

# At UNH's Manchester Campus, Psych Students Get Real-World Experience

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It used to be psychology students would have to wait until grad school or later to get their hands on some real life research opportunities, or be one of a lucky few chosen by a professor for such a chance.

But associate psychology professor [Alison Paglia](#) at [UNH's Manchester campus](#) has changed that. Now anyone who takes her [community-based research class](#) — which is available once a year and has seats available for this spring — has the chance to work with a group to research real community-based issues.

This project-based, service-learning class, not only helps students gain the practical and intellectual skills they will need to transfer to the workplace, says Paglia, but they are helping out nonprofits in the community.

"The class, which incidentally satisfies capstone requirements for seniors," she says. "Helps develop skills like teamwork and problem solving while also teaching students how to synthesize information as well as analyze, interpret and present data to an authentic audience."

Amanda Riney, 21, from Nashua who is a senior in the UNH-M psychology program, took the class last spring. For her project, she and her team worked with the Concord-based [New Hampshire Hospice and Palliative Care Organization](#). Their task was to interview medical care professionals working in hospice settings to find out how care providers felt about addressing the spiritual piece of the hospice experience.

"It's very hands on," says Riney. "The students really have a say in how the project is going to go. The professor is there to guide you, but you are responsible for setting the deadlines and creating the structure of the project."

And while some may be daunted by that, Riney says her group embraced the challenge and really enjoyed seeing the project through from start to finish.

"That was our baby," she says. "We were so passionate about it because we put all that time and energy into it. We weren't just doing it for a grade, we were doing real research that was going to affect people."

Riney says she's confident being able to put her research experience on her resume is going to give her a leg up on the competition after she graduates in the spring of 2016.

Not only is it a benefit to the students, but it benefits area nonprofits as well.

"The program originated with people from the community coming to me with research needs," says Paglia. "And I started out by recruiting students one by one to do the research and then I just thought, 'Why not make this a class?' So I did."

This is the project to be conducted in the spring of 2015 brought to Paglia by Jean Tewksbury, director of programs at the YWCA. Tewksbury and her staff want to do a better job of reaching out to and designing programs for, recent college grads and young professional women. Being a nonprofit, time, staff and resources to dedicate to a project like that are hard to come by. So Tewksbury reached out to Paglia and her class for help.

"This will allow us to better be able to gauge our target population which in turn will help us learn how we can draw the in to use our services," Tewksbury says. "By using this program, we're able to have a group of people be able to truly focus on getting out in the community and where the holes are in what we are offering. It also means, while they are out there, our staff can be here focused on our programs."

*Learn more about the psychology program at UNH's Manchester campus [here](#). Learn more about the program at the Durham campus [here](#).*

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