

ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES

Organizational Studies at the University of Michigan

Organizational Studies (OS) is an interdisciplinary major that examines the behavior, structure, and dynamics of organizations through a variety of disciplinary lenses, and investigates such questions as why human beings organize, how organizations interact with each other, and what makes organizations effective. The interdisciplinary approach that is at the heart of OS fosters a broad vision of organizations and their critical role in society that is essential for tomorrow's leaders in a rapidly changing world.

OS is a selective major; students must apply and be admitted, and competition for spaces is intense. The result is a small program made up of outstanding students committed to the study of organizations and our organizational world. OS students reap the benefits of a broad interdisciplinary curriculum, as well as close contact with both outstanding faculty and talented peers. Students graduate with knowledge and skills that are applicable across many fields and job titles. Highlights of the program include:

Core courses focusing on “micro” and “macro” perspectives: The macro course focuses on complex organizations as enduring formal structures, examining their interactions with their environments and each other and the way they grow and change. The micro course focuses on people in organizations, examining the social bases of human coordination, and the informal and formal organization of social institutions.

Research in real-world organizations: All OS students participate in organizational research, with opportunities to perform research in not-for-profit organizations or for-profit enterprises. This research develops not only analytical skills, but leadership and team skills as well. Student teams present their research findings to organizational leaders who have uniformly found the results to be informative and useful.

Small seminars on specific organizational topics: Small seminar courses are offered on varying topics such as leadership, power in organizations, negotiation and conflict resolution, non-profit organizations, and corporate social responsibility.

Electives in a wide range of disciplines: Elective disciplines include economics, psychology, sociology, communication, political science, management, marketing, and many others. All elective courses examine organizations through the lens of their particular discipline and give our students a broad understanding of organizational concepts.

Student responsibility for their individual educational path: All students create a “concentration pathway”, which outlines a guiding vision for their studies and allows them to make thoughtful and relevant elective course choices which align closely with their interests and goals.

Organizational Studies at Michigan is truly a unique and innovative program, producing outstanding graduates. If you have further questions about this program, please visit our website or feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JOS', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Jason Owen-Smith
Interim Director, Interdisciplinary Program in Organization Studies

What Organizational Studies Students Learn

Many valuable skills and abilities are developed in pursuing a concentration in Organizational Studies. These include:

Analysis

Defining problems
Evaluating ideas and evidence
Planning

Research

Framing research questions
Developing ideas and theories
Gathering information
Summarizing results
Presentation skills

Human Relations

Leadership
Team Skills
Analyzing behavior
Mediating/negotiating

Communication

Explaining ideas
Persuading
Writing clearly
Presenting information effectively