REPORTS OF OUR DEATH ARE GREATLY EXAGGERATED:

A STUDY OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACADEMIC PROGRAM SURVIVAL IN ALABAMA

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ABSTRACT

It has been suggested that the reduction of and eventual termination of LEEP funds for the education of inservice justice system employees would lead to a reduction in the size of criminal justice academic programs with attendant termination of many programs. However, academic programs are rarely terminated and tend to develop their own constituencies. This study examined the survivability of criminal justice academic programs in Alabama and found that while there may have been a reduction in size at some point, the criminal justice programs continue to survive, are experiencing growth in student population, and have long-term plans for program development.

The advocacy for higher education for police officers has a history of almost 70 years. August Vollmer proposed a college program for police offices in 1917 (Hudzik, 1978). Early degree programs were developed at the University of Southern California (1929), Michigan State (1935) (Buraker, 1977), and San Jose Teachers College (1930) (Kuykundall, 1977). Before the 1950's, there were fewer than 1,000 students enrolled in justice system related programs in less than 50 programs in the U.S. (Misner, 1981). There was some growth in the 1960's, and less than 10% of America's police officers had some college education by 1968 (Jacobs & Magdovitz, 1977).

The Sixties saw considerable social unrest in the form of desegregation, peace movements, riots, and protests. In many cases,

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these activities led to police involvement and visibility, usually with a negative image projected, culminating perhaps in the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago with its vivid coverage of police efforts to control demonstrators. At the same time, the visibility of crime in the Sixties increased the fear of crime by many Americans (Osterman, 1966). By the mid-Sixties, public opinion polls consistently found that the public ranked crime among the most important issues of concern (Scammon & Wattenberg, 1970). As a result, there was a shift in the attitude of the national government concerning crime control. Crime came to be recognized as a matter of national concern rather than as a local or state issue (Feeley & Sarat, 1980). As a result, crime control became a major issue in the 1964 Presidential campaign with all major candidates identifying crime as a problem demanding attention on the national level (Gray & Williams, 1980).


One of the five major provisions of the Safe Streets Act focused on training, education, and research (Feeley & Sarat, 1980). The Law Enforcement Education Program's (LEEP) mission was to educate criminal justice employees, especially the police, by funding criminal justice programs in two and four-year colleges and in universities (Taft, 1981a). The LEEP program made grants available to employees of the justice system and loans available to preservice students. The grants were forgiven if the employee remained in the justice system for four years following the semester in which he or she received LEEP support. The grants could be renewed as long as the employee was in school and could be used to complete work through professional degree programs such as the J.D. or Ph.D. (Jacobs & Magdovitz, 1977). Federal funds were provided to educational institutions that established new programs or made existing programs available to justice system employees. The schools usually administered these grants through a specific academic department or through financial aid offices. Justice system employees would be notified that the courses were available at no cost with LEEP funds covering the cost of tuition, fees, and books (Taft, 1981a). The development of programs to take advantage of these funds was rapid.