



EKU Psychology Program Review

2019 - 2024

Program Name: Psychology, B.S.	Degree Designation as on Diploma: Bachelor of Science in Psychology
Program Degree Level: Undergraduate	CIP Code: 42.0101
Program Director: Richard Osbaldiston	Program Implementation Date: 1968
<p>Institutional Recommendation:</p> <p>Continue without Modification Continue with Modification Close within Three Years</p> <p>Feedback:</p>	

1. Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

Reminder: Include the TracDat four-column report with your submission.

<p>After reviewing TracDat reports and APAC evaluations for the current strategic planning cycle (2016 – Present), please provide a summary of the effectiveness of the program in achieving its student learning objectives (SLOs). Be sure to refer to both data/results compiled and meaningful changes implemented as evidence to the summary.</p>
<p>The Psychology Bachelor of Science degree had six objectives. Data were collected between 2016 and 2020. Thirty individual datapoints were collected across the six objectives over five years. Overall, the data demonstrated positive student learning outcomes based on the implemented meaningful changes.</p> <p>The six objectives outlined by the Psychology Bachelor of Science degree include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critical Reading for Independent Learning—Students would demonstrate critical reading skills through the use of metacognitive strategies 2. Knowledge of Empirically Generated Psychological Content—Students would recall and explain empirically generated psychological content 3. Information Literacy—Students would be able to recognize when the information was needed and would have the ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the needed information; students would also be able to generate new information using scientific inquiry

4. Interpersonal Competency—Students would demonstrate competency in written communication
5. Professional Development—Students would identify realistic career options
6. Critical Thinking—Students will use critical thinking, skeptical inquiry, and when appropriate the scientific method to solve problems related to behavior and mental processes.

Each year during the Assurance of Learning Day, the department would decide to focus on one or multiple of six learning objectives. Individual instructors would then submit meaningful change descriptions and outcome data per course assignment at the end of each academic year.

The objective of *Critical Reading for Independent Learning* had a total of seven observations between 2016 and 2020. The submitted meaningful changes were at the course assignment level. Examples of meaningful changes included changing assignment descriptions, modifying instructional methods to promote critical reading skills, creating new assignments that target critical reading, and teaching students on interpreting statistical tables. Our observations indicated that meaningful changes mostly resulted in positive results, with 80% or more of the students meeting or exceeding expectations. Only two of the observations included outcomes with less than 80% of the students meeting or exceeding expectations (72% in 2016 & 73% in 2020). The lower percentages might have been caused by a combination of an early standard adjustment period in 2016 and COVID-related difficulties in 2020.

The objective of *Knowledge of Empirically Generated Psychological Content* had a total of six observations between 2016 and 2020. Some meaningful changes were made at the department level and some meaningful changes were made at the course assignment level. Examples of department-level changes included creating a Learning Upgrade course (studying strategies) for all majors and revising the Senior Exit Survey questions. Course-assignment-level changes included changing course format from in-person to online during Spring 2020 and changing quiz format from static weekly quizzes to dynamic multiple attempts. Three of the six observations from 2018 through 2020 indicated that the meaningful changes resulted in student performance meeting or exceeding expectations at a rate of 80% or higher. The other three observations from 2016 through 2017 included meaningful changes that resulted in student performance meeting or exceeding expectations at a rate of 65%-76%. Although the percentages from 2016 and 2017 were lower, student performance increased steadily from 2018 through 2020, reflecting the positive and upward trend caused by the implemented meaningful changes.

The objective of *Information Literacy* had a total of four observations between 2016 and 2020. Meaningful changes were made at the course-assignment level. Examples of meaningful changes included adding short lecture videos to promote in-class discussions, adding assessments that targeted information literacy, and integrating questions into lectures that were more relevant to the final exam. Three of the four observations indicated that 76% of the students met or exceeded expectations. Faculty members whose students scored lower than the 80% criterion of meeting or exceeding expectations were asked to revise their assessment or instructional methods. One observation indicated that 98% of the students met or exceeded expectations.

The objective of *Interpersonal Competency* had one observation between 2016 and 2020. The course instructor has opted to utilize an “ungrading” method to assess students’ learning outcomes. This method of teaching required students to gauge their personal growth and communicate that growth effectively with the course instructor. Students reported that they had a positive experience with the

course and were impressed with the course instructor's passion. A total of 98% of the students in the class met or exceeded expectations after the meaningful change was implemented.

The objective of *Professional Development* had three observations between 2016 and 2020. Examples of meaningful changes included adding a three-hour Co-Op requirement to the General Concentration and increased student presence at various local and national conferences. The inclusion of a Co-Op requirement is an important milestone for the degree program, as studies have shown that Co-Op experiences increase future employment opportunities. For courses with revised instructions to include more professional development, 91% of the students met or exceeded expectations. In terms of conference attendance, 38 students made conference presentations during the 2015-2016 academic year. Although only one year of conference attendance was logged in our TracDat data, the department routinely sends between 20 and 40 students to professional conferences annually.

The objective of *Critical Thinking* had one observation between 2016 and 2020. The instructor of PSY 400 included resilience training into her course and taught students mental strategies that promote resiliency. The meaningful change resulted in excellent student performance with 92% of the class exceeding expectations. Few observations were logged for this objective likely because the objective was similar to the objective of *Critical Reading for Independent Learning*, which the department focused on more and had a total of seven observations between 2016 and 2020.

Overall, the Bachelor of Science program in Psychology has implemented meaningful changes that resulted in successful student performance improvement. A few of the observations (notably the ones in the *Information Literacy* objective) had students meeting expectations at 76%. The observations with lower percentages were caused either by external forces such as COVID-19 or were part of an adjustment period due to early standard adaptation. All lower percentage responses received follow-up revisions from individual faculty members. Our faculty members implemented thoughtful, consistent, and incremental meaningful changes that led to increased student success.

2. Outcomes Data Evaluation & Alignment

Data regarding enrollment, degrees awarded, retention rates, graduation rates, progression, and student credit hours are posted here: <https://oie.eku.edu/program-review-data>

2.1 Using the data charts above, provide a description/interpretation of the program's past trends regarding student success, and a rationale of the performance.

The Psychology Bachelor of Science degree at ECU has experienced continuous growth from 2015 through 2020. The growth trend of the Psychology undergraduate program is in contrast with the overall enrollment decline trend at the university level. From 2016 to 2020, ECU's campus-wide student enrollment decreased by 11.3% from 16,881 to 14,980. In that same timeframe, the Psychology Bachelor of Science degree grew by 20.4% from 672 students to 809 students (averaging across fall and spring semesters). In terms of overall recruitment, the psychology department has been highly successful in recent years.

The Psychology Bachelor of Science degree has had mixed success in terms of enrollment with low-income students and minority students. The enrollment of low-income students has declined slightly from 865 to 761 between 2015 and 2020. This was likely due to the increase of ECU's tuition cost from \$4075 for a full-time in-state student in 2015 to \$4633 in 2020. The department, however, did benefit from ECU's focus on providing scholarships to underrepresented minority (URM) students. The psychology undergraduate degree's URM enrollment increased exponentially by 70.4% between 2015 and 2020. Our initial URM enrollment in 2015 was 147 students; this number had increased to 251 students in 2020.

In terms of the number of degrees conferred per year and retention rate, the department has seen a steady growth trend in all categories. The per-year total degrees conferred increased by 47.9%, from 142 in 2015 to 210 in 2020. A similar trend is observed for low-income students (88 to 132) and under-represented minority students (8 to 36). The department has also been increasingly successful in retaining students. The overall student retention rate for the Psychology Bachelor's degree increased from 78.96% in 2015 to 81.74% in 2020. Similar trends were observed for low-income students (77.68% to 81.77%) and under-represented minority students (75.76% to 78.33%).

In terms of degree progression and the number of credit hours earned, the Psychology degree has been trending positively overall from 2015 through 2020. Degree progression refers to the rate at which students are moving toward completion or graduation. Students usually need to earn 30 credit hours per year to graduate on time (in four years). Overall degree progression has improved from 39.11% to 50.71% from 2015 through 2020. A similar degree progression trend can be observed for low-income students and under-represented minority students in the department. In terms of the number of credit hours earned by students (a typical course equals three-credit hours), the department is also experiencing an overall growth trend from 21,295 credit hours in 2015 to 23,656 in 2020. A similar growth trend can be observed with under-represented minority students but not low-income students. The number of credit hours earned by low-income students fell from 11,588 in 2015 to 9,695 in 2020. As mentioned previously, this was likely the result of a tuition increase.

The graduation rate of students in the Psychology Bachelor's degree has seen an overall steady increase with some fluctuations in the year-to-year data. The overall six-year graduation rate has increased from 36.11% to 46.15% from 2010 to 2015. The department's overall graduation rate is lower than the university's overall graduation rate. For example, 51.94% of ECU students graduated within six years during the 2014-2015 academic year; the psychology department, on the other hand, graduated 46.15%. Much of this was due to our unique student demographics. For example, a total of 840 students enrolled in the psychology undergraduate program during the Fall 2019 semester. Of these 840 students, 49% were identified as low-income and 16% were identified as minority students. Students who were identified as low-income and/or minority traditionally take more time and require more support. If one were to look at the eight-year graduation rate instead of the six-year graduation rate, one would find that the psychology department had a graduation growth trend that out-paced the university. The eight-year graduation rate for the Psychology Bachelor's degree increased from 40.48% in 2010 to 54.76% in 2013. If one were to look at the most recent data in 2013, the Psychology Bachelor's degree's eight-year graduation rate (54.76%) outpaced ECU's overall graduation rate (53.04%). If one were to focus on the graduation rate of low-income and minority students in the Psychology Bachelor's degree, a similar growth trend would be observed for both six-year and eight-year graduation rates with some fluctuations from year-to-year.

2.2 How does the program intend to improve enrollment, retention, and graduation going forward? What projections and goals will the program be setting to achieve improvement?

The Psychology department has a continuous goal of achieving academic excellence and promoting student success. We believe that increasing enrollment, retention rate, and graduation rate are all part of the greater goal of academic excellence. We do, however, face multiple challenges including the decline in population from our service region, the decline of overall enrollment at ECU, increasing tuition rates, and the aftermath of COVID-restrictions. The department is committed to persevere and provide our students with the best education despite the challenges.

One of the most important enrollment-growth efforts that the psychology department has engaged in is the offering of online courses. ECU traditionally recruits students from the eastern part of Kentucky; our service region, however, has seen a continuous population decline. We had therefore begun the effort of putting courses online and attracted non-traditional students through our online course offerings. Much of our growth in recent years has been attributed to the growth in our online program. We will therefore continue to offer nimble, career-focused, and affordable online courses to sustain our strength in online education. The department has a dedicated online pedagogical coordinator who hosts teaching workshops and provides online pedagogical consultation. The department also has multiple faculty members who continuously engage in the research of distance education and publish their findings. Other ongoing enrollment efforts such as hosting spotlight days, social media promotions, and podcast visibilities are continued.

The psychology department also engages in other recruiting efforts to promote growth. First, the department works closely with college-level and university-level advisors and recruiters. Faculty members routinely volunteer at recruiting events such as Spotlight Day and other recruiting events. The department also works closely with recruiters to publicize novel research findings as tools for student recruitment. Second, the department publishes blogs (written by faculty members) with e-Campus recruiters. These blogs are also posted on our various social media outlets (e.g., [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [Youtube](#) department accounts). The department also generates a newsletter called

“PsyQ” that describes and promotes the achievements, awards, events, and major milestones of the department. This newsletter is published every semester and the effort is led by Dr. Dan Florell in the department to reach both alumni and potential new students. Third, faculty members such as Dr. Jon Gore partner with the local community to mentor minority students in the area and recruit them to the department. Fourth, the department offers a [service-based clinic](#) that functions both as a training center for our graduate students but also as a community outreach program to serve the Central Kentucky region. Fifth, the department actively recruits our undergraduate students and involve them with research. Faculty members volunteer their time to [mentor undergraduate students’ research](#) endeavors and recruit them into the department’s various graduate programs. Our undergraduate students have routinely won research awards at various state and regional conferences. One of our undergraduate students, [Thomas Morris](#), won the [first-place award](#) at the 2020 Kentucky Academy of Science conference in the Social Science category.

In terms of increasing retention and graduation rates, the department has employed several measures. First, the department reviews the D grades, F grades, and Withdraw rates (DFW rates) of undergraduate courses annually. The department chair makes recommendations to faculty members and drafts modification plans. Some of these modification plans have involved changing the course content or a curriculum change. Second, the department has renewed its effort in advising. Faculty members actively reach out to students who are not registering and encourage students to sign up for classes. Third, the department continually evaluates its retention and graduation numbers during faculty meetings and the annual Assurance of Learning Day meeting. Fourth, the department has an in-house free tutoring service called “[PASS](#)” that offers online and in-person tutoring. This tutoring effort is led by one of our faculty members and consists of outstanding graduate assistants in psychology as tutors. Faculty members also actively use midterm grades and relevant grade alert systems to reach out to at-risk students.

It is difficult to set a concrete goal for enrollment, retention, and graduation rate for the next five years. The three main obstacles include declining student population in our service region, increasing tuition rates, and the aftereffect of COVID restrictions. The department’s overall enrollment, retention, and graduation rate will likely be down from 2020 to 2025 as a result of these obstacles. Despite these challenges, the department has committed itself to academic excellence and we believe that some of our innovative measures (especially in the area of online education) could minimize the negative impact of environmental factors.

Alumni Survey data regarding satisfaction with degree program are posted here:

<https://oie.eku.edu/program-review-data>

Kentucky Employment Outcomes Data: <https://kystats.ky.gov/Latest/PSFR> (This information can be filtered by major using the *5-Year Employment Outcomes by Specific Major* located in the bottom right of the page)

2.3 Using the data linked above, provide a description/interpretation of the program’s results, and plans to improve the outcomes.

The majority of the alumni with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from ECU are satisfied with their education. The alumni survey indicated that 78.4% of the alumni were satisfied with the quality of their education from ECU and 72.9% were satisfied with their overall experience (including non-academic extra-curricular activities) from ECU. Many alumni had positive comments on the quality of the faculty members in the department.

Employment data has indicated that students in the psychology department follow the general employment trend of ECU students in the Social and Behavioral Sciences category. The 5-year employment outcome data indicated that 57% of the graduates with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from ECU were employed with a median wage of \$27,876. Psychology is a field that requires students to attain some level of graduate training; those who do not go on to earn a graduate degree would often be employed in the service sector within the state of Kentucky. Kentucky's median per capita income in 2018 was \$26,948. Our non-graduate-degree-seeking students were therefore earning a median-level wage for the state of Kentucky. Our senior exit survey indicated that 41.24% of our graduates were planning to begin graduate school immediately or were in the process of applying for graduate school. Students who had completed some level of graduate degree had a median income of \$60,000 according to a 2017 report by the American Psychological Association (Winerman, 2017). The specific data for ECU is mostly unavailable, but we do have two data points from a few graduates with a Master's degree in Psychology from ECU. For graduates from ECU's School Psychology program (two-year, Master's degree), the employment rate was 70% and graduates had a median wage of \$53,718. For graduates from ECU's Industrial/Organizational program (two-year, fully-online, Master's degree), graduates' employment rate was 48% with a median income of \$46,657. The lower median income of ECU's graduates compared to national data was probably a reflection of Kentucky's lower cost-of-living and wage relative to other States.

Preparing our students' career-readiness is at the forefront of our department's mission. This is evident from the planning goals as described in Section 1 of the current report. The department currently offers four graduate programs, including 1) Master's in General Psychology, 2) Master's in Applied Behavioral Analysts, 3) Master's in Industrial/Organizational Psychology and 4) Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. The department has created a professional development website that provides additional support for students (<https://sites.google.com/eku.edu/eku-capp-psy-pd-modules/home>). We are also in the process of incorporating this website into all of our undergraduate courses and we are continuously updating the website and host workshops through the website. Other efforts such as co-op, research opportunities, and career-focused advising are continued to be carried out. The department is also in the process of creating a new course, PSY 327 (Registered Behavioral Technician and Psychological Rehab). This is a course that would certify psychology students with a Bachelor's degree to be immediately eligible to work as a Registered Behavioral Technician (RBT). RBTs with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology are often paid \$41,000 annually.

References

Winerman, L. (2017, September). *How much do today's psychologists earn?* American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/09/psychologists-earn>

3. Faculty and Teaching Data

3.1 Indicate how faculty workload and utilization, course offerings, and course enrollments positively and negatively impact the degree program, as well as what changes will be made for improvement.

The Psychology Department currently employs 20 full-time faculty members. The typical teaching load of a full-time faculty member is four courses per semester. Several faculty members have course-release time due to their administrative assignments. For example, the department chair teaches one course per semester. A graduate program director teaches three courses per semester. After taking into account all course-release time in the department, faculty members' average work-load per semester is 3.5 courses. The full-time faculty members have been very productive in their scholarly pursuit despite budgetary challenges. Individual faculty members in the department averaged 8.6 scholarly contributions between 2016 and 2020. Most of these scholarly contributions involved students with an average of 5 students being mentored by every faculty member annually between 2016 and 2020. Not only were the faculty members in the department productive in their scholarly pursuits, but they have also maintained high-levels of teaching with the average course evaluation score between Fall 2016 and Spring 2020 being 4.5 out of a possible maximum score of 5. In addition to research and teaching, full-time faculty members also engage in service activities such as Spotlight student recruitment events. On average, individual faculty members participated in 2.3 service activities per semester. Each full-time faculty member also advises an average of 41 students per semester. Other than the full-time faculty members, the department also employs between 20 and 30 part-time faculty members per semester. The majority of part-time faculty members are graduate students in the doctoral program who have already obtained their Master's degree. The part-time faculty positions allowed our qualified graduate students to gain valuable teaching experience and help fund their graduate education. Other part-time faculty members include those at the regional campuses, those who teach evening classes, and those that teach special-topics courses. Overall, the faculty members in the psychology department have been highly productive.

In terms of course offerings, the department has strived to maintain relatively small class sizes and offer a variety of topics within the Psychology undergraduate degree. For example, the average student-to-faculty ratio during the Fall 2019 semester was 29.3 to 1; the average ratio during the Spring 2020 semester was 26.2 to 1. Many of the 200-level psychology courses have 35 students per class while some 400 and 500-level classes might have 15 students. The department also offers multiple class sections with 123 and 128 unique course sections being offered during Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, respectively. A list of the undergraduate courses offered by the psychology department can be found in [EKU's undergraduate course catalog](#).

3.2 After reviewing the past 5 years of scholarly productivity, teaching effectiveness, and service outcomes, indicate how these factors positively and negatively impact the degree program, as well as what changes will be made for improvement.

Teaching effectiveness is probably the most important aspect of the Psychology undergraduate program. In terms of teaching effectiveness, the department as a whole has done well with consistently high teaching evaluations. The university is experiencing a transition phase that is characterized by increasingly larger class sizes and less teaching support. This transition has affected

the department, and we have taken proactive measures to maintain teaching effectiveness. One area that the department is exploring is the collaboration with high-achieving undergraduate students as teaching assistants in our large section Intro to Psychology course. Other endeavors involving research and pedagogical innovations are ongoing (e.g., <https://youtu.be/so6atkc9hGE>).

Service continues to be a major component of the Psychology undergraduate program. The department's service efforts mainly focus on advising and recruitment, with individual faculty members advising 41 students per semester. Advising 41 students per semester usually translates to 20.5 hours of work twice per semester. This was in addition to faculty members' teaching, research, and other service responsibilities. Other endeavors such as increased social media presence, announcements of new research findings, and cultivating new and attractive program areas are ongoing. The department's service efforts have been highly effective as is evident in the department's increasing enrollment numbers and graduation rates.

Research is the main area that is undergoing challenges due to severe budgetary constraints. Faculty members no longer have individual faculty development funds. Instead, faculty members compete with one another for a small pool of research funds. University-level recruiters and advisors have often stressed the importance of research activities as a recruiting tool for new students. The current budgetary constraints have negatively impacted the department's research productivity. Individual faculty members have responded by seeking competitive funding from the college, the university, and outside sources.

Overall, the department is doing well in both teaching and service despite the budgetary challenges. Our students are well-served and continue to thrive despite the challenges.

4. General Education Contribution (if applicable)

4.1 How does this program provide value to General Education? Include in this narrative, the evaluation of past courses, enrollments, efficiencies, and planned changes.

The Psychology Department contributes two courses to the General Education requirement. The two courses include Introduction to Psychology (PSY 200) and Lifespan Developmental Psychology (PSY 280). Both courses are part of the Gen Ed Area 5B requirement—Social and Behavioral Sciences. Introduction to Psychology is one of the most popular courses at Eastern Kentucky University and serves an important function in the General Education requirement.

The Introduction to Psychology (PSY 200) course is the cornerstone of the Psychology undergraduate degree. The number of course sections varies from year-to-year but usually averages 20 sections per semester. Most of the sections are offered as in-person class sections at the Richmond main campus. The department also offers between 3-5 sections at the Manchester and the Corbin regional campuses. The department also offers 2-4 fully online sections of the course, including two e-Campus sections that enroll mostly non-traditional students and two dual-credit students with mostly high school students. Most of the in-person sections enroll approximately 30 students. Online eCampus sections tend to be larger and usually averages approximately 100 students per section. Between 700 and 900 students would take Introduction to Psychology every semester. The Introduction to Psychology course teaches students a variety of topics relevant to general human interaction and career development. Examples of topics include Social Psychology, Personality, Emotion and Motivation, and Learning. Many students in the Health Sciences, Business, and Criminal Justice degrees are encouraged to take Introduction to Psychology because the course content is relevant to their future career choices.

The Lifespan Developmental Psychology (PSY 280) is the only other psychology course offered as part of the General Education requirement. The department offers two sections of the class per semester and each class enrolls approximately 22 students. The course is usually offered in the in-person format when COVID-restrictions are not enforced. The Lifespan Developmental Psychology course covers topics concerning human development from birth through death. It is a course that is suitable for students who are not psychology majors but need to learn more about human development; students who seek a degree in Education or Health Science often take this course.

Both Introduction to Psychology and Lifespan Development in Psychology support ECU's General Education goals and competencies well. Both courses help students develop skills in critical reading and writing and appropriate critical thinking skills. For example, many of the instructors of Introduction to Psychology incorporate class discussions to stimulate students' critical thinking and motivate students to connect textbook content with real-life situations. The two courses have less emphasis on quantitative reasoning but do introduce students to the research methods of psychology. For example, in the Lifespan Development in Psychology course, students are taught the basic research methods in developmental psychology. Both courses also support ECU's Critical Reading Quality Enhancement Plan. For example, faculty members meet annually during the Assurance of Learning Day to implement new and improved critical reading assignments into the Introduction to Psychology course. Assignments such as discussion posts that focus on the reading and critically examining scientific literature have been incorporated into both classes. Overall, both courses support the General Education goals very well.

The Psychology Department is constantly improving the quality and pedagogical practices of both courses at the assignment level and also at the holistic course level. For the assignment level, the department sets annual improvement goals during the annual Assurance of Learning Day. For example, the department has asked all faculty members in the department to implement a professional development module that the department has developed. This professional development module will help students with career-readiness. At the holistic course level, the department has implemented the First-Day textbook adaption policy in collaboration with the publisher and the university bookstore. As part of the agreement, students would automatically receive electronic access to the textbook material on the first day of class. This change promotes academic readiness.

4.2 How would General Education be impacted if this program did not participate?

The Psychology Department contributes two courses to the General Education requirement-- Introduction to Psychology (PSY 200) and Lifespan Developmental Psychology (PSY 280). Both courses offer valuable lessons and skills that would benefit students in a variety of career choices and throughout their lives.

The two Gen Ed classes offered by the Psychology Department prepare students well for the skills that employers look for. Indeed, a job search site with the highest online traffic has recently published a list of 11 “most sought-after employability skills” (Indeed, 2020). The list of skills include 1) communication skills, 2) leadership skills, 3) teamwork skills, 4) interpersonal skills, 5) open-mindedness, 6) self-management skills, 7) organizational skills, 8) computer skills, 9) problem-solving skills, 10) learning/adaptability skills, 11) strong work ethic. The first five of the 11 skills can be grouped as “inter-personal skills” and the remaining can be classified as “self-awareness/self-management skills”. Both of the Psychology Gen Ed courses include a variety of topics that teach students about human interaction and self-learning skills. For example, one topic covered in Introduction to Psychology is “Social Psychology”. The chapter teaches students the principles of human social interaction and provides useful tips for teamwork, communication, and management. Another chapter covered in the course is “Learning”. In this chapter, students learn about human motivation, learning process, and receive practical tips for becoming better learners.

Other than employability skills, the two Gen Ed psychology courses also provide students with knowledge from a historical, intercultural, and scientific perspective. For example, in the Lifespan Development Psychology course, students learn about the classic Rhesus monkey experiment and learn about the importance of spending quality time and cuddling with children. The experiment demonstrates that physical contact is important in child-rearing in a variety of cultural contexts. Another example is in Introduction to Psychology; students learn about the Milgrah obedience experiment and how the experiment helps explain the Nazi soldier’s cruelty and the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse during the Iraq War. Both of the Gen Ed psychology courses provide students with not just practical skills for employment but also provide students a unique and scientific perspective about the world around them.

The greatest strength of the Gen Ed psychology courses is that these courses cover a broad spectrum of practical topics. Students can learn about intercultural communication by taking various language classes. Students can learn about management skills by taking business classes. No department,

however, does a better job in teaching breadth and practicality than the Psychology Department. This is the reason for the popularity of the Gen Ed psychology courses, especially the Introduction to Psychology course.

References

Indeed (2020, October 19). *Top 11 Skills Employers Look for in Candidates*. Indeed.

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/skills-employers-look-for>

5. Curriculum Changes

Reminder: Include a Curriculum Map with your submission

5.1 Reflect on the latest trends in curriculum changes or modernization in the discipline. Cite professional organizations or standards that have guided these changes in the discipline. Specifically address how your program has responded or will respond to those changes. Describe any results you have observed regarding those changes.

Psychology as a scientific discipline has only been around for approximately 100 years, but it has undergone several important changes. Other than theoretical and methodological changes, the discipline is also changing in terms of pedagogical innovations at the undergraduate level. The American Psychological Association publishes a guideline for psychology undergraduate education every 10 years. The latest iteration of the guideline was published in 2013 (APA, 2013). The guideline includes a list of five learning goals, including 1) Knowledge Base in Psychology, 2) Scientific Inquiry and Critical Thinking, 3) Ethical and Social Responsibility in a Diverse World, 4) Communication, and 5) Professional Development. The department has chosen goals one, two, and five to implement systematic curriculum changes. The chosen curricular changes were prioritized based on the specific needs of the students attending Eastern Kentucky University.

The most significant curriculum change that the Psychology Department has implemented in the past five years is the restructuring of its core research sequence requirement. The original three courses included 1) Information Literacy PSY 250, 2) Statistics and Research Methods PSY 309W, and 3) Statistics II PSY 310. These three courses were revised to 1) Scientific Literacy in Psychology PSY 240, 2) Research Literacy in Psychology PSY 340W, and 3) Applied Scientific Literacy in Psychology PSY 440. The updated curriculum reflects the department's priorities in aligning itself with APA's latest undergraduate curriculum guideline and also ECU students' unique needs. First, the updated curriculum focuses on an improved knowledge base in psychology by introducing modern adaptive learning systems to the curriculum. The new courses utilize internet-based quizzing systems that allow students multiple learning opportunities and systematically adapt to students' learning progress to achieve mastery level. Second, the updated curriculum emphasized the discipline of psychology as a scientific field by including the latest psychological research methodology, scientific inquiry methods, and scientific thinking. Third, the updated curriculum focused on teaching students skills that would be relevant to the new digital economy. For example, the previous research curriculum put much emphasis on students' ability to hand-calculate statistical equations. The new curriculum had instead focused more on teaching students statistical reasoning using software programs and articulating the findings through graphs, charts, and oral presentations.

The revised research core sequence was meant to achieve several learning outcomes. First, we hope that students would have a clearer understanding of the scientific basis of psychology and implement the scientific inquiry method beyond their time at ECU. Second, we hope that the inclusion of a modernized content delivery method (e.g., an adaptive learning system) would facilitate students' learning process and bring equity to student achievements. Third, we hope that the focus on more career-ready skills such as the usage of Microsoft Excel as a statistical tool would promote students' employability upon graduation.

References

American Psychological Association (2013). *APA guidelines for the undergraduate psychology major: Version 2.0*. APA. <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/about/psymajor-guidelines.pdf>

5.2 Provide an overview of curriculum changes that have been implemented in the last five years and the data that supported those changes. Also discuss any plans for upcoming changes. If you have already described those changes in previous sections, refer back to those sections.

The Psychology Department has a dedicated curriculum review committee that is formed by faculty members in the department. This committee regularly meets to discuss curriculum change proposals and present their findings and recommendations to the department. Curriculum change is therefore a continuous and iterative process for the Psychology department.

The most recent and significant curriculum revision was the change of the core research sequence as described in Section 5.1 above. The department began reviewing the core research sequence in 2018, began the updating process in 2019, and implemented the new curriculum during the Fall 2020 semester. Systematic outcome data are not yet available because the change has been implemented recently. Preliminary data from our pilot implementation during the Summer 2020 semester indicated that students had responded favorably to the change. For example, for the Research Methods PSY 340W online course, students gave the course a score of 4.47 out of 5 in terms of the overall course quality. The previous version of the same course, PSY 309W online, received a course quality score of 3.83 during the Spring 2020 semester. Students also commented favorably on the inclusion of Excel as a statistical computation tool instead of focusing on the hand-calculation of statistical equations.

The department has also made other curriculum changes such as changing PSY 403 (Practicum in Psychology) to PSY 503. These changes were made to facilitate student registration. For example, graduate students were not able to register for PSY 403 for credit even if they needed to complete practicum experiences; the revised PSY 503 designation thus allowed graduate students to register. Because these changes were registration-related (revising the designation or name of an existing course) and not content-related, this report will not elaborate on these changes.

6. Reflection and Recommendations

Reminder: Include supporting evidence and documentation, as appropriate.

6.1 Reflect on and make recommendations for the future of the program.

The Bachelor of Science in Psychology degree is a growing and flourishing program overall. Our enrollment has been growing even as the university has experienced a steady decline in enrollment. The department's teaching evaluation has been consistently high, and we have been responsive and sensitive in revising our curriculum. Our weaknesses are directly related to budgetary issues largely outside of our control, and we have taken proactive cost-saving measures to counteract the negative impact. The department is unique in that it is almost four times as large as the second-largest department in the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences (CLASS) at ECU. Despite our size, we have been incredibly efficient in teaching approximately 800 students with 20 full-time faculty members. Our faculty members have also been highly productive despite the financial challenges. For example, Dr. Bob Mitchell was the recipient of the 2019 CLASS research award and Dr. Matt Winslow was the recipient of the 2019 CLASS teaching award. We are confident that despite the financial challenges, our faculty members will continue to do excellent work.

As we look forward to the next five years, we are focusing our efforts mainly on growing our online degree program. The population of the service region from which most of our traditional college students come from is dwindling. For us to maintain our current growth, we must continue to maintain a strong online presence and seek innovative ways to grow our online program.

6.2 If applicable, address plans to extend degree program to online delivery. If already offered online, reflect on the value of providing the program in this manner. What can be done to make this online program more innovative and unique?

The Bachelor of Science in Psychology degree is already offered as a fully online option. The program is healthy, growing, and currently enrolls approximately 300 students. The fully online program allows full-time working individuals, older non-traditional individuals, and out-of-state individuals to take advantage of ECU's top-rated psychology program. The flexible nature of the online program allows the department to serve students who have traditionally not been able to access higher education or students who would like to join ECU's program but live further away. The department offers almost all of its courses in the online equivalent degree. Only courses that require specific lab components or courses that require intensive in-person interactions (e.g., courses on suicide prevention) are not offered in an online format.

The department has dedicated additional effort to promote our online presence with the goal of continuous growth. The department has designated a social media graduate assistant position who would be in charge of social media outreach. The person would regularly generate Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, and blog content. Other innovative ideas such as the usage of Microsoft Teams to build an online community are ongoing. The department is also in constant dialogue with ECU Online (eCampus) marketing team to discuss innovative ways to reach out to new potential students.