

BSOS ALUMNI CAREER PROFILE: RESEARCH ASSISTANT

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...because **SUCCESS** starts here.



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Major: Psychology

What do you enjoy most about your current position?

During my time at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) I have been very happy with the variety of tasks I am able to work on daily. One of my favorite things about my job is how my team and I are able to submit proposals and present at conferences. In my current position, I enjoy supporting the international assessments division of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in their administration of large-scale international assessments (e.g., PISA, TIMSS, TALIS, and PIRLS).

Working with professional researchers at AIR as well as staff at the U.S. Department of Education has taught me the importance of communicating efficiently, especially through email etiquette and when giving presentations in front of others. It's also been truly wonderful how everyone I work with is friendly and passionate about the work they do.

Which undergraduate experiences did you find most helpful in preparing you for your current position?

As an undergraduate, I enjoyed volunteering as a research assistant at Center for Addictions, Personality, and Emotion Research (CAPER) and being an undergraduate teaching assistant for Psychology of Interpersonal Relationships in my senior year. After graduating, I worked for a year and a half at UMD where I gained more relevant work experience and transferrable skills through my experiences being a faculty research assistant at the CAPER and through being a

staff teaching assistant for PSYC100. I do not believe I would have been qualified for the position I have with AIR today without these experiences.

How are you applying or practicing psychology in your current position?

Being a psychology major taught me the importance of communicating effectively and the importance of research methods. Although the focus of my work is currently education research, the transferrable knowledge and skills I learned from PSYC200 and PSYC300 come into play on a daily basis. Many of the group projects I was a part of during my undergraduate career also taught me the value of being able to work efficiently as a team with others to meet task deadlines.

Any job or internship advice?

1. One suggestion is to take pride in the experiences you have gained from Maryland over the course of your undergraduate career, and to use this confidence in an interview or in a job application.
2. Another recommendation is to have some of your online profiles public when you are applying for positions. Employers often look up potential candidates and sometimes it can be questionable as to why there is no information available. Therefore, having an up-to-date LinkedIn profile with a professional photo is critical!
3. Do not give up! If you are unable to organize a job immediately after graduating, keep trying because having strong perseverance is key to being offered a position you want. Follow companies you are interested in working for on LinkedIn and receive updates on when a new job has been posted.
4. Take undergraduate courses such as The Psychology of Getting Hired (PSYC123) and Professional Development for Psychology Majors (PSYC303).

Final piece of advice?

My recommendation for current undergraduate students is to continue gaining more work-related experiences during your undergraduate careers to open more opportunities for networking and to develop new skills.

- If you have free time, consider acquiring an additional position to keep building new experiences.
- This way you are maximizing more of your time, while developing new skills and connections.

If you have questions for Frank, you can reach him through [Terrapins Connect](#). It only takes a couple of minutes to sign-up. Once signed in, search for "Frank Fonseca" in the search box. You will have the option of submitting questions over email, video chat, or via phone.