



Birmingham-Southern College, Department of Psychology

Undergraduate Research Assistant (RA) Application

Being a research assistant and collaborator in a lab offers the kind of close, experiential opportunity BSC is known for. If your plans involve graduate education, you need to gain research experience *outside the classroom*. Graduate school admission is typically far more competitive than many undergraduate admissions requirements. One of the top criteria listed by graduate faculty in Psychology that will help you stand out is gaining quality research experience. Working in a lab will also help BSC faculty members write much better, more detailed letters of recommendation for your graduate / professional school applications.

What you do in a given lab will vary. You will have the opportunity to get involved with various aspects of research, such as designing experiments, collecting data, and data analysis. Some RAs even have the opportunity to present at conferences. While RA positions do not carry academic credit (outside of Vail Fellows applications – a separate process), the experience provides a tremendous opportunity for students who plan to go to graduate school. Many graduate programs expect applicants to have obtained research experience over and above the research that students conduct in their research methods or capstone courses.

1. Professor's lab to which you are applying (see end of application for lab descriptions): _____

Your full name:

Year in College:

Major:

Minor:

Current Overall GPA:

GPA in major:

2. List all psychology courses taken and grade in each course: Provide course #, professor, semester taken, and grade. For example, PY 101, Valenti, SP2020, A.

3. Please briefly describe your broad research interests. What are you interested in, and what do you hope to learn in our lab?

4. What would make you a good candidate for this particular lab? What skills do you have (e.g., organized, can work independently, statistics acumen, etc.)? Do you have any computer skills and/or programming experience? (e.g., Excel, SPSS, Microsoft, Java, Python, etc.). If so, please elaborate.

5. What are your plans after graduation?

6. Do you have any experience working or volunteering with specific populations that psychologists study (e.g., older adults)? If you do, please describe.

7. How many/which terms (or years) are you available to work in the lab?

8. How many hours per week can you commit to the research assistant position? Think about your existing commitments (academic, extracurricular, family, etc.); given these, how will you make time in your schedule to volunteer as a research assistant?

9. Have you completed IRB CITI training? If yes, please list expiration date. (If you have no idea what "IRB CITI training" is, just type "no" for this question. ☺)

10. Is there anything that you wish to add about yourself?

To complete your application, please e-mail directly to the professor with whom you are applying to work two documents: (1) this filled out application, and (2) your unofficial transcript.

Lab Descriptions

Dr. Greta Valenti

Broadly speaking, my research interests are in the areas of social cognition, and judgment and decision making. Most of my recent projects examine the factors that influence how people think and feel about past regrettable decisions. For example, one project investigates how regret for purchase decisions is influenced by the type of purchase (tangible, material goods (the latest iPhone) vs. experiences (weekend getaway)). Another project is examining the factors that influence the extent to which we consider the feeling of regret beneficial, and which particular benefits we believe it has. My research is typically conducted using adult, online samples, and occasionally with undergraduate participants at BSC.

Dr. Shane Pitts: ESCaPe (Experimental Social Cognition and Perception) Lab

Most of my research involves how perceivers' stereotypes, prejudices, and prejudice-related motives influence how we categorize, perceive, and understand others. Another research focus includes how people make sense of the world. We touch here on political, religious, and scientific domains, exploring how people maintain their beliefs, what they think of people with opposing beliefs, and what it takes for people to change their minds. Recent topics of investigation include: Facial information in social judgments; Racially biased perceptions of pain sensitivity; Racially biased perceptions of emotion and threat; Anti-atheist prejudice; Moral psychology; Misinformation and motivated cognition. Research in the lab will offer you an *ESCaPe* from everyday classes wherein you can develop your research skills, advance your CV/resume, and revel in the pure joy of scientific discovery. With any good fortune and a lot of hard work, as I have done with over 70 students in my career at BSC, you may soon find yourself presenting research at psychology conferences, mingling with future fellow graduate students and graduate faculty mentors.

Dr. Joe Chandler: 'Southern Sleep Lab (SSL)

I have three active area of research right now. The first looks at neurobehavioral consequences of sleep loss with the aim of modeling individually tailored fatigue countermeasures in high performance environments (military operations, athletics). The second examines psychosocial aspects of the LGBTQIA+ experience, especially in relation to Hate Crimes. The third seeks to create an early-identification predictive model of Parkinson's Disease using longitudinal and multi-level data analytics. I've mentored research associates at the undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral levels. RAs in the SSL have the opportunity to present at regional, national, and international conferences depending on project content and role, and the aim of the lab is to give RAs a realistic research experience while building valuable CV / resume content.

Dr. Jessica Allen: The Gerontology and Wellbeing Lab

Research in the Gero and Wellbeing Lab primarily focuses on the biopsychosocial wellbeing of older adults living in our community and their caregivers. This lab has three primary areas of research interests: (1.) research on the end-of-life continuum (EOL) including advance care planning (e.g. living wills), service utilization (e.g. hospice) and bereavement (e.g. depression and prolonged grief disorder), (2.) research on student attitudes and psychological wellbeing regarding aging (e.g. aging stereotypes), and death and dying (e.g. death anxiety) (3.) psychosocial and related interventions for community-dwelling older adults with cognitive impairment (i.e. dementia) such as adult day and respite care programs. While most of the research in GWL involves primary data collection, some large, secondary datasets are used as well. Student research in GWL has been presented at regional conferences such as the *Southern Gerontological Society*.