

Byrne Receives Distinguished Scholar Award

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CJ Prof Advocates Evidence-Based Corrections Policy



Prof. James Byrne, left, with Chancellor Marty Meehan, has been honored by the American Society of Criminology.

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By Sandra Seitz

Mandatory sentencing. Rehabilitation services. Boot camp. Electronic monitoring. Intense community supervision. There is no shortage of initiatives and lofty claims for changing and improving criminal justice programs.

But, with 7 million offenders in the corrections system in this country, Prof. James Byrne of the Criminal Justice and Criminology Department argues for a higher standard than intuition or political rhetoric.

"We simply don't know what works – and what doesn't work – with offenders in correctional settings," said Byrne in his 2009 testimony before the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies. "Before we examine the available evidence of the effectiveness of various strategies, we need to distinguish the 'science' from the 'nonsense.'"

Byrne has received the 2011 Distinguished Scholar Award from the American Society of Criminology's Division on Corrections and Sentencing. The award recognizes a lifetime of achievement, with particular emphasis on ground-breaking contributions during the previous five years.

Byrne advocates for corrections policies to be based on high-quality evaluation research. The problem is that research on the effectiveness of various correctional programs simply has not been conducted – research that is necessary to "focus our resources on those strategies that actually work," he says.

Byrne has testified before the National Commission on Safety and Abuse in American Prisons on the causes and control of prison violence and disorder. His research has been published in a wide range of professional journals and he is co-editor of *Victims and Offenders: Journal of Evidence-Based Policies and Practices*.

His publications include Maximum Impact: Targeting Supervision on Higher Risk People, Places, and Times, a monograph published by the Pew Center on the States (July, 2009), and several books, including The Culture of Prison Violence and The New Technology of Crime, Law, and Social Control.

The American Society of Criminology's Division on Corrections and Sentencing also presented Byrne with the Warren and Palmer Differential Intervention Award for 2011, in recognition of his work in risk classification and rehabilitation. The award was established to advance the understanding of differential approaches to intervention among juvenile and adult offenders, in contrast to a one-size-fits-all approach.

In current research, Byrne is collaborating with Prof. April Pattavina of the Criminal Justice and Criminology Department on a project funded by the Bureau of Justice Administration. The project will model the impact of expanded treatment programs on recidivism, cost and other factors. Byrne serves as a research consultant on a national study to investigate possible identity manipulation among registered sex offenders.

Byrne represents UMass Lowell in a [research partnership](#) with the Sherriff's Office of Middlesex County to conduct studies and provide expertise on correctional policies and practices.



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