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The annual publication of the UW-Madison Chapter of Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology
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Andy Hung
Nathaniel Miller
Lauren Silber
Letter from Psi Chi

Dear Readers,

On behalf of the UW-Madison Chapter of Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology, I am pleased to present the fifth publication of our chapter’s newsletter. The newsletter strives to achieve several goals that center on promoting communication and collaboration between undergraduate psychology students and the broader psychology community. First, we feature interviews with professors and graduate students in the psychology department to exemplify what academic research and graduate-level education entails. Second, we include articles submitted by Psi Chi members to share their unique perspectives and experiences with our readers. Third, we provide students with networking opportunities by including profiles for several professionals in psychology-related fields. These professionals have expressed a willingness to connect with students and provide helpful advice. The contributions that make up this year’s newsletter highlight the diverse opportunities that a psychology education leads to. We hope this newsletter will encourage psychology students to utilize the valuable opportunities available at UW-Madison, connect with accomplished professionals in the psychology community and, ultimately, enrich and individualize their undergraduate experiences.

On, Wisconsin!

Kathryn E. Anderson

Acknowledgments

We would like to recognize the Newsletter Committee Members who dedicated their time to contribute to this year’s publication. Your commendable writing highlights your commitment to academic achievement, and your continuous engagement demonstrates your personal excellence. A special thanks to Professor Jenny Saffran, Professor Bas Rokers, and graduate student David Menendez for sharing your experiences through interview; we deeply appreciate your contributions to the university. I am grateful for the professionals who are willing to lend career guidance to psychology students: Dr. Amy Altenhaus and Jaclyn Zavoral; your wisdom and advice will be of great benefit. Lastly, I would like to thank Valerie Johnson for providing useful input and serving as an invaluable resource throughout the newsletter planning and publication process.
An Interview with Professor Jenny Saffran
By Lauren Silber

Professor Saffran is the primary investigator at the Infant Learning Lab at the Waisman Center. The lab investigates how infants and young children learn language -- specifically, the meanings of words, the statistical patterns within language, and how to track the properties of speech.

What are the primary implications of your research?

Learning language is something integral to us as we develop. However, not everyone is as successful at learning language. By understanding how learning unfolds and what could potentially go wrong, we can help kids whose experience with language learning isn’t so easy.

Which of your current projects focuses on atypical language development?

There’s one large project: we’re working with 2 year olds with autism. Children with autism are at high risk for language delays, but little is known about how they start learning and processing language and how these processes compare with typically developing children. There are clinics at Waisman with services for children with autism, so we are able to recruit through them. We also recruit directly through the community, since parents concerned with their child’s language delays are likely to be interested in participating.

Can you describe your involvement in the psychology department at UW?

As a member of the Undergraduate Committee, I’m in charge of the honors program, where we make decisions about aspects of curriculum and requirements as well as discuss issues and suggest improvements to the department chair. Additionally, I chaired a committee for Letters and Sciences called the “Excellence for Teaching and Learning” committee. Here, I had a voice in recommending changes to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Our committee compiled a list of recommendations that the Dean endorsed, which resulted in the Chancellor’s giving the Dean funding. We also pitched the concept of Undergraduate Teaching Fellows, where faculty work with undergraduate teaching fellows (similar to a TA without the grading). Not only would this motivate undergraduates to learn about teaching, but being paired with professors gives students a chance to give feedback to improve the professor’s teaching. This would be beneficial, because professors often have an extensive research background but little teaching experience.
How do you guide your researchers with their projects?

As a senior collaborator, I help them figure out which of their ideas are feasible and novel as well as how to turn an idea into a testable research question for a study with the lab.

How did your experiences as an undergraduate influence your current work?

I was lucky to grow up in a college town, because in high school I was offered credit for college campus research. I’d been babysitting for a professor’s kids, and as a result, I became drawn to Developmental Psychology. Then, I had the opportunity to work in a small infant lab as the only undergrad, which allowed me to get close with faculty. I had lots of novel ideas involving topics such as word segmentation.

Do you have any advice for undergraduate students pursuing a PhD?

Do your research to figure out what places, programs, and faculty are studying your interests, and contact them to see if they’re taking in students. Get to know your professors, and without question, go to office hours. Also, in order to prepare for the GRE, read difficult nonfiction like the New York Times or the magazine the New Yorker, which can be helpful in boosting your reading comprehension skills and vocabulary. Lastly, don’t be afraid to take a year off before applying to grad school because it’s a great opportunity to gain more experience and perspective, and it shows that you took time with your decision. Especially since programs are competitive and it can be intimidating to step off this track through school, take some time to travel and teach or conduct research.

What is your favorite class to teach?

I love teaching my child development lecture, Psych 460, because it allows me the opportunity to get students excited about child development and studying kids as a scientific enterprise. I get to see students develop an interest in careers in research, and when I describe a study, I get to see their eyes light up!

If you could choose to have coffee with any famous psychology theorist to praise, critique or just be buddies with, who would it be?

I’d choose BF Skinner because I’d like to ask him, “did you really believe that language is learned by parents praising a kid when they get it right and punishing when they get it wrong? Did he believe that?” And I already met Chomsky!
An Interview with Professor Bas Rokers
By Nathaniel Miller

Bas Rokers grew up in the city of Schiedam in the Netherlands – a town he was quick to point out makes the best Dutch gin in the world. As an undergraduate, Rokers participated in the Cognitive Artificial Intelligence program at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. He initially attended graduate school at Rutgers University, but later transferred to the University of California, Los Angeles. Rokers graduated from the Cognitive Neuroscience program at UCLA with a dissertation on the neural basis of perception. After graduating, he worked as a post-doctorate researcher at the University of Texas at Austin, where he had the opportunity to develop his neuroimaging skills.

Professor Rokers found parts of his transition to the United States as a graduate student to be challenging. His perception of the United States was based largely on pop culture, and he found that things were not entirely as he expected when he arrived here. In particular, he was very surprised by the existence and popularity of diners, which he had assumed were relics of the past. With some time, however, he was able to transition smoothly.

Professor Rokers became interested in philosophical questions as an undergraduate, and he was curious about our experience with objects in the world. In particular, he was intrigued by the limitations of our perception – the fact that our representation of the world is imperfect, and that we often perceive things incorrectly or see things that aren’t there. Rokers began exploring these ideas while studying memory, but found that his interests were difficult to research with the tools available at the time. In the domain of vision, however, he found these philosophical questions to be much more tractable. The relationship between objects in the world and our internal representations of such objects can be more readily studied using current methods.

Rokers has been a professor for seven years, joining UW-Madison in 2011. He studies the neural bases of visual perception, with projects in three broad categories: basic research, commercial applications, and medical investigation. First and foremost, his lab researches the mechanisms through which light is transformed into our perceptual
experience. Commercially, many projects focus on improving virtual and augmented reality devices, optimizing visual cue presentation in order to reduce motion sickness and create more immersive experiences. On the medical side, the lab researches the causes of certain perceptual disorders and the ways in which they can be treated or prevented.

One project Professor Rokers is currently excited about focuses on using virtual reality headsets to investigate the cues involved in 3D motion perception. Rokers is collaborating with Jacqueline Fulvio (a post-doctorate researcher in the lab) to research the use of head movement in motion perception. Extending the traditional knowledge of motion cues in perception, Rokers’ and Fulvio’s research shows that small head motions provide a critical source of information. Rokers qualifies these movements not as large intentional motions, but rather “head jitter” – the involuntary, very small motions your head makes. They have found that these small motions actually provide valuable information that people use to improve their perception.

Professor Rokers strongly advised that students study abroad if possible, emphasizing the value of learning how similar we all are, contrary to what our prejudices or prior assumptions may suggest. Rokers discussed the importance of experiencing what life is like in other parts of the world, especially when one is young and has the opportunity to travel. For students interested in applying to graduate school and hoping to find their niche, Professor Rokers highly recommended trying out different research labs as an undergraduate. He said students should not worry if things don’t work out, and suggested they keep exploring other opportunities. He also explained that professors are looking for people that are curious, interested, and hard-working, and that students shouldn’t give up if they don’t hear back right away. If students are interested in a professor’s research, Rokers suggested they go knock on the professor’s door or take one of their classes in order to see if they would be a good fit. Lastly, Rokers said professors are students’ best resource when looking for graduate programs, as they will be able to answer

Professor Rokers added that students interested in vision science should take Psychology 406 (Sensation and Perception), and any students interested in learning more about his lab and his research may send him an email at rokers@wisc.edu.
David obtained his associate degree from Miami Dade College, and then transferred to UW-Madison where he earned a BA with honors in Psychology. He was deciding whether to study psychology or architecture when he began college. During the first semester of his freshman year, he realized that he enjoyed thinking about how people make judgements about the visual world more than he enjoyed creating architectural designs.

As an undergraduate, David worked in Dr. Martha Alibali’s Cognitive Development and Communication lab, which studies the development of mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills and the role of gesture in communication and instruction. He worked on a project that examined the factors that lead undergraduates to change the method they use to solve math problems. David also worked in Dr. Karl Rosengran’s Cognition and Action lab, which explores how motor and socio-cultural factors influence cognition throughout the lifespan, as part of the Psychology Research Experience Program. He worked on a project that examined children’s understanding of death in Mexico and the United States, specifically how cultural practices, like dia de los muertos, influence how children reason about death. David did his senior thesis with both Dr. Alibali and Dr. Rosengran. He explored how different visual representations help children and adults learn and generalize from a lesson. He also took part in the Latino Mental Health program at the University of Southern California. In this program, he travelled to Mexico City and worked with Dr. Corina Benjet at the National Institute of Psychiatry Ramon de la Fuente Muñiz. Their project focused on assessing risk factors for suicide during the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

When asked if he had any advice for undergraduates who are applying to graduate school, David recommended that students get to know their professors. He explained that they will serve as amazing resources while students are figuring out where to apply and what characteristics to look for in a school. In addition, he recommended that students take steps that will prepare them for the specific graduate programs they want to apply to. He said his path involved a lot of research experience, as he wanted to attend a research-based PhD program. Other programs, in contrast, might value other experiences more.

David’s advisors, Dr. Alibali and Dr. Rosengren, largely contributed to his decision to attend graduate school at UW-Madison. He said they were always concerned with helping him grow as a professional, but also as a person. He valued this personal connection so deeply that he knew he wanted to continue his education at UW-Madison.

David currently works with both Dr. Alibali and Dr. Karl Rosengran. His research focuses on how to exploit human cognitive and perceptual mechanisms to improve science education. Much of his work has examined how modifying perceptual features of diagrams and other visual representations help children learn biological concepts. He also strives to better understand cognitive constraints on categorization in order to help children learn about evolution, which, he explained, violates some of those constraints. David’s short-term goal is to get his PhD, from UW-Madison. His long-term goal is to continue to bridge the gap between psychology and education in order to improve science curriculum.
Think Outside The Psychological Box
By Morgan Fuller

Often times, when people hear the word “psychologist” they automatically assume it refers to a therapist who sits in an office all day and listens to clients talk about their problems. Although a completely respectable profession, there is so much more to psychology than that. In fact, one of my favorite things about psychology, and a big factor in why I chose to go into it, is how relevant it is; how all-encompassing. While there are many variations to the definition of “psychology”, they all boil down to one main purpose: the study of human behavior. Quite literally, anything that involves people involves psychology. This makes the field both incredibly fascinating as well as ever-evolving. Thus, a career in psychology allows students the flexibility to apply knowledge of human behavior to virtually any field, industry, or organization.

Are you studying psychology, but fascinated by education and love working with kids? School Psychologist. Torn between a career in psych and a career in the medical field? Think about clinical psychology or psychiatry, maybe even neuropsychology. Do you daydream of starring in criminal minds or CSI? If yes, then forensic psychology is probably for you. Love working with people, but also interested in all that corporate America has to offer? Organizational psychology gives you the best of both worlds. Health psychology, developmental psychology, educational psychology, social psychology…I could go on and on. The areas of expertise are virtually endless, each providing a multitude of different employment opportunities in a variety of settings.

My point is this: when thinking about what to do with a degree in psychology, explore your options. Think outside the box, and don’t be afraid to get creative in how you want to apply your knowledge. Use your strengths and stay true to what interests you. Choosing to study psychology to become the quintessential therapist is awesome, and those people are much needed. That is actually exactly what I pictured myself doing when I declared psychology as my major. However, after taking advantage of several other opportunities, learning more about the field, and following my own passion for sports, I have found myself going down a completely different path.
In an increasingly competitive professional world, it’s no secret that most undergraduate students need to start building their resumes as early as possible. This gives us a competitive edge when it comes to life after college. However in the field of applied psychology, that isn’t always so simple. After reaching out to numerous psychologists and mental/behavioral health organizations, I quickly learned that these types of careers often come with a lot of strict privacy rules and regulations. This makes it difficult to find internships and hands-on experiences that are directly applicable.

However, determined to gain some professional experience during my undergraduate years, I continued searching for opportunities that both interested me AND suited my particular skill-set...which is how I came across the Manhattan Sports Business Academy (MSBA). Growing up a competitive athlete, and attributing much of who I am to the experience I had playing sports, I’ve always been interested in the idea of sports psychology. I was just never quite sure how to get my foot in the door of such a niche field. I knew the field existed, but breaking into it seemed next to impossible. But that is exactly why the “sports” part of MSBA was intriguing to me right away. The “business” part, on the other hand, made me feel a bit apprehensive and unqualified. So much so, that I almost passed up looking further into the program all-together. But something caused me to click the link to MSBA’s website, which is one of the best decisions I have ever made. Although that apprehension towards business did not initially disappear, every other component seemed right up my alley: the chance to intern with some of the most well-known organizations and companies in the sports industry, the mentorship collective, the speaker series and office tours, the fact that I’d have 24 other peers to navigate through a summer in NYC with. Imagining all of the personal interactions and social opportunities I would have in that environment excited me, which was clearly the psychology side of me speaking. So, after researching nearly every past alumni and every aspect of a summer spent with MSBA, I convinced myself that it was at least worth a shot to apply. If they didn’t think a psychology major was well suited for one of the 25 spots, so be it.

Lo and behold, I was accepted to the program. Come to find out, after my interview with the Dean of Students, MSBA was actually excited about what different majors could bring to the program. In fact, they thought that my background in psychology and ability/passion to connect with and learn from others was a unique and valuable skill to have in the sports industry, despite the fact that I had applied to a sports BUSINESS program. Long story short, to say I had an amazing summer and life-changing experience is an understatement. It all happened because I took a chance and decided to step outside the narrow-minded box I had previously put myself in as a psychology major. I challenge you to do the same. As I alluded to earlier, the study of psychology can apply to, and benefit you, in any career you can imagine. I challenge you to think outside the box. Be true to who you are, what you are interested in, and what skills you have outside of psychology. Then, figure out a way to combine those factors. In my mind, that’s the key to true success in this field.
Opportunities for Involvement
By Savannah Frei

Muddying one’s way through the many opportunities available on campus can be quite complicated. After choosing a major, such as Psychology, it’s tempting to become comfortable with simply attending class. While this is an acceptable means of attaining a degree, there are many other ways students can increase their exposure to the field of psychology. The Psychology department at UW-Madison offers many opportunities, some of which are laid out here!

DECLARE THE MAJOR

One of the best ways to learn about the opportunities available to psychology undergraduates is to declare the major as soon as possible. This, first and foremost, gets your email on the department’s emailing list. The departmental advisors regularly put together newsletter emails that lay out events occurring in the psychology department as well as opportunities available to students. To declare the major, an appointment must be scheduled with an advisor. This can be accomplished via the following pathway: https://psych.wisc.edu > Undergraduate Program > Advising

APPLY FOR HONORS IN THE MAJOR OR DISTINCTION IN THE MAJOR

The honors in the major path pushes students to go above and beyond by requiring them to complete additional academic activities in the classroom, attain at least a 3.3 GPA in the psychology department and cumulatively, and complete an honors thesis. Distinction in the major is available to students not completing honors in the major and requires either three psych honors courses (breadth or depth) OR an undergraduate thesis and a 3.7 GPA in the psychology major. Both are great options for students who seek to devote time to additional, in-depth learning within the classroom and conducting their own research. More information on the honors program in Psychology can be found here: http://psych.wisc.edu > Undergraduate Program > Major
RESEARCH LAB ASSISTANCE

By working in a lab, students can gain experience in their field or subject of interest while developing close relationships with other undergraduates, graduate students, and professors. This is a great opportunity available to sophomores, juniors, or seniors. Students often receive class credit for their experience in a lab. Use the following pathway to get more information or to get in contact with professors whose labs are open for student involvement: https://psych.wisc.edu > Undergraduate Program > Research Opportunities

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

A less academic means of attaining psychology experience is to get involved in the community. Here in Madison, there are many mental health institutions, homeless shelters, etc. that would be happy to take volunteers on board. This opportunity may be best suited for those students who may not want to work in a lab, but are instead looking for interpersonal involvement in their career. More information on community volunteering opportunities can be found here: https://morgridge.wisc.edu > Students > Search Volunteer Opportunities > Volunteer by Major

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The most clearly linked student organizations to the psychology major are Psychology Club and Psi Chi. Psi Chi is the International Honor Society in Psychology, and students must apply and be accepted to the organization to become a member. This organization allows for direct networking with professors at private events, access to scholarships, and increased opportunities for involvement within the major. Other student organizations are available on campus that may not be directly linked to the Psychology department. However, the Center for Leadership and Involvement offers a student organization matching program that allows for students to find student organizations that align with their interests. You can access the program here: https://cfli.wisc.edu > Get Involved > Match Your Interests > WIN’s Interest Matching
APPLY FOR EMPLOYMENT

Jobs may be one of the best ways to immerse yourself into your field of interest or simply to get experience in a work environment. While there are many jobs available that target a diverse audience of students looking to become employed, the UW Job System allows students to sort through jobs and look for those that apply to their field of interest. These employers are understanding of the fact that a student is applying, so they are more flexible with scheduling hours around classes and other academic commitments. This is a great opportunity for engaging your interests in a hands-on way. The UW job portal can be accessed with the following link: https://jobcenter.wisc.edu

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT EVENTS

Students often have hectic schedules and may have limited time to devote to psychology-related extracurricular activities. Luckily, the Psychology department at UW-Madison offers a wide range of events and workshops throughout the academic year. These events, which are held at varying times throughout the week, provide students with opportunities to expose themselves to many useful topics. Some examples include professor talks, alumni panels, career webinars, and graduate school Q&As. All of the departmental events are listed on the event calendar: https://psych.wisc.edu > Undergraduate Program > Events

TALK TO AN ADVISOR

Advisors are always being sent information in regards to opportunities available for their students. They are perhaps the most educated on which opportunities would be best for certain students. Our advisors are more than happy to speak with students on how they can best be involved in the department. Schedule an appointment with them here: https://psych.wisc.edu > Undergraduate Program > Advising
A section highlighting the UW-Madison Psi Chi members who served on the 2018 Newsletter Committee

**Kathryn Anderson**

**Year:** Junior  
**Majors/Certificates:** Psychology; Global Health & Criminal Justice Certificates  
**Lab affiliation:** Cognitive Development & Communication Lab  
**Career goals:** Provide mental health services to traditionally underrepresented populations  
**Favorite thing about Psi Chi or UW-Madison:** Psi Chi has allowed me to network with peers who have similar interests and goals as I do. The diverse psychology courses offered at UW-Madison have helped me explore my interests and identify the topics I’m most passionate about.

**Savannah Frei**

**Year:** Senior  
**Majors/Certificates:** Psychology; English Linguistics  
**Career goals:** Become a corporate lawyer  
**Favorite thing about Psi Chi or UW-Madison:** My favorite thing about Psi Chi is that the program offers communication between highly achieving psychology majors in a laid-back setting; it also and allows for community involvement in a way that makes more of an impact than volunteering intermittently.
Morgan Fuller
Year: Senior
Majors/Certificates: Psychology
Lab affiliation: Judy Harackiewicz's Intrinsic Motivation Lab
Career goals: I want to go into the field of sports psychology as a licensed counseling psychologist and eventually open my own practice called BalanceYouthSports.
Favorite thing about Psi Chi or UW-Madison: My favorite thing about the psych department here at UW is the breadth of resources and opportunities offered to undergraduate students. From social, to academic, to professional or career goals, there is never a shortage of events to attend, groups to get involved in, or people to talk to.

Andy Hung
Year: Senior
Majors/Certificates: Psychology; Neurobiology
Lab affiliation: Center for Healthy Minds, Brauer Group Lab
Career goals: Practice as a psychologist/psychiatrist
Favorite thing about Psi Chi or UW-Madison: Psi Chi is great because it facilitates communication between professors and psychology students. Professors are good people to talk to if you need advice on graduate school, careers, or life in general.

Nathaniel Miller
Year: Senior
Majors/Certificates: Molecular Biology; Psychology
Lab affiliation: Professor Bas Roker's Vision Lab
Career goals: I hope to become a physician practicing in clinical neurology.
Favorite thing about Psi Chi or UW-Madison: My favorite thing about UW is its tremendous undergraduate research opportunities. Research has been a really fundamental part of my undergraduate career, and UW is a great place to explore your interests and get involved.

Lauren Silber
Year: Junior
Majors/Certificates: Psychology; Human Development & Family Studies
Lab affiliation: Infant Learning Lab
Career goals: School Psychologist
Favorite thing about Psi Chi or UW-Madison: I love the sense of community among psychology students. Everyone studies together and looks out for each other so that we can learn and grow
Professional Network

“By including profiles for UW-Madison alumni in psychology-related fields, we strive to encourage students to expand their networks and develop new relationships. We hope students value the generous advice provided by these professionals.”

-Kathryn Anderson
Where did you grow up? Where did you get your undergraduate and graduate degrees?

I grew up in New Jersey and went to UW-Madison for my undergrad degree. Many students from my high school went there as did several relatives of mine. I became interested in Madison after doing a paper in my 10th grade biology class on Harry Harlow’s primate research on Motherly Love. I contacted Dr. Harlow and he invited me to tour his lab. I had visited a number of colleges but once I got to Madison, I knew that this was the right school for me. I loved Madison and actually did a year of grad school there, but I ended up transferring to a PhD program in clinical psychology at Rutgers.

What experiences and interests led you to your current field of work?

I always knew that I wanted to be a psychologist and go to graduate school; it was just a matter of figuring out what kind of psychologist. When I was young, I was always encouraged to follow whatever interested me. So, I did. When I was in high school, I was a camp counselor and a hospital volunteer. I really enjoyed working with people. Then, when I was in Madison, some of my professors testified at the Capitol, and I learned a lot about the power of science and how it could effectuate change, which was really exciting to me.

Back then, things were really in the dark ages in terms of healthcare for women. I was in a health collective and was tasked to review and present research as well as do counseling about healthcare for women. Then, as a result of working at the health collective, I did pregnancy counseling at Blue Bus. At the time I was doing all this, abortions weren’t legal and it was illegal to talk to even married women about birth control, so it was just a very exciting time to get involved in changing how things were. These experiences helped to influence my choice of dissertation research as well as my earlier work in behavioral medicine and the work I do now.

Describe what your day-to-day is like and what you do in general.

My days are different because I do a variety of things. Sometimes it can be pretty hectic if I have deadlines to meet, in terms of
writing reports, and some days it’s quiet. A large part of what I do is family court evaluations, and that involves doing a lot of interviews and report writing. Sometimes I testify in court. I also have regular therapy clients, some of whom I’ve been working with for 25 to 30 years. Depending on how much structure they need to live a productive life, I’ll see them once a week or every other week. I’m also on a number of advisory boards in a number of work related fields such as the Youth Commission for my county and the advisory board for Legal Aid, which provides low cost legal services. Part of my time is spent keeping current in my work through reading research and attending classes. I recently went through collaborative law training, so I’m looking to join a group of professionals who do that work. A few years ago, I went back to school at NYU to update my skills in career counseling.

What’s your favorite part of your job?

One of the things that I like, particularly about forensic work, is that I’m able to utilize my psychology skills both in research and in clinical training. I like the variety, and I enjoy helping families resolve conflicts. Being able to use my research background and clinical skills to solve problems is very rewarding.

Are there any unexpected ways in which you’ve been able to apply your background in psychology and research?

I would say… over the years, I’ve found that for a lot of my hobbies and other interests, I’m always able to apply psychological principles to help people understand why they do what they do. At this point, I don’t think it’s unexpected. I just find it interesting that there are ways to look at things and explain things with psychological principles that make sense to me.

Do you have any advice for undergraduates?

First of all, the world has changed and continues to change rapidly. There is a lot more uncertainty now. You aren’t planning the rest of your life, only, in reality, the next few years. I think it is important to know and trust yourself. Don’t be afraid to follow things that interest you, and when you do, find someone who’s doing work in that area. Talk to them. Get the best possible training to do what you want to do and make changes along the way to suit your interests and needs. Also, always be able to rely on yourself because I think that’s what is going to get you through a lot of challenges. Certainty comes from within yourself.

Students interested in connecting with Dr. Altenhaus can contact her through badgerbridge.com
Why did you choose to attend UW-Madison?

I come from an extended family of Badgers. My dad received his undergraduate and masters from Madison and I grew up so close to the university that I always felt connected to this school. I attended a lecture with my brother my senior year of college and I knew this is where I wanted to be. Also, if I’m being honest, I was extremely undecided and figured it was better to go to a bigger school with more opportunities to explore various majors.

What led to your interest in psychology? Did you pursue any additional majors and/or certificates?

I explored many majors. I knew that I always enjoyed working with people and science courses, and this led me to take the Nursing pre-requisites, which included Intro Psychology and Child Developmental Psychology. I realized I most applied myself to these classes, so I declared Psychology as my major. I found my passion for Industrial/Organizational Psychology after taking a course through the business school. At that point, I added a Certificate in Entrepreneurship to learn some business foundations and take on additional Management and Human Resources coursework.

Please describe the most impactful experience you had as an undergraduate.

The two opportunities that helped me grow the most personally and professionally were serving as a Psychology Peer Mentor and my internship as a Talent Management Intern at the UW-Madison Division of Information Technology (DoIT).

It can be difficult to navigate this huge institution at times, and psychology is one of the most popular majors on campus. These factors can make it hard to know what opportunities are available to you. I had the misconception that the only thing I could do with a Psychology degree was pursue the clinical track.
It wasn’t until I took the capstone in Industrial/Organizational Psychology that I realized there are many great ways to apply Psychology to the world. I’ve been fortunate to have a few great mentors to encourage me to pursue different opportunities, and it was rewarding to pay it forward and help coach my peers in the Psychology department.

My time as a Talent Management Intern with DoIT also stands out as meaningful because it demonstrated to me that there are career opportunities available that don’t require graduate school to apply my passions and strengths. This internship was on-campus so my full-time colleagues recognized that value that students bring to campus and provided me with high-level projects and experiences that I don’t know that I would have received somewhere else.

What is your current position, and where? What experiences/interests led you to this field of work?

My current position title is Employee Programs Coordinator, and I didn’t know a position like this existed before I got my internship. I was motivated to find an internship in the Human Resources/Talent Development field after taking a course in Organizational Behavior. After about a year interning, my supervisor resigned and I had the opportunity to fill her role on an interim basis. It wasn’t until after I graduated that I formally applied and interviewed for the position, which was a nerve-racking process. However, I knew it was where I wanted to be.

I always enjoyed my social psychology classes, including Personality Psychology and Cultural Psychology, and I was curious to see how my knowledge of human behavior would translate to the workplace. I enjoy learning about individual differences and how people with different personalities and life experiences can work productively together. As a result, I’ve also learned a lot about how to foster diversity and inclusion in the workplace. I’m currently co-leading a team within my unit that focuses on recruiting and training women in the IT field. I took a Theory and Practice of Interviewing course through the Counseling Psychology department at UW that has proven to be invaluable. It taught me to ask good questions, which I’ve been able to apply outside of the counseling context.

Please describe your current position.

In my role as Employee Programs Coordinator, I develop a talent management strategy that aligns with business objectives for a department of 80 full-time employees and 150 student employees. This includes providing support and coordination for departmental interviewing and on-boarding, developing training and professional development programs, and leading retention efforts.
I also advise departmental leadership on topics related to organizational effectiveness. This position is separate from our Human Resources department, so I am not involved with enforcing HR policies regarding things like performance management or payroll/benefits. I enjoy my current position because I am able to research best practices and create opportunities that benefit people every day.

What are your plans for the future?

My plan for the future involves continuing to learn. I believe the best leaders are the best learners. I certainly still have a lot to learn after only two years in the workforce. Graduate school might be in my future eventually, but for now I enjoy my current role. I enjoy the mission of higher education and I know that my work here makes a difference in other people lives.

Do you have any advice for undergraduates?

The best advice I’ve received is to push yourself outside of your comfort zone, because this is where you learn the most about your interests and what motivates you. I really wasn’t comfortable with the “business world” because I had a pre-conceived idea of what it meant, and that I needed to make a quick decision. I’m happy I took the time to explore the field because I discovered my passion lies in the combination of psychology and business. I felt the pressure to graduate in four years, so I sometimes felt that I couldn’t afford to explore majors. I’m glad I didn’t rush into something too quickly. When you spend an average of 40 hours a week at work, you might as well enjoy it.

It is great to have good grades but make sure you are involved out of the classroom. In my experience, it is some of the out of the classroom experiences that really helped to reinforce what I was learning in my classes. Interviews are a two-way street. It’s an opportunity for you to put your best foot forward, but also an opportunity for you to assess whether an organization is a good fit for you. Make sure you ask questions to understand whether the role aligns with your values and interests. As a graduate from UW-Madison, you have the experience to make a positive impact in the world.

Students interested in connecting with Ms. Zavoral can contact her through badgerbridge.com
Badger Bridge is a professional network created exclusively for UW-Madison alumni and students. Creating an account is simple and free—you can even connect your LinkedIn account to quickly complete your Badger Bridge profile.

Use Badger Bridge to...

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Join the global, online community of UW-Madison students and alumni today!
Psi Chi is a nonprofit established in 1929 that is committed to “recognizing and promoting excellence in the science and application of psychology.” Psi Chi has chapters (groups) at more than 1,160 universities in the United States and 14 countries! Being a member of Psi Chi is exciting and prestigious, and the UW-Madison chapter is currently fundraising to support all Psi Chi programs that help students and faculty, as well as our own chapter. Some examples of the benefits that Psi Chi provides include scholarships, research funding, and travel grants.

We would greatly appreciate it if you would Give Back to Psi Chi today with a donation. As part of this challenge, Psi Chi will give the UW-Madison chapter 10% back of what we raise so that our local chapter can benefit as well! Just visit psichi.org/donations, make your donation, and be sure to add our chapter’s name in the chapter affiliation box. The Psi Chi Chapter Challenge will be taking place until April 30, 2018.

Thank you so much for helping Psi Chi and the UW-Madison chapter, as well as supporting thousands of students pursuing psychology educations!
About Psi Chi

Psi Chi is the International Honor Society in Psychology, founded in 1929 for the purpose of encouraging, stimulating, and maintaining excellence in scholarship, and advancing the science of psychology. The mission of Psi Chi is to produce a well-educated, ethical, and socially responsible member committed to contributing to the science and profession of psychology and to society in general.

The UW-Madison Chapter offers practical experience to members through events designed to enhance the regular curriculum. At monthly member meetings, we discuss chapter affairs and service opportunities, and hear from guest speakers in the field.

Benefits of Becoming a Psi Chi Member:

• Members receive international recognition for academic excellence in psychology
• There are over $400,000 available annually in awards and grants for undergraduates, graduates, faculty advisors, and chapters
• Psi Chi’s Career Center features thousands of psychology-related job openings
• Members have access to three useful publications: Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research, Eye on Psi Chi magazine, and Psi Chi Digest
• Involvement with a local chapter promotes leadership experience, community service opportunities, mentoring involvement, and networking
• Members receive access to local, national, and international psychology conventions

Psi Chi accepts applications for new members biannually in the fall and spring semesters. Membership is open to students that meet the qualifications and are making the study of psychology one of their major interests. Please see our website for more details: http://psych.wisc.edu > Undergraduate Program > Involvement > Student Orgs > Psi Chi

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