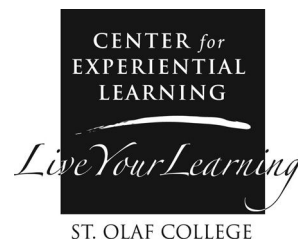


# Neuroscience Concentration

*Preparing for a career in neuroscience takes careful planning. Use this step-by-step guide to make the most of your St. Olaf experience.*



## First & Sophomore Year

### Plan Your Academics

- Meet with the director of the neuroscience program to officially declare the concentration and initiate the Neuroscience Contract.
- Get on the Neuroscience email alias.
- Work with your academic advisor to create a 4-year plan outlining required courses as well as elective courses that will enhance your research, reading, writing, and analytical skills.

### Explore Careers in Neuroscience

- Identify your primary focus as either biology or psychology by learning where each direction leads.
- Read books and newspapers/articles related to neuroscience. Stay informed about new developments in the field.
- Attend career-related events/programs.
- Use the St. Olaf Online Alumni Directory to conduct informational interviews or to job shadow professionals in careers of interest.

### Gain Experience

- Join the Neuroscience club.
- Find a meaningful student work position (i.e. as a tutor, a lab tech, in an academic department, as a research assistant, etc.) to develop your skills.
- Get involved in student clubs and organizations; begin to develop teamwork and leadership skills.

### Think about Graduate/Medical School

- Develop strong relationships with professors. Get to know 1-2 faculty members as well. Talk to them about your interests within neuroscience and your career ideas.
- At the end of your sophomore year, start broadly investigating graduate/medical school programs to learn what different types of programs offer.

## Junior Year

### Grow in academics and experience

- Assume leadership roles in clubs and organizations of interest to you.
- Complete an internship or other significant experiential learning activities to supplement your academics.
- Participate in undergraduate research during the summer after your junior year.

### Plan ahead

- Set up an appointment with a neuroscience advisor to ensure that you are on track to complete the concentration.
- Begin to think about what you might do in the first year after graduation (i.e. graduate school, medical school, gap year, work, etc.). Look into resources and steps that will help you in the application process for your chosen direction.

St. Olaf College – Center for Experiential Learning

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LEARNING

*Live Your Learning*

ST. OLAF COLLEGE

## Prepare for Graduate/Medical School

- Become familiar with the GRE (required for graduate school) or the MCAT (required for medical school). Attend one of the GRE/MCAT strategy sessions.
- Register and study hard for the MCAT. Take the exam by June of your junior year if you plan to attend medical school immediately after St. Olaf.
- Investigate neuroscience programs at both graduate and medical schools. Use university websites to learn about specific requirements and determine the research interests of the faculty.
- Email graduate and medical schools for applications and admissions information during the summer following your junior year. If possible, visit the schools.
- Write a curriculum vita and a personal statement (approximately 3 pages). Ask faculty and CEL counselors to review the CV and statement and provide critical feedback.
- Stop by the CEL to pick up a “Graduate School Interview Questions” worksheet; set up a practice interview. Prepare for interviews in the spring if you are headed towards medical school. Graduate school applicants can wait to practice interviewing until fall of their senior year.

## Senior Year

### Gain capstone experiences

- Complete an academic internship during Interim if you haven't yet had an internship experience.
- Complete an independent study in an area of specific interest. The IS could extend your summer research or grow out of another area, but should demonstrate your ability to learn and research independently.
- Get a position as a teaching assistant (TA) with a faculty member in your academic major.

### Prepare to Transition out of St. Olaf

- Talk with neuroscience faculty and CEL staff about what you might do in the first year after graduation (i.e. graduate school, medical school, gap year, work, etc.) and how your choice complements your long term direction.
- Learn the process each of these options will require. Create a checklist of tasks to keep you on track.

### Apply to Graduate/Medical School

- Register and study hard for the GRE. Take the exam in the early fall of your senior year if you plan to attend graduate school immediately after St. Olaf
- Finalize applications, the personal statement and a CV after seeking feedback from several faculty and CEL staff.
- Identify faculty who will write letters of recommendation for you and provide them with a list of the schools to which you're applying, along with the preferred method of submission and the deadline for each school. A copy of your personal statement and CV will help in writing strong letters of recommendation.
- After January 1<sup>st</sup>, submit your FAFSA application for financial aid as soon it is available.
- If accepted, celebrate! Visit each program to which you're accepted, speaking with both faculty and students in the program. Investigate financial aid, housing, etc.
- If rejected, identify a course of action to bolster your chances next year. Faculty will be particularly helpful with this task.
- Keep faculty in the neuroscience program up-to-date on what you're doing after graduation especially as you move into and then out of graduate work.

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