



COLLEGE OF SCIENCE  
**PSYCHOLOGY**  
VIRGINIA TECH™

## NOVEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER Undergraduate Research and Centers

Hello Psychology Majors,

We hope you enjoyed your Thanksgiving Break! We are dedicating this monthly newsletter towards breaking down the importance of getting involved with undergraduate research and centers and the process for connecting with a faculty member to gain this experience. We have surveyed Psychology professors and undergraduate students who currently are involved with the Psychology labs and centers. They provided great insight for how you can reach out, apply, and gain the best experience.



We also highlight the Office of Undergraduate Research and encourage you to look even outside of the Psychology department for undergraduate research and experiential learning opportunities. We are here if you think of any questions and encourage you to reach out.

We hope you enjoy the last few weeks of this semester!

*Taylor Swan, Christina Minford,  
Courtney Glass, & Dr. Kurt Hoffman*



## Why is getting involved in research important?

- Opportunity to build a stronger relationship with a Psychology professor - could lead to a strong letter of recommendation later.
- Opportunity to network with other students, grad students, faculty members and community members related to this topic.
- Learning more about what you are interested in and enjoy related to careers in Psychology or another field.
- Learn skills that will be transferrable to any field/career you decide on
- More information on why research is important is [here](#).

## Psychology Labs and Centers

- The PSYC Department has many opportunities to get involved.
- You can find all of the Psychology Research Labs [here](#).
  - Some research can be done for course credit. Ask your advisor for more information.
- If you are interested in getting involved, please look at the descriptions of the labs and centers for what would be interesting to you. Then email the appropriate faculty member of that lab or center to ask if they have any open slots for this Spring 2024, Summer 2024 or Fall 2024.
- Who can do research? (Hint: YOU!) More information [here](#).



## Four Areas of Psychology

In the Psychology Department, we have faculty doing research in four broad and overlapping research areas.

- **Cognitive Neuroscience & Biopsychology**: The future of neuroscientific and biological research in psychology: behavioral neuroscience, psychophysiology, and neuropsychology.
- **Clinical Psychology**: Integration of science and practice to enhance mental and physical health, well-being, and healthy decisions
- **Industrial & Organizational Psychology**: Uses psychological perspectives to develop and evaluate theories of work-related behaviors and organizational processes.
- **Developmental Psychology**: Study aspects of human functioning that change across of multitude of ages, speech and language perception, communication, learning, memory, emotion, etc.

## Specifics of Getting Involved

### **When?**

- Most faculty accept students in both Fall and Spring semesters. There are typically no restrictions on academic year, but a preference for freshman-juniors. Faculty look to fill labs for the subsequent semester in the last 2 months of the previous semester. Labs/Centers require varying levels of commitment, including one semester, a year, or even three semesters. Faculty recommend getting involved as early as possible!

### **How?**

- Faculty typically require submission of an application, resume/CV and an interview. Some applications are listed online, but some faculty will need to be contacted via email.



## Specifics of Getting Involved Continued

### **What are faculty looking for?**

- General interest in getting involved and willingness to learn
- Some faculty may consider GPA
- Evidence of responsibility, time management and communication skills

### **What characteristics make a successful RA (From Students!)**

- Open mindedness
- Passion to excel in research
- Willing to take on a challenge
- Responsibility

## Lab/Center Student Activities and Experiences

Being a part of a lab, you may have the opportunity to do the following tasks:

- Assist in data collection, data preparation and statistical analysis
- Engage in extensive reading (e.g. literature review) that results in written submission and contribute to a manuscript for publication.
- Give formal presentation(s) to your lab/center research group and giving presentations at a research meeting or conference
- Assist in study recruitment, participant screening, participant observation
- Conduct phone screenings, learn clinical skills, learn about different career opportunities within Psychology
- Work with complex experimental laboratory equipment
- Brainstorm or troubleshoot experiment design



## Tips for Students from Faculty and Students

### Faculty Advice:

- Get involved sooner than later! Doing is the best way to learn--both learning how to do things and what you enjoy doing.
- Be willing to explore labs, topics, and volunteer experiences that sound intimidating/scary; you never know where your perfect fit is until you're exposed to it.
- Working in research as well as human service jobs (e.g., camp counselor, crisis hotline) can help you determine what you might want to do, and learning what you don't like is just as important as learning what you are interested in.

### Student Advice:

- Explore multiple labs and look for one or two that align with your interests. Remember that you don't have to be an expert in research to join a lab, just demonstrate your passion for the subject and your willingness to learn. The sooner you join, the more you will learn, and the greater the likelihood that you will be able to work your way up within the lab.
- Always be open to new opportunities and experiences because it might help you figure out what you would like to do in the future. Also, being around others who are interested in the same topics as you is so helpful because you can stem ideas from each other. A bonus is you can make great friends, and form a network.
- We have so much fascinating research going on in the psychology department that sometimes it can feel very overwhelming. You just have to ask yourself what your interests are (and it's okay if you're still figuring them out!) and find a research team that you really connect with. After that, if you put in the time and effort, you will surprise yourself with how far you can go!

## Office of Undergraduate Research

Did you know VT has an [Office of Undergraduate Research](#)? OUR is available for all of your research needs: Finding opportunities, preparing you for research, and offering scholarships for research.