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3 September, 2019

SWOSU Criminal Justice Student Attends Oklahoma Summer Policy Institute

Alberto Manzano, a Clinton senior at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford majoring in criminal justice, recently attended the 2019 Oklahoma Summer Policy Institute held in Tulsa.

The four-day institute is hosted annually and led by the staff of the Oklahoma Policy Institute (OK Policy)—a non-partisan independent policy think-tank—to provide students with a unique opportunity to network with fellow students and community leaders and become better informed about Oklahoma's most important policy issues.

Dr. Daniel Kavish, assistant professor of sociology and criminal justice at SWOSU, said participants in the institute are chosen by a competitive application process aimed at selecting students with strong academic training, diverse experiences, and a clear interest in the study and practice of public policy. Around 50 Oklahoma undergraduate and graduate students are chosen each year to participate in the institute.

Manzano was able to specifically learn about OK Policy's Open Justice Oklahoma (OJO) program. OJO seeks to understand and analyze how criminal justice policies have impacted Oklahoma communities and to develop and advocate for potential reforms that may reduce crime and improve rehabilitation.

An example of the work done by OJO that Manzano learned about is the recent report on the impact of the voter-approved state question 780, which reclassified simple possession of any drug as a misdemeanor, instead of a felony, and raised the felony threshold for many property crimes by \$500. OJO found that SQ-780 resulted in over a 28% decrease of total felony filings during FY2018, reversing a decade long trend in Oklahoma of increased felony filings.

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