

First Impressions of UCLA Psychology:  
A Transfer Student's Perspective

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Transferring to UCLA as a psychology major can be a very intimidating process. Since it is one of the largest departments and highly competitive, the daunting task of entering UCLA in one's third year raises several questions such as how am I going to compete with other students for grades when they have already been here for two years and have the upper hand, and how can I improve my level of involvement in psychology when I have to compete for positions with others who are probably much more qualified? Needless to say, a significant number of negative thoughts run through a transfer student's head, which in turn leaves feelings of being overwhelmed, discouraged, disheartened, and possibly even demoralized.

However, once overcoming these thoughts and feelings and attending various psychology-related events, a whole new outlook can emerge. UCLA isn't threatening, but rather just the opposite, full of opportunities for everyone. These opportunities include joining student organizations, such as Psychology Society and Psi Chi, or becoming a teaching assistant, research assistant, fieldwork participant, or volunteer in positions directly related to the field of psychology. To find out more information regarding UCLA psychology, visit their website at <http://www.psych.ucla.edu/>.

Psychology Society is a wonderful place for a transfer student to begin their exploration of UCLA psychology. Psychology Society functions as a source of information and encourages social interaction among peers, while promoting academics,

networking, peer advising, and community service. In addition, the Society routinely holds special discussions, which include a graduate student panel and other distinguished faculty as guest speakers or to find out more information begin by at. To find out more information visit their website at <http://www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/psychsociety/>. Or to become a member begin by attending a meeting, which are held Wednesdays, during odd weeks from 5-6 pm in Franz 3534.

Another fantastic organization for undergraduates to become involved with is Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology, whose purpose is to encourage, stimulate, and maintain excellence in academics and research. One of the major benefits of Psi Chi is the access to resources, providing members with information directly related to courses at UCLA, workshops, conventions, GRE preparation, and tips on getting into graduate school. Another added bonus is it provides networking opportunities with other dedicated individuals in order to form contacts that will be valuable throughout one's educational and professional career. To find out more information visit their website at <http://www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/psichi/>. Or to become a member begin by attending a meeting, which are held Tuesdays, during even weeks from 5-6 pm in Franz 3435.

In addition to these organizations, a transfer student can interact with faculty members, by becoming an undergraduate teaching assistant. It requires asking a professor, whose class one has excelled in, to be a teaching assistant when the class is offered again. The position includes enrollment in Psych 192, with about seven hours of work per week, and offering review sessions, office hours, and also attending lecture. This is a wonderful opportunity to not only work closely with faculty, but to gain the knowledge and experience of what goes into teaching a class. Assisting in the preparation

of discussions, course materials, and proctoring exams is a valuable way to gain behind the scenes awareness. To find more information about becoming a teaching assistant go to [http://www.psych.ucla.edu/Undergrads/research\\_int/info\\_192.php](http://www.psych.ucla.edu/Undergrads/research_int/info_192.php).

Another important means for undergraduates to become involved with UCLA psychology is by participating in research, assisting faculty and graduate students with research projects they are conducting. There are several different ways to become a research assistant. Psychology students can enroll in Psych 196A, for which students receive four units of credit on a P/NP grading basis for about 7 to 8 hours work per week. Or students who have completed Psych 100B may elect to design and conduct their own research project by enrolling in Psych 199. Besides being a research assistant, students can elect to participate in the Departmental Honors Program. The Honors Program is a one year research program for those who have a cumulative or major GPA of a 3.5 and wish to pursue their dream of being a researcher. Thus, by participating in research, students learn specific skills and experience all aspects of the research process. To find more information about the various research positions and the Honors Program visit [http://www.psych.ucla.edu/Undergrads/research\\_int/](http://www.psych.ucla.edu/Undergrads/research_int/).

Another way for students to receive credit in UCLA psychology is through Fieldwork. Students are given the opportunity to work in a community setting that has a psychological orientation. To do so, one may enroll in Psych 195A, receiving four units of credit, and attend a weekly seminar, all while working in a clinical setting off campus. To find more information regarding Fieldwork and how to become involved go to [http://www.psych.ucla.edu/Undergrads/research\\_int/info\\_193.php](http://www.psych.ucla.edu/Undergrads/research_int/info_193.php).

Lastly, there are numerous different volunteer positions on and off campus directly related to those interested in psychology. Numerous student groups offer volunteer opportunities in a plethora of areas, ranging from working in a health clinic to helping orphans in Mexico. To find more information in regard to student groups and volunteering visit <http://www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/>. In addition, the UCLA hospital has over 300 volunteer positions that provide students the chance to explore various different health-related options. To find more information regarding volunteer positions at the UCLA hospital visit <http://healthsciences.ucla.edu/healthcare/mattel/shared/volunteering>.

Thus, UCLA psychology does not have to be large and intimidating, but rather it can be shaped into an intimate and supportive sanctuary. By becoming involved in some of the many opportunities that UCLA psychology has to offer, transfers will flourish, building self-esteem and emerging with a new positive outlook.