

PSYCHOLOGY NEWS

JMU Undergraduate Program

April 2001

Summer Psychology Experiences

Peer Advisors offer suggestions based upon their personal experiences

Written by Lisa Allgaier, Ryanne Cannady, Kim Castora, Bethany Meade, Kim Payne, Heidi Petway, Jill Sundheim, and Nancy Sherman

ave you ever caught yourself daydreaming about that corner office with a window view? Or maybe you have wondered what it would be like to study in another country, work one-on-one with children, or understand the workings of the legal system. Stop dreaming because this can happen for you! Summer is a great time to try out these ideas. You can gain invaluable insights into your future career path, define your career goals, and benefit from experiences that will help you obtain your first job.

You may ask what summer experiences are relevant to your psychology major. Many options are available. Positions can be found at local hospitals, counseling centers, local companies, government agencies, schools and universities, as well as local law enforcement and criminal justice agencies. You may not only observe the work environment, but you may be involved with "hands on" learning opportunities. You can take an inside look at what tasks are performed in a particular profession.

To help you in your search for the right summer experience, this article describes how you can find a relevant summer experience.

How to Find a Summer Experience

Ryanne Cannady

Spring semester is generally the time to start looking for a summer psychology position. The sooner the search begins, the better! There are many resources available to help you find the perfect summer experience. Psychology magazines such as *Psychology Today* and the APA Monitor frequently have advertisements for upcoming national and international internships for undergraduates and graduating seniors. The JMU Department of Psychology Undergraduate Program web page has a specific link supplying information for summer research opportunities and fellowships. This web page may be found at cep.jmu.edu/ugpsyc; click on "Summer Internship Opportunities." The JMU Academic Advising and Career Development Center (AACD) web page, also offers an internship database at www.jmu.edu/career; click on "Student Section." Students can also call the AACD at x6555 and make an appointment to meet with a staff member. AACD offers internship workshops throughout the semester and conducts an Internship Fair annually, that is open to all majors.

Many students overlook another valuable resource – Psychology professors! Some professors in the School of Psychology conduct research during the summer, and may be looking for student assistants. Ask faculty members in your field of interest if they need help, or if they know of any opportunities for you.

You can also use your time off in the summer to participate in a summer travel program. These programs provide students with valuable experience in the field they wish to pursue upon graduation. Information about summer travel may be obtained from JMU's Office of International Education in Hillcrest Hall or call 568-6419.

The Internet is a great resource to find a summer opportunity in the subject area and location you are looking for. Cold call companies and organizations that interest you and ask if they need help.

The Peer Advising Office in Johnston 113 offers many books, pamphlets, and binders on summer internships locally, nationally, and internationally that can help find a summer experience.

BEGIN NOW! You will need time to make contacts and send applications. KEEP ORGANIZED! You might want to create a notebook or file containing the information gathered from each internship site and a timeline to keep track of application deadlines.

A Corporate Experience

Nancy Sherman

After a long search using JMU Career Services, contacts, and "cold calls" to companies inquiring about programs, I located my summer internship through an online job-posting site. During the summer between my junior and senior years, I secured an internship through the Human Resources Associate Program at Chase Manhattan Bank (now J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.) in New York City. Chase's Human Resources' function encompasses employee relations, recruitment, development, and compensation.

My internship focused on career development and executive coaching. I attended career development training sessions available to the 80,000+ employees of the bank and analyzed the content of these sessions. As the department made strides to move all career development initiatives online, I helped to evaluate career assessment tools offered over the Internet. The executive coaching aspects of my internship allowed me to interact with external consultants of the bank who work with top management on their development needs. In order to allow communications between coaches, executives, and HR professionals, I designed a database to be used on the Chase Intranet.

This experience provided me with many great learning opportunities emphasizing creativity, problem solving, and attention to detail. I am grateful I was able to apply my interest in Industrial/Organizational psychology to a "hands-on" experience. I have actually continued to work for the company from my apartment here in Harrisonburg as a telecommuter/"e"-intern.

I have opted to enter the field of consulting next year in order to apply my experiences in client relationships. My experiences with Chase confirmed my professional interests, and helped me to realize that at this point in my life I want the fast-paced, dynamic, and travel-friendly environment that consulting offers. I encourage all psychology students to seek an "out-of-classroom" experience. For more information about this internship, visit www.jpmorganchase.com.

Summer in Vienna

Bethany Meade

I always wanted to study abroad. When I heard from a friend about the opportunity to go to Vienna, Austria during the summer and get credit for my capstone in psychology, I filled out the application right away! I went to the Office of International Programs in Hillcrest Hall seeking information on a psychology summer program which was affiliated

with Beaver College. I found a packet describing all summer programs which are offered every year. The website for Beaver College Education Abroad www.beaver.edu/cea contains some very helpful information about the itinerary of the program, what to expect from the difference in culture, and what to pack for your stay. I discussed my financial needs with my parents to make sure I could afford the trip (approximately \$3500, not including spending money), applied for a passport, and found eight small pictures of myself. The program, "Vienna's Psychologists and Art Nouveau," consisted of two three-credit courses. Students have the option of taking one or both courses. I only took the psychology course. The course focused on the three psychologists who studied and worked in Vienna: Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, and Viktor Frankl.

I loved the experience of living in Vienna with a family and studying where founders of psychology developed their theories. Our group learned first hand about each psychologist by visiting where they lived. We went on class trips to Freud's house and office, where Alfred Adler was a protégé, and to a concentration camp similar to the one where Frankl developed his theories of man's inherent desire and search for meaning in life. The background I gained in Vienna has enhanced my psychology experience by providing a foundation for the courses I have taken over the past two semesters.

It was a growing experience to be on my own in a foreign country with college students from other universities. We shared our love for analyzing behavior and helping others. We traveled on the weekend to Florence, Amsterdam, Salzburg, and Prague. I developed strong friendships and learned a lot about my personality, such as how I work with others and how I can survive on my own. I had the time of my life and would recommend it to anyone!

My Summer at Camp

Heidi Petway

While searching for a summer experience, my main concerns were location and expenses. Opportunities near my hometown are limited, and it can be expensive to live in metropolitan areas. It was from this dilemma that I developed an interest in working at an overnight camp, where living expenses are included. I searched the Internet and found lots of information at www.campstaff.com, a site that provides information about hundreds of camps by location and type. There are several different types of camps such as special needs camps, specialty camps, and sports camps for both children and adults. My goal was to find a camp that served children with emotional or behavioral problems. I accepted a position as an administrator at Camp Starfish in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

The children at Camp Starfish ranged in age from 4-15 and experienced a variety of problems including ADHD, histories of child abuse and neglect, depression, anxiety disorders, and social skills deficits. As an administrator, I provided direct care for children at the camp, and developed a variety of activities and programs for both the kids and the counselors. My skills and knowledge obtained as a psychology major were crucial to my job. My coursework helped me understand many of the problems the children were experiencing, and I used many of the counseling skills that I learned at JMU. My direct experience in working with the children and in observing trained professionals also gave me the opportunity to improve my skills. I improved my leadership and communication skills through my role as a supervisor.

The summer was extremely challenging. I worked long hours and found myself becoming both physically and emotionally exhausted at times. As I look back on the experience, however, I think of it as not only the most challenging time of my life, but also the most rewarding. In many ways I was given the opportunity to be a kid again, and at the same time I saw the positive impact my efforts had on the children. I strongly encourage other students who are interested in a psychology-related career working with children to consider a camp experience.

Interning with a Juvenile Parole Officer

Kim Castora

My summer psychology experience between my junior and senior years was with the Juvenile Court Service Unit in Staunton, Virginia. Though I was completing this internship as part of my Criminal Justice minor, I used psychology resources to find it. The Peer Advising Office in Johnston Hall has three binders with information about field placement sites. I searched through these binders and found one that captured my interest; interning with a juvenile parole officer. I contacted the individual listed for field

placement and spoke with her about my interests. She agreed to review my vita and to interview me. At the end of the interview, I was offered the internship.

I spent the summer commuting to Staunton and Waynesboro four days a week, which turned out be well worth the time and fuel costs! As an intern, I performed most tasks a juvenile parole officer performs. I managed my own caseload of 10 youths, all of whom had been incarcerated, some were still in state custody. I attended court hearings/trials, wrote a Social History Report, visited juvenile correctional centers, and met with parolees and their families. These meetings took place in the office, at their homes, or at places of employment. I even filed two violations of parole for individuals who broke parole rules.

The relationship between psychology and criminal justice was evident as I met for many hours on end with parolees and their families. Family relationships for most of these adolescents were strained or non-existent. In most cases, the teens were being raised by one parent and were often engaged in verbal and physical altercations. I mediated many disputes and attempted to teach both parents and children how to communicate more effectively. I also spent many hours with two adolescents, discussing their addictions and the problems they experienced from using drugs.

My background in psychology gave me the basic knowledge and skills necessary to be an effective listener for these teens and their families. I was more understanding and aware of the family dynamics and the issues both the adolescents and the parents faced. This rewarding experience broadened

my knowledge and awareness of psychology and provided the opportunity for enormous personal, emotional and mental growth. I established helpful for a future job search.

I hope that this internship description inspires other psychology students to pursue their own summer experiences. Their efforts will be rewarded with an enriching and educational experience! For students interested in this internship site, contact the Juvenile Court Service Unit in Staunton, or a Court Service in your hometown.

In Conclusion

Jill Sundheim

Summer experiences allow students to take the knowledge gained in the classroom and apply it to a professional setting or expand it in new directions, such as camps and summer abroad programs. The previous examples describe a few of the many internships available to psychology majors. Summer experience supervisors can be used as personal contacts for future employment or references on applications. Undergraduate field experiences are valuable when applying to graduate schools or for employment after graduation. They can also help to shape your future plans by providing you with the opportunity to explore a career without long-term commitment. They may clarify your career path. In addition, internships can be fun! You can be immersed in work that is enjoyable and surrounded by people who share common interests.