

The Tow Youth Justice Institute is a university, state and private partnership established to lead the way in juvenile justice reform through collaborative planning, training, research and advocacy.

In This Issue

COVID-19 has changed the way in which we approach our work and the way in which students are wrapping up their semester. Our student interns have continued to be instrumental in accomplishing our work throughout 2019 - 2020. We'd like to take a moment to thank and celebrate them for their contributions!

Students are being highlighted alphabetically by their supervising staff member.

Celebrating the Student Interns of the Tow Youth Justice Institute



Students working with Dr. Danielle Cooper, Director of Research

Olivia Bissanti

"Olivia joined the research team over a year ago as a sophomore eager to get involved. During our time working together, she has demonstrated her superlative oral and writing skills through several projects—most recently an issue brief on the treatment of migrant youth at the southern border.



I am honored to work with someone who has such a passion for policy and advocacy. I look forward to continuing to work together in her senior year at the University.

"~Dr. Cooper

Most of the work I do for TYJI is synthesizing aggregate data and working with current event articles. I think the opportunity to work with TYJI is so important to me because it's an institution that works closely with the CT government, so we are able to make measurable change to many lives through the advocacy done at JJPOC. While I don't have a seat at the table for these meetings, I know that the research time helps get much of the data and information ready to be presented at these meetings where law/policy is made for juveniles in the state.

I learned that school disciplinary systems can play a major part in behavioral trends for juveniles. I never considered how large of a role school disciplinary policy plays but working on the school-based diversion project showed me how important it is to provide kids who break school rules with resources and alternatives. I think too often people consider the juvenile justice system as just including law enforcement, when preventative measures are just as important.

This experience will help me in the future because it has really showed me how the many entities in policy, advocacy and research work together. Watching JJPOC meetings and hearing about the different projects me and the other researchers work on taught me that there are many different groups who all

have a common goal of helping the youth population in CT. It really helped me narrow what kind of specific work I want to do in the field of advocacy as I never realized how many options there was before this.

I'd say my biggest accomplishment is the Youth at the Border project I did. While it isn't entirely done, I spent many hours learning about the immigration detention centers which were a major news story this past summer. I was able to apply my knowledge on policy and law to understand how this happened, who was impacted and what kinds of long-term ramifications this will have on immigrant children. This semester was really busy and crazy for me considering we are now at home because of COVID-19. I am glad we are able to continue our work with TYJI but miss being on campus! ~ *Olivia Bissanti*

Paul Klee

"Paul has been an asset to the research team during his first year at the University. He has grown as a researcher and future academic over this brief period. Our time spent developing the evaluation plan for an upcoming police training has allowed Paul to make critical recommendations and changes to work that will hopefully support youth and police in positive relations." ~Dr. Cooper



During the 2019-2020 academic year I worked for the Tow Youth Justice Institute Research Team under the guidance of Dr. Cooper. Dr. Cooper has helped develop my skills in Microsoft Office, Microsoft Teams, SPSS, and Qualtrics, and offered many valuable learning opportunities. I had the opportunity to work on the Georgetown Capstone Project, The Connecticut Institute for Youth and Police Relations training, and assist on a variety of other projects. In addition to the research projects being conducted, I had the opportunity to help plan The Tow Youth Justice Institute Five-Year Anniversary and the Critical Perspectives on Drugs event. I have also been able to participate in meetings regarding juvenile justice and youth in the state of Connecticut. I was able to attend JJPOC meetings in Hartford, JJPOC workgroup meeting, The Dispute Resolution Workshop at Yale, Katal meetings, IMRP CT Reentry Collaborative meetings, and a few other webinars and statewide calls. My involvement on the Research Team has had a profound impact on my ability to collaborate and conduct meaningful research.

Over the past year, I have learned that research and advocacy can be very rewarding. The Tow Youth Justice Institute has shown me the tangible application of research through directed policy recommendations. The experiences made available to me by the Tow Youth Justice Institute have helped me better understand the importance of research, and how it can be applied to help others. While conducting research, it is important to stay organized, which I have found to be much easier with the use of Microsoft Teams. The Microsoft Teams software is a wonderful data storage and communication program that I will continue to use to catalog the work that I do. I am grateful to have been introduced to this program by Dr. Cooper.

My most significant accomplishment this semester has been helping develop an evaluation for The Connecticut Institute for Youth and Police Relations. The University of New Haven is a tight-knit community that has invested in providing me an excellent education through my coursework and my fellowship at the Tow Youth Justice Institute. This semester has been particularly challenging due to remote learning and working, but this different type of learning has forced me to embrace learning through a different medium, and develop skills in telecommunication that I rather wouldn't have developed. ~*Paul Klee*

Megan McClintock



"After Megan's stellar performance in my Quantitative Applications in CJ course, I was honored to have her join the research team in the fall of 2018. Over the past two years, she has expanded quantitative and qualitative research skills that will serve her well as she continues into the workforce and graduate school after graduation. She has brought as much light and laughter as she has organization and planning to the team. She will be missed by many, but most of all me." ~Dr. Cooper

Working at the Tow Youth Justice Institute, I was able to take part in research that paved the way for social justice in our state. I not only learned new software that gave me a head start when it came to classes but also gave me the tools that I would need to further my education. I loved getting to meet all of the Tow staff and work with them to further the goals of the program. One of my favorite moments working at the Tow was when I was able to take part in the event planning process and see my ideas come to light. It was great to see people engage and learn from the different sessions we held, while also informing attendees about the Tow. This experience not only helped me with my current

education but prepared me for my educational journey as I start my master's program. Working at the Tow for two years was one of the highlights of my time at the university and I could not imagine my time without it. As I graduate this semester, I cannot wait to see all of the work that continues and see all the new faces that join the team next year. ~Megan McClintock

Dayquan Garrett

"Dayquan humbly introduced himself at an event in the spring of 2019, but little did he know that I had already heard of his work ethic and commitment to social justice issues from other professors and colleagues. Over the past year, Dayquan has been integral in the first two phases of research funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. He has reviewed data and written summaries that have allowed for assessment of racial and ethnic disparity in Connecticut cities. He is beyond deserving of his recent award for Outstanding Student in Community Psychology. I look forward to continuing my support of his journey as he pursue his PhD." ~Dr. Cooper



From a personal perspective, the most significant takeaway from my working with the Tow Youth Justice Institute was to be confident in what I have to offer. There were plenty of opportunities for my opinion and skill set to be sharpened and encouraged. From a knowledge perspective, I learned all of the efforts that the state of Connecticut is doing in juvenile justice. My experience will help me think critically about programs and policies needed for social justice of minority groups and those negatively and disproportionately affected by current policies that are implemented. The experience I gained with TYJI showed me that through true collaboration and people who are passionate about the work they do, real change can be fostered.

This semester, I won the award for outstanding graduate student in Community Psychology, the award given annually to a graduating Community Psychology master's student who has shown excellence in academics as well as community or program service and engagement. This honor was truly moving and something I will always cherish.

My time at the University of New Haven gave me exponential personal and professional growth. I gained skills, from research to evaluation, that will help me be an asset in any environment. I also gained mentors and friends that will last a lifetime. Overall, my experience has been amazing! ~Dayquan Garrett

Bridget McEvilly

"Having taught Bridget in three of my classes, I have had the honor of watching her develop into a strong scholar and researcher over the past two years. She has worked tirelessly on curating the background research, reviewing the available data, and achieving necessary approvals from IRB for the Health, Housing, Education, and Justice study. Her efforts have helped move us forward as we work to secure funding and collaborative agreements for the project. As a graduating senior, her hard work and warm positive spirit be missed as she moves on from the University. I look forward to the seeing how she contributes to the field of youth justice as a practitioner and a scholar." ~Dr. Cooper



Working at the Tow Youth Justice Institute has been an amazing experience. I became a researcher in the Spring of 2019. The most significant takeaway that I have learned is that it takes a significant amount of effort and time to make changes in the Criminal Justice System. It feels amazing knowing that I was a small part of change in the last year. My experience at the Tow Institute will definitely help me in my many future endeavors. I now have a better understanding of how to complete research. I have gained new skills including new technology, communication skills, professionalism and teamwork.

This semester has been exciting for me. Specifically, Dr. Cooper and I have been working on projects involving the Health, Housing, Justice and Education of juveniles. Just recently our IRB was approved. This semester I also helped plan an event that we had on campus: The Critical Perspective on Drugs, which was a huge success. Lastly, I was able to attend three JJPOC (Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee). During these meetings I was able to see some of the projects I have been personally working on be brought to policy makers.

Since touring the University of New Haven four years ago, I knew I wanted to attend. Since enrolling here, I have been an active member of the Criminal Justice Association, the Executive Assistant of the Juvenile Justice Club, studied abroad in Italy for an entire semester, and of course became a research intern at the Tow Youth Justice Institute. I decided to pursue a major in Criminal justice with a concentration in Juvenile and Family Justice along with completing two minors, one in Psychology and the other in Business Management. I will finally be completing my degree this May after four long years. My experiences have all made me into the strong, independent woman that I am today. ~Bridget McEvilly

Alison Oliver

"Alison jumped right in during the summer of 2019 to kick start our research on school-based diversion. In less than a year, she has been integral to the review of the literature, interviews with key stakeholders, and a survey of middle and high school administrator. Her observations and analyses have led to the development and refinement of a definition of school-based diversion. As her MA program comes to a close in the fall, it is clear that Ali is destined to make great contribution to the field of youth justice. " ~Dr. Cooper



Most of the work that I have done with the TYJI has involved diversionary practices, particularly school-based diversion. I collaborated with staff to propose a definition of school-based diversion to the JJPOC's school-based diversion subgroup in the summer 2019. In late fall 2019, a school-based diversion inventory was devised and sent out to middle and high schools in Connecticut in order to gather information on what policies and procedures are being implemented in schools regarding diversionary and disciplinary practices. Being able to work on these various projects has been an extremely rewarding experience. I have been able to learn so much and have been exposed to situations and people that I would not have been otherwise.

Being a member of the TYJI research team has allowed me to grow in many ways and broaden my perspective. I have learned what it truly means to be part of a team and that there are numerous people advocating and passionate about youth justice in Connecticut. My experience with the TYJI will help me in the future because of all of the tools I have been able to acquire along with the ample events and stakeholders that I've been exposed to. I have been able to experience various facets of the juvenile justice system as a whole that will serve as a significant benefit for my future career.

Some of my significant accomplishments this semester includes maintaining a Graduate Deans Scholarship as well as being selected to participate in the Graduate Student Showcase. This semester has brought many ups and downs, but I have had an amazing experience so far at the University of New Haven. I have learned so much just in this semester and have gained several tools and experiences, many from my involvement with the Tow Youth Justice Institute. I am extremely thankful for the time I had have at the University so far and especially my work with the TYJI. ~Alison Oliver



Student working with Devon McCormick, Restorative Justice Practices Project Manager

Rami El Gharib

"Rami has been a jack of all trades for our Restorative Justice project. Rami entered as an eager-to-learn unpaid intern in the Fall of 2019, and spent the semester assisting me in providing technical assistance to our School-Based Diversion Initiative schools. Rami did so much self-guided learning about Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices, and has been the most supportive student worker I could have asked for. This semester, Rami returned to work with me as a student worker, and together we did a tremendous amount of consultation planning for UNH student affairs and housing. When COVID-19 hit, Rami stepped up immediately to provide me with support and develop



content for our online technical assistance and resource development for our school collaborators.

Rami is the most appreciative and helpful person I could ever hope to work with. He has provided the project with innovative, creative ideas, he is always so grateful for my time and wisdom, and has provided me with a lot of joy and fun. Rami ran his own training, developed his own content, and keeps me motivated when we face challenges. I can't wait to see what he does with the many skills he has been developing, but I am sure whatever it is will be AWESOME because of the wonderful person he is!" ~Devon

Coming from Lebanon, a country that is filled with conflict, it was great to learn more about new methods of dealing with conflict through Restorative Justice. Working with TYJI has been truly eye opening and has changed my vision and approach to conflict resolution. I worked on creating several training documents and attended several trainings that have furthered my knowledge in the RJ field. The most significant takeaway I learned from working with TYJI is that there is always a space for healing and growth. This can really be shown in the workplace culture at Tow and through communicating with my colleagues, supervisor and through the nature of my work at the institute. Graduating during a pandemic is not easy but I want to thank my colleagues at TYJI for being very supportive and always providing a space for growth. I am excited to go back to Lebanon and provide the knowledge and skills I have learned through TYJI. ~Rami El Gharib



Students working with Erika Nowakowski, Director of Youth Justice Initiatives

Richard Concepcion

"From day one Richie has brought to TYJI a lot enthusiasm, energy, and creativity to the work. The past two years he has directly worked with the TYJI Transforming Leadership Program, revising material, collecting and noting feedback, and developing the alumni network social media Facebook page. His ability to stretch his skills is apparent as he works diligently to rework materials to an online platform for the startup of the fifth cohort. His motivation to do more and leave a mark at the University of New Haven is demonstrated as he sought out to form and lead the "Juvenile Justice Club" for the past two years and play a key role in various other university organizations. Lead by example is what he has done and will continue to do as he begins his Master's degree in Community Psychology at UNH in the fall. " ~Erika

The most significant takeaway that I have learned by working with the Tow Youth Justice Institute is making meaningful relationships with not only the employees but the students and professionals that we engage with every day. Through my two years working at the TYJI, I have communicated well with the staff, interns, and many more individuals that we connect with daily. As a member working with the Transforming Youth Justice: A Development Leadership Program, I have gained many relationships with the professionals I hope to work with in my future in the juvenile justice system. I have educated myself with guest speakers learning about trauma, child development, RBA practices, community advocacy and gaining those connections that are experts in their focus of work. I have learned that there are many ways to provoke change in different organizations and connect with different parts of the juvenile justice system and how we can all come together to treat our youth better. I have learned that everyone in the TYJI is an essential and crucial asset to the team to work effectively. Each team member has a significant role, and we all work together to promote evidence-based practices to advance juvenile justice system reform in Connecticut that will improve outcomes for the youth involved.



My experience at the Tow Youth Justice Institute helps me learn how to be an effective leader in the future. Through my work with this organization, I have learned how to be a better communicator with a team, be an effective leader to provoke change, and learn from the individuals that have much knowledge about reform of the juvenile justice system. I have learned the founding basis of the different practices that best serve our youth. In my future, I want to be a Juvenile Probation Officer, and through my experience at the TYJI, it will help me understand how to treat the youth and their families in difficult circumstances that one struggles with. It has given me the experience of the difficulties that juveniles face and the system and educate individuals on how to communicate

and treat them as youth are different from adults. Provoking reform and change starts with the professionals in the field and I have gained knowledge about the individuals that work in this system, and how to make sure there will be adequate resources and treatments to provide.

As this semester was the last semester of my undergraduate degree, I tried to do as much as possible to stay involved with my campus community academically, and through my extracurricular activities. Besides working at the Tow Youth Justice Institute, I was the Founder and President of the Juvenile Justice Club for two years on campus. My role in that position was to facilitate club meetings with activities to discuss topics/ideas about the difficult circumstances that juveniles face in the system. Before COVID-19 occurred, we were supposed to invite Nicole Kowal to train us on LGBTQ+ youth in the system, and Jerry Martinez was joining us to discuss his experiences with the juvenile justice system personally. I am also a brother of Alpha Phi Omega and was on the executive board this semester, serving as the Fellowship Vice President. As my role as Fellowship Vice President, I facilitated events to enhance the brotherhood of our fraternity while coordinating the planning and successful execution of the fellowship program of the chapter. I also oversaw the Inter-Chapter Relations Chair, Sunshine Chair, Rec-Sports Chair, and Alumni Relations Chair.

In May 2020, I will be graduating with my Bachelor of Science, Criminal Justice degree with a concentration in Juvenile and Family Justice and a minor in Psychology. This university has given me the best memories, friendships, and opportunities that I cannot even imagine. With my internships at the Tow Youth Justice Institute and the Connecticut Judicial Branch, I have gained professional knowledge about the procedures and policies of the criminal justice system. I never knew what I wanted to do in my professional career when I was applying to college, but after having the experience with the juvenile justice system, I realize that this is a field I am passionate about.

Through my extracurricular activities with Alpha Phi Omega, University of New Haven Marching Band, and the Juvenile Justice Club, I have learned how to work in a team and be an effective leader throughout all aspects of my life. The University of New Haven has shaped me into the person I am today, and I am very excited to continue my education in the fall with starting my Master's degree in Community Psychology with a concentration in Forensic Psychology. ~*Richie Concepcion*

Alex Scranton

"Alex graduates this spring with an M.S. in Criminal Justice and has been a member of the TYJI team for the past two years. In the past two years he has demonstrated his ability to be a good listener, flexible, and eager to assist anybody on the team. Alex has played a key role in the work of the JJPOC by assisting in the development of legislative and policy recommendations, has created and organized meeting materials, note and share information, and trouble shoot and identify strategies on any areas or topics you ask of him. His quiet nature is a strength in the mist of what can sometimes become heated discussions in the dynamic of the work we do." ~*Erika*

I believe that the most significant takeaway during my time at the Tow Youth Justice Institute is that you should never close the door to new opportunities. Having been primarily interested in financial crime investigations, I was not quite sure how I would like the world of juvenile justice. The staff at Tow and working with people around the state showed me how dedicated this small, but important part of the criminal justice system truly is.



My experience at TYJI will without a doubt help me in the future. I have learned to manage my time effectively to accomplish a variety of equally important, but unrelated tasks. I have also learned what it truly means to work as a team with those around me. Lastly, it has given me an abundance of personal and professional connections that I can now potentially use as I grow in my own career.

I co-authored an academic article with UNH Professor Giovanni Circo. The title was "Did Connecticut's 'Raise the Age' Increase Motor Vehicle Thefts". The topic was something that I learned of through my time at TYJI. I can proudly announce the article was published with the Criminal Justice Policy Review. I am also happy to announce I have obtained my first job post-graduation. I will be working at People's Bank corporate office in Bridgeport as an OFAC Analyst.

I am truly grateful for my time at the University of New Haven. It is hard to believe that it was 6 years ago when I started my journey as an Undergraduate. I was able to meet some amazing people along the way, especially folks within the Henry C. Lee College of Criminal Justice and Forensic Sciences and the Tow Youth Justice Institute. As I graduate with my M.S. in Criminal Justice this month, I can safely look back and say I would do it all over again. ~*Alex Scranton*



Students working with Kelly Orts

Catherine Parafati

"Catherine started as an intern at the Tow Youth Justice Institute but quickly proved to be a vital part of the team. Through her commitment to learning and impressive organizational skills, Catherine was able to turn her internship into a part-time student employment during her junior year at the University of New Haven. She currently assists in the coordination of JJPOC meeting materials, including, but not limited to, agendas, minutes, and attendance. She was also a vital researcher in the Diversion Workgroup, focusing on the minimum age of juvenile jurisdiction and global standards. Catherine excels at everything she does, which is apparent through her educational, professional, and personal success thus far. As she enters her senior year, I look forward to seeing where she lands after graduation and know they will be lucky to have her!" ~Kelly

Working with the TYJI for the past year has taught me so much. However, the most valuable lesson I have learned is that passion and dedication make all the difference. The entire TYJI staff is so invested in every project they tackle, and it is for the sole purpose of bettering the lives of juveniles in Connecticut. I feel so honored to have been able to learn from such a great group of individuals how to take your passion for something and utilize your skills to their full potential. It was so inspiring to watch the team organize, prepare, and execute meetings and conferences under varying circumstances, and still be able to produce positive results.



My position at the TYJI has pushed me to advance my communication and time management skills, as well as my ability to work collaboratively in a team setting. I was also able to grasp a better understanding of the juvenile justice system, specifically in the state of Connecticut, and the necessary steps to eventually pass new legislation. Wherever my future career path in Criminal Justice takes me, I am sure that I will be able to utilize the knowledge I have gained when working with all of the state agencies that comprise the Juvenile Justice Policy & Oversight Committee.

This past semester, I have created several standard intern guides to help future TYJI interns with their orientation process, and give them helpful advice for completing tasks efficiently. Over the course of the past year, I have created numerous organizational charts and graphs for the JJPOC and all of the workgroups/subgroups to utilize. Outside of the TYJI, I became the Vice President of my Greek organization, and most recently became the Sergeant at Arms for the Juvenile Justice Club, which was founded by a student intern at the TYJI.

While I still have my senior year to look forward to, the past three years I have spent at the University have allowed me to grow and really step out of my comfort zone. I have taken leadership roles in recognized student organizations, which have presented me with so many opportunities to advance in the Criminal Justice field. I have also learned how to manage my time in order to have a healthy balance between school and extracurriculars. Most importantly, I have made connections to so many significant individuals in the Criminal Justice field who just want to see me succeed and help me achieve my goals. ~Catherine Parafati

Brooke Barbeau

"Brooke began her internship at the Tow Youth Justice Institute assisting in website management and design in February 2020. She is responsible for communication between TYJI and the Connecticut General Assembly website to ensure updated communications of all JJPOC meetings and materials. She also assists in preparation of meeting materials and attends JJPOC workgroup and subgroup meetings. Brooke is always curious and communicative with the other interns and continues to be committed to the juvenile justice work and TYJI. She is a great team member and I look forward to our continued mentorship and professional development in the Fall!" ~Kelly



Through my intern position, I was able to learn of the great efforts the Tow Youth Justice Institute puts toward ensuring a better future for juveniles in Connecticut. The passion and dedication all TYJI employees and volunteers have for their work is very inspiring! Tow Youth Justice Institute has helped me gain insight into the legislative process of juvenile justice reform. My experience here will help me gain real-world knowledge which I can apply to my future career, being a criminal justice major with a minor in legal studies. I have been given the opportunity by TYJI to collaborate on important projects for the JJPOC and have been able to sit in on a workgroup meeting in Hartford! I am excited to continue to help at Tow next semester!

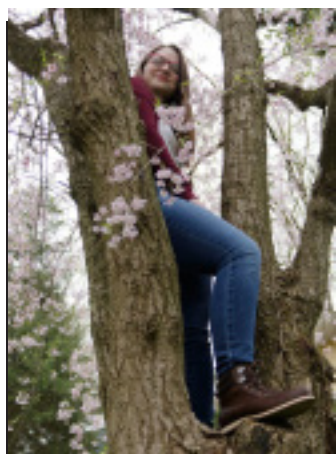
In the upcoming year I will be a junior in the undergraduate program here at the university and so far my experience here has been nothing less of great! I have been able to make important connections that will help me later on in life and have made great friendships! While I am upset that this year was cut short, I cannot wait for the day we return to campus! ~Brooke Barbeau



Student working with Donna Pfrommer, Director of Development and Communications

Rebecca Satzberg

"It's been a pleasure and an honor working with Rebecca. She is very talented and creative and brought her vast knowledge of podcasting to our array of communications that raise awareness of juvenile justice reform. Her contributions in other areas, such as our new website, have been invaluable. She was an integral part of the student planning team for our Tow 5 Year Anniversary Celebration on campus. I will miss her but can't wait to see her name as a sound designer for theater productions, and the many other ways in which she will wow our world with her bright light!" ~Donna



The most significant thing I learned from working at Tow is how difficult it can be to schedule in-person meetings with someone. This position has given me the opportunity to explore more virtual options for podcasting that I am sure to use in the future. The podcasting skills, and editing I did on the recordings, will serve me well going forward into more audio editing jobs. I also think learning how difficult scheduling can be will help me to plan things further ahead in the future.

This semester, I was the Sound Designer, Engineer, and Dramaturg for our production of George Brant's Elephant's Graveyard which is my last show I will do at the University of New Haven. I am a graduating senior, and I will be pursuing a Technical Sound Internship Certificate at Yale's School of Drama next year.

My time at the University of New Haven has been more than special. I have worked in many different facets at the University, and have learned more than I ever imagined I would. My biggest take away is how amazing our professors are, and how I know I will forever have incredible connections here to come back to and continue working with going forward. ~Rebecca Satzberg

