



# the Collage

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
Kutztown University

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## Dr. P. Colin Bolger | Criminal Justice Faculty Highlight

“Criminal justice agencies are human service agencies,” explains Dr. P. Colin Bolger, professor of Criminal Justice at Kutztown University. He found his way into criminal justice through psychology as an undergraduate student. He was interested in human behavior and decision making, eventually realizing criminal justice is more of a social science approach to a service he believed was important—community safety and fairness of the criminal justice system.

For Dr. Bolger, the most important part of teaching is to inform those going into the workforce about the best practices in policing strategies and tactics, part of his area of expertise. He hopes to teach his students strategies that will improve fairness in policing and police decision making, and reduce disparities in who is stopped, searched, and arrested while still reducing crime and contributing to community safety.

As the current perspectives of students, and the American public in general, are often polarized in terms of pro- or anti-police, it has become increasingly important to have open discussions with students in terms of policing and citizen perceptions of police. “Where we are in criminal justice today is dramatically different than where we were five years ago,” Dr. Bolger explains. “Adjusting [my] teaching style to have more of a two-way conversation has really become more important.” He believes open conversation and understanding can bring people towards a more balanced perspective: “I think a lot of the polarization in people’s perspectives of police is partially driven by a lack of understanding about how police agencies and criminal justice systems operate overall.”

He also believes the same is true of police agencies in their lack of putting sufficient importance on public perceptions. “I have thought for a long time that citizen perceptions of police should be an important goal of police agencies,” he points out, as police agencies have not made enough of

an effort to focus on citizen perceptions and citizens have not put pressure on agencies to make such an effort. Instead, both police agencies and communities have historically identified crime-control as the most important goal of any police agency, with citizen perceptions a distant second. Despite this, he has noticed a big shift in recent years in terms of police agencies taking public perceptions into much greater account, as well as improving the transparency of investigations of allegations of police misconduct and excessive force.

**“The reason that people go into criminal justice is to help their communities, make them safer, and help people improve their lives...”**

In order to help police agencies evaluate citizen perceptions, Dr. Bolger is working with Dr. Ko-Hsin Hsu in the criminal justice department to create and offer different analytical services for smaller, more rural policing agencies. “They tend not to have those types of capabilities,” says Dr. Bolger. “Offering that kind of service and looking at evaluating citizen perceptions as something they don’t have the funding to immediately do is one of my main focuses right now.”

While working to ensure the understanding of citizen perceptions, he hopes to help prepare students for the intensity of the police force. Dr. Bolger and the Criminal Justice

department at KU are currently developing an internship opportunity for students who want to go into policing. “During their final semester of their graduating year, students

will be able to go to the police academy and receive internship credits for completing academy training,” he explains. This way, students can go straight to working in the field with the police force

after graduation, expediting the often-lengthy process of applications, background investigations, and training post-graduation.

Ultimately, Dr. Bolger advises criminal justice students to get involved in different student groups helping to improve campus life or providing community service opportunities. He believes getting involved shows a commitment to helping and prepares students for their careers: “The reason that people go into criminal justice is to help their communities, make them safer, and help people improve their lives—getting involved now is going to make you have the right priorities when you go into the workforce.”

## New Tenure-Track Faculty



Dr. Jeffrey McCabe  
Social Work



Dr. Christopher Harris  
Social Work



Dr. Robert Foschia  
English



### Payton Mentzer | Public Relations Student Highlight

After starting as a Finance major, Kutztown University senior Payton Mentzer realized she wanted to connect more with the public. She found she could with Public Relations. She was also drawn to the versatility of PR, noting, “You can go anywhere you want, really. There’s not one set specific career in PR.”

Payton has found this versatility applies to her current work with Residence and Housing Life on campus. As a freshman at KU, she worked as a desk receptionist in the residence halls on campus. She discovered a passion with residence life that led her to taking on roles with increasing responsibility. Payton worked as a Community Assistant

her sophomore year and eventually worked as an Assistant Resident Director in the traditional style dorm, Schuylkill Hall, her junior year. Now working as the Co-ARD in the apartment style residence hall Golden Bear Village South, she noticed her communication skills learned through her PR major, as well as her Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGS) minor, have helped in her residence life journey. “I oversee a staff of desk receptionists and Community Assistants, and I work alongside the Resident Director just to make sure the day-to-day operations of the building run smoothly,” she explains. “I am basically an educator in my position—I have to retrain my staff members, talk them through things—just be able to communicate really well. As I’ve moved through my PR major, my communication skills have advanced a lot, and I think that really helps.”

Interacting with KU’s diverse campus and meeting new people with residence life has been important to her college experience so far. “I try to get everyone involved,” Payton says, as she tries to pass on this rewarding experience. “Students can get a lot of the professional skills that they’ll need to work any job in a really simple way.” She also hopes to have residents join residence life to be more receptive to the residence life staff. “Often people see us as policy enforcers who don’t want anyone to have fun,” she points out. “But that’s not what we are, we’re just trying to keep the community safe.”

Payton also interned with the Housing and Residence life office last school year. She worked on several projects that tied in with her PR major, including helping to create a program to connect students and staff outside of the classroom. She believes this put the office in the public eye with a program she helped plan, all while using communication and program planning skills she learned through PR.

While in this position, she was presented with the opportunity to be the Student Trustee for the Council of Trustees at KU. In the hopes of branching out of residence life, she applied and got the position for this school year. “It’s definitely out of my comfort zone,” she says. “A lot of the talk in the meetings is law and financial related, but it’s a really good steppingstone for me going out into the real world and not being a college student anymore.”

Payton is not entirely sure where she will end up after graduating in the spring. She is considering going to graduate school for public administration, something that can coincide with PR and her current career interests. “I have a lot of things in mind,” she mentions. “I have career goals, but I don’t have one specific path that I’m dead set on doing.” Ultimately, Payton hopes to advise her peers to have a passion, but try to do things outside of their comfort zone, especially while still in school. “I’ve done so many more things this year—I am the Student Trustee, I started getting my real estate license,” she says. “Don’t be afraid to take new adventures and try new things.”

## Award Winning Faculty



Dr. Gregory Setliff  
2023 Chambliss Faculty  
Research Award



Dr. Wing Hong Tony Wong  
2023 Chambliss Faculty  
Research Award



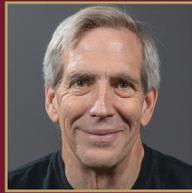
Dr. Brooks Emerick  
2023 John P. Schellenberg  
Award for Excellence in  
Teaching and Learning



Dr. Colleen Clemens  
UGRC Faculty  
Mentorship Award



Dr. Dale Parson  
UGRC Faculty  
Mentorship Award



Dr. William Donner  
Freyberger Professor



Dr. Ed Simpson  
2023 CLAS Dean's  
Outstanding Faculty Award