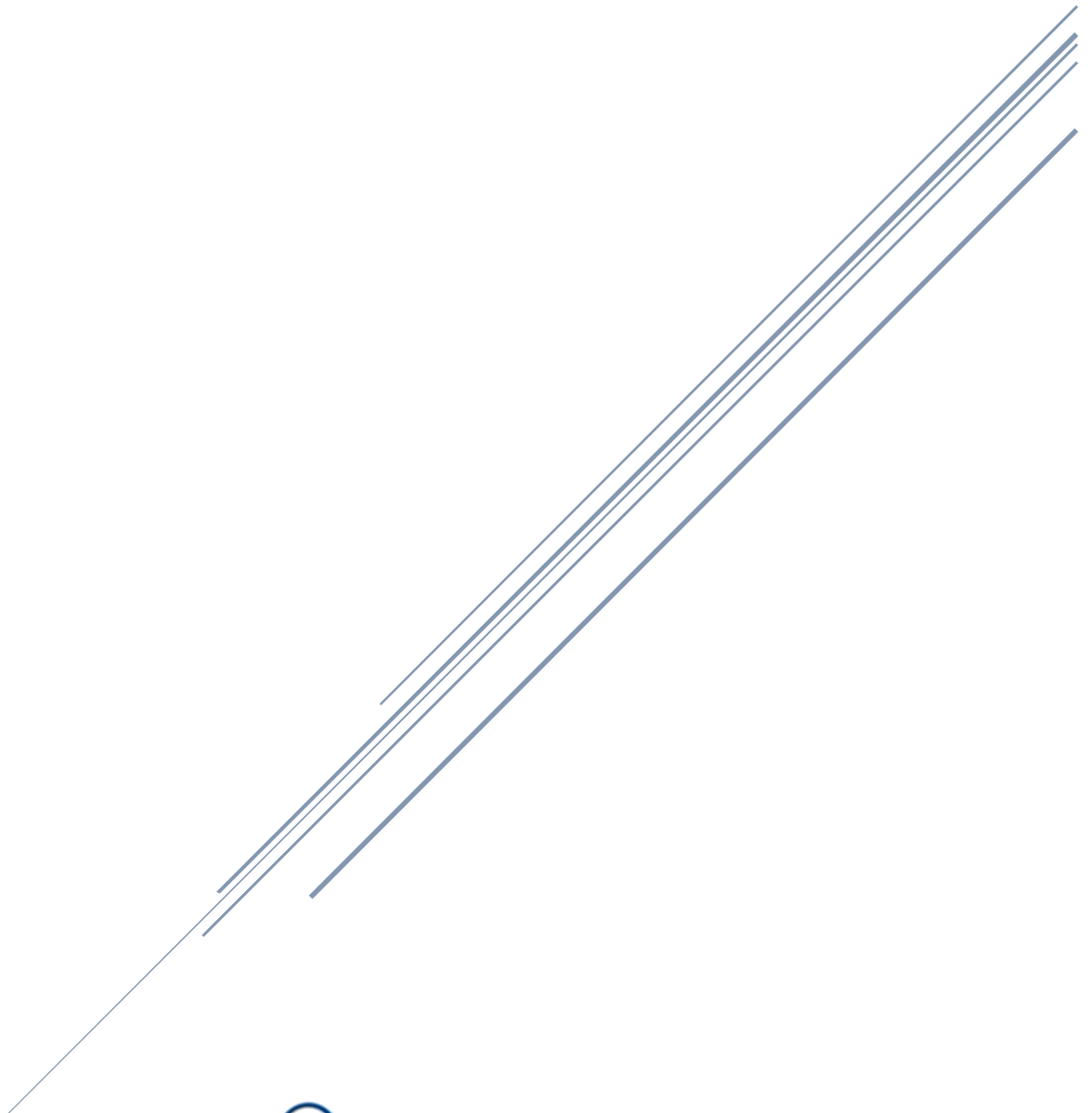


INFORMATION AND RESOURCES RELATED TO GRADUATE
STUDY IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY
DIVERSITY OUTREACH WORKSHOP



INFORMATION AND RESOURCES RELATED TO GRADUATE STUDY IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Diversity and Inclusion

The Virginia Consortium Program values diversity and inclusion. Toward that end we strive to educate a diverse group of students to become culturally competent clinicians and researchers. Diversity in the field of clinical psychology can be thought of in terms of (but not limited to) racial/ethnic diversity, sexual and gender (SGM) diversity, differential abilities, first generation and non-traditional college attendees. The goal of this Resource Manual is to provide useful information as you think about how to navigate consideration of, preparation for, and application to clinical psychology graduate training programs. Below we discuss some, but not all, types of diversity.

Racial Diversity

Of the approximate 25,000 doctoral students in the United States, roughly two thirds of the population are non-Hispanic White.

Approximately, 78% of psychology faculty population are non-Hispanic White. Without diverse faculty, students may be less likely to see graduate school as a realistic option for them

When compared to non-Hispanic White college students, students of color:

- Perceived more academic barriers
- Believed that these barriers were related to their racial background.
- Believed stereotypes of their racial groups are prevalent in the field.

As a result of these racial disparities, the American Psychological Association (APA) recognized that it is imperative that the psychology community become more reflective of the larger community and recruit a more diverse student body.

For clinical psychology, we need a diverse population of therapists because clients tend to seek out therapists who are like them. A lack of minority psychologists may serve as a barrier to treatment for many individuals.

Diversity among psychologists will also help in providing diverse perspectives on how we conduct research and learn about different populations and perspectives that will lead to stronger society for all.

Sexual and Gender Minority Diversity

Sexual and gender minority (SGM) advocacy and training is also a primary initiative of the psychology community.

- SGM college students experience concerns related to rejection, harassment, discrimination, disclosure.
- Research suggests that SGM (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) youth and adults are at increased risk for self-harm, substance problems, and mental health concerns.
- According to the American Psychological Association's (APA) Office on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, their mission is "... to advance the creation, communication, and application of psychological knowledge on gender identity and sexual orientation to benefit society and improve lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people's lives."

Nontraditional Students Diversity

Nontraditional students (e.g., students older than 24, working students, students with families) also make up an integral part of the college community. They have unique perspectives that can add to the diversity of the profession.

Differential Ability Diversity

Differently-abled individuals are dramatically underrepresented in graduate psychology programs and careers. Of the few that enter graduate training programs in the first place, many experience frustration that may lead to the higher-than-average drop-out rates for differently-abled students. Although many people may think only of mobility impairments such as requiring a wheelchair or sensory impairments such as blindness and deafness, there are many other categories of differently-abled people, including so-called "invisible disabilities" such as chronic pain, Crohn's disease, and developmental disorders.

WHAT ARE FIELDS IN PSYCHOLOGY FOR GRADUATE STUDY?

There are ample career paths to choose from when considering a particular field of psychology to get involved in. Some of these fields include:

Behavioral Neuroscience – A Ph.D. in Behavioral Neuroscience prepares students to enter the field as an experimental neuropsychologist or a behavioral neuroscientist, either in academia or the industry. This is a more hands-on or basic science approach to examining how the brain affects behavior.

Clinical Psychology – Clinical psychologists focus on the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental, behavioral, and emotional issues. They work with clients that have short-term problems as well as those with severe and debilitating mental health disorders.

Counseling Psychology – As opposed to clinical psychologists, counseling psychologists tend to work with patients without severe mental illness, although they may still work with some common mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety. Counseling psychologists also tend to practice in specialized areas of interest rather than in general practice.

Developmental Psychology – Developmental psychologists study the changes that occur during the human life cycle and the processes that influence behavioral, cognitive, social, and emotional development. This research can then be applied through policy making or in educational, clinical, or social settings.

Human Factors – Human Factors psychology utilizes research on human psychology to help humans better co-exist and interact with machines and technology. Programs in Human Factors offer degrees at the master's and doctorate level.

Industrial/Organizational Psychology – I/O psychologists study human behavior in the work environment to maximize probability and effectiveness. These psychologists often work with Human Resources departments of major companies to help assess potential employees.



For more information on these and other fields of psychology, visit

<https://www.psychologydegree411.com/careers/>

Clinical Psychology and Related Fields

When one desires to incorporate a therapeutic/counseling element to his/her psychological career, there are several degree options to consider.

The three most pertinent degrees are the Ph.D., Psy.D., and Master's Degree. Here are a few links describing the key differences in types of psychology graduate programs:

[Choosing Between a Ph.D. and Psy.D. Clinical Program](#)

[Master Degree program](#) (MA vs. MS vs. MSW)

If you would like more information on clinical and counseling psychology programs, we recommend that you purchase/rent/borrow a copy of the [Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology](#), by John C. Norcross and Michael A. Sayette.

For doctoral programs in clinical psychology, it is essential that you know whether the program you desire to attend is APA accredited or not. Programs that are APA accredited hold several advantages, some of which are listed below:

- APA accreditation ensures a quality education
- Increased career options
- Increased internship option (many sites only accept applications from APA accredited programs)
- State licensure may be easier or require an APA accredited education (e.g., Florida)

There are some clinical (doctoral) programs there that are **for-profit professional schools**. These programs may not be university-based, and **may** have the following characteristics:

- Larger incoming classes (40+ people for Ph.D. programs and sometimes as many as 80 or 90 for Psy.D. programs versus typically 4 to 12 for nonprofit schools)
- Higher tuition (\$40,000+ a year)
- Limited funding support
- Limited practicum opportunities

Be sure to do your research if you are interested in a for-profit professional school to ensure that the program will help you achieve your goals.

FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISADVANTAGED/MINORITY APPLICANTS

Funding can be broadly divided into two categories: general and program-specific.

General Funding Opportunities

TRiO programs: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html>

- Higher Education Act of 1965 spurred TRiO's existence.
- TRiO: Not an acronym. It just originally referred to the number of United States federal programs dedicated to increasing access to higher education for students who are economically disadvantaged.
- Implemented, administered, and funded by the United States Department of Education.

Two of the eight TRiO programs are available to help potential graduate students from disadvantaged populations, including low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities.

- Student Support Services
- Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program



Here is a set of links to sources detailing various funding opportunities including fellowships, grants, scholarships, etc.

<https://mcnairscholars.com/funding/> (McNair)

<http://www.collegescholarships.org/grants/graduate.htm> (General graduate school grants)

<http://oedb.org/african-american-grant/> (African American higher education grants)

<http://www.greatcollegedeals.net/scholarships/20-great-phd-scholarships-and-doctoral-grants-for-minorities/> (20 PhD grants for minorities)

Program-Specific Opportunities

Many programs, but not all, offer financial packages to admitted students that include assistantships. There are teaching assistantships and research assistantships that require service in exchange for a stipend and fellowships that typically do not require work in exchanges for the financial support. Some assistantships come with partial or full tuition assistance. The financial package should be discussed and presented in writing at the time of admission.

SHOULD I APPLY TO GRADUATE SCHOOL?

Good reasons to apply to graduate school:

Professional development/career goals such as teaching, research, industry, clinical

Genuine interest in the subject/field

Not so Good reasons to apply to graduate school:

Not sure what else to do.

Don't feel ready for a job.

For the money (there isn't a ton!)

You've always wanted a Ph.D.

General benefits of graduate school:

Gain advanced knowledge and skills in area of interest.

Increases chances of employment and financial compensation.

Bond with others over similar interests.

Network with psychology colleagues from around the world at conferences/other events.

Opens professional doors which may require Ph.D. and/or licensure credentials.



[“Four questions to ask before applying to graduate school.”](#) from APA

A list of [FAQs](#) about Graduate School from the APA website

HOW TO PREPARE FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL/AM I QUALIFIED?

If you have decided that you want to go to graduate school, you should assess strengths and areas in need of improvement.



Check out this helpful overview about [Getting Into Graduate School](#)

GPA and academic background

- You should have a minimum 3.0 GPA. Doctoral program GPAs are generally higher on average.
- Generally you should be well-rounded in psychology including good grades in statistics and methods courses

GRE

- Take the GRE as early as your junior year – this gives you time to take it again (and again if necessary).
- Assess your GRE scores (percentile ranks, best sections).
- GRE scores vary across Ph.D. programs. The best approach is to look at the data provided on the webpage to see the mean and median score for accepted classes to see where your scores place you.
- Some programs have a minimum score for acceptance.
- Look to see if GRE subject score is required.
- GRE Resources to assist you in navigating your way to understanding the layout of and mastering the GRE.

[Facing and Conquering the GREs \(APA\)](#)

[Tips for GRE Success](#), US News and World Report

Research Experiences and scholarly *productivity*

- Research experience is important as it demonstrates interest in conducting research and that you can bring some skills with you into graduate school
- Productivity is also valued
 - Productivity entails posters, honors thesis, publications, etc.
- Before committing to working in a lab, ask the research director/primary investigator about what you will be doing and if there may be opportunities for posters or presentations.

Clinical or Quasi-Clinical Experience

- If you are going into a helping profession, how do you know this is a good fit for you?
- If you haven't worked in the field (that's ok!) get some volunteer experiences

- Crisis lines, Big Brother/Sister, All types of opportunities can “count” as long as you can articulate what you learned from this experience about yourself and your desire to go into the field

Join national, state, or local professional student organization(s).

- American Psychological Association.
- Association of Psychological Science
- Psi Chi
- Institution – specific honor societies (NSU Psychology Institute)

If you do not have all of the above, all is not lost. Look at the program requirements of individual programs to determine what qualifications are emphasized. Or, you can apply to Psy.D. programs if you are primarily interested in clinical work if your research interests or experiences are limited. You can also consider master degree programs, counseling programs, or work a couple of years as a research assistant to strengthen the qualifications for a Ph.D. doctoral program.

Final Considerations:

- Think about what research/career options interest you the most.
 - Academia? Private Practice? Research only?
- But remember that it’s okay not to know everything that you want to do with your career before you begin graduate school.
- Discuss your plans with faculty mentors.
 - Get their advice on what parts of your application you need to work on/develop more.
 - Ask them for honest feedback to help you become a competitive applicant.



Watch this video on the [Understanding Admissions Criteria and Acceptance Rates](#) from APA but don’t let it discourage you. Use it to decide how to be more competitive.

Specific Information for Non-traditional students:

- Sometimes it is difficult for these students to get involved in activities that might help prepare them for graduate school.
- The U.S. News and World Report wrote an [article](#) specific for nontraditional students who are interested in graduate school

HOW DO I CHOOSE THE RIGHT PROGRAM FOR ME?



Here is a link to APA's 6 questions to ask before applying to any graduate program:

[Applier beware](#)

Think about your most pertinent research and clinical interests (it's ok to have more than a couple!)

[Identifying Compatible Graduate Programs](#) (APA – Identifying Compatible Graduate Programs)

Important Questions to ask yourself before submitting applications:

- Am I willing to move?
- What geographical areas are off the table?
 - What kind of environment do I want to live in? (urban, suburban, rural?)
- How important is funding?
- What faculty members am I most interested in working with?
 - Am I *very* interested in any? If not, do not choose someone for the sake of it. It is better not to apply to the program if it is research based.
- What clinical/research opportunities does the program provide?
- Is this program research heavy? Clinically heavy? Equal emphasis?

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

Be sure to read and comply with **ALL** application requirements **ESPECIALLY** meeting deadlines.

Make a list of the programs and the requirements for the application and check them off as you submit them.

- Similar to college application, there are application fees for graduate programs. Research the programs to determine which ones you will apply to and prepare for the application fees which vary greatly.
 - However, look for any application fee waivers. There are plenty of options out there and you may very well qualify!
- Most schools require an online application that entails uploading all material necessary.
 - Few schools have 100% paper-based applications, but they do still exist!

- Some schools require you to fill out an additional, supplemental application specific to the program. Pay close attention to all the instructions to ensure that you submit all required components of the application.

What Usually Goes In to Submitting an Application

- ✓ The Application Itself (online or paper)
- ✓ Possible Supplemental Application
- ✓ GRE (general GRE always required, sometimes the subject test is required)
- ✓ Curriculum Vitae (CV)
 - A CV is similar to a resume in that it is a summary of your experiences but it is more detailed.
 - Ask mentors or grad students you know for models/examples.
 - Get feedback from others.
 - Here is a link to an incredibly informative UCLA presentation on the proper construction of a CV: [Writing the Curriculum Vitae](#)
- ✓ Transcripts
 - To submit transcripts, find out the deadline, costs and requirements for getting your official transcripts EARLY. Some schools allow you to upload an official transcript for review but ALL schools require an official transcript if accepted.
 - If you are a transfer student, you will be required to send all of your transcripts from any undergraduate institution that you have attended.
- ✓ Letters of Recommendation
 - This link from the APA website contains a video detailing how to secure quality letters of recommendation. [Securing Letters of Recommendation](#)
- ✓ Personal Statement (sometimes called a “statement of goals”)
 - Fact: You never realize just how hard it is to write about yourself until the first time you try to do it.



Here are a few links regarding the construction of a proper psychology-related personal statement:

- [The Personal Statement](#)
- [Preparing your personal statement for graduate school applications](#)
- [Writing Personal Statements](#)
- A list of Dos and Don'ts for Personal Statements
 - ✓ **DO** tailor the statement to the program at hand, showing your understanding and interest so far (and even what you want to learn more about).

- X **DON'T** make a long list of things you've done/read/watched without explaining how these developed your understanding of the field/your interests.
- ✓ **DO** research what skills and qualities the program you're applying to demands and show how you already possess said skills/qualities.
- X **DON'T** mention irrelevant or general hobbies.
- ✓ **DO** mention any career paths you're considering, and how the program will help you follow these paths.
- X **DON'T** leave your statement to the last minute; give yourself time to draft and re-draft, plus share with others for feedback (professors, mentors, friends who are grammar-savvy, etc.).

- Quotes from VCPCP faculty:

"... a personal statement is a story, and as a story it should clearly articulate your career aspirations, the motives for aspiring to become "X", how your work/education/training has built towards that career, and how the program would facilitate you achieving your aspirations." – Dr. Alan Meca

"I also tell students that the story needs to have their "brand" throughout. The student should choose a limited number of strengths (e.g., research skills, going above and beyond) and provide specific evidence of these qualities as they tell the story." – Dr. Matt Judah



Here's a helpful link regarding [Completing Your Applications](#)

WHAT IF I GET INVITED FOR AN INTERVIEW?

I've been invited to an interview! What should I do?

Most clinical programs want to meet potential applicants to ensure that they are a good fit for the program and a good fit for their research mentor. It is also an opportunity for you to show them your interest in the program and the research mentor.



This link provides useful information pertaining to interview scheduling, questions to ask interviewers, questions you may be asked, and more! [How to Interview for a Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program](#)

This additional link contains a video from the APA website demonstrating ways in which to master the interview. [Mastering Graduate Interviews](#)

An underemphasized, but important part of admissions: Pre – Interview Events

Many graduate programs hold dinners/lunches/get-togethers the day or night before interviews to allow the applicants to relax and get to know the individuals who are currently enrolled in the program.

These informal events outside of the formal interview are almost always student-run.

Although these events are more informal than the interview itself, keep in mind that you are still “on the clock,” as students will always report impressions of applicants to their advisors.

At these events you have the opportunity to ask questions that you may not want to ask in a formal setting or to faculty members (e.g., What do students do for fun? Where do students live? What’s the community like?)

This also provides you with the chance to mingle with other applicants.

Try not to be intimidated by other applicants and resist the temptation to compare yourself to others. Remember, every applicant there received an interview offer for different reasons, but you are all considered to be on a level playing field.

Speaking of “on the clock,” keep in mind that all interactions you have with the program “count.” Your interactions with office staff for example make an impression so keep in mind that you want to make a good one, in all you do!

DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Each applicant must decide for him or herself what the deciding factors will be and their relative importance.

To summarize, some of the most crucial factors to consider when choosing a program to enroll in include:

- The faculty match
- Financial considerations
 - *Tuition remission*

- *Competitive vs. Cooperative funding*
- *Stipends*
- *Fellowships: University based or external sources*
- Cost of living
- Overall program feel



[Making Final Decisions](#) (APA – making final decisions)

LINKS

- Succeed as a Nontraditional Grad School Applicant
 - <https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/graduate-school-road-map/2013/08/16/succeed-as-a-nontraditional-grad-school-applicant>
- Choosing between a Ph.D. and Psy.D. Clinical Program
 - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/careers-in-psych/201603/choosing-between-phd-and-psyd-some-factors-consider>
- Master Degree program (MA vs. MS vs. MSW)
 - <https://www.bestpsychologydegrees.com/masters-degrees-in-psychology/>
- Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology
 - <https://www.guilford.com/books/Insiders-Guide-Graduate-Programs-Clinical-Counseling-Psychology/Sayette-Norcross/9781462532117/reviews>
- Four questions to ask before applying to graduate school
 - <http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psn/2014/01/applying-graduate.aspx>
- APA Graduate School FAQs
 - <http://www.apa.org/education/grad/faqs.aspx>
- Getting into Clinical Psychology Graduate School
 - [CUDCP http://www.clinicalpsychgradschool.org/](http://www.cudcp.org/)
- Facing and Conquering the GREs
 - http://www.bizvision.com/webcast/prod/79967?group_stream_idx=6692
- 6 Tips for GRE Success
 - <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/articles/2012/04/30/test-prep-6-tips-for-gre-success>
- Understanding Admissions Criteria and Acceptance Rates
 - http://www.bizvision.com/webcast/prod/79967?group_stream_idx=6693

- Applier beware
 - o <http://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2011/09/applier.aspx>
- Identifying Compatible Graduate Programs
 - o http://www.bizvision.com/webcast/prod/79967?group_stream_idx=6694
- Completing Your Applications
 - o http://www.bizvision.com/webcast/prod/79967?group_stream_idx=6696
- Securing Letters of Recommendation
 - o http://www.bizvision.com/webcast/prod/79967?group_stream_idx=6695
- Writing the *Curriculum Vitae*
 - o <https://grad.ucla.edu/asis/agep/advcv.pdf>
- The Personal Statement
 - o https://www.wlc.edu/uploadedFiles/Content/Academics/Programs_of_Study/Undergraduate_Programs/Psychology/Psychology-Graduate-Schools-Personal-Statement.pdf
- Preparing your personal statement for graduate school applications
 - o <http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psn/2016/09/graduate-school-applications.aspx>
- Writing Personal Statements
 - o http://www.bizvision.com/webcast/prod/79967?group_stream_idx=6698
- How to Interview for a Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program
 - o <https://sites.education.uky.edu/motivation/files/2013/09/prinstein-how-to-interview-for-grad-school.pdf>
- Mastering Graduate Interviews
 - o http://www.bizvision.com/webcast/prod/79967?group_stream_idx=6697
- Making Final Decisions
 - o http://www.bizvision.com/webcast/prod/79967?group_stream_idx=6699

On behalf of the Virginia Consortium, we thank you for attending this workshop and we wish you the best in all of your graduate school and career endeavors!

For more information or to stay in touch contact us at:

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