

Research Opportunities for Students

We strongly encourage psychology majors, especially those considering graduate school, to gain research experience during their time at Augustana. Research is both challenging and rewarding: it requires curiosity, creativity, perseverance... and a willingness to discover that you might have been wrong! Research allows you to pursue answers to questions that you think are important and to test your ideas. Many graduate programs require research experience for admission, and the research skills you will learn are highly valued in many career settings.

Ways to get involved with research

1. Directed Research (PSYC 361/362)

Students join a faculty member's research team (see descriptions below), and work on one or more empirical research projects currently being conducted in that laboratory. Students meet regularly with the faculty, read relevant research articles, and collect data. Students may also participate in entering, coding, or analyzing data, and will have opportunities to present their findings (at the Augustana Symposium and possibly national conferences).

2. Independent Research (PSYC 392/398)

Once students have gained research experience in Directed Research, they may develop their own independent research projects. Often, these projects grow out of interests student have developed in directed research, or in one of their classes. A faculty member will supervise the student in designing the project, obtaining institutional ethics approval, collecting and analyzing data, and writing up the findings in a formal APA-style paper.

3. Off-Campus Research

Each year, there are many national opportunities for undergraduate students to travel to another institution and spend a summer working in a laboratory. Many of these are paid positions. The department helps gather information about these opportunities, and psychology majors are strongly encouraged to apply.

Ongoing Department Projects

Clinical Psychology: Dr. Casey Trainor specializes in the relationship between anxiety and sleep disorders. Specifically he is interested in the factors that contribute to the development of anxiety, the relationship between anxiety and sleep, and the relationship between anxiety and substance use. Students in his lab design and analyze web-based surveys, and conduct in-person clinical interviews.

Cognitive Psychology: Dr. Elizabeth Babcock researches how cognitive abilities (such as memory, attention and learning) are affected by real-world task demands. She has investigated how selective attention can help avoid distraction on the Internet, and how to improve memory for names in real life situations. Recently, students in her lab have programmed and administered a variety of cognitive tests for college-aged students and older adults (aged 63+).

Developmental Psychology: Dr. Olivia Lima's broad area of research interest is teaching and learning, as informed by cognitive, developmental, and educational psychology. She has investigated preschoolers' word learning in school settings, and how classroom climate/relationships affect learning and development. Recently, students in her lab have conducted studies at local preschools, where they read storybooks, observe children's behavior, and test vocabulary.

Social Psychology: Dr. Anne Zell's research relates to social and positive psychology. Her research topics have included humility, forgiveness, self-control, how competition affects relationships, moral evaluations of deception, and how receiving praise affects people. Recently, students in her lab have conducted both experiments and correlational studies on these topics.