

Student Profile

Kathleen Shelton – Master of Legal and Forensic Psychology Program



Your Time at UCI

What made you decide to pursue a graduate degree?
I realized that, in order to succeed in the field of forensic psychology, it was necessary for me to further my education with a master's degree. I attained my undergraduate degree in psychology, which is also when I became interested in legal and forensic psychology. I then worked for a forensic psychologist for about a year before I applied to UCI's master's program after I learned even more for working hands-on in the field. I knew that I would benefit greatly from the further knowledge that I would receive from this graduate degree.

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

I grew up in Orange County, so I was already quite familiar with UCI and knew how distinguished it was. When I learned that this program was online, but I would also have opportunities to meet with professors and become involved in the community, I knew that was a special part of the program that would be difficult to find elsewhere. I am able to get my coursework done on my own time while still working and being a member of an on-campus research lab. Because I'm local, I'm also able to meet face-to-face with professors if I ever need help with my coursework, which

was really important to me when I was looking at schools to get my degree from. If you aren't local, the professors are more than willing to email, talk on the phone, or even do video calls. The professors in this program are what I feel are the best part of this program—they are always there to help!

If you are conducting research, how would you explain your research and its significance to your grandparent?

I am lucky enough to be a member of Dr. Elizabeth Cauffman's Developmental, Disorder, and Delinquency Lab on campus. Currently, we are working on the Crossroads Study, which is primarily trying to identify how best to process youth who are entering the juvenile justice system for the first time.

What are your hobbies/passions outside of research?

I am at the movie theater almost every week, love to read, go on (very easy) hikes, and go to trivia nights with my friends.

Reflections

What are you most proud of accomplishing (so far) in your graduate program?

I am most proud of how much I have learned about how the legal system actually works. Throughout many of my classes so far, I have been surprised and enlightened about how different the legal system is than I previously believed. I have also learned how many amazing professionals there currently are who are trying to continually improve how our legal system operates.

What is your most memorable moment/experience at UCI to date?

The most amazing experience would definitely be the in-residence course held at UCI, Introduction to Legal and Forensic Psychology. I learned so much in a short amount of time, was able to get excited about the program, and made some amazing friends that have been able to help me make the most out of this experience.

What advice do you have for a new graduate student in your program?

I would say to take time management and organization very seriously, especially if you work while completing this degree. While it is completely attainable to work and go to school, I found that my first quarter was the hardest because I was not managing my time as well as I could. After asking for tips and making schedules, the rest of the program has become much smoother because of the extra effort I made in the beginning.

Career

What do you see yourself doing in five or ten years?

I see myself working for a federal agency in a role that focuses on preventing crimes. Personally, I am the most interested in making a difference through preventative work, as that is where I feel like I excel the most. I know that UCI is preparing me for this field and am confident that my knowledge learned during this program will help me in my next chapter of life.