

WPA STUDENT CONVENTION GUIDE

Students new to WPA conventions are often both excited and overwhelmed by the variety of activities going on. This article will provide you with some answers to questions you might have in mind as well as with some helpful suggestions to make your attendance more enjoyable.

Here are some questions this article answers:

- What convention activities may students attend?
- May students attend the WPA Receptions?
- Do you have to be invited to attend a session labeled as *INVITED*?
- May I leave during the middle of a session?
- May students ask questions in paper reading sessions?
- Is there a dress code at the convention?
- Who are the exhibitors in the hall with the poster sessions?
- What does it cost to attend the convention?

Convention Registration

When you arrive at the convention hotel, make one of the first stops the WPA registration desk where you will receive your identification badge and convention program. The identification badge is your ticket that allows you to enter any and all convention activities. The convention packet contains the WPA Convention Program and other announcements for you to look over. Anyone who registers for the convention may attend all program events. Student early registration costs \$75 and includes student affiliate membership. On-site registration is \$90 for students.

The Convention Program

The WPA convention program book lists and briefly describes every activity at the convention. The 200+ pages with hundreds of activities might seem bewildering at first but be patient and focus on just one page at a time. Also, look for Psi Chi (International Honor Society in Psychology), Psi Beta (community college student honor society) and STP (Society for the Teaching of Psychology) events, as many of these are either presented by students or are on topics of special interest to students.

The convention program is organized into several sections. The opening section presents announcements and special events and lists the hosts, convention policies, etc. The rest of the program is devoted to a listing of the events by day, by hour and by room. Each program entry contains the title of the activity, the title of the presentation(s) and the name and affiliation of the presenter(s). The appendix contains an alphabetical listing of every presenter and a day by hour by room summary chart of every activity and presentation (to give you an overview of the whole convention) as well as a map of the convention floor. The convention activities and presentations

you may attend include Paper Sessions, Invited Addresses, Symposia, Poster Sessions, the Presidential Address, Special Events, Receptions, Film Festival, and Exhibits. Each of these will now be briefly described.

The convention app will organize the convention sessions by topic. One of the topic areas is “Especially for Students.” Others include content areas such as Social Issues. This will make it easier to find a listing of events that are especially relevant to students or for people interested in a given topic.

Convention Activities

Hospitality Room: You are invited to visit the WPA Hospitality Room during the convention. It is a great place to meet friends and interact with students and faculty from other campuses... and just plain relax! Make it your home away from home. Check the program book for its location. Members of Psi Chi and Psi Beta, the national honor societies, will be there to assist you and answer any questions you might have. This article was developed by faculty and students who are members of these organizations. The hospitality room is generally open from 8am to 5pm each day of the convention.

Presentations by Distinguished Speakers: Each year prominent psychologists are invited to present addresses at WPA (thus, this is sometimes called the “invited program”). This gives everyone an opportunity to hear first-hand the latest research findings and theoretical ideas from leading researchers in the country. Large meeting halls for 200 or more are often used for these addresses. All convention attendees are welcome at the talks by these speakers. Also, conversation hours with students will be scheduled for many of the distinguished speakers.

Poster Session: In a poster session, 40 or more presenters display the highlights of their research studies, including charts and tables, as posters mounted on bulletin boards. Presenters stand by their posters as attendees stroll along the rows, reading the posters and discussing them with the presenters. These sessions give you the chance to meet active research psychologists and ask questions and discuss findings. Most presenters have a limited number of copies of their research papers and will give you a copy if you ask. Each presenter welcomes your interest and questions no matter who you are. This is also a good opportunity to find out about graduate and undergraduate programs at other colleges and universities from the presenting professors and their students. Don't be shy!

Symposium: Two or more authorities in an area of interest present a brief paper or short lecture. After the presentation they each comment and critically evaluate each other's papers and hold a lively discussion of the issues involved. The chairperson also invites comments and questions from the audience.

Paper Session: Each presenter in a paper session delivers a brief talk. Four or five papers are scheduled per session. After each paper is presented, or at the end of a session, the audience is given an opportunity to ask questions.

Attendees are free to quietly enter and leave any session, so do not let this distract you. If you do not plan to stay the full session, please sit by the door or in the back so you can leave as unobtrusively as possible. You may enter any session at any time.

Film Festival: The WPA Film Festival showcases new films that span all areas of psychology. The films are organized by content so that related films show consecutively. The Film Festival runs Thursday to Saturday, from the morning until into the evening; in some years there are also films on Sunday morning. In the program book you will find a list of films for each day at the start of the day's section. There is also an alphabetical listing of all films near the beginning of the program book. While viewing films we ask you to fill out a brief rating form for each film so we can use your ratings to determine the Film Festival winning films. These great films are shown again the following year in the "Encore! Encore!" section of the festival. Films start promptly at the time listed. You are free to come and go as you please. Help yourself to free popcorn while enjoying the films!

Exhibitors: During the convention, 15-20 publishers, universities, representatives of the American Psychological Association and other professional organizations, and companies that have psychology-related merchandise and research tools are located in the same large ballroom where poster presentations occur. Here you can browse through the latest books, see demonstrations of lab equipment, talk with universities about their graduate programs, and shop at The Psych Store. Be sure to stop in the booths that interest you and chat with the representatives. They appreciate your interest.

WPA Receptions: All convention registrants are invited to the WPA Receptions on Thursday and Friday evenings. Refreshments, good friends, and stimulating conversation will make these gatherings memorable events.

Special Events: Each year WPA extends an invitation to professional groups to schedule special events and social hours in conjunction with the convention. Psi Chi and Psi Beta, for example, hold sessions for chapter members that include social hours.

Dress: There is no formal dress code. However, it is expected that everyone will dress in professionally appropriate clothing.

Join WPA: Students become Student Affiliate members of the Western Psychological Association when registering for the convention. Students may also become student affiliate members at no charge. This is a fine way to begin your professional career and demonstrate your commitment to psychology.

Plan Ahead: Are other students at your campus also going to WPA? It can be a great idea to coordinate your plans. This can include finding people to share a hotel room or a ride to the convention. It can also mean planning such things as: 1) a breakfast meeting each morning to plan which talks to attend, 2) a dinner with students and faculty, 3) bringing cameras to take photos and videos of each other making presentations and meeting with some of the major speakers. A little planning with your colleagues can make the convention more fun for everyone.

WPA provides this Letter of Support, download PDF [here](#).

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