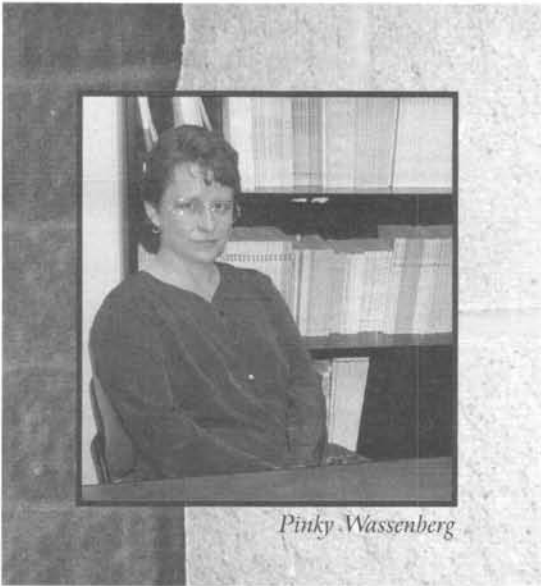


Faculty Profile: *Pinky Wassenberg*

Ancedotal information was floating around Illinois on whether juveniles were getting timely access to attorneys in delinquency proceedings. The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission wanted to know for sure what was happening, and turned to the Center for Legal Studies (CLES) at UIS to find out.



Pinky Wassenberg

Pinky Wassenberg and Richard Schmitz became the principal investigators in a statewide evaluation. "We found out that nearly every juvenile has an attorney when [he or she] first appears in court," said Wassenberg. They also learned in some counties many cases ended within a month of the appointment of an attorney. That short amount of time, Wassenberg said, might indicate that not enough time was spent looking at the alternative placements that might be best for the juvenile.

This study typifies the kind of work Wassenberg does. With a law degree and a Ph.D., she has a joint appointment with the CLES and the Political Studies department, where she is an associate professor. She has been on the UIS campus since 1987, and frequently teams up with Schmitz on evaluations of innovative criminal justice programs around the state. The CLES has

established a high level of credibility and a good working relationship with the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, which frequently needs independent external evaluations of various programs.

Another evaluation completed within the past year already has paid some dividends for one county. The problem in a number of Illinois counties is the overcrowding of the county jail. So in Madison and Adams counties, the Sheriff's Work Alternative Program (SWAP) allows some low-level offenders with relatively short sentences to do public service work under a deputy's supervision instead of spending time in jail. Wassenberg said these offenders have done work such as painting schools, building bleachers, and cleaning up municipal cemeteries. There has been a good response from the public, which considers it a good idea for convicted people to do work instead of sitting in jail, Wassenberg said, and another benefit is that these projects save bed space in jails. When grant funding for the project ran out in Madison County, Wassenberg said, the county board decided to fund the SWAP with county funds, in part because the UIS evaluation described how successful the project had been.

Wassenberg spends much of her time in the field and doing quantitative analysis, while Schmitz handles the qualitative analysis of their evaluations. One thing Wassenberg has learned from years of conducting evaluations is that the success of any innovative program often depends on having someone at the local level who is entrepreneurial and who then goes out and hires the right people for the job.