

[REDACTED] Ph.D., [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

February 7, 2005  
Facsimile Letter (936) 294-1271

Mitchell J. Muehsam  
Dean of Graduate Studies  
Sam Houston State University  
Box 2478  
Huntsville, Texas 77341

Dear Dean Muehsam:

This letter is an appeal for assistance in correcting a significant error on my doctoral transcript and diploma. I come to you after attempting to address this problem through my program's former Director of Clinical Training David Marcus, Chair of the Department of Psychology and Philosophy Donna Desforges, Assistant Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Jerry Bruce, and Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Terry Thibodeaux, all without success.

In a letter dated March 23, 2000, I was offered a position in the "Forensic Clinical Psychology" doctoral program beginning in Fall 2000, and signed contractual documentation accepting this position. All documentation during my tenure at Sam Houston State University consistently identified my degree program as "Forensic Clinical Psychology" including:

- The student program handbook under which I entered the program
- Yearly program evaluation letters
- Letters of recommendation submitted in support of my internship applications
- The "Report of Comprehensive Doctoral Examination" results
- The conferring of my degree by Dean Genevieve Brown during the commencement program in August 2004

The only document that has been inconsistent with this degree title was my final program evaluation letter, dated September 14, 2004, which was only 16 days before I completed my internship - the final criteria needed for the fulfillment of my degree requirements.

Therefore, it is illogical to me that my diploma and transcript read "Clinical Psychology: Specialization in Forensics" when this was not the program I contracted with, paid for, and worked so hard to complete. Aside from the deceptive nature of the diploma received, this title change raises a number of issues that are potentially damaging to my career, both in the present and in the future. My arguments are as follows:

- I have been informed that the program was officially changed from Forensic Clinical Psychology to Clinical Psychology in April 2004, and, as a result, no student who graduates after that date may earn a doctoral degree in Forensic Clinical Psychology
  - At the time of the program change, I had already completed my educational curriculum requirements for the degree of Forensic Clinical Psychology. As all program and curriculum changes occurred after I had completed my signed degree plan, I did not have access to, nor was I bound to, the more "clinically" based curriculum that was created for the program transition.
  - During my attempts to resolve this matter, I have been informed that program administration was negligent because they did not arrange for a transitional period to accommodate those students, like myself, who completed their course of study prior to the program's transition.
  - Graduates in May 2004 and August 2004 received a diploma conferring a doctoral degree in "Forensic Clinical Psychology." Thus, the offered reasoning that no graduates after April 2004 can receive such a degree is nullified
  
- I believe my degree in its current form is of less value than those who graduated before me as there are a number of reasons the change in my degree title may have deleterious effects that have and will continue to produce material harm to my present and future career.
  - My application for provisional licensure to the State Board of Examiners of Psychologists has been prepared since December 2004. However, my application will not be complete or valid until my transcript from Sam Houston State University matches the remaining materials, all of which indicate the degree title "Forensic Clinical Psychology."
  - Moreover, this delay has put my current postdoctoral forensic fellowship in jeopardy, as the position is contingent on my ability to generate independent forensic income that is commensurate with my annual salary. Prior to licensure, the State of Texas requires that all forensic evaluations are supervised, rendering me unable to generate "independent" income until this matter is resolved and I can pursue licensure.
  - My current postdoctoral fellowship was offered primarily on the basis of my formal forensic training, and I have been informed by my employer that an offer would not have been extended had I received but a specialization in forensic psychology.
  - It is my intention to seek a diplomate awarded by the American Board of Professional Psychology and the American Board of Forensic Psychology after I have obtained my qualifying experience. A degree in Clinical Psychology may necessitate additional documented training that will not be required with a formal forensic degree.

- [REDACTED]
- o Finally, this deceptive degree calls my integrity as well as the integrity of the program and the university into question. The nature of forensic work includes the constant scrutiny of psychological examiners by attorneys, their investigative staff, and the court system, in general. As a professional whose work involves regular court appearances requiring a qualification of my credentials, the confusion surrounding a change in my degree title may result in cross-examinations that seek to impugn my credibility as well as the validity of the program, and waste significant amounts of the Court's time while unnecessarily placing me on the defensive.

I have been attempting to address this issue since August 2004 with the hopes of avoiding this present dilemma. All along the way, I had been assured by both the Director of Clinical Training and the Department Chair that my degree would read "Forensic Clinical Psychology," but such was not the reality when my diploma was delivered on January 21, 2005.

This letter represents my formal objection to the degree as listed on my diploma and transcript, and I demand that a) these items be corrected to reflect the true degree for which I contracted, paid, and worked to achieve, and b) that I am notified post haste of the University's position on this matter, such that I may respond accordingly. I look forward to your response via facsimile, email, or U.S. mail.

Best regards

[REDACTED] Th. D.  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



# Sam Houston State University

*A Member of The Texas State University System*

## GRADUATE STUDIES

Mitchell J. Muehsam

February 24, 2005

[REDACTED], Ph.D., [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear Dr. [REDACTED]

Thank you for your correspondence relating to the title of your major on both your diploma and transcript. I certainly appreciate your desire to have your transcript be entitled Forensic Clinical Psychology as it appears such a title best serves your career.

As you noted in your letter, the program was entitled Forensic Clinical Psychology when you started your studies at Sam Houston State University. As you also correctly noted, in April 2004 the program was renamed to Clinical Psychology. As such, students graduating in August and December 2004 were conferred a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology. Prior to this time, graduates from the program earned a Ph.D. in Forensic Clinical Psychology.

The University, upon the request of the Department of Psychology and Philosophy sought the name change with the intention of expediting the program's efforts to gain accreditation from the American Psychological Association (APA). We feel that this name change more accurately describes the nature of your training. You have been trained as a clinical psychologist with an emphasis in forensics. Since the curriculum continues to allow students to have a focus in forensics, students graduating from the program who follow the forensics focus may request to have "Specialization in Forensic Psychology" printed on their diploma and transcript. It is my understanding that your transcript and diploma do indeed include the "Specialization in Forensic Psychology" statement.

In reviewing your request, I have discussed our options with the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, representatives from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and a representative from our System office. In my judgment I cannot justify granting your request, thus, it is my responsibility to inform you that we will not change the title of your degree program on either your transcript or diploma. However, if you so desire, I will be happy to send a letter to the State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, the American Board of Professional Psychology, and the American Board of Forensic Psychology detailing your situation. In the letter I can emphasize the name change process as well as stressing the forensic nature of the curriculum you completed.

Dr. [REDACTED], I wish you continued success in your professional endeavors. I apologize for the length of time it took me to respond to your correspondence. I felt it necessary to contact a variety of sources to help me make an informed decision. Please contact me if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely yours,

Mitchell J. Muehsam  
Dean of Graduate Studies

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