

Student statisticians put in time tracking crime

by Natalie Johnson - Monday, May 19, 2008

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/905/student-statisticians-put-in-time-tracking-crime/>

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh criminal justice students spent the spring semester crunching the numbers on federal crime data for the Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance (OJA) Statistical Analysis Center.

“This is a fairly big deal for undergraduates,” said Susan Reed, public administration department chair. “Analysis of this federal database (all crime reported to police nationally) is usually farmed out to expensive working professionals or done by graduate students as part of master’s theses or doctoral dissertations.”

Students in assistant professor Donald Faggiani’s statistics and research methods classes worked in teams of four or five to develop 15- to 25-page research briefs. The topics ranged from drugs and violent crime to convenience store robbery and child abuse.

“The data are part of a new statewide police reporting system implemented by the OJA in 2005,” Faggiani said. “To date, we are the first group of researchers to examine this new data at this level. The data are not modified or reduced down in any way for the project. The students worked as if they were analysts.”

On May 8, the students presented their results to the director of OJA’s Statistical Analysis Center.

One presentation, “Marijuana in Milwaukee: A Study of Sales and Possession,” was given by undergraduates Kate Goedtel, Rachel Knight, Holly Kolb and Andrew Young.

They reported that in 2005 and 2006 marijuana-possession crimes made up 68 percent of the incidents handled by Milwaukee law enforcement officials. The greatest percentage of offenders was 18 years old, with more than half of all offenders under the age of 21.

Another group consisting of Jessica Harrington, Courtney McFadden, Martin Nicchetta, Kyle Radke and Xiong Thao presented “Analysis of Intimate Partner Domestic Violence as Reported to the State of Wisconsin.”

They reported that nearly 75 percent of domestic violence involves intimate partners. Of those incidents, the boyfriend/girlfriend relationship was the most frequent at 36 percent, followed by cohabitants at 34 percent and spouses at 15 percent.

For more information about the criminal justice program at UW Oshkosh, visit www.uwosh.edu/departments/public_affairs/.