

BBS RECRUITMENT EVENT e-PACKET

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Areas of Research Focus and Associated Labs

UGA's Behavioral and Brain Sciences program houses laboratories where research focuses on at least one of the following areas:

Developmental Psychology Social-Personality Cognitive Neuroscience

Health Psychology Behavioral Neuroscience Social/Affective

Neuroscience

Vision Sciences Clinical Neuroscience

Lab Name	Lab Director
Infant Research Lab	Dr. Janet Frick
Health and Development Lab	Dr. Katie Ehrlich
Vision Sciences Lab	Dr. Randy Hammond
Family, Relationships, Emotions, Stress, and Health Lab	Dr. Anne Shaffer
Close Relationships Lab	Dr. Rich Slatcher
Clinical Neuroscience Lab	Dr. Lawrence Sweet
Motivation and Behavior Lab	Dr. Michelle vanDellen
Visual Perception Lab	Dr. James Brown
Gene-Brain-Social Behavior Lab	Dr. Brian Haas
Merging Emerging Realities Lab	Dr. Keith Campbell
Clinical and Cognitive Neuroscience Lab	Dr. Brett Clementz & Dr. Jennifer McDowell
Georgia Emotion Neuro-Imaging Lab	Dr. Dean Sabatinelli
Georgia Decision Lab	Dr. Adam Goodie
Georgia Attitude, Bias, and Behavior Acquisition Lab	Dr. Allison Skinner-Dorkenoo

# of Months Out from Application Due Date	Tasks Due	Done?
9-10 months out	Decide to Apply (start thinking about this in the Fall, if your deadline is Spring/May; start thinking about this in the Spring, if your deadline is Fall/December) Seek Research and/or Applied Opportunities (depending on interests) Finish Coursework (if degree not finished) Search for Programs Begin GRE Prep *GRE is now optional*	
7-8 months out	Continue Program Search Draft CV (get feedback) Continue GRE Prep (take a practice test) *optional	
5-6 months out	Finalize Program List Organize Program List using Excel (see Section 3 for tips) Draft Personal Statement (get feedback) Edit CV Take GRE (take at least two months before applications are due; earlier is better in case you need to take again) *optional Request Letters of Recommendation (initial request should be early as professors need advance notice) Begin Contacting Faculty of Interest (e.g., email potential mentors, introduce yourself at conferences, have mentors introduce you and/or put in a good word for you)	
3-4 months out	Start Online Applications Request Transcripts Request GRE scores (or take GRE again, if needed) *optional Revise Personal Statement Finalize CV Follow up with Letter Writers Prepare Packets for Letter Writers Gather Information on Program Funding	
1-2 months out	Complete and Send Applications Follow up on Transcripts Follow up with GRE Scores *optional Follow up with Letter Writers Follow up with Faculty Mentors of Interest (if needed)	
	Apps Due	
1 month after	Application Review Time	
1-5 months after	Interview Invitations (sometimes) OR Decisions (Offers, Waitlists, Rejections)	
6+ months after	Getting Ready to Start the Program	

This is a general application timeline; your timeline and tasks may differ depending on your background and applications. Please note the GRE is no longer a requirement for our program.

PERSONAL STATEMENT GUIDE

Personal Statement Do's & Don'ts

DO

DO NOT

- · Keep your audience in mind
- · Be accurate and be yourself
- Let the reader know who you are, what motivates you, what characteristics come together to make you unique
- Use the active voice and avoid passive verbs; using "I" is to be expected in a statement that is about YOU
- Make connections between your experience and the resulting value or meaning to you
- Use specific examples to illustrate connections you have made, conclusions you have reached, and insights you have gained from your experiences
- · Point out specific features of the school that attract you
- Include academic distinctions (publications, study abroad, internships) related to your goals
- Include information that puts your achievements into perspective (such as working full-time during your undergraduate education)
- Include any special skills that may make you a
 preferred candidate for acceptance into the program
 (e.g., research, computer, laboratory, foreign language
 skills)
- Put creativity and imagination into your opening remarks to capture the attention of the reader
- Make your point early and be sure to focus on the positive
- · Follow the school's instructions TO THE LETTER
- Keep your statement concise two pages or less (and within the word-count limit)
- Consider the personal statement a persuasive essay
- Use your conclusion to pull everything together and make a final attempt to sell yourself to the graduate program
- When it is absolutely necessary to explain shortfalls or deficiencies, consider using an addendum rather than including this in your personal statement
- Enlist others to proofread your essay for grammar, syntax, punctuation, word usage, and style
- Use a highly readable font with conventional spacing and margins

- Write your autobiography or simply reiterate information from your application or your resume
- Fall into the trap of "I've always wanted to be..."
- Compose a list of your achievements and personal qualities
- Generalize, lecture, whine, or present yourself as an expert in the field of study
- · Pretend to be the "ideal" applicant
- Include anything that you cannot substantiate or anything that is untrue
- Talk about money as a motivating factor in your plans for the future
- Discuss your minority status or disadvantaged background unless you have a compelling and unique story that relates directly to it
- Remind the school of its ranking among the various programs of its type
- Waste your personal statement opportunity with a silly introduction or conclusion
- Use a gimmicky style or format
- Submit supplemental materials unless the school requests them
- · Get the name of the school wrong
- Use clichés and common information. Almost all applicants are intelligent, hardworking, and have a strong desire to pursue an advanced degree.
- Include high school accomplishments, as they are almost always irrelevant at this point in your professional development.
- Risk writing about a controversial topic. Consider your audience. If you feel passionate about a topic, it is certainly your right to express your feelings about it.
 Just be aware that your audience may not share your strong opinions.
- Address problems or weaknesses in your personal statement. Keep the personal statement positive, even if the subject is overcoming adversity.
- Disclose aspects of yourself (personal, medical, religious, etc.) which you are uncomfortable sharing.
- Use sensationalistic stories that are unrelated to your program of interest.

PERSONAL STATEMENT GUIDE

Ideas For Personal Statement

Before you begin writing:

- Research the school, the graduate program, the faculty, and possible areas of focus within the graduate field of study and/or associated career field.
- Have a very clear understanding of why you want to go to graduate school, and why each school is a good fit with your background and interests.
- Think about what makes you unique. An experience or person in your life may have molded you or contributed to your desire
 to attend graduate school. Do you have a hobby or artistic ability about which you are passionate?
- Determine how you can express what distinguishes you from other applicants and how your goals or research interests match
 the program and its faculty.
- Be aware of your long-range goals, how an advanced degree will help you achieve those goals,
- · and how you might use your degree in the future.
- Be ready to articulate the most compelling reasons for the school or program to accept your application.
- Consider referring to elements of the program that are a good fit for you.

Content

- Focus on your specific interests and goals as they pertain to academics
- Determine what questions are being asked and answer them fully, paying careful attention to those that have multiple parts
- Typically, graduate programs want to learn:
 - What your purpose is in choosing graduate studies
 - o What your area of focus will be
 - o How you will use your graduate studies in your career or future plans
 - How your academic and extracurricular experiences combine to make you a unique candidate
 - What problems or inconsistencies appear in your records/grades/scores, as well as what you have done to address these issues or specific positive qualities that may temper this information
 - What additional commitments/responsibilities you have that may present challenges (such as a significant workload outside of school) and (as above) what your plans are to address the situation and/or what positive qualities may serve to balance or temper this
 - What made you choose the specific institution to which you are applying
 - Who you are!

Style and Approach

The perfect style and approach to writing a personal statement is the one that best fits who you are as an individual. Beyond that, the style should be clear, well-organized, and specific with special attention given to transitions that facilitate the flow of the document.

Tips for writing an outstanding research statement

At NYU, we normally receive 200-300 applications to our Social Psychology program from prospective students—many of whom have outstanding "objective" credentials (e.g., GRE, GPA, etc). Therefore, we use the research statement to get a sense of each applicant's writing ability, intellectual potential, passion, and fit with the program. The most important thing you can do to increase your chances of admission is to forcefully articulate why you would be a great fit for our social psychology program. Many students make the mistake of writing a biography when we are really looking for is a description of your fit in terms of research experience and interests. A generic or superficial statement is almost never sufficient for admission at NYU.

We are especially interested in applicants who have actually read some of our research, have thought critically about it, and have specific ideas for extending it in a novel direction. I am looking for applicants who outline their research interests, propose interesting questions, and communicate their passion for these issues. It is very easy for us to get excited about students who demonstrate an understanding of our research because it demonstrates a serious of purpose and clarity of thought. A PhD is a major commitment, and we want to see evidence that you know what you are getting into and that you will flourish at NYU.

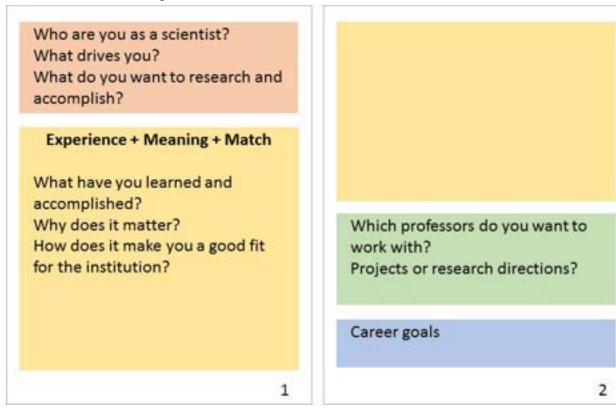
As you write you statement, you should address the following questions: Why are you pursuing a PhD? What are your core research interests? Why are these issues scientifically or practically important? How have your previous experiences informed these interests and prepared you for your PhD at NYU? Why is NYU (and my lab) well suited for pursuing these interests? Are you particularly keen on working with certain faculty members (we highly favor students who are likely to collaborate with two or more faculty)? Why or why not? What skills do you bring to NYU and which skills do you hope to acquire? Why is NYU a good place to develop these skills? How will these skills help you address your specific research questions?

Statements that answer these questions are truly informative. They tell our faculty why you want to complete you PhD at NYU, the issues you hope to address, the skills you bring, and the skills you hope to acquire. Address these questions clearly and in a compelling fashion will make your application more informative and increase your chances of admission.

General Tips:

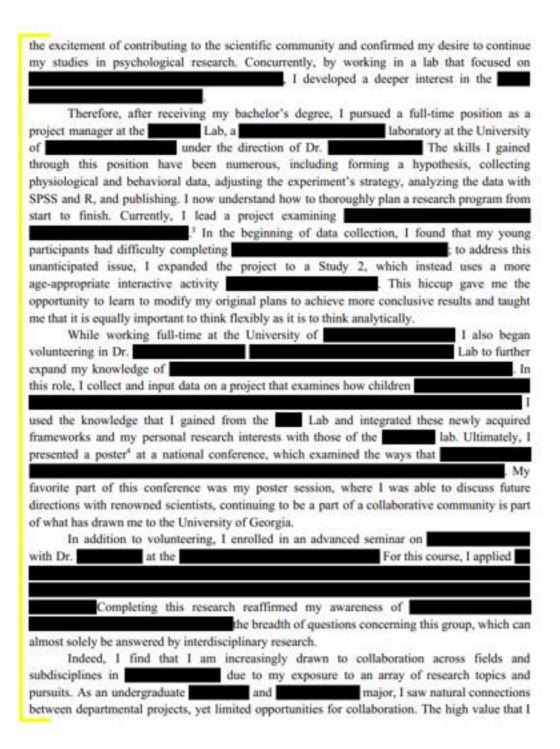
- 1. Get feedback from mentors and peers! The professors and graduate students you work with are experts in successfully applying to graduate school. Ask for their feedback on your application materials (e.g., statements, CVs, writing samples, etc.). Make sure you ask them for feedback well in advance of deadlines though. They'll be busy, so respect their time.
- 2. Some of your peers might be in the middle of applying to graduate school right now. Ask them for advice and feedback. They'll likely have a unique perspective.
- 3. Helpful links:
 - a. Questions to ask yourself before applying
 - b. 6 questions to answer before applying
 - c. Answers to common questions about personal statements
 - d. What to do if you're rejected?; Another resource
- 4. When writing a personal statement, remember the following tips:
 - a. A strong personal statement will clearly describe what you want to study, why you want to study it, and will demonstrate that you have the skills and knowledge necessary to study it. It will also show why the specific mentor/s you are interested in are a good fit.
 - b. Check each program's requirements for personal statements (word limits, inclusionary criteria, deadlines, etc.). Some programs require more than one personal statement, while some programs also require you to answer a series of short-answer questions.
 - c. Use this space to make yourself more personable to the admissions committee. Include a personal story that ties your research interests and experiences together. Stay away from subjects that may turn the admissions committee off of your application (e.g., your personal mental health).
 - d. Think of yourself as a salesperson. Give detailed information about your accomplishments, and do not assume that readers are familiar with every other part of your application packet. Your personal statement should communicate that you are a great candidate for the program to which you are applying by repeating and elaborating on the accomplishments listed on your CV. Your statement should emphasize your readiness for graduate school by clearly stating how your experiences have prepared you. It should also communicate your potential to succeed by demonstrating your interest in a specific topic and motivation to study it.

Personal Statement Template



Sample Traditional Personal Statement

Personal anecdote should be here, it should draw in your readers and explain your reasoning for wanting to pursue these studies -
reasoning in waiting to pursue tress states
. As I have moved
through my observations on a
personal level and in an academic capacity, have inspired a deep interest particularly across program at the University of Georgia to study
and, more specifically,
nterests are inspired by my personal experience as well as my research experience across various subdisciplines. UGA is a natural fit; the collaborative research, emphasis on teaching competence, and the advisors' innovative research have drawn me to this program and can help me expand upon my current interdisciplinary research interests. My deeply rooted personal interest in came into focus as I grew
older; as such, I decided to pursue it in a more formalized, academic setting. My first academic experience in psychological study of was as an undergraduate researcher in the Lab at University. In the Lab, I realized that my lingering questions regarding are being investigated on a much larger scale. I worked with Dr. to examine in different communities. In this lab, I
examined and a second a second and a second
field work in all of these neighborhoods and saw how affects individuals,
particularly, how
This difference only further deepened my curiosity about and how it relates to
explore how
Lab at University, where I was able to pursue this research question.
In this position, I examined how
1. We
replicated the and found a positive relationship those who hold are more likely to
ultimately able to present a poster ² on this project, which allowed me to more fully understand



place on interdisciplinary research is one of the many reasons why I find the graduate program at the University of Georgia so appealing. This program offers the chance to integrate the multidisciplinary perspectives I have already begun to explore:
As I have navigated these subdisciplines of throughout my undergraduate
education and as a full-time employee, one constant has been my mentors. While an undergraduate at guided my initial interest, and, as I narrowed down my passions, Dr. offered projects specifically tailored to them. At the
University of encourages exploration, which has allowed me to nurture my interests, despite not being a topic addressed in
her lab. In addition, Dr. and Dr. mentor me even though I am not a part of their field. As a graduate student at the University of Georgia, alongside my research endeavors, I look forward not only to exciting research opportunities, but also to advising students who share similar interests and supporting their intellectual growth, just as my mentors have with my own. UGA's emphasis on teaching and the opportunity for graduate students to be a part of the will allow me to create meaningful
relationships with mentors and form relationships with mentees.
At the University of Georgia, I plan to focus on and the effects of processes that create these processes that create these because of our overlapping
interests. Dr. see search on separate is particularly interesting to me because of the work that she has already begun to do with
that we so often see when talking about the continuing this research and expanding to other kinds of the will be an important next step.
are the fastest growing population in the United States*; while there is a breadth of research on this group, most of the findings center on
individuals
a scholar, I believe it is imperative that we extend the scope of research on as our country continues to
gap, and I plan to advance this area of study during my career as a researcher with the support of the University of Georgia.
References: 1. Citation that speaks to the literature
2. Prospective Student's Conference Presentation 3.
Prospective Student's Publication in Prep. 4. Prospective Student's Conference Presentation 5. Pt of Interest's publication
6. Citation that speaks to the Intersture

Sample Non-traditional Personal Statement 1

Indeed, throughout my education and	d personal life,
Upon moving to the US to pursue his	gher education,
Passionate about reducing	I sought leadership roles
	ity's institutions would allow me to improve e me to research the consequences
	examine how language engenders social hierarchies and lied the knowledge
	eloping research questions examining Even though I was approaching my projects
my research ques	
And the second s	ity between research focus and discipline showed me tha
learning was necessary for me to delve into	was formative, but it became more than evident that i the inquiries of psychology. Having explored these
	. I see that my academic experiences and my persona
Being a member of Dr.	
	my undergraduate coursework and my time as a
	te projects pertaining to my research interests. As a research coded qualitative data for interventions aimed at
	s an RA for Dr. s lab, I run participants through
experimental protocols on	studies. Valuable skills I have acquired
	efining study designs, evaluating peer-reviewed research
	alternative assessments, and theorizing future directions ojects, I created my own independent project investigating
beyond neipting impreneur mese pre	Consistent with my predictions, we
found	
We have also expl	ored whether

and literatures. We investigated the We have finished running statistical analyses using SPSS and are designing our second study. Taken together, their guidance has equipped me to methodologically transform into concrete and testable research questions. In addition to my academic pursuits, I have actively sought opportunities to better my community. As a tutor in my undergraduate career, I was in the unique
position to improve by helping navigate the
of higher education. Likewise, I became an
student ambassador to help
of the university. I quickly realized this wouldn't be enough—structural
changes needed to come from within our institution if we aimed to not renege
After being elected the
represented the biggest college of our university to bring students' concerns to the administration
and faculty members. After months of planning, we launched the university's first-ever
to make students aware of
and improve
to make students and faculty members of color
our liberal arts institution. My commitment to reduce is demonstrated in the
opportunities I have pursued throughout my undergraduate and graduate career. I will be an
engaged member of the university's community by bringing these experiences to the University of Georgia.
My diverse scholastic and professional experiences and eagerness to learn has and will
continue to allow me to thrive as a graduate scholar. After reading Dr. spublications, I feel strongly drawn to her lab because her work concentrates on
. Under her guidance, I will continue to
investigate how a personal subject for me as a
. The program at the University of
Georgia will give me access to the faculty, curriculum, and resources I need to continue
high-level scholarship and achieve my goal of being a university faculty member. I will apply
my findings to help create atmospheres where
my mixings to neith create authospheres where

Yours Sincerely,

CV Example 1 (Name here)

Mailing Address City, STATE 30602

• @gmail.com

EDUCATION

The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia B.S., Psychology

Expected December 2020

Minor: Spanish

Honors Thesis: An Investigation of Potential Moderators of Using the Self as a

Referent for Behavior

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Facilitator 2010 - 2011Atlanta, Georgia I assessed the research conducted either on-site or at-home. Once enough participants were recruited, I organized session materials, coordinated client schedules, and managed group testing sessions when they occurred in the building. During these sessions I worked closely

Undergraduate Research Assistant

with clients in the facility to ensure

2011

Lab, University of Georgia

goals were met.

Under the direction of . Ph.D.

I assisted with data collection, analysis, and interpretation. In addition, I attended lab meetings and contributed to theory development and design for research experiments. During my time as a lab assistant I conducted study sessions for several, methodologically varied experiments.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Guest Lectures

How Do People and their Environment Interact with Each Other?

Undergraduate environmental engineering course guest lecture, University of Georgia

An Alternative Explanation for Ego-Depletion Effects

Undergraduate self-regulation course guest lecture, University of Georgia

The Role of Nature in Human Optimal Experience and Functioning

Undergraduate existential psychology course guest lecture, University of Georgia

PUBLICATIONS & GRANT ACTIVITY

Underexplored Ideas in the Light of Modern Psychology. Heroism Science.

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program (unfunded, submitted November, 2014), "Effects of Societal Mindsets and Arginine Vasopressin Levels on Out-group Aggression".

CONFERENCE POSTER AND PAPER PRESENTATIONS

Newly Diagnosed HIV-positive Men Who Have Sex with Men. Poster accepted for the Annual Meeting and Scientific Sessions of the Society of Behavioral Medicine.

Membolic L & Morting 8. (2018). Investigating how Components of Ancestral vs. Modern Societies Influence the Personality-Behavior Link. Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Atlanta, GA.

(2017). Exploring the Disparity between Police Shootings of Black and White Participants. Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Southeastern Social Psychologists, Atlantic Beach, FL.

HONORS & AWARDS

Dean's List UGA Psi Chi Chapter 3rd Place Paper Award 2018 - present 2018

TRAINING AND RELEVANT_COURSEWORK

Languages

Spanish, advanced writing and speaking

Statistical Software

SPSS, R, M*Plus

Undergraduate Statistical Courses

Psychometrics, University of Georgia ANOVA and Regression, University of Georgia

Ethics Training

University of Georgia Ethics Training Course University of Georgia Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy Training

SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT Diversity and Anti-Racism Committee 2020 – present Founding Member Georgia Science and Engineering Fair 2018 – present Volunteer Judge Student Mentoring Committee 2018 – 2019 Vice President Annual Meeting of the UGA Psi Chi Chapter Volunteer Judge

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Current rese	arch interests concern processes	
. M	ore specifically, has a keen interest in how	
	EDUCATION	
	Seeking Graduate Student	January 2018
University o		
Coursework.		
Bachelor of	Science in	May 2018
	University,	G.P.A.
Relevant Co	ursework:	
2010	HONORS AND AWARDS	
May 2018	Cum Laude Graduate, University	
2015-2018 2014-2018	Dean's List, University Scholar, University	
2014-2018	Four-year scholarship awarded with a focus on developing	leaders for a diverse
	and complex world.	leaders for a diverse
2014	Leadership Program Graduate,	University
	Certificate awarded for completion of semester long	led mentoring
	program designed to develop leadership.	
	CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS	9
	., (2019, June) "	
	" Conference,	
	, (2019, April) "	
Con	ference,	The second of the second
		(2018, May)
		Conference,

MANUSCRIPTS/PUBLICATIONS (2019) " " Manuscript in preparation. (2019) " " Manuscript in preparation. RESEARCH EXPERIENCE Research Assistant July 2018-Present Lab, University of Location Assists research that aims to examine with particular attention to · Collects data from Codes and processes data from multiple projects. Project Manager September 2018-Present Lab, University of Location Responsible for the oversight of two studies which evaluate varying Capture and analyze utilizing equipment. · Conduct data processing and analysis using MS Excel, SPSS, and R, including creating code to most efficiently organize large raw data sets. - Contribute to multiple research study designs and development and generate amendments to protocols for Institutional Review Board review and approval as the study needs change over time. Research Assistant January 2018-May 2018 University Location Lab. Managed research that hypothesized that . Research attempted to understand the c in order to reduce them and improve · Evaluated over 150 college students with the use of Qualtrics, a software for collecting and analyzing data for research in a laboratory setting. · Presented a coauthored poster on this research at the conference. Research Assistant September 2016-December 2016 University Location

that exists in different

Supported research that examined varying levels of

communities

with varying in order to general	te recommendations for the
· Collected data from	
· Coded and analyzed the data using Mi	crosoft Excel and Microsoft Access.
Research Intern	June 2013
Lab, Research Institute	Location
Aided in the development of the	
	-58
· Focused on creating grids for enhan	nced p
Research Intern	June 2013
Lab,	Research Institute
Location	
Supported research which implemented a	
28 25	
· Tested the	
within the	state of states.
· Analyzed data collected by the QST	AR to determine the adequacy
	ENTORING SERVICE
Education Leader	May 2016-January 2018
Student Alliance for	University Location
A student created and organized club which	h addresses issues such as
	ers of the problems and current events surrounding
the	Anala and a same and a same a same
Co-developed a curriculum for individual curriculum.	duals to increase job
eligibility.	stants as they created their own presentations and
led their own group activities.	stants as they created their own presentations and
Junior Coach	September 2015-September 2016
	Location
A company that provides fun and educational se	occer classes for children one to twelve.

- · Promoted to Junior Coach within first month of employment.
- Created lesson plans to teach team work, discipline, and ball control skills to players ranging in age from one to nine.

Guided and mentored assistant coaches to help build their coaching skills.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Out of School Time Leader

January 2017-July 2018

Location

A nonprofit organization that provides a comprehensive network of services for children with emotional and behavioral challenges between the ages of four and fourteen.

- Worked with children ages six to twelve with a diagnosis of PTSD and behavioral problems to decrease maladaptive behavior and increase cooperative and appropriate conduct.
- Created and implemented activities for children including: assisting with homework, mentoring, emotional support, on and off-campus recreational skills.
- Monitored and documented both maladaptive and positive behaviors to create and keep track of individual goals.

Program Associate

January 2016-July 2016

Location

A nonprofit organization that empowers individuals with developmental disabilities to increase their independence and quality of life by helping them secure or advance their careers.

- Created Individualized Success Plans (ISPs) to increase each client's job skills and then accompanied individuals out in the community at internships and volunteer opportunities to complete on-site job coaching.
- Developed relationships with various community organizations to create new internships and volunteer opportunities.
- 100% of participants were placed in an internship during this six-month period with 65% moving onto employment.

Server

January 2015-May 2018

Location

A women's shelter which provides holistic support including: meals, shelter, advocacy, and job training to help give women the necessary tools to improve their situation.

- · Prepared and served food in restaurant style to homeless women and their families.
- Provided an engaging setting for skill development and offered career advice.
- Created an instigative environment to encourage productive action.

QUALIFICATIONS/SKILLS

Computer Skills:

Proficient in R, SPSS, MS Excel, MS Access, MS Word, MS Powerpoint, Photoshop, Final Cut Pro, Prezi.

Letters of Recommendation

Most applications require a minimum of 3 letters of recommendation that are typically written by people who know you well in a professional capacity. For many, the go-to people to ask are professors for courses they have taken or heads of research labs they worked in. However, applicants are not restricted to these sources for letters of recommendation and often there are other strong candidates for whom to approach for a letter of recommendation. Other potential letter writers include:

Employer at off-campus workplace Graduate students in labs you have worked in Direct Supervisor for any internships you have completed Supervisors for any volunteer work you have done Advisor/mentor for any special or honors project

When asking for recommendation letters, remember the following tips (from SPSP):

- Make the process as easy as possible for your letter writers, who are likely very busy and have
 many other letters to write and submit. Ask your letter writers at least two months before the
 earliest letter deadline, and provide them with detailed information at least one month prior to the
 deadline. See "Checklist" tables for guidance.
- Request letters from people who can write strong, positive statements of support. Your letter
 writers should know you, and should have specific, genuine, and positive information to share
 about you and your research experience, skills, professionalism, and qualifications for graduate
 school. Detailed illustrations of your strengths are more effective than bland generalities. If
 concerned, you can ask whether the potential letter writer could write a positive letter.

Why Your Letters of Recommendation Matter (from SPSP Student Committee)

- While your personal statement is an opportunity to learn more about you, professors also want
 to know what others have to say about you. Graduate professors may weigh letters of
 recommendation highest when deciding whether to accept a student. A letter carries more weight
 if it is written by someone with a PhD who holds a faculty position in a social or personality
 psychology program, and if it is written by someone whose work the letter reader is familiar with
 or someone they know personally.
- If your undergraduate and postgraduate experiences were not in social or personality psychology, you will be most successful if your letters are from faculty members who work in