



WHAT CAN I DO WITH A MAJOR IN ...

PSYCHOLOGY

OCCUPATIONAL OVERVIEW:

Psychology, the study of human mind, behavior, and cognitive processes, is an exceedingly broad degree that can lead to job opportunities in many diverse fields. Most students who study psychology fall into one of two groups: the first group represents students who may choose to pursue the field out of sheer enjoyment of the subject, but may not necessarily pursue a professional psychology position, in which graduation education is usually required. In this scenario, it is critical for students to gain related experience in the intended occupation through internships, part-time employment, or volunteering. This group of students may also choose to pursue graduate or professional school in an unrelated area (e.g., law school), in which psychology provides an excellent broad, liberal arts background.

The second group of students may major in psychology because they want to work in a professional psychology position (e.g., therapist, social worker, psychiatrist, psychological researcher). Many entry-level “helping positions” are available; however, the amount of direct client contact is limited for those who have a bachelor’s degree. Students who wish to pursue an occupation with extensive client contact will probably need to pursue graduate education (master’s or doctoral degree) in psychology, social work, counseling, college student personnel, or other related fields to increase opportunities and earning potential.

Go to <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos056.htm> for a complete listing of different types of counselors and psychologists.

Most employers, regardless of industry, seek communication, interpersonal, leadership, teamwork, and computer skills, and all psychology students are encouraged to develop these skills, regardless of occupational intent.

EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS:

A bachelor’s degree is the minimum formal education required. However, many occupations and employers also require graduate school. For example, they may require a master’s degree, and some require a Ph.D., M.D., or J.D. (law degree). Student wishing to pursue graduate education should focus on maintaining a high grade point average, securing strong faculty recommendations, and gaining research or applied experience through internships, volunteer, and work opportunities. Psychology graduate programs, particularly clinical psychology, are generally very competitive.

EMPLOYERS/INDUSTRIES & SUGGESTED STRATEGY:

Please ask your Career Advisor (CDF) for identifying employers or additional resources for your occupation of choice.

Human Services: Counseling – Case Management – Mental Health Services – Advocacy – Programming – Community Relations – Administration – Federal, state, local governmental agencies – Senior citizen’ centers – United Way agencies – Nonprofit organizations – Religiously-affiliated service organizations - Hospitals

Suggested Strategy: Obtain related experience in any type of “helping” role (see below for ideas), as many entry-level positions in the helping professions require one year of related experience, which can typically be fulfilled through volunteer, internship, or part-time work. Gain proficiency in a second language; Spanish is particularly useful. Obtain a graduate degree in psychology, counseling, or social work for high-level client contact or advancement into administrative work. Develop strong “transferable skills,” such as communication skills and an ability to work with and help different types of people.

Research: Federal government (Department of Health and Human Service, National Institute of Education, National Institute of Mental Health) – National headquarters of nonprofit organizations – Universities and colleges

Suggested Strategy: Assist a professor in conducting research, develop strong quantitative and statistical skills/computer programs (e.g., SPSS), obtain a graduate degree for greater opportunities.

Public Relations: Research – Programming – Writing/editing – Event planning – Media placement – Public speaking - Fundraising

Suggested Strategy: Obtain related experience, such as through serving as an admissions tour guide, working in alumni relations, or other PR-related functions on campus or in the community. Volunteer as a fundraiser or political canvasser. Join the campus chapter of Public Relations Society of American (PRSA). Gain internship experience. Develop strong writing and speaking skills.

Advertising: Creative – Media – Account Services – Research – Advertising agencies – Companies with in-house advertising

Suggested Strategy: Obtain relevant experience with the campus newspaper, TV, or radio station. Obtain an internship, even if unpaid, with a market research or advertising firm. Develop a portfolio of your work. Consider a business or communications/journalism minor or double major for account services positions.

Market Research: Market research firms – Market research departments of consumer goods and manufacturing firms

Suggested Strategy: Develop a strong background in math and statistics. Get involved in the American Marketing Association (UNM's chapter is through the Business School). Obtain related experience with a market research firm, or in business research. Serve as a canvasser or phone interviewer for a nonprofit organization or political campaign. Earn a graduate degree in statistics or marketing for the greatest number of opportunities.

Teaching: Public and private schools – Colleges and universities

Suggested Strategy: Obtain teaching certificate for public school positions (seek guidance from the College of Education). Volunteer as a tutor. Gain experience working with school-age children, preferably in an educational setting. A Ph.D. is required for university-level teaching (a master's degree may suffice for two-year colleges).

Retailing: Management – Department stores – Specialty stores – Discount stores – Super retailers

Suggested Strategy: Secure leadership positions. Work part-time in a retail store. Be willing to start in a management-trainee program. Consider taking marketing, merchandising, or other courses that focus on consumer behavior.

Sales: Retailers – Service providers – Wholesalers – Manufacturers – Insurance companies – Real estate companies

Suggested Strategy: Obtain relevant experience through internships or sales positions. Take business courses. Seek leadership roles. Must work well under pressure and be comfortable in a competitive environment.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Below is a list of professional organizations that represent psychology, counseling, social work, and college student personnel work. These organizations often provide a wealth of career information for students who are pursuing employment or graduate study in their areas.

American Psychological Association:

American Counseling Association:

National Association of Social Workers:

American School Counselors Association:

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs

National Board for Certified Counselors

Council on Social Work Education

Association of Social Work Boards

National Association of School Psychologists

American Board of Professional Psychology

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

American College Personnel Association

www.apa.org

www.counseling.org

www.socialworkers.org

www.schoolcounselor.org

www.cacrep.org

www.nbcc.org

www.cswe.org

www.aswb.org

www.nasponline.org

www.abpp.org

www.naspa.org

www.acpa.nche.edu

EMPLOYERS OF PSYCHOLOGY GRADUATES

Psychology graduates can be found in nearly every industry, occupation, and organization! However, if you wish to pursue a psychology-related occupation, here is a brief list of typical employers of psychology graduates:

Department of Health and Human Services

Department of Justice (probation, parole)

Veterans Administration

Children, Youth, and Families Department (New Mexico)

Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation

(community mental health centers, state psychiatric

hospitals, facilities for the mentally impaired)

Senior citizens' centers

United Way agencies (go to www.uwcnm.org for the United Way of Central New Mexico)

Nonprofit organizations

Religiously-affiliated service organizations

Hospitals

National Institute of Education

National Institute of Mental Health

Universities and colleges

IDEAS FOR VOLUNTEER AND INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Because most entry-level positions in psychology require one year of related experience in a helping role, which can usually be fulfilled through volunteer or internships, here is a list of organizations to begin your search:

United Way of Central New Mexico

Agora Crisis Center

Youth Development Incorporated (on United Way website)

Youth Diagnostic and Development Center

PB & J Incorporated (on United Way website)

Hogares, Incorporated (on United Way website)

Undergraduate Research Internships (national database through APA) www.apa.org/science/undergradopps.html

www.uwcnm.org

www.unm.edu/~agora/

(505) 831-6038

(505) 841-2400

(505) 877-7060

(505) 345-8471

OTHER INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES:



<http://online.onetcenter.org>



<http://www.bls.gov/oco/>