

## **Questions from Prospective Students – Diversifying Psychology Event 2021**

The following questions were submitted by prospective students who registered for the Fall 2021 Diversifying Psychology event. Thank you for your questions! We realized we would not have time to answer them all during the event itself, so we have created this document with answers to your questions. Please do raise your questions with faculty and students at the event.

### ***Does your program require GRE scores? If so, how do you work to support applicants of low SES?***

No, we do not require GRE scores, nor do we use them in our selection process in any way. Please do not send us your scores if you have taken the GRE.

### ***What is the percentage breakdown for all race or ethnic backgrounds within the Psychology PhD program at UWM?***

Within the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program the racial/ethnic backgrounds of our students is: 12% Asian or Asian American, 6% South Asian/Indian, 9% Latinx/Hispanic, 3% Black/African American, 3% multi-racial/ethnic, 3% Middle Eastern/North African, and 65% non-Hispanic White.

### ***What is the percentage of international students in your program?***

Currently, that percentage is 3%.

### ***What DEI initiatives are currently being implemented across the university and specifically this department?***

This will be discussed during 20-minute DEI panel with graduate students at the Diversifying Psychology virtual event. More information is also available on the Clinical Program Diversity Committee Resource Sheet available on the website for the Diversifying Psychology event: [https://uwm.edu/psychology/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2021/10/Clinical-Program-Diversity-Committee-Resource-Sheet\\_ProspectiveApplicants2021.pdf](https://uwm.edu/psychology/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2021/10/Clinical-Program-Diversity-Committee-Resource-Sheet_ProspectiveApplicants2021.pdf)

Briefly, some additional initiatives are in place in the program and/or department, including:

- A Clinical Psychology Program Diversity Committee, consisting of four working groups: Clinical, Community Engagement, Education, Research
- An department-wide Psychology Department Diversity Committee
- Trainings & program/department meetings on anti-racism, multiculturalism, and diversity, equity, and inclusion – including as part of the weekly Professional Development in Psychology meetings, periodic Diversity and Social Justice hours, trainings from outside presenters
- A new four semester (1-credit/semester) multicultural seminar
- Activities supported by an anti-racism action grant received by a team of clinical program students and faculty, including book clubs and support for other initiatives
- Annual program/department climate survey & review of results

- Outreach efforts, including events for high school students
- Review of curriculum and infusion of multicultural and anti-discriminatory content across curriculum
- Reviewing clinic policies & procedures to increase equity for clients

***How do you make sure students and professors are fostering a safe & inclusive environment?***

***What precautions does the program have in place to protect and value diverse students?***

First, we acknowledge that fostering a safe and inclusive environment is an ongoing process that requires sustained attention and likely has no finish line. With that in mind, the program and the department have established several approaches to sustain efforts to make the environment safe and inclusive.

The program has established minimum requirements for mentors, which include a fundamental respect for individuals from all backgrounds and a right to be treated fairly. Faculty also receive training in antiracism and Title IX (sexual/gender harassment). Students also engage in university and program-level training.

The program involves students in decision making in several ways:

- Two students serve as representatives on the Clinical Training Committee (CTC) which consists of all program faculty and the two student representatives. The CTC is the governing body of the clinical program, and the student representatives are full members with voting rights. The student reps are in place to ensure that student voices are heard and part of program governance, and to serve as a formal liaison between students and faculty.
- Students serve as co-chairs of the program and department diversity committees, along with a faculty co-chair(s).
- The program diversity committee and the four diversity committee working groups (Clinical, Community Engagement, Education, Research) include both students and faculty and operate on a fairly horizontal structure.

These program/department provide multiple ways of inviting student feedback:

- The department/program conducts an annual climate survey, including broad aspects of climate and aspects specifically related to equity and inclusion. Data are collected and reviewed by faculty, staff, and students annually, and used to discuss changes that may need to be made.
- The program DCT and Clinic Director hold feedback forums with students at the end of each semester.
- A form exists to provide identified or anonymous feedback to the DCT at any time about any aspect of the program.
- The Clinic Director does regular check-ins about how clinical supervision is going.
- Additional town halls/forums are held as needed to address concerns.

The department/program/UWM also offer a number of options for seeking consultation and assistance in navigating interpersonal or climate challenges:

- The department has two designated ombudspersons, one clinical and one neuroscience faculty member.
- The department recently approved language describing the ombuds process for supporting students. This guidance is meant to apply to all faculty, as students may opt to seek consultation or support from any faculty member.
- The UWM Dean of Students office provides ombuds support.

***What is an example of when you were offered criticism/feedback regarding a topic related to diversity/inclusion and how did you respond to that feedback?***

As noted above we offer multiple opportunities for feedback, and do our best to respond to criticisms and concerns. There have been a number of times that we have received such feedback. Here are some examples:

- Students reported that the previous multicultural counseling course offered in a different department was not appropriate, and in some cases (depending on instructor) not always a safe space. One of our faculty, Krista Lisdahl, has developed a new four-semester (1 credit/semester) course designed more with our students in mind.
- A large group of students in the department prepared and/or signed a letter to department faculty requesting changes in department to improve the climate. This led to formation of the department diversity committee (in addition to the existing clinical program diversity committee), inclusion of students on search committees, adding students to the neuroscience faculty governing committee (as already existed for the clinical program), development and posting of statements of commitment to anti-racism, formalizing the ombuds role at the department level (in addition to existing ombuds designee in the clinical program), and initiation of the department-wide climate survey (as had been done in the clinical program previously).
- Students in the Clinical working group of the program diversity committee provided feedback on aspects of clinic functioning that would make the clinic more welcoming to all, leading to changes in some clinic forms and other aspects of clinic operations.

Creating a safe and welcoming environment is an ongoing effort and we want and expect student feedback in this process.

***Are there outreach organizations?***

The Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership, and Research offers numerous options for connecting with the community, particularly in terms of service:

<https://uwm.edu/community/>

Other opportunities are available through the Office of Sustainability:

<https://uwm.edu/sustainability/community-engagement/>

In general, Milwaukee is a large enough city that there are many rich cultural, volunteer, and other engagement opportunities available.

***Any LGBTQ+ events in the program/graduate school?***

The UWM LGBTQ+ Resource Center offers opportunities and events on campus, and also has links to off-campus events and resources: <https://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/>

***What services are there for students with disabilities?***

Students with disabilities may seek an array of services through the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC): <https://uwm.edu/arc/>

***Can you further explain the funding packages offered to graduate students in the clinical program?***

Funding is guaranteed by the university for 3 years, so if you receive an offer of admission this is what your letter will say. However, in reality students have always been funded for the full duration of their career in the program, up to seven or eight years.

Students are funded either through teaching assistantships, research assistantships, or fellowships. Students who are not on a research assistantship or fellowship serve as teaching assistants. Research assistantships are available on a lab-by-lab basis depending on available grant funding. Our students are very successful in receiving fellowships at the local and national level. Several students have received NIH predoctoral fellowships (F31). Locally, there are three UWM graduate fellowships available: Distinguished Graduate Student Fellowships (1 year), Distinguished Dissertation Fellowships (1 year), Advanced Opportunity Program Fellowships for individuals from historically excluded racial/ethnic groups, participants in the McNair Scholars, TRIO or similar programs, and students who have experienced other forms of disadvantage (e.g., economic).

***What is the stipend and what is it like living with the stipend? Do students get health insurance and what is it like?***

The stipend for the assistantships and fellowships vary, but typically range between ~\$13,750-\$17,000. The typical TA stipend for those in the second year and beyond is \$15,000. These stipends cover the 9-month academic year. Funds are currently available from the university to cover summer during some years (usually 1 or 2 years) at approximately the level a student would be paid during the academic year. Some laboratories fund students for summer and/or additionally during the academic year. This varies by lab and depends on available funding.

Cost of living in Milwaukee is not as low as it used to be and has outpaced the university's stipend levels for TAs, RAs, and fellowships. Thus, while some extremely frugal students are able to manage on the university-determined stipend levels, for most the base stipend is not sufficient. Some students are able to live on the stipend, plus other supplemental funding as described above (summer funding, additional academic year funding from the lab, or taking an extra 25% TAship during the academic year). Other students receive student loans.

Health insurance is included and the coverage is excellent. Preventive care is fully covered and co-pays for other visits and medications are small (typically less than \$15-25). A monthly fee is also deducted from the student stipend to contribute to the insurance costs. This varies based on the type of insurance plan selected. Health care is also available on campus at the Norris Health Center, which is covered by the student segregated fees.

***Since the diversity, equity, and inclusion statement asks for students to explain how we see our role as a scientist-practitioner within the context of diversity and social justice, should there be more of a focus on our personal background or our future goals to explain this?***

We have purposely left that decision up to you, as we wish to give applicants freedom to answer in whatever way makes most sense for them. For some this may include content about their own background, for others it may focus on previous efforts in this area, others may write about future plans. And applicants may feel free to include all of these elements. Please use the space to highlight what is most important to you.

***How do you incorporate a focus on diversity of both researchers and participants in your respective labs? How do you encourage the students you work with to continue with that focus as well?***

Generally, this varies by lab. However, the research working groups of the program and department diversity committees have developed tools for laboratories to conduct assessments of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Many of our laboratories conduct research specifically with individuals from historically excluded or marginalized groups. There are ongoing efforts to continue to improve equity, inclusion, and affirming approaches for recruitment and support of students, staff, and participants from diverse and non-majority group backgrounds. We encourage you to talk to your faculty advisor of interest and students from that lab to learn more about lab-specific efforts.

***What is the process for evaluating a previous completed master's thesis so that the thesis requirement is waived?***

A student entering the program having already completed an empirical master's thesis will not need to complete an additional master's thesis project as part of their program of study at UWM. The DCT will confirm with you that you have completed an empirical master's thesis and document that on a course/curriculum waiver form.

***What is the extent to which professors and graduate students co-author papers and grants together?***

Co-authoring manuscripts is central to the research process in all laboratories. While the specific nature of these jointly authored papers varies by lab, students are given opportunity to contribute as first author and co-author in all faculty laboratories.

***How much time do students and faculty spend together outside of an academic setting?***

This is a bit harder to answer at the moment, as we are still navigating in person group meetings due to COVID. However, historically, we have had 2-3 department and/or program get-togethers each year. Labs also have lab parties or get-togethers, however, this varies by lab

and is not happening at a typical frequency in all labs right now due to COVID. This would be a good topic to discuss with students in your lab of interest.

***To what extent do both faculty and graduate students collaborate with others within this institution, and does this same type of collaboration occur with individuals at other institutions?***

This varies by laboratory, however, broadly speaking there is a high degree of collaboration across laboratories within the department, outside of the department at UWM, and with collaborators at other institutions. Nearly all of the program faculty are currently collaborating with at least one other program faculty member.

***What is one thing you wish students would know about becoming a grad student at UW Milwaukee?***

We did not survey all students. We encourage you to talk with the students directly about this. Some of the students who were on the team organizing this event shared their thoughts on this question:

- “I wish I would have known is the level of self-advocacy work students must engage in for themselves/other students in graduate school. I will acknowledge that this is not something unique to our program, and I feel like many prospective graduate students should know and learn this skill regardless of where they end up. It is a skill that people will use throughout their lifetime and is part of academia.”
- “I wish I would have known before entering the program is that (depending on your goals) the required statistics courses are not necessarily sufficient and that many students need additional stats training to complete their theses and dissertations.” (DCT note: We changed the required statistics sequence this past year in hopes of having the required statistics courses moving students into more advanced statistics more quickly.)