Inside This Issue

Words of Wisdom from faculty, staff, and graduate students in the psychology department guide this issue of Gray Matters. Use their advice for your growth and development, both academic and personal.

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Acknowledements

The Gray Matters staff extends our deepest thanks to our formatter D. Hunt Stephan. You have helped our vision become reality, and your contribution will help students at Georgia State University accomplish great things!
Greetings Students,

“New and Improved!” While these terms typically apply to products that have only added new packaging (too often reducing the quantity of the product), this issue of Gray Matters is indeed “new and improved”! Previous issues have become increasingly longer, loaded with valuable information of interest and relevance to students of psychology. This issue goes a step further – not only is there a new look – more professional “packaging”- but the content is more focused and organized. I hope you will carefully read each article as there is a wealth of knowledge to be gained. Kudos to our new editors and staff writers who have done an excellent job of putting this publication together.

Psi Chi continues to sponsor a wide range of programs and events geared toward meeting the needs of psychology majors and minors. Some of these include:

- Graduate school preparation: curriculum vita and personal statement workshops, meet-and-greet sessions with current graduate students, GRE preparation classes, opportunities to meet with directors of graduate school programs
- Movie Nights: movies involving topics such as autism, schizophrenia, homelessness, domestic violence, depression and suicide. Commentary is provided by faculty and community professionals with expertise in the particular topic.
- Practicum Fair - held each fall semester where students can meet with research and applied practicum supervisors to learn about practicum opportunities (Fall 2013 Practicum Fair is scheduled for October 31st)
- PURC - Psychology Undergraduate Research Conference - scheduled for October 25, 2013
- Psi Chi Library - housed in UL 1156 - books, journals, and other materials can be checked out by psychology students
- Mentoring opportunities with upper classmen and/or graduate students
- Funding to help defray expenses to attend regional and national psychology conferences

All of our programs are open to any Georgia State University (GSU) student. Please contact any of our executive board members or me (dgarfin@gsu.edu) for questions or programming suggestions.

Whether or not you are a member of Psi Chi, I encourage you to join our Facebook Page (search for Psi Chi @ Georgia State University) to keep posted about the programs we sponsor as well as other events taking place in the psychology department. The psychology department Facebook Page (Undergraduate Psychology at Georgia State University) is another great source of information for psychology students.

Wishing you an awesome semester!

Dr. Deborah Garfin
Psi Chi Faculty Advisor
Readers,

This semester has undoubtedly been a productive one, and there are many events yet to come. This Gray Matters issue focuses on providing resources for psychology undergraduates and delineating steps for us to take as we progress through our undergraduate career. The pages of this newsletter are lined with words of wisdom from our colleagues, mentors, and superiors. I urge all psychology majors and minors alike to take advantage of the free guidance.

My advice to everyone is to get involved. I’m sure we’ve all encountered the bubbly and excitable front-man, hyping up the facets of their organization. Alternatively, maybe a bored-looking member has handed us a pamphlet with an inordinate amount of print detailing the things we can do to get involved. Well, in reality, all you need is about an hour or two to spare a week. That’s all it takes to do the extra work! The best part: that small amount of planning and effort you did can be enumerated on your resumes and transcripts.

And, participating can be addictive! No, not in the way that Breaking Bad or Mad Men is addictive, but once you start agreeing to lend a helping hand you may find it hard to say no. Make an effort to get to know the people you volunteer with, learn from those who head the organizations, and do your part in your community. Who knows, maybe you’ll even meet someone who shares your interests and can direct you to new work or education opportunities.

I encourage you to claim ownership of your academic path and contribute to the wealth of knowledge here at Georgia State and out in the community. How might you accomplish this? Simple, get involved, lend a helping hand, and never, ever hesitate to ask for help.

-Julia Mangia
Editor

P.S. Here’s an opportunity for you! Submit a writing sample to Alexandra, the Co-Editor (aduncan11@student.gsu.edu) or me at jmangia1@student.gsu.edu and you may be published in the next issue of Gray Matters. Check out the box below for instructions.

Submit to Gray Matters

☐ Be a Student
☐ Have an Idea
☐ Write a Sample
☐ Send it to jmangia1@student.gsu.edu or aduncan11@student.gsu.edu

Psst! You can add this publication to your CV!

Psi Chi Eligibility

- Declared major/minor in Psychology
- At least second semester sophomore standing
- 9 semester hours of courses completed in psychology at GSU
- Minimum GPA of 3.0/4.0 in general and psychology coursework
- Pick up an application on the 11th floor of the Urban Life Building

“No one can do this for you. Take your future into your own hands and prepare yourself for a wonderful career in this fascinating discipline!”
- Dr. Andrea Weyermann
The Benefits of Research Practica
Dylan Stone-Miller

A professor recently informed me that I could receive credit from the University for devoting my time to the psychology research department. Unfortunately, this was after two semesters of sitting in front of a computer screen three hours a week, tediously entering data, and earning no credit. I was happy to be working in the department, but I did not feel as though I was being mentored or molded into a proper researcher.

When I began my research practicum, my whole experience as an undergraduate research assistant changed. Immediately, I was paired with a supervisor with whom I delineated my weekly schedule and expected responsibilities. My supervisor assigned me a role in a study that encompassed a wide range of new experiences that advanced my career as a social scientist and was a great addition to my curriculum vita. I spent one day as a practicum student and I already felt more confident about my future abilities in the field of psychological research than I had during the prior year.

Being part of the research practicum is easy. Students must have at minimum, sophomore standing (45 hours), an overall grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or more, a psychology GPA of 3.0, and authorization from the faculty member who directs the research. One suggestion is to build a good rapport with a professor in a psychology class that you are doing well in, and at the end of the semester visit their office during office hours to see if there are open positions in their labs. In exchange for your efforts, you will receive a structured, supervised experience that will put you ahead of the game and even award you class credit. Additionally, for those seeking to continue their education at a higher level, working directly with professors and graduate students is a fantastic opportunity to earn a letter of recommendation that will help with placement in a good graduate level program.

Students can earn between one and three hours upon completion of the proportional amount of hours devoted and a short reaction paper. Pick up an application on the 11th floor of the Urban Life Building and contact Dr. Rachelle Cohen at rcohen@gsu.edu with any further questions. Additional information about the practicum program can be found at http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwpsy/3052.html

Find a Research Lab

☐ Go to http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwpsy/
☐ Select faculty tab
☐ Browse faculty to learn more about their research interests
☐ E-mail faculty to inquire about open positions in lab

Obtain a Practicum

☐ Visit with Psychology Undergraduate Advisor, Tenagne Mulugeta to obtain Practicum Application Form
☐ Discuss and agree upon lab hours and responsibilities with lab director
☐ Turn practicum application in to Dr. Rachelle Cohen for approval
Get Involved

“The truth is that your career began when you decided to major in psychology, and that the things that you are learning and the opportunities you are experiencing are part of your life as a psychologist. Make the most of it!”

-Dr. David Washburn

The Community Psychology Student Network
Julia Mangia

This past fall, Ciera McGill, Alexandra Duncan, and Ruth Kinney set about the task of establishing a new chapter here at Georgia State University titled the Community Psychology Student Network (CPSN). The purpose of this chapter is to promote awareness about the opportunities that exist here at Georgia State University, which has one of the few community psychology graduate programs in the country! With assistance from their faculty advisor, Dr. Chantal Tusher, these three women drafted a charter constitution heavily based on some of the central tenets of community psychology; empowerment, information dissemination, building upon strengths and community support. CPSN intends to assist psychology students in accruing the resources, activities, connections, and opportunities necessary in earning an effective degree in psychology here at Georgia State.

By utilizing the principles of community psychology, CPSN hopes to strengthen the connections between all psychology majors and function as a comprehensive resource for students with questions. The founding members of CPSN have been involved in student outreach efforts by presenting and promoting CPSN to Introduction to Research Design and Data Analysis (Psyc 3510) classes. The presentations introduce CPSN, the primary goals of the chapter, and encourage those who need help, are interested in helping, or both, to contact CPSN with any questions or concerns. CPSN offers graduate school preparatory advice, career advice, leadership opportunities, a chance to work with the psychology faculty, links to established resources, and too much more to list! As mentioned earlier, the CPSN presentations encourage efficacious behavior on behalf of the undergraduate student body and urge them to ask questions, seek advisement, and get involved.

Finally, membership is not necessary to gain access to the resources and information available through CPSN, although participation in extracurricular activities is highly advisable. CPSN offers membership and leadership opportunities that are less exclusive than other psychology chapters and clubs and allows for those outside of the community psychology concentration to learn about this relatively new field. For those who wish to get in touch with a CPSN member, email CPSN.gsu@gmail.com and a member will do their best to promptly assist. CPSN hopes to gain chapter status by fall semester 2013, so be on the lookout for opportunities to get involved!

Join CPSN
- E-mail: CPSN.gsu@gmail.com for an application
- Eligibility Requirements:
  - 2.5 Overall grade point average
  - Psychology major or minor

Upcoming Conferences

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Why Attend a Psychology Conference?

Robert Reagin

One advantage to studying psychology in a major metropolitan area is the option to create a network of peers outside of campus. Such an opportunity was the meeting of the Southeast Psychology Association (SEPA) last spring held a short walk from GSU at the Omni Hotel/CNN Center. As a “near-graduate” transitioning to the task of securing a position in graduate school, I took advantage of this opportunity.

The scope of concentrations is a key reason to attend a conference. You may encounter exciting foci within psychology you had missed or discover that researchers are taking your subject of interest in unexpected directions. Those who have chosen to pursue a smaller niche within psychology may at last encounter others who share their interest. Any major conference will also feature informational sessions on general topics. The SEPA convention held sessions covering the use of technology in research, APA writing style, how to publish your research, teaching techniques, advice on entering the academic marketplace, and all aspects of securing a graduate school acceptance.

Multiple poster sessions, each one comparable to those at PURC or GSURC, are a mainstay of academic conferences. Attendees can choose which to attend, as these sessions will usually have a theme (e.g. cognition, addiction). A tremendous bonus for students who are researching graduate schools is interacting with undergraduate and graduate student presenters from psychology programs around the country. When students were not occupied presenting their research, they were eager to answer questions regarding all aspects of choosing a school, the application process, and succeeding as a graduate student.

In a typical paper session, a few researchers with shared interests discuss their most recent studies. These sessions, which usually end with a question and answer session, give attendees an opportunity to view one issue from diverse perspectives. These discussions provide an opportunity to interact with those working in the trenches of your research interest. Meeting, and possibly impressing, a potential mentor in this forum could be more important than anything they might see on your curriculum vitae. A warning to the inexperienced, the level of paper session discourse can be bewildering to those just beginning their studies.

Getting a handle on the broad selection of academic and career choices within psychology can be intimidating. Moreover, even at a university with a large psychology department, not every field of psychology is represented. Attending a psychology conference is a great way to gain exposure to new ideas and personal contacts that could reveal your calling in the expanding field you have chosen. Next year, SEPA will be held in Nashville, Tennessee from March 5-8th.

For more information about this conference see http://www.sepaonline.com/annualmeeting-info.htm

From left to right: GSU students Ana Ordaz, Christyl Wilson, and Alexandra Duncan at the 2013 Southeastern ECO Conference in Durham, NC.
Find Your Specialty

The Psychology of Work: An Overview of Industrial-Organizational Psychology

Alexandra Duncan

Have you ever wondered who creates the test items included on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or the Graduate Record Examination (GRE)? Who determines that these math and science questions aptly measure academic competency? And even if the SAT and GRE reflect your academic ability, who decided that these tests predict your performance level during pursuit of an undergraduate or graduate degree? One field of psychology addresses all three questions and more: Industrial-Organizational (I-O) psychology. I-O psychology applies findings from social, engineering, and quantitative psychology to improve human behavior in the workplace.

This definition is extremely broad, but that is because I-O psychologists approach issues in the workplace at all levels: individual, group, and organizational. The industrial subfield focuses on traditional human resource topics like testing, staffing decisions, and performance measurement. There are many established models for these topics, and new research continues – especially in regards to the pervasive role of technology in the workplace.

Organizational Psychology is more contemporary, with topics of interest encompassing occupational motivation, stress, leadership, and fairness. Relevant research includes gender differences in leadership styles and cross-cultural communication. Some psychologists are using the tenets of I-O psychology to design work environments that foster greater performance, productivity, and satisfaction.

Several universities offer graduate programs in I-O psychology, which typically follow a scientist-practitioner model to prepare students for a variety of career options. Graduates of this field have a great advantage in regards to job prospects. Not only do I-O psychologists have the option of an academic career of research and teaching; they are highly sought after for their consulting expertise by government agencies and private sector corporations. In addition, despite the economic downturn, there are more positions for I-O psychologists than ever due to their ability to increase workplace efficiency and productivity.

If you are interested in contributing to the field, the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) produces the most comprehensive resources. SIOP is composed of researchers, practitioners, teachers, and students who are already making great strides - their website (siop.org) includes a helpful guide to graduate programs, too. Additionally, Frank Landy and Jeffrey Conte provide a fantastic introductory text titled “Work in the 21st Century”. Work consumes so much of our lives, and it is no wonder there is an entire field dedicated to its improvement and advancement.

Psi Chi Executive Board members and Psi Chi Advisor
Most psychology students know of the iconic Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), but less known are the so-called “third-wave” behavior therapies that present compelling, modern twists on evidence-based psychotherapy. The most prominent among them is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), which combines the scientific rigor of behaviorism with the acceptance and values-based tone of humanistic and existential therapies. Created by Steve Hayes in 1986, ACT (pronounced like the verb “act”) is a growing area of research and practice that has proven effective in a wide variety of clinical and community contexts.

The core of third-wave therapies is mindfulness, or the ability to engage fully with the present moment without judging or trying to control the thoughts and emotions that come to mind. ACT is unique from other therapies in that it teaches more than meditation to develop mindfulness skills, and instead of following strict protocols, ACT therapists customize and invent techniques for individual clients. With this liberty, clinicians apply ACT to an array of settings with individuals and groups for both long and short-term therapy. As well, ACT is the only Western psychotherapy created based on its own empirically supported model of human language and cognition, known as Relational Frame Theory.

Although the core processes of ACT are beyond the scope of this article, the goal of ACT is simple: to create a fulfilling life while accepting the suffering that necessarily accompanies it. ACT challenges the common assumption of healthy normality, which posits that humans are naturally happy and healthy, experiencing suffering only as a consequence of pathology. In contrast, ACT asserts that a destructive normality exists; that we naturally create psychological suffering when we attempt to avoid the negative private experiences (thoughts, emotions, etc.) that we all have. In this process, it is not the presence of an experience such as anxiety, but our attempt to escape from it that creates the essence of psychological disorders. ACT targets this experiential avoidance and teaches clients not how to eliminate symptoms, but rather how to reduce their influence while committing to behaviors that reflect their values and enhance their lives.

The resulting mindful awareness, acceptance of mental states, and commitment to valued behavior constitutes psychological flexibility, which is the core of psychological health according to the ACT model. When one is psychologically flexible, she or he can truly live in the present moment and act toward a rich, meaningful life.

For more information, you can visit: www.contextualscience.org/about_act
Beyond a Bachelor’s

Taking Time Off Before Grad School
Chandler Puhy

Psychology students planning to pursue a graduate degree often face the decision of whether or not to take a year (or more) off after completing their bachelor’s degree. There are several important elements to consider when making this decision. Widely cited reasons for going straight to graduate school include the fear of losing academic momentum and the desire to finish school as early as possible. Assuming you are an exceptionally qualified applicant, these are perfectly valid reasons for applying immediately to graduate programs. However, taking an additional year before applying is likely to make you a more attractive candidate—as long as that time is used wisely. Graduate schools are looking for well-rounded applicants who have developed academically, professionally and personally.

Most doctoral programs are looking for candidates with research experience. If you lack this, you should consider working in a research lab prior to applying. Lab positions and internships are not restricted to undergraduates and you may consider research opportunities at other universities. Becoming acquainted with the research process will help you to determine the type of graduate program you are looking for. Research experience doubles as a way to solidify your interests, and thus pinpoint professors with whom you would like to work with as a graduate student. As an additional advantage, a year off can provide the time needed to improve your performance on the Graduate Records Exam (GRE) as well as create a powerful personal statement.

Aside from academic development, graduate schools want to know that you have the professional skills to excel. In a collaborative environment, your colleagues and mentor will expect you to take and give criticism, stick to deadlines, and demonstrate initiative. Professional experience also bolsters your technical competency. Along with a general working knowledge of current technology, a student who has experience working with statistical software such as Prism or SPSS has an edge over someone without that exposure.

Well-rounded applicants are also those who have developed personally. If you decide to take a year off, look for opportunities that cultivate leadership, communication, presentation and interview skills. Many students look stellar on paper but are not able to “sell” themselves in person. Additionally, many professors find that a year off provides students an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to the discipline. All of these elements lead to confidence that will impress a graduate admissions board.

In the end, the decision to apply immediately or to wait is a personal choice and must be made based on your particular situation. Talk with a professor or an academic counselor to gauge your readiness for the application process. Either way, keep your eye on the goal!
The Revised GRE Exam
Rebecca Auchter

Are you planning on applying to graduate school? Those of you interested will need to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). This graduate admissions test is one that every school looks at to help determine your acceptance into the program of your choice. The cost of taking the exam is $185 and can be taken every thirty days; however, only five tests can be taken in any given year. The format and scoring of the GRE has changed recently so this article will hopefully clear up some confusion and questions you may have. The GRE will take about three and a half hours to complete and is a computer-based test. There are many websites that provide practice tests and questions, but my advice is to go the official GRE website at www.ets.org and download the free Powerprep II software. This software offers two full-length practice tests and other tips to maximize your performance on the exam.

The exam measures student aptitude in three areas. There are two analytical writing essays, two sections of verbal reasoning, and two sections of quantitative reasoning. The two analytical essays are scored on a range from zero to six in half-point increments. The verbal and quantitative reasoning sections are scored ranging from 130 to 170 in one point increments. Test takers will be able to see the verbal and quantitative scores immediately after the exam. Because test graders must grade the the essay questions, they will be sent by mail between 10 and 15 days after the exam. Students can also choose at the time of the test to have their scores sent to up to four schools. If at the end of the exam you feel you performed poorly, you can opt not to view your scores. Neither you nor the schools you selected to send your scores to will receive the results. I do not recommend choosing this option because it is always helpful to see your scores in order to know where you can improve.

The exam is administered at many locations throughout Georgia including the most convenient place: Georgia State! The test is given multiple times a month but there is a limited amount of space so make sure to schedule your exam appointment early. For more information, you can visit the official GRE website (www.ets.org). Good luck to those of you planning on applying to graduate school and happy studying!

Most Common Requirements for Grad Schools

- Keep GPA up! A competitive GPA is 3.5
- Research Experience
- Personal Statement
- Curriculum Vitae
- Letters of Recommendation (Generally 3)
- GRE Scores and GRE subject test scores
- Academic involvement
- Presentation at Conferences
- Publications

GRE Quick Facts

- Test Sections:
  - Verbal
  - Quantitative
  - Analytical Writing
- Cost: $185
- Duration: 4.5 hours
- Recommended prep materials:
  - Barron 6th edition
  - Princeton review for Subject GRE

“If you want to work in the field of psychology, you must consider a graduate program...You must be proactive in searching for the program that best fits your interests and also proactive about taking the necessary steps to become a competitive candidate.”

- Dr. Andrea Weyermann
Like Psi Chi on Facebook for the latest news about opportunities and events!
Search for “Psi Chi, Georgia State University”