

ACCESS



*Spring 2012:
Issue 2*

Psychology Newsletter

Look
Inside

Getting Involved:
Avoiding the
Sophomore Slump



2



How to Get Into
Your Dream
Graduate School

3

Academic
Survival Skills



4

Meet Psych ACCESS
spotlight faculty:
Dr. Roseanne Foti



6

This issue

We discuss how to succeed in your academic career; and if you are applying to graduate school this year, we provide information about your next step after graduation.

You will also learn about Dr. Foti, an industrial and organizational psychologist, and her work on leadership.

We hope you enjoy the rest of the semester and have a great summer!

Psych Access Authors



Getting Involved: Avoiding the Sophomore Slump

You did it! You are almost there! The end of the academic year is in sight. You survived making new friends, taking new classes, and many new personal freedoms. But then what? Perhaps a job, summer vacation, or nothing at all? Before long, August 27 is here and you are back for the next year. And now comes new confusion and uncertainty associated with academics, friends and extracurricular activities. But you are a sophomore (or junior or senior) and are expected to have already adjusted to college. And so begins the so called “sophomore slump.” This is a period of time when many students lose motivation in their college career. Students also feel misunderstood (you already made it through one year, so why shouldn’t you know what to do this year?). Yet, this is a time for a lot of personal growth and some of the most important years of a student’s life. There are many steps students can take to ensure they are successful during the middle years of college.

First, your major must be decided, which can be a very stressful commitment. Perhaps you were in university studies or maybe realized that you just don’t like the basic classes you are taking. Classes are going

to be harder and the workload will increase. This is the perfect time to talk to an academic advisor or a faculty member. Studies have demonstrated that faculty interaction is a strong predictor of academic success and increased self-esteem, especially when deciding on a major. These small interactions can help you decide if you want to stick with your major, add a major or minor, or switch to something else. The important thing to remember is that it is up to the student to seek out help.

This is also a period of time for new social interactions. Unfortunately, many of your relationships from the first year will weaken, simply due to physical distance and time constraints. Work and time are needed to keep up those friendships. If you find yourself missing your friends, perhaps this is an opportunity to be more involved around campus. Join a club or volunteer. You will be surprised how important social ties will be. Recent research shows that perceived social support is linked to increased self-efficacy for all sorts of study behaviors, helping you on the road to success. Not only that, but having friends is a great motivation to exercise, sleep and eat properly, which is linked to academic performance. Again, talk to an advisor to help you find a social niche.

Speaking of involvement, this is also a time to think about your life outside of college.

How to Get into Your Dream Graduate School

Consider becoming involved in research to see if that is something that interests you. Not sure how to get involved? Ask your professor or graduate teaching assistant about their research. If your interests do not line up, then they should be able to point you in the right direction. Also, professors have their research interests posted on departmental websites. There is nothing wrong with an email expressing interest.

Your middle years are also a time to consider internships, co-ops, externships and other career options. Career Services is an amazing resource for information about potential careers, graduate and professional school options, or just advice on what to do next. Check out their website www.career.vt.edu for tons of information on opportunities.

The middle few years of college are some of the most stressful you will experience. It is important to think ahead and realize that while this one year is almost over, there are still a few more to go. Take the time to set yourself up for success. To quote an amazing television show, "It's never too late for now."

BY JONATHAN WALDRON

References

Fox, M. C. (2011). *Social support, health behaviors, and academic success in college students*. (Master's thesis, East Carolina University), Available from The ScholarShip.

Gahagan, J. & Hunter, M.S. (2006). The second-year experience: Turning attention to the academy's middle children. *About Campus*.

Graunke, S.S., & Woosley, S.A. (2005). An exploration of the factors that affect the academic success of college sophomores. *College Student Journal*, 39.

Maggitti, S. T. (2010). Sophomores: The struggles of the "middle children" of college. Retrieved Mar.28, 2012 from: <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/secondyear/pdf/SophomoresStruggles.pdf>*



In applying and interviewing for graduate programs, keep in mind the process serves you *and* the recruiting committee in determining if the program will be a good fit for you, not only the recruiting committee. Depending on the type of graduate degree you pursue, you will spend 2 to 4+ years in the program, so it is important that there is a good fit for both academic and personal reasons. While a match in research interests between you and your potential advisor is undoubtedly important, there are other types of fit you should consider.

This notion relates to Pervin's (1968) theory of person–environment (P-E) fit, which posits individuals will have positive experiences when their work environment is compatible with their personal characteristics. Research in this area has shown P-E fit is positively related to individuals' satisfaction, involvement, commitment, and success on the job and negatively related to turnover (Kristof, 1996). This encompasses a person's fit with the job, the group, and the organization.

In terms of applying for graduate school, person-job (P-J) fit concerns whether or not one has the abilities to perform in the role as a graduate student and whether or not the role meets the individual's needs. While the recruiting committee will use different criteria to select candidates, you should consider

whether the program offers the classes and growth opportunities you desire (e.g., practicum or internship experiences).

Person-group (P-G) fit concerns an individual's compatibility with colleagues. In graduate school, you will interact often with faculty and graduate students so it is important that you can work with them and get along. Person-organization (P-O) fit concerns compatibility with the program's values and culture. For example, some programs may operate in a culture of collegiality whereas others might have a more competitive nature. You should consider which environment would be most conducive for you.



In applying for graduate program, be sure to research various aspects of the program so you can make an informed decision. While information about curriculum is readily available, you may have to seek out other information about other aspects of the program. If you are

provided the opportunity to visit the school, consider it a great opportunity to learn more about the people and the culture. If you are not able to visit, try arranging interviews with both faculty and current graduate students. In either class, ask lots of questions. In light of P-E research findings, achieving a good fit may make your graduate career a more positive and successful one.

BY NICOLE J. THOMPSON

References

Kristof, A. L. (1996). Person-organization fit: An integrative review of its conceptualizations, measurement, and implications. *Personnel Psychology*, 49, 1-49.

Pervin, L. A. (1968). Performance and satisfaction as a function of individual-environment fit. *Psychological Bulletin*, 69, 56-58.*

Academic Survival Skills



Academic success is largely dependent on the ability to effectively make use of the many resources available to you, and the development of certain critical skills. Effectively making use of resources may involve knowing where to look to find help and not being afraid to ask for help when needed. Academic expectations at Virginia Tech are likely higher than what expectations were at your high school, so it's worth putting the time and energy into academic preparedness in order to make your college years successful.

For research papers, Virginia Tech's libraries are a great place to start. In addition to independently searching for information on your own, subject librarians are available to assist with your research needs. Research librarians are accessible in person, online (via chat and email), and via text messaging. If they cannot specifically address your research needs, they will likely direct you to someone who can, and can even help you locate information or materials that are available outside of Virginia Tech's library system (<http://www.lib.vt.edu/>). The Writing Center is also located at Newman Library and is a free service that may assist with reading and writing assignments, as well as



non-course-related projects
(<http://www.composition.english.vt.edu/wc/>).

Getting to know your professors will likely help you more than you know. Attending office hours is a great way to start making connections – whether to ask for clarification about a point in the lecture, to discuss career goals, or simply to chat. Professors who know you personally are more likely to make you aware of opportunities in your field of study (e.g., jobs, summer internships, volunteer opportunities), and to be able to speak to you as a person when they write your future all-important letters of recommendation for your various pursuits. Faculty at this university are a wealth of information, so take advantage of their desire to share their knowledge with you!

If you find yourself severely struggling with academics, and have or believe that you may have a learning disorder, the office of Services for Students with Disabilities may be able to help (<http://www.ssd.vt.edu/>). They may provide classroom accommodations and academic coaching in cases of documented learning disorders.

In addition to resources, skills such as time management and good study habits are important in order to achieve academic success. Involvement in activities and organizations, while great for many reasons, should not come at the expense of poor grades. Time management involves planning ahead, setting goals, and potentially turning down extracurricular opportunities every now and then if they conflict with your ability to complete assignments. Creating a daily to-do list

(potentially in addition to a longer-term to-do list) can be helpful with juggling a long list of responsibilities, not to mention the good feeling that comes with checking off completed tasks! Time management also involves re-evaluation of your planned schedule from time to time, and the ability to be flexible to allow maximum efficiency. Taking periodic short breaks can boost long-run productivity, and decrease your level of stress.



In terms of good study habits, making an effort to study in a conducive environment for doing so, avoiding distractions, and treating school as a job can help to promote productivity. Determining how and when you learn best can also help you to most effectively plan your study time. “Strategic learners” view studying and learning as a controllable, systematic process, rather than something impossible and out of their control (Weinstein & Hume, 1998). Overall, being mindful of the use of your 168 hours per week and staying on top of your academic obligations leaves more time for friends and fun, and affords the possibility to make your college years the best they can be.

BY JILL LORENZI

References

- Weinstein, C. E., & Hume, L. M. (1998). *Study strategies for lifelong learning*. Washington: American Psychological Association.*

Dr. Roseanne Foti

Industrial and Organizational psychology is a broad field, how would describe it to someone who has never heard about it?

Most of our lives are spent at work. What happens at work can have a huge impact on people and their families. Industrial-organizational psychologists apply research to improve the well-being and performance of people and the organizations that employ them. I/O Psychology might sound like a narrow field of study and practice, but in fact it's quite broad, encompassing topics from individual performance in the workplace to team dynamics to organizational culture change. The field of I/O psychology is certainly a very applied field, but many I/O psychologists also address relatively basic research questions. In other words, I/O psychologists want to produce solutions to problems in the workplace, but they also want to develop a fuller understanding of life at work to produce a solid scientific knowledge base. I/O scientist/practitioners like being in an environment with problems to be solved, but they also like to discover and collect scientific data about work and organizational settings they can apply to problems yet to be faced. Traditionally, I/O psychologists have focused on understanding individual behavior and experience in organizational settings. That is, the worker has received the most attention. Today more than ever, however, I/O psychologists explicitly acknowledge the importance of considering the whole work system.



How did you become interested in I/O psychology?

In my senior year as an undergraduate, I was taking a senior seminar course. A majority of the class was interested in I/O psychology, but we didn't have any courses in the area, so the class convinced the professor to change the class topic to I/O!

Could you tell us about your research program?

I am interested primarily in the process of leadership. First, I study the process by which people come to see others as well as themselves as leaders. Second, I study the role of leadership in facilitating team performance and adaptation. Third, I study what individual differences are predictors of leadership and performance.

In this issue of the newsletter, we are talking about professional development (e.g., work, school), does your line of research inform us how to enhance our professional development?

Leadership is one of the social sciences most studied phenomena. After more than a century of research, scholars have a good understanding of what constitutes good leadership, how to measure it, and most importantly, are beginning to focus on how to develop it. Furthermore, we are certain that leadership makes a difference--a big difference to organizational effectiveness and the satisfaction of those with whom leaders work.



DR. HOFFMAN: Faculty Advisor to Psych ACCESS. Dr. Hoffman is a Developmental and Biological Psychology faculty and the Director of Undergraduate Studies at Virginia Tech.

NURI REYES is a fifth year doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at Virginia Tech. Her research interest is in Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

JILL LORENZI is a third year graduate student in clinical psychology at Virginia Tech. Her research interests include the early identification and evidence-based treatment of autism spectrum disorders, particularly in young children.

JOY (QIONG) WU is a fourth year Ph.D. student in Developmental and Biological Psychology at Virginia Tech. Her research interest is infant language acquisition and development.

JARED MCGINLEY is a third year graduate student in biological psychology at Virginia Tech. His research focuses on central mechanisms in regulating autonomic activity as well as on profiling the biological signatures of anxiety disorders.

JONATHAN WALDRON is a second year student in Clinical Psychology at Virginia Tech. His research interest is in Violence and Victimization.

JORDAN BOOKER is a third year doctoral student in Developmental and Biological Psychology at Virginia Tech. His research interest is parental emotion socialization, children's development of socio-emotional skills, and peer relations, from a strengths-based perspective.

SARAH ALLGOOD is a fourth year graduate student in Industrial/ Organizational psychology at Virginia Tech. Her research centers on implicit leadership theories as well as on leadership development.

KRYSTAL LEWIS is a fifth year doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at Virginia Tech. Her research interests are anxiety disorders in early childhood and the implementation of school-based prevention/intervention programs.

NICOLE J. THOMPSON is a 4th-year doctoral student in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. Her research interests lie in leadership, teamwork, interdisciplinary collaboration, and pattern-oriented approaches.

JIWON CHOI, Editor, is a senior at Virginia Tech majoring in Psychology. After graduation, she is interested in pursuing a graduate degree in Clinical Psychology and working with children. *All pictures included in this newsletter were obtained from Google Images.