

Comparison of Psychology's LCN (Lifespan Cognitive Neuroscience) and the IPN (Interdisciplinary Program in Neuroscience) programs

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The below isn't meant to take the place of the more detailed information on each program that you'll find on their respective websites, but is meant to help to answer the questions:

- (1) What are the differences between these programs?
- (2) To which should I apply?
- (3) Is it okay to apply to both?

Students are welcome to apply to both programs. The programs are closely related and their directors communicate frequently, so you should let each program know that you are applying to the other as well. That way, if both programs wish to interview you, they can coordinate interviews. Applying to both programs does not hurt your chances of getting into either. There are considerable differences between the programs (see below), but if your interests bridge them, it can be difficult to decide which is for you until you visit during interview days. Also faculty who participate in both can be very helpful in discussing which would fit your interests better, and the students in both programs can also provide useful information. We view these programs as enriching each other, and so, as we see it, having outstanding applicants apply to both of them doubles our chances that we will bring those students to GU.

Similarities Between the Programs:

- **Coursework:**
 - Both require the 12 credit (6 credits in each of 2 semesters) neuroscience core, which is offered by the IPN program. This course covers cellular/molecular through systems level neuroscience, and it is taken throughout the first year by students in both programs.
 - Students in both programs can take electives in the other program, so there is often a mix of students from both programs in Psychology and Neuroscience courses.
 - After the first two years, there is very little coursework in either program
- **Potential mentors:**
 - Some faculty in psychology can mentor students in either program. Hence Psychology labs often contain a mix of IPN and LCN students.
- **Research:**
 - Students are involved in research from the beginning of their training and present their work to peers and faculty at least once a year.
 - Students are required to write grant proposals (typically to NIH or NSF) as part of their training

Differences Between the Programs:

- **Breadth of training:**
 - LCN: Training in the Psychology program is across domains of developmental science, and the core developmental science courses include students in the Human Development and Public Policy concentration. So these seminars range across psychology with a frequent focus on development.
 - IPN: Training is across the domains of neuroscience and hence there is a lot of interaction across the levels of neuroscience, with seminars ranging from cellular/molecular through cognitive neuroscience.
- **Coursework:**
 - LCN: in addition to the neuroscience core, students take 2 semesters of statistics, 4 semesters of developmental science core, plus one semester of Seminar in Cognition and one semester of Seminar in Cognitive Neuroscience, plus two electives.
 - IPN: primary required courses (in addition to neuroscience core mentioned above) are two semesters of Neurobiology of Disease, the Medical Neuroscience course, one semester of Survey of Neuroscience and a course in Survival Skills and Scientific Ethics. All of these required courses are completed in the first year. In the second year all courses are electives.
- **Degree conferred:**
 - LCN: Ph.D. in Psychology
 - IPN: Ph.D. in Neuroscience
- **Funding during training:**
 - LCN: minimum of five years as a Teaching Fellow is guaranteed, though students may be supported by other sources such as mentor's grant or by their own predoctoral fellowship from agencies such as NIH or NSF.
 - IPN: first two years are covered by Georgetown or Training Grants (no teaching or research service requirements), remaining years are usually provided by mentor's grant or student's funding (e.g., predoctoral fellowship from NIH) and sometimes by training grants.
- **Teaching training/experience:**
 - LCN: regardless of source of financial support, students are required to teach a total of four semesters and to take a course on learning to teach. Four semesters required include: assisting in a large lecture course (e.g., general, abnormal, social), assisting in a section of Research Methods and Statistics, assisting in an upper level undergraduate seminar, and finally teaching the grad student's own upper level undergraduate seminar. Also graduate students frequently help to mentor Psychology Senior Honors Theses, and so there is a lot of contact with undergraduates.
 - IPN: no formal requirements for teaching, though there are many opportunities to gain teaching experience if the student seeks them out. The IPN students introduced their own course, entitled *Disorders and Diseases of the Brain*, which they teach to undergraduates.

- **Mentorship arrangement:**
 - LCN: students typically come to work with a particular mentor, though it is possible to change mentors once here. There are approximately 15 potential mentors (all in Psychology) though affiliated faculty (some in Neuroscience) can serve as co-mentors. There is no rotation system, though students are encouraged to do research bridging faculty labs, not only within Psychology but across departments and main/medical center campuses.
 - IPN: students are required to do rotations in three different labs, which results in their identifying a lab in which to do their dissertation research by the end of their second year. Approximately 60 faculty participate across many departments in the medical center and main campus.

Number of students:

- LCN: approximately 2 incoming students each year (but 2 additional come into the “sister” track in Psychology, Human Development and Public Policy)
- IPN: approximately 10 incoming students each year

“Age” of program:

- LCN: first students admitted 2003
- IPN: first students admitted 1994