Forensic Psychology (BA) Mission Statement & Learning Objectives

The mission of the Forensic Psychology major is to enhance understanding of behavior, in terms of its biological, cognitive, social, emotional and contextual components and their interaction, and to develop an appreciation for its implications in forensic settings. Students will learn to employ a scientific approach to understand behavior.

The Psychology Department has developed a series of learning objectives (adapted from those of the American Psychological Association (APA) "area's" of learning) that reflect "optimal expectations for performance at the completion of the baccalaureate degree by students who major in psychology" (APA, 2007, p. v). The first five objectives include development of knowledge, skills, and values consistent with the science and application of Psychology, which are thought to be the responsibility of the psychology program. The final five objectives reflect knowledge, skills, and values consistent with liberal arts education that are further developed in psychology. These are thought to be developed (and assessed) across domains – both in the major as well as through general education.

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the historical and theoretical foundations of psychology, as well as key concepts, content, and research methods in the major sub-disciplines of psychology and in the field of "psychology and the law". [Areas #1, 4]
- Demonstrate appropriate information literacy, including the ability to perform effective database searches. [Area #6]
- Demonstrate the ability to design an ethically appropriate psychological research study and analyze and interpret basic research data. [Areas #2, 3, 5]
- Gather, read, synthesize and critique primary source psychological and psycho-legal literature. [Areas #3, 6, 7]
- Communicate effectively through oral and written presentations and demonstrate appropriate use of APA style. [Area #7]
- Critically and skeptically evaluate psychological information and extend this critical thinking to one's own work and all aspects of life-long learning. [Areas #3, 4, 9]
- Demonstrate an appreciation of contextual influences on individual behavior and diversity of perspectives, including those related to race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality and culture. [Area #8]
- Recognize professional ethics inherent in different aspects of psychology, including forensic psychology. [Areas #5, 8]
- Demonstrate an appreciation of how psychology relates to real-life professional and personal situations. [Areas #4, 9]
- Demonstrate an awareness of the scope and entry qualifications of professional and graduate programs in psychology. [Area #10]

Forensic Psychology Major Learning Objectives (adapted from APA)

#1. Area: Knowledge Base of Psychology: Students will demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.

Specific Learning Objectives
Define Psychology
Understand major psychological theories (behavioral, biological, cognitive, evolutionary, humanistic, psychodynamic and sociocultural)
Use psychological theory to explain psychological phenomena
Demonstrate knowledge of history of psychology
Demonstrate knowledge of key concepts, content, and research methods in the major sub-disciplines of psychology and in psychology and law.

#2. Area: Basic research knowledge and skills: Students will understand and apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation.

Specific Learning Objectives
Understand principles of research methods in psychology
Accurately summarize a research article
Conduct a review of research in a specific area of psychology.
Understand format of research article
Understand advantages of scientific research
Create a basic, ethical research design
Understand which type of research design can test for causation and which cannot
Interpret and generalize appropriately from research results

#3. Area: Critical thinking Skills: Students will respect and use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and, when possible, the scientific approach to solve problems related to behavior and mental processes.

Specific Learning Objectives

Distinguish between theory and empirical findings
Distinguish between subjective, professional, and research knowledge
Demonstrate problem-solving skills
Solve ethical dilemmas
Operationalize concepts for measurement in research
Critique primary source materials

#4. Area: Application of Psychology: Students will understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues.

Specific Learning Objectives
Describe Major Theoretical areas of psychology (e.g. clinical, counseling, industrial/organizational, school, health)
Identify appropriate applications of psychology in problem solving
Articulate how psychological principles can be used to explain social issues and inform public policy
Critically evaluate the interpretation of psychological research and applications in the media, society, practice etc.

#5. Area: Ethics and Values: Students will be able to weigh evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and reflect other values that are the underpinnings of psychology as a discipline.

Specific Learning Objectives
Awareness of APA ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct
Awareness of need for ethics in research
Awareness of need for ethics in applied settings
Respect for other points of view

Understanding and applying moral reasoning in applied psychology settings

#6. Area: Information and Technology Literacy: Students will demonstrate information competence and the ability to use computers and other technology for many purposes.

Specific Learning Objectives
Full use of PsycInfo
Evaluate sources of general internet search

#7. Area: Communication Skills: Students will be able to communicate effectively in a variety of formats.

Specific Learning Objectives
Demonstrate effective writing skills, including use of APA style for empirically based reports, literature reviews, and/or theoretical papers
Demonstrate effective oral and interpersonal communication skills, to foster interpersonal understanding, cooperation and collaboration
Exhibit quantitative literacy

#8. Area: Awareness and Respect for Diversity: Students will recognize, understand, and respect the complexity of sociocultural and international diversity.

Specific Learning Objectives
Interact sensitively, respectfully and effectively with people from diverse backgrounds and varied perspectives (including those related to race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality and culture)
Examine sociocultural, international and other contexts that influence individual differences
Explain how individual differences influence beliefs, values, and interactions with others and vice versa
Recognize and understand prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors and how those affect their own and others' behavior

#9. Area: Personal Development: Students will develop insight into their own and others' behavior and mental processes and apply effective strategies for self-management and self-improvement.

Specific Learning Objectives
Reflect on experience and learn from it
Self-assess performance
Respond constructively to criticism

#10. Area: Career Planning and Development: Students will emerge from the major with realistic ideas about how to implement their psychological knowledge, skills, and values in occupational pursuits in a variety of settings.

Specific Learning Objectives
Develop Familiarity with careers in Psychology
Implementation of Psychological Knowledge
Continuing Education in Psychology