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Concordia Criminal Justice Highlights

Faculty & staff committed to a higher education.

BY SCOTT HARR, CONCORDIA CRIMINAL JUSTICE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

It's a common misconception that the online component of Concordia University St. Paul's bachelors and masters degree programs is what sets them apart from other school options. True, these fully accredited degrees from a 114 year old school are completed totally online, but we consider the technology no different than any other used to convey information during classes; really, the use of the Internet isn't much different than once using an overhead projector or showing a movie.

What really makes Concordia's criminal justice programs such a rich learning environment are the students and faculty. Students start their degree program with a small group (a cohort) which takes the entire series of classes, one at a time, together. Not only do students develop an immediate support system, but friendships that will last a lifetime are formed.

It's not just the people; it's where these people are from and what they do. Any program can let criminal justice practitioners sit around with others from their immediate area discussing what they already know. But think of the opportunities to be in a class with people who can share their own wealth of experience as if you were sitting across from them!

We consider our faculty and students family, and take great pride introducing them. In this edition we would like to introduce Concordia Criminal Justice Instructor Linda Finney...

Please introduce yourself:



Linda Finney. I recently retired as the Superintendent of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and have been teaching in Concordia's criminal justice program since it began.

Because of the pride we have in what our faculty brings to our program, what is your background? I retired from the Metro-Dade Police Department in Florida in 1984 as a lieutenant after working there since 1972, then was with the BCA from 1986 until I retired in 2006, having served my last two years as Superintendent. During my tenure with the BCA I served as SAC of Training.

What experience did you have with online learning prior to Concordia? Absolutely none! I have to admit I was intimidated by it, but in fact it's very easy to master.

Has your perspective about online learning changed? Yes, significantly. My concern was losing contact with students, but I found the online approach actually gives me more direct contact with each individual. What the program has provided me as faculty is much greater flexibility in terms of responses to students, virtually anytime of day or night, and access to class from anywhere with internet connections. Also no student is 'lost in the crowd,' each gets individualized attention.

What advise would you give someone considering returning to school? Mid-career is an excellent time to return to school. I found the life experience gained by students who have worked in their chosen pro-

profession adds to the depth of discussions. They give as much as they get in this environment. Also students can more readily see the application of concepts and ideas to real world situations. For all these reasons return to school later than some have makes education a richer experience.

What are the positives you see to online learning? Flexibility for one. Regardless of shift or other demands, students are able to be active in the courses. Accessibility for another. Whether they are out of town or working late, or even have a child's school concert to attend, students don't miss out on content or completing assignments.

We consider faculty like Linda Finney, and our students from around the World, the real essence of our program. While it's not the fact the program is online that makes it such an exceptional option for adults trying to balance busy lives, it is the fact the online program allows so many people and unique perspectives to be involved that makes this such a rewarding way to earn a degree. But the accessibility of it being online adds to why so many criminal justice personnel are finding it's the best fit for them.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Criminal Justice Department Chair Scott Harr at harr@csp.edu or 651-603-6277 or department recruiter Mike Conner at conner@csp.edu or 651-641-8249 and by visiting www.csp.edu. ■