

The benefits of a small university for graduate studies in psychology

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Prospective psychology graduate students generally aim to attend larger institutions. However, most are unaware of the numerous benefits of attending a smaller university. This article briefly summarizes some compelling reasons to consider a smaller university for graduate studies in psychology. These observations are based on the experiences of master's and doctoral students in psychology at the University of Lethbridge, a small comprehensive university in southern Alberta.

Collaboration. At smaller universities, faculty members often maintain labs with fewer students. With fewer lab members competing for an advisor's time, students receive more personalized supervision, often developing close working relationships with their advisor. Smaller universities also allow for enhanced communication and collaboration with others both within and outside one's own lab and department.

Institutional support. Students at smaller universities regularly receive disproportionately higher institutional support compared to students at larger universities. Furthermore, at many smaller universities, administrative staff are more personally invested in an individual graduate student's success. The School of Graduate Studies at the University of Lethbridge, for example, supports students with generous teaching assistantships, research stipends, and conference funding.

Research focus. Many large universities require all graduate students to take a large number of courses. Although breadth of knowledge is important, smaller universities often place less emphasis on course volume, and greater emphasis on independent learning and research productivity. With more time to devote to research, graduate students at smaller universities often have a greater opportunity to publish more extensively. Many of the graduate students in psychology at the University of Lethbridge have published numerous papers in prestigious, high-impact journals.

Funding and productivity. Students at smaller universities frequently experience great success in conducting and publishing research, leading to more competitive applications for obtaining awards and funding. Psychology graduate students at the University of Lethbridge have received numerous awards for academic and research excellence, external research funding as principal investigators from independent granting bodies, and prestigious fellowships from federal and provincial agencies. Success rates for these awards among psychology graduate students at the University of Lethbridge exceed success rates at many larger institutions.

Prospective graduate students in psychology should seriously consider attending a smaller university such as the University of Lethbridge for master's or doctoral degrees.

Enhanced student-advisor relationships, greater institutional support, and a focus on independent learning and research productivity at many smaller universities

facilitate the development of academics and practitioners who can effectively compete in an increasingly challenging job market.