



The Psychology Major at Rhode Island College

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Introduction

The faculty has designed this guide to provide information about the Psychology major at Rhode Island College (R.I.C.) and to discuss the requirements and the strategies for completing this major. To aid students with respect to General Education requirements, we have included a short guide in the addendum. The present document is not designed to present details on general college requirements (e.g., General Education). The current R.I.C. Catalog, which is available from the Records Office and from the Office of Academic Support and Information Services (OASIS), will present these requirements.

Mission of the Psychology Major

The Psychology major at R.I.C. is designed to broadly cover the field of Psychology and is reasonably typical of Psychology majors at other colleges and universities. It is an academic major requiring courses in research methods, personality, social psychology, developmental psychology, and experimental psychology. Specialization in one area of psychology is not possible within the major requirements. However, students who are interested in specialization can select additional psychology courses in their chosen area. For example, a student who wishes to emphasize developmental psychology can opt to take Psychology 331 (Child Psychology), Psychology 332 (Adolescent Psychology), Psychology 335 (Family Psychology) and Psychology 339 (Psychology of Aging); however, only one of these courses would count toward completion of the major. Psychology as a discipline has largely adopted a scientific approach to the study of behavior, and consequently 3 of the required courses in the major are fully devoted to research methods and statistics. The major has no structured practicum component (e.g., counseling, working with children, etc.).

The Advisor

When you declare a Psychology major, you will be assigned an advisor from among the Psychology department faculty. It is to your advantage to discuss your classes and future plans with this individual. Meeting with your advisor is mandatory in order to be able to register for courses. Advisors can review your transcript to discuss remaining requirements, problems, future strategies, and so on. In addition, they can provide perspectives on courses that you might be considering, help with scheduling, refer you to various campus resources, and assist you in dealing with other faculty members, the administration, and other student services. You are strongly encouraged to seek your advisor's input.

Should you not know who your advisor is or if you were not assigned one, see the secretary in the Psychology department. The secretary will let you know who your advisor is or will aid you in selecting an advisor. If you would like to change your advisor, you can do this by contacting the department secretary.

General Rhode Island College Requirements

To graduate R.I.C. with a major in Psychology, you must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Successful completion of the Psychology major
2. Successful completion of the General Education program
3. Successful completion of both the college Writing Competency and the college Mathematics Competency requirements
4. A minimum of 120 earned credits.
5. A minimum cumulative Grade Point Average of 2.00
6. A minimum of 45 earned credits at R.I.C.
7. A minimum of 15 earned credits in Psychology courses at R.I.C., with a minimum of 12 of these earned credits in 300-level Psychology courses.
8. A minimum GPA of 2.00 in the Psychology major

The Psychology Major

The Psychology major has been changed for students entering Rhode Island College in Fall, 2009 or later. The Psychology major requires successful completion of ten (eleven in the new major) courses in Psychology. Six of these courses are specific core requirements; the remaining four (five in new major) required courses involve selection from distributions of alternative courses. Presentation of the Psychology major, including course descriptions and course prerequisites, is found in the R.I.C. Catalog.

In outline form, the Psychology major with prerequisite courses in brackets [] is presented below:

Psychology Major Checklist

Required Core Courses:

- ___ Psyc 110: Introduction to Psychology (4 credits)
- ___ Psyc 215: Social Psychology (4 credits)
- ___ Psyc 221: Research Design and Analysis I: Foundations (4 credits) [110]
- ___ Psyc 230: Human Development (4 credits) [110]
- ___ Psyc 251: Personality (4 credits) [110]
- ___ Psyc 320: Research Design and Analysis II: Behavioral Statistics (4 credits) [110, 221]

Required Distribution Courses: (One from each of the following groups)

| <u>(ENTERING PRIOR TO FALL 2009)</u> | <u>(ENTERING FALL 2009 OR LATER)</u> |
|---|---|
| <p>___A. Developmental (4 credits): Psy 331, 332, 335, 339 [221 & 230]</p> <p>___B. Experimental (4 credits): Psy 341, 421, 344, 345, 347, 422, 349 [221]</p> <p>___C. Social/Personality (4 credits): Psy 351 [221 & (either 110 or 215)] Psy 353, 354 [221 & 251] Psy 356, 423 [221 & 215] Psy 424 [221 & either 215 or 251]</p> <p>___D. Methods (4 credits): Psy 473 [320 & One from A or 422] Psy 475 [320 & One from C or 422] Psy 476 [320 & One from 354, 356, 357, 422, 423, or 424] Psy 477 [320 & one from B or 421 or 422]</p> | <p>___A. Developmental (4 credits): Psy 331, 332, 335, 339 [221 & 230]</p> <p>___B. Experimental (4 credits): Psy 341, 344, 345, 347, 349 [215, 221]</p> <p>___C. Social/Personality (4 credits): Psy 351 [221 & (either 110 or 215)] Psy 353, 354 [221 & 251] Psy 356 [221 & 215]</p> <p>___D. Applied (4 credits): Psy 421, 422 [221] Psy 423 [221 & 215] Psy 424 [221 & (either 215 or 251)] Psy 425 [221 & (either 110 or 215)]</p> <p>___E. Methods (4 credits): Psy 473 [320 & One from A or 422] Psy 475 [320 & One from C or 422] Psy 476 [320 & One from 354, 356, 357, 422, 423 or 424] Psy 477 [320 & One from B or 421 or 422]</p> |
| <p>** All courses listed within "[]" are required prerequisite courses</p> | <p>** All courses listed within "[]" are required prerequisite courses</p> |
| <p>TOTAL CREDITS = <u>38</u></p> | <p>TOTAL CREDITS = <u>44</u></p> |

Psychology 360 (Seminar in Current Topics: 4 credits) [221 and consent of department chair] may be substituted for one of the required courses in groups A, B, or C in the major with written permission of department chair. The department Chair will determine whether a particular Psych. 360 topic will be substituted for a group A, group B, group C, or group D requirement.

Four issues concerning the Psychology major require further discussion. These include the sequencing of courses, transferring of credits from other institutions, double majoring, and the R.I.C. Education curriculum.

Course Sequencing. The sequencing of courses in the major is an important issue. While two courses have no prerequisites (Psychology 110 and Psychology 215), the remaining courses do require at least one prerequisite course; sometimes more than one prerequisite course is required. For example, Psychology 477 requires four prerequisites. The student must have successfully completed (1) Psychology 110, (2) Psychology 221, (3) Psychology 320, and (4) an Experimental decade course (any Psychology course numbered from 341 to 349). The computer registration system does check for prerequisites; however, because advanced technology can be fallible, it is a possibility that you will find yourself in a class for which you do not have the prerequisites. Students who are inappropriately enrolled in a course without the proper prerequisites, can be dropped from that course by the instructor. If there is uncertainty about whether you have the prerequisite for a course, you are advised to see the course instructor or the Psychology department chairperson prior to registering for that course.

As long as you have met course prerequisites, you may take courses in any order. However, there are some guidelines to consider when planning the order of courses in the major. Psychology 110 (Introductory Psychology) should ideally be taken as a first course in your major for two reasons. First, it provides broad coverage of the field of psychology and covers basic concepts with which you will be dealing for the remainder of the major. Second, it is a prerequisite for all but one course required in the major. You need to also pay special attention to Psychology 221 (Foundations of Psychological Research) and take it relatively early in your major. This methods course covers important concepts and procedures helpful for later courses and serves as a prerequisite for many of the courses required in the major.

Course Credit Transfer. Another issue to discuss involves circumstances in which a required Psychology course is met by taking a comparable course at another college or university. If you are transferring into Rhode Island College from another college or university, the Admissions Office will evaluate which R.I.C. courses and credits are met by credits earned at your other institution(s). If you are an undergraduate degree candidate at R.I.C. and want to satisfy a requirement by taking a course at another college or university, see the appropriate R.I.C. department chair (e.g., the Psychology department chair for a Psychology course). In order for the course at the other institution to count toward your Rhode Island College degree, the department chair must approve the course by signing an Authorization of Credit Form (available from the Records Office, from OASIS, or from the Psychology Department). Students need to obtain the R.I.C. department chair's signed consent prior to registering for a course at another college or university.

If you transfer a Psychology course or courses from another institution into R.I.C., you may find that a course transferred in as three credits, while the comparable course at R.I.C. is four credits. Therefore, you may be short of the credits required by the Psychology major. Department policy regarding this issue is as follows:

The completion of the 10-course Psychology major with 36 or more credits (11-course major with 40 or more credits in the new major) is acceptable. Students who finish the 10-course Psychology major with less than 36 credits (11-course major with less than 40 credits in the new major) are required to complete an additional Psychology course, chosen with consent of the Psychology department chair.

Double majors. Some students have Psychology as part of a double (or even triple) major course of study. Regardless of whether Psychology is a first or second major, the requirements are the same. Should Psychology be your second major, and if you will not be able to complete the Psychology major by the time that you wish to graduate, your basic options are either to remain enrolled long enough to complete the second major or to change from a second major in Psychology to a minor in Psychology.

The Psychology Minor

The Psychology minor consists of six of the ten courses (of the eleven courses in the new major) required for the Psychology major. Five of these courses are specific core requirements; the final course involves the required selection from a distribution of alternative courses in Experimental decade (any Psychology course numbered 341 to 349). (Note: The Psychology minor is unaffected by the new Psychology major except for deletions of Psychology 342 and 346 as alternative courses for the Experimental Decade.)

In outline form, the Psychology minor with prerequisite courses in brackets [] is presented below:

Psychology Minor Requirements (24 credits)

- _____ Psych 110, Introduction to Psychology (4 credits)
- _____ Psych 215, Social Psychology (4 credits)
- _____ Psych 221, Research Methods I: Foundations (4 credits) [110]
- _____ Psych 230, Human Development (4 credits) [110]
- _____ Psych 251, Personality (4 credits)
- _____ Experimental decade: Psych 341, 344, 345, 347, 349 (4 credits) [221]

Behavioral Neuroscience Minor

Neuroscience is an inherently interdisciplinary enterprise spanning from molecular to behavioral science. In an increasingly complex and competitive world the undergraduate study of behavioral neuroscience emphasizes the interdependent nature of science and allows students to draw knowledge from diverse fields in order to better understand and address our greatest social, biological and ethical challenges. The behavioral neuroscience minor seeks to prepare students for diverse careers in fields related to the study of behavior and brain function. Students graduating with a minor in behavioral neuroscience in combination with degrees in psychology, biology, chemistry, computer science or others may choose to pursue careers in biotechnology, consulting, medicine, pharmaceutical and/or medical industry, public health, research or teaching.

BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE MINOR PROGRAM GOALS:

- 1) Promote a culture of academic excellence in the study of brain and behavioral science.
- 2) Demonstrate the interdependent nature of science.
- 3) Promote critical and integrative thinking.
- 4) Facilitate an understanding of the scientific enterprise in the context of social, biomedical and ethical challenges.
- 5) Prepare students for graduate or professional careers in neuroscience related fields.

COURSE REQUIRMENTS FOR MINOR IN BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

| Course No. | Course Title | Credit Hours |
|----------------------|---|--------------|
| <u>PSYC 110</u> | Introduction to Psychology | 4 |
| <u>PSYC 221</u> | Research Methods I: Foundations | 4 |
| <u>BIOL 108</u> | Basic Principles of Biology | 4 |
| <i>or</i> | | |
| <u>BIOL 112</u> | Introductory Biology II | 4 |
| <u>CHEM 105</u> | General, Organic and Biological Chemistry I | 4 |
| <i>or</i> | | |
| <u>CHEM 104</u> | General Chemistry II | 4 |
| <u>PSYC 345</u> | Physiological Psychology | 4 |
| <u>PSYC/BIOL 445</u> | Behavioral Neuroscience | 4 |
| Total Credit Hours | | 24 |

For additional information contact:

Steven Threlkeld Ph.D.
 Assistant Professor, Coordinator for the Minor in Behavioral Neuroscience
 Horace Mann 312
 (401) 456-8585
 (401) 456-8015

The Chemical Dependency/Addiction Studies (CDAS) Major

The B.S. in Chemical Dependency/Addiction Studies (CDAS) is an extension of the existing liberal arts major in Psychology. Completion of the Chemical Dependency/Addiction Studies major will prepare the student for the entry-level position in the field of chemical dependency, Counselor in Training (CIT), and also for work on more advanced degrees (M.A. in Counseling – Chemical Dependency Counseling and the Master of Social Work) and higher professional certification at the Advanced Chemical Dependency Professional (ACDP) level. In outline form, the CDAS major with prerequisite courses in brackets [] is presented below:

Required Courses:

| | | | | |
|-------|-----------|--|-----------------------|--|
| _____ | Psy 110, | Introduction to Psychology | (4 credits) | |
| _____ | Psy 215, | Social Psychology | (4 credits) | |
| _____ | Psy 221 | Research Methods I: Foundations | (4 credits) | [110] |
| _____ | Psych 230 | Human Development | (4 credits) | [110] |
| _____ | Psy 251 | Personality | (4 credits) | [110] |
| _____ | Psy 320 | Research Methods II: Behavioral Statistics | (4 credits) | [221] |
| _____ | A. | Developmental decade (4 credits) | Psy 332 or 335 or 339 | [230 & 221] |
| _____ | B. | Experimental decade (4 credits) | Psy 345 | [221] |
| _____ | C. | Social/Personality decade (4 credits) | Psy 354 | [221 & 251] |
| _____ | D. | Applied decade (4 credits) | Psy 421, 422 | [221] |
| | | | Psy 423 | [221 & 215] |
| | | | Psy 424 | [221 & either (215 or 251)] |
| _____ | E. | Research Methods III: Applied (4 credits) | Psy 476 | [320 & one from 354,356,357,358,or 359] |

Additional Requirements

| | | | | |
|-------|---------|--|-------------|--|
| _____ | Psy 217 | Drugs, Society and Chemical Dependency | (4 credits) | [110] |
| _____ | Psy 351 | Psychology of Human Diversity | (4 credits) | [(110 or 215) & 221] |
| _____ | Psy 425 | Community Psychology | (4 credits) | [(110 or 215) & 221] |
| _____ | Psy 452 | Theories of Psychological Intervention | (4 credits) | [217 & 354] |
| _____ | Psy471 | Practicum in CDAS | (4 credits) | [CDAS acceptance and 351 & 452] |
| _____ | Psy 472 | Internship in CDAS | (4 credits) | [425 & 471 and approval of instructors] |

Students interested in the CDAS program should declare CDAS/IM as a second major early in their career. They should also take Psychology 251 as soon as possible (often 2nd semester freshman year) so that they have the prerequisites for future courses.

The CDAS degree has been designed to have a second admission process (similar to the education and nursing programs). Students will file applications for admission into the CDAS program after successful completion of Psychology 452, typically at the end of the junior year. In order to be admitted, students will be required to have earned a minimum grade of B- in PSYC 217, PSYC 351, and PSYC 425, and a minimum GPA of 2.50 in all classes taken in the major prior to admission to the professional program. To remain in the program, students must also maintain at least a 2.50 GPA in the major and earn no grade lower than B- in a concentration or professional course. The course requirements for freshmen and sophomores wishing to declare a major in the B.S. in Chemical Dependency/Addiction Studies are almost identical to those required for the B.A. in Psychology. Students admitted to the Chemical Dependency/Addiction Studies program should also declare as a Psychology major, as successful completion of the former will simultaneously result in the completion of the latter.

A more complete description of the Chemical Dependency/Addiction Studies program will be available from the Psychology Department.

The Honors Program in Psychology

After accumulating at least 60 earned credits toward the degree, eligible students can apply for admission to the chairperson of the department who will forward applications to the department Honors Committee. Forms for application to the Honors Program are available from the department secretary. Upon successful review of the application, participation begins the following semester. Students may apply at anytime between the accumulation of 60 and 89 earned credits. No student may apply after accumulating 90 earned credits.

The following 10 criteria must be met by the student for admission into the Psychology Honors Program:

1. Enrollment in the BA or a BS curriculum with a major in Psychology.
2. At least a 3.50 GPA in all Psychology courses taken prior to admission to the Honors Program (during the first 60 credits of course work).
3. At least a 3.25 GPA in all courses prior to admission to the Honors Program (including transfer credits).
4. Transcripts from Rhode Island College and/or all other institutions attended must accompany application.
5. A letter of recommendation from a faculty member of a psychology department attesting to their estimate of the applicant's ability to complete an independent research project.
6. Completed Honors Program application form (available in the department office).
7. Completed proposal for enrollment in Psychology 39X (available in the department office and in the records office).
8. Average proposal quality rating greater than 2 by at least of the 3 members of the department Honors Committee.
9. Letter of acceptance by the Honors Committee of the Psychology Department of Rhode Island College.
10. Final approval of the Psychology 39X proposal by the Dean's office.

A more complete description of the Honors Program in Psychology is available from the department. This document includes the requirements that students must meet to earn Honors in Psychology, the policies regarding dismissal from the Honors Program, and the criteria for evaluating the honor proposal and the final honors project by the department Honors Committee.

The Psychology Major “outside of the classroom”

Psychological Society and Psi Chi. It is important for you to realize that learning occurs outside as well as inside the classroom. You can gain substantial amounts of information and experience by interacting with your peers and faculty in non-classroom contexts. These opportunities can aid in making Psychology more than an academic endeavor. Fortunately, we have two student organizations that help in this goal. The first organization is the Psychological Society of Rhode Island College which is open to all individuals interested in Psychology. The second organization is Psi Chi, the National Honors Society in Psychology that requires its members to fulfill the following requirements:

1. Completion of at least 3 semesters of the college course.
2. Completion of 9 semester hours of Psychology
3. Registration for major or minor standing in Psychology
4. Have an overall GPA and a psychology GPA of 3.0
5. High standards of personal behavior
6. Two-thirds affirmative vote of those present at the regular meeting of the Psi Chi chapter.

Clearly, freshmen and first-semester sophomores, along with more advanced students, are encouraged to join the Psychological Society and if they meet the above requirements, they can think about submitting an application to Psi Chi. Both of these organizations have a mailbox in the Psychology Department. All inquiries regarding membership and activities can be directed to the organization president via this route. These organizations have sponsored seminars about getting into graduate school and speakers from a variety of psychology-related professions, as well as trips to professional conferences. In addition, they run the annual Rhode Island College Psychological Research Conference that highlights the research and creativity of Psychology students. Overall, these student organizations foster interaction between the students in this major and generate a greater sense of community.

Psychology department faculty. Very often, students will only interact with faculty members in class and sometimes during office hours. This is highly unfortunate because the faculty possesses knowledge and experience that may not be communicated in the course setting. You can often gain research experience by working with either a R.I.C. faculty member or a psychologist at another academic or clinical institution. This may potentially lead to professional recognition of your work through presenting at the R.I.C. Undergraduate Research Conference, at a regional professional association (e.g., New England Psychological Association or American Psychological Society). In fact, research publication is possible. In addition, the faculty can serve as a potential source of networking and a source of information about working in various settings (e.g., mental health clinics, government consultation, working in the private sector). The more faculty members that you get to know, the more opportunities to which you will be exposed. Below is a list of our present faculty and some of their interest areas:

| Faculty Member | Interest Area(s) |
|--------------------------|--|
| Fred Agatstein | Social psychological aspects of self; Social power and cognitive processes |
| Barbara Anderson | Standardized testing; Personnel testing |
| Emily Cook | Adolescent Social Development; Adolescent risk behavior; Prevention and Intervention research; Research Methods |
| Andrea Dottolo | Feminist Psychology; Social Identities; Qualitative Research |
| Beverly Goldfield | Language development; Parent-child interaction; Early cognitive development |
| Randi Kim | Counseling Psychology; Problem/risky behaviors; Cross-ethnic/racial issues; Career development |
| Katherine Lacasse | Environmental and Political Psychology, Emotions, Attitude change |
| George Ladd | Developmental psychopathology; Gambling disorders; Addictive behavior |
| Marta Laupa | Social and cognitive development; Mathematical reasoning |
| Beth Lewis | Adolescent development; Adolescent and family psychotherapy; Object relations; Substance abuse |
| Tom Malloy | Interpersonal perception |
| Christine Marco | Health psychology; Behavioral Medicine; Occupational health, Research methods |
| Robin Montvilo | Child development; Premature birth issues; Aging issues |
| Megan Smith | Cognitive psychology; human learning and memory; applying cognitive psychology to improve learning in educational settings. |
| Jayson Spas | Behavioral health risk factor research and intervention with medical, underserved and ethnically diverse populations. |
| David Sugarman | Family violence; Social cognition; Social psychology of the law; Psychology of religion |
| Steven Threlkeld | Neurodevelopmental disorders; Forebrain Neuroanatomy; Auditory processing & learning |
| Richard Tropper | Statistics; Artificial Intelligence; Computer Applications |

After Graduation

What do you do with a Psychology major? This is a simple question that does not have a single, definitive answer. There are two general goals discussed in this section: (1) getting into graduate school and (2) getting a general entry-level job that may or may not be related directly to the discipline of Psychology. Though these goals are discussed separately, they are not mutually exclusive. You need to realize that it is quite possible to move toward accomplishing both of these goals.

Graduate School. If you intend to go to graduate school in Psychology or related disciplines (e.g., Counseling, Educational Psychology, Social Work), you need to consider a number of factors while you are still an undergraduate student. First of all, the courses that you take as an undergraduate may influence your chances of getting into your desired graduate program. Students are strongly encouraged to take more than the minimum requirements for a Psychology major. Rather than limiting your course work to a single required distribution course in each of the developmental, experimental, and personality and social areas, you should take a number of courses in each of these areas. Also, a Psychology major who is intent on graduate school is well served by courses in Biology, Computer Science, Mathematics, Philosophy, and Sociology. Of course, the opportunity to take electives in these areas is easiest for Psychology majors who have not declared any other major or minor. These programs obviously place additional course requirements that will reduce the number of elective credits available to you. Still, at times you may be wise to double major or have a minor in another discipline if it furthers your chances of gaining graduate school admission. For example, if a student wishes to get into a doctoral program in comparative psychology, earning a minor in Biology or double majoring in biology would be a smart strategy.

Second, both your understanding and experience of Psychology (and your graduate school application) are enhanced by a variety of activities in which you can engage as an undergraduate. Research skills are important to Psychology graduate programs and those in related fields. Thus, in addition to the course work required for your major, you can become involved in research. There are a number of routes for such involvement. You can propose an independent study (Psychology 390) to be conducted under the supervision of a Rhode Island College faculty member. Application forms for an independent study are available in the Psychology department office. The application deadline for a Fall semester independent study is April 15 of the previous academic year and for a Spring semester independent study is November 15 of the current academic year. This means that you have to plan ahead to take advantage of this opportunity. Additionally, you can gain research experience by serving as a research assistant either to Rhode Island College faculty members who have ongoing research projects or to psychologists at many of the hospitals. Many of these latter individuals hold faculty appointments at the Brown University Medical School. You can also get involved in research in the private sector, such as with companies and businesses that do survey research, public opinion polling, public relations, career counseling, and job placement.

Third, when you are planning to apply to graduate school, you need to know what graduate programs are available. For graduate programs in Psychology, the American Psychological Association publishes a book, *Graduate Study in Psychology*. A copy of this book is available in the Psychology department chairperson's office and lists graduate programs offered in Psychology and in related disciplines (e.g., Counseling, Education). This book is an essential tool and will give potential applicants a range of important information about each program (e.g., minimum GPA, minimum GRE scores, program philosophy, availability of financial assistance, etc.). Furthermore, a paper entitled *Applying to Graduate Programs in Psychology* is available in the Psychology department. This document, written by David Sugarman, provides a clear and concise description of the graduate school application process. If you are thinking of applying to graduate school in programs related to Psychology such as Counseling, Social Work, and Education, you are advised to check with the Counseling and Educational Psychology, Social Work, Elementary Education, or Special Education departments at Rhode Island College for information about graduate programs in these fields. The Career Development Center can also be helpful with respect to graduate programs.

Fourth, you need to recognize that the graduate school application process is not something that can be accomplished overnight. It involves much more than simply filling out a single form and mailing it along with a check to some graduate admission office. This process requires that you do considerable soul-searching regarding what you wish to accomplish, and to take the time and effort to create an application packet that will outshine the many other applicants who are competing for a limited number of graduate student slots.

Getting a Job. Perhaps one of the questions most asked by students is “So what can I do with a Bachelors degree in Psychology?” The answer is much more optimistic than you may think. Psychology majors can be prepared to gain entry-level positions in a wide range of fields. These can include human services work (e.g., casework, child care, geriatric care, health services, personnel, probation/parole work, and psychiatric assisting), scientific work (e.g., research or laboratory assisting, technical writing) and other private and public sector jobs (e.g., administration/management, marketing, public relations, sales).

The real issue that students face surrounds selecting the specific type of employment that they wish to obtain. The problem that many advisors encounter is that often a student will express a vague goal such as “I want to work with children but not in a school setting.” Students need to gain a clearer picture of the type of career that they want. This process can be facilitated by the advisor who may know of career options that approximate the student’s poorly defined goals; however, the advisor is only one source of information. Additionally, you need to assume responsibility and check with local libraries for books on job hunting and different career opportunities; you also are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the College’s Career Development Center.

One overlooked job search strategy is seeking out individuals who are presently engaged in the career in which you have interest, and talking to these individuals. You can start with the name of a professional who may be a friend of a parent or another friend. You contact this individual, requesting permission to set up a short period of time when the two of them could chat about being in this specific career. At the meeting, you clearly need to be prepared with a series of questions about the individual’s career. Some examples of questions that you may ask are:

What are the typical daily activities that you perform in this position?

How did you get to be in this career position, such as the required educational or professional experiences?

What do you see as the future direction of this career in terms of competition for these positions?

Has or will the requirements for attaining this position change? For example, will a new state legislature create new requirements or lessen them?

Are there any other individuals in this career position to whom I may want to talk and may I use your name as a means of introduction?

This strategy permits two things. First, students gain a clearer picture of the duties of a specific job and how to attain that position. Second, students begin to network so when it does become time to search for a job they will know not only what to present but also to whom they are presenting their resume. Overall, this planning permits students to ascertain whether a job is suitable to them and the specific educational experiences that are required for this career.

Once the goal has been set, then course selection can become easier. For example, a Psychology major who wishes to work in the criminal justice system (e.g., police officer, corrections officer, etc.) may be wise also to major (or, at least, minor) in Justice Studies. A student interested in marketing research may be well advised to take courses in business and communications. Even specific courses within the Psychology major may be more advisable given the student’s specific career goals. Someone interested in working in nursing homes may find Psychology of Aging (Psych. 339) and Health Psychology (Psych. 359) highly relevant.