



TIMES PHOTO BY JASON WACHTER

Lt. Stacy Gohman, a St. Cloud State University public safety officer, issues a ticket Friday afternoon to a car with an incorrect permit parked in the lot near Stearns Hall in St. Cloud.

Program broadens police training

Department aims to produce well-rounded, highly skilled officers

By Kyle Hopkins

TIMES STAFF WRITER

As a special agent for the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Ken McDonald spends 20 to 25 hours a week working toward his criminal justice master's degree at St. Cloud State University.

Growing at the undergraduate and graduate levels, the criminal justice program aims to produce well-educated and more resourceful public safety officers.

"I feel that I have a long career yet in front of me, and see it as a good career-development move," said McDonald, who works primarily on death investigations and plans to complete his degree this summer.

McDonald is one of more than 60 graduate students who, with roughly 400 undergraduates and nine faculty members, constitute one of the state's most comprehensive criminal justice departments. The program boasts the only such graduate program in the state.

Demand for the degrees comes from traditional students looking to work as corrections, police and parole officers, and

from veterans in the field seeking more in-depth skills. The university currently is searching for three more faculty members.

Public safety officers with four-year degrees eventually will become the norm, said Bob Prout. All new police officers hired at the St. Cloud Police Department, for example, are required to hold a bachelor's degree.

Director of the criminal justice graduate program at St. Cloud State, Prout began the criminal justice department in 1972.

It was a time of protests, and the university community was wary of law enforcement. The

campus mood was skeptical, to put it politely, said Barry Schreiber, one of the department's professors.

As the sole faculty member, Prout built a multidisciplinary degree program, with required courses in political science, philosophy, economics and more.

"The campus was very clear. It didn't want a bullets-and-handcuffs training program," Schreiber said.

Neither did Prout. Today, students do technical, hands-on

Please see **TRAINING, 6A** ►

■ Criminal justice students learn through experience/6A

Criminal justice students get hands-on training

By Kyle Hopkins

TIMES STAFF WRITER

A group of criminal justice students spent five weeks in July in England and Ireland studying the local courts and corrections systems, said Miles Heckendorn, director of the public safety department at St. Cloud State University.

Back on home soil, many of the criminal justice department's undergraduates work with Heckendorn as public safety officers and are first on the scene in many campus emergencies.

Graduate students Jenn Furan and Stacy Gohman are the campus department's first criminal justice graduate students.

"My plan is, I want to finish my master's degree next December. Then I want to go to skills, which is the equivalent of a police academy in Minnesota," said Gohman, 23. Already working with records in the St. Cloud Police Department's criminal investigation division, she wants to serve as an officer in St. Cloud eventually.

At 21, Furan has earned a psychology degree and has chosen to focus her graduate study on the human relations element of criminal justice. She now sets the work schedule for the school's 55 public safety officers, among other duties.

Women outnumber men in St. Cloud State's criminal justice department, with roughly half the students entering the master's degree program directly after earning their bachelor's degrees. The other half are professionals already working in the public safety field.



Jenn Furan

SCSU GRADUATE STUDENT

Training

skills training during the summer at other campuses, like Alexandria Technical College.

"I didn't want to get into a position where we were teaching skills ... but not having the social awareness as to what it took to be an effective human being and effective criminal justice employee," Prout said.

"Campus is not the place to be teaching firearms. This is the place to be teaching ethics, literature and communication so you've got a well-rounded person who goes into police work," he said.

Or, as McDonald put it: "They facilitate the learning process for you. It's not just always them providing the lecture. They instruct you how to learn, develop. How to conduct research, how to critique research, so as you progress through your career, you don't accept things at face value."

In 1972, federal money was made available to start criminal justice programs, Prout said. But the former state trooper and police trainer chose not to build the department on a temporary funding source.

"I wanted to develop a program all the way on hard money, not soft money," he said. The stability has been key to the program's success.

Twenty-eight years ago, Prout came to St. Cloud State fresh from earning his law degree and a doctorate. Fourteen students enrolled the first year.

Is the department still moving in the direction he intended?

"Yes, definitely. Now, though, it's getting there faster because we're hiring some high-powered people. (Our) three most recent hires really have been some powerful people," Prout said.

Department faculty have served in the military, CIA and FBI.

Meanwhile, the program's influence has spread throughout the state, Schreiber said. It also was the first St. Cloud State undergraduate program — in any discipline — to require a senior thesis.

At the graduate level, practicums are common. Many students build a connection to Central Minnesota public safety departments while still in school through internships, community service work or asking research questions.

Some eventually will join the St. Cloud Police Department.

"(Police Chief Dennis O'Keefe) hired some of our best," Prout said.

Other students will enter law school, pursue doctorate degrees or continue their primary careers. One student serves as an assistant principal in St. Cloud.

"They're taking what they've learned in an academic setting and sharing that with the community," said associate professor John Campbell, who spent 28 years with the FBI and served as the bureau's academic dean.