

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

ASPIRE EXPERIENTIAL MAJOR MAP

RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Graduates of the West Liberty University Criminal Justice program leave with a strong foundation in criminal justice theory and practice, real-world experience through a required 200-hour internship, leadership and service experiences, and transferable workplace skills valued by employers. Students develop critical thinking, ethical decision-making, communication, research, and problem-solving abilities while building professional networks with faculty and community partners. These experiences prepare graduates for careers in law enforcement, corrections, courts, victim advocacy, federal agencies, and related fields, as well as graduate or law school. The combination of academic preparation, experiential learning, and career readiness provides graduates with the knowledge, skills, and professional credentials to successfully transition into meaningful careers that serve communities.

CAREER UNDERSTANDING

- Explore the causes of crime, criminal behavior, and the impact of crime on communities.
- Develop a theoretical understanding of criminal law, law enforcement, ethics, investigations, and the U.S. justice system.
- Examine current issues in criminal justice while developing skills to analyze evidence and make informed decisions.

CAREER PREPARATION

- Gain hands-on experience through internships, and crime scene scenarios.
- Develop strong communication, critical-thinking, and problem-solving skills.
- Learn from experienced faculty with backgrounds in criminal justice and related fields.
- Develop strong communication, critical-thinking, and problem-solving skills.

CAREER PATHWAYS

- Law Enforcement
- Courts & Legal Services:
- Probation and Parole
- Criminal Investigation
- Crime Scene Analysis
- Natural Resources & Wildlife:
- Corrections & Rehabilitation:
- Government & Public Service:
- Careers with federal, state, and local agencies, as well as opportunities in private security and community organizations.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

"The combination of classroom learning, faculty mentorship, and hands-on experience helped me graduate feeling prepared for a career in criminal justice." - *Gracie Bush*

"The internship and real-world learning opportunities showed me what it truly means to serve others with integrity and professionalism." - *Tanner Griffith*

HILLTOP ADVANTAGE

The Hilltop Advantage is a structured, student-centered approach that ensures every student graduates with not only a degree, but also meaningful experiences, career-ready skills, and a clear post-graduation plan.

TOP SKILLS

- Communication skills
- Problem-solving & Leadership
- Collaboration & Teamwork
- Conflict Resolution
- Research & Data Analysis
- Critical thinking & Analytical reasoning

ASPIRE - Experiential Major Map

CRIMINAL JUSTICE	FIRST YEAR EXPLORE	SECOND YEAR EXPERIENCE	THIRD YEAR APPLY	FOURTH YEAR EXCEL	ACADEMIC SUCCESS CHECKLIST • Make an appointment with your academic advisor • Visit faculty during office hours • Create a working resume and LinkedIn profile • Engage in campus organizations • Work toward effective internship opportunities
ACADEMIC MASTERY	Students explore & develop an understanding of the U.S. criminal justice system, the roles of police, courts, and corrections, academic writing, communication, and quantitative reasoning. Students also complete foundational general education courses.	Students experience why crime occurs, juvenile justice, corrections, and begin developing professional identity and ethical awareness. Students strengthen critical thinking and communication skills while completing additional general education courses.	Students apply skills through hands-on learning opportunities in the study of criminal law, ethics, victims of crime, criminal investigation and substance abuse issues while learning to analyze criminal justice policy and evaluate evidence-based practices in mock crime scenes, courtrooms, and correctional settings.	Students integrate classroom knowledge & excel through research design and a supervised 200-hour internship. The senior seminar course prepares students for employment or graduate education through professional projects and reflection.	
SELF-DISCOVERY & STRENGTHS (HIGH IMPACT LEARNING EXPERIENCES)	• Explore personal values and interests in criminal justice careers. • Identify individual strengths through coursework and self-assessments. • Develop study skills, resilience, and time management.	• Refine career interests (law enforcement, courts, corrections, victim advocacy, federal service, etc.). • Assess personal strengths related to leadership, ethics, and public service. • Develop professional identity.	• Evaluate personal growth and professional competencies. • Demonstrate ethical decision-making. • Build confidence through applied learning and research.	• Reflect on personal and professional growth. • Demonstrate readiness for employment or graduate school. • Develop a lifelong professional development plan.	
PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION INTEGRATIVE & EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING	• Learn about criminal justice career pathways. • Attend career fairs, guest speaker events, and departmental activities. • Begin creating a résumé and LinkedIn profile. • Join the Criminal Justice Society or related student organizations.	• Participate in service-learning experiences. • Job shadow criminal justice professionals. • Develop interviewing and networking skills.	• Complete research projects and case studies. • Participate in simulations (mock trials, investigations, policy analysis). • Prepare for internship placement. • Update professional portfolio and résumé. Ensure electives align with career goals	• Complete the required 200-hour practicum/internship. • Complete the Senior Seminar and capstone projects. • Prepare for employment through mock interviews, résumé refinement, and job applications. • Participate in Research (RECAP) • Integrate classroom learning with real-world practice. Ensure electives align with career goals.	
RELATIONSHIPS & LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT & WELL-BEING	• Build relationships with faculty, advisors, and classmates. • Participate in campus organizations and service activities (criminal justice society) • Practice teamwork through class projects. • Develop communication and collaboration skills.	• Strengthen mentoring relationships with students, faculty and professionals. • Serve on committees or participate in student organizations. • Develop conflict resolution and interpersonal communication skills. • Work collaboratively on research and class projects.	• Assume leadership roles in student organizations. • Mentor newer students. • Collaborate with community partners during projects. • Strengthen professional networking.	• Demonstrate leadership in internship and professional settings. • Build lasting professional networks with supervisors and alumni. • Transition from student to criminal justice professional.	