

The Psychology Department at VU offers a strong and balanced program intended to provide a comprehensive view of psychology, offering a choice of either a B.S. or B.A. degree. Each semester the department schedules courses in experimental, social, developmental, and clinical/counseling psychology as well as in areas of special interest. In addition to these course selections, the department provides opportunities for psychological applications and research. Internships are available in the surrounding community involving the developmentally disabled, the mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed, the elderly, criminal offenders, and victims of abuse; students interested in working in a business setting work for a local company. On-campus opportunities include laboratory, teaching, and research assistantships. The department provides the student of psychology with the breadth of knowledge and applied skills suitable for bachelor-level psychology careers.

Employment and Graduate School Opportunities to Graduates

At Valparaiso University, just over half of our graduating seniors find employment directly after graduation with their bachelors degree and many others pursue graduate degrees. Recently, students with undergraduate degrees from our program have found employment in such occupations as education (e.g. Drake University Head Start Pre-School), retail sales/marketing, organizational consulting (e.g. Andersen Consulting), journalism (e.g. Florence Morning News), social service (e.g. Indiana Lake County Division of Family and Child Protection Services), community service (e.g. Fort Wayne Rescue Mission), volunteer organizations (e.g. Peace Corps), health care (e.g. Northwest Physical Therapy), corrections (e.g. LaPorte Juvenile Detention Services) and mental health (e.g. Hartgrove Hospital, Chicago). More exotic employers have included the Amity Foundation in China and Brookfield Zoo. Occasionally, students will choose to complete a post-bachelors internship in a field of interest; one student recently completed a program at Wyler Children. s Hospital.

At Valparaiso University, roughly 40% of our majors go on for graduate study in masters or doctoral programs. Over the past four years many schools have accepted our students, including the following:

Concordia Seminary, DePaul Law School, Illinois College of Optometry, Indiana University, John Marshall School of Law, Loyola University, Marquette University, Miami University, Ohio State University, Purdue University, St. Xavier University, Temple University, University of Denver, University of Illinois, University of Minnesota, University of Missouri-Columbia, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Washington University (St. Louis), Wheaton College

A few of our graduates elect to continue their masters-level education at VU, and are occasionally accepted into our programs in counseling and school psychology.

Our Degree Programs

At the undergraduate level, Valparaiso University offers two major programs and one minor program.

Major. Bachelor Of Arts. The B.A. degree in Psychology requires a minimum of 27 credits of coursework in psychology. All students take a core of three courses,

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General Psychology (PSY 110 with or without a lab), Statistics (PSY 201) and Research Methods (PSY 202). All students must then take two experimental psychology courses (at least one with a lab), one course from the personality and social psychology group, and one course from the clinical/applied psychology group. Students are also encouraged to take a capstone course. Listings of courses in these categories offered in the department are given below. Students also have to fulfill the General Education Requirements for the B.A. degree in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Major. Bachelor Of Science. The B.S. degree in Psychology requires a minimum of 32 credits of coursework in psychology. All students take a core of three courses, General Psychology (PSY 110 with or without a lab), Statistics (PSY 201) and Research Methods (PSY 202). All students must then take two experimental psychology courses (both with labs), one course from the personality and social psychology group, and one course from the clinical/applied psychology group. Students are also encouraged to take a capstone course. Listings of courses in these categories offered in the department are given below. Outside the department, students must take at least one biology course numbered 151 or higher (e.g. Human Anatomy and Physiology), and one mathematics course numbered 122 or higher (e.g. Finite Mathematics). Students also have to fulfill the General Education Requirements for the B.S. degree in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Minor. A minimum of five courses with a total of at least 15 credit hours in psychology constitutes a minor. Courses for the minor must include General Psychology (110, with or without lab), Psychological Statistics (PSY 201), and one course, with or without laboratory, chosen from the Experimental Psychology course group.

Undergraduate Psychology Courses

Psychology majors see a departmental advisor every semester. The advisor assists in the selection of courses and helps with planning their whole academic program. Majors and minors in psychology can then attend a special preregistration session, where students are given reserved spaces in psychology courses. This assures majors and minors first access to courses in their department.

Graduate Psychology Courses

The Department of Psychology at Valparaiso University offers a Masters Degree in Applied Behavioral Science. This program is intended to provide professional training in counseling for individuals who are currently employed in social service, mental health, and other service-based institutions. A number of courses are offered each semester in support of the graduate program. On occasion, or with special permission, junior and senior psychology majors are permitted to enroll in these classes. Available courses are listed below; for details about the department's graduate programs, contact the Dean of Graduate Studies, Kretzmann Hall.

Special Opportunities For Psychology Students

Most undergraduate curricula in psychology are similar. Therefore, the distinctiveness of our program at VU emanates largely from the co-curricular and support activities that the Psychology Department provides to complement the formal education of our students. These opportunities not only encourage student-faculty interaction, but in doing so, afford innumerable opportunities for informal advising, student feedback, discussion of issues related to both psychology and other disciplines, etc., all of which improve student-student and student-faculty cohesiveness with the department. Such cohesiveness, we believe, helps establish a sense of academic/intellectual identity among our majors, and may be partly responsible for the fact that NO upper division psychology students have transferred out of our program because of dissatisfaction in the past four years. Some of these distinctive opportunities include:

- a. lab assistantships: junior and senior psychology students may take on full responsibility for teaching lab sessions for which they are paid
- b. research opportunities: students may join in faculty research and share in co-authorship on presentations/publications
- c. practicum placements: fieldwork in social service or mental health agencies and local businesses can provide valuable work experience for students
- d. student tutoring: several students have the opportunity to act as paid tutors for Statistical Methods each semester
- e. laboratory courses: many psychology departments have eliminated lab courses as cost-saving measures, while we have actually expanded and improved our lab offerings
- f. Psychology Colloquium: students and faculty discuss research topics in an informal atmosphere over lunch each Friday

Two student groups are active within the department that add considerable richness to our program. The Psychology Club is comprised of students with common interests in psychology; sponsors field trips, social events, Career Night in Psychology, etc. Psi Chi is the national honor society for psychology majors, which works to promote psychology on campus as well as bring in outside speakers and participate in community service. These groups have assumed a major role in the development and planning of co-curricular activities within the department; representatives from both groups meet with the Chair of the department and attend most faculty meetings to provide student input on important departmental decisions and policies.

Each year the department sponsors a number of special events designed to foster students' development and promote student-faculty interaction. During the fall semester, for example, the Department conducts a "Career Workshop" to assist students in the process of gaining admission to graduate schools as well as obtaining professional employment. This workshop represents part of a larger effort on the part of the department to provide continual career advisement and job placement information. Furthermore, several visiting psychologists are brought in each year as colloquium speakers, exposing students to the latest ideas within various subfields of psychology. And, of course, the department sponsors occasional social events and gatherings that provide students with the chance to

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informally interact with faculty and other psychology students. Thus, while each program or event has its own specific objective, the overall intent is to provide an intellectually stimulating, yet personable atmosphere conducive to individual growth and development.

Preparation for Entering the Job Market

Get a well-rounded education with a second area of concentration. If you plan to seek a job immediately after obtaining your bachelors degree in psychology, there are a number of strategies that you might follow to increase your competitiveness within the job market. A broad, well-rounded education is perhaps the key to any successful career. Take a variety of courses within the psychology curriculum, focusing primarily on those types of courses that involve the understanding of human behavior in social organizations. You should plan to supplement your psychology major with a second major or a minor in an area that adds to your marketability. Second majors in social work, education, or theology may be appropriate depending on your interests and goals. Minors in business, computer science, statistics, economics and math all provide practical skills that can greatly enhance your psychology background, particularly if you are interested in taking a position within business or industry.

Psychology combines well with many different majors, and you should therefore discuss some of the various possibilities with your departmental advisor.

Field Experience. If your goal is to work in an area related to mental health or social services, one of the best ways to enhance your qualifications for employment is to gain practical experience through the Practicum/Intern program provided by the Psychology Department. The practicum enables students to gain experience working in various community social service agencies while obtaining course credit under PSY-485 Practicum: Field Experience. Students can obtain a list of participating agencies from the Department Practicum Director, and they arrange their participation with the agency and faculty sponsor in the semester prior to the beginning of the practicum. Those interested in careers and business and industry are also strongly encouraged to take advantage of the field experience opportunities available in the department. Students benefit from the practicum, not only formally in the work experience that they acquire, but also informally in the frequent job contacts that are made through these opportunities.

Build a strong record. As with all employment, a reasonably good GPA background in several different areas, and strong references from faculty are always important for your credibility and viability within the job market. Maintaining a solid 3.0 GPA will undoubtedly improve your chances, and getting to know the psychology faculty, both on an academic level as well as an informal level, will help familiarize them with your capabilities, strengths and qualifications. Take advantage of department opportunities for teaching assistantships, student tutoring, and participation in student organizations (e.g., PSAC, Psychology Club) to enhance your overall attractiveness to potential employers.

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Preparation for Graduate School in Our Department

If you intend to pursue graduate study in psychology, it is important that you be well prepared at the time you submit your application--usually late fall of your senior year. Your best preparation is to obtain a well-rounded, liberal arts education with a major in psychology and a minor in a related area. No matter what your area of interest might be (i.e., clinical, counseling, experimental, industrial, etc.), it is always wise to supplement your coursework in psychology with rigorous courses in natural sciences, computers and math. High grades in these types of courses are viewed very favorably by most graduate admissions committees and will help to offset any negative effects of possibly low GRE (Graduate Record Examination) scores. The GRE is a national standardized test required of all students planning to enter graduate school for doctoral work, and it is usually taken by late fall of your senior year.

You should also consider taking courses outside psychology that enhance your understanding of the field in which you are most interested. For example, if you are interested in industrial/organizational psychology, several business courses would be appropriate; if you are interested in physiological psychology, several biology courses would be appropriate; or if you are interested in adolescent psychology, courses in education might be helpful. Your departmental advisor will assist you in choosing courses that might deepen your understanding of special interest areas within psychology such as these.

The importance of a strong academic record. Entry into doctoral programs to psychology is very competitive, and a GPA of 3.5 or higher is necessary for admission into most reputable programs. It is, therefore, important to maintain a high GPA during your entire four years in college. Master degree programs are generally less stringent in their requirements, but they too will not usually accept students with GPAs lower than 3.0. It will also be necessary for you to obtain letters of recommendation from three faculty in the Psychology Department. Strong letters of recommendation are critical for a competitive application, so you should keep in mind possible individuals on the faculty who might be able to help you in this respect. Your psychology departmental advisor is one faculty member who not only might write a letter of reference for you, but might also suggest other appropriate faculty who could serve as possible references for you.

Research experience. The importance of becoming involved in a research project under the direction of a faculty member in the Psychology Department can never be understated. Whether you are interested in clinical-applied psychology or experimental psychology, research experience is probably the most important way to supplement a strong set of academic credentials for admission into graduate school. Generally, research experience is given formal recognition under the course title, e.g. "PSY-495 Independent Research." Students wanting to sign up for Independent Research during their senior year should discuss their interest in, and ideas for, Independent Research with a psychology faculty member during their junior year. Once the student obtains a faculty sponsor, the sponsor assists the student in developing both a research proposal and methodology for the project. Usually these research projects require a high degree of self-motivation as well as a strong commitment of time and dedication on the part of both the student and the faculty sponsor. For this reason, faculty are selective as to whom they will sponsor

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for Independent Research, and evidence of quality work from the student is usually an important criterion for sponsorship.

Honors thesis. Some students want to create a significant, finished piece of research work as part of their undergraduate career. The honors thesis option allows students to do this and receive special recognition for their accomplishment. If you are interested in this possibility you should consult with a faculty member early in your junior year of study, and review the requirements for honors theses which are given in the University catalog.

Field experience, while not as important as Independent Research, is often helpful for students in that it gives them initial exposure to settings that frequently employ mental health professionals. Furthermore, field experience, teaching assistantships, and lab assistantships all contribute to the student's academic record, and provide excellent opportunities for students to interact with faculty on a more intense basis than is afforded in most classroom situations.

Do not get discouraged. While entry into graduate school requires both good credentials and strong preparation, it is not an impossible endeavor. The Psychology Department at Valparaiso University attempts to provide strong and directed guidance for those students interested in pursuing graduate study. We have a good track records of placing students in graduate programs; when students are not accepted, it is usually because they do not seek out the advice of the faculty who can help them formulate their program of study and appropriate goals.