Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges

Meeting Date**: November 12, 2026**

Agenda Item: **2.6**

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION:

Committee: **Academic & Personnel Committee**

Action Item: **Addition of a Bachelor of Arts/Science in Applied Criminal Justice – WSC**

Developed as part of a system-wide initiative to explore reduced-credit bachelor's degrees, WSC proposes the addition of a Bachelor of Arts/Science in Applied Criminal Justice with an emphasis on Social & Organizational Communication. This degree is intended for "nontraditional" learners — i.e., adults who are not interested in a traditional in-person, on-campus college experience, and many of whom are expected to be in-service professionals seeking advancement in their law enforcement or related public service fields.

The degree builds on the existing 120-credit Criminal Justice curriculum, which is available to students online, while streamlining coursework that emphasizes essential knowledge and leadership competencies for policing and agency administration. It is intended to support degree completion for working professionals with defined career goals and agencies that increasingly expect bachelor's-level education for advancement.

The 90-hour program consists of 30 hours of general studies courses and 60 hours of program requirements. The program requirements break down into 12 hours of foundational work, 24 hours of criminal justice coursework, and 24 hours of additional coursework that will allow students to tailor the program to their career interests. Additionally, up to 15 credit hours can be accepted into the program as credit for prior learning (CPL) in Foundational Coursework or the internship requirement. Students must earn a grade of C or above in the Foundational Coursework.

This 90-credit bachelor's program is tailored for the online learner and is designed to prepare students for advancement in law enforcement careers and related public service professions.

The System Office recommends approval of the addition of a Bachelor of Arts/Science in Applied Criminal Justice at Wayne State College.

ATTACHMENTS:

- NSCS New Program Bachelor Applied Arts & Science in CJ WSC

Wayne State College

Proposal to Add Bachelor of Arts/Science in Applied Criminal Justice

1. Descriptive Information

A. Name of Institution: Wayne State College

B. Name of Program: Applied Criminal Justice

C. Degrees/credentials to be awarded graduates of the program: BA/BS

D. Other programs offered in this field by the institution: BA/BS in Criminal Justice (emphasis in Social & Organizational Communication)

E. CIP code: 43.0104

F. Administrative units for the program: Department of Criminal Justice; School of Science, Health, & Criminal Justice

G. Proposed delivery site(s) and type(s) of delivery, if applicable: Online

H. Proposed date (term/year) the program will be initiated: Spring or Fall 2027, dependent upon Board and HLC approval timelines

I. Description of Program:

Developed as part of a system-wide initiative to explore reduced-credit bachelor's degrees, this program in Applied Criminal Justice with an emphasis on Social & Organizational Communication is intended for "nontraditional" learners — i.e., adults who are not interested in a traditional in-person, on-campus college experience, and many of whom are expected to be in-service professionals seeking advancement in their law enforcement or related public service fields.

The degree builds on the existing 120-credit Criminal Justice curriculum, which is available to students online, while streamlining coursework that emphasizes essential knowledge and leadership competencies for policing and agency administration. It is intended to support degree completion for working professionals with defined career goals and agencies that increasingly expect bachelor's-level education for advancement.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Apply a theoretical foundation to case-based scenarios to criminal justice.
2. Define pertinent criminal justice issues associated with their career-oriented goals.
3. Develop technical writing applications that illustrate a comprehensive knowledge of criminal justice material.

Degree Requirements: 90 credit hours

- General Studies Requirements: 30 credit hours

- Program Requirements: 60 credit hours
- Up to 15 hours of credit for prior learning (CPL) will only be considered for the Foundational Coursework in this program and the internship requirement. Students must earn a grade of C or above in the Foundational Coursework.

Foundational Coursework (12)

CJA 105 Introduction to Criminal Justice 3
CJA 200 Criminal Law 3
CJA 203 Police and Society 3
CJA 235 Security and Loss Prevention 3

Required Criminal Justice Coursework (24)

CJA 304 Report Writing for Criminal Justice Professionals 3
CJA 325 Community-Based Corrections 3
CJA 351 Criminal Procedure 3
CJA 380 Cybercrime 3
CJA 405 Family Violence 3
CJA 475 Ethics and Issues in Criminal Justice 3
CJA 497 Internship 6

Additional Coursework (24)

Select two of the following courses 6
- CJA 320 Correctional Institutions (3)
- CJA 360 Homeland Security and Terrorism (3)
- CJA 377 Gangs and Organized Crime (3)
- CJA 404 Drugs, Alcohol, and Crime (3)
- CJA 430 Criminology (3)
- CJA 444 Topics in CJ (3)
- CJA 460 Emergency Management (3)

Select two of the following courses in Social Issues, Diversity, and Communication 6
- CNA 201 Small Group Communication (3)
- CNA 210 Interpersonal Communication (3)
- CNA 252 Public Address (3)
- HUS 202 Introduction to Human Services (3)
- HUS 218 Personal Growth (3)
- SOC 220 Social Problems (3)
- SOC 245 Race and Ethnic Relations (3)

Select two of the following courses in Justice, Policy, and Media Relations 6
- CJA 370 Crime and Media (3)
- POS 430 Public Policy (3)
- POS 445 Public Administration and Management (3)
- CNA 374 Public Relations (3)
- CNA 377 Public Relations Writing (3)
- CNA 426 Public Relations through Social Media (3)

Select two of the following courses in Law, Rights, and Social Justice 6
- CNA 346 Organizational Communication I (3)
- CNA 459 Organizational Leadership (3)
- CNA 465 Communication Law (3)

CNA 467 Intercultural Communication (3)
POS 402 State and Local Politics (3)
POS 420 American Constitutional Law (3)
POS 425 Rights and Liberties (3)
SOC 320 Social Welfare (3)
SOC 460 Social Inequalities (3)

Existing Courses

CJA 105 Introduction to Criminal Justice 3
This is a survey course designed to acquaint the student with the total field of criminal justice emphasizing the institutions and processes of law enforcement and corrections.

CJA 200 Criminal Law 3
Criminal Law focuses on substantive criminal law, including constitutional limitations on government power, elements of crimes, and criminal responsibility and defenses. Criminal laws explored include inchoate offenses, person crimes, property offenses, crimes against public morality, alcohol and drug offenses, offenses against public order and safety, and offenses against justice and public administration.
Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105.

CJA 203 Police and Society 3
Examines the role of the police in relationship to law enforcement and American Society. Topics include, but are not limited to, the role and function of police, the nature of police organizations and police work, and the patterns of police-community relations.
Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105.

CJA 235 Security and Loss Prevention 3
Provides insight into the complex problems of loss prevention in today's society, including security staffing needs, fire protection and control, duties and responsibilities of security personnel, internal controls, emergency and disaster planning and internal theft.
Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105.

CJA 304 Report Writing for Criminal Justice Professionals 3
This course focuses on writing effective investigatory reports which follow fundamental guidelines established to ensure accurate information for use by professionals working cases in law enforcement, social worker, security, corrections, parole/probation, and forensics. Ongoing topics covered include diligent notetaking, appropriate grammar, and proper organization of information for a clear, concise, correct, and complete report.
Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105.

CJA 320 Correctional Institutions 3
The course focuses on the historical development of prisons, and a discussion of the current structure, philosophy, character, and issues of modern correctional institutions.
Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105.

CJA 325 Community-Based Corrections 3
The study of the correctional processes at the community level including the parole and probationary concepts. Emphasis is on applied techniques.

Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105.

CJA 351 Criminal Procedure 3
This course focuses on the procedural criminal law, including search and seizure, arrest, interrogation and identification procedures, the pretrial process, the criminal trial, sentencing and punishment, and appeal and post-conviction relief.
Prerequisite: CJA 200

CJA 360 Homeland Security and Terrorism 3
This course examines the nature and extent of the threat from internal and external political groups as well as how the federal law enforcement community was restructured in a post 9-11 period. Agency structure, funding, training jurisdiction, issues, and contemporary court cases are topics.
Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105.

CJA 370 Crime and Media 3
This course will examine the representations of crime and the criminal justice system in the media. It will examine how the media presents, represents, distorts, and/or screens issues in our society related to crime and justice. This course will evaluate television, film, newspaper, and electronic/internet media to examine how these entities are used as a mechanism to explore issues that are central to the study of crime.

CJA 377 Gangs and Organized Crime 3
This course provides insight on gangs and organized crime by examining the history, structure, activities, identification of criminal and organized groups, and government efforts to control them both nationally and internationally. Topics include illegal trafficking, money laundering and cybercrime.
Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105.

CJA 380 Cybercrime 3
This course focuses on the latest trends and best practices associated with cybercrime and investigation contexts, processes, and procedures. Topics include identity theft, hacking, cyberterrorism, child sexual abuse, cyberbullying, the Deep Web, and the Dark Web.

CJA 404 Drugs, Alcohol, and Crime 3
This course examines drug use and abuse, the impact of drugs on the human body, and how drugs are correlated with crime. The course will explore theoretical explanations for drug use and abuse, current treatment, and prevention strategies, along with the criminal justice system's response in prevention and public policy.
Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105.

CJA 405 Family Violence 3
The course examines child abuse, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and elder abuse. Particular topics include theories of abuse, societal responses to abuse, and assistance to victims.
Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105.

CJA 430 Criminology 3
This course reviews the nature and causes of crime and efforts of the criminal justice system to predict, prevent, modify, and correct criminal behavior. Criminological theories of crime and criminality from classical theories to modern theories will be examined. Students will also assess the benefits and weaknesses of major sources of crime statistics and their impact on criminal justice policy.
Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105.

CJA 444 Topics in CJ 3
Current or special issues in Criminal Justice will be examined. The course offers students the opportunity to discuss relevant issues facing society. This course may be repeated, by advisement, with different topics.
Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105.

CJA 497 Internship 6
Placement in a professional capacity in an agency for a supervised period of at least 50 hours per credit.
Prerequisites: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice, instructor approval, 2.5 GPA required and junior standing or above.

CNA 201 Small Group Communication 3
Explores the functions of discussion in our society, problem-solving, group dynamics, and analysis of the operative forces within the group. Emphasis on skills of group discussion, participation in decision-making groups, leadership, organization, and evaluation.

CNA 210 Interpersonal Communication 3
The study of theories and models of interpersonal communication that enhance understanding and development of interpersonal relationships. Skills are developed in listening behavior, dyadic interaction, relationship and conflict management, verbal and nonverbal communication, and intrapersonal processing.

CNA 252 Public Address 3
This course sets the foundation of communication theory by setting the stage of the first roots of the western heritage in rhetoric. Students will learn how the art and skills of rhetoric evolved beginning with the Greeks of Plato and Aristotle, through the Romans of Cicero and Quintilian, through the Christianization of rhetoric in St. Augustine, and ending with the Ramian and Cartesian turns leading into modern thought and practice of communication theory.
Prerequisite: CNA 100

CNA 346 Organizational Communication I 3
Explores the nature and function of communication in organizations. Emphasis on concepts, skills for effective management of communication, analysis, and evaluation of formal and informal patterns of communication in organizations.
Prerequisite: CNA 100

CNA 374 Public Relations 3

A study of the principles and practices of effective public relations with exercises and projects emphasizing application of media skills for business, educational, and political communication.
Prerequisite: CNA 100

CNA 377 Public Relations Writing 3
This course emphasizes writing skills needed in Public Relations work, awareness of Public Relations as a management strategy, the role of Public Relations in generating social awareness and responsibility, and the study of ethics in Public Relations.
Prerequisite: CNA 100

CNA 426 Public Relations through Social Media 3
An introduction to current systems and practices used in Public Relations to create and maintain Internet-based interactive communications with customers and constituents. Students will create content hands-on and will be able to apply a conceptual framework including branding programs, Integrated Marketing Communications, and other professional, legal, and ethical standards and practices. This course draws from the fields of public relations writing, photography, video production, and/or other types of multimedia content creation.

CNA 459 Organizational Leadership 3
An introduction to the study and practice of leadership from a communication perspective. Particular focus on the relationship between communicating and leading. Examination of leadership concepts and theories in organizational group and public contexts. Students will analyze leadership styles and develop leadership skills through team projects and classroom activities.
Prerequisites: CNA 100 and sophomore standing.

CNA 467 Intercultural Communication 3
A course aimed at developing a thorough understanding of communication and culture, in both global and community settings, and the way members of diverse cultures and subcultures utilize unique systems, symbols and media representation to communicate among themselves and other groups. Emphasis on media representation of minority groups and U.S. sponsored health/public welfare campaigns in developing nations will enable students to critically assess the communication process in a cultural context.

CNA 475 Communication Law 3
An overview of the laws, regulations, and court cases affecting personal and organizational communication. Topics addressed include freedom of speech, libel and slander, privacy, regulation of advertising, copyright and trademark, and Internet and media law. Case studies emphasize how the courts interpret and apply the law.
Prerequisite: CNA 100

HUS 202 Introduction to Human Services 3
This course summarizes the history and standards of the human services profession. It also clarifies the personality characteristics, skills, and knowledge that lead to the development of effective human services professionals. Students implement these

during service-learning activities in human services agencies in the community (as available) and discuss their experiences in small reflection groups.

HUS 218 Personal Growth 3
An introduction to the study of personal growth with an emphasis upon facilitating self-awareness, personal growth, and adjustment. An understanding of oneself and others will be addressed along with such issues as friendship, stress, motivation, work, decision making, emotions, intimate relationships, sexuality, and others.

POS 402 State and Local Politics 3
The study of the political institutions and process at state and local levels.
Dual-listed: POS 502

POS 420 American Constitutional Law 3
A study of the U.S. Constitution and the impact of the Supreme Court's interpretations of the Constitution: judicial review, governmental powers, and rights of citizens, including both civil and criminal rights.

POS 425 Rights and Liberties 3
A study of the Bill of Rights and the impact of the Supreme Court's interpretations on its provisions. Subjects include freedoms of religion, freedoms of speech, freedom of the press, the right to keep and bear arms, search and seizure, the right to counsel, cruel and unusual punishment, discrimination, and the right to privacy.

POS 430 Public Policy 3
The study of domestic policy making processes and institutions at all levels, taught from an intergovernmental relations perspective.
Dual-listed: POS 530

POS 445 Public Administration and Management 3
Concepts of public administration and management processes, introduction to administrative processes of personnel, budgeting, and program management; analysis of public bureaucracy's function from a public policy perspective.
Dual-listed: POS 545

SOC 220 Social Problems 3
Study and discussion of selected social issues including racism, ageism, sexism, poverty, welfare, and environment.

SOC 245 Race and Ethnic Relations 3
Study of the history, place, and role of ethnic and racial groups in American society. The course examines the social construction and consequences of majority-minority group relations to understand the differences and similarities in the adjustment processes of race and ethnic groups in American society.

SOC 320 Social Welfare 3

Designed for those interested in understanding social welfare systems, public assistance processes and policies, social services programs, client/patron relations, current issues associated with welfare programming, and the influences of politics of social welfare.
Prerequisite: SOC 101 or SOC 220; or instructor approval.

SOC 460 Social Inequalities 3
The course explores the development and maintenance of systems social stratification historically and in contemporary global society. It focuses on the effects of social class inequality and relationship to social change. In doing so, it also includes the intersection of inequalities based on race/ethnicity, gender, and age.
Prerequisite: SOC 101 or SOC 220; or instructor approval.
Dual-listed: SOC 560

Re-added Course (last published in 2021-22 catalog)
CJA 475: Ethics and Issues in Criminal Justice 3
Students will examine social issues that give rise to current ethical dilemmas in the practice of criminal justice. Topics such as racism and prejudice, abuse of authority, and corruption will be examined in the context of well-established ethical theory. Case studies are an integral component of this course.
Prerequisite: Major in (Applied) Criminal Justice or CJA 105

2. Centrality to Role and Mission

Wayne State College's tripartite mission is to inspire students, strengthen communities, and serve the region. Since its founding as Nebraska Normal College in 1891, WSC has served as a hub for teaching and learning in Northeast Nebraska. Today, with over 130 majors, concentrations, endorsements, and graduate programs, along with myriad professional development opportunities and community enhancement events, Wayne State continues to foster intellectual growth and support its region and the state.

The Bachelor of Arts/Science in Applied Criminal Justice represents the next step in WSC's evolution as it expands undergraduate degrees designed for adult learners. This 90-credit bachelor's program is tailored for the online learner and is designed to prepare students for advancement in law enforcement careers and related public service professions.

3. Evidence of Need and Demand

A. Need for the program:
Nebraska currently faces a shortage of law enforcement professionals. The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program reports that nationwide there are approximately 2.3 sworn officers per 1,000 inhabitants. Nebraska, with just over 2 million residents, according to the Census Bureau's 2025 population estimate, and approximately 4,100 certified law enforcement officers, according to the Police Standards Advisory Council, has a ratio of 2.03 per 1,000 inhabitants, with urban areas such as Omaha and Lincoln having markedly higher ratios than rural regions. LB 1241, which was enacted as the Law Enforcement Attraction and Retention (LEAR) Act in

2022, is part of the state's efforts to address this gap. WSC's proposed program contributes to this effort.

B. Demand for the Program:

Between 2020 and 2025, 345 students graduated from Wayne State College with bachelor's degrees in Criminal Justice, making it the single largest undergraduate major at the College and the second largest program behind Business Administration (757 conferrals).

The existing program is offered both in-person and online. Face-to-face sections, even at the 300 and 400 levels, typically have enrollments over 30 and on occasion over 40; online section enrollments tend to be in the 15–18 range. The proposed program is designed to complement, not replace, the existing online program. Students in the applied major will be enrolled in the same online sections that currently enroll students in the online 120-hour program, so no additional sections will be required until enrollment exceeds 12-15 students per year. (NB: Per § 5.4 of the current SCEA Agreement, online course enrollments are capped at 30.)

Of the 235 declared Criminal Justice majors enrolled at WSC in fall 2026, 35 are enrolled in the online program. The department estimates that ~15% of these students will shift to the applied program when it is available, which is reflected in enrollment estimates below.

Year	Shifts	New/ Readmitted	Continuing	Total Enrolled	Graduates	Attrition/ Stop-outs
2027-28	5	10	–	15	5	1
2028-29	–	15	9	24	10	2
2029-30	–	20	12	33	15	3
2030-31	–	20	15	35	15	3
2031-32	–	20	17	37	15	3

Attrition/stop-out figures are estimated based on recent rates for JR/SR students at WSC. The enrolled-to-graduates ratio is higher than that of other programs due to the three-year nature of the applied program.

4. Adequacy of Resources

A. Faculty and Staff Resources:

The Department of Criminal Justice at Wayne State College currently employs five full-time faculty members and one graduate assistant, providing in-load instructional capacity of up to 44 course sections per year. In the 2025-2026 academic year, the program offered 49 undergraduate course sections, exclusive of those offered for dual credit.

The new applied program utilizes existing course offerings with one exception. CJA 475: Ethics and Issues in Criminal Justice, which was a requirement in the four-year CJ major until 2022, will be revived and added to the department's course rotation. The frequency and scheduling of other CJA course sections are being adjusted to accommodate this addition without adding to delivery costs. The department expects to continue to deliver

48-50 CJA course sections per year once the new program is launched. As a result, no additional personnel are required for the delivery of the applied degree program.

B. Physical Facilities:
No new physical facilities are required for the delivery of this program.

C. Instructional Equipment and Informational Resources:
Because Wayne State College already offers a four-year version of this program, no new instructional equipment or library materials are required. Department faculty will need to develop new advising materials and program checklists to guide students in the program in Stellic. At the institutional level, coordination will be required to develop marketing materials and clarify processes related to applied bachelor's degrees.

D. Budget Projections for the first five years of program:
Because this proposal is based on the use of existing personnel, facilities, instructional equipment, and informational resources, a projected budget *pro forma* is not included.

The current plan anticipates modest growth over the first five years of the program, with total enrollments eventually mirroring those of the 120-credit online program. Given current capacity in existing online courses, no additional sections are anticipated until enrollment exceeds 25, assuming enrollment in the four-year online program remains steady. By year three, if enrollment estimates are met, the program would require two additional adjunct sections per semester, at a cost of $12,000 per year. By year five, this would rise to four additional adjunct sections per semester, at a cost of $24,000 per year. Given the current online tuition rate of $337.70 per credit, it would require only 2.37 full-time students to generate the gross revenue required to offset this cost.

5. Avoidance of Unnecessary Duplication

Wayne State College, like all members of both the Nebraska State College System and of the University of Nebraska System (except UNMC), offers a four-year bachelor's degree program in Criminal Justice or a similar discipline. These programs are widespread because they are in high demand among students and have clear pathways to professions.

Chadron State College's reduced-credit Justice Studies program was approved by the Board at its January 2026 meeting and received HLC approval in September. Peru State College's reduced-credit Criminal Justice program was approved by the Board at its June 2026 meeting with an HLC visit and approval forthcoming. Though these programs, like the one proposed here, are available statewide, the institutions' commitment to focus on their designated service areas ensures the avoidance of unnecessary duplication.

A review of accreditation actions taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) reveals that, since the accreditor began approving reduced-credit bachelor's degrees in March 2025, seven institutions had been approved for applied programs in Criminal Justice or a similar area as of August 2026, the most recent month reported. Of these, five are in states that are members of the Midwest Higher Education Compact (MHEC): Manchester University in Indiana (approved March 2026), Concordia University–Saint Paul in Minnesota

(approved March 2026), Southeast Missouri State University (approved March 2026), St. Mary's University of Minnesota (approved May 2026), and Indiana Wesleyan University (approved August 2026).

6. Consistency with the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education

This proposed program has been developed in alignment to several major statewide goals identified in the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education's Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education:

- By reducing total degree costs and time-to-completion, the program meets the plan's call to "reduce students' costs, and shorten time to degree."

- By focusing on the needs of in-service law enforcement professionals, the program meets the plan's calls to "provide…graduates with the knowledge and workplace skills needed to be successful employees" and to "be responsive to the workplace development and ongoing training needs of employers and industries to build and sustain a knowledgeable, trained, and skilled workforce in both rural and urban areas of the state."

- By developing a newly recognized degree structure and stepping up as one of the first HLC-accredited institutions to offer a reduce-credit Criminal Justice bachelor's degree, the College meets the plan's call to "adopt new methods and technologies to address" the "evolving needs and priorities of the student and people of Nebraska."