

## Local I-O in the Capital City

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### For All Readers

In the heart of our nation's capital, amid all the political actors and bureaucrats, hundreds of I-O psychologists are diligently working to drive efficiency and to prepare a new generation of I-O scientists and practitioners to do the same. With no fewer than *five* I-O psychology graduate programs, the greater Washington DC area also employs I-O psychologists in the countless businesses, government agencies, NGOs, and consulting firms headquartered here. It's no wonder that the Personnel Testing Council of Metropolitan Washington (PTCMW) is home to one of the oldest and strongest local I-O groups.

Established in 1977, this local I-O group fosters professional dialogue and supports career growth through a variety of events held throughout the year. With nearly 300 professional and student members, the group has an impressive membership base and its list of past presidents reads like a "who's who" of I-O thought leadership. Within this "City of Magnificent Intentions," PTCMW provides an oasis for professionals, researchers, and students to share ideas, facilitate learning and networking, and advance the science and practice of I-O psychology and related fields.



If you are currently active in a Local I-O Group or are trying to start one, I can predict what you're thinking right now: "Ha. It's no wonder they have a strong group. Location, location, location, right? Our group would be strong too if we were living in the mecca of I-O psychology. We just don't have as much to work with here."

While there is a nugget of truth there, don't assume that what PTCMW does is easy. Despite the number of professionals living and working in the area and the rich culture for research and learning, it can be challenging to persuade busy I-Os to come to a professional meeting at the end of a long, exhausting day. So, although there are no shortages of talent, ideas, or people, like many local groups around the country PTCMW can struggle to maintain day-to-day engagement of its membership. Everyone is busy and time is at a premium.



PTCMW President **Lorin Mueller** offered some advice for engaging members to ensure a thriving local group and provided some examples that we could all learn from.

**Make it easy to join and to participate.** Like many of the successful Local I-O Groups we've talked with around the country, PTCMW has a very **inclusive** membership policy. You do not need to be an I-O psychologist or even have an advanced degree to join. The group's hundreds of members include not only I-O practitioners, faculty and graduate students, but also attorneys, statisticians, human-resources professionals, and EEO specialists from government, business, consulting, and academia. There are no educational requirements to join, although about 92% of the membership have a graduate degree, and about 64% have a PhD or equivalent.

Annual membership fees are low – just \$30 for professionals and \$15 students. You don't even need to live in the area to participate in PTCMW programming. Most of their events and speakers are available via webcast for a nominal fee (free for students!) So, although about 75% of their members live and work in the District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia, another 25% of the membership base lives outside the area and are spread throughout the country.

**Provide meaningful learning experiences.** PTCMW hosts a variety of events throughout the year focused on supporting continuous learning and career development. Monthly educational events cover a range of topics including recent relevant research, career issues, and examples of cutting-edge applied work. For example, on July 24 **Gilad Chen** will be presenting a research review of recent influential I-O topics during his presentation: "The State of I-O Psychology Research: Where We Have Been, and Where Are We Going?"



Liberty Munson (Microsoft), David Dorsey (HumRRO), and Seymour Adler (Aon) discussing Cutting Edge Technology at PTCMW's fall event.

In addition to the monthly meetings, the organization sponsors several targeted events that support learning among professionals. In June they host a half-day workshop that usually focuses on a key technical skill. This year, **Eric Dunleavy**, **Martha Hennen**, and **Don Lustenburger** will be leading a workshop entitled "The Diversity Characteristics that Affects Us All... Eventually: A Primer on Contemporary EEO Issues Related to Age."

In the fall PTCMW plans a larger event that entails a presentation by a well-known I-O professional or panel, focusing on timely issues in the field. This year the speaker will be **Steven Rogelberg** presenting on how the lessons from his new book "*The Surprising Science of Meetings*" can be leveraged by I-Os to make the most of their meetings.

**Encourage student participation.** According to **Lorin Mueller**, PTCMW benefits greatly from the work of students. "We do a lot with the local I-O schools to ensure that their students have leadership responsibilities within the group. Student volunteers are essential!" Student involvement not only benefits the organization, but also provides unique opportunities for those just starting their career. By recruiting students into leadership and volunteer roles, PTCMW helps students build their résumés while supporting the Local I-O Group's sustainability, effectiveness, and efficiency.

PTCMW has also established learning events targeted specifically toward graduate students. Each year in February or March, PTCMW hosts a career panel for local I-O students. The panel typically includes a range of successful I-O practitioners who provide practical advice on preparing for and navigating through the first few years of an I-O career. The organization also sponsors a “Consulting Challenge” every fall. Interested students can register via the website. Event coordinators assign students to teams that balance work and school experience, research expertise and schools. Teams then compete to create the best response to a simulated Request for Proposal, working over the weekend to develop a brief response and presentation. The event is sponsored by a local consulting firm that serves as the author of the RFP and judge of the presentations. The winning team takes home \$1,250, and all participants receive free membership to PTCMW.

**Facilitate networking.** Enough about learning; where’s the party? In addition to the more intellectual events listed above, PTCMW sponsors several social events per year that better support networking. These are typically happy hours hosted at a local restaurant and tend to be well attended. In addition to bringing people together to share ideas and insights, these events allow members to catch up with old friends and make new ones. They can also be a great way to learn about new opportunities for research, career growth, and job openings.



You Zhou, Semret Yibass (PTCMW Recorder), and Hailey Chen enjoy networking at the fall event.

#### ***Partner with universities and local employers***

Finally, PTCMW credits much of the organization’s sustained success to the partnerships they’ve maintained with local universities, consulting firms, and key employers. The organization solicits support in the form of event sponsors at various levels to help defer some of the cost associated with holding these activities. Sponsors also do a great deal to maintain a professional service culture among their staff, leading to increased numbers of volunteers and organization leaders. By the same token, partnering with universities increases involvement from students and faculty. Finally, both consulting firms and universities often offer up space to host meetings and other events.

Event Sponsorship has been a key contributor to PCTMW’s success.

For more information about Personnel Testing Council of Metropolitan Washington or to participate in one of their stellar events, check out their website: <http://www.ptcmw.org/events>.



