Intent to Plan for a New Program
South Dakota Board of Regents
Academic Affairs Forms

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Use this form to request authorization to plan a new baccalaureate major, associate degree program, or graduate program; formal approval or waiver of an Intent to Plan is required before a university may submit a related full proposal request for a new program. The Executive Director and/or their designees may request additional information. After the university President approves the Intent to Plan, submit a signed copy to the Executive Director through the System Academic Officer through the proper process. Only post the Intent to Plan to the university website for review by other universities after approval by the Executive Director, System Academic Officer or designee. This form is meant to capture critical elements for stakeholders to review prior to a full proposal.

University	BHSU - Black Hills State University
Degree	BS : Bachelor of Science
Name of Major	BCJ : Criminal Justice **Criminal Justice**
Specialization Required?	Yes *Note: If the new proposed program includes specific specializations within it, complete and submit a New Specialization Form for each proposed specialization and attach it to this form. Since specializations appear on transcripts, they require Board approval.*
College/Department	6S : BHSU College of Behavioral/Natural Sciences/BSBS : School of Behavioral Sciences
Intended Date of Full Proposal	Fall 2026
Planned CIP Code	43.0100

Program Description

1. Provide the working program description that may appear in the university catalog.

The Bachelor's of Science degree in Criminal Justice provides students interested in law enforcement, the criminal legal system, corrections, and general crime and deviance studies with a broad education emphasizing social science principles. The program is designed to provide B.S. students with the skills necessary to enter the workforce as professionals throughout the criminal justice system. As an interdisciplinary program, it also prepares students to study crime and deviance as well as other social sciences at the graduate level. A firm background in critical thinking, writing, methodology, and theory encapsulates a flexible curriculum that allows students to pursue a variety of special interests, such as terrorism, criminal law, and both psychological and sociological factors related to crime and deviance, and the societal response to these phenomena.

Strategic Impact

2. Describe how the program fits in with the institutional mission, strategic plan, existing institutional program array, and academic priorities.

A criminal justice program produces graduates who are in a unique position to accomplish goals articulated in Black Hills State University's mission statement, specifically promoting significant public engagement and generating graduates who make significant contributions to the workforce and the betterment of their community. Public safety, in various forms, promotes the welfare of the community. This includes the wide variety of fields that criminal justice students enter, such as policing, corrections, community-based corrections, and counseling and reintegration services. It prepares graduates to make significant contributions by preparing them not only for entry-level positions but leadership positions within these fields. The program will provide a firm foundation through which to pursue graduate education as well. Criminal justice, as the primary form of formal social control within a society, is engaged with the public. Through rigorous education and interdisciplinary curriculum, graduates will be prepared with the knowledge and desire to engage the public in meaningful ways.

Goal One - Objective Five of the current strategic plan at BHSU focuses on fostering a rich array of career and leadership development opportunities for students. This includes internship programs. There are many internships available to criminal justice students at the federal, state, and local agencies. The availability of a criminal justice education improves the array of career and workforce-oriented majors available at BHSU as the major translates directly into a field with numerous job opportunities and openings. Criminal justice professionals often operate with little supervision in their jobs, thus making the development of leadership skills important within the curriculum of the program. All of these elements accomplish the institutional mission and strategic goals of the university.

Goal Two – Objective Three of the current strategic plan calls for new or substantively modified graduate, major, minor, or certificate programs. The introduction of a criminal justice major and accompanying minor, if deemed appropriate, would help to accomplish this objective. It aligns the university curricula with current and emerging workforce needs. This is especially true in western South Dakota, where there are no criminal justice programs. Since criminal justice is primarily the responsibility of government, it increases student engagement with government agencies as well as community groups and non-profits who often fill treatment needs within community-based corrections. This reinforces Goal One – Objective five mentioned above.

Criminal justice, as an interdisciplinary social science, fits well with the current institutional program array. While criminal justice and criminology are distinct fields of study and distinct academic disciplines, they draw on other social sciences available at the university. Criminal justice has elements of psychology, sociology, political science, and human services within the field. This reduces the resources required to operate a criminal justice major while improving educational outcomes. The distinct elements of the field will be available to students, providing them with a fuller array of social sciences to choose from, and will complement other programs within the university, which can also draw on the expertise contained within the criminal justice field. Criminal justice, in many ways, is intertwined with the other social sciences in the professional spheres as well. Human services professionals often work with criminal justice agencies. Political science deals with criminal justice issues both nationally and internationally, while psychology and sociology provide some of the theoretical schools of thought within the field.

If the program does not align to the strategic plan, provide a compelling rationale for the institution to offer the program.

NA

3. How does the program connect to the Board of Regent’s Strategic Plan?

Goal four in the SDBOR strategic plan (2022-2027) focuses primarily on workforce and economic development. Relevant objectives addressed by the new program under goal four include:

Align new or enhanced undergraduate programs to the South Dakota and national workforce.

Increase awareness of placement needs, and opportunities within South Dakota for graduates.

Promote strategic investments in critical need areas to fuel South Dakota’s knowledge based economy.

The new program in criminal justice aligns with the need for increased education for practitioners within the criminal justice system. It provides educational opportunities for students and practitioners on the western side of the state. The bachelor’s degree in criminal justice also prepares students well for post-graduate study within the State of South Dakota, including the University of South Dakota’s Knudsen School of Law or their Master’s of Administration degree with a concentration in criminal justice administration (housed in USD's Beacom School of Business). In addition, the proposed program provides another path into master’s level counseling programs (e.g. SDSU’s Rapid City program), and master’s levels social work programs (e.g. USD’s MSW program), particularly for students interested in working within criminal justice settings.

Since criminal justice graduates work in a variety of fields, criminal justice professionals would help to increase the number of treatment professionals both within and outside of the criminal justice system itself. This includes practitioners in critical areas such as drug addiction counseling, re-entry services, various offender monitoring programs, and treatment programs for delinquent youth. By increasing the capacity to treat delinquent youth, South Dakota could not only increase opportunities for employment of college graduates but decrease the number of delinquents transferred out of state for rehabilitation and treatment. Criminal justice graduates can also pursue licensing as an associate social worker and addictions counselor trainee. These lead to more advanced licensure with experience.

The criminal justice degree at BHSU would represent an investment in the knowledge-based economy of South Dakota by producing graduates

equipped to provide advanced knowledge-based skills such as crime mapping, data analytics, and research skills to criminal justice agencies and other fields. Other fields such as cyber-crime, geospatial intelligence, and risk-terrain analysis are all skills that will be taught throughout the curriculum. These are all in-demand knowledge-based skills that have a wide base of application from assisting public agencies to starting businesses based on providing these services to a variety of entities within and beyond the state.

Goal three in the SDBOR strategic plan calls for academic excellence, improvement in student outcomes, and educational attainment. Relevant sub-goals include:

Prioritize programs with high-impact practices and workforce alignment

Initiate collaborative partnerships for STEM pathways.

The proposed major at BHSU will emphasize high-impact practices including internships, a research lab, and a collaborative forensic experience designed to expose students to a variety of educational experiences that focus on experiential learning. The program, through the core classes, will offer simulations, promote critical thinking, and be writing intensive. These components have a high impact on student learning. Established partnerships with various agencies in the area will provide hands-on experiences including possible training as a reserve officer, working with the courts as administrative assistants, and working with various community-based programs connected to the criminal justice field.

Criminal Justice emphasizes a basic understanding of statistics and methods with an emphasis on technical skills associated with crime analysis and crime mapping as well as cybercrime. A research lab, established in conjunction with the program along with existing faculty expertise will be used to assist students in gaining technical expertise necessary for a modern criminal justice system. These skills promote partnerships with STEM pathways as public safety becomes more technically complex and even policing departments are demanding more technical expertise from their officers, deputies, and troopers. STEM pathways such as computer science fit seamlessly with criminal justice and provide not only the pathways but also the workforce opportunities that are emerging in the current labor market.

Program Summary

4. If a new degree is proposed, what is the rationale?

This question refers to the type of degree, not the program. For example, if your university has authorization to offer the Bachelor of Science and the program requested is a Bachelor of Science, then the request is not for a new degree.

No new degree is proposed.

5. What modality/modalities will be used to offer the new program?

Note: The accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) require Board approval for a university to offer programs off-campus and through distance delivery.

	Yes/No	Intended Start Date	
On Campus	Yes	Fall 2026	
	Yes/No	**Location(s)**	**Intended Start Date**
Off Campus Location	Yes	BHSU Rapid City	Fall 2026
	Yes/No	**Delivery Method(s)**	**Intended Start Date**
Distance Delivery	Yes		Fall 2026

	Yes/No	Identify Institutions
Does another BOR institution already have authorization to offer the program online?	Yes	he University of South Dakota and Northern State University both offer a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice. South Dakota State University offers a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminology which is closely related. Every comprehensive university in the state offers the degree except for BHSU.

6. If the program will be offered through distance delivery, identify the planned instructional modality:

Both / HyFlex

Academic Quality

7. What peer institutions and current national standards will be referenced to develop the curriculum for this program? Include links to at least 3 comparable programs at peer institutions and links to national or accreditation standards, if any.

There are no national accreditation standards for undergraduate criminal justice or criminology programs, but there are national quality standards. These will be incorporated into the proposed program. They can be found at the following website under bachelor's degree standards:

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Program Endorsement
There are three existing programs at BOR schools within the state. These are referenced below:
1. University of South Dakota
University of South Dakota Criminal Justice - https://www.usd.edu/Academics/Colleges-and-Schools/college-of-arts-sciences/political-science
2. South Dakota State University
South Dakota State Criminology Program - https://www.sdstate.edu/school-psychology-sociology-rural-studies
3. Northern State University
Northern State Criminal Justice Program -
-https://northern.edu/academics/college-arts-and-sciences/departments/history-and-social-sciences

The proposed program will have some elements in common with these programs. This allows cooperation between the universities and expands the availability of online courses that are part of, but not a complete program. This will benefit all of the schools offering criminal justice or similar degrees as it increases the number of courses available online to students at BOR schools. The program at BHSU will have a distinct focus on core competencies in criminal justice as well as technical and practical skill training. It will also serve a different population related to the geographic location of the university on the western side of the state.

Additional program formats were consulted as part of the development of the criminal justice program. These programs are listed below.

1. University of South Alabama – 9,241 undergraduate, 13,992 total enrollment
University of South Alabama Criminal Justice - https://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/artsandsci/pscj/
2. Colorado Mesa University – 9,473 undergraduate, 9,785 total enrollment
Colorado Mesa Criminal Justice Program - https://catalog.coloradomesa.edu/areas-study/criminal-justice/criminal-justice-ba/
3. Chadron State College – 1,690 undergraduate, 2098 total enrollment
Chadron State Criminal Justice Program - https://www.csc.edu/academics/justicestudies/
4. Old Dominion University – 17,504 undergraduate, 23,469 total enrollment
Old Dominion University Criminal Justice Program - https://www.odu.edu/academics/programs/undergraduate/criminal-justice
5. University of Nebraska Omaha – 11,859 undergraduate, 15,051 total enrollment
University of Nebraska Omaha Criminal Justice - https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-public-affairs-and-community-service/criminology-and-criminal-justice/index.php

8. What program accreditation is available, if any?

There is no program accreditation, only program endorsement by the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.

9. Will the proposed program pursue accreditation or certifications?

No

If no, why has the department elected not to pursue accreditation for the program?

Accreditation in not available for criminal justice or criminology programs. The program will pursue program endorsement from Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.

Duplication and Competition

10. Do any related programs exist at other public universities in South Dakota?

A list of existing programs is available through the university websites and the RIS Reporting: Academic Reports Database. If there are no related programs within the Regental system, indicate ***none.***

Related programs are offered at the University of South Dakota, South Dakota State University, and Northern State University. Black Hills State is the only comprehensive liberal arts university without this major. BHSU is located 366.66 miles from USD, 349.97 miles from SDSU, and 271.50 miles from Northern State University (linear distance). This makes it inconvenient and impractical for many people on the western side of the state to relocate in order to study in related programs at other South Dakota universities. BHSU is the only 4-year institution in the western part of the state and within close proximity to one of the two major population centers in the state. This warrants the establishment of a new program serving people and communities in the western portion of the state, especially within the growing Black Hills region of South Dakota and western Wyoming – a region also containing the second largest metro area of SD – the Rapid City Metropolitan Statistical Area (RPMSA). Geographic distance, however, is not the only reason to establish an additional program within the regental system.

The three other regental schools that have criminal justice related programs follow a somewhat similar type of criminal justice education, but proposed BHSU curriculum has several notable differences. Northern State University requires 24 hours of specific courses, nine of which are statistics, methods, and a capstone course. USD also requires 24 hours of criminal justice courses but no statistics or methods courses. SDSU's criminology program requires 12 hours of criminal justice related courses along with 12 hours of unstructured electives. NSU and SDSU's programs are linked more with a sociological approach while USD is linked more closely with political science. All of these approaches are good and have strengths.

BHSU's program would require a strong core of 36 hours of required courses for knowledge that is expected of criminal justice practitioners. This curriculum would combine elements from human services, political science, psychology, and sociology with criminal justice specific knowledge better positioning graduates to enter the workforce in a variety of fields within the criminal justice system. Human services classes such as crisis intervention, case management, and program evaluation are not available in the curriculum in other regental programs. Knowledge and skills derived from these courses open additional employment opportunities for students outside of traditional policing and probation/parole. The program at BHSU would be designed to educate students in the fundamentals of a community-oriented criminal justice system in order to meet the workforce needs of a rapidly changing field (Clear, 2018). Policing, courts, and corrections all continue to shift focus to community-based needs and approaches in search of a criminal justice ideal. With three social science disciplines in one school (School of Behavioral Sciences), BHSU is in a unique position to provide multidisciplinary education along with a strong criminal justice core that diversifies the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to enter a variety of criminal justice fields upon graduation as well as attend graduate school. In summary, the program compliments other offerings in the state rather than competes with them and offers educational opportunities in the western part of the state. It also serves agencies in the western part of the state including various local agencies, state agencies headquartered in Pierre, and federal agencies headquartered in Rapid City. It is located in an area accessible to several Native American reservations as well as a large and soon to be expanding military base (SecAF/PA, 2025). These will all be well-served by a criminal justice program at BHSU.

A. If yes, defend the need for an additional program within the state, Include IPEDS enrollment data and additional data as needed.

Internal enrollment data displayed in Table 1 shows that enrollment is strong at all of the Regental schools, and would likely also experience strong demand at BHSU.

Table 1. Enrollment at BOR Schools from Fall 2019 to Fall 2025

Program	F19	S20	F20	S21	F21	S22	F22	S23	F23	S24	F24	S25	F25
NSU Criminal Justice (BA)	41	39	45	44	53	51	43	49	57	52	53	50	50
SDSU Criminology (BA)	—	—	—	—	3	4	3	5	10	11	18	14	14
SDSU Criminology (BS)	—	—	18	41	80	82	117	119	127	126	137	—	—
USD Criminal Justice Studies (BA)	177	152	136	124	148	129	136	140	154	152	156	152	146
USD Criminal Justice (BS)	59	55	57	61	54	55	62	55	54	49	55	53	50

Source: Internal Enrollment Information

As Table 1 shows, enrollment at SDBOR schools is consistent and relatively high. The addition of a criminology program at SDSU in fall of 2021 had little impact on enrollment at other schools, demonstrating a widespread interest in and need of a criminal justice program as well as the viability of such a major at BHSU. Enrollment has remained steady at each institution which is consistent with national trends in criminal justice degree conferment displayed in table 2.

Table 2. Bachelor's Degrees Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions, by Field (Criminal Justice)

Year	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21
Graduates	60,264	62,416	62,723	61,159	59,553	58,121	57,333	57,044	58,009

B. If yes, would this program be a candidate for Regental system collaboration?

Equivalent courses could be shared among the universities. The program would also produce qualified candidates for M.S. in administration program at USD with a concentration in criminal justice studies. The overlapping classes, some of which are taught online, could be used to bolster the

number of classes available to students at BOR schools. This provides additional flexibility in programming at all colleges with criminal justice and criminology programs.

11. Do any related programs exist at any non-Regental college or university within 150 miles of the university?

List those programs here:

No comparable bachelor's degree programs exist at non-Regental colleges or universities within 150 miles. Chadron State College in Nebraska offers a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice - and is 153 miles from BHSU.

Western Dakota Technical College offers an AS in Criminal Justice - and is 52 miles from BHSU.

A. If yes, use IPEDS to identify the enrollment in those programs.

There were 17 graduates from Chadron's Criminal Justice program (332 total bachelor's degree completers) in 2023-24.
There were 17 graduates from WDTC's AS Criminal Justice program (240 total AS degree completers) in 2023-24.

B. What evidence suggests there is unmet student demand for the proposed program, or that the proposed program would attract students away from the existing program?

BHSU will develop an articulation agreement with WDTC to allow AS degree completers to easily matriculate into BHSU's BS program in Criminal Justice.

Market Demand

This section establishes the market demand for the proposed program (eg Regental system need, institutional need, workforce need). Use the following sources for your data:

- South Dakota Department of Labor & Regulation
- O-Net
- US Department of Labor Projections Central
- SDBOR Workforce and Degree Gap Analysis Report

12. What is the expected growth of the industry or occupation in South Dakota and nationally?

Include the number of openings, as well as the percentage of growth when possible.

Criminal Justice Employment Projections: Regional & State Trends

Demand for criminal justice related employment is expected to increase steadily at the regional and state levels as the population in the Black Hills region and state grows. While there is no official standard for the ratio of law enforcement officers per the size of a given population, a rising population generally indicates that agencies in that region are likely to experience increasing calls for service (CFS) - an indication of demand. In the greater Black Hills region of South Dakota , Pennington, Lawrence, Meade, Butte, and Custer Counties all experienced population growth between 2010 and 2020, as did Weston and Crook Counties of Wyoming (U.S. Census 2026). Around 50 percent of South Dakotans live in two of the state's three metro areas – the Sioux Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area and the Rapid City Metropolitan Statistical Area (RCMSA) (Avelino 2025). As such, the following analysis focuses on employment projections for the largest population center in the Black Hills region – the RCMSA – and the overall State of South Dakota.

Rapid City government officials estimate that their city population gained nearly 10,000 residents between 2020 and 2025 (Keene 2025). Concurrently, the Rapid City Police Department experienced a 13 percent increase in calls for service between 2020 (122,163) and 2024 (138,323) (Rapid City 2025) while Pennington County Sheriff's Office experienced a 31 percent increase within that same timeframe (45,407 in 2020 to 59,639 in 2024) (Pennington County Sheriff 2025). Relatedly, the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation projects that occupations most closely related to criminal justice are expected to steadily expand in the region and state (SDDLR 2024). Table 3 below summarizes the estimated changes in the number of criminal justice related occupations for the RCMSA and the State of South Dakota between 2022 and 2032. Some data were unavailable for the RCMSA, but the overall trend is one of growing demand. Such growth is notable given that recruiting and retaining criminal justice professionals is a well-documented challenge, as will be discussed below.

Table 3. Employment Projection Estimates for Criminal Justice Related Occupations in the Rapid City Metropolitan Statistical Area (RCMSA) and State of South Dakota (SD) between 2022 to 2032

Criminal Justice Occupation	RCMSA # of Jobs, % Change by 2032	SD # of Jobs, % Change by 2032
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	306 (+1.7%)	2,032 (+3.79%)
Detectives and Criminal Investigators	49 (+2.1%)	248 (+2.48%)
First-line Supervisors of Police and Detectives	34 (+3.0%)	217 (+3.33%)
Correctional Officers and Jailers	214 (+0.9%)	1,443 (+2.34%)
First-line Supervisors of Correctional Officers	NO DATA	54 (+3.85%)
Probation Officers and Correctional Treatment Specialists	45 (-2.2%)	358 (+0.28%)
Protective Services Workers, All Other	NO DATA	101 (+3.06%)
First-line Supervisors of Protective Services Workers, All Other	NO DATA	57 (+1.79%)
Fish and Game Wardens	NO DATA	135 (+0.75%)
Gambling Surveillance Officers and Gambling Investigators	NO DATA	92 (+8.24%)
Total Jobs Change for Available Data	+13	+122

Given the complexity and breadth of the criminal justice system, the table above is not an exhaustive list of all occupations for which someone might pursue undergraduate training in criminal justice. Some occupations are less exclusive to the criminal justice system, but still work within its purview, including drug and alcohol rehabilitation counselors, social workers, social and human service assistants, lawyers, and others. Many of these occupations are also projected to grow, but they require graduate credentials (e.g. MSW, JD, LPC-MH, etc.). Students who pursue these professions within a criminal justice context may first desire a solid undergraduate background in criminal justice.

Criminal Justice Employment Projections: National Trends

National trends in criminal justice related occupations also reflect a steady increase in demand. As stated in a March 2024 report in the FBI's Law Enforcement Bulletin, law enforcement resignation and retirement rates have risen sharply in recent years while the number of law enforcement recruits has declined – between "27% to 60%, depending on the area" (Karch 2024). In response, many agencies have altered or changed their recruiting standards – including lowering educational requirements. As Karch (2024) highlighted, however, standards that attract less-educated, less-fit, and/or more financially desperate recruits create an additional set of challenges. Still many departments like the Rapid City Police Department retain some higher education requirements (e.g. one qualifying requirement with RCPD is an associate's degree or 64 hours of college credit from an accredited institution) among their standards (RCPD 2026). College-level skills like data analysis and grant writing are particularly valuable to

agencies like RCPD, whose operations involve significant assessment and reporting obligations and are subsidized by grants from the US Department of Justice, US Department of Homeland Security, and other external sources (NAACP 2026). Many federal agencies also require college-level skills and/or credentials. Below, Table 4 details national trends in employment projections for criminal justice related occupations from 2024 to 2034 according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data (BLS 2026). The data again demonstrates an overall trend of growth.

Table 4. Employment Projection Estimates for Criminal Justice Related Occupations in the United States between 2024 and 2034

Criminal Justice Occupation	Nation # of Jobs, % Change by 2034
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	674,600 (+3.4%)
Detectives and Criminal Investigators	75,500 (+2.9%)
First-line Supervisors of Police and Detectives	153,300 (+3.3%)
Correctional Officers and Jailers	329,000 (-7.7%)
First-line Supervisors of Correctional Officers	52,700 (-2.8%)
Probation Officers and Correctional Treatment Specialists	92,300 (+2.6%)
Protective Services Workers, All Other	184,500 (+1.4%)
First-line Supervisors of Protective Services Workers, All Other	30,200 (+3.0%)
Fish and Game Wardens	100,000 (-6.0%)
Gambling Surveillance Officers and Gambling Investigators	51,000 (+3.4%)

As with Table 3, Table 4 is not an exhaustive list of projections for all criminal justice related occupations. Other occupations like transit and railroad police, bailiffs, public and private security, federal positions, and a variety of other professional roles for which an undergraduate degree in criminal justice would be appropriate are not included. Overall, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook (BLS 2025) projects that employment for "Police and Detectives" is expected to increase by 3% (as fast as average) between 2024 to 2034 with a total number of 826,800 jobs – likely including some of the more specific occupations listed above.

13. What evidence, if any, suggests there are unfilled openings in South Dakota or nationally?

According to the 2024 Recruitment and Retention Survey from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), staffing shortages are a "continuing crisis" for law enforcement agencies nationwide (IACP 2025). Out of the 1,159 U.S. law enforcement agencies surveyed by IACP in 2024, over 70% reported more difficulty with recruiting compared with five years earlier with a near 10% deficit in staffing levels (IACP 2025). These are the most authoritative data on overall unmet staffing needs for police departments in the United States. Such recruiting struggles extend to rural Western South Dakota and statewide. During a January 20th, 2026 House Transportation Committee meeting in Pierre, the Department of Public Safey Secretary Bob Perry reported that the South Dakota Highway Patrol is having difficulty maintaining adequate staffing, especially within the rural "West River" part of the state – home to BHSU (Hult 2026). According to the South Dakota Attorney General's Police and Sheriff Management Studies, the overall statewide trend in police and sheriff turnover between 2000 to 2022 has been an increase – from 48% police turnover in 2000 to 78% in 2022 (Huber 2023). While a significant portion of such turnover is due to transferring to other departments for better pay, promotions, etc., turnover is also affected by misconduct and underperformance. A growing body of research suggests that college-educated police officers have a lower risk for misconduct and have better investigative outcomes on average, indicating potential benefits for the departments and communities they serve (including retention) (Katsapis 2025). Working in tandem with regional and state law enforcement agencies, the BHSU Criminal Justice program would be an additional resource for recruiting high quality law enforcement officers and other criminal justice roles at a time where public safety organizations need an all-of-the-above approach.

14. What salaries can program graduates expect to earn in South Dakota and nationally?

Salaries for graduates of undergraduate criminal justice programs vary significantly by region, career stage, and role. South Dakota has significantly lower pay across many occupations as the median household income in the state in 2023 was $72,421 and $80,610 nationwide (U.S. Census 2024). Additionally, entry level earnings for law enforcement officers are often significantly lower than even their mid-career earnings given the strong advancement opportunities into law enforcement administration and leadership. The 2024 median pay for "police and detectives" according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook was $77,270 per year ($37.15 per hour) (BLS 2025). Pay in the Black Hills region for entry-level law enforcement is somewhat lower with Spearfish Police Department offering a starting wage of $31.97/hour and Rapid City Police Department at $31.02/hour. However, Spearfish PD offers a $6,000 sign-on bonus, a $500/month housing allowance for up to 8 months, zero-cost health insurance, State of South Dakota retirement plan (SDRS), overtime pay, and other benefits (Spearfish 2026). The Rapid City PD also offers $250/month student loan reimbursement, low-cost health insurance, SDRS retirement plan, overtime pay, and other benefits (RCPD 2025). At the state level, the South Dakota Highway Patrol (SDHP) pay starts at $30.08 an hour, offers of a $5,000 hiring bonus for certified law enforcement officers who can pass the reciprocity exam and skills test, health insurance benefits, retirement via SDRS, and opportunity for overtime and holiday pay (SD BHR 2025). At 40 hours per week, the SDHP annual entry-level salary works out to around $62,000 per year. Earning promotions can yield significantly more pay with the SD Highway Patrol Lieutenant for Western South Dakota earning $105,000 per year (Open SD 2026). Experience, specialization (e.g. cyber crime, special response teams, etc.), and career advancement all create strong earnings trajectories for knowledgeable, skillful, and dedicated professionals working within the criminal justice system. The lower cost of tuition within the State of South Dakota combined with the opportunities to earn greater wages in criminal justice positions outside of the state make an undergraduate criminal justice program a good investment for both in-state and out-of-state students. The out-of-state tuition for BHSU (~$12,000) is competitive with in-state tuition for states like Colorado (~$12,000) - perhaps more so when considering room and board, but in Colorado the starting pay for a Colorado State Trooper is around $91,000 / year (CSP 2025).

15. Optional: Provide any additional evidence of regional demand for the program.
e.g. prospective student interest survey data, letters of support from employers, community needs...

Student Demand

16. Provide evidence of student completers/graduates at that degree level at peer institutions that offer the same/similar program using data obtained from IPEDS.
Choose programs not already listed in question 11. Use the most recent year available.

University Name	State	Program Name	Number of Degrees Conferred in Program	Total Number of Conferrals at Level (Undergrad or Grad)
Western Illinois University	IL : Illinois	Criminal Justice	9	1112
University of South Alabama	AL : Alabama	Criminal Justice	29	1772
Northern Arizona University	AZ : Arizona	Criminal Justice	17	2148

17. What evidence suggests there is interest from prospective students for this program at the university?

Tertiary information regarding student interest is present. Online criminological classes offered by BHSU have consistently seen high enrollment. There is high enrollment in introduction to criminal justice classes offered by BHSU as well, which serve as a general social science option for SDBOR schools. There have been requests for transfers from community colleges in Wyoming requesting criminal justice course equivalency. The majority of BHSU sociology majors are also in the law and justice track, which focuses on criminal justice. The criminal justice certificate is also a very popular option at BHSU. Finally, prospective student visiting BHSU request to meet with professors in criminal justice.

Enrollment

18. Are students enrolling in this program expected to be new to the university or redirected from existing programs at the university?

Include the number of openings, as well as the percentage of growth when possible.

There is no intention of redirecting students from existing programs. Some current students in the law and justice track of sociology might prefer a criminal justice major but it is not expected that a significant number of them will switch majors. The addition of a criminal justice program is expected to enroll new students at the university rather than draw students from other majors. There are no reliable methods with which to measure openings or percentage growth. There are no hard limits on openings as there would be with a professional program leading to licensure. A criminal justice program is expected to aid in attracting students from Wyoming and Colorado. These areas are much closer to BHSU than other SDBOR schools and would be an attractive option given tuition differentials between states mentioned in section 14.

19. Narrative Description of the preliminary estimates on annual enrollment in this program by year six

Include all students within the program, not just those new to the program.

The criminal justice program will fit well with existing offerings at the university and add to the strength of the School of Behavioral Sciences and social sciences as a whole. Preliminary enrollment will be relatively low as the major is expected to become active shortly before final registration. In the first year, it is expected that the major will enroll at least 10 students. This will increase rapidly. By year three, once the major becomes established on the campus, it is expected that there will be 30 students. This is consistent with the growth seen by South Dakota State University with the establishment of an undergraduate criminology program. By year six, it is expected that the major will be mature and enroll 60 to 70 students and maintain this level. This will be achieved through advertising and cooperation with community stakeholders in various criminal justice fields including policing, courts, and corrections.

In order to maintain a fully functioning criminal justice major, it will be necessary to increase some resources at the university. It is expected as the major roles out the first year, enrollment will drastically increase as seen in SDSU's program. It is estimated that this will require up to three adjunct instructional slots per semester. This will allow the consistent offerings of the core courses required for the major. This is situation dependent as enrollment in the program rises and demand for classes increases. There is currently a single criminologist at the university who has experience running criminal justice programs and teaching the entire curriculum and existing university resources will be used as applicable. Depending on growth of the program and available funding, an additional full-time instructor or tenure-track line would be preferrable several years into the program.

The establishment of a criminal justice lab for research as well as an integration of introductory forensic science and investigative procedures, would be possible with the addition of modest discipline fees designed to cover research and programmatic expenses. In order to prepare students to work in a technologically evolving field, these fees will be necessary to cover expenses related to equipment as well as software. In order for the program to recruit students, it is necessary to offer unique high-impact practices. Criminal justice labs require statistical software, reasonable personal computing power for large-scale data analysis and AI applications, data sources, expendable forensic materials, and specialized equipment such as entry-level aerial drones and other technological devices for surveillance and crime scene processing. This is to familiarize the students with the most up to date criminal justice procedures and techniques. The inclusion of technological components, funded by a modest discipline fee, will be critical to not only maintaining a reasonable number of students in the program, but also developing the high-impact teaching practices the SDBOR desires to see in universities.

An innovative program in criminal justice will increase the involvement of community stakeholders with BHSU. Cooperation with the State Attorney General's office, Rapid City Police Department, Butte and Lawrence County, and the 4th Circuit courts have been established at the university, but with a criminal justice program involvement with these stakeholders will increase. Further partnerships will drive recruitment as well as provide opportunities for community focused research.

Overall, the establishment of the criminal justice program at BHSU will provide students on the western side of South Dakota with additional educational opportunities and develop skills to perform in an ever-changing criminal justice system. The program will also benefit the community, public safety agencies, and increase university and student involvement in the community.