

A Summer Program for Undergraduate Students

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Source: Nagasawa, S., & Fulton, H. (2006). A summer program for undergraduate students. *Psynopsis: Canada's Psychology Newspaper*, 28(3), 17.

If you are one of the hundreds of undergraduate students trying to gain entrance into graduate studies for psychology, then it should come as no surprise to hear that graduate schools are looking for candidates who have a fair amount of research experience.

Since the life of many ambitious students encompass the stress of classes, work, and unruly roommates (who never get around to doing their dishes) it seems like a daunting task to also take on the additional pressures of volunteer work.

As daunting as adding another item to your "to do" list is, having the extra experience will come in handy (trust me on this one,) and just think, it will also provide you with an additional reason for not doing your laundry all semester! From my own limited experience I have found that one can often volunteer for a previous professor or, even better, apply for a student post within your department either at the beginning of the school year or during the summer (when no one is around to keep the rats company.) One particular research experience I would like to highlight is the unique opportunity that I was afforded at McGill University. The program is called the Discover McGill Behavioural Neuroscience Training Program and offers students a four-month placement with a professor of similar research interests. The goal of the program is to provide selected students from across Canada the opportunity to learn about the types of research that is currently taking place at the

graduate level, and to acquaint potential graduate students with McGill University.

My experience, and the experiences of fellow students who took part in the program, found the summer spent in beautiful Montréal to be equally enriching and eye-opening. Working within an academic environment gave me the opportunity to improve my research skills, such as learning new experimental software, creating experimental stimuli, and running and recruiting participants for various studies. Furthermore, being in the company of knowledgeable graduate students also provided me with answers to all those questions that pamphlets and academic counselors could not answer.

Without a doubt, my summer spent at McGill not only influenced but solidified my desire to gain acceptance into a graduate school program in psychology. Although I learned a great deal about research, I also took away from the experience how crucial it is to enjoy what you are doing (more specifically, in regards to a field of research) and how important it is to work in an environment with like-minded people who will support you. I would urge any undergraduate student who is looking for research experience and a summer filled with learning to look up the Discover McGill Program (www.mbns.ca). The experience has not only made me a better researcher but was also invaluable in opening my eyes to what (hopefully) lies ahead in my academic pursuits.