Six Psychology Students Prepare for Internship

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Samantha Corralejo successfully defends her PhD dissertation.

As the summer heats up and the Psychology Department prepares for an incoming cohort of students and the next school year, six psychology students are preparing for new adventures in doctoral internship programs across the country. Doctoral internship experiences offer hands-on, supervised training for students prior to being awarded a PhD.

Applying to internship can be a lengthy and stressful process for graduate students and their families during their final year of formal education. “Applying for internship was exciting and stressful at the same time! I loved thinking about what kind of training opportunities were available to me and where I might go,” said Samantha Corralejo, an advanced student in the Combined Clinical Counseling Program. “On the other hand, I worried that I had not chosen all of the right practica and assistantships to get me where I wanted to be.”

Students prepare for internship applications throughout their time at USU, networking and researching the best training opportunities, geographic locations, and areas of interest. The competitive nature of graduate students leads to coveted internship locations for high-ranking programs. “My advice to other students is to consider internship options and requirements early on in the program so that you can be sure to have the best resume possible when you apply,” said Corralejo.

The Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) coordinates the match with programs to help identify their preferred applicants and for applicants to also identify their programs of choice. Requirements for applicants vary by program, and applications are submitted by students from across the country. Then invitations for interviews are extended. This leads to increased expenses for travel during the busy school year. In the end, each internship site ranks their top choices for interns and each student ranks their top choices for internship locations. APPIC helps each site and student connect with their top choice, while maximizing the number of matches for all.

“I knew pretty early on that Jewish Child Care Association in Brooklyn was going to be one of my top-ranked sites. From my Uber driver hyping me up as he dropped me off, to the general ease I sensed between the current interns and staff, to the social justice oriented questions I was asked during the interview, it all felt like the perfect fit,” said Corralejo.

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“My internship is at San Francisco General Hospital, a tier-1 trauma center and public hospital,” said Lesther Papa, a 2018 clinical psychology fellow and doctoral intern. “This keeps me really busy. I’m doing comprehensive and developmental evaluations, outpatient services for children with PTSD, depression, ADHD, and dyadic work with young children and their caregivers to address the effects of trauma.”

Each student will relocate to their internship site and spend the next year working with that program. Internship applicants can elect from accredited programs in numerous settings and many areas of interest. Traditionally, students begin internship placements in July or August and complete them the following year.

“I’m currently at the tail end of my doctoral internship,” said Papa. “I’ve moved out to a city near Richmond in the Bay Area and have been taking advantage of where I live and what it offers. I’ve been able to see many of the touristy spots in San Francisco and enjoy lots of the natural beauty and events of the Bay Area and surrounding geography.”