

● Skyler Whitman, Psychology Major & Presidential Fellow, 2024

Summer Internship: South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) Investigative Services



"In Summer 2026, I was selected to intern with the South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division (SLED), working with the Investigative Services Field Office in the Pee Dee Region. The internship offered an uncommon opportunity to see criminal investigations from within the investigative process, from interviews and case development to investigative decision-making and the evaluation of information used to develop leads. I also gained insight into emerging challenges facing law enforcement, including cybercrime and online violent extremist networks. Across these experiences, I saw how investigations often require reconstructing

complex human behavior from fragmented information and weighing patterns, context, and competing interpretations to understand what may have occurred.

What stayed with me most was the central role of behavior in this process. Reviewing body-worn camera and correctional facility video, engaging with investigative casework, and learning about intelligence-sharing showed me how individual behaviors can become meaningful when viewed within a larger social and investigative context. I began to recognize familiar psychological questions about decision-making, social influence, beliefs, and behavior emerging in contexts far removed from traditional research. Rather than encountering behavior as an abstract construct, I was seeing how interpretations of behavior could shape real investigative decisions and responses to increasingly complex forms of crime.

The experience ultimately expanded my understanding of what psychological science can do. My research training at Stetson gave me the perspective to recognize and engage with behavioral questions in an investigative setting, while SLED showed me how that perspective can be extended into applied contexts beyond traditional academic research. I leave the internship with a deeper appreciation for the many ways psychology can contribute to understanding complex behavioral problems and with questions I hope to carry into graduate study, particularly as I continue exploring applications of psychological science to emerging forms of crime. "