

NEWSROOM

[Home](#) / [News](#) / [2021](#) / [September](#) / New Center to Focus on Crime, Equity and Justice

NEW CENTER TO FOCUS ON CRIME, EQUITY AND JUSTICE

STUDENT AND FACULTY RESEARCH WILL INFORM NEW POLICIES.

by [Jim Hanchett](#) | September 14, 2021*Above: CNU students at a campus Black Lives Matter rally in 2020**Read time: about 2 min*

Christopher Newport University is launching the [Center for Crime, Equity, and Justice Research and Policy](#).

The new center will bring students and faculty together with local and state leaders and experts to conduct meaningful research projects and produce policy recommendations related to crime, equity and justice.

“We want this new center to work as a bridge between the talented, passionate, and hard-working students and faculty at CNU and the individuals and organizations that do important work on crime, equity and justice across Hampton Roads and Virginia,” said Dr. Steven Keener, the newly-appointed director of the center. “There is important work happening every day in our surrounding communities and across the state and our students and faculty can be, and should be, contributing their expertise and passion.”

Keener and associate director Dr. Laine Briddell say students will complete projects that enhance their liberal arts education by demonstrating how their research skills and content knowledge can be used to address crime, justice and equity issues facing Virginians.

Pilot initiatives by the center, part of the [Department of Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology](#), include:

- Building community and state-level partnerships in order to conduct applied research and evaluation projects that help organizations achieve their goals
- Developing the credibility and visibility of the center in order to make meaningful state and local policy recommendations on issues such as criminal justice reform, social justice and equity
- Creating formalized relationships with community-based and state-level organizations in order to facilitate student internship and career opportunities
- Hosting speakers on campus throughout the academic year
- Launching an annual justice conference on campus focused upon modern issues of crime, justice and equity

Christopher Newport is well situated and equipped to implement a center of this nature. Its geographic location will allow affiliates of the center to contribute to projects in the Hampton Roads region, while also working on state level efforts to address criminal justice reform and larger social inequities in Virginia. The university's faculty also include experts on criminology and criminal justice, sociology, racial justice, public policy and other related fields. The result will be on-campus and community opportunities for students, faculty and staff to focus on these pressing issues.

The center will begin its work this fall semester, with a specific focus on building partnerships with community and state organizations. The center is planning an official launch event during the upcoming spring semester that will be open to the campus and surrounding community. The event will be a social justice conference held on the campus, featuring speakers from across the region and state that either work in, or are experts on, issues of crime, equity and justice in Virginia.

Keener teaches criminology and sociology courses, including courses on incarceration, mental health and crime, and crime and inequality. He conducts research on the ramifications of the carceral system, with a focus on the re-entry process and the intersection of mental health and the criminal justice system.

Briddell teaches in criminology and sociology, including courses on deviant behavior, substance use and addiction, and crime and inequality. Her research focuses on substance use, juvenile delinquency and the transition to adulthood.
