The Center for Studies in Criminal Justice

The Law School has received a grant of $1,000,000 from the Ford Foundation to found and help support a Center for Studies in Criminal Justice.

In a statement made at the time of the grant, Dean Neal stated: “The primary aims of the Center will be to conduct research on problems of the criminal law, including the disposition and treatment of convicted offenders, and to give specialized education in the criminal law field at the graduate level, including training in the technique of social science research appropriate to the field. The Center will thus contribute directly, by its research activities, to the enlargement of knowledge concerning criminal behavior and the procedures and sanctions for dealing with it; and it will contribute indirectly to the same end by the impetus and direction it will give to the work of younger scholars interested in the field or who may be attracted to it.”

Initially, the Center will concentrate on law enforcement, corrections, and prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency. Projects already planned include:

- An evaluation of defender services for indigents, with special attention to the role of social workers in such programs.
- A demonstration project on the need for legal assistance on civil matters.
- Development of standard police, judicial, and correctional statistics in Illinois to serve as a national model.
- Establishment of a regional planning group to coordinate the introduction and evaluation of new treatment methods in correction.
- Evaluative research on “half-way house” and other community-treatment experiments as an alternative to imprisonment, and assistance to public and private agencies planning such facilities.
- A re-examination of the juvenile court as a means of reconciling conflicts between child welfare and delinquency control.

A study of the Swedish prison system, which is considered by many scholars to be the most advanced in the world.

Further projects now under consideration include a study of bail administration, a study of the problems of probation and its administration, surveys of existing methods of research, graduate fellowships in criminal justice studies, a program of advanced training for young law teachers and legal scholars, and a visiting scholars program.

Important among the Center’s research objectives will be an effort to study systematically the effectiveness of different sanctions in deterring criminal behavior, a problem about which surprisingly little scientific knowledge exists. In this, as in other aspects of its work, the Center will build upon the experience and techniques of empirical investigation developed in the Law School’s studies of the jury and other law and behavioral science research.

Norval R. Morris, Julius Kreeger Professor of Law and Criminology, has been appointed Director of the Center. Professor Morris will work closely with Francis A. Allen, University Professor of Law and nationally recognized authority in the criminal law field.