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Two Attorneys Leave Courtroom for the Classroom

By Erika Mantz
UNH News Bureau
603-862-1460

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For additional comment, call John T. Kirkpatrick, director of Justiceworks, (603) 862-1957; Michael Skibbie (603) 224-1236; and Charles Putnam (603) 742-8581.

DURHAM, N.H. -- Prominent criminal attorneys Michael Skibbie and Charles Putnam will join the staff of Justiceworks, a University of New Hampshire-based consortium dedicated to providing balanced, non-partisan research on issues of crime and justice, later this year.

Skibbie is currently executive director of the New Hampshire Public Defender's Office, a position he has held for the past nine years. He will join Justiceworks in September. Putnam, head of the criminal justice bureau in the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office, will join Justiceworks in November.

Long-time adversaries in the courtroom, the two attorneys will now work collaboratively on joint research projects to strengthen public safety, individual liberties and the administration of justice in the state. Skibbie and Putnam will be staff associates in the Justice, Law, and Society Project at Justiceworks and hold the rank of research associate professor of political science at UNH.

"We are extremely pleased that Mr. Skibbie and Mr. Putnam will be joining us," says John T. Kirkpatrick, director of Justiceworks. "Both colleagues are highly regarded by members of the bar, judiciary and others in the criminal justice system. Together, they offer a wonderful balance between prosecution and defense. It is a real coup for us at the university to recruit both to work on the pressing problems of the juvenile and
Kirkpatrick added that one of their first collaborative projects will be to better understand the processing of youth with disabilities within the state's juvenile justice system. Skibbie and Putnam will also work on developing education and training opportunities for criminal justice professionals throughout the region.

A graduate of the University of Vermont and Franklin Pierce Law School, Skibbie has consulted around the nation on matters of importance to public defense attorneys, particularly on the quality of indigent defense.

Putnam joined the Attorney General's Office in 1986, after working as a clerk in the U.S. Court of Appeals in the Second Circuit. A graduate of Yale University, he earned his law degree at the University of Connecticut. Prior to assuming his current post, he headed the Consumer Bureau as well as the Homicide Unit in the Attorney General's Office.

Based at the UNH Institute for Policy and Social Science Research, Justiceworks combines the expertise of university professors, researchers, police, judges, corrections officials and others throughout the region to serve a three-part mission:

- Provide timely and affordable evaluations of state and local programs aimed at minimizing crime and delinquency;

- Provide useful and current information about crime and crime control strategies to planners, policy makers and those with an interest in the field of criminal justice;

- Develop and provide new training opportunities in criminal justice to various audiences within the regional justice system, including victim advocates, school resource officers, and defense and prosecuting attorneys.