Hello Psychology Students!

PsychNews is the newsletter for the undergraduate program in Psychology at UWM. Through this newsletter we aim to inform you about opportunities in the program, tips on making your way through the major, and many of the exciting opportunities in the Psychology program.

SONA – EXTRA CREDIT
If you are in a psychology course for which you can earn extra credit for research participation, don’t forget that the deadline for participation is Friday, May 8 at 5pm. More information about Sona and research participation for extra credit can be found on the department webpage.

Psychology Open Advising Days

Tuesday, March 31 & Wednesday, April 1 from 9 AM – 2 PM in Pearse 184

What is Advising Days?

Do you have questions about the requirements for the major? Relevant courses? Field placement or research opportunities in the department? Career planning? Well, mark your calendars. This semester we will be holding our first ever open advising days on Tuesday, March 31 and Wednesday, April 1 from 9 AM – 2 PM each day in Pearse 184. No appointment is necessary.

This is an opportunity for you to meet with Psychology faculty for individual advising. Dorrie van Kerkvoorde from the Letters & Science advising office will also be present to answer general degree questions.

The event is open to all Psychology majors, minors, intended majors, and students considering a switch to a Psychology major.

How to make the most of Advising Days.

- Write down your questions.
- Bring along a copy of your unofficial transcript, available on PAWS. This will allow a faculty advisor to review what you still need to take to complete the major.
- Think about your interests and what kind of careers you may wish to pursue.
- Haven’t declared your major yet? If you have already taken Psychology 101, this is a good chance to do that. Just bring your unofficial transcript and prior to Advising Days complete the online tutorial designed to ensure that you are aware of program requirements and opportunities.
All students entering UWM (or any UW system school) beginning summer semester 2014 will follow the new requirements for the major that went into effect May 2014. Students who were enrolled at any UW System school prior to May 2014 may choose EITHER the new curriculum, or the old. Most will find the new curriculum easier to fulfill.

Requirements for the Major

- 101, Introduction to Psychology
- 210, Psychological Statistics
- 325, Research Methods
- 254, Physiological Psychology
- ONE from: 205, 214, 230, or 260
- EITHER:
  - Three Systems and Foundations courses AND two Advanced Lab courses
  - Four Systems and Foundations courses AND one Advanced Laboratory course

Should I choose a BA or a BS in Psychology?

Psychology students may earn either a BA or a BS. Be aware that the general education and other requirements are slightly different for the BA and the BS. For the vast majority of students a BA is a more efficient and appropriate option. BS students will need to complete 30 credits in L&S advanced natural science courses. These can come from any department in L&S. Psychology offers many advanced natural science courses, especially in neuroscience. Please consult the L&S requirements for the BA or BS.

When can I declare my Psychology major?

Once you have passed (D- or higher) Psych 101 and completed 15 university credits you may declare your major. See the information in the gray panel to the left on the steps needed to declare your major.
The Requirements for the Psychology Minor

All students entering UWM (or any UW system school) beginning summer semester 2014 will follow the new requirements for the minor. Students enrolled at any UW System school prior to May 2014 may choose EITHER the new curriculum, or the old.

Requirements for the Minor

- 101, Introduction to Psychology
- One from: 205, 210, 214, 230, 254, or 260
- Four additional Psychology courses, at least three of which must be upper level (300-level or higher)

Note: the minor does not require Psychological Statistics or Research Methods. You may still elect to take these courses for the minor – they are just no longer required. However, if you are considering majoring in Psychology we highly recommend that you take these courses as they are required for the major and not taking them could slow down completion of the major.

Why should I consider a Psychology minor?

A minor in psychology can be a very useful addition to many majors, including business, education, criminal justice, social work, sociology, kinesiology, any health sciences major, communication, biological sciences, and many others. A minor in psychology will help you gain specific knowledge in human behavior that is relevant for nearly any career. Almost every employer values strong “people skills.” Students interested in neurobiological underpinnings of human behavior and cognition may wish to major in a natural science (or double major with Psychology), however, an understanding of behavior is best developed in Psychology courses.

Other Resources for Students

Panther Academic Support Services (PASS). PASS offers a wide range of tutoring options, particularly for 100- and 200-level courses. Supplemental instruction is often (but not always) available for 101, 205, 210, 254, and 260. Their services include weekly small group tutoring for some classes, individual face-to-face and online tutoring.

Writing Center. Some psychology courses are writing intensive. The UWM Writing Center offers both online and face-to-face assistance for students in any subject and at any point in the writing process.

Norris Health Center. The health center offers services to students for health problems of all types, including psychological distress. The website includes links to online screening questionnaires for many types of problems, including depression, PTSD, and eating disorders. Their website also includes a link to ULifeline, an online resource for mental health concerns that is designed especially for college students.
Where can I learn more about the psychology program and career options?

Have you checked out the new Psychology department website? The department website was completely overhauled recently. Check it out! The undergraduate section has lots of useful information on program requirements, declaring your major, selecting an advisor, research opportunities, and field placements. The Resources section includes a number of useful pages – be sure to check out the information on career planning, including tips for how to get into graduate school.

Interested in a career in psychotherapy or mental health? There are a number of different graduate degrees in this field, including a Ph.D. in Clinical or Counseling Psychology, a Psy.D., or a masters degrees in psychology and social work. It can be confusing to know which path is right for your career goals. The Graduate School page on the Undergraduate section has lots of useful links to get you started. It’s definitely a good idea to meet with a Psychology faculty advisor to sort through these options.

Get advised!
This is the most important step. Even if you think you have a clear understanding of the requirements for the degree and major, it is still important to meet with your advisors. They can ensure that you are on track so there are no unwelcome surprises as you finish your degree. Your advisors can also help inform you about other opportunities in the department that can help you plan for your future.

How to use your L&S and psychology faculty advisors.
The L&S advisors are best suited to help with planning for completing your degree, choosing a major, general education requirements, and the requirements for the major. They can also assist you with identifying the courses needed to complete your major. They will review your summary sheet and the checklist for the major requirements. It’s very useful to review your academic advising plan and other planning tools on PAWS beforehand and to think ahead about courses you may want to take before you meet with your L&S advisor. Planning ahead will help you get more done in your meeting. If you don’t know who your L&S advisor is check the upper right corner of your unofficial transcript on PAWS.

Your Psychology faculty advisor can also help you with the psychology major or minor requirements, but they are most useful for discussing other opportunities in the department, such as field placements and research experience, and in offering guidance toward a career in Psychology. They can give you advice about graduate school, and the type of degree needed to land a particular type of job. It can be confusing to choose the best graduate degree for your interests. Start asking questions about this early on – for sure by your junior year.

How do I get a psychology faculty advisor?
You must choose a faculty member when you declare your major, which you can do as soon as you have taken Psychology 101, Introduction to Psychology. See the sidebar on p. 2 for information on how to declare the major. If you haven’t declared your major yet you should feel free to talk to a faculty member anyway. Find a faculty member whose interests are similar to yours or an instructor you liked and meet with them. Start asking questions about how to achieve your career goals early! If you declared your major but forgot who you selected as your advisor you can find out by using the advisor lookup tool.

How often should students meet with their advisor?
We recommend once per semester. The L&S advisors are really busy around registration time in November and April. A good time to meet is just before registration, say in October or March. They will have more time for you. Other good times to meet with an advisor are during the first 10 days of class if you are still debating your schedule, or if you are struggling in a course, right before the drop deadline.
What is getting a Ph.D. like?

An interview with Skyler Shollenbarger, a graduate student in Dr. Lisdahl’s lab

Interviewed by Rhiannon Kohloff ('14)

How long have you been working in the lab?
It is my fourth year at in the PhD program in Clinical Psychology here at UWM.

What is your current research about?
We are looking at the effects of marijuana on the brain through magnetic resonance imaging (structural MRI, functional MRI and diffusion tensor imaging) and neuropsychological assessment. We also attempt to explain individual differences by examining whether gender, genetics, or lifestyle factors (such as body mass index, cardiorespiratory health, activity markers) have an impact. Subsequently, we do a VO2 test which measures the body’s availability of oxygen in the blood. Athletes are trained to have higher VO2 levels, so we collect data on athletes to further explore the effect of marijuana and exercise.

What is your daily work load as a graduate student?
I have a community placement two days at the Medical College of Wisconsin for training in neuropsychology. And because I am a research assistant and not a teaching assistant like a lot of graduate students, I spend the other days running participants, writing, and studying for classes.

What helped you decide you wanted to go to graduate school?
I took a psychopharmacology class and fell in love with the brain. As well, I took an Effects of Drugs on Behavior class that impacted my research interest.

What are two pros and cons about graduate school?
The first pro would be that I learned how to connect with more resources while the second is that I have the potential to impact health quality of people and increase their quality of life. A con would be that it is difficult to step away from work and sometimes I miss out on things like going back home because I only have time to visit once or twice a year. Another con is that it is hard to start a life for yourself and because of the lengthy training and need to move for some aspects of training it can be difficult to start a family.

What is your ultimate goal?
I am deciding if I want to do research or clinical work, but hopefully I can do both. I really want to do research and teach.

What advice can you give to undergraduates who aspire to attend graduate school?
To join a laboratory or even better a few of them, volunteer in a lab, get to know professors so you can get letters of recommendation, do an honors thesis or project of your own, do poster presentations, or write a paper. It is very important to do whatever you can to amplify your credentials because applying for graduate school is competitive.
What’s it like being an undergraduate research assistant?
An interview with Christopher Kirchner, a senior in Dr. Lisdahl’s lab

Interviewed by Rhiannon Kohloff ('14)

How did you hear about research opportunities for undergraduate students?
I saw a flyer for the McNair program (a program for nontraditional, minority and first generation college students) and then applied so I was able to get research experience through that. McNair takes students and prepares them for graduate school; it is research focused, enables social networking, and GRE preparation. I appreciate this program greatly because it gave me people to identify with.

What made you choose this lab?
Well I am in three labs. I picked the lab with Dr. Lisdahl because I am interested in neuropsychology and brain imaging among youths who use drugs and I have personal ties with drug issues. I was also invited to work in a lab with Dr. Pate and Dr. Topitzes which looks at health status and employment for black men. I am also a paid research assistant with Dr. Fenrich and LaBell in the Drug Treatment Court.

What kind of work do you do in the labs?
In the lab with Dr. Lisdahl, we look at the brain and cognitive consequences of drug use in adolescents and explain individual differences with gender and lifestyle; specifically marijuana use among young adults and its relation to fitness. In Dr. Pate’s lab I administer surveys near my home and have touched neighborhoods and I helped with writing a book chapter and work on publications. In this lab I am doing my own research project for childhood, incarceration, employment and drug abuse among African American men. Lastly, I evaluate the efficiency of the Drug Treatment Court, help interview judges, lawyers, and the district attorney.

Have you participated in any related work outside of the lab (conferences, posters presentations, et cetera)?
I was published in “Current Addictions”. I also presented posters at various conferences. I have gone to the National Conference of Undergraduate Research, the UWM Research symposium in New Orleans, I went to the McNair program twice, and the APA conference in Washington D.C. I also have been awarded a SURF grant for two years and am a TA for the Introduction to Social Welfare Policies course. For my TAship I meet with students and decide if the assignments are passable and run an interactive discussion on D2L.

Do you plan on going to graduate school?
Yes, my number one school is Columbia, working with Carl Hart on neuropsychology and drug abuse and policies. I just learned I was accepted to the bridge program at Columbia in his lab.

What impact has the graduate students you work with made on your life?
The praise I have gotten for my research has influenced me and been rewarding and the graduate students have given me a lot of support too. As well, the McNair program and the professors I have worked with have helped me make extreme changes in my life.

If you were to meet a freshman what would you recommend to them?
Yes. I would tell them that they need to have good grades, develop relationships with professors, take initiative to get into research as soon as possible, try to figure out what you really want to do (sooner versus later), and work hard.

What have you gained from doing research?
I have become more passionate, intrigued, and knowledgeable about the effects of drugs on people and have found that it doesn’t match the policies in place. I have been inspired to make changes and want politicians to look at scientific research and adjust the policies accordingly. Subsequently, I have learned about inequalities in this society and think that changes need to be made that consider minorities and their experiences.
So you worked at Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center in the Vince Lombardi Cancer Clinic with patients and families. Can you tell me more about what your daily duties were like?
My daily duties consisted of a few things, right away when I got there in the morning (before it got busy) I would clean all the chairs, fill the blankets, stock snacks and make the area as comfortable as possible. As the morning went on I would offer patients and families something to drink or snack on, blankets if they were cold or anything to make their experience better. Along with that I helped the nurses if they needed anything from me while they’re tending to many patients throughout the day. The most important and best part of my role was to visit with and make patients and families as at home as possible. I was able to sit with patients if they wanted company, get to talk with them about their lives, hear their stories and just give them my time for anything they wanted. Although there were few that weren’t open to me being there many people were more than willing and open to me being with them and keeping them company while receiving treatment for different kinds of cancer.

What was your favorite part of the placement?
My favorite part of the placement was getting to see the same people every time I was there. Although it wasn’t under the best circumstances that we got to meet as they were all being treated for different forms of cancer, I couldn’t have grown more through such rewarding and outstanding experiences. By being able to see the same patients and families each week I was able to build good rapport and make their experience of treatment one of meaning. Being told on a weekly basis that I was making such an impact in their lives was an incredible feeling and I wouldn’t change it for the world.

How did you find your placement?
I found the placement through the options on the Field Placement page through the UWM Psychology webpage. Technically it was to only volunteer at Aurora, but once I went through training and asked my supervisor questions about different opportunities, this one presented itself to me and I instantly knew that I would enjoy it and learn from it.

What did you hope to get out of your experience?
I wasn’t quite sure what to expect from my experience; I was scared at first because I had the training, and I had all the right tools in my head but it seemed very intimidating for me to walk into a clinic and do my possible best at working with vulnerable people. I not only had hoped to learn more about people and their situations but I had hoped that I could become better and more comfortable with people and in the clinical environment. I had hoped more than anything to help people, and that was more than achieved.

What are the benefits and drawbacks of your field placement so far?
Benefits of working in this field placement were knowing that I am making a difference in people’s lives and not only just knowing that in my head, but people actually explaining to me how my presence had helped throughout their treatment. Not only was I able to connect with patients but also with their families and the nurses that work in the Vince Lombardi Cancer Clinic. A drawback of the field placement was the amount of volunteers that were there so sometimes it was challenging to work it in with my schedule and what was available for me to be there. It was also hard for me to see people in such a vulnerable state and see their families being there for them and knowing that they’re going through a tough challenge on a daily basis.

How do you feel that this placement relates to what you want to do with your Psychology degree?
I believe that this field placement related to what I want to do with my Psychology degree in a few different ways. I think the most important connection was that I got to spend my time with people. Psychology studies humans, their minds and all aspects of their lives whether it is biological or environmental. This placement had all of those factors playing into one situation and it was an eye opener for me to learn about all these people, their perspectives on life and their treatments as well as to see how they react physically and mentally to treatment. I plan to pursue a career working with eating disorders and I think it helps to experience vulnerable situations because it teaches far more than a textbook can sometimes.

What would you tell someone who was considering doing a field placement?
I would tell that person that it is a life changing experience and to go for it. If you have a heart to help people and love making a difference in people’s lives working in the Vince Lombardi Cancer Clinic at Aurora St. Luke’s was not only an eye-opener but also a beginning to a new perspective on life.
Field Placements: What are they and why do one?

What is a field placement?
Field placements are essentially volunteering or working in a psychology-related field for course credit.

What are the benefits of doing a field placement?
Field placements allow you to apply what you have learned in your courses to real-world problems. Doing field placement work has many important practical benefits as well. You can learn more about a particular line of work and see whether that field interests you (or not). If you are dedicated and capable your field placement supervisor can serve as an excellent resource for career development, help you network with other professionals in the field, and write letters of recommendation for you. Volunteer or work experience gained through a field placement is a great resume builder!

How do I find a field placement?
Finding a field placement requires some initiative. While there are a number of more standard sites (see box below), there are hundreds more organizations in the Milwaukee area that are possible sites. You may also choose to do a field placement somewhere outside of Milwaukee. You will need to find a site to work or volunteer at, confirm your supervisor that you are also earning UWM course credit, and find a UWM Psychology faculty member to sponsor your placement. More information about finding a placement and on the process of setting it up can be found on the Field Placements page on the department website.

Example Field Placement Sites

UWM Psychology students have done field placement work at numerous agencies in the Milwaukee area (and some outside southeast Wisconsin), including:

AMRI Counseling  Milwaukee County Zoo
Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center Ozaukee Family Services
Center for Tobacco Research Running Rebels
COPE Services Crisis Line Sojourner Family Peace Center
Easter Seals Walker’s Point Youth and Family Center
Literacy Council of Greater Milwaukee Wisconsin Early Autism Project
Milwaukee County Mental Health
Tips for Timely Completion of Your Psychology Major or Minor

Don't wait to take Psych 210.

Psych 210 is a prerequisite for 325, which in turn is a prerequisite for the advanced labs. If you delay 210 it will just delay the other courses too. Math 103, 105, 175 or equivalent is now a prerequisite for 210, so make sure you satisfy this math requirement right away!

Be aware of the GPA requirement to enroll in Psych 325.

You need an average GPA of 2.62 across Psych 101 and Psych 210 to be eligible to enroll in Psych 325. If you don’t achieve this GPA you will need to retake 101 or 210.

You must take Psych 325 before the advanced lab course(s).

Psych 325 and the advanced labs cannot be taken simultaneously.

Register early for Psych 325 and the advanced lab(s).

These courses fill up quickly! Remember, it never hurts to email the instructor if the class is full. Showing up on the first day of class is also wise.

Be aware of the requirements for the major and minor.

Review the checklists for the major and minor on the department website. Read the Undergraduate Handbook describing the program requirements, declaring your major, using advising services, and other information about the Psychology program.

Important! New Prerequisites for Psych 210 and 325

The university has adopted new competency requirements for Quantitative Literacy (QL) and Oral and Written Communication (OWC). You need to satisfy a Part A and a Part B for both competencies. Psych 210 satisfies the Part B QL requirement, and Psych 325 satisfies the Part B OWC requirement. You MUST complete the Part A requirements BEFORE you can take the Part B QL and OWC courses.

The QL Part A prerequisites for Psych 210 are one of the following:

a. earn a grade of C or higher in Math 103(106), 105, 175;
b. earn a minimum of 2.5 credits with a grade of C or higher in an equivalent or higher-level math course;
c. earn a placement code of 30 or higher on the Mathematics Placement Test

The OWC Part A prerequisites for Psych 325 are one of the following:

a. earn a grade of C or higher in English 102 or equivalent course;
b. earn a suitable score on the UW-System English Placement Test, as defined by the GER OWC guidelines
Undergraduate Student Accomplishments

Congratulations to Ciera Lewis who was awarded a Psi Chi Regional Research Award for the May 2015 Midwest Psychological Association.

Selected UWM Psychology Student Co-authors on Recent Published Papers


Selected UWM Psychology Student Conference Presentations


Selected UWM Psychology Student Presentations at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research in Cheney, WA in April, 2015

- Tanya Cass: "Evolution of Pre-Health Professionals’ Attributions of the Causes of Obesity during an Obesity and Weight Management Course"
- Ciera Lewis (Mosack): African American Emerging Adults’ Experiences with Mental Health Care
- Carolyn Rafa Todd (Mueller): bFGF (FGF-2) protein expression in addiction-related brain regions after acquisition and extinction of cocaine seeking
- Kenia Rivera and Michelle Helms (Klein-Tasman): Examining Psychosocial Functioning in Young Children with Neurofibromatosis Type 1 Using the BASC-II Content Scales

Psychology graduates who earned honors in the major, December 2014

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If you know of an undergraduate accomplishment please email Dr. Larson.