



# THE SCIENCE OF HUMAN ACTIVITY

A GUIDE TO A MASTER'S  
DEGREE IN KINESIOLOGY





## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource is designed to provide a comprehensive look at the field of kinesiology. In this resource, we explore why kinesiology is important, what you can do with a master's degree in kinesiology, and how to choose a master's degree in kinesiology program. We will also explore how Pacific Lutheran University's Master of Science in Kinesiology is uniquely prepared to give you the knowledge, experience, and background you need to build a career in exercise, sport, performance and health related fields.

The background of the page is a photograph of a snowy campus. In the center, a tall, dark church steeple rises above the trees. To the left, a yellow circular logo with black geometric patterns is partially visible. The ground is covered in a thick layer of snow, and some evergreen trees are visible in the background.

## ABOUT PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY

Pacific Lutheran University purposefully integrates the liberal arts, professional studies and civic engagement in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. Founded in 1890 by Norwegian immigrants, PLU continues the distinctive tradition of Lutheran higher education as it seeks to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care – for other people, for their communities and for the Earth.

PLU is committed to the advancement of knowledge, the preparation of citizens in service to the world and to its ongoing reform. The faculty and staff at PLU's Department of Kinesiology are committed to nurturing the development of whole persons—in body, mind, and spirit.

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# MOVEMENT IS THE KEY TO HUMAN HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

In this next section we will discuss the importance of the field of kinesiology in modern academics.

The awareness of physical activity and its beneficial health effects is becoming increasingly more prevalent.



Movement is easy to take for granted. The ability to move freely, regularly, and without pain is a key component of human health and happiness.

Physical inactivity is a major public health issue globally, and it contributes to many public health crises like obesity, mental health disorders, sleep disorders, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and certain types of cancer. In fact, the World Health Organization identifies physical inactivity as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality.

Much of this physical inactivity can be traced to changes in how we work and live over the last century. People's jobs and home lifestyles are increasingly sedentary, a major shift from the past generations where movement was a natural, integrated part of life. Advances in technology and knowledge work, while beneficial in some ways, have taken a major toll on the amount of physical activity required of the average American.

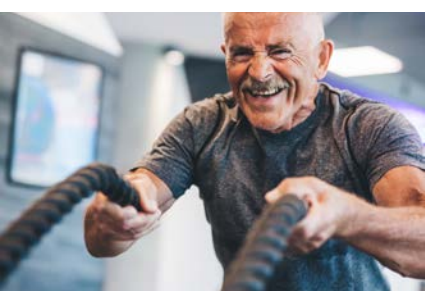
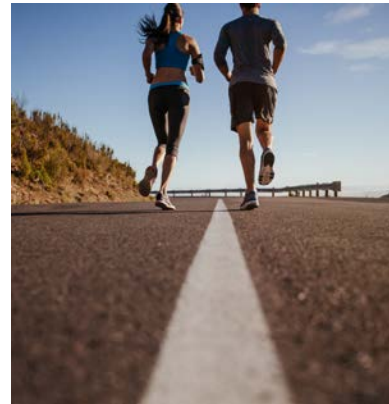


Some have responded to this decrease in “built in” physical activity by joining gyms or fitness communities. Recreational jogging became popular as recently as the 1960s. Today, many Americans schedule in time to tend to their physical health, spending hours every week running, walking, cycling, or doing high intensity training. But it is a struggle to remain active enough by choice to counteract our sedentary lifestyle.

The rise of conscious physical activity and the rise of health issues related to mobility and movement have created a growing demand for professionals in the health, rehabilitation, fitness, and sports industries, including the field of kinesiology.

Professionals in the field of kinesiology are trained in the science of human movement, and how our bodies are designed to function and move.

When you build a career in the field of kinesiology, you are helping patients and clients improve their mental, physical, and emotional well-being through the promotion of healthy habit building and healthy movement and activity.





# UNDERSTANDING THE FIELD OF KINESIOLOGY

Kinesiology is the study of human movement, encompassing many fields of interests that lead to diverse career options.






Kinesiology is the science of human movement. Kinesiology studies the principles of movement and investigates the complexity of the mechanical, physiological, and psychological components of movement. The study of kinesiology involves deep understanding of various biological systems as well as behavioral theories. Many people are introduced to the concept of kinesiology through a sub-field like physical therapy or sports medicine, but kinesiology is the larger umbrella term for the theory and practice of human movement.

The [American Kinesiology Association \(AKA\)](#) defines kinesiology as a “discipline which involves the study of physical activity and its impact on health, society, and quality of life.”

It includes, but is not limited to, such areas of study as:

- exercise science
- sports management
- athletic training and sports medicine
- socio-cultural analyses of sports
- sport and exercise psychology
- fitness leadership
- physical education - teacher education
- pre-professional training for physical therapy
- occupational therapy
- medicine
- other health related fields

As the AKA makes clear, careers in kinesiology can be theoretical or practical, ranging from roles in education and research to roles as in health care, sports management, and more.



# 5 REASONS TO PURSUE A KINESIOLOGY MASTER'S DEGREE

If you are interested in building a career in sports, fitness, physical education, or health care, a master's degree in kinesiology is a great way to study the theoretical and practical foundations of human activity.

A master's degree in this field will also significantly improve your job and career prospects.

Let's look at five major reasons why you should pursue a kinesiology master's degree.



## **Increase your earning potential**

Teachers who earn a master's degree make an average of \$7,000-\$9,000 more than those with a bachelor's degree.

## **Expand your professional opportunities**

A master's in Kinesiology opens the door to full-time teaching, coaching and strength- and-conditioning positions in colleges and universities, as well as administrative and leadership roles in the health and fitness industry.

## **Get advanced certifications**

A master's in Kinesiology allows you to pursue advanced credentials, including Certified Mental Performance Consultant (CMPC-AASP) and Clinical Exercise Physiologist (CEP-ACSM).

## **Specialize your knowledge and skills**

A master's in Kinesiology gives you the knowledge and skills you need to improve your practice and enhance your ability to serve others and the profession. Working professionals in health and fitness careers, public service professions and public health can enhance their ability to better serve the needs of society in relation to physical activity promotion and disease prevention.

## **Build a career with meaning**

Careers in kinesiology related fields are oriented toward evidence-based service of others. Professionals in these fields get to build a life helping others overcome tough physical and mental challenges and meet and surpass significant movement related goals. Promoting healthy activity and movement can change an individual's quality of life for the better, bringing them greater joy, comfort, and confidence.





# WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A MASTER'S DEGREE IN KINESIOLOGY?

We've explored how a master's degree in kinesiology functions as an entry point to a whole range of industries and careers. Now let's talk specifically about the types of jobs you can pursue and what your career and salary expectations will look like.



All information regarding salary and demand (when available) is based on numbers from the [Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\)](#).

## Career Options and Job Titles

### Exercise Physiologist -

Design and develop exercise programs for individuals recovering from illness and injury. In the Seattle-Tacoma area specifically, [the annual mean wage](#) for exercise physiologists is \$52,330.

### Athletic Trainer -

Work with athletes, individuals, or groups and with other medical professionals to prevent, treat, and rehabilitate injuries in settings like schools, colleges, professional sports,



clinics, hospitals, and the military. Athletic trainers in Washington state [make an annual mean wage of \\$50,510](#).

### Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors -

Work with athletes, individuals, or groups in gyms, health clubs, and wellness centers to meet fitness goals, including providing training programs, personalized coaching, and exercise modifications based on need. Exercise trainers in Washington state [make an annual mean wage of \\$55,750](#).





This is one of the highest mean salary numbers in the country. In the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue area specifically, [this number increases to an average of \\$60,490.](#) Employment for this occupation is [expected to grow 13%](#) in the next eight years, much faster growth than the average for all occupations.

### **Mental Performance Consultant -**

Develop strategies to help clients (like athletes, performing artists, executives, military personnel) create mental and life habits that allow them to access peak performance in difficult conditions.

### **Physical Education Instructor -**

Teach principles of healthy movement and physical fitness to students in educational settings.

### **Sport Psychologist -**

Use mental health techniques and principles of psychology to help athletes optimize performance, meet fitness goals, or recover from injury.

### **Biomechanist -**

Apply the principles of physics and engineering to analyze human movement and improve the quality of interaction between humans and objects.





### **Strength and Conditioning Coach -**

Develop fitness plans for athletes designed to promote long-term muscle health, natural movement, endurance, and mobility and work alongside other coaches to monitor athlete health and performance.



### **Kinesiology Research Lab Assistant -**

Conduct experiments, develop new biomechanical prototypes, and contribute to ongoing research and studies in the field of kinesiology.

### **Professor of Kinesiology -**

Conduct research, study, and teach principles of kinesiology to the next generation of practitioners.

### **Physical Therapist -**

Help patients improve movement and mobility and manage pain due to illness, disability, or injury. The [annual mean salary for this position](#) in the Seattle-Tacoma area is \$89,150.





### **Occupational Therapist -**

Help patients regain or develop the ability to perform everyday tasks, providing ongoing and often long-term support to those with mental or physical disabilities. The [annual mean salary for this position](#) in the Seattle-Tacoma area is \$84,930.

### **Recreational Therapist -**

Incorporate health care and movement goals into daily, recreational activities, helping patients recover health and confidence from physical and or mental disability through leisure activities and community engagement. The [annual mean salary for this occupation](#) in the Seattle-Tacoma area is \$68,180.



### **Respiratory Therapist -**

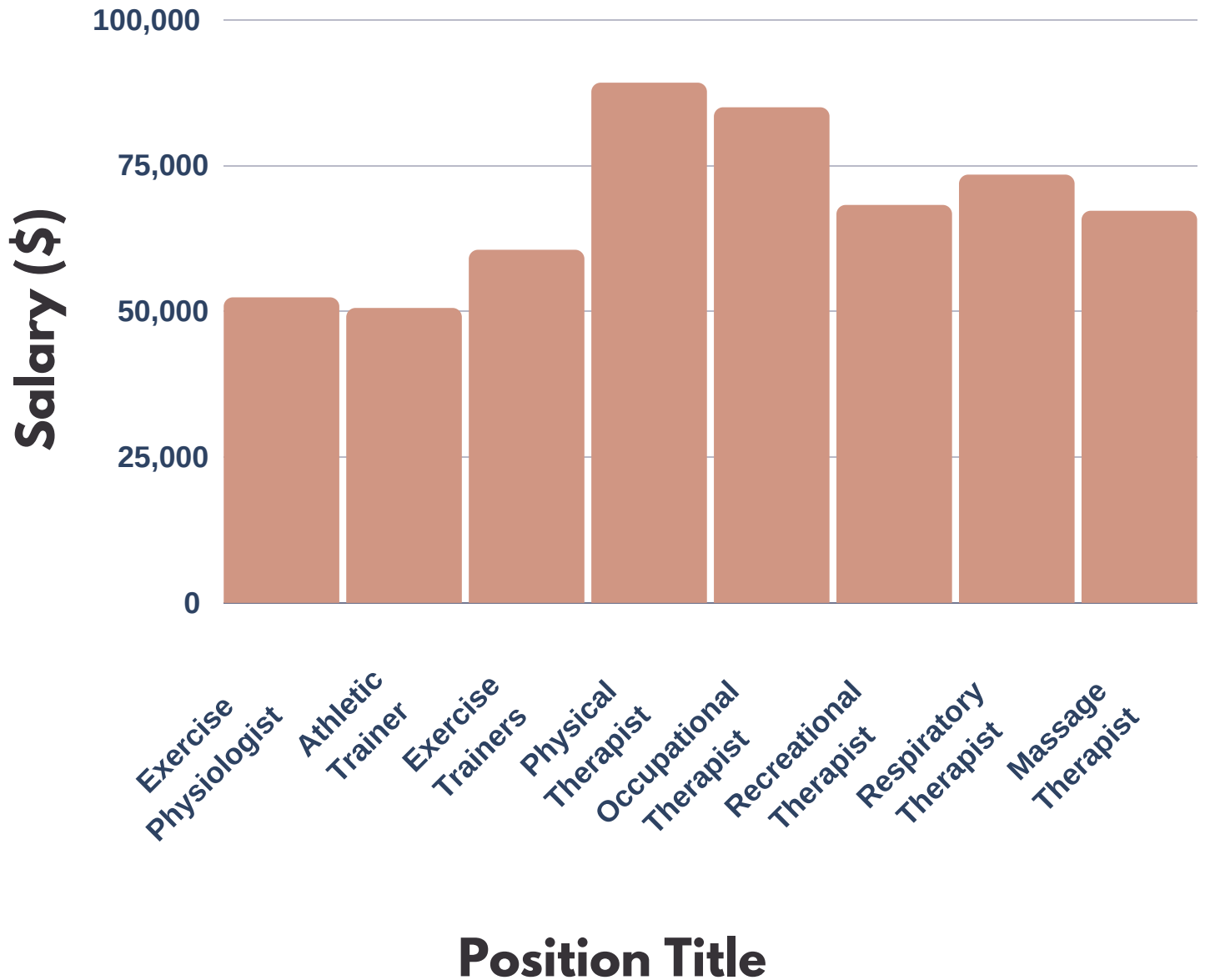
Work specifically with patients suffering from chronic cardiopulmonary issues like emphysema, asthma, and heart disease. The [annual mean salary for this occupation](#) in the Seattle-Tacoma area is \$73,380, and employment of respiratory therapists is projected to grow 21 percent from 2018 to 2028, much faster than the average for all occupations.

### **Massage Therapist -**

Use massage and manipulative techniques to address muscle pain and soft tissue issues, often working in coordination with other rehabilitation professionals. The [annual mean salary for this occupation](#) in the Seattle-Tacoma area is \$67,180.



## Average Salary in Tacoma-Seattle Area by Position



# WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A MASTER'S PROGRAM IN KINESIOLOGY

Not all kinesiology programs are created equal. If you are considering a master's in kinesiology, it's worth exploring what excellence in a master's in kinesiology program looks like.







## **Here's a quick list of qualities you should look for in a master's program in kinesiology.**

### ☐ **Look for a program that emphasizes both theory and practice**

A great kinesiology master's program will provide you with a deep grounding in the science and theory of kinesiology, but will also offer you plenty of opportunity for practical application and experience.

### ☐ **Choose a program where you have lots of access to faculty and mentorship**

As with most graduate programs, the value of a master's in kinesiology is directly related to the quality of the relationships you form with your peers, faculty, and others in the industry. Choose a program that emphasizes close, working relationships between students and faculty.

### ☐ **Consider the school's reputation and alumni network in the field**

What are the school's rankings like? What is its local reputation? Do they have strong community relationships that will help you find a job or network as you go through the program?

☐ **Think about which specializations or certifications you are looking for**

Will the program prepare you for the industry certifications you want to pursue? Look at the concentrations offered, the areas of expertise of faculty, and consider whether the program will prepare you to succeed on certification exams.

☐ **Ask yourself if the program is preparing you to serve diverse populations**

When you work in health, rehabilitation, fitness, or sports performance, you must be prepared to work effectively with people from all walks of life and diverse populations. Choose a program that explicitly focuses on methods and dispositions that will help you serve all communities.







# A CLOSER LOOK AT PLU'S MASTER OF SCIENCE IN KINESIOLOGY

Our Master of Science in Kinesiology program has so much to offer our students. See why PLU's program could be the right fit for you!



Ranked by Niche as the top Kinesiology department in Washington state and the Pacific Northwest, the Kinesiology program at PLU brings a tradition of excellence into the Master of Science degree.

The [Master of Science in Kinesiology at Pacific Lutheran University](#) combines a rigorous academic experience with real-world, relevant and impactful applications designed to intentionally address critical gaps in kinesiology training and practice. This master's program also includes two rigorous concentration options.

Unique features of our program include a commitment to diversity and inclusion, along with intentional mentorship and leadership development opportunities.

Through coursework, mentoring support, and an applied project, M.S. candidates develop the knowledge and skills they need to become effective evidence-based practitioners who can enhance their own career while positively impacting those they serve.





## The M.S. in Kinesiology emphasizes:

### **Flexibility**

May be completed in as few as 14 months, or over the course of 26 months. Classes occur in the evenings and are a mix of traditional and hybrid in design.

### **Theory to Practice Focus**

Uses evidence based, best practices that critically evaluate, integrate and apply current, primary research and established theoretical concepts. Coursework focuses on building an evidence-based practice through rigorous coursework applied to real-world situations. All students complete an applied project as part of the program.

### **Inclusive Practice, Leadership, and Mentorship**

Engages multiple perspectives and demonstrates inclusive practices and leadership. Two required courses in the program examine issues of diversity, justice and inclusion in order to inform how we do our work and how we can best serve a diverse population. All students are assigned a faculty mentor who also serves as lead advisor for the applied project.

### **Career Growth and Professionalism**

Uses a range of effective communication strategies and demonstrates professional behavior to best serve the needs of clients. The program is designed to serve high growth professions and to enhance the skill set of novice and experienced practitioners in exercise, sport, performance and health related careers.

## PROGRAM FORMAT

**Program Lengths:** one-year or two-year option.

**Credit Hours:** 34 semester units

Classes are in the evenings on one or two nights per week and a mix of traditional and hybrid in design. Students with flexible work schedules can generally work part-time or even full-time.

One Year Intensive Option		
Summer I (8 credits)		
KINS 500	Research Methods and Application in Kinesiology	4 credits
KINS 505	Inclusive Leadership	4 credits
Fall (10 credits)		
KINS 510	Mentorship and Leadership	2 credits
KINS 515	Applied Sport Psychology I	4 credits
KINS 540 or	Applied Sport Psychology II	4 credits
KINS 525	Applied Exercise Science I	4 credits
Spring (8 credits)		
KINS 520	Adapted Training for Special Populations	4 credits
KINS 530 or	Social Issues in Sport	4 credits
KINS 535	Applied Exercise Science II	4 credits
Summer II (8 credits)		
KINS 591	Special Topics	4 credits
KINS 595	Final Project and Defense	4 credits



Two Year Option		
Summer I (8 credits)		
KINS 500	Research Methods and Application in Kinesiology	4 credits
KINS 505	Inclusive Leadership	4 credits
Fall (4 credits)		
KINS 515	Applied Sport Psychology I	4 credits
Spring (4 credits)		
KINS 520	Adapted Training for Special Populations	4 credits
Summer II (4 credits)		
KINS 591	Special Topics	4 credits
Fall (6 credits)		
KINS 510	Mentorship and Leadership	2 credits
KINS 540 or	Applied Sport Psychology II	4 credits
KINS 525	Applied Exercise Science I	4 credits
Spring (4 credits)		
KINS 530 or	Social Issues in Sport	4 credits
KINS 535	Applied Exercise Science II	4 credits
Summer III (4 credits)		
KINS 595	Final Project and Defense	4 credits

[Explore a full list of course descriptions](#)

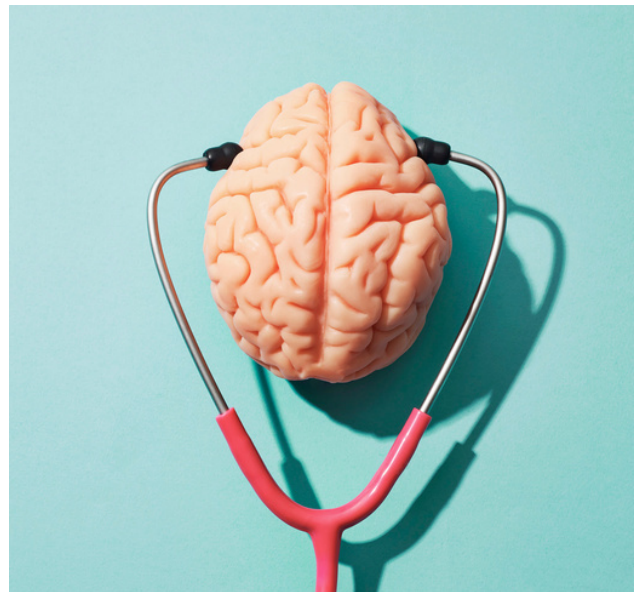


# Applied Sport Psychology Concentration

The program of study for the Applied Sport Psychology concentration focuses on integrating theory, research and application related to factors such as motivation, communication, feedback, attribution and leadership that impact experiences and performance in sport and physical activity.

The concentration is designed to prepare students to serve as performance consultants in a wide variety of settings including athletic programs at all levels, physical activity related organizations and businesses, and branches of the U.S. military.

Athletic coaches, health-and-fitness teachers and others interested in maximizing human performance are also a good fit for this focus area. A Master's degree is required to become a Certified Mental Performance Consultant through the Association for Applied Sport Psychology.





## Applied Exercise Science Concentration

The Applied Exercise Science concentration blends theoretical, applied and research training into a dynamic program focused on preparing practitioners who can effectively bridge the theory-to-practice gap and provide evidence-based, inclusive practices in the field.



Courses in this concentration focus on the design and implementation of individual and group exercise programs. Physiological adaptations to acute and chronic training, functional anatomy, exercise testing and prescription, and applications to diverse populations are areas of emphasis within the program.



The Applied Exercise Science degree supports the needs of those wishing to pursue specific credentials such as a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (NSCA), Certified Exercise Physiologist (ACSM), and Clinical Exercise Physiologist (ACSM).





# HEAR FROM STUDENTS IN PLU'S MASTER OF SCIENCE IN KINESIOLOGY PROGRAM

Sarah Johnson and Kyle Drugge share their thoughts and dreams about pursuing the Master of Science in Kinesiology. Hear what they have planned for the future and a little about where they came from.



# SARAH JOHNSON

## **What inspired you to join the MSK program at PLU?**

I came to PLU during [my undergraduate years] from a big state university. [The] Kinesiology department was where I knew I had a place. I could go and talk to my professors...and they really cared about me as a person, not a number.

I have learned so much with the classes in the Kinesiology department of both physical as well as mental health. It is truly amazing how being physically active can have such a positive impact on our lives. I would not trade what I have learned from PLU for anything. I have had access to so many opportunities with travel, internships, research and ACSM Northwest Meetings.

I now know I have a passion for helping people both with their physical and mental outlooks and finding tools for them to unlock their best life.



## **What are you most excited to learn?**

I am most excited to dive deeper into Sports and Exercise Psychology within the MSK. Some topics include stress management, imagery, concentration, arousal control, self-talk, confidence, goal setting, team building, adversity and the power of FUN!

## **How would you use this degree in your future career?**

After I finish the MSK program I want to look into certifications I can earn through this degree. Then I plan to take a gap year to start looking into Occupational Therapy programs. I am looking forward to applying the mental tools I learn in this program to the OT world!

## **What tips would you share with undergraduate students when considering a graduate program?**

Find what makes you passionate. What areas of study naturally give you energy and a desire to learn more? Once you find those areas, learn as much as you can and go to programs that are worth your money. There are many graduate programs out there, but not all are created equal.



# KYLE DRUGGE

## **What inspired you to join the MSK program at PLU?**

I have a strong desire to deepen my competence in the field of Kinesiology, specifically sport psychology. I majored in business for my undergraduate (BBA '18) at PLU, but minored in exercise and sport psychology and that is really when I figured out that I wanted to pursue a master's program in this field. Amazing faculty, the scope and style of the program, and an opportunity to coach at the university, were all strong reasons for me to choose the PLU MSK program.



## **What are you most excited to learn?**

I am most excited to learn more about the science of sport psychology, but I am even more excited to learn about how to use that information ethically and competently in an applied setting. The faculty and my peers have so much knowledge, I just can't wait to collaborate and learn from all of them.

## **How would you use this degree in your future career?**

Well I don't know yet exactly what "job" or "career title" I'm after, but I want to be in a coach or teacher role. Whether I become a college golf coach, a sport psychology consultant, or a doctorate student in sport and performance psychology, those are some of the routes that I am interested in.



I mostly love learning this stuff, and want to be able to help people using the information that I will acquire from this program. I'm sure I will start to zero in on my path as I progress through the program.

### **What tips would you share with undergraduate students when considering a graduate program?**

For students that are considering a graduate program, my advice is two-fold.

First, do your homework. So much of a graduate program is less about that degree/diploma itself and more about the opportunities, who you want to surround yourself with and what you plan on doing after the program.

Take into consideration faculty, is it more research-based, applied-based, or a blend, and think about where you will be challenged to grow the most.

Second, make sure that you really want it and that you really love to learn what you are studying. If you are considering a graduate program because it will give you a professional advantage over your peers, or because it is the next degree to get, while that may be true, I personally believe those reasons aren't strong enough to make it worth your while.

If you have a rock-solid desire to know your stuff, use it ethically, and use it for the betterment of yourself and those around you, then you are probably on the right track for a graduate program!

[Get to know more of the PLU Kinesiology community by exploring our Facebook page!](#)



# CONNECT WITH PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY

Because human movement is a central part of life, there will always be a need for skilled, evidence-based practitioners in the field of kinesiology. A master's degree in kinesiology prepares you for a career serving others, helping them improve and meet physical goals.

We invite you to get in touch with us for more information and to ask any specific questions you may have about the PLU Master of Science in Kinesiology. Begin your journey to a career in kinesiology today!

[Explore the Master of Science in Kinesiology](#)

[Request More Information](#)

[Attend an Information Session](#)

[Schedule an Appointment](#)

[Start an Application](#)

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