sure to have him illustrate using specific examples whether and how he achieves this in future groupwork.

So, why is there a grading scale on my syllabus? Our university systems are not yet built to support ungraded teaching and learning. Students will, in fact, receive a final letter grade in my course, though it will be determined collaboratively and based on evidence of engagement (as defined by the class in the learning contract) from a portfolio in which they can store class notes, readings with notes/highlights, artifacts from group work, and out-of-class assignments.

I feel like I'm finally teaching at the caliber I'm capable of, and I'm really enjoying it (check in with me at ASC; I might be singing another tune by then!). If you've tried ungrading techniques in your courses, I'd love to hear about them.

This teaching note is dedicated to the talented instructors at Drexel's Teaching and Learning Center, for inspiring and equipping me to take this journey. It is also dedicated to my dad, Dr. C. Carney Strange, who helped Bowling Green State University students learn, develop, and grow for 37 years (Strange, 2023).

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AltAc Corner

In this issue, we're sharing a few tips to help you with informational interviewing. We're also excited to highlight our Resume Revamp office hours series, and share where you can find us at ASC 2025!

3

TIPS FOR



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

What are informational interviews?

Informational interviews are one of the most effective ways to explore AltAc careers. They're low-pressure conversations that help you learn about roles, organizations, and transitions – all while building authentic professional connections.

1. Lead with Curiosity, Not a Job Ask

Informational interviews are about learning, not landing an immediate offer. The best way to start is by showing authentic interest in someone's career story. Begin with a simple, respectful message. Once you meet, focus on understanding their journey rather than selling yours. Ask open-ended questions like:

- What does a typical day or week look like in your role?
- What skills helped you transition successfully from academia?
- What advice would you give to someone exploring a similar move?

2. Do Your Homework and Find Connection Points

Preparation shows respect for the other individual's time and makes your conversation more engaging. Spend a few minutes researching:

- Their organization's mission and current projects.
- Their career trajectory (LinkedIn is a good place to start).
- Any shared academic, research, or geographic ties.

Then, make your outreach and your questions more personalized. If you share similar interests, mention them early on. People are more likely to respond when they see a genuine connection.

3. Follow Up – Genuinely

A thoughtful follow-up turns a one-time chat into an ongoing relationship. Within 24 hours, send a brief thank-you message. In the weeks that follow, keep in light contact: share an article related to your discussion, let them know how their advice helped, or update them on your next steps.



The DCS AltAc Resume Revamp office hours series provides attendees with content related to reframing and rewriting their academic CV to a resume suitable for industry spaces! This includes live editing of an example CV/resume, and; the opportunity to ask for personalized help on your own resume.

UPCOMING OFFICE HOURS:
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH, 2025

[REGISTER HERE](#)

FIND US AT ASC 2025

DCS'S ALTAC SERIES: A PANEL FOR JOB SEEKERS - NAVIGATING INTO ALTAC CAREERS

**Friday, November 14th
2:00 to 3:20pm
Judiciary Square - M3**

This thematic panel will cover four main topical areas: 1) the basics about AltAc industry spaces and the type of varied work across spaces; 2) why scholars, at times, are pushed into these spaces and away from traditional academia; 3) the kinds of impact(s) scholars can make in these career settings; and 4) advice for faculty mentoring about discussing and helping students navigate AltAc paths.

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Visit the AltAc Team's Webpage:

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Spotlight on Mentoring

The DCS Mentoring for Success Program: Seven Years of Growth, Connection, and Impact

Jill Viglione, University of Central Florida

The Division on Corrections and Sentencing (DCS) Mentorship for Success Program is now in its seventh year. Over the course of its history, program committee members have matched students and individuals early in their careers with faculty and professionals in the field. The original intent behind the program was to better integrate young scholars into DCS and within the broader field, aiding in their professional development and networking. The program originator, Dr. Danielle Rudes, envisioned the program as a way to ensure that every DCS member would be sitting at the breakfast at the annual American Society of Criminology (ASC) conference knowing at least one other person. I became the chair of the Mentoring for Success program committee in 2020. Since then, we have had 108 student mentees, 45 tenure-track or early career mentees, and 153 faculty or practitioner mentors. Over the last seven years, we have matched and supported a total of 120 mentorship pairs in the academic track and 33 mentorship pairs in the alt-academia track.

Since its inception, the program has evolved into a comprehensive four-track model, consisting of two academic pathways, one for students and one for tenure-track professors, and two non-academic pathways, one for students and one for early career professionals. The committee's work has also grown, with multiple subcommittees established to further support program participants:

- The Mentorship Matching Subcommittee is responsible for developing, updating, and administering the application survey, reviewing responses, and facilitating meaningful mentee-mentor matches.
- The Program Subcommittee is responsible for developing programmatic flyers, developing and updating program materials, including suggested meeting guidelines, topics to cover in meetings, and suggested schedules. This year they are also developing a variety of additional guides, including funding resources for doctoral students, professional development funding opportunities, and more!

- Third, the Program Events Subcommittee plans and coordinates both virtual and in-person events to foster engagement and connection.

Together, members of the Mentoring for Success program committee are committed to providing the most supportive, enriching, and impactful mentorship experience for all participants.

As part of the program, we survey participants to gather feedback and identify areas for improvement. To date, we received responses from 40 program participants, including 18 mentees and 22 mentors. Of these respondents, 72% reported being very satisfied with the program, 26% being satisfied, and 2.6% were dissatisfied.

Most participants reported they met with their mentee/mentor once per month (58%), while others met every other month (21%), twice per month (8%), once per semester (8%), or as needed (5%). Mentees reported receiving feedback most frequently on networking (30%), publications (20%), the job market (10%), grants (10%), building agency relationships (10%), comprehensive exams (10%), and general career advice (10%). When asked about areas where they desired more support, mentees identified grants, publications, networking, the job market, and agency relationships. Mentors reported they provided guidance most frequently on the job market (40%), publications (30%), teaching pedagogy (10%), tenure (10%), and navigating doctoral programs (10%). Seven participants reported that their involvement in the program led to the creation of at least one deliverable, such as a publication, presentation, or newsletter article.

Notably, 90% of participants reported they planned to maintain their relationship with their mentee or mentor after their formal involvement in the program concluded. Those who did not anticipate continuing cited reasons such as already having a robust mentoring network or experiencing a breakdown in communication during the course of the program. The committee actively incorporates feedback like this to refine program materials, enhance guidance provided, and strengthen the matching process.

In response to an open-ended question, participants identified the most beneficial aspects of the program as opportunities to build connections outside of their current universities or agencies.

Participants reported genuine enjoyment in meeting new people, building meaningful

relationships, and enjoyed sharing knowledge and interests with new people. Mentees valued having an experienced mentor to turn to for feedback and encouragement. They especially appreciated mentors who were flexible and responsive. Mentees also discussed how their mentor helped them gain insight into both academic and nonacademic career trajectories and uncovered aspects of the “hidden curriculum” and practical strategies for navigating academia.

Both mentees and mentors reported that the program expanded their professional networks and increased their visibility in the field. Mentors facilitated introductions to others with similar interests and career goals. Further, mentees emphasized the emotional support and encouragement they received, often viewed as just as important as academic advice. Having a mentor outside of their university or agency to confide in was perceived as “safer” and more comfortable than relying solely on internal networks. Participants also highlighted the value of exchanging ideas that might not surface in formal academic settings. Through shared research interests and open dialogue, mentees and mentors engaged in mutual learning and inspiration. Overall, feedback underscores that the program fosters academic growth and connection among scholars across DCS.

Lastly, we asked participants to share suggestions for improving the program. Key recommendations included facilitating conversations among mentors to exchange strategies, conducting more frequent check-ins with participants to assess mentorship pairings, and to engage with other professional organizations such as ACJS. We deeply value this feedback and view it as essential to ensuring the program remains relevant and effective for DCS members. In response, we developed a dedicated session for mentors to discuss best practices, share tips, and reflect on their experiences. We also began surveying participants at the end of the fall semester to identify any emerging challenges. While we encourage mentees and mentors to communicate directly when issues arise (if they feel comfortable), there are times when ending the relationship may be the most constructive option. We offer guidance, advice, and when necessary, assistance in re-matching to ensure every mentoring experience is as productive and positive as possible.

Building on this feedback-driven approach, I recently interviewed a student mentee, Steven Chen, and his mentor, Janani Umamaheswar, to better understand the long-term impact of the program. Steven and Janani have been working together in the program in the student mentoring track for several years. Their reflections shed light on the value of cross-institutional mentorship and highlight the program’s role in fostering personal growth, professional development, and sustained connection.

MENTOR REFLECTIONS: JANANI UMAMAHESWAR

On Representation and Support:

"I was an international student and a student of color in graduate school, and I remember wishing there were more senior scholars who understood the unique challenges that came with those identities. It's been really rewarding to be in a position where I can now offer new scholars the kind of support I wished I had when I was in their shoes."

On Evolving as a Mentor

"I'm still very much growing into my role as a mentor, to be honest. I think that the benefit of having an external mentor is that they can fill gaps in the internal, institution-specific support a student might be receiving, whether social, topical, or methodological. For that reason, I think asking mentees "what do you need from me?" and "what's missing from the support you already have?" can be valuable."

On Building Connection

"I loved meeting Steven in person at ASC and highly recommend supplementing virtual interactions with in-person meetings when possible."

Advice to Mentees

"I think it's very important to be honest and clear about what you're hoping to get out of the mentorship program, and to be proactive about reaching out. I imagine many mentors will feel the way I do about not wanting to add additional pressure on mentees by checking in frequently, asking how progress on their [insert stressful milestone] is coming along, etc., so reaching out at your own pace and on your own time is important for getting the most out of the relationship."

MENTEE REFLECTIONS: STEVEN CHEN

On Representation and Support:

"During my second year, I encountered challenges and nearly considered dropping out. My previous mentor from this program guided me, helping me navigate alternatives and ultimately continue with my PhD program. No department is perfect, so it is critical to have an outside mentor to offer additional support and perspective. I deeply appreciate Janani's input on my dissertation proposal, especially her generosity in sending me relevant scholarship. Although my committee members are corrections scholars, none of them specialize in aging populations in corrections, so her support has been invaluable. Being an international student adds another layer of challenge, particularly with navigating the job market and balancing work under a limited visa timeframe. I look forward to having more conversations with her about these issues."

On Challenges Feel More Equipped to Address"

"One of the most challenging parts of my dissertation will be working with the Department of Corrections to gain approval for research activities. I am grateful for Janani's willingness to share her personal experiences and offer guidance. Although I have not yet formally applied to the DOC, I've had initial contact, and the feedback has been generally positive. They encouraged me to submit my research proposal, and I plan to ask Janani to review."

On Building Connection

"I have benefited greatly from both my previous and current mentors in this program. My mentors often point out things I would not have considered and provide me with additional useful information."

Advice to Mentees

"Being open and honest has been especially helpful. Janani reviewed my CV, helped organize my research ideas, and supported me even when I wasn't as proactive due to visa-related travel... My biggest takeaways are to be honest, set clear goals, and stay proactive."

These reflections underscore the transformative potential of mentorship. Whether you're a mentor or mentee, intentionality and openness can have a positive impact on building a successful professional relationship.

As mentioned in Janani's interview, meeting in-person with your mentee or mentor is invaluable. One of the key initiatives the committee has dedicated efforts to in response to participant feedback was to create more opportunities for mentees and mentors to connect in person. Beginning in 2022, we encouraged program participants to meet face-to-face at the ASC conference. To date, participants have taken advantage of this opportunity by meeting at the DCS breakfast, ASC Ice Cream Social, and Mentoring Program Coffee Hours. This year, the events subcommittee has fun activities planned for mentorship program participants at the DCS Social, which will take place on Wednesday, November 12th from 6-8pm at City Tap located at 901 9th Street NW. We hope to see you there!

I want to conclude by expressing my deep gratitude to the many DCS members who have served on this committee with me since 2020. This program thrives because of your time, dedication, and collective effort. Without each of you, it simply would not be possible. I'm also profoundly thankful to our program participants, especially the mentors who generously dedicate time from their already busy schedules to support the next generation of corrections and sentencing scholars. We quite literally would not have a program without you. If you are reading this article and have not yet participated in the program, please consider applying this summer!

Serving as chair of this program over the past six years has been an incredibly honor. I truly enjoyed the opportunity to help shape and grow this program. To continue strengthening its impact and welcoming fresh perspectives, I am passing the torch to a new chair after this academic year. I look forward to watching the program evolve and flourish in the years ahead.

Historian Note

Sharing Current DCS Graduate Student Member Experiences

Victoria Rivera Laugalis, PhD, Loyola University New Orleans

Angela Murolo, PhD, St. Francis College

The Historian Committee's first project of the 2025-2026 academic year focused on DCS graduate student member experiences. If you are currently a student or remember what it was like being a graduate student, you know it is an exciting but also challenging time, and a number of factors can influence that experience. Part of the Historian's duties are to document important moments, experiences, and activities of DCS. Therefore, we wanted to hear about and share some of our graduate students' experiences and current interests.

The students who agreed to participate responded to several questions including what led them to graduate school, their research interests, career goals, graduate school challenges, and DCS experiences. We want to thank Gabriel Alvarez (4th year J.D./Ph.D. student at University of California, Irvine), Joy Ferdinand (2nd year Ph.D. student at University of Arkansas at Little Rock), and Meghan Koza (2nd year Ph.D. student at Sam Houston State University) for taking the time to share their interests and experiences.

When asked what influenced their decision to enroll in graduate studies, Alvarez said "mostly my desire to engage in empirical research and my parents." Ferdinand explained how she "saw how much impact research and policy can have when they are done well" and "wanted the tools to not just point out problems, but also help create solutions." Ferdinand continued, "It was more about equipping myself to do work that makes reentry easier, reduces recidivism, and pushes the justice system to be more humane." Koza said "I genuinely find research to be fun."

When asked about their current research interests, Koza stated the "rights of the justice-involved, criminal policy, sentencing & corrections," Alvarez said "Family and Law, Psychology and Law, Health and Life-Course Criminology," and Ferdinand indicated a focus "on reentry, social support, and the broader policies that can either open or close doors for people who are trying to rebuild their lives after incarceration."

Some of the biggest challenges expressed for being a graduate student today were “funding,” “cost of living,” and “learning how to write and communicate one’s ideas.” The students’ career goals after graduation included academia, research, and roles related to law and policy.

The students also shared how they got involved with DCS and how DCS can help support their education and career goals. Their responses indicated involvement in DCS was influenced by “mentors being involved,” graduate student peers, and an “interest in how the justice system can better handle incarceration and reentry.” Ferdinand said, “The Division of Corrections and Sentencing can support my education and career goals by helping me bridge my academic research with my advocacy and policy work.” Koza suggested, “Providing abilities to explore new areas of research, education on novel research methods.” Alvarez said “student mentoring is a huge source of support” and explained that it “allowed me to connect with and write with two AMAZING professors in the field who still help me think through my ideas.”

We appreciate the students’ contributions to the Historian record, and look forward to documenting more of DCS’s activities. This project developed from the previous Historian’s documentation of student experiences, and we hope to continue recording member activities in the future. Additionally, the Historian Committee welcomes members to join the committee to help continue these projects. Feel free to email us at vrlaugal@loyno.edu if you are interested.

MEET YOUR NEW MENTOR

DCS Mentoring for Success Program



Corrections
Sentencing



ACE!

The Center for Advancing
Correctional Excellence

Join us at the DCS Social!

Wednesday, Nov. 12, 6-8pm

City Tap: 901 9th Street NW



Get to know your mentor/mentee! The first few matches to complete an activity win a prize.



Need an intro? Committee members have marked nametags and can help!

Can't attend the social? Meet your mentor at the DCS outreach table and head to another event:

DCS Breakfast Meeting

Thursday, Nov. 13, 8:00-9:20am

Georgetown - Meeting Level 1

(Tickets Required)

ASC Ice Cream Social

Thursday, Nov. 13, 1:30-2:45pm

Liberty Salon L & M -

Meeting Level 4 (Exhibit Hall)

ASC Poster Session

Thursday, Nov. 13, 6:30-8:30pm

Marquis Salon 5 -

Meeting Level 2

ASC Presidential Address

Friday, Nov. 14, 5:00-6:20pm

Independence Salon A-E -

Meeting Level 4

ASC Closing Brunch

Saturday, Nov. 15, 12:30-1:50pm

Liberty Salon L & M -

Meeting Level 4 (Exhibit Hall)

Division Leadership

Chair

Eileen Ahlin, Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg
ahlin@psu.edu (2023-2025)

Vice Chair

Debi Koetzle, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
dkoetzle@jjay.cuny.edu (2024-2026)

Secretary/Treasury

Daniel Butler, Iowa State University
hdbutler@iastate.edu (2024-2026)

Executive Counselors

TaLisa Carter, American University
carter@american.edu (2023-2025)

Megan Novisky,
University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute
Meghan.Novisky@uc.edu (2023-2025)

Janani Umamaheswar, George Mason University
jumamahe@gmu.edu (2024-2026)

Past Chair

Shelley Johnson, University of North Carolina, Charlotte
slistwan@uncc.edu (2023-2025)

Congratulations to our Incoming Board Members!



Chair

Dr. Jill Viglione
University of Central Florida



Executive Counselor

Dr. Jess Grosholz
University of South Florida



Executive Counselor

Dr. Clare Strange
Drexel University

Interested in serving on the Board?

The call for nominations will be out in spring/summer 2026. Consider nominating yourself or others for Vice Chair, Secretary/Treasurer, or Executive Counselor for the 2026-2028 term.

Committee Members

Nominations

Chair: TaLisa Carter,
Heath Grant, Renee Lamphere, Susan McNeeley, David Pitts, Breanne
Pleggenkuhle, Shi Yan

Outreach

Chair: Meghan Novisky
Cassandra Atkin-Plunk, Stuti Kokkalera, Peter Lehmann, Travis Meyers,
Chelsey Narvey, Clare Strange

Awards

Chair: Dan Butler
Linsey Belisle, Jill Doerner, Brandon Dulisse, Chantal Fahmy, Krista Gehring,
Sergio Grossi, Bryan Holmes, Arynn Infante, Cheryl Jonson, Heejin Lee, Kate
Kempany, Doyun Koo, Rimonda Maroun, Susan McNeeley, Meghan Mitchell,
Travis Meyers, Miriam Northcutt Bohmert, Ebony Ruhland, Stephanie Spiegel

Student Awards

Chair: Dan Butler
Ashley Appleby, Ashley Arnio, Claudia Anderson, Cassandra Atkin-Plunk, Kayla
Freemon, Nancy Gartner, Krista Gehring, Elizabeth Hartsell, Beth Huebner, Kim
Kras, Ryan Labrecque, Robert Lytle, Alicia McKay, Scott C. McWilliams, Meghan
Mitchell, Chelsey Narvey, Jennifer Peck Breanne Pleggenkuhle, Jason Rydberg,
Jenn Tostlebe, Clare Strange, Matthias Woeckener,

Special Events

Chair: Cassandra Atkin-Plunk
Heath Grant, Jess Grosholz, Sergio Grossi Debi Koetzle, Meghan Mitchell
Chelsey Narvey, Stacie St. Louis

Program

Chari: Janani Umamaheswar
Colleen Berryessa, Nancy Gartner, Kate Kempany Stuti Kokkalera, Doyun Koo,
Renee Lamphere, Susan McNeeley, Ashley Nellis

Committee Members

Newsletter

Chair: Debi Koetzle

Colleen Berryessa, Heath Grant, Stuti Kokkalera, Ashley Nellis

Historian

Chair: Victoria Rivera Laugalis

Kelli Callahan, Angela Murolo

AltAc

Chairs: Shannon Magnusson & Kelsey Kramer

Ashley Balavender, Kelsey Kramer, Kim Kras, Julia Laskorunsky, Jennifer Peirce, Timothy Reling, Samantha Tosto

Mentoring

Chair: Jill Viglione

Josh Cochran, Katie Durante, Jess Grosholz, Narissa Haakmat, Elizabeth Hartsell, Kelsey Kramer, Brittany Martin, Jennifer Peirce, David Pitts, Victoria Rivera Laugalis, Danielle Rudes, Stacie St. Louis, Christine Tartaro

Spotlight on our Committees

Our division could not function without the help of our many committee members. Read below for brief descriptions of each committee. We hope you'll sign up to volunteer for next year!

The **Nominations Committee** oversees award nominations and board elections for the Division. They facilitate the process by encouraging members to self-nominate or by identifying potential candidates for awards and board positions, ensuring transparency and inclusivity. Each summer, the committee organizes the slate of candidates and manages the election process, strengthening member engagement and leadership within the Division.

The **Outreach Committee** helps to solicit sponsors for division events and manages the outreach table. The committee is also charged with recruiting new members. The bulk of their work is completed in the fall (August-November).

The **Awards Committee** is responsible for reviewing applications and selecting awardees for our various awards. Each year, the committee organizes into subcommittees by award. Applications are reviewed and recipients are selected by each subcommittee with most activities completed in August through October.

The **Student Awards Committee** focuses on the awards for our current students. These include the dissertation award, student paper, and travel award. Members of this committee work in subcommittees to review applications and select recipients every fall (August through September).

The **Special Events Committee** supports the board with planning the DCS social at ASC. The committee also organizes outings during ASC and plans activities for the social. These activities largely occur between August and November.

Spotlight on our Committees

The **Program Committee** aims to showcase corrections- and sentencing-related research at the annual meeting of the ASC. Work on this committee may include brainstorming panel/roundtable ideas, inviting researchers to join these sessions, working with other divisions to create co-sponsored panels/roundtables, and/or advertising DCS-related research being presented at ASC. Much of the workload is concentrated over a few weeks in the spring after the ASC call for submissions for the annual meeting goes live.

The **Mentoring for Success with DCS Program Committee** oversees the division's formal mentoring initiative. Each August, the committee coordinates the solicitation of applications for both mentors and mentees, carefully reviewing submissions to facilitate meaningful and effective matches. In addition to managing the application and pairing process, the committee is responsible for developing, updating, and distributing program materials that offer clear guidance and expectations for participants. To foster engagement and ongoing support, the committee also organizes a variety of in-person and virtual events throughout the year, tailored to meet the needs of program participants and to promote a culture of professional growth and collaboration across the division.

The **Newsletter Committee** assists the Vice Chair with preparing the Spring and Fall newsletter. This includes soliciting and reviewing submissions and helping to finalize the newsletter. The goal of the newsletter is to promote the work of our division and our members and to share important information with our membership. Committee activities take place during the spring (March-April) and fall (September - November).

The **Historian Committee** assists with the oral history project and engages in activities throughout the year. Check out the Spotlight on Historian for their recent work.

The **Alt-Ac Committee** is busy throughout the year. They support our members by holding virtual officer hours, sponsoring panels at ASC, and hosting list-serve. They also regularly contribute to the newsletter!

AMERICAN PROBATION AND
PAROLE ASSOCIATION



GOT INSIGHT?

WE WANT IT!

CALL FOR ARTICLES

APPA encourages article submissions from practitioners
and/or academics.

Papers should center on issues related to community
corrections and associated topics and cater to APPA's
membership:

- Traditional review articles
- Research articles
- Program, practice, or policy



Check out APPA Perspectives Website for
more information!

From the Editor

I'm pleased to share the Fall 2025 edition of the ASC DCS Newsletter. It is an honor to serve as editor of this newsletter and I'm grateful to our members who submitted notes about their research, teaching, or other activities. I'm also thankful to our committee who helps to solicit submissions and to proof the material.

This edition has some great reminders about ASC, including featured panels and papers, as well as mentoring and AltAc events. Be sure to mark your calendars!

As we think ahead to the next year, I would like to elevate the activities of our student members, including celebrating those that have graduated. I'm curious as to what you would like to see in these pages. More division news? More teaching or research notes? Drop me a line and let me know!

Hope to see you in DC!
Debi



Debi Koetzle
Editor

Call for Submissions

We are accepting corrections- and sentencing-focused teaching notes, student section contributions, or research notes for publication in our Spring newsletter. Ideally, submissions should be 500-1,000 words, in APA format.

Submissions will be accepted through **April 15, 2026** via
dkoetzle@jjay.cuny.edu