



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

Published by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) • College of Education • The University of Texas at Austin

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SCAVENGER HUNT

Students in the first few days of their criminal justice curriculum at a community college are anxious to visit the police department and courthouse. However, tours can be time-consuming and not necessarily educational. This scavenger hunt was designed to present students with an experiential learning opportunity early in their college careers, while minimizing time spent away from the classroom.

Fifteen departments in the criminal justice system were asked if they would be willing to spend 15-20 minutes meeting with a team of two or three students enrolled in an Introduction to Criminal Justice class. All but one agreed. Several departments were excited at the prospect, and some prepared materials for the students.

Each team was presented with directions on how to reach its destination. Once students found their building, they were to locate a specific office and a person who was awaiting their arrival. Once that contact was made, the students had a series of questions for the contact person or an assignment to complete.

Sample assignments include the following:

- Police Department identification bureau: Obtain your fingerprints. Discuss with the officers how fingerprints and mug shots are maintained at the office. What role does technology play in the maintenance of the information?
- Police Department property division: Determine how evidence is stored from arrest through trial. How many pieces of evidence are logged into the property room each year? How is technology utilized in the property room?
- Police Department detective bureau: Determine how the bureau is divided into crime divisions. Examine and describe the interrogation rooms. Ask how a police officer becomes a detective. Is it a desired position?

- Courthouse—Common Pleas Court—arraignments: What role did technology play in the courtroom? What litany did the attorney go through prior to entering a plea of not guilty on behalf of their client? What type of judicial officer was hearing the arraignments? What happened when the issue of incompetency or insanity was raised?
- Common Pleas Court—felony docket call: What types of cases were being heard by the judge? Prior to accepting a plea, what questions did the judge ask the defendant? Was a defendant sentenced immediately following his/her plea? If not, what happened?
- Court administration—pre-trial services: What is the responsibility of the pre-trial services department? What background and educational experience did your contact have? To whom does pre-trial services report?
- Court administration—clerk's office: What records are kept at the clerk's office? What access does the public have to the information?

What role does technology play in the maintenance of the information? Learning objectives for the assignment include:

- The student will locate a specific government building and office.
- The student will locate a particular individual at the office, introduce him/herself, and explain the nature of the visit.
- The student will secure answers to the questions provided by the instructor.
- The student shall organize the materials and information received in order to present findings to the class.
- The student will make a brief explanation of the department visited and describe the information gathered.



The experience for the class was excellent. Most class members were making "cold calls" on a government office for the first time and were surprised at the varying degrees of formality and informality they witnessed. Many were surprised at the open access of the courtrooms and the ease with which information regarding court cases was made available to the general public.

Overall, the hunt was a huge success. It introduced the class to different components of the criminal justice system in an experiential way, demonstrating that criminal justice is much more than the "on the street" officer.

Our college has the advantage of being located in the county seat, within walking distance of municipal and

USING TEMPLATES TO GRADE WRITING

As a full-time writing instructor, I grade approximately 600 essays per semester. Grading templates save me time and improve my responses to students' performance, using three basic categories: organization, style, and content.

The *organization* section might open with an overall judgment of that criterion—strong, good, average, weak—followed by subsections covering more specific organizational matters: hook, thesis, blueprint sentence, topic sentences, paragraph unity, transitions, etc. After years of grading, I have a repertoire of responses for each item. For example, *thesis* for an argumentative-essay assignment includes these criteria: debatable, clearly and precisely worded, easy to spot, or no discernible thesis. The first three responses are followed by "yes" and "no." Other items have a rating scale and, often, a series of numbers by which to indicate a problem paragraph. I underline or circle where appropriate.

I find my feedback is more efficient if I don't try to have a set response for every content problem. Some writing programs have a numbered list of logical fallacies, so a number can indicate a fallacy. However, I prefer to circle the number of the paragraph(s) in question and write my comment. Content has so many potential problems, and they cannot all be anticipated.

The *surface error* section opens with an overall evaluation and follows with a list of common style problems: sentence-stop errors, fragments, misspellings, pronoun use (including agreement, vagueness, sexism). This allows me to focus on specific grammar and punctuation problems, and to identify patterns—crucial to controlling surface error.

Templates save time; rather than repeatedly writing the same comments, it is possible to underline a pre-

federal courts. However, this project could be modified as a field trip for colleges not so convenient to such seats of justice. Our students all want to know when we can do it again!

Pat Millhoff, *Visiting Associate Professor, Criminal Justice Technology*

For further information, contact the author at the University of Akron-Community and Technical College, Akron, OH 44325.
e-mail: milhof@uakron.edu

printed comment and circle a number or numbers. For simpler assignments, summaries, or placement and exit essays, templates can cut grading time in half; for more complex assignments, such as argumentative pieces, the time saved is less but still noteworthy.

Templates are not just faster: they are better. They force consistency—working through the same criteria for every paper. They help clarify teacher assignment expectations; students can see how and on what they will be graded. They give grades more legitimacy, and students are less likely to argue that a grade is too subjective.

Paul Dougan, *Instructor, English*

For further information, contact the author at Pikes Peak Community College, 5675 South Academy Boulevard, Colorado Springs, CO 80906.
e-mail: Paul.Dougan@ppcc.ccoes.edu

Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

December 7, 2001, Vol. XXIII, No. 29

©The University of Texas at Austin, 2001

Further duplication is permitted by MEMBER institutions for their own personal use.

Innovation Abstracts (ISSN 0199-106X) is published weekly following the fall and spring terms of the academic calendar, except Thanksgiving week, by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD), Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, SZB 348, Austin, Texas 78712-1293, (512) 471-7545. Periodicals Postage Paid at Austin, Texas. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Innovation Abstracts*, The University of Texas at Austin, SZB 348, Austin, TX 78712-1293. Email: sroueche@mail.utexas.edu