As February comes to an end, we are experiencing longer days and warmer weather.

The approaching spring serves as a good reminder that we often forget to take a break from our computers – marking exams, writing papers, or preparing for a lecture. It’s important that we take time to step away – to participate in other activities.

In this month’s newsletter, we share some of the learning and social activities available to our students. Undergraduate students have the opportunity to participate in special events hosted by the Criminology Student Association – and every student enrolled in a criminology course is a member of the organization.

We also highlight a learning opportunity that challenges students to step out of the classroom to gain some real world experience. Our interview with Professor Myers, and a few of her students, reveals the impact of their class field trip to a local prison.

Lastly, we introduce you to our newest staff member, Jeni Koumoutsakis. Jeni provides an excellent example of how to achieve work/life balance by pursuing professional development and enjoying a variety of hobbies.

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. Send your comments, questions and story ideas to crimcomm@sfu.ca.

Sincerely,
Neil Boyd
Director, School of Criminology
STUDENT ASSOCIATION OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Attending university provides the opportunity to meet new people, to enjoy extracurricular activities and to give back by volunteering. The challenge for most students is fitting all these possibilities into the demanding schedule of student life.

The Criminology Student Association (CSA) helps to solve this problem by providing students with a chance for increased university engagement beyond attending classes and staying up late studying.

The CSA exists to represent all criminology students at SFU. Every student currently enrolled in one or more criminology courses is automatically a member of the organization.

Members are invited to participate in weekly meetings and to attend special events. An executive committee of volunteers helps to organize and coordinate activities, and provides representation on university committees to assert the interests of students.
“We always like to meet new students at our meetings because we don’t get to meet all the criminology students from just going to class. The meetings provide an opportunity for students to share any concerns they have about their university experience,” says CSA president Chelsey Lee, a fourth year criminology student.

CSA meetings are held every Wednesday from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in Saywell Hall, Room 10218.

In addition to representing student interests to the faculty, the CSA organizes a variety of social and academic activities.

“The easiest way to get involved with the organization is to attend one of our events. We have one event each semester that provides an opportunity for students to relax and socialize,” says Lee.

The group recently held a “Murder Mystery Event” based on the popular board game Clue. For the event, participants were split into small groups and had to travel around campus searching for clues. Similar to the board game, participants needed to determine the culprit, the weapon, and the location of the fictional murder. Volunteers located around campus provided the clues – and not volunteers told the truth.

“We held the Murder Mystery Event to provide an entertaining evening for students to take a break from school. It was an enjoyable event for us to organize and the participants had fun,” says Lee.

In addition to organizing social activities, the CSA also holds a Career Fair every spring to provide students with the opportunity to make connections with organizations linked to criminology.

This year’s Career Fair takes place on Wednesday, March 11, 2015 from 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the Saywell Atrium. Representatives from a variety of agencies, including policing, law and community groups, will meet with students to answer questions. Information on co-op and volunteer opportunities will also be available.

A panel discussion on women in criminal justice, held in conjunction with the Gender, Sexuality & Women’s Studies Student Union and the SFU Women’s Centre, will take place after the Career Fair from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Saywell Atrium.

The CSA’s events are open to all students to attend. Most events have free admission.

Students interested in participating in events or attending meetings are encouraged to contact the CSA with any questions. The organization is actively seeking new volunteers.

“The executive committee is happy talk to students about what we do and how they can personally get involved. Also, if they want to get involved but don’t have much free time, we can work with them,” says Lee.

For more information on the CSA and its upcoming events, please visit www.sfu.crim.wix.com.
INSIDE THE CLASSROOM

PRISON VISIT PROVIDES REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS

Last semester, Professor Nicole Myers took seven of her Criminology 343: Correctional Practice students to visit two prisons in Abbotsford: the Fraser Valley Institute for Women (FVI) and the Matsqui Institution for men. She’ll repeat the tour this semester with another 10 students.

Criminology 343 is a third year seminar class for 25 students. The class discusses contemporary issues in correctional practice in Canada, specifically focusing on the prison experience.

We interviewed Myers to learn the purpose of the field trip and how it impacted her students.

WHAT WAS YOUR MAIN GOAL IN BRINGING STUDENTS TO SEE A PRISON FIRST HAND?

I wanted students to have the opportunity to visit a correctional facility to dispel any myths that have been created or fostered by the media. Also, the visit adds that real world experience to what we talk about in the classroom. If you are going to work in the criminal justice system or in corrections, I think you really need to get a sense of what it is you are going to go do and see what that looks like first hand.
HOW DID THE STUDENTS REACT TO THE EXPERIENCE?

The students certainly seemed very nervous, very uncomfortable. You could see it on their faces, and some of them said it. It is a very uncomfortable experience going in and seeing people who are serving time. Some of the people serving time are not happy that you are there for a tour; this definitely adds to the level of discomfort.

WHAT DID THE STUDENTS GET TO SEE DURING THE VISIT?

The visit generally takes a full day. We are walked right through the institution. We see most parts of the prison, with the exception of segregation (solitary confinement) cells. You see that prisoners go to work, go to school and also participate in religious, cultural and therapeutic programming. The correctional officer gives an overview of the institution. Students are provided an opportunity before and after the tour to ask questions.

WHAT FEEDBACK DID YOU RECEIVE FROM STUDENTS ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE?

The experience facilitated very interesting dialogue in the classroom. We often talk about prisoners in an abstract way in the classroom setting, so it was nice for the students to get the opportunity to follow up the tour with any questions for myself and to relay that experience to others in the class. I think they took a lot from the experience. The tour made the issues we were discussing very real and it served to humanize the prisoners by challenging ideas of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

WHO SHOULD TAKE THIS CLASS?

I think anyone who is interested in taking a critical look at what we are doing in corrections. This course is not a how-to of correctional programming. This course is looking at challenging and controversial correctional practices. It’s an opportunity for students to explore these areas in a very critical way. We are not looking at how to administer programming, we are critically thinking about how correctional practices can be improved. Students taking this course need to want to actively engage with the material and participate in class discussions.

Note: To be eligible to attend the prison tour, students must be enrolled in Criminology 343 and apply for CPIC security clearance at the beginning of the term.

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

BRITTANY LING

Visiting a women’s institution and a men’s institution all in one day provided me with a great opportunity to experience the vast differences between the two. It was interesting to see the different programs and activities available for the inmates. For example, the dog kennel program at Fraser Valley Institution and various workshops at Matsqui Institution. I had no idea these existed! Touring the various buildings and observing the layout of the institutions was very intriguing as it allowed me a greater picture of what these prisons were like from the inside.

Overall, it was a very valuable experience not only for my education, but also personally as any other member of society who typically has limited opportunities to see the realities of our criminal justice system.
KRYZEN LOO

The visit to the correctional facility really influenced me personally and my understanding of the prison system. I was just recently hired by Burnaby Youth Custody Services as a youth correctional officer. The field trip influenced much of my decision to apply for this position.

I found that no matter how detailed something is in a textbook, it does not compare to actually experiencing it. It is a very difficult task working with offenders, changing their mentality and helping to improve their overall well being. The one part of the field trip that really influenced me was when our tour guide said, ‘I feel I make a difference even if I only help 1 in every 100 inmates.’ Although this may sound like terrible odds, every difference matters.

ELEANOR BATES

As we toured the prisons, it became apparent that both had different purposes. The way the women's prison was set up seemed to be different to the way the men's prison was set up.

FVI seemed to be very conducive to treatment, psychological help, and most importantly, education, and the women were able to wander around freely, and have a good relationship with the officers.

Matsqui Institution had a more onerous atmosphere. We were shown a maximum unit, where the male offenders heckled us, and it was hard not to stare back at them. The organization of this unit looked like the 'typical' prison that we see on TV shows. The officers appeared to monitor the male offenders (more than the females at FVI), and this confirmed the stereotype that male offenders are perceived to be more dangerous. I just thought that the male offenders looked like sad, aimless souls, knowing that they were going to be in there for a long time.
NEW STAFF MEMBER JOINS CRIM TEAM

Jeni Koumoutsakis has ten years of experience helping keep offices organized and running efficiently at SFU.

Koumoutsakis recently joined the School of Criminology as an administrative secretary. Before becoming part of the Criminology team, she worked as an assistant to the chair in the Department of Psychology for eight years. She started her career at SFU in the Department of Mathematics as the chair’s secretary.

“We’re lucky to have had the opportunity to hire Jeni; she understands the environment very well – from the requirements for hiring new faculty to the details involved in tenure, promotion and salary review cases. She has a vast range of experience,” says Director Neil Boyd.

Koumoutsakis’ main job function is to assist with the organization and maintenance of faculty records. She’s charged with handling the paperwork for sessional appointments, faculty salary reviews, tenure position renewals, and study leave requests. She also assists the School’s director and manager with administrative work.

“I’m excited to be working for the School of Criminology. The position is challenging me to learn a new set of systems and processes. I am also taking on assignments that were not required in my previous jobs. It’s very enjoyable and rewarding,” says Koumoutsakis.
As a believer in the value of lifelong learning, Koumoutsakis aims to challenge herself not just in the workplace but also in her spare time.

She enjoys taking courses offered by SFU Human Resources to increase her skill set and to keep up with technology. She takes a variety of courses focused on computer literacy and personal development.

“I really like working for SFU because it offers such a positive and supportive environment for growth. It’s encouraging to be able to learn new things and to develop my skills,” says Koumoutsakis.

When she’s not in the office, Koumoutsakis is busy participating in a variety of activities. She enjoys hiking, cycling and attending Zumba and yoga classes.

This spring, Koumoutsakis is running in the Vancouver Sun Run for the second year. She’s been attending regular training clinics to prepare herself for the physically challenging run.

Koumoutsakis is an avid traveller who enjoys her summers in Greece at the family vacation home. She has toured Europe and Mexico extensively. She is also a member of the Port Moody Film Society.

### IN THE NEWS

**ARTICLE COURTESY OF SFU NEWS**

**COOL OPTIONS GROW**

Professor Eric Beauregard’s Criminology 101 class has just 11 students this semester, rather than the usual 200-plus. That’s because he’s teaching it entirely in French.

The course is part of SFU’s COOL Option program. COOL is the acronym for Curriculum in the Other Official Language, a program organized through SFU’s Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs (OFFA).

OFFA may be best known for developing the French Cohort Program – an undergraduate program in French, political science and history that is taught primarily in French and leads to a BA. But the office also helps develop other courses taught in French, both to offer the cohort students some additional variety, and to offer other French-speaking students on campus a chance to study in French.

Beauregard, who hails from Montreal, taught the Crim 101 course in French for the first time last semester. While it’s an added teaching load because he had to design the course all over again in French, he notes that there are significant advantages to teaching it in French.

“Because I have so few students, I can take the time to lecture and discuss the readings with them. For me, it’s good because I can really test whether they’ve understood the material, and for them, they have a chance to ask questions. It provides a good class discussion.”

He also was surprised to discover how well French Immersion students speak and understand French, and hopes the COOL program continues to grow.