

I'm Caitlin Olafsson, a junior at Gustavus Adolphus College with a double major in public health and psychology. I play softball here and am a part of the psychology honors society. I originally declared a major in psychology and a minor in public health but I knew I wanted to do grad school for some kind of branch in public health, now that has been more specific to epidemiology. I was unaware of my options at Gustavus and recently got to know more about a personalized major. I realized at this point that it was time to do what I could to change my major to fit my interests, idealized career path, and desire to do something health-related. I have done very well in my public health courses and found that is more of what I want to do in the future. Psychology is interesting and useful and I enjoy learning about all it has to offer, although it is very tunneled. This made me feel more confined to certain career options. None of which I felt overwhelmingly excited about. Public health encompasses all parts of health with a broader application and opportunity. Psychology is a growing major and interest, as it should be, but psychology fits into public health in contrast to public health only somewhat fitting into psychology. I plan to use psychology and all of the valuable tools I've used and insert them into any career I'm in in the future.

The public health courses I have taken at Gustavus have fueled my interest and helped me realize that is what I enjoy doing. The class health behavior is a prime example of being able to do both sides. You use psychology concepts to influence/understand a population's (or person's) health behavior and with that make changes to better a group's health. Public health is found everywhere and this brings comfort knowing my options are more broad for my future. I knew I wanted to pursue something in the health/medical field and this option seems to be the best way to get both sides of what I want. I was able to take epidemiology and found I had skills that I wanted to use in the future. The way it uses both concepts from biology and math gives me hope for a bright future in tracking and working with diseases.

Psychology can be used as a broad umbrella for many things with mental processes. This would take away the stress of being streamlined into only some options for professions and give me a leg up in the public health realm. I would be able to use my psychology background knowledge to help me professionally. Having an understanding of how people think and behave and why would help me make decisions and give me the ability to dive deeper than the surface.

With all that being said I plan to apply for graduate school in epidemiology, hopefully on the East Coast. I was able to visit my family on the East Coast for the last two summers and it felt like home away from home. I feel that it would allow me to experience a new education with many opportunities to work and build connections. I have been working to build my network through new opportunities. Recently I have been a part of the Nicollet County Health Assessment working with professionals from all different areas and companies around Minnesota. This has been a great opportunity to see how things work in the public health world and give me a different look on all professions. I was able to go with some professors who have helped me make connections so I'm able to continue to find what path is best for me.

I appreciate your time, consideration, and flexibility. I look forward to hearing more from you, Thank you.