

ACA Research Council Update

By Christopher A. Innes

The American Correctional Association's Research Council is a standing committee charged with advising ACA's Executive Committee, Board of Governors, committees and members, as well as the corrections field at large regarding the use of research to inform policies and practices. Last month, members of the Research Council met during the Winter Conference in Florida.

ACA President Harold Clarke selected me to serve as the new chair of the council and Lettie Prell, research director for the Iowa Department of Corrections, to serve as vice-chair. Newly appointed and returning members joining the council include: Allen Beck of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, James Beck of the U.S. Parole Commission, Marlene Beckman of the National Institute of Justice, George Braucht of the Georgia Department of Corrections, Christopher Chinapoo of the Trinidad and Tobago DOC, Cathy Fontenot of the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, Brian Grant of the Correctional Service of Canada, Lynette Greenfield of the Virginia DOC, Edward Latessa of the University of Cincinnati, Marilyn Moses of NIJ, Dan Storkamp of the Minnesota DOC, and Richard Tewksbury of the University of Louisville. In addition, Peter P. Lejins Research Award recipients are honorary members of the council. At the January meeting, the members made plans to build upon the accomplishments the council has achieved in recent years.

The Research Council has significantly expanded its activities under the leadership of my immediate predecessors, Tewksbury and, before him, Howard Snyder, chief of Recidivism, Reentry and Special Projects for BJS. During their tenures, the council sponsored a number of workshops at ACA conferences, including the very popular Author Meets Critic series; assumed responsibility for supporting the Research Notes column and a special correctional research issue of

Corrections Today; and developed stronger ties with other organizations. The council also recommends to the ACA Awards Committee its nominee for the Peter P. Lejins Research Award, which recognizes individuals for outstanding contributions to corrections research.

Since its inception, the Author Meets Critic series has covered a wide variety of subjects. The sessions provide an opportunity for conference attendees to hear from researchers who have addressed controversial subjects and to participate in a critical examination of their work. At the 2008 Winter Conference in Texas, a session on Devah Pager's book, *Marked: Race, Crime and Finding Work in An Era of Mass Incarceration*, was organized by Marilyn Moses. Previous sessions have hosted the authors of reports on prison rape, Project Greenlight, the Vera Report on American Prisons and research on community corrections.

Through the Research Notes column in *Corrections Today*, council members have authored or identified important subjects and potential authors on research subjects of interest to ACA members for the past three years. The December 2007 issue of *Corrections Today*, for which I served as theme coordinator with the help of other council members, was titled "Correctional Research and Evidence-Based Practice." It included research-based articles on maximizing the contribution of correctional staff, planning strategically for implementation, providing mental health services, entering research partnerships, exploring new applications for relapse prevention, programming for low-risk offenders, supporting research and policy on sex offenders, engaging families in reentry, and using performance audits. Several of the authors in the issue also presented at a workshop before the ACA Congress of Correction in January 2008 on the relation of research to correctional policy and practice.

The Research Council has also been active in developing stronger relationships with organizations involved in correctional and other criminal justice research. The council, under the leadership of former Chair Howard Snyder, participated in the development of the Memorandum of Understanding between ACA and the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) adopted in 2006. It provided for equality of some member benefits between the organizations, encouraged participation in each other's meetings and provided for ACJS representation on the council. As part of this effort, Vice-Chair Lettie Prell organized a session titled "Forging Mutual Beneficial Partnerships Between Corrections and College Campuses" for the March 2008 ACJS conference.

In the coming year, the council also plans to develop a stronger partnership with the American Probation and Parole Association's Research Committee as well as two research networks already in operation in community corrections and institutional corrections, sponsored by NIC and NIJ respectively.

Finally, in August 2008 the Research Council saw its longtime member Allen Beck, Ph.D., receive the Peter P. Lejins Research Award from ACA in recognition of his contribution to corrections during his 20-plus-year career at BJS.

The Research Council usually schedules its meetings for late Sunday afternoons during each of ACA's winter and summer conferences, and opens them to anyone with an interest in correctional research. The exact time and location of the Research Council's meetings are listed in each conference's program book. Information on the Research Council's ongoing activities is also available online at the NIC Correctional Research Roundtable forum at <http://community.nicic.org/forums/107.aspx>.

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