

Psychology

Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Psychology is to offer the highest quality academic experiences at the undergraduate and graduate levels through excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service to the professional and local communities and to encourage the development of new knowledge through faculty scholarship. Our educational aim at the undergraduate level is to facilitate the mastery of theoretical, methodological and empirical work in Psychology as a specialized field and as a component of a broader Liberal Arts education. At the graduate level, we aim to prepare students for professions that rely on the application of psychological methods and insights, and to provide training in advanced psychological scholarship that will facilitate doctoral level study. Our commitment to research reflects broad interests and aspirations, as we aim to contribute both general and applied research on local, national and global issues. A major goal of the Department is to work toward equipping students with the critical skills and knowledge necessary for continued occupational, educational, and personal advancement in Psychology and related disciplines via in class experiences, transformational learning opportunities, experimental research opportunities with faculty, internships and practicums with community partners. In addition the Department strives to foster an environment in which students are encouraged to assess their values and apply their knowledge to their increasingly complex world and thus promote the recognition of the importance of their roles in society as members of a vital citizenry. Finally, our faculty and students are committed to serving the diverse communities in which they live and work, including the University, the discipline, and the region.

Student Learning Outcomes

Graduates will be able to:

Content/Discipline-Specific Knowledge/Skills

- Utilizing discipline specific knowledge, describe major theories, contributions, methodological approaches, and scientific foundations of the following core areas of Psychology: Cognitive/Learning, Biological, Developmental, Personality/Individual differences, and Social.
- Utilizing discipline specific knowledge, demonstrate competence in appropriate use of technology in searching for and retrieving relevant literature using digital databases and in conducting statistical analyses and presenting results using contemporary computer applications.

Communication Skills

- Utilizing communication skills, demonstrate the ability to communicate verbally in academic settings how Psychology, as a discipline, contributes to the understanding of complex psychosocial and cultural processes by presenting ideas professionally in oral-presentation formats.
- Utilizing communication skills, articulate Psychological concepts clearly and concisely by presenting ideas in written formats that apply APA style guidelines in collecting data with human and nonhuman subjects, analysis, interpretation and reporting of research findings.

Critical Thinking Skills

- Utilizing critical thinking and discipline specific knowledge, provide appropriate theoretical rationale based on existing literature for development of research questions and testable research hypotheses and apply those theories to design basic studies to address psychological questions using different research methodologies and applying APA guidelines.
- Utilizing critical thinking skills, learn how to describe psychological theories, principles, and findings relate to everyday life and analyze alternative solutions to problems or issues encountered in real-world settings; evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their own classroom, laboratory and field experiences, and describe how these experiences can apply to career choices.
- Utilizing discipline specific knowledge, demonstrate competence in appropriate use of technology to demonstrate the ability to collect data and to analyze data using basic descriptive and inferential statistics. Locate, identify, and critically evaluate relevant research and methodological practices necessary to conduct and interpret results of research studies. Evaluate the merit of different arguments and recognize biases and fallacies.

Assessment Approaches

Numerous direct and indirect measures of student learning are employed to assess mastery of the expected student learning outcomes and provide feedback to students on which outcomes they are mastering. To achieve these outcomes, we review course assignments and assessments that use a defined scoring rubric (criterion-based rating scale) as one of the principal assessment approaches. Other direct program learning measures may include pass rates on subject area tests, student publications/conference presentations, and/or intern and practicum supervisor ratings of students' performance. We use objective testing to determine the level of student mastery of content outcomes and critical thinking abilities. We use scoring rubrics for student papers and oral presentations to measure student achievement in formulating, developing, and supporting complex analytic arguments and to measure how well they are able to communicate psychological concepts and critical thinking. We also use rubric assessments to provide specific measures of how well students formulate, develop and support complex analytic arguments and how well they communicate at an expert or professional level. Through the direct assessments, students continue to gain insight into which learning outcomes that they have achieved in the program. While students gain individual feedback from the direct assessments, the program provides assessment data on a global scale to determine improvement trends and action plans.

Indirect measures may include employer or alumni surveys, student perception surveys, ISQs, and graduate school placement rates (an estimate of the percent of undergraduates going onto graduate education at the masters and Ph.D levels is 25%).