Psychology Department Guide to Research Engagement

https://www.coloradocollege.edu/academics/dept/psychology/research/index.html)
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Overview

Consistent with our liberal arts tradition and emphasis on empirical research and scientific understanding, the Psychology Department would like to provide students with opportunities to develop and practice their research skills (e.g., PY251) and conduct their own projects in collaboration with faculty (e.g., PY451). The steps outlined in this guide are designed to help students learn, understand, and engage with the available research opportunities.

All students in the department are encouraged to use these steps to seek out research opportunities. Psychology majors can also use these steps to move toward satisfying the Research Experience Major Requirement.

Step 1

Consider what topics or areas of study interest you. What do you think about or wonder about often? What might be interesting that you haven't engaged with yet? Sources of inspiration include your life experience, books or textbooks read, and classes studied.

Timing: Ongoing throughout your CC career and life

Resource: APA Divisions https://www.apa.org/about/division (click "View All Divisions")

Step 2

Complete **PY205** *Introduction to Methods and Statistics ("Methods I")*. This course is a prerequisite for most research opportunities within the department. Students interested in neuroscience research should complete **PY299** *Neuroscience*.

Timing: During 1st or 2nd year (ideally)

Step 3

Refine your interests to pursue. With the knowledge of topics and approaches learned from PY205 or PY299, start to hone your general interests into questions that might be logistically feasible to explore. Consider the theories, methods, samples, and goals of research you have read about in the literature. How have others addressed these questions? What methods and measurements did they use? Who served as the target participants or subjects?

Timing: Ongoing after PY205 or PY299

Step 4

Identify faculty members who might share your interests. Read through the faculty profile pages on the website to learn about their areas of specialization, courses taught, and specific research interests. Look through the research presentation pages of the website for examples of actual projects from prior years that the faculty have collaborated on with students like you.

Timing: Between PY205/PY299 and Block 2 junior year

Resources: Profiles
https://www.coloradocollege.edu/academics/dept/psychology/people/index.html
Presentations:
https://www.coloradocollege.edu/academics/dept/psychology/research/local-presentations/index.html

Step 5

Reach out to faculty members who might share your interests. Utilize email, office hours, after class conversations, etc., to contact one to three faculty members to request a meeting to talk about research interests and opportunities. It is **not** necessary that you have previously met the faculty member. Faculty members are aware of and expect these requests. It **is** necessary to be flexible and patient about meeting times. All faculty have busy teaching, research, and committee schedules which might delay possible meeting times. While not typical, the first available meeting time could be a block or more in the future.

Timing: After PY205/PY299 and Steps 1 to 4. No later than Block 3 of junior year.

Resource: Example email starter
"I'm a student in my _____ year and interested in ___[area or topic, e.g., "social psychology"]___ . Would it be possible to meet with you sometime to talk about research interests and PY251/PY451 possibilities? Thank you for your time and consideration."

Step 6

Meet with the faculty member. Ask the faculty member about their research and area. Share thoughts you have had about what interests you. Have a discussion. Ask about possibilities for senior year PY251 or PY451 projects. You may also ask about any sophomore or junior year PY251 opportunities. Discussions can remain introductory and general or become more specific and planful, depending on you, the faculty member, and where you are in the course of your CC career. Neither you nor the faculty member need to commit to a project collaboration during this meeting.

Timing: No later than Block 5 of junior year.

Resource: Example discussion starters
- *Can you tell me about the kind of research projects you conduct?*
- *I'm trying to plan for my PY251/PY451 requirement…can you help me figure it out?*
- *I want to learn more about research opportunities in the department and hope you can help me.*
- *I'm interested in [state the interest]. What next steps might I take to learn about [interest]?*

NOTE: The availability of pre-senior year PY251 courses is highly variable. Sometimes there are several; sometimes there are none. It is possible, but by no means expected, that you might have arranged a pre-senior year PY251 with the faculty member by the end of Step 6. When possible, these early-career PY251 courses are beneficial toward helping you develop research skills, perspective on the field, and a better understanding of your topical interests or dislikes. Completing an early PY251 *does* satisfy the Research Experience Requirement for psychology majors, but it *does not have to be* your only research course (PY251/PY451). You may still seek senior-year or other research courses in the future.

Step 7

Email yourself or otherwise write notes to document project ideas discussed with the faculty member during the meeting. Psychology majors without an early PY251 will have to fill out an application for research advisor matching during Block 6 of their junior year. Students with an early PY251 might still decide to apply for senior year research advisor matching when the time comes. The application will ask you to comment on the project ideas discussed, so it is helpful to have taken notes about what ideas were discussed and with which faculty member(s).

Timing: As soon as possible after the meeting

Step 8

Complete and submit the Senior Research Advisor Matching Application or opt out if you don't need or want a PY251/451 course. Psychology majors having completed the PY251/451 requirement, or any non-psychology major, may opt out if desired by forwarding a message to mark.saviano@coloradocollege.edu. Any junior wanting to pursue senior research may complete the application. The application asks you to provide three preferences for a senior research advisor and to briefly summarize project ideas you discussed with them in the earlier steps.

Timing: First two weeks of Block 6.

The Qualtrics application will be distributed via email at the start of the block.