

## **Pilot Program-to-Program Articulation Project Psychology – June 1 Interim Report June 1, 2010**

The committee met on Friday April 30<sup>th</sup> and discussed a number of approaches to consider. We believe that in order for such an articulation project to be successful we must consider elements of both breadth and depth within the Psychology major. While a competency-based approach allows a great deal of flexibility, we must still identify the content areas in which competencies such as critical thinking, application, evaluation, etc., are to be demonstrated.

The committee recognized that many Psychology departments organize their curriculum (and requirements for the major) around a number of content areas, such as Developmental Psychology, Biological Basis of Behavior, etc.. Often, Psychology majors are required to complete a minimum number of credit hours in more than one content area, in order to provide exposure to the breadth of topics in the field. Yet, very few content areas are universally required, save for Statistics and Research Design. Additionally, students are often required to pursue advanced courses within one or more content areas, in order to provide a depth of knowledge in at least one specialty area.

With few universally required courses, the challenge for the 2-year school is to develop content-based courses that will transfer to a wide range of 4-year schools. An idea that was proposed was to attempt to identify broad content areas that seem to be generally accepted, and that these content areas could provide a structure to work with. The committee agreed that a good place to start was with the “APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major,” as well as APA’s report on “Teaching, Learning, & Assessing in a Developmentally Coherent Curriculum.”

The first document offers specific goals that are recommended for students earning an undergraduate degree in Psychology. The first goal is “Knowledge Base of Psychology, which seems to address the ‘breadth of knowledge’ issue.” Under the suggested Learning Outcomes is an identification of four ‘general domains’ in the field: 1) Learning and Cognition; 2) Individual differences; 3) Biological bases of behavior and mental process; and 4) Developmental changes (APA, 2007, p. 11).

The second document provides a structure within each of these goals that seems well suited to distinguishing differences in a first and second-year curriculum versus an advanced curriculum. This distinction seems to address the depth of knowledge aspect of the curriculum. APA identifies three outcome levels: Basic (retention and comprehension), Developing (analysis and application), and Advanced (evaluation and creation). It would seem then, that, regardless of content area (Cognition, Developmental, Abnormal, etc.) Community College curriculum (and indeed, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year courses offered as part of a 4-year curriculum) could focus on Basic and Developing behavioral outcomes, and the 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>- year curriculum should focus on Advanced behavioral outcomes.

Based on discussions both in the April 30<sup>th</sup> meeting and via electronic postings since then, we have a basic framework that seems to be taking shape. We are working in the direction of identifying generally-agreed-upon content areas. Once those content areas are established, the curriculum within them can be structured around the appropriate Outcome Levels. The content areas that the group is currently focusing on are listed below, along with examples of courses that would fall under each area. These areas are closely aligned with those identified by APA:

1. **Human Development** –Child, Adolescent, Adult, Lifespan, Aging.
2. **Individual Processes** –Psychometrics, Personality, Social, Cross-cultural, Abnormal.
3. **Learning and Cognition** – Learning, Memory, Cognition
4. **Biological Basis of Behavior and Mental Processes** – Physiological Psychology, Neuroscience, Brain and Behavior, Sensation, Perception, Comparative, Motivation, Emotion, Health Psychology, Human Sexuality
5. **Research Methods** – Basic Statistics, Research Design, Advanced Statistics, Advanced labs in specific content areas.

What we envision at this point is creating a structure whereby Community Colleges can develop courses in any one of the major content areas, with learning outcomes designed to address Basic and Developing outcomes. Those courses would transfer smoothly and meet the Basic/Developing requirements in that same content area at the 4-year school. This will allow each college or university to develop courses based on faculty expertise. For example, one Community College may have a course in Cognition, while another has a course in Cognition and Memory. Students from both schools would be able to transfer to the 4-year school and be able to fulfill the Basic/Developing –level criteria for the Learning and Cognition category.

### Next steps

We need to finalize the content areas, particularly what courses are ‘core’ to those areas (appropriate for first and second-year offerings) versus those courses that are either ‘elective’ content areas, or more appropriate for third- and fourth-year Psychology majors.

When the content areas are finalized, we will move on to aligning the outcome levels within the curriculum.

We need to identify competencies related to the Psychology major that might only be achieved through courses that lie outside of the Psychology curriculum – such as understanding of the natural sciences, information literacy, mathematics, and communication (written and oral).

Once the Psychology PAC has finalized the Psychology and related-course competency areas, we will send a summary to our constituencies state-wide to begin to get

preliminary feedback regarding the proposed model. This feedback will be incorporated into the next interim report.

## References

American Psychological Association. (2007). *APA guidelines for the undergraduate psychology major*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from [www.apa.org/ed/resources.html](http://www.apa.org/ed/resources.html)

American Psychological Association. (2008). *Teaching, learning, and assessing in a developmentally coherent curriculum*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, Board of Educational Affairs. Retrieve from [www.apa.org/ed/resources.html](http://www.apa.org/ed/resources.html)