

Education & Careers

SPRING REGISTRATION



A Psychology Degree Can Take You Places

Graduates discover many ways to put their skills to use

Herlinda Tin chose a psychology career following a devastating incident in high school. "One of my friends was assaulted, and I was the first person she approached after that. I had no idea what to do. I felt helpless," recalled Tin, a native of Guatemala who grew up in San Francisco. "I went to counseling with her and saw how it helped her." Now a graduate student at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (MSPP) in Newton, Tin hopes to do mental health work with Latinos and veterans after she completes her degree.

Anna Van Dam of Columbia Falls, Maine, has been

interested in child psychology for most of her life. "I saw the increases in autism and mental illnesses in children, and I saw an opportunity to do more with children's lives," said Van Dam, a senior psychology major at Wheelock College in Boston.

The two women are among many students preparing to meet the growing nationwide demand for psychology professionals. "There are so many opportunities," said Shirley Malone-Fenner, Wheelock's dean of arts and sciences. Today's in-demand specialties range from the traditional—such as clinical and school psychology and family counseling—to newer areas such as forensic, geriatric, sports, and even animal

psychology.

Child psychology and autism treatment are two particularly hot fields. "There simply aren't enough child mental health professionals in the United States," said Stan Berman, MSPP's vice president for academic affairs. In the early 1990s, only about a dozen US schools offered programs in behavioral analysis, added Tom Byrne, associate professor of psychology at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams. "Now there are hundreds," he said. The upswing is driven by demand for autism specialists. Many students embark on psychology careers equipped with only a bachelor's degree.

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Education & Careers



Photo: Wheelock College

Field experience is an important part of a psychologist's training as this Wheelock student learned working with young children.

continued from previous page

"There are plenty of jobs in the human services and helping professions," said Byrne. "Others go into the business world and use their psychology skills in sales or management."

Wheelock graduates have worked as community organizers, family counselors, and research assistants, or landed jobs at nonprofits and social services agencies. The common thread: "They are able to research, analyze, assess, and engage in critical thinking," said Malone-Fenner, herself a clinical psychologist. "The job possibilities are endless for someone with those abilities."

For those who want advanced education, MSPP offers master's and doctoral degrees in clinical, forensic,

organizational, and school psychology, among others. But Berman said what really sets MSPP apart are its social-commitment offerings. "We have one of the few programs in the country equipping students culturally and linguistically to work in the Latino community," he said. MSPP's Latino Mental Health Program features seminars conducted in Spanish and field experience in Spanish-speaking countries.

MSPP also offers programs in military and veterans' psychology, such as the Train Vets to Treat Vets program, in which veterans and reservists learn to counsel soldiers returning from active military duty. MSPP's Global Mental Health program prepares students to work with immigrant and refugee

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communities. And the school's new neuropsychology program trains students to work with people with neurological injuries or illness. "Some people have labeled this 'the century of the brain,'" Berman said. "This is the new frontier."

All three colleges offer field experience, such as internships in hospitals, schools, research labs, and other settings. Through Wheelock, for example, Van Dam has worked with preschoolers in Dorchester and children with emotional and behavior problems in Jamaica Plain.

"It was amazing to see the concepts we talked about in class playing out in my interactions with the children," said Van Dam, who hopes to become a child psychologist. •