

# CABS Handbook

## Fall 2024

Thank you for your interest in the Center for Applied Behavior Systems (CABS). In the following pages you will find everything you need to know about CABS in order to decide if being involved in CABS is a commitment you are willing and able to make. This Handbook provides information regarding what CABS does, the projects on which we are currently working, what is expected of you if you join CABS, and what you can gain from your involvement in CABS. *Please thoroughly review the information provided*, as it will answer many of the questions you may have concerning CABS. Furthermore, some important aspects of CABS are explained here that, should you join, you will be responsible for knowing.

Following the information section of this application, a brief section asks for some general information about you and your expectations for CABS. This section will allow us to ensure that you are a good match for CABS and vice versa. **All new and returning students should fill out an application form.**

### Mission Statement

The Center for Applied Behavior Systems (CABS) was developed to:

- a) Help undergraduate and graduate students learn how to conduct research that combines the technology of applied behavior analysis with theories from positive, social, and humanistic psychology,
- b) Give students real-world, hands-on research experience, from designing methodology and data-analysis strategies to documenting findings for professional publications,
- c) Teach community-based and organizational research and intervention techniques,
- d) Give students the opportunity to participate in leading-edge professional activities,
- e) Improve human welfare and quality of life on a large scale, and
- f) Teach, demonstrate, and disseminate the Actively Caring for People (AC4P) principles.

### Project Descriptions

<i>Projects</i>	<i>Description</i>
● <b>Pedestrian Gratitude</b>	The aim of this project is to increase communication and safety between pedestrians and drivers.
● <b>Bagless Blacksburg</b>	The aim of this project is to reduce the number of plastic bags used in grocery stores in Blacksburg. This project will make a very small, but very important impact on the world.
● <b>Gratitude in the Community</b>	The aim of this project is to take the Pedestrian Gratitude project one step further, looking at gratitude expressions across the Virginia Tech community. Examples include holding the door for others and saying thank you to the bus driver when getting off the bus.

- **Thank You Professor** We are also conducting research on the ability of Thank You cards to increase intrapersonal gratitude within the Virginia Tech community. This study measures the impact of expressing gratitude on mood by assessing the mood states of students who give their professors a custom thank you card.

### **Training and Orientation**

For each research project, students receive relevant training for appropriate data collection, data entry, and data analysis. Training sessions (for data collection and entry) occur near the beginning of each semester by project leaders and periodically throughout the semester as needed. All new and returning students must attend these special training meetings.

In addition to regular training sessions provided for research teams, CABS hosts weekly group meetings for more in-depth instruction regarding the operating procedures and facilities of CABS. Additional topics are covered at these sessions, often with guest discussion leaders.

### **Educational Core**

The Educational Core of CABS provides undergraduates with opportunities to learn more about the theories, models, and research methods commonly used in applied psychological science. It also ensures that the research students become experientially involved in all aspects of an effective research process. Completion of the Educational Core involves several components:

- Attend a weekly CABS meeting: Tuesday, 5:00- 6:30 pm, Williams Hall Room 220.
- A minimum of 40 hours (for 2 credits) or 55 hours (for 3 credits) of data collection.
- A minimum of 6 hours (for 2 credits) or 9 hours (for 3 credits) of data entry and verification.
- Creation of a Curriculum Vita.
- Attend training or brainstorming meetings for particular research projects.
- Research in Human Subjects Certification

### **Grading Criteria**

You will be required to work **three hours per week for every one credit hour** for which you are signed up. Students registered for two credit hours must work **6 hours a week for 14 weeks, totaling 84 hours per semester**. Forms are provided to keep track of your hours, and it is strongly suggested that you keep track of your own hours. Hour forms must be filled out, initialed by the proper project leader, and returned to the Coordinator at the Tuesday night meeting. Hours not returned by Wednesday at 12:00 P.M. **will not be counted**.

Although this seems like a lot of work, there are many ways to earn hours in CABS, and in order for CABS to run smoothly, you need to submit your hours at a reasonable time. Hours can be earned by:

- Collecting data and completing required summary and reliability sheets.
- Entering, verifying, and updating computer databases.
- Attending meetings.
- Reading articles and completing literature searches for independent study projects.

- Completing special assignments.
- Attending conference workshops, symposia, and presentations.
- Doing administrative activities to help the Coordinator and/or Project Leaders.

CABS also requires that each undergraduate student enrolled for university credit complete a **Curriculum Vita** (an academic résumé listing research experience for graduate school applications). You will receive training for this at one of the weekly meetings.

All students working for academic credit are expected to complete their required hours before Reading Day at the end of the semester. Failure to do so will result in a grade of “F”. CABS is not a “walk-in-the-park,” it is a reputable research Center producing quality research with your effective participation.

The fact that a student has completed the requirements listed here does not ensure the student will be invited to reapply to CABS in a following semester. The decision of whether a student will be invited to reapply is based on several criteria, including:

- Feedback from CABS leaders.
- Meeting attendance.
- Completion of the 40 hours (for 2 credits) or 55 hours (for 3 credits) of data collection.
- Completion of the 6 hours (for 2 credits) or 9 hours (for 3 credits) of data entry/verification.
- Completion of the total 84 hours (for 2 credits) or 126 hours (for 3 credits).
- Creation and submission of a Curriculum Vita.

## **General Expectations of CABS**

Every Tuesday night we have a general CABS meeting. This is where we review and discuss the current status and activities of our projects, debrief students on how to improve the data-collection procedures, and give formal presentations on a wide range of issues, including:

- Presentations about ongoing projects
- Basic research design
- Applications and expectations in graduate school
- How to create a curriculum vita

Following each presentation, an interactive discussion will take place where you may ask questions or make comments. These sessions often result in improvements to CABS as well as offer a way to facilitate a better understanding of CABS and the issues discussed.

**Tuesday night meetings are mandatory;** they are a key educational component of CABS and by not attending, you are depriving yourself of a valuable educational/training experience. In addition, your first opportunity to sign up for data collection will be at the Tuesday night meetings. You will also be able to turn in your weekly hourly log sheet for the previous week.

All students are expected to abide by the rules outlined in the “University Honor Code.”

All persons working in CABS are expected to perform their assigned tasks to the best of their ability.

CABS is a research center and will not “hold your hand” through our research projects. You are expected to understand the protocol and complete all data sheets in a timely fashion.

The primary mission of CABS is to conduct quality research. Therefore, the accurate and reliable collection of data is our highest priority. *Protocols related to the collection and handling of data are to be followed at all times, without exception.* Without permission of the project

supervisor, raw data sheets cannot leave the Center once the data have been collected and the data sheets have been filed in the Center. In addition, persons working in the Center are expected to return the data sheets and complete the appropriate data logs **within 24 hours** from the time the data are collected.

In order to ensure accurate data collection procedures, the project leader of the respective project will review your data sheet when you hand it in, and go over any errors or problems you may have had. Common or grievous mistakes will be discussed at the Tuesday night meeting to ensure proper data collection techniques.

Persons scheduled to collect data are responsible for their specific data-collection session. If someone cannot collect data during their scheduled times they (not the Center) are responsible for finding a substitute, and notifying the project supervisor or the Center Coordinator of the change (phone and email lists will be provided). **Missed data collection sessions will result in the deduction of the equivalent hours that would have been earned. Some data-collection hours will only be available on nights/weekends.** Please circle your student ID Number on your application to confirm that you read this entire document.

In order to complete the 6 hours of data entry/verification required, you simply come to the CABS office and ask the Center Coordinator if any data entry or verification opportunities are available. Upon your request (and if any data are available to enter or verify), the coordinator will set you up with the data to enter or verify.

## Feedback

The leaders in CABS are firm believers that improvement is impossible without feedback. Thus, leaders may periodically provide research students with feedback via a “coaching form for corrective feedback.” These forms are not meant to degrade or criticize, only to provide direction for improvement. You will also have the opportunity to respond to the feedback on the coaching form.

Similarly, if you have suggestions or feedback for CABS or its leaders, we ask that you please let us know. You can provide us with feedback verbally, via email, or anonymously in the feedback box located in CABS.

## Strengths and Limitations of CABS

**Strengths:** Many students in the past have indicated that CABS is a best way to obtain experiential learning in applied psychological science. CABS is an invaluable addition to a student’s vita and looks impressive on application forms for graduate school. Depending on the level of your involvement in CABS, there will be several opportunities to author or coauthor a paper or poster presentation given at one of the many professional conferences. In addition to being a coauthor, you may be the presenter at these conferences as well. Being a coauthor of a presentation at a professional conference is a best way to bolster one’s vita and gain valuable presentation experience. For many students, their experience in CABS was critical for their acceptance into a competitive PhD program.

In addition to the more obvious advantages mentioned above, being involved in CABS allows you to gain invaluable knowledge and expertise about theories and procedures used in applied psychological science research that have broad applications across many disciplines.

Students often use their experiential learning in CABS to develop and implement their own project ideas in other fields and academic domains.

**Weaknesses:** It is easy to get lost in the crowd in CABS. We are a large research Center with many projects and many students (sometimes 50 or more). Students in the past have expressed concern over the lack of individual attention. Our primary goal is to produce and disseminate quality research. Because of this, there is little time for everyone to develop a personal relationship with all members of CABS.

That is not to say it is not possible to benefit from such relationships, but you need to make the effort to cultivate these productive relationships. This is possible by: 1) coming into CABS often to discuss/work on projects; 2) being intimately involved in one or more of the ongoing research projects; and 3) being “research assertive,” which involves going above and beyond what is asked of you (i.e., volunteering for data collection spots that need to be filled, even if you have all your hours, etc.). The Center Coordinator(s) will always make time to address any concerns or issues you may have, so do not hesitate to speak with these research leaders.

Another consideration that students have brought to our attention in the past is that CABS may appear disorganized at times. This is usually due to the dynamic nature of the projects in which we are involved. Data collection opportunities may be canceled because of reasons beyond our control. We ask you to bear with us as we “roll with the punches.” We do our best to provide you with the opportunities necessary to achieve an optimal research experience, your vita listings for graduate-school applications, a strong letter of recommendation, and the grade you want.

**Please note that Dr. Geller will no longer write letters of recommendation for Cabbies until they have been a research student in CABS for at least one semester.**

**CABS office hours:** Monday- Friday 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
Williams 202  
540-231-8145

Please contact Anastasia Semenova ([ana21@vt.edu](mailto:ana21@vt.edu)) or Ivan Savelyev ([ivansavelyev@vt.edu](mailto:ivansavelyev@vt.edu)) with any further questions.

## Application

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain where you found out about CABS:

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Please explain what you hope to gain from experiencing research in CABS:

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What skills and/or abilities could you contribute to CABS?

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What does the phrase “Actively Caring For People” mean to you?

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What are your plans after graduating from VT?



- Submitting a Curriculum Vita

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

***PLEASE ATTACH YOUR CLASS SCHEDULE FROM HOKIE SPA!***

DEADLINE TO HAND IN APPLICATIONS IS **MONDAY AUGUST 26TH BY 5:00 PM.** WE WILL REVIEW APPLICATIONS THAT DAY AND NOTIFY YOU BEFORE MONDAY.