

CAMPUS CORNER

STUDENTS

The University of Lethbridge (Departments of Psychology and Neuroscience)

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Situated in picturesque Lethbridge, AB, the University of Lethbridge (U of L) has been educating minds and broadening horizons since its establishment in 1967. With a strong focus on research and a student population of approximately 8000, the U of L provides a community atmosphere filled with unbridled potential and opportunities.

The benefits of education at the U of L are numerous. With a faculty to student ratio of 1:12, the U of L prides itself on small class sizes and student/professor interactions. But don't make the mistake of associating quantity with quality. The philosophy at the U of L is liberal, with strong humanities and arts programs balanced by research-intensive sciences and management programs. Education is tailored to fit individual interests, with a broad array of courses and programs designed to offer a well-rounded foundation. In the Faculty of Arts & Science, no minor is required, allowing students to focus on a single disci-

pline, complete a multi-discipline degree, or pursue a combined degree with the Faculty of Education or Management. Students may also participate in applied or independent study courses. For credit, students are given the freedom to study with a professor of his or her choice, and create and complete his or her own syllabus.

Offering psychology as a Bachelor of Arts or Science major, or as a stream in one of several multiple-discipline degree programs, the U of L views psychology as a both specific field of study and a supplementary asset for any other field. Students may take courses from the Health Sci-

ences (e.g., addictions counseling, nursing, public health) and from the department of neuroscience to expand and enrich their understanding of psychology.

The U of L psychology program cannot be discussed without mention of neuroscience. The campus includes the highly-acclaimed Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience (CCBN), home to prominent researchers in the field. Faculty members include innovative minds such as Drs. Bryan Kolb, Ian Whishaw, Robert Sutherland, & Bruce McNaughton, just to name a few. Current research includes topics such as: brain injury (stroke re-

covery), brain plasticity, neurological disorders, and the mechanisms of attention. The philosophy of student focus is carried into graduate programs, with graduate students in both psychology and neuroscience having the opportunity to study and work with prominent researchers and use cutting-edge technology at the CCBN. For a more in-depth discussion of current research, please visit <http://ccbn.uleth.ca/>.

In addition to the research conducted at the CCBN, other research opportunities in Psychology exist at the U of L. The psychology department currently includes interests in organizational psychology, sexual behaviour, criminal behaviour, cognition, development of language, and childhood disorders. Majoring in psychology, or even just taking one class, affords students the opportunity to study under brilliant lecturers and re-

searchers such as Drs. Martin Laminiere, Peter Henzi, Paul Vasey, and Louise Barrett. Students may work with faculty members in these areas or pursue other interests with an applied or independent study.

The capacity for reaching one's potential at the U of L is high, as evidenced by the most recent results of the MacLean's Canadian University Survey Consortium. In the current MacLean's Canadian University Survey Consortium, the U of L received scores from 87 percent to 96 percent on the seven scales measuring student satisfaction. Measures included items such as class size, professor availability, and quality of education. In addition to the strength of the program, the city of Lethbridge offers students at the U of L unique academic and social opportunities that one would unlikely receive at a much larger centre.

Advocating for Psychology as a Profession: A Clinical Psychology Student Initiative Advocacy Through Action: Students Bringing Psychology to Our Community

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In contrast to many other health professions—such as optometry or dentistry—that frequently highlight important health concerns and market their services to the public, psychology is less visible. Moreover, in the face of pop psychology and the endless list of writers and personalities offering advice and therapy to the general public, efforts are needed to actively debunk popular myths and guide people to empirically-supported psychological information and resources.

In 2006, a group of Clinical Psychology graduate students attended a workshop about advocacy for psychology presented by Dr. Ian Nicholson (Director of Clinical Training, Psychological Services, London Health Sciences Centre). Inspired by that workshop, the students began discussing ways in which they could advocate for the profession of psychology to convey to the public how psychology is applicable to both individual and societal issues. Out of these discussions, the student group Advocacy Through Action was born.

The students of Advocacy Through Action realized that scientifically-evaluated information needed to be made available to the wider community. It is one thing to conduct research cloistered away in the university, but even more constructive to share it with the public in a user-friendly manner!

Beyond wanting to translate the information we have learned during the course of our studies at university, we also wanted to say "thank you" to the London community. For many of us, individuals and families from the community have participated in our research studies, or indirectly funded our training through schol-

arships. It is this involvement by the community that allows us, as students, to continue doing what we do.

Our first outreach project took place in February 2008 when we organized a series of public lectures to commemorate Psychology Month, and to provide community members with psychological information about everyday concerns. Based on the mandate of Advocacy Through Action at that time—i.e., to showcase psychology's applicability to everyday common life dilemmas—the series of talks was aptly named Finding Your Way: The Psychology of Everyday Life. Talks were given by graduate students and faculty from the University of Western Ontario in areas of particular expertise or interest. The series covered 14 different topics, including how to get your child into bed and stay in bed in the evening, relaxation for kids, stress management, and understanding romantic relationships.

This series of free public lectures was put on at the main branch of the London Public Library in downtown London, Ontario, and ran four consecutive Saturdays in the month of February. From the outset, faculty members and psychologists in London

were very supportive of our initiative. Based on public feedback and evaluations from the 2008 library series, our February 2009 library series was expanded to include more talks on various days and evenings throughout the whole month. Compared to last year, we are already seeing a dramatic increase in the number of attendees and positive press we are receiving.

For more information about the 2009 Finding Your Way: The Psychology of Everyday Life library series, please see <http://psychology.uwo.ca/news/community/fyw.htm>.

Recently, Advocacy Through Action was acknowledged by the Ontario Psychological Association (OPA) with a Public Education Award for our 2008 library series. Winning this award has made our group feel both validated and humbled. When this group began, many of us were unsure of the influence we could have had on the general public or the psychological community in London. The recognition and support that we have received from both groups has greatly surpassed our expectations, and has encouraged us to see how we can make a difference beyond our academic and clinical pursuits.

We now realize how much we can accomplish with limited time and resources, and we would strongly support other student groups in organizing their own similar advocacy events. Psychology is for everyone, and it is up to all of us to show the general public how!

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Lessons Learned: 10 Tips for surviving (and thriving) while completing your dissertation

MAXINE HOLMQVIST (University of Saskatchewan) and
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Most dissertations don't have sections for lessons learned; however, if they did, ours might look something like this:

- 1 Start early. Choose a topic that genuinely interests you, but keep your expectations realistic. You have the rest of your life to do Nobel prize winning research – choose a project that can be completed within your time frame.
- 2 A positive relationship with your advisor is crucial. Take steps to establish good communication and clear expectations. If you're unable to resolve differences early on, consider consulting with a trusted colleague or faculty member about your options.
- 3 Set deadlines. We all need them and they can always be renegotiated as required. Establish regular contact with your research advisor to stay on track and set dates to review work once it has been submitted. Use lab-mates to help keep you accountable.
- 4 Beware of procrastination and subtle forms of avoidance (e.g., is another literature search really necessary?).
- 5 Measure twice, cut once. It is much easier (and less stressful) to do things right the first time than to cut corners and try to repair the damage afterwards.
- 6 It can't be said enough - BACK UP your data, manuscript drafts and defense presentations regularly. This is one area where a little obsessiveness can pay off.
- 7 While writing, develop a system early on to label successive drafts clearly. This is particularly critical if you are working on multiple computers (at home, in the lab, etc.).
- 8 Prioritize your research. This means scheduling time to work on it into your week. If an internship is required for your program, having a nearly completed dissertation (e.g., full draft, oral scheduled) will make you a more attractive candidate and will allow you to take full advantage of opportunities during and after your training.
- 9 Prepare for your defense. Attend other defenses in your department, learn as much as you can about the process in advance, and practice, practice, practice. If you have the opportunity, practice with the equipment and in the room you will be using at your defense.
- 10 Practice good self-care. It may sound obvious, but eating well, getting enough sleep and exercise and occasionally having a guilt-free evening out with friends is necessary to keep your motivation up. Some of the most successful graduates we know managed to have a life during grad school—you can too. It just requires a little discipline.