PRE-MAJOR PLANNING

As a pre-psychology major, you have time to plan for the future and optimize your chances for success in psychology or a closely related field. Many of the opportunities available to psychology majors require advance planning. **START NOW!**

If you know that you like psychology but are not sure about your specific areas of interest, consider:

a) Visiting the Career Development Center to take the diagnostic tests and consult with a career counselor
b) As soon as you qualify (generally, completing Psy 100) take Psy 301 and courses from the psychology major requirements from group three, subgroup A, which focus on populations often studied by psychologists, and/or group three, subgroup C, which focus on roles and careers of psychologists.

If you know your specific interest area, and it involves graduate study, begin now to take the necessary courses and develop relationships with faculty who can provide guidance and support.

Some suggestions for course choices and strategy:

a) Take solid courses (research, statistics, science) rather than obvious filler courses. Both employers and graduate school admissions committees look beyond GPA at the content of the courses that contribute to the GPA.

b) Don’t take too many CR/NCR classes, too many Incompletes, or too many Withdrawals. Such marks on your transcript suggest any or all of the following – laziness, lack of organization and follow-through or manipulation. None of those qualities please either employers or graduate school committees. To avoid too many incompletes and withdrawals, check the course syllabi in Peer Advising to see how much work is involved in a course before you register for it.

Some suggestions for impressing faculty (and thereby improving your grades):

**DO:**
- Turn in work on time
- Ask relevant questions which reflect outside reading and thought
- Sit where the instructor learns to recognize you
- Attend class regularly
- Discuss class topics during faculty office hours
- Attend department colloquia and other activities
- Be pleasant when you pass in the courtyard or hallways

**DON’T:**
- Talk to neighbors or read in class
- Ask: “Did I miss anything important last week while I was at the beach or…?”
- Miss exams, and request make-up exams (except in a REAL emergency)
- Ask: “Is this going to be on the test?”
- Wait to ask for help until just before the final exam
- Nit-pick over test questions
- Chat excessively about non-academic matters during office hours
- Engage in extended conversations in the hallways

Finding your niche in the field of psychology is a challenging, time-consuming enterprise. Do not expect anyone to decide for you what you should do. Expect to talk with many people, read about the field, view videos, take courses, etc. A good place to begin your search is in the Peer Advising offices. Ask one of the peer advisors to show you what is available about careers and graduate school. Use the facilities. Hint – it will be less crowded if you avoid the first two weeks of the semester.

**REMEMBER – Take Psychology 301, Psychology as a Discipline and a Profession as soon as possible.** This required course covers careers in psychology and preparation for graduate study as well as key controversies and ethical issues in the field. Course assignments include course planning, use of PsyInfo (literature search in psychology), and a project on career development or graduate school planning. **You may take this course as soon as you have finished Psychology 100.**