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The Basics

Congrats again on joining us in the Ecological Community Psychology Department at MSU! We're very much looking forward to having you. Before we dive into the things you need to know, here are some facts about the new place you’ll call home!

Michigan State University

• MSU was founded in 1855 and now has a 5,200-acre campus
• MSU is a member of the Big Ten Conference
• There are 37,988 undergraduates and 11,355 graduate and professional students
• Homogenization of milk was discovered at MSU

East Lansing

• The population is 48,579
• The median age of the city is 21.6 years old
• East Lansing was the major junction of two important Native American trails
• In 1963, a visiting 3,000 lb. elephant escaped from its trainer in East Lansing. She led police on a 2 mile rampage, causing thousands of dollars in damage. The elephant was tragically killed by local police.

Lansing

• Lansing is the capital of the state of Michigan
• The population is 114,297
• In 2010 it was named one of the 10 Great Cities for Young Adults
• Dwayne Johnson’s character in Tooth Fairy is a minor league hockey player for the fictitious Lansing Ice Wolves.
Getting Your Student ID

You will need an MSU Student ID soon after you arrive at MSU. The information on the card will be necessary to set up your insurance, make doctor’s appointments, get student discounts, etc.

You can get your Student ID at:

The International Center
427 N. Shaw Lane, Room 170
East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 355-4500

The office is open M-F, 8 am-5 pm

For more information, visit: http://idoffice.msu.edu/requirements.html#students
Parking

There are a couple different options for parking near or on campus. These range in price and accessibility. They include:

1. UNIVERSITY PARKING PASS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

You can park on campus for $121 per semester. Those with valid parking permits affixed to their windshield may park in faculty/staff spaces south of the Red Cedar River and in the Brody Complex. Parking is not allowed north of the Red Cedar River (where the Psychology Building is) unless at a paid meter or when the posted employee restriction is no longer in effect. Parking with a graduate assistant parking permit is allowed in pay lots 79 and 62 West; in any other pay lots you must pay the hourly fee. For more information, please visit: https://permits.police.msu.edu/start.aspx

See next page for more parking options
Parking

There are a couple different options for parking near or on campus. These range in price and accessibility. They include:

FREE NEIGHBORHOOD PARKING

Most of us choose to park in the neighborhood north of campus close to the psychology building. While spaces are always open, the availability of closer spaces fluctuates depending on how busy the time of day is. Walks to campus can range from 5-15 minutes. On the map below, GREEN indicates 2-hour parking, while RED indicates all day parking.
Riding the Bus

Taking the bus can be an easy and inexpensive alternative to driving to campus. Depending on the neighborhood you’re living in, this option might actually be faster than driving. Some lines run every 10 minutes, while others run every 45 minutes. A number of bus lines stop right outside of the psychology building. Lansing and East Lansing use the CATA system.

Students receive a discounted rate when riding CATA. To get a student fare on the bus ($.60 as opposed to $1.20), you just have to show your student ID. You can pay for this right on the bus.

Another option is to get a student bus pass. Each semester costs $50 for an unlimited number of rides. To buy the pass in person requires cash or a check and your student ID. This may be done at the following locations: https://www.cata.org/Fares/Buy-In-Person
You can also buy passes online here: https://www.cata.org/Fares/Buy-Online/Products

Campus Study Locations

MSU Interactive Map: https://maps.msu.edu/interactive/
MSU Main Campus Map: https://maps.msu.edu/__public/pdfs/MSU_main_campus.pdf

Each dormitory has a common area for lounging and studying. Residence halls can be located on the interactive campus map. Other locations on campus include:
1. Broad Museum https://broadmuseum.msu.edu/
2. Chittenden Hall https://grad.msu.edu/grad-lounge
3. MSU Union https://www.msuunion.com/18/secondarypage/about
4. Brody Square
5. Main Library https://lib.msu.edu/hours/
6. Erickson Hall

Psychology Website & Directory

Many program FAQs, faculty/staff/student directories, and important forms can be found on the department and Eco-Community website: https://psychology.msu.edu/programs/ecological-community

It is a good idea to explore this website thoroughly, especially the “Resources for Current Students” page.
Building Access

The psychology building is open from 6am-9pm. As long as you are inside the building, you can stay in as long as you want. If you want to come in between 9pm and 6am you must submit an Office Services Request (see below) requesting that you get your MSU ID set up to gain electronic access to the psychology building after hours and provide your PID and the six digit number following the asterisk on the back of your student ID.

Once you figure out where your office is, you will need to contact your temporary advisor and request that they put in an Office Services Request for you to get your keys. You will need to get a key to your office and a key that opens room 134C. After your advisor submits an Office Services Request your will receive an email and be instructed to pick up your keys in room 262.

Online Service Request Forms

This resource and its utility will be explained during your orientation, but as a helpful reminder, to put in a request:

1) Go to psychology.msu.edu
2) Click on “Dept Files & Services” at the upper right of the screen. You will be prompted to log in using your NetID and password.
3) Select Office Services Request, Tech Support Request, Grad Office Request, or Maintenance and Building Request from the left column
4) Fill out the corresponding form

Travel Authorizations

Travel pre-authorization is required for all school or research-related travel (e.g., conferences, workshops, travel for RA duties). To obtain travel authorization, use the steps above to complete an Office Services Request. Select the “travel” radio button and be sure to include the following information in the request: name of traveler, departure date, return date, destinations (City, State, and Country), hotel, and purpose of travel. TIP: in the box labeled “Additional FULL email address(s),” be sure to CC your advisor or other faculty associated with the travel. This will enable them to resolve any questions or concerns that arise.
Computer & Shared Drive Access

To gain access to the MSU network, email your temporary advisor and request that they put in a Tech Support Request. After this is done, you will be able to log in to any computer in the psychology building using your NetID. You should also submit a Tech Support Request to be added to the PsySHARE and PsyRESEARCH drives on the psychology server.

Software

For PSY 815, SPSS will be necessary. Department computers should have the most recent version of SPSS on them, but most people also want to have the program on their personal computers. If you don’t already have it on your personal computer, the department has a subscription that you may use. Gary Schrock (gary@eyelab.msu.edu) typically sends out an email annually when updated SPSS licenses are available with instructions on installation and licensing. (See Appendix A for 2017 license and instructions.)

Printing

Depending on where your office is, you may be able to use its printing facilities. You may also make copies in room 262. The copy code is 3763. Room 262 is open from 8-12 and 1-5 M-F. Room 262 is really strict about their lunch hour so don’t chance being in there after noon!

Restrooms & Nursing Rooms

The Psychology Building has male and female restrooms on each floor. There is one single-occupant restroom located on the first floor in the Psychology Clinic (by the north end of the building). A campus all-gender restroom map can be found here: http://lbgtrc.msu.edu/trans-msu/unisex-and-accessible-bathroom-facilities-at-msu/

If you are in need of a designated space to nurse or pump, please contact Debbie Richards (richa650@msu.edu). As of spring 2018, the psychology department was in the process of designating a room for this purpose.
BUYING BOOKS
For all book purchases, we recommend using bigwords.com. This site compares book prices across multiple sites and has been very useful.

WHICH BOOKS TO BUY
You will not have to buy very many books your first year of grad school. While the books for your Methods course will be necessary, the books for Statistics (PSY 815) are NOT necessary. If you ever feel like you need them (some of us never did) see if you can borrow a copy from another student in your class or in the eco-community department.

TO PRINT OR NOT TO PRINT
Instead of textbooks, most of your courses will have readings posted online. These vary in length, but most are relatively long. While some people like to print these readings, most do not find it necessary and are comfortable reading off of their computer screens. If you do choose to print, know that the readings will likely fill multiple large binders.

ALTERNATIVES TO PRINTING
If you don't already use a reference manager, now might be the time to start! Some students might recommend EndNote or Zotero, but many in our program have become fond of Mendeley. This free program allows you to store all of your articles in one place (on your desktop but accessible online, like Dropbox). There are functions for highlighting, commenting on, and taking notes within each article. It makes organizing and citing all of your resources pretty simple!
You might already be wondering about funding for coming semester or what you should be doing for your thesis. Don’t stress! Here’s what you need to know:

**IRB TRAINING**

You will need to be IRB certified before beginning any research activities. Go here to find on training requirements and a link to the HRPP Certification page where the online modules can be found: https://hrpp.msu.edu/required-training

Note: even if you have previously completed human subjects protection training (e.g., through the CITI program), make sure to visit this page to upload documentation of your training and complete any additional requirements.

**SUMMER FUNDING**

You will receive an email fairly early in the fall semester about summer TA positions. TRY YOUR BEST TO RESPOND TO THIS THE SAME DAY! Slots can go rather quickly and the department does not guarantee summer funding. Other opportunities can be found at: http://grad.msu.edu/funding/

**MASTERS PLAN OF STUDY**

You will not have to complete this until the end of spring semester. In order to get a jump start though, you can fill out all of the classes you will be taking for your first year on your Master’s Plan of Study form, which is accessible here: https://psychology.msu.edu/students/grad/current-student/mastersforms

Essentially the plan of study is the paperwork that outline the 30 credits you will take in order to qualify for your masters. It can be amended as you go and you will need 3 faculty to sign off as committee members. You will talk about this at your Annual Review (which happens in April and is not a big deal for first year students) and your professors will help you prepare as well.
STUDENTS ENTERING WITH A MASTERS DEGREE
For students entering with a Masters degree, congratulations! You’re well on your way to a Ph.D. already! However, we know it can be difficult to find information about next steps, since most incoming student info is directed towards those coming in with a Bachelors. Here are a few resources to get you started:

Program Handbook & Policies:
On this page, you can find a link to the current version of the program handbook. Because the handbook changes slightly each year, be sure to refer to the handbook for the year you entered the program, as these are the requirements that will apply to you:
https://psychology.msu.edu/programs/ecological-community/degree-requirements

Courses:
When you enter with a master’s degree, you may have already taken courses that will count for credit here. These course requirements may be waived; however, the credit hours will not be. For example, you may not have to take statistics but you are still responsible for ensuring you take the amount of credit hours (3) necessary. These can often be made-up through other courses. It is best to talk with your advisor about what courses you think you’ve already taken and may count. Be prepared to provide a syllabus from that class and a short paragraph about why it should be waived. Waived courses will be reported on your plan of study. Popular courses waived by master’s students include statistics (PSY 815) and psychometrics (PSY 818).

Thesis:
If you have already written a thesis, you will need to submit it to your advisor to see if it will be accepted at MSU. Only an empirical thesis will be accepted by the department. If you do not have an empirical thesis you will need to complete one.

Plan of Study:
- If your master’s thesis is accepted, you will come in at the doctoral level and need to complete a doctoral plan of study.
- If your master’s thesis is not accepted, you will come in at the master’s level and need to complete a master’s plan of study (see pg. 11 of the welcome guide).
Milestones

- For those who do not have a master’s thesis accepted, completing the master’s thesis is the first milestone to begin working towards. The master’s thesis will involve compiling a three-person committee, to include a committee chair (generally your advisor).
- For those who have completed a master’s thesis that is accepted, comprehensive exams are the next milestone. The comprehensive exams process involves compiling a four-person committee, to include a chair. Additionally, students have the ability to choose a comprehensive exam option (writing a grant, completing a literature review, etc.) and this should be discussed with your advisor.

Social Life

For students entering with a master’s degree, finding ways to engage with peers can be challenging. Those who waive courses, move right to comprehensive exams, or enter on a fellowship may not spend as much time with their cohort. It is encouraged that students seek opportunities to work on research projects or join on-campus organizations. Don’t be scared to search for and engage in opportunities within or outside of the department such as:

- Writing Groups
  - Student-run within the program
  - through the Writing Center
- Professional Development Organizations
  - Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP)
- Volunteering
  - Research labs or projects
  - Interest group, department, or university committees
- Community organizations

Further Questions?

- Current Students Who Entered with Master’s Degrees:
  - Tyler Virden (4th year, Fellowship Student)
  - Dessie Clark (3rd year)
  - Tatiana Bustos (3rd year, Fellowship Student)
WORKSHOPS OFFERED BY THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
The MSU Graduate School offers excellent one-time and recurring workshops that are open to all grad students, with topics ranging from professional development and writing to mindfulness and stress management. Attendance is free, but for many workshops you must register online ahead of time at: https://grad.msu.edu/calendar

Examples of recent & frequently attended workshops include:

- **Write-Ins at the Graduate School**: This is a popular workshop among our grad students. Write-ins are held once a month on Fridays from 9 am-noon, with drinks and a pizza lunch provided! These are a great way to set aside writing time, and consultants from the Writing Center are available to help.

- **Navigating the PhD (series):**
  - Managing Time and Academic Relationships
  - Writing Processes & Strategies for Academic Writing

- **Electronic Thesis/Dissertation Formatting Workshop**

- **Personal Finance Seminar**

- **Healthy Motivation & Productivity in Graduate School**

- **Koru Mindfulness**

WHAT IS A CV AND HOW DO I GO ABOUT CREATING ONE?
A curriculum vitae (CV) is a record of academic productivity and experiences, and is used in place of a resume for most academic/research positions. Whereas resumes are typically restricted to one page, CVs are usually unrestricted in length. CVs for experienced scholars are very long; however, a graduate student CV will likely be much shorter, perhaps 2-5 pages.

**Key sections to include in your CV:**
- **Education & Area(s) of interest**
- **Honors & awards**
- **Research experience**: include all current and prior research-related positions
- **Teaching experience**: include all current and prior teaching, TA, or training positions
- **Publications**: include sections for peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed writing as applicable (e.g., article in journal newsletters, technical reports), and for manuscripts in preparation and under review
- **Conference presentations**
Sections to include if applicable:
  - Academic reviewing
  - Professional service: include activities such as service on departmental committees, planning conferences and events, student leadership in professional organizations, etc.
  - Community volunteer service: include volunteer activities outside of the academic context if appropriate
  - Professional memberships (e.g., Society for Community Research & Action, American Evaluation Association)
  - Specific technical skills (e.g., multi-level modeling, program evaluation)

For more detailed information on developing your CV, visit these helpful links:
- MSU CareerSuccess webpage:
  https://careersuccess.msu.edu/phdcareers/search/resumes
- CV format guide and sample CV from MSU Anthropology department:
- Sample CV with annotations:
- University of Illinois CV Tips & Samples:
  http://www.grad.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/cvsamples.pdf

Many current Eco-Community students have also posted their CVs on the MSU Psychology website. These are a great resource for developing your own CVs!

To view, select a current student from the directory at
https://psychology.msu.edu/people/graduate-students
If the student has posted a CV, a clickable icon will appear at the top of her/his personal page next to the student’s name.

WHAT IS THE GRADUATE EMPLOYEE UNION (GEU)?
The Graduate Employee Union at MSU is a labor union responsible for negotiating contracts for Teaching Assistants, and by extension, all graduate assistants. At the welcome meeting for incoming students held in the fall of 1st year, a representative from the GEU will provide information and ask if you would like to join the Union. Union membership is optional, and if you join as a TA, union dues equal to 1.6% of your salary will be deducted from your paycheck. You can also join the GEU as a research assistant for $40 to receive the same membership benefits.
The GEU has a voting Department Steward from the psychology department who changes from year to year. For questions about the GEU, visit http://geuatmsu.org/about/ or email the psych Department Steward.
2018-2019 Psychology Steward: Kara Cochran, kara.cochran3@gmail.com
SELF-CARE, WELLNESS, & UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Taking care of yourself physically and psychologically during grad school is incredibly important. Below are some useful articles on self-care, especially for those who are engaging with issues of social justice and oppression.

- Radical Self-Care (Dear Kerry Ann, IHE)
- Pick Your Battles (Dear Kerry Ann, IHE)
- Self Care for People of Color after Psychological Trauma (JustJasmineBlog.com)
- Self Care List: How to Take Care of Yourself While Learning about Oppression (with Unaware People) (FabiansWriting.Tumblr.com)
- How to Support a Scholar Who Has Come under Attack (from Conditionally Accepted)

Wellness resources for grad students at MSU, including free group fitness classes, can be found here: https://grad.msu.edu/wellness.

The Eco-Community program is committed to helping its graduate students feel supported, including students with marginalized identities and first-generation students. If you are feeling unsupported or have an issue you would like the program to address, please contact a member of the Social Climate & Inclusion Committee. Student committee members for ’17-’18 include:
- Katie Clements
- Dessie Clark
- Kristen Mills
- McKenzie Javorka

MSU has numerous resources for students. From the MSU Diversity webpage:

- The Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives serves as the university’s focal point for promoting inclusion and diversity on campus. Learn more about MSU’s inclusive heritage and our diverse campus.
- The Office of Cultural and Academic Transitions constructs supportive social and educational communities that actively involve students in learning by bringing together individuals and groups from diverse racial, ethnic, international and domestic backgrounds.
- The Office for International Students and Scholars supports international students on campus and provides guidance to the university’s international student clubs.
- The WorkLife Office partners with the community to create an inclusive, responsive work environment where all faculty and staff are respected and supported toward well-being in work and personal lives.
- The LGBT Resource Center leads and collaborates on university-wide initiatives that enhance campus climate and academic and support services for students who identify as lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender and/or transsexual and their communities.
- The Student Parent Resource Center helps students and families balance work, educational and family responsibilities.
- The Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities helps to maximize ability and opportunity for full participation by persons with disabilities.
Helpful Tips from Eco Students

What did we wish we knew before we started our first year? Well, let us tell you!

“Take advantage of Practicum by getting out in the community and learning as much as you can. You never know where the relationships you build first semester will take you!”
- Hannah Feeney

“Don’t put too much pressure on yourself to narrow your research interests or plan out your entire course trajectory in your first year. It’s a time to explore practicum sites, learn about community psychology, and settle in to graduate school. You have plenty of time.”
- Corbin Standley

“The term ‘self-care’ gets thrown around a lot in grad school, but it can mean much more than relaxing activities like coloring. Find meaningful ways to make grad school sustainable, whether that’s taking a mindfulness class, picking up kickboxing, or getting to the bottom of the procrastination habits we all develop.”
- McKenzie Javorka

“Don’t freak out. It’s going to be fine! Also, back up your files.”
- Danielle Chiaramonte

“Take advantage of all the resources that are available to you, and advocate for those that aren’t. Learning to say “no” is a part of this process. Don’t lose sight of your passion or vision!”
- Kristen Mills

Welcome again! We can’t wait to have you!