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The best U.S. colleges for a major in criminology

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A degree in criminology is designed to help students understand the behaviors of criminals by learning about causes of crime and the process of the modern criminal justice system. The criminology major introduces students to crime-related topics and allows them to analyze crime in current society.

This often leads to successful careers in various justice organizations, positions in law enforcement or work in governmental agencies.

As a criminology major, students take classes in not only the justice system, but also psychology and sociology to gain knowledge about why crimes are committed.

Classes in probation and parole, social research, deviance, punishment, law and research methods are also offered in most degree programs.

Undergraduate criminology programs require students to analyze information, process it, and write about it in a coherent and concise manner.

Strong writing and critical thinking skills are important for a criminology major, and these will be enhanced throughout the program. Many of the top programs in the country are taught by professors who have experience in the field and are prepared to push students towards success.

1. University of California: Irvine, Calif.

The University of California – Irvine is a public research university dedicated to providing students with a strong education through an innovative curriculum. The Department of Criminology, Law and Society combines classes in criminology with socio-legal studies to give students an advanced understanding of criminal justice theories.

Undergraduate students study the social, political, cultural and economic factors that play a role in crime, while looking at the psychological and theoretical side of the field. Graduates of this program often find jobs in police departments, probation and parole agencies, legal firms and other organizations earning an average starting salary of \$39,000 and an average mid-career salary of \$68,000.

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2. University of Pennsylvania: Philadelphia

The University of Pennsylvania is a private Ivy League school with a rich history of rigorous academics. The criminology major is an interdisciplinary program that helps students understand the causes of criminal behavior through classes such as criminal justice, biosocial criminology, law and sociology.

These classes introduce students to the theoretical framework behind criminology to help provide information on why crimes are committed and how to stop them. Students have the opportunity to perform research into the bio-psychological side of criminology and gain knowledge on social behaviors. Graduates of UPenn earn a high average mid-career salary of \$84,000.

3. University of Florida: Gainesville, Fla.

The University of Florida is a public research university. The school has a large campus, with the northeast corner listed as a Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. The undergraduate program in criminology combines classes in law and sociology with a humanities and science core to give students a well-rounded liberal arts education.

Students graduate with a deep understanding of the criminal law system, along with knowledge about the psychological aspect of crime. Many students use a criminology degree from this university to find a career in human services, earning an average starting salary of \$35,000, increasing up to an average of \$64,000 at the mid-career level.

4. Stonehill College: Easton, Mass.

Stonehill College is a liberal arts college that ensures students receive a balanced education to prepare them for success in the work force. It was founded as a Catholic college in 1948 and maintains a holistic approach to education. The criminology program is one of the top programs in the country because it allows students to learn both the theory and practice of criminology.

Classes in criminal justice, sociology, juvenile delinquency and the accused are supplemented with research classes to provide a comprehensive criminology education. Students often pursue various careers in law and public service, earning an average starting salary of \$42,000 and an average mid-career salary of \$65,000.

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5. Saint Anselm College: Manchester, N.H.

The liberal arts school of Saint Anselm College is a top school for a degree in criminal justice because it provides its students with a diverse education, combining classroom teaching with practical, hand-on experience. Classes in criminal justice, crime prevention,

crisis intervention and sociology provide students with the opportunity to tailor their program to their interests.

Field work prepares graduates for scenarios they may face on the job, giving them an opportunity to apply their knowledge before graduation. Graduates of Saint Anselm College have found careers as leaders in the public service field, earning an average starting salary of \$35,000, working up to an average mid-career salary of \$60,000.

6. University of Delaware: Newark, Del.

The University of Delaware is the largest school in the state, delivering an advanced education to over 20,000 students. Founded in 1743, the school has a research-intensive curriculum designed to provide students with an advanced understanding of their subject field.

The undergraduate program in criminal justice focuses on classes in criminal law, juvenile justice, corrections, sociology, political science and psychology. The interdisciplinary aspect of the program pushes students to look at criminal justice through various lenses, giving them a comprehensive understanding of the field. Graduates of the University of Delaware are often highly successful, earning an average mid-career salary of \$73,000.

7. Regis University: Denver, Colo.

Regis University is a Jesuit school that values a strong education along with a commitment to community service and helping others. A degree in criminology allows students to follow this tradition because it equips graduates with a strong understanding of the justice system, allowing them to help prevent crime by addressing its core causes.

The program stresses human behavior along with social and cultural dynamics to help criminology majors learn about the current practices of the field. This interdisciplinary program is theory based, but provides practical knowledge that leads to productive careers in the criminology field. The average starting and mid-career salaries of Regis University graduates are \$39,000 and \$61,000, respectively.

8. Marquette University: Milwaukee, Wis.

Marquette University is a private, coeducational university that has a reputation for preparing students for successful careers in any path they choose. The criminology program at Marquette gives students the knowledge and skills to not only investigate crimes, but further understand the reasons people commit these crimes.

Classes in criminal justice are blended with psychology and sociology to allow graduates to gain a deep understanding of the criminal thought process. Students are introduced to the American legal system, while learning about research methods that will allow them to continue developing their understanding of criminology. Some criminology majors pursue advanced degrees in law, while other find jobs following graduation, earning an average mid-career salary of \$57,000.

9. Loyola University: New Orleans

Chartered in 1912, Loyola University is a private university with one of the top criminal justice programs in the country. The program has a large social science research component that introduces students to the criminal justice system, while allowing them to look at the psychological decisions behind crime.

Classes in deviant behavior, criminal law, sociology and psychology blend to teach students about the theoretical workings of the law system, while helping students learn to analyze and prevent criminal behavior. The average starting salary for Loyola criminology graduates is \$37,000 and the average mid-career salary is \$57,000.

10. The University of Texas at Dallas: Richardson, Tex.

The criminology program at The University of Texas at Dallas provides students with a strong understanding of the criminal justice system, along with teaching them how to understand why crimes are committed and the best way to prevent criminal activity. Students work closely with faculty members who are not only recognized for their scholarly contributions to the field, but also have years of experience.

Students take classes in law, sociology, psychology and special topics to prepare for careers in law enforcement, crime scene investigation and positions with various justice agencies. A degree from UT Dallas can lead to an average starting salary of \$37,000, with a mid-career salary of \$57,000.

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