



Law Enforcement Professionals

Bring Their Experiences into the Classroom

The many industry professionals turned professors at Mercy College supplement rich curricula with helpful guidance and anecdotes from their days on the job. In the case of Mercy’s Criminal Justice Program, shared lived experiences from professor to student undoubtedly contributes to students’ success in their pursuit of what can be a challenging, exciting and rewarding career.

In addition to distinguished careers, many Criminal Justice Program faculty have earned their doctoral degrees. They teach theory along with procedure — and draw important connections between the two. In turn, their students become more skilled in decision making and gain a deeper understanding of the dynamic field of criminal justice.



Mercy College Assistant Professor Charles Lieberman, Ph.D., falls into the category of experienced practitioner and academic researcher. Just six weeks after his 21st birthday, Lieberman started a career with the New York Police Department (NYPD) that would last 20 years. After arresting an individual who

was involved with multiple homicides, he was offered the opportunity to serve as an undercover officer in the Organized Crime Control Bureau and was promoted to detective at the age of 25. He was also a first responder for both attacks on the World Trade Center. “I’ve always had a strong sense of justice and had a desire to respond

to injustice wherever I encountered it,” said Lieberman, citing his motivation for entering the police force.

After retiring from the NYPD in 2005 on disability, Lieberman earned a doctorate in criminal justice in 2009, conducting research on the application of community policing to counterterrorism. He served as a full-time professor at the University of New Haven for two years before being reinstated with the NYPD in 2011. After retiring again in 2014, he worked as a policy and research director for a local legislator before returning to academia.

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Lieberman found his way to Mercy College in 2021 and now serves as the Criminal Justice Program Director. “I think it’s important to provide students with a practitioner’s perspective so that they have a more comprehensive understanding of how to apply academic concepts to their potential professional careers,” Lieberman said. “I try to provide context to help facilitate their transition from an academic environment and enhance students’ ability to think critically about all issues. The goal of a professor is to teach students how to think, not what to think.”



For **Brian Kelly, Ed.D., visiting assistant professor in corporate and homeland security at Mercy College**, his motivation for entering into the police force was largely family driven. “My uncle’s career as a police officer interested me and I looked up to him,” said Kelly. He desired to pursue a career in criminal justice, in which he could

have an impact, and take on mentorship and leadership opportunities, like his uncle.

Throughout his fourteen-year career in criminal justice, Kelly was a county corrections officer, a New Jersey Transit Police Officer, police academy senior coordinator and senior county investigator. In 2000, Kelly was accepted into the Police Studies Graduate Program at Seton Hall University in New Jersey. “It was a historic program, where 90% of the students were in law enforcement, from police officer, to colonel, to secret service, to state police,” he said.

He started teaching in 2004, after graduate school, and hasn’t stopped since. In 2016, Kelly finished his doctorate in police leadership and organizational decision making. At Mercy, Kelly teaches a diverse course load, covering topics such as investigative techniques and terrorism. “I bring a realistic approach to the classroom,” Kelly said. “My versatile background aligns with many aspects of the criminal justice curriculum that I’m asked to teach, which I think is a benefit to my students.”



Mercy College Associate Professor Jeong Lim Kim, Ph.D., brings a unique perspective to Mercy’s Criminal Justice Program as a former member of the South Korean police force. As described by Kim, the de-escalation techniques in South Korea are much more prevalent in how

you handle a situation. It would be rare if a police officer in South Korea fired a gun. “In the entirety of 2005, for example, you could count the amount of nationwide gun incidents on one or maybe two hands,” Kim explained. During his 20-year career as a police officer for Gangnam Police Station in Seoul, South Korea, Kim experienced only one gun incident.

Kim came to the United States in 2005, when he was 40 years old, not knowing a word of English, highly motivated to enter

a career in academia. He earned a doctorate from Sam Houston State University in 2015 and started working at Mercy College in 2016. His experience as a South Korean police officer has led him to gain a particular interest in community policing, a topic he teaches with passion at Mercy.

“I instill in my students the importance of having a kind heart, and I encourage them not to be a ‘robot-cop style’ law enforcement officer,” said Kim. “Your job is to serve the public, not rule. Also, in my class, I make a point about the importance of critical thinking. If my students can think critically, they can be reasonably flexible on the job, and make good decisions.”



Mercy College Assistant Professor Tanya Grant, Ph.D., was a first-generation college student. Because of the financial sacrifices that her family made for her education, she felt immense pressure to do well. She thought she’d be a doctor but was turned off by many of the required pre-med classes.

At an opportune time, Grant was offered an internship at a juvenile probation center. She was at first resistant to taking the internship, but looking back, is forever grateful that she did. As an intern, Grant had an influential mentor who inspired her to pursue a career in corrections. “She mentored me enough to love and to be passionate about what I did because it impacted people on a regular basis,” Grant explained. “She also taught me to never be judgmental and to give the best of yourself. I held onto that mentality going into every role.”

That mentality would serve her well — and be crucial to her success — as both a practitioner and a professor. Grant worked in juvenile probation for two years, then juvenile detention for four years, then adult corrections for five years before transitioning to a full-time professor role. She earned her doctoral degree as a single mother, often times doing homework side-by-side with her son.

Learned from her vast experience, Grant emphasizes the importance of mentorship in her classrooms. She also aims to instill the following principle in her students: “The respect you give is the respect you give back.”

