What is Policing?

Policing is the application of laws bound together by sciences (social, political, religious, economic) and the social phenomena that occur in a society. Policing describes a sub system within the criminal justice system that deals with the prevention of crime, response to in-progress crime and investigative follow-up of crimes that have occurred. Sworn (peace officer) and non-sworn (support personnel) play an integral role in the protection of life and property and employ numerous strategies to combat harmful conduct in our society.

Community policing empowers criminal justice professionals to develop and foster community partnerships to aid in problem solving. The approach to problem solving in the area of community policing involves a collaborative effort of the criminal justice professionals, community-based organizations and the citizens within the communities served.

There are a myriad of assignments that make up the policing component of the criminal justice system. As technology has advanced, modern day policing employs a multi-faceted approach to predicting, preventing and responding to crime and disorder.

Tell me more about the kinds of jobs in the field of policing . . .

Initially, policing agency jobs are primarily uniformed patrol. Positions within California require Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certification in the state of employment. POST basic academy training typically lasts four to six months.

New police officers are assigned to a field training officer for several months before receiving a more permanent patrol assignment. Some sheriff departments may assign new deputies to security detail in the county jail or courts before transferring them to patrol duties.

Experienced patrol officers may be assigned to specialized divisions after a number of years, particularly in large departments. These assignments might include motorcycle traffic enforcement, community policing, training, investigations, juvenile, and narcotics.

Investigators are usually promoted from the ranks of patrol officers after several years experience. Criminal investigators in local police and sheriff’s departments, normally titled detectives, investigate the majority of reported crimes including homicide, robbery, burglary, theft, assault, and rape as well as some unreported crime such as narcotics trafficking and prostitution. District attorney’s offices also employ investigator, principally to prepare cases for trial. District attorney offices primarily hire experienced investigators from police or sheriff’s departments, rather than training their own investigators.

What kinds of skills would I need for this career?

Police agencies emphasize involvement with community and maintenance of both law and order without the use of force or invoking arrest.

Communication. A candidate must communicate clearly and concisely, both orally and in writing. Must maintain composure in stressful situations and possess strong decision making skills and techniques.

Critical Thinking. Ability to address a complex situation in the field in a manner that shows consideration for all stakeholders. Must exercise excellent
judgment, self-confidence and the willingness to use creativity to solve problems.

Ability to work with people. The ability to deal effectively with victims and offenders. Must exercise a sincere desire to serve the community and deal effectively with people from all socio-economic levels.

**Situational Awareness.** The ability to identify, process and comprehend critical information and having the ability to understand the impact of that information on short and long-term goals.

**Ethical behavior.** Consistent procedurally and morally correct behavior under all circumstances. Candidates must be honest, trustworthy, and reliable, and hold themselves accountable for their actions.

**Other helpful skills:**
- Physical agility
- Maturity

**Deal-Breakers**
Some concerns will make a potential candidate unsuitable for this career.
- Unwilling to carry a gun
- Hiring often limited to age 35
- Reckless driving
- Heavy drinking or drug use
- Credit problems
- Misdemeanor arrests
- Committed felonies

**Suggested Electives**
The following is an excerpt. Consult the Major Planning Worksheet for the full list of electives.

**Area I - Administration**
- CRJ 142 Police Administration
- CRJ 144 Critical Issues in Police Admin.
- CRJ 163 Leadership in CRJ
- CRJ 165 CRJ Planning
- CRJ 168 CRJ Information Systems
- CRJ 195 Internship

**Area II - Investigations**
- CRJ 133 Fundamentals of Computer Crime
- CRJ 152 Interviewing & Detect of Deception
- CRJ 153 Advanced Criminal Investigation
- CRJ 154 Introduction to Physical Evidence
- CRJ 156 Intro to Crime & Intelligence Analysis

**Area of Interest III - Corrections**
- CRJ 134 Community Based Corrections

**Area IV – Offenses & Offenders**
- CRJ 105 Delinquency Prevention & Control
- CRJ 106 Analysis of Career Criminals
- CRJ 108 Domestic Crimes & Violence

- CRJ 112 Gangs and Threat Groups in America
- CRJ 114 Sexual Offenses & Offenders
- CRJ 115 Violence & Terrorism

**Area V - Law**
- CRJ 125 Law of Responsibility
- CRJ 126 Law of Evidence
- CRJ 127 Juvenile Law
- CRJ 191E Topics in Law

**Area VI – Supporting Courses**
- GOVT 120A Constitutional Law
- GOVT 122 Law & Bureaucracy
- GOVT 180 California State & Local Government
- HIST 162 Social History of the United States
- PSYC 110 Cognitive Psychology
- PSYC 168 Abnormal Psychology

**What do I need to do right now?**
Connect with the field. Look for opportunities to volunteer or ride-along at various agencies. Join professional societies and participate in your chosen field. Many positions in the field are earned via networking with hiring agencies.

Start a binder for future applications:
- Official Transcripts:
  - High School reflecting graduation
  - Colleges
- Syllabi from all college courses
- Records of any honors or awards
- Record of all extracurricular activity and community service
- List of potential references and any letters of reference
- Employment history:
  - Name, address, telephone numbers of all employers
  - Period employed
  - Any letters of reference from employers
- Residential history, addresses and dates
- Birth certificates, certified
- Military records, DD214

Remember the importance of integrity and honesty, not only in your personal and professional life, but in your academic career. Many agencies conduct extensive background checks which include interviews with an applicant’s former college instructors. Incidences of cheating, plagiarism, rudeness (including use of cell phones during class) and any kind of offensive behavior, are occurrences that will be noted by your professors.

Be mindful of your digital footprint. Avoid engaging in questionable behavior in your social media presence. This will be an area explored as a part of your background process by a prospective employer. Meet with your major advisor every semester to make sure you are on track to graduate.