



Robert Culbertson
19th ACJS President
1981-1982

Robert “Bob” Culbertson was born and raised in Iowa. Upon graduation from high school he attended Webster City Junior College in Webster City, Iowa, where he earned an Associates of Arts in 1960. He then enrolled in the University of Iowa where he earned a B.S. in Political Science in 1962 and a M.A. in Sociology/Criminology in 1964. Upon graduation, he began work as a Juvenile Court Counselor, eventually becoming the Supervisor, while also teaching part time.

In 1968, Culbertson obtained a position as an Assistant Professor at Indiana State University teaching criminal justice. At the same time, he decided to further his education, enrolling in the Ph.D. program in Criminology at the University of Cincinnati. According to Culbertson, “I chose the UC criminal justice program because it was grounded in the social psychology approach to crime theory. The young professors in this new program were determined to put us through our paces. Many hours were spent tracing assigned theories back to their roots, following every question to its end. My doctorate from UC prepared me for a marvelous career in terms of research, teaching and serving as an expert witness. It opened doors for me that no other program could have.” It did in fact open doors for Culbertson, for upon earning his Ph.D. he left Indiana State University, accepting a position at Grand Valley State College where he taught for two years. He then accepted a position at Illinois State University in 1976 as the Chair of the Department of Corrections.

While at Illinois State University, Culbertson became involved in the Academy as Secretary/Treasurer, and developed a friendship with George Felkenes. Culbertson assisted Felkenes in organizing the Midwest Association of Criminal Justice, and for his active participation in both organizations was considered a “Young Turk,” or in modern parlance, a change agent. Culbertson advocated a number of changes which led to his election as Secretary/Treasurer for the two year term of 1977-1979. In 1978, he worked tirelessly with John Conley at the annual meeting in New Orleans to make it the benchmark conference against which all future conferences would be judged. The number of panels and papers presented, exceeded anything in the past, attendance was the highest it had ever been, and the focus on giving out awards to those inside and outside of the Academy was seen as a means of enhancing the organization’s legitimacy. For his efforts, Culbertson was elected 2nd VP in 1980.

As ACJS President, Culbertson advocated for the creation of the Academy’s own journal eventually leading to an ad hoc committee that would found *Justice Quarterly*. Culbertson also voiced concern over the desire by many to move the national office to Washington D.C. thinking it too expensive, so he pushed for locating the office at a Midwest University campus, and that is, in part, how ACJS came to be headquartered at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. While president he also authored the Monograph on *Syllabus Design and Construction in Criminal Justice Education* for the Joint Commission on Criminology and Crime Justice Education in 1981.

After his tenure as ACJS President he continued working his way up in administration, becoming the Dean at Montana State University and later Vice President at Arkansas State University, and finally Chancellor at the University of Wisconsin – Platteville, where he served from 1993-1996, before returning to faculty.

He was awarded the ACJS Founder’s Award in 1984 and the distinguished title of Academy Fellow in 1987.