



# Bachelor of Arts in Psychological Science



## Psychology Department **Student Handbook** **2026-2027**

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California State University San Marcos  
Psychology Department Student Handbook  
2026-2027

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## ***Welcome to the CSU San Marcos Psychology Department!***

This student handbook was developed by the members of the Psychology Department faculty to inform you about our requirements, offer advice, introduce you to the faculty, and to answer general questions about our Psychological Science major. Psychology is an academic discipline grounded in scientific inquiry, critical thinking, and in-depth analysis of issues of human and animal behavior. Your understanding of our program aims, and expectations will be helpful to you. Please review the handbook carefully and keep it readily accessible for future reference. Also, visit our Psychology Department web site ([www.csusm.edu/psychology](http://www.csusm.edu/psychology)) for updates, news, and activities and follow us on Instagram @csusm\_psyc.

The Psychology Department faculty members are active scholars from diverse areas of training and specialization. The faculty is a dedicated group of instructors who seek to make your undergraduate education in Psychological Science rich and meaningful. We offer a challenging and high-quality undergraduate curriculum that provides an excellent background in psychological theory, research, and application. The rewards from succeeding in our program include a strong preparation toward your career or graduate goals, personal and professional insight, and a better appreciation of our diverse world.

Become involved in as many aspects of your university education as possible. We look forward to knowing you.

Best regards,

Psychology Department Faculty

# **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Psychology Department at Cal State San Marcos is to provide excellence in undergraduate and graduate education in the science of psychology, the scientific study of behavior in both humans and animals. Our degree program emphasizes psychology as an empirical science and the development of skills that include written and oral communication, information literacy, quantitative and qualitative research methods, and critical analysis of complex problems. We believe that consideration of multicultural perspectives and ethical issues are integral to the study of human behavior and characteristics.

## **How do we achieve this mission?**

Central to fulfilling our instructional mission is a faculty composed of excellent teachers who are active scholars. Psychology faculty members regularly contribute to scientific knowledge in their respective fields, in both basic and applied research areas.

Active collaboration with students is an important feature of our scholarship and pedagogical practice. We fulfill our mission by immersing students in the psychological laboratory, in order to master the skills in critical thinking, research methods, and communication that are necessary for the scientific study of behavior. We define the psychology laboratory broadly, including on-campus research environments and field research sites in the local community (hospitals, clinics, educational settings, community service organizations, business and industry, and zoological parks). Field experiences forge strong ties between the Psychology Department and the region and serve our mission for student community involvement.

## **What do our majors do?**

The Psychological Science major prepares students for careers in a variety of psychology-related settings including research laboratories, mental health agencies, hospitals, academic institutions, business, industry, and public organizations. Our students are also well-prepared for graduate training in fields such as experimental, clinical, and counseling psychology, teaching, social work, medicine, law, business and management, and public administration. The structure of our program and the specific experiences, knowledge and skills promoted prepare our students for the tasks and challenges they will face in the broader community.

# Major Requirements

| <b>Lower Division (9 units required)</b>                                                             |                                                                   | <b>Units</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| PSYC 100                                                                                             | Introduction to Psychology                                        | 3            |
| PSYC 220                                                                                             | Introductory Statistics in Psychology                             | 3            |
| PSYC 230                                                                                             | Research Methods in Psychology                                    | 3            |
| <b>Upper Division (40 units required)</b>                                                            |                                                                   |              |
| <u>Core courses required of all students</u>                                                         |                                                                   |              |
| PSYC 301                                                                                             | Psychological Science as a Major and Profession                   | 3            |
| PSYC 332                                                                                             | Social Psychology                                                 | 3            |
| PSYC 360                                                                                             | Biopsychology                                                     | 3            |
| PSYC 362                                                                                             | Cognitive Processes                                               | 3            |
| PSYC 402                                                                                             | Psychological Testing                                             | 4            |
| <u>Choose ONE of the following Developmental Psychology courses:</u>                                 |                                                                   | 3            |
| PSYC 331                                                                                             | Infancy and Childhood: Theories and Research Study                |              |
| PSYC 349                                                                                             | Adolescence: Theories and Research                                |              |
| PSYC 356                                                                                             | Developmental Psychology: Adulthood and Aging                     |              |
| <u>Choose ONE of the following courses:</u>                                                          |                                                                   | 3            |
| PSYC 334                                                                                             | Psychology of Personality                                         |              |
| PSYC 336                                                                                             | Abnormal Psychology                                               |              |
| <u>Choose ONE of the following Diverse Perspectives courses:</u>                                     |                                                                   | 3            |
| PSYC 333                                                                                             | Psychology of Prejudice                                           |              |
| PSYC 341                                                                                             | Multicultural Perspectives in Psychology                          |              |
| PSYC 350                                                                                             | Psychology of Women                                               |              |
| <u>Choose ONE of the following Laboratory courses:</u>                                               |                                                                   | 3            |
| PSYC 390                                                                                             | Laboratory in Animal Learning                                     |              |
| PSYC 391                                                                                             | Laboratory in Behavioral Neuroscience                             |              |
| PSYC 392                                                                                             | Laboratory in Sensation and Perception                            |              |
| PSYC 393                                                                                             | Laboratory in Cognitive Psychology                                |              |
| PSYC 394                                                                                             | Laboratory in Comparative Animal Behavior                         |              |
| PSYC 395                                                                                             | Laboratory in Developmental Psychology                            |              |
| PSYC 396                                                                                             | Laboratory in Social Psychology                                   |              |
| <u>Choose ONE of the following applied psychology courses:</u>                                       |                                                                   | 3            |
| CHAD 495                                                                                             | Field Experience with Children, Adolescents, and Families         |              |
| PSYC 338                                                                                             | Environmental Psychology                                          |              |
| PSYC 340                                                                                             | Survey of Clinical Psychology                                     |              |
| PSYC 343                                                                                             | Psychology of Work and the Family                                 |              |
| PSYC 344                                                                                             | Positive Psychology                                               |              |
| PSYC 345                                                                                             | The Psychology of Caregiving Across the Lifespan                  |              |
| PSYC 346                                                                                             | Principles of Behavior Change                                     |              |
| PSYC 353                                                                                             | Psychology in the Workplace: Industrial/Organizational Psychology |              |
| PSYC 354                                                                                             | Educational Psychology: Psychological Perspectives                |              |
| PSYC 432                                                                                             | Health Psychology                                                 |              |
| PSYC 443                                                                                             | Psychology and Law                                                |              |
| PSYC 495                                                                                             | Field Experience in Psychological Settings                        |              |
| Select 9 units from other 300-, 400-, or 500-level Psychology Courses (Except PSYC 361, 330, or 348) |                                                                   | 9            |

## Special Requirements

**Each course counted toward the major must be completed with a grade of C (2.0) or higher.** No more than a total of six (6) units taken from either Independent Study (PSYC 498) and/or Independent Laboratory Research (PSYC 499) may be applied toward the major. No more than three (3) units of Field Experience (PSYC 495) may be applied toward the major. A minimum of eighteen (18) units counted toward the Psychological Science major must have been completed at CSU San Marcos. You must acquire approval in writing from your major advisor *prior* to enrolling in courses at any other institution if they are to be counted toward the major here.

**Intermediate Language Proficiency (0-9 units):** This requirement can be met in one of the following ways:

- a. Intermediate 200-level (3rd semester) language course with a grade of C or higher or CR.
- b. CSUSM Language Proficiency Exam demonstrating intermediate-level language proficiency.
- c. AP Language other than English Examination with a score of 3 or higher.
- d. IB Higher-Level Language A Literature Exam or Language A Language and Literature Exam with score of 4 or higher.
- e. CLEP with the following minimum score: French Level II: 59; German Level II: 60; Spanish Level II: 63.
- f. TOEFL or other CSUSM-approved English language exam as a condition for admission to CSUSM.
- g. Completion at least 3 full-time years at a high school or university where English was not the principal language of instruction.
- h. Intermediate-level ASL may fulfill this requirement, see the [Catalog](#) for conditions.

**Breadth Requirement (3 units):** Select an upper-division Social Science (UD4 designated) course outside of the major and in a discipline other than Child & Adolescent Development or Psychological Science.

In addition to the Psychological Science Major Requirements there are a number of General Education Requirements. Please consult the university catalog or a GE advisor if you have questions about those requirements.

Consult the [General Catalog](#) for official course descriptions.

## Description of the Major

### Lower Division Courses

There are three (3) lower division courses required for the Psychological Science major: Introduction to Psychology (PSYC 100), Introductory Statistics in Psychology (PSYC 220), and Research Methods (PSYC 230). All are offered at CSU San Marcos. Local community colleges, and some universities, offer some courses that satisfy our lower division requirements. For example:

| CSU San Marcos |                                | Grossmont                            | Palomar                | MiraCosta                                | Mt. San Jacinto         |
|----------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| PSYC 100       | Introduction to Psychology     | PSY 120                              | PSYC 100               | PSYC 101                                 | PSYC 101/101H           |
| PSYC 220       | Introduction to Statistics     | PSY 215 or<br>SOC 215 or<br>ANTH 215 | PSYC 205 or<br>SOC 205 | PSYC 104 or<br>SOC 104<br>(not MATH 103) | PSYC 121 or<br>SOCI 121 |
| PSYC 230       | Research Methods in Psychology | PSY 205                              | PSYC 230               | PSYC 205                                 | PSYC 124/H              |

These articulation agreements are renegotiated annually. If you plan to take a psychology course at a community college other than introductory or general psychology (PSYC 100), consult with a CSU San Marcos psychology faculty member first. A full list of courses currently accepted from other colleges without requiring faculty approval is available online at [www.assist.org](http://www.assist.org). Further information on issues related to transfer can be found on the Department website: [www.csusm.edu/psychology](http://www.csusm.edu/psychology) under Transfer Student Information.

As a general rule, we do not accept statistics courses taken in MATH departments, as they do not provide students with the necessary background in behavioral statistics for success in our upper division psychology laboratory classes. In any event, you should check with [assist.org](http://www.assist.org) or a faculty advisor.

### Lower Division Courses

#### Introduction to Psychology (PSYC 100)

Provides an introduction to the core areas of Psychology. It is the prerequisite for many upper division psychology courses.

#### Introductory Statistics in Psychology (PSYC 220)

Many of our upper division lecture courses and all of the research methods courses (i.e., PSYC 230 and "lab" courses: PSYC 390-396) assume you have taken statistics as a prerequisite. *It is critically important that you have this preparation.* If you have not taken statistics prior to beginning your major at CSU San Marcos, you should make arrangements to do so right away. (MATH statistics does not fulfill this requirement.)

## **Research Methods in Psychology (PSYC 230)**

All of the upper division research methods ("lab") courses and most upper division lecture courses list PSYC 230 as a prerequisite. This requirement is strictly enforced.

## **Human Participant Pool**

Most lower division psychology courses (i.e., PSYC 100, PSYC 220, PSYC 230) have a research requirement. This requirement can be met through participation in psychology studies that are conducted by faculty and students here on campus or through an alternative assignment. Involvement in psychological research is an active way of participating in the science of psychology. The HPP requirement will be explained in your course syllabus each semester and on the department website.

## **What other lower division psychology courses that I have taken elsewhere will count toward my major at CSU San Marcos?**

**NO** other lower division psychology course, whether taken at a community college or a 4-year college/university, and regardless of its title or content, will count toward the Psychological Science major at CSU San Marcos. These courses probably do apply to your total units toward graduation (this is determined by Admissions), but **NOT** toward the major requirements. Psychology courses you have taken at the lower division level are considered good preparation for psychology coursework at the upper division level but cannot substitute for upper division work. If you have taken upper division psychology courses elsewhere, please email a request along with the syllabus and course description to the Psychology department chair.

## **Does the department accept AP Psychology Classes?**

We accept AP Psychology for our PSYC 100 course, if the student passes with a 3, 4, or 5. However, the Psychology Department does **NOT** accept AP Statistics for a Behavioral Statistics course. We do not accept any other AP courses/tests for the Psychological Science major. For more information on AP courses, see the [Undergraduate Advising Services website](https://www.csusm.edu/academicadvising/) (<https://www.csusm.edu/academicadvising/>).

## **Upper Division Courses**

### **Upper Division Laboratory Courses (Advanced Research Methods) (PSYC 390-396)**

The psychology laboratory options acquaint students with characteristic research techniques in particular fields. The lab classes are activity-oriented; they are challenging and involve a significant commitment of time. Students conduct research projects both in and out of class. Also, you **must** take PSYC 230 Research Methods before taking an upper-division lab class.

The Psychology Department offers enough sections of advanced research methods classes each semester to meet general student enrollment needs. The department makes an effort to offer all of the upper division laboratory courses on a regular basis, but you may not have the opportunity to take a particular course during your time with us. **We cannot guarantee that the *one* lab that you need to graduate will be available in the semester you need to take it. Plan ahead so that you have several options available.**

Each of the upper division laboratory courses has a companion lecture course prerequisite. You must take the lecture class **before** (not concurrently with) taking the lab class. The lecture course covers topics, theories, hypotheses, and research; the lab courses give you experience with

primary methodologies and characteristic research designs in the field.

Prerequisite lecture courses for upper division laboratory courses (all lab courses also have PSYC 100, PSYC 220 and PSYC 230 as prerequisites) are as follows:

| <i>Lab</i> | <i>Prerequisite Lecture Course</i> |
|------------|------------------------------------|
| PSYC 390   | PSYC 360                           |
| PSYC 391   | PSYC 360                           |
| PSYC 392   | PSYC 360                           |
| PSYC 393   | PSYC 362                           |
| PSYC 394   | PSYC 360                           |
| PSYC 395   | PSYC 331 <i>or</i> PSYC 349        |
| PSYC 396   | PSYC 332                           |

Please note that the prerequisites for lab courses will be strictly enforced and must be completed with a grade of C or better before enrolling in the lab (i.e., no concurrent enrollment). If you took the prerequisite courses anywhere other than CSU San Marcos, please send a copy of your transcripts and course syllabi to the Psychology Department Chair for an alternative course approval.

### **Required Lecture Courses**

The Psychological Science major requires seven (7) core lecture courses:

- PSYC 301 Psychological Science as a Major and Profession
- PSYC 332 Social Psychology
- PSYC 360 Biopsychology
- PSYC 362 Cognitive Processes
- One course in Developmental Psychology (331, 349, 356)
- Psychology of Personality (334) *or* Abnormal Psychology (336)
- PSYC 402 Psychological Testing

These are designed to provide a broad overview of each of the major fields in psychology.

The first four core lecture courses are prerequisites for advanced lab classes, so take them early in your program. The Psychology Department normally offers at least one section of all required courses each semester.

Psychological Science as a Major and Profession provides students with an overview of both the degree program and the field as a whole. It can help with showing pathways to different careers and discovering new options. You should plan on taking this course at CSU San Marcos as soon as you can to have the maximum benefit.

Psychological Testing requires knowledge of basic statistics and research methodology; prerequisites for this course (PSYC 100, 220, 230 and one upper-division psychology laboratory course [PSYC 390-396]) are enforced. We recommend that you take this class during your final year at CSU San Marcos.

### **Applied Psychology Courses**

These classes give Psychological Science majors the opportunity to put theory into practice. You must complete three (3) units (one course) in this category, although you may want to take

additional classes as elective credits. A number of psychology classes meet this requirement and, typically, three or four applied psychology courses are offered each semester.

*Field Experience in Psychological Settings (PSYC 495) and Field Experience with Children, Adolescents, and Families (CHAD 495)*

PSYC 495 and CHAD 495 are applied courses designed to provide supervised field experience in on- and off-campus community and institutional settings. Students will spend approximately six (6) hours per week in the field and attend weekly class meetings to discuss relevant theory and research. The Psychology Department does not give college credit for volunteer work or other field experiences unless they are associated with PSYC 495 or independent study (498-499, see below). 495 requires taking nine unit of upper-division PSYC or CHAD coursework prior to the class. It is strongly recommended to take PSYC 301 prior to 495. For best selection of internships, apply for internships the semester before enrolling in 495 (i.e, apply in April for Fall semester and in October for Spring semester). A step-by-step internship guide can be found [here](#), and students can contact Dr. Kim Pulvers for questions about PSYC 495 and Dr. Allison Jobin for CHAD 495. Gaining instructor permission prior to enrollment is not required at this time.

### **Electives**

In addition to the required courses, Psychological Science majors must take three (3) upper division (300/400 level) psychology classes (9 units). Consult the General Catalog for descriptions of courses that may be offered as electives. The department makes an effort to offer all of the electives on a regular basis, but you may not have the opportunity to take a particular course during your time with us. If an elective that you particularly want is offered in a given semester, take it (if you have the required prerequisites). There is no guarantee that you will have a second chance. Please note that PSYC 361, Brain and Mind, is an upper division general education psychology course for non-majors only; this course **cannot** be used towards the Psychological Science major. PSYC 330 (Developmental Psychology: Infancy and Childhood) and PSYC 348 (Developmental Psychology: Adolescence) are for non-majors only and cannot be used toward the Psychological Science major.

Electives can be used to develop breadth or depth. (Note: If you intend to go to graduate school in psychology, it is highly recommended that you develop breadth. Graduate programs generally prefer that you have a broad background in psychology).

The following elective courses provide individually supervised learning experiences:

*Independent Study (PSYC 498)/Independent Research (PSYC 499)*

PSYC 498 projects are intended to be primarily library projects, in which the student conducts extensive library research on a topic of interest in psychology. The resulting manuscript will typically be either a detailed research proposal or a theoretical paper written in APA (or other appropriate scientific) style. Innovative projects of a special nature may also be proposed as 498 projects. In all cases, such projects will involve gaining familiarity with the relevant professional literature and a written report in APA (or other appropriate scientific) style. In some cases, 498 projects may include some field experiences. However, 498 shall not serve as a substitute for 495. No more than one-half of the hours of PSYC 498 shall consist of field placement.

PSYC 499 projects are intended to be primarily laboratory or field research projects, in which students receive a *variety* of "hands-on" research experiences (e.g., preparing stimulus materials, running subjects, coding data, entering data into computer files, analyzing data). Students should

read a minimum of 10-12 background articles or equivalent scientific literature related to the research project on which they are working. Students must submit an APA (or other appropriate scientific) style research report or research proposal at the conclusion of the 499.

To be eligible for PSYC 498 or 499, a student must have completed at least 48 units of undergraduate study and must have a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or better. Final acceptance in PSYC 498 or PSYC 499 depends on the willingness of a faculty member to supervise you.

PSYC 498 or 499 are normally taken for three (3) units, although in some cases more or fewer are appropriate to the project. The course may be taken for one (1), two (2), three (3), or four (4) units, with varying expectations of workload. The number of units appropriate for each special studies project shall be determined by the faculty member.

If you want to take either PSYC 498 or 499, you should first check to be sure that you meet the eligibility requirements listed above. Then, contact a faculty member with whom you would like to work. If the faculty member is willing to sponsor you, obtain a digital "Independent Study/Research & Internship Contract" from the faculty member. The faculty member will provide the topic, outline of work, and grade expectations in Sections B and C; review this and then complete Section A. Once you have completed Section A, the faculty member will route the form for signatures and submit the signed form to the Registrar via email. Monitor myCSUSM to verify enrollment.

Please be aware that a student may enroll for no more than a total of four (4) units of PSYC 498 and/or 499 in one term without special permission from the Psychology Department. Also, although both 498 and 499 may be repeated, no more than six (6) units of PSYC 498 or 499 (combined) may be applied toward the major.

### **Other Graduation Requirements**

The General Catalog provides information on CSU San Marcos graduation requirements. Depending on your year of initial enrollment at CSU San Marcos, these requirements may vary. We suggest you consult Undergraduate Advising Services for advisement on issues outside the Psychological Science major.

### **Grades**

Remember, each course counted toward the major must be completed with a grade of C (2.0) or higher. In addition, final grades in a course cannot be changed after they are submitted except in the case of a clerical error or where an error was made in the original evaluation (the grade was entered inaccurately, or the professor miscounted your points on the final exam, for example). This rule is stipulated by the CSU San Marcos catalog (see "Grade Changes").

### **Requesting an "I" (Incomplete) Grade**

Students have the right to request an "I" grade from the instructor if unforeseen circumstances prohibit them from completing their coursework. However, the decision to assign an "I" grade rests with the instructor.

If you decide to request an "I" grade in a course, it is important to take into consideration the following information:

- According to CSUSM Office of the Registrar policy, an incomplete may **not** be assigned if it will be necessary for the student to attend a major portion of the class when it is next offered.
- Also, according to CSUSM Office of the Registrar policy, students will **not** be allowed to re-enroll in a course for which they have received an incomplete until that "I" has been converted to

another grade.

- According to Psychology Department policy, an “I” will not be assigned unless there is a “serious and compelling reason” for the student’s inability to complete the coursework.

*The following constitute serious and compelling reasons:*

- An extended absence due to a **documented** accident, illness, or serious personal problem.
- An extended absence due to a death in the immediate family. This applies to absences exceeding a week due to family affairs that must be attended to by the student.
- A necessary change in employment status that interferes with the student’s ability to attend class. The student's employer must verify this change in employment status in writing for the term in which the incomplete is being requested.
- Other unusual or very special cases, considered on their own merit.

*The following are **NOT** considered serious and compelling:*

- Grade anticipated in class is not sufficiently high
  - Failure to attend class, complete assignments, or take a test
  - Class is harder than expected
  - Pressure of other classes, social activities, family responsibilities, or a simple lack of motivation
  - A change of major
- According to Psychology Department policy, an “I” will not be assigned unless the student has attended at least 70% of the class (i.e., relatively consistently through approximately the 11<sup>th</sup> week of the term).
  - According to Psychology Department policy, an “I” will not be assigned unless the student has completed at least 70% of the regular (i.e., not counting extra credit) coursework or all but 1 or 2 assignments \*
  - According to Psychology Department policy, an “I” will not be assigned unless the student has earned a passing grade (i.e., “C” or better) on the completed regular coursework.
  - According to Psychology Department policy, an “I” will not be assigned unless, in the instructor’s opinion, it is possible for the student to successfully complete the remainder of the coursework without attending a major portion of the class when it is next offered.

*\*Note.* If the student’s reason for requesting an incomplete fits the definition of “serious and compelling” but they **have not** completed 70% of the coursework, then a “withdrawal” from the course may be more appropriate.

## Advising

### Course Registration Planning

We encourage you to use [Degree Planner](#) to track your progress toward your Psychological Science degree and indicate which applied and elective courses you’re most interested in taking. We normally offer all courses specifically required for the major very frequently, usually every single semester. Other courses that are menu choices to satisfy a major requirement are not always offered as frequently.

- The upper division laboratory courses vary in their frequency. PSYC 392, PSYC 393, PSYC 395, PSYC 396 are normally offered very frequently, but the other upper division laboratory courses are offered once a year or even less frequently.

- ❑ PSYC 424 is offered only once a year, typically in the fall semester.
- ❑ Every semester, we offer at least one course that satisfies the “Applied Psychology” requirement, but some of the courses on that menu are offered frequently and others less often.
- ❑ For other courses that can count as Psychology Electives, some are offered very frequently and some less often.

We encourage you to take this information into account when you plan your course registration. For example, if a course that you want to take is offered less frequently, you may wish to enroll for it when the first opportunity arises. If you need a course to fulfill a menu requirement you may not want to wait until your favored course is offered. In order to be able to take a laboratory course when it is offered, you will need to have the prerequisite lecture course, so you may wish to ensure that you enroll in the appropriate lecture courses early in your career.

### **Reference Information**

There are many sources of information about the Psychology Department at CSU San Marcos. Most of the information needed to develop your program of studies is contained in the CSU San Marcos General Catalog and the Schedule of Classes. This Psychological Science Student Handbook has been developed to provide additional information. We also have a [web page](#), where you can find most of the information (and more) contained in this handbook.

### **Advising**

We encourage you to meet with faculty in the department during office hours to discuss which classes to take in your major to help you toward your career goals and ways to get involved. For questions outside the major, reach out to [Academic Advising](#). The [Career Center](#) offers a variety of services to assist students in choosing educational paths, assessing life direction, and establishing career goals, as well as support applying for internships, jobs, and graduate school.

### **Course Approvals**

**Do you want to take a course through CSU Online or at another university?** You MUST receive approval from the Department Chair BEFORE you take a MAJORS course from a university other than CSUSM. Even if a course has a similar/same name, it does not mean it includes the same content or meets our PSYC department course requirements. You MUST send a course description and syllabus and receive approval before taking a majors course off campus or online; however, we do NOT need to approve GE or non-majors courses. This is true for all CSU online courses.

Note: We have articulation agreements with several community colleges in the San Diego area for PSYC 100, 220, and 230. You can check [www.assist.org](http://www.assist.org) to see if an agreement is already in place. Otherwise, you will need to obtain approval from the Department Chair.

### **Psychology Academic Resource Lab (PARL)**

The Psychology Academic Resource Laboratory is a resource for *all* undergraduate Psychology Department students. The purpose of the PARL is to provide academic support for enhancing quantitative, computing, writing, biological, and research methodology skills that are essential to psychology. The PARL also offers a variety of specialized computer programs and tutorials on statistics, research methods, psychometrics, and the biological bases of behavior. Psychological Science graduate students staff the lab, which will be available during the semester on a drop-in basis. Graduate assistants also provide individual appointments for academic consultation. Finally, PARL schedules workshops, symposia, and videos presented by faculty, staff, and graduate students throughout the year. The presentations might include

writing APA style papers, information about graduate/professional schools, career options in psychology, and research topics in psychology. In addition, PARL has posted videos of some common issues (Stats, APA formatting...) online; find the links on the PARL website. PARL is held in SBSB 1206. PARL hours will be posted early in the semester. You may also find PARL hours on the department [website](#).

### **Graduation**

*Graduation is not automatic upon the completion of requirements.* Students who intend to graduate must take the initiative and apply for graduation. Upon completion of 85 units, the student is eligible to file an application for graduation with Enrollment Services. The Class Schedule each semester specifies the filing date, which is well in advance of the expected graduation date (usually early in the semester before graduation). Deadlines for graduation application are also available on the web at [www.csusm.edu/enroll/graduation](http://www.csusm.edu/enroll/graduation). Sometime after you apply for graduation you will receive a notice detailing your current status and courses remaining to be taken. If you have any questions about your graduation notice, see a campus academic advisor right away.

Importantly, the Commencement Ceremony (walking across the stage) is NOT the same as graduation. Commencement usually happens before final grades are turned in and thus does not guarantee that you will graduate. In addition, you need to register for commencement even if you have applied for graduation; please go to the [commencement website](#) for more details:

### **Graduate school preparation**

You should *plan early* if you think graduate school is a possibility for you. Look for workshops hosted by the PACO and Psi Chi (Psychology's honor society) on "How to get into graduate school." Faculty members will present information on graduate admissions procedures, on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), and tips for improving your chances at acceptance.

A few general suggestions for graduate school aspirants include the following:

- Graduate schools like to see breadth in the undergraduate preparation.
- Graduate schools usually favor applicants with research experience. Good performance in lab classes, and collaborative research with faculty members, are highly desirable. It is a good idea to begin collaboration with faculty members early in your undergraduate program, so they are able to write strong letters of reference.
- Contrary to what you may have heard, it is not necessary to achieve a 4.0 GPA in order to gain entrance to graduate school. A high GPA is important, but straight As are not essential! A composite of good grades, good GRE scores, good letters of recommendation, and research experience is most likely to get you into graduate school.

# About the Faculty...

## Tenure-track faculty

**Nancy Caine, Ph.D.** (1980, University of California, Davis). Dr. Caine joined CSU San Marcos in 1992; her area of specialization is comparative psychology. She completed a postdoctoral traineeship in the Developmental Psychobiology Research Group at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and was on the psychology faculty at Bucknell University (Pennsylvania) from 1981-1991. Her research focuses on antipredator behavior and sensory adaptations related to vigilance and foraging in nonhuman primates.

**Nate C. Carnes, Ph.D.** (2017, University of Massachusetts, Amherst). Dr. Carnes joined CSU San Marcos in the fall of 2017. His areas of specialization include both social and quantitative psychology. Dr. Carnes is interested in the group dynamic processes that underlie our moral psychology, and answers research questions surrounding why we care about equality, fight in wars, and pick political sides. Dr. Carnes is currently on leave.

**Haylee DeLuca Bishop, Ph.D.** (2018, Kent State University). Dr. DeLuca Bishop joined CSUSM in 2018. Her research investigates predictors and consequences of close relationships during adolescence and young adulthood, including peer, romantic, and sexual relationships, with a focus on individuals who have experienced a family transition or dissolution. Her recent projects have examined peer and romantic relationship outcomes of adoptees and foster youth (as compared to those reared by their biological parents) and how friends impact short- and long-term reactions to casual sexual relationships and experiences.

**Francisco J. Flores Ramirez, Ph.D.** (2020, The University of Texas at El Paso). Dr. Flores Ramirez joined CSUSM in 2024. Prior to joining CSUSM, Dr. Flores Ramirez was a postdoctoral research fellow at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, CA. Dr. Flores Ramirez is a Behavioral Neuroscientist, and his research investigates the neurobehavioral mechanisms that underlie Substance Use Disorders, particularly those that drive the loss of control over drug intake and that ultimately make individuals vulnerable to relapse, even after long periods of self-imposed abstinence. Using rats as a model system, his recent research projects have examined the effect of pharmacotherapies that target the orexin/hypocretin and dynorphin systems to reduced exacerbated drinking and prevent stress-induced relapse.

**Gerardo M. González, Ph.D.** (1989, California School of Professional Psychology, Fresno). Dr. González joined CSU San Marcos in 1991; his area of specialization is clinical psychology. He completed his predoctoral and postdoctoral clinical training at the University of California, Berkeley and a clinical-research fellowship at the University of California, San Francisco. Among his research interests are multicultural mental health issues (particularly for the Spanish-speaking), computerized clinical assessment, and the cognitive treatment of depression.

**Elisa Grant-Vallone, Ph.D.** (1998, Claremont Graduate University). Dr. Grant-Vallone joined the faculty in 1998 after graduating from Claremont Graduate University. Dr. Grant-Vallone studies organizational psychology, with an emphasis on work and family issues, work environments and employee health and well-being. She is particularly interested in how women make decisions about their work and family lives, benefit from multiple roles, and manage conflict and stress.

**Lisa V. Graves, Ph.D.** (2019, San Diego State University/University of California San Diego). Dr. Graves joined the CSUSM faculty as an Assistant Professor of Psychology in Fall 2021. She received her PhD in 2019 from the SDSU/UC San Diego Joint Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology, with a major area of study in neuropsychology. She completed a predoctoral internship in clinical neuropsychology at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System in 2018-2019, and an advanced postdoctoral fellowship in neuropsychology with an emphasis in aging and Alzheimer's disease at the VA San Diego Healthcare System and UC San Diego in 2019-2021. She is a licensed psychologist in the state of California and has extensive experience in neuropsychological assessment of adults with known or suspected neurological dysfunction, including mild cognitive impairment (MCI) and dementia within the context of neurodegenerative disease, cerebrovascular disease, and traumatic brain injury. Her current research program is centered around (1) using sensitive neuropsychological and functional measures to improve diagnostic accuracy across the continuum of normal aging, MCI, and dementia due to Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, and (2) examining influences of risk and protective factors on cognitive, functional, and biomarker trajectories, particularly among culturally diverse and historically underrepresented populations. Dr. Graves currently teaches neuropsychology at the undergraduate (PSYC 465) and master's (PSYC 556) levels at CSUSM.

**Alex C. Huynh, Ph.D.** (2018, University of Waterloo, Canada). Dr. Huynh joined CSU San Marcos in 2020. Dr. Huynh specializes in cultural and social psychology, with an emphasis on studying cultural change, intergroup relations, reasoning processes, and social class. His recent projects examine how cultural values shift in response to rising ethnic diversity, as well as what motivational and contextual factors predict wiser reasoning (e.g., intellectual humility, perspective taking).

**Allison Jobin, Ph.D., BCBA-D** (2012, University of California, San Diego). Dr. Jobin joined CSUSM in 2020. Broadly, her research focuses on treatment for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families and the effective delivery of evidence-based practices in community settings. Dr. Jobin is a licensed psychologist and board certified behavior analyst with research and clinical expertise in the treatment and evaluation of ASD and related childhood disorders, parent-mediated treatment models, and naturalistic developmental behavioral interventions. Her areas of interest are in the examination of evidence-based intervention delivery in usual care settings and strategies to support community providers in the implementation of these practices, as well as the testing of approaches for adapting interventions to improve fit within varied child and family contexts.

**Sasha Kimel, Ph.D.** (2013, University of Michigan). Dr. Kimel is a social and cultural psychologist. Before joining the faculty at CSUSM in Fall 2018, Dr. Kimel was at Harvard University where she was a Harvard College Fellow, a postdoctoral fellow and a lecturer. She received her PhD from the University of Michigan. Dr. Kimel's research focuses both on the factors that impact conflict between diverse cultural groups and on how our cultures (e.g. nation, race/ethnicity, religion) shape the way we think, feel and behave.

**Hyunjin Koo, Ph.D.** (2023, University of California, Irvine). Dr. Koo joined CSUSM in 2025. Before that, she was a postdoctoral research associate at the University of British Columbia. Dr. Koo is a social psychologist with two main research programs. First, her work investigates how experiences and beliefs about socioeconomic mobility shape everyday thoughts and behaviors, including attitudes toward work and leisure, views on the rich and poor, inequality, morality, and social class. In an emerging line of research, she is interested in a novel psychological construct she calls leisure guilt. She explores its antecedents, consequences, and the cultural and social factors that influence why and how people feel guilty about taking leisure time instead of being productive.

**Sabrina Liu, Ph. D.** (2020, University of California, Santa Barbara). Dr. Liu joined the CSUSM Psychology Department in 2026. She received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from UC Santa

Barbara in 2020, followed by a predoctoral clinical internship at Cambridge Health Alliance/Harvard Medical School and an NIMH Conte Center postdoctoral fellowship at Chapman University and UC Irvine. She is a licensed psychologist in the state of California. Dr. Liu's research examines how adversity, stress, and social inequities shape mental health and well-being across generations. Her work focuses on children, families, and perinatal populations, with particular attention to community, cultural, and structural contexts. Dr. Liu's work is informed by her experiences as a clinical psychologist working with youth and families in hospitals, schools, and community mental health centers.

**Aleksandra Perez Grabow, PhD.** (2019, University of Oregon). Dr. Perez Grabow joined CSU San Marcos in Fall 2019. Her areas of specialization are clinical/counseling psychology and trauma. She completed her undergraduate studies at CSU Long Beach and worked in the community as a rape crisis counselor prior to her graduate work. Dr. Perez Grabow completed her predoctoral clinical internship at UC Riverside's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). Her research focuses on examining individual and environmental factors that influence long-term psychological, physiological, and behavioral outcomes of trauma through a non-pathologizing lens. Her work on trauma encompasses developmental trauma, collective trauma, and media violence exposure.

**Janice Phung, Ph.D.** (2017, University of California, Irvine). Dr. Phung joined the faculty at CSU San Marcos in 2019 after one year as a Visiting Assistant Professor at Pitzer College (of the Claremont Colleges). A developmental psychologist by training, Dr. Phung's research investigates the challenges experienced by children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as they relate to individual and family outcomes. Her most recent project examined the effects of a community-based martial arts intervention on executive and social functioning in children with ASD. The goals of her program of research are 1) to better understand and promote optimal development in children and adolescents with ASD, and 2) to improve how stakeholders, namely caregivers and professionals who work with the autism community, interface with individuals with ASD to help them lead healthier and happier lives.

**Kim Pulvers, Ph.D., M.P.H.** (2006, University of Kansas). Dr. Pulvers joined the faculty at CSU San Marcos in 2008 following two years as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, San Diego. Dr. Pulvers is a clinical psychologist specializing in health behavior change with high-need populations. Her research focuses on reducing tobacco-related death and disease through testing smoking cessation treatments, harm reduction approaches, and regulatory strategies as well as understanding the role of cannabis co-use.

**Carlos E. Rosas, Ph.D.** (2022, University of Illinois Chicago). Dr. Rosas joined the CSUSM faculty in Fall 2025. He earned his PhD in Psychology, with a concentration in Community and Prevention Research, from the University of Illinois Chicago. Prior to joining CSUSM, Dr. Rosas completed epidemiology-focused postdoctoral fellowships at UC San Diego, SDSU, the Medical College of Wisconsin, and Rush University Medical Center. His research program integrates social and health psychology theories, epidemiological methods, and community-based participatory research (CBPR) approaches (1) to examine the social, cultural, and psychological drivers/determinants (e.g., SES, immigration status, and racial/ethnic discrimination) of mental and physical health — particularly in the context of chronic disease prevention and management; and (2) to develop, implement, and evaluate culturally informed and tailored, community-based interventions to promote healthy behaviors and mitigate risk factors. His research places special emphasis on communities of color and other historically understudied populations.

**Yasmine Sherafat, Ph.D.** (2021, University of California, Irvine). Dr. Sherafat joined CSUSM in 2022. She specializes in behavioral neuroscience, with an emphasis on addiction and learning and memory. Dr. Sherafat's recent projects have examined how neuromodulators regulate nicotine

addiction and reinforcement, both at the global and site-specific level.

**Kimmie Vanderbilt**, Ph.D. (2013, University of California, San Diego). Dr. Vanderbilt joined CSU San Marcos in 2013. Her area of specialization is in social cognitive development. She completed her graduate and undergraduate degrees at the University of California, San Diego. Dr. Vanderbilt's research interests focus on how children (and people) learn to reason about the thoughts and behaviors of others. Particularly, she investigates how young children learn to judge the reliability of sources who provide information, as well as how and when children make inferences about the mental states of such sources.

**Carrick C. Williams**, Ph.D. (2003, Michigan State University). Prior to joining CSU San Marcos in 2014, Dr. Williams was at Mississippi State University (2005-2014) as an Assistant and then Associate Professor. His area of specialization is cognitive psychology with a specific interest in visual cognition. Dr. Williams' research focuses on the interaction of vision, attention, and memory when people view and process objects, faces, and scenes. Dr Williams is currently Associate Dean for the College of Arts, Humanities, Behavioral and Social Sciences (CHABSS).

**Yu Zhang**, Ph.D. (2021, University of California, Santa Cruz). Dr. Yu Zhang joined CSUSM in 2023. Prior to joining CSUSM, she worked as a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Chicago. Her research draws upon sociocultural theory to understand the mechanisms of children's learning and education from infancy to middle childhood. She investigates how various contexts—such as everyday practices, family attitudes, cultural values, and beliefs—shape the ways of learning and interaction in families from diverse backgrounds.

## **Part-Time Faculty**

In addition to our tenure line faculty, we have lecturers who regularly teach courses. Faculty may also be added as needs arise. You can read about these faculty members at:

<http://www.csusm.edu/psychology/facstaff.html>

# Student Responsibility Code

**You are responsible for knowing University and Psychology Department policies and deadlines.** You should obtain and read pertinent sections of the General Catalog, Class Schedule, the Psychological Science Student Handbook, and class syllabi.

**You are responsible for attending all classes and laboratory meetings, and for being on time.** If you must miss a class, you are responsible for contacting your instructor to determine how to make up any work you may have missed or to determine how to obtain any important information you missed. *You may not be able to make up missed work.*

**You are responsible for adjusting your outside responsibilities (work, family, social, etc.) in order to allow sufficient time for your education.** As a general rule, students are expected to spend a minimum of two hours outside of the classroom each week for each *unit* of credit engaged in learning. For a 3-hour-a-week lecture course, this means that the student workload for successfully completing the course should require students to spend at least 6 additional hours per week outside of class—reading, studying, writing, doing research, or doing other course-related work.

**Plagiarism. Your exams, homework, research reports, and term papers must reflect your own work, unless you are explicitly directed otherwise by your instructor.** Proper methods of referencing outside sources of information should be used at all times. If you are unfamiliar with the concept of plagiarism or have questions on a specific assignment, you are responsible for asking your instructor for assistance. If your professor believes that you have plagiarized or cheated in your coursework, they are *required* to report you to the Dean of Students. Violation of academic honesty can result in several penalties (including expulsion from the University). See the General Catalog and Student Handbook sections on Academic Honesty.

**Artificial Intelligence (AI) use.** You are responsible for knowing the course policies regarding the use of AI in assignments. Instructors vary in their policies regarding AI use. If you have any question about the acceptability of using AI in a class, you should contact your instructor.

**Prerequisites.** Prerequisites for all classes (e.g., research methods, labs, psych testing) are strictly enforced, and must be completed with grades of C or better. If you took the prerequisites anywhere other than CSU San Marcos, please bring copies of your transcripts to the first class for verification.

# Student Organizations

## **Psychology and CHAD Student Organization**

The Psychology and CHAD Student Organization (PACO) holds regular meetings and sponsors speakers and other presentations of interest to students. Elections for PACO officers are held annually.

Among recent PACO activities were organizing guest speakers for career opportunities in psychology and sponsoring the CSU San Marcos Psychology Student Research Conference.

Students can become affiliates of regional and national psychological associations. Application materials for the Western Psychological Association (WPA), the Association for Psychological Science (APS), and the American Psychological Association (APA) student memberships are available from their websites: [www.westernpsych.org](http://www.westernpsych.org), [www.psychologicalscience.org](http://www.psychologicalscience.org), or [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org).

## **Psi Chi**

Psi Chi (pronounced "sigh high") is the international honor society in psychology. In December 1993, CSU San Marcos was granted a charter for a Psi Chi chapter on campus. Members of Psi Chi meet regularly and sponsor psychology-related events on campus. Members of Psi Chi have also presented their research at regional, national, and international conferences.

Requirements for membership in Psi Chi are specific and fairly rigorous. Interested students should visit the CSUSM [Psi Chi](#) webpage for more information.

# **Annual CSU San Marcos Psychology Student Research Conference**

The Annual CSU San Marcos Psychology Student Research Conference is held in the Spring semester. The primary goal of the Conference is to provide students with experience presenting their work to colleagues. This is your chance to share your work with your fellow students and with faculty. Please check the [website](#) in October and February for specific details and updates.

The Conference is conducted much like a professional conference. There are sessions in which students present projects that they have conducted as part of research methods courses, independent study courses, etc. There may also be other sessions of interest (e.g., "Careers in Psychology"). The call for submissions may be obtained from the [website](#), available in late fall. The "call for papers" includes an application form and instructions for submitting your work for presentation at the Fair.

## **Three Reasons Why You Should Get Involved with the CSU San Marcos Research Conference:**

- 1. Did you know that graduate schools (even those specializing in clinical training) rate previous research experience as one of the most important factors that they consider when making admissions decisions?**

Having presented a paper at a student conference is concrete evidence of your research experience! It demonstrates that you have experience in all phases of the research process, from developing an idea to presentation of the final report.

- 2. Have you ever wondered what to list in the "additional related experiences" section of grad school applications (or job applications)?**

Listing a presentation at a student research conference will help to make your grad school application (or your job application) stand out from all the others!

- 3. Most important, participating in the CSU San Marcos Psychology Student Research Conference is FUN!**

Don't miss this opportunity! Submit a research report and/or research proposal for the Fair!

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **How are instructors in the Psychology Department chosen?**

Full-time, tenure track faculty (listed above) make up the core faculty of the department. They are chosen in a nationwide search process, in which they must meet rigorous standards in both teaching and research. They are judged on their scholarship and teaching records and evaluation letters from colleagues acquainted with their work.

Teaching is evaluated by having candidates give a lecture on their research. Students are encouraged to contribute to the selection process; watch for announcements about faculty candidate interviews.

Part-time instructors are recruited locally to teach selected courses in their scholarly specialties on a temporary basis. Student feedback is considered carefully in evaluating part-time instructors for future assignments. Part-time instructors' assignments depend on availability of courses in their areas of expertise and on budgetary considerations.

## **What courses will be offered in the future?**

The Psychology Department offers a schedule of upper-division classes sufficient to enable students to complete the major in a two-year period of time. Class schedules are developed on a semester-by-semester basis. *Please note that it is not currently possible to satisfy all requirements for the major if you can only attend classes at night.*

Psychology Department courses are taught in-person. There are some upper-division laboratory courses that are taught in hybrid format, and we may offer some elective courses online, but students must attend nearly all PSYC and/or CHAD courses on campus to complete the degree.

## **What other upper-division coursework should I take?**

The Psychological Science major requires 49 units. In addition, students must complete general education requirements. In order to graduate, you need to take 120 units in all. What should you take once you have all the psychology, general education, and graduation requirements out of the way?

Technically, you can take anything you wish. You can take additional psychology classes (remember that graduate schools look for breadth within psychology), or classes in related fields to round out your major. You could take a minor. Consult the General Catalog for a list of minors and specifics. Departments that offer courses that complement the Psychological Science major are offered in Biology, Communication, Sociology, Computer Science, Liberal Studies, Human Development, Linguistics, and Mathematics. CSUSM offers an interdisciplinary minor in Cognitive Science that many students combine with the Psychological Science major. A faculty advisor can help you choose non-psychology courses that will round out your academic program.

## **Is Psychological Science a good major to take if I want to teach elementary or high school?**

Psychology is not a "teaching subject" in grades K-12 and subject area competency is required for teaching at the high school or junior high school level. However, a major in Psychological Science can be helpful for teaching in the lower grades. A Credentials Analyst in the School of Education is available as a resource to advise individual students or groups on issues of teaching credential requirements. Visit the [School of Education](#) for more information. [Contact Advisors & Program Coordinators](#)

### **Can I take upper division classes at other universities that will count toward my major at CSU San Marcos?**

Remembering that at least 18 units in the major must be taken at CSU San Marcos, you may seek permission to take a course in your major at another school. Bring a copy of the *catalog description* and *syllabus* of the course you would like to take elsewhere to the Psychology Department Chair. The faculty will decide if the course is a suitable substitute for one of our own psychology courses. You should do this *before* you take the course. If you have already taken courses at another institution, see the department chair as soon as possible to determine whether those courses will transfer.

### **Does the Psychology Department offer a Master's Degree?**

Yes, the psychology Department offers two Master's Degree, one geared toward research proficiency (Psychological Science) and one focused on preparation for a clinical counseling career.

The [Master of Arts \(MA\) degree in Psychological Science](#) at CSU San Marcos is intended to prepare students for one of three career objectives: for continued study at the doctoral level, for a variety of positions in business, industry, and the public sector, or for academic careers at the two-year college level.

The [Master of Science \(MS\) degree in Clinical Counseling](#) is intended to provide the educational components leading to Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor licensure.

### **How should I balance working and going to school?**

How many units should you take if you are working and going to school? Depending on your other commitments, suggested course loads are given in this table:

| <u>Hours worked per week</u> | <u>Recommended number of units</u> |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 40                           | 3                                  |
| 30                           | 6                                  |
| 20                           | 9                                  |
| 10                           | 12                                 |
| 0                            | 15                                 |

Keep in mind that Upper Division coursework is more challenging and time-consuming than Lower Division classes. Remember that an increased course load means you need more time to read, write, and reflect, use the library and the computer facilities, meet with faculty, and involve yourself in your studies in a way that maximizes your experience. As a general rule, you should allow *two to three hours* outside of class for study purposes for each hour spent in class.

Per the CSUSM credit hour policy, you should expect a minimum of 8-9 hours per week of coursework for each 3-unit course. For a 4-unit course, you should expect a minimum of 12 hours per week of coursework.

### **What should I do if I have a problem in one of my psychology classes?**

In spite of our efforts to provide an excellent educational experience, students do encounter problems of various sorts. The vast majority of problems can be resolved by discussing the issue with the person directly involved. Most of the time misunderstandings can be cleared up by good communication; it is often the case that the faculty member is unaware that there is a problem. The first step is for you to express your concern to your instructor.

The second step should be taken if the first step does not resolve the problem. Make an appointment to see the Department Chair in Psychology, Dr. Kim Pulvers (SBSB 3212). The Department Chair will listen to your problem and, if appropriate, they will discuss it with the other party or parties involved. The Department Chair can usually serve as a neutral third party to facilitate resolution of the issue. If the Department Chair is unable to resolve the problem, they will refer the issue to the appropriate administrator either in the College of Humanities, Arts, Behavioral & Social Sciences or Student Affairs.

**How can I maximize my experience in the psychology program at CSU San Marcos?**

1. Give yourself ample time to be a student (see section on working and going to school, above).
2. Get involved in research, field experience, or volunteer work in the community.
3. Get involved in the life of the campus. Attend events. Become active in the Psychology and CHAD Student Organization (PACO) or Psi Chi.

Not only will these suggestions enhance your experience while you attend CSU San Marcos, but they will increase your employability and/or your chances for graduate school acceptance.

Employers and graduate school admissions personnel look for both excellent achievement and special experience that adds particular interest to a job/grad school candidate.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) ABOUT  
INDEPENDENT STUDY (498) AND INDEPENDENT RESEARCH (499)**

**WHAT IS INDEPENDENT STUDY (PSYC 498) AND INDEPENDENT RESEARCH (PSYC 499)?**

The Psychology Program at CSUSM places a strong emphasis on psychology as an empirical science and seeks to provide advanced students with in-depth, hands-on experiences with significant issues in the field and with the techniques psychologists employ to address those issues. Toward this end, Independent Study (PSYC 498) and Independent Research (PSYC 499) were developed.

**WHO SHOULD ENROLL IN INDEPENDENT STUDY (PSYC 498) AND/OR INDEPENDENT RESEARCH (PSYC 499)?**

Some students get the impression that they “must” take Independent Study (PSYC 498) and/or Independent Research (PSYC 499) or their psychology degree will be incomplete or inferior. This is not the case. PSYC 498 and 499 are designed primarily for students who are interested in, and excited by, the prospect of learning how to plan and conduct research projects, and who are planning on applying to competitive Masters or Ph.D. programs. If you do not enjoy the various activities that are part of the research process (e.g., designing studies, collecting data, coding data, analyzing data, writing APA papers, presenting research results at conferences), then you should not enroll in Independent Study (PSYC 498) and/or Independent Research (PSYC 499).

### **WHAT KINDS OF ACTIVITIES QUALIFY AS INDEPENDENT STUDY (PSYC 498)?**

PSYC 498 is an elective course designed to allow advanced students to undertake an in-depth study of a particular issue or area in psychology that interests them. Psychology 498 projects are intended to be primarily library projects, in which the student conducts extensive library research on a topic of interest in psychology. The resulting manuscript will typically be either a detailed research proposal or a theoretical paper written in APA style.

In some cases, students may receive 498 credit for serving as a student assistant for a class or for the Psychology Academic Resource Laboratory (PARL). In such cases, in keeping with the Psychology Department TA/GA Policy, students will complete a set of readings either on pedagogy or on the content of the course for which the student is serving as a student assistant. The writing requirement details will be arranged and specified in the contract

## **WHAT KINDS OF ACTIVITIES QUALIFY AS INDEPENDENT RESEARCH (PSYC 499)?**

PSYC 499 is an elective course designed to provide advanced students with "hands-on" research experience in the laboratory or the field. PSYC 499 projects are intended to be primarily laboratory or field research projects, in which students receive a variety of "hands-on" research experiences (e.g., preparing stimulus materials, running research participants, coding data, entering data into computer files, analyzing data). Students should read a minimum of 10-12 background articles or equivalent scientific literature related to the research project on which they are working. Students must submit an APA style research report, research proposal, or equivalent writing at the conclusion of the 499.

## **DO I NEED TO DEVELOP MY OWN IDEA FOR A PSYC 498 OR 499 PROJECT BEFORE I ENROLL?**

No. Sometimes an undergraduate student may develop his/her own 498 or 499 project. More typically, undergraduates receive PSYC 498 or 499 credit for assisting a faculty member with an ongoing research project(s) in the faculty member's lab.

## **HOW DO I FIND OUT ABOUT PSYC 498 OR 499 OPORTUNITIES?**

Many faculty have ongoing research projects and will generally talk about some of their research during class. Thus, one of the most common ways to learn about research opportunities is to talk with those professors during office hours and ask whether they have any volunteer research position openings in their lab. You may also find a list of labs with research openings at the following website: [https://www.csusm.edu/psychology/ra\\_labs/index.html](https://www.csusm.edu/psychology/ra_labs/index.html). Professors have different criteria and different processes for filling open research positions. Some may require an application and interview; others may have a less formal process. Some may require that you have successfully completed one of their classes before taking you on as a research assistant. It's important to keep in mind that mentoring students and supervising PSYC 498 and 499 takes a good deal of the faculty member's time. Thus, they are more likely to be willing to devote that time to you if they have gotten to know you and if you have demonstrated that you are a serious, mature, and motivated student by attending class consistently, participating in class discussions, going to office hours, and generally performing well in class.

## **WHICH FACULTY MEMBERS SPONSOR PSYC 498 AND 499 PROJECTS?**

Not all eligible faculty members offer PSYC 498/499 each semester, and there is a limit on the number of PSYC 498/499 projects that each faculty member may sponsor per semester.

**HOW MANY UNITS CAN I RECEIVE FOR PSYC 498 OR 499?**

PSYC 498 or PSYC 499 may be taken for 1, 2, 3, or 4 units. Students who receive 1 unit of credit shall be required to work on project related tasks a minimum of 60 hours over the semester (4 hrs/week x 15 weeks) and to produce at minimum a 3-page APA paper, report, or equivalent writing. Those who receive 2 units of credit shall work on project related tasks a minimum of 90 hours over the semester (6 hrs/week x 15 weeks) and to produce at minimum a 7-page APA paper or equivalent. Students who receive 3 units of credit shall be required to work on project related tasks a minimum of 120 hours over the semester (8 hrs/week x 15 weeks) and to produce at minimum a 10-page APA paper or equivalent. Those who receive 4 units of credit shall work on project related tasks a minimum of 150 hours over the semester (10 hrs/week x 15 weeks) and to produce at minimum a 10-page APA paper or equivalent. The number of units appropriate for each particular special studies project shall be the final determination of the faculty member.

**CAN I ENROLL IN PSYC 498 OR 499 MORE THAN ONCE?**

Yes, however it is important to note that a MAXIMUM of 6 units of PSYC 498 and/or PSYC 499 (combined) will count as elective units toward the PSYC major.\* There is no limit on the number of units of PSYC 498 and 499 that can be taken as general electives. [\*NOTE. Any combination of up to 6 units of 498 & 499 can count toward the PSYC major. Any 498/499 units in excess of 6 will not count toward the PSYC major, but will count toward general elective units toward graduation.]

**HOW WILL MY GRADE FOR PSYC 498 OR 499 BE DETERMINED?**

The nature of the work and assignments required for successful completion of the course will be stipulated in the PSYC 498/499 contract that you develop with the faculty sponsor. It will be entirely up to the faculty member to determine how successfully you have completed the assigned work and the grade to assign. You are encouraged to talk with your faculty sponsor about his/her expectations and requirements.

**DO PSYC 498 AND PSYC 499 MEET AT A PARTICULAR TIME?**

You and your faculty sponsor will determine when and how often you will meet for your independent study/research course. It is required by department policy that your faculty sponsor meet with you an average of one (1) hour per week across the term.

**WHAT ARE THE PREREQUISITES FOR PSYC 498 AND PSYC 499?**

To be eligible for either PSYC 498 or PSYC 499 you should have completed at least 48 units of undergraduate study, and you should have a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or better. Both PSYC 498 and 499 require the consent of the instructor to enroll and may require specific pre-requisite coursework.

**HOW DO I ENROLL IN PSYC 498 OR 499?**

After a faculty member has determined that you meet the prerequisites and indicated that they are willing to sponsor you for a 498 or 499 project, ask them to provide you a digital Independent Study/Research Contract. The faculty member will provide the topic, outline of work, and grade expectations in Sections B and C; review this and then complete Section A. Once you have completed Section A, the faculty member will route the form for signatures and submit the signed form to the Registrar via email. Monitor myCSUSM to verify enrollment.