Recidivism Rates for Canine-Inmate Rehabilitation Program Participants: A Research Collaboration with the University of Denver

Jennifer K. Wesely

Project Overview

This project involves collaboration with Dr. Kevin Morris, Research Associate Professor, and his research team at the Institute for Human-Animal Connection in the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver. Dr. Morris and I began communicating several years ago about our overlapping research pursuits related to the role of canines in inmate rehabilitation programs. I am involved in the Jacksonville TAILS (Teaching Animals and Inmates Life Skills) program, which pairs rescue dogs with incarcerated men. TAILS participants live with the dogs and train them using an 8-12 week obedience curriculum. From 2016-2018 I conducted focus groups with TAILS participants at a Florida Department of Corrections penal institution in the greater Jacksonville area, and the results of this research were just published in the Journal of Offender Rehabilitation.¹ During Summer 2019, I also involved UNF students in TAILS through a Transformational Learning Opportunity (TLO) award course entitled “The Role of Canines in Inmate Rehabilitation.”²

Thus far, my research on canine-inmate programs has been derived from one participating correctional facility. Dr. Morris and I aim to examine recidivism (re-offending) rates among participants in canine-inmate programs on a wider scale. There is anecdotal evidence and limited research which finds that prison-animal programs reduce recidivism, but there remains a dearth of broader studies along these lines. As such, we hope to fill this gap, while contributing to the important topics of rehabilitation and re-entry which directly relate to the safety of communities and the reduction of crime. Specifically, Dr. Morris, his research team and I are in the development phase of a funding proposal to be submitted to a national agency such as the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), which would draw upon data derived from multiple state Department of Corrections agencies. In order to solidify next steps and prepare the proposal, I am requesting this award to travel to the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado.

² This course was featured on Action News Jax, including interviews with students and professor: https://www.actionnewsjax.com/news/local/canine-rehabilitation-program-helps-inmates-transition-back-into-society/957971849
The visit to Dr. Morris and his team would allow for workshop-style research meetings to facilitate and streamline proposal development. As I have not met Dr. Morris or his team in person, the nature of dynamic interactions in face-to-face meetings will enhance the collaborative process. This will make the final proposal more robust and competitive, while also fortifying the professional relationships that will serve us in research endeavors moving forward.

The travel timing, from May 13-16, 2020, purposefully coincides with the *Animals on the Mind 4.0 Conference* hosted by the University of Denver on May 14-15, 2020. This is the first year the conference will feature prison-based programs, including a presentation by the Sustainability in Prisons Project.³ The conference focuses on social justice-informed research findings and practice models for a culturally responsive approach to the development of humane communities. While conference attendance is not the main purpose of the trip, coordinating the timing of the research meetings to align with these dates adds value to the travel. Specifically, through exposure to and networking with professionals and practitioners in the field, there is the potential to gather meaningful feedback on project conceptualization, along with the addition of contributions (or contributors) that strengthen the proposal.

**Project Budget**

Funds totaling $1749.68 are requested for this travel, which would take place from May 13-16, 2020. Below please find an itemized budget breakdown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Budget Item</strong></th>
<th><strong>Total</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel near University of Denver, $175/3 nights</td>
<td>$525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airfare + baggage fees roundtrip</td>
<td>$450</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNF-JAX @ .445/mile, 24 miles roundtrip</td>
<td>$10.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEN-hotel roundtrip @ $75/one way (Uber/taxi)</td>
<td>$150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hotel to UDenver (multiple roundtrips, Uber/taxi)</td>
<td>$70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parking Jacksonville International Airport, 4 days</td>
<td>$50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Per diem for 4 days @ $36/day</td>
<td>$144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference registration</td>
<td>$350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total funds requested:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,749.68</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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There are no other funding sources for the project at this time.

³ [http://sustainabilityinprisons.org](http://sustainabilityinprisons.org)
CURRICULUM VITA
Jennifer K. Wesely

EDUCATION:
2001 Ph.D. School of Justice Studies, Arizona State University

UNF EMPLOYMENT:
August 2015-present Professor
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of North Florida
August 2009-August 2015 Associate Professor
August 2004-August 2009 Assistant Professor
August 2009-present Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of North Florida

OTHER UNF ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS:
January 2014-present Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB)
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP)
June 2006-June 2010 Graduate Director, Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice (MSCJ)
Program Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice

BOOKS:

JOURNAL ARTICLES 2017-present: (* denotes student co-author)

EXTERNAL GRANTS:
Principal Investigator, “Juveniles in the TAILS Program,” Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), $7,466.47 (2019-present)

INTERNAL HONORS, AWARDS & GRANTS:
Outstanding Faculty Community Engaged Scholarship Award (2018-2019); Community Scholars Program, 10th cohort. Center for Community-Based Learning, $3,000 (2018-2019); Transformational Learning Opportunity (TLO) award, Academic Affairs, Office of the Provost & Vice President: “The Role of Canines in Inmate Rehabilitation,” Summer 2019, $14,000; SMART (Student Mentored Academic Research Team) Grant Award. Office of Undergraduate Research: “The Content of Campus Safety Alerts: An Exploratory Study” with undergraduate C. Smith and faculty Dr. L. Brown and Dr. C. Phills (2016-2017); Faculty Scholarship Development Summer Grant, Academic Affairs, Office of the Provost & Vice President: “Criminal Pathways, Incarceration and Self-Sufficiency: Experiences of Women Ex-Offenders in a Jacksonville Community Re-Entry Program,” $7,500 (2015); Research Enhancement Plan (REP) Award, College of Arts & Sciences: “Women’s Re-Entry: Self-Sufficiency after Incarceration” (2014-2015); 2013-2014 Outstanding Faculty Service Award Recipient; 2014 Susan B. Anthony Award Recipient; Research Enhancement Plan (REP) Award, College of Arts & Sciences: “Interventions and Re-Offending Among Intimate Partner Violence Perpetrators: A Qualitative and Quantitative Approach” (2012-2013); 2011-2012 Outstanding Faculty Graduate Teaching Award Recipient; 2008-2009 Outstanding Faculty Undergraduate Teaching Award Recipient; 2008-2009 Faculty Empowerment Award, Disability Resource Center

2019 MEDIA CONTRIBUTIONS:
Interviewed and The Role of Canines in Inmate Rehabilitation course discussed on local news: https://www.actionnewsjax.com/news/local/canine-rehabilitation-program-helps-inmates-transition-back-into-society/957971849