



Making the Most of Summer 2020 | Behavioral Science

As you look to prepare for job and internship recruiting and a career in the behavioral sciences, remember that an 8-10 week internship is just **one** way to build experience and demonstrate aptitude for a particular career path.

Instead of thinking of your resume as discrete 8-10 week experiences, look at it as your personal portfolio of smaller and larger experiences demonstrating your knowledge and skills relevant to this type of work. Below are ideas to help you structure an engaging and productive summer and beyond, to continue building on your current skills and preparing for competitive candidacy in upcoming internship and full-time recruiting and graduate school application cycles.

- *Pro-tip: If you do “create your own summer experience/internship”, keep notes on what you have learned and write a reflection paper. As you embark on the 2020-2021 academic year, you can strategically provide this reflection to employers as evidence of what you accomplished this summer.*

Deepen Your Knowledge About Behavioral Science (10-15 hrs/week)

“Behavioral science” is both a specific area of study as well as an umbrella term for the various areas of study that focus on understanding the when and why of human behavior. Several disciplines fall under the broad label of behavioral science, including:

- Social psychology
- Cognitive psychology
- Behavioral economics
- Consumer behavior
- Anthropology
- Sociology

Whether working in an experimental setting or a corporate setting or a clinical setting, an individual applying their expertise / skills in one of these disciplines uses their understanding to *influence* human behavior. This could look like designing an advertising campaign to encourage consumers to make, avoid, or change spending decisions, designing policy interventions to help people make economically beneficial choices, or proposing interventions on behavior to help an individual make better life choices.

In order to understand the full complexity of human behavior, some behavioral scientists synthesize theories, concepts, and methodologies across some of these disciplines. For example, the field of behavioral economics emerges from bringing insights from psychology to bear on economic behavior, thereby predicting and explaining behavior that is not anticipated by standard economic theories.

Take the time to learn about this varied field and think critically about what interests you most – child/developmental psychology, consumer behavior, etc. – and which pathway may fit that interest best – from research / academia, clinical, corporate or marketing, behavioral change consulting, or other. This will also help you think about which opportunities (e.g., graduate school, industry, consulting, policy work, etc.) appeal to you most and might be a fit for your skills and interests.

- Was there a class you particularly enjoyed this past academic year? Review the reading material, researchers/authors, and find more resources to better understand your specific areas of interest!
- Participate in research! Join a study or few from the University of Chicago’s Center for Decision Research [here](#). It will give you a better sense of what behavioral science research looks and feels like.



- Read books that provide insight about behavioral science or behavior change.
 - [Misbehaving: The Making of Behavioral Economics](#)
 - [Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness](#)
 - [Designing for Behavior Change: Applying Psychology and Behavioral Economics](#)
 - [Research Methods for the Behavioral Sciences](#)
 - [Evolution and Contextual Behavioral Science: An Integrated Framework for Understanding, Predicting, and Influencing Human Behavior](#)
 - [Thinking Fast and Slow, by Daniel Kahneman](#)
 - [The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference](#)
 - [Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion](#)
- Identify areas of research you're interested in and read papers and thought leadership from Centers and/or professors conducting that research to learn more and deepen your understanding.
- Follow blog posts from current industry professionals are another great resource to gain current intelligence about the industry
 - [The Behavioral Scientist](#)
 - [Action Design Network](#)
- Podcasts / webinars are a great way to learn and engage
 - Public
 - Freakonomics
 - Invisibilia
 - Hidden Brain
 - Career Advancement Career Exploration
 - [Academia and Research](#)
 - [Marketing](#)
 - [Clinical Careers Webinar](#)
 - [Cross-Industry Student Panel](#)
- Reach out to alums utilizing [Wisr](#), [UChicago's alumni directory](#), or [LinkedIn](#). It will be especially interesting to talk with alums who are currently working in the companies, fields or functions you are interested.

Research Firms or Masters / PhD Programs (2-4 hrs/week)

You will give yourself the best odds during recruiting/application season by applying to a carefully cultivated range of firms and/or graduate programs for which you demonstrate a good understanding and good “fit.” The more you know about a firm or program earlier, the better!

Firms

The focus of firms doing behavioral science-related work vary. For example, career opportunities range starting from working full-time “doing” behavioral science work – e.g. as a product manager designing toys that take into consideration children’s developmental needs or as a behavioral change consultant working for a non-profit organization defining a global childhood vaccination strategy - to working in a role where considering behavioral research / implications is one element of the work – e.g., working in as a strategy analyst for an advertising firm designing media campaigns for a product based on your knowledge of human / consumer behavior or working in a financial services or insurance company analyzing and deriving insights from client behavior to inform relationship management.

- For more behavioral science / change firms, review firms and organizations that are a part of the [Action Design Network](#)
- Surf through websites for firms to learn more about their industry niche, culture, and opportunities for young professionals



- Reach out to professionals, alumni who are working at the companies you are interested in and schedule a brief virtual meeting to learn more about the cultures and the work. As mentioned earlier, [Wisr](#), [UChicago's alumni directory](#), or [LinkedIn](#) are great resources

Masters / PhD Programs

There is a myriad of programs that serve the varied interests of students interested in behavioral science. And the focus of programs varies significantly, so doing your own research is key. How do different programs can meet your interests? Does the research and the researchers sound align to your interests?

- Learn the difference between masters programs and PhD programs. Identify alumni who have completed such programs on [LinkedIn](#) and reach out to them by finding their emails via the [UChicago's alumni directory](#)
- Read about the programs on their websites, and read affiliated researcher/faculty pages, papers, and journal articles
- Email the researchers or centers to learn more by sharing a bit about your interests and setting up time to speak about the work via Zoom or phone
- Visit professional association websites where there is typically a plethora of information and resources like Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists, Behavioral Science & Policy Association, Association of Clinical Research Professionals, National Association of Social Workers, or the like

Hone Your Relevant Skills and Knowledge (8-10 hrs/week)

- It is extremely beneficial to cultivate technical skills that are commonly used in today's working world, such as tools to interpret data (e.g., Excel, Python, Statistics, etc.), data visualization platforms (e.g., Tableau, PowerPoint), etc. The below are some places to gain such skills.
 - [LinkedIn Learning](#), [Coursera](#), [Codecademy](#), [Skillshare](#)
- Create your own personal blog to demonstrate your industry interest and knowledge
- Do an independent, self-directed project in your area of interest (research and write an analysis of a particular industry served by the firms you are interested in, or a company you would like to work for)
- Closely monitor [Micro-Metcalf](#) opportunities posted on handshake to gain hands on project-based internship experience
- Sign up for the [Career Advancement newsletters](#) to stay informed on new opportunities to gain experiences and get ahead over the summer

Build Foundational Skills by Serving Others (5-10 hrs/week)

Look for opportunities to use skills relevant to your industry in a volunteer capacity.

- Utilize Excel to organize and analyze data for a local business or community organization
- Research data to assist the organization with marketing, business development, or other
- Manage a project for the organization
- If you're connected with community organizations, see if there are ways that you can provide support through them. Check with organizations where you have volunteered in the past to see if you can step back into previous roles.
- Use [idealist.org](#), [volunteermatch.org](#), or [omprakash.org](#) to seek other local options; or seek short-term project/internship opportunities through family networks.