From: "R. Eric Landrum" <elandru@boisestate.edu>
Date: Mon, 9 Dec 2013 10:32:42 -0700
Subject: Fwd: STP Presidential Task Forces for 2014
To: stpexec@googlegroups.com

FYI -- what I just sent to potential 2014 task force participants. Take care! Eric

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: R. Eric Landrum <elandru@boisestate.edu>
Date: Mon, Dec 9, 2013 at 10:31 AM
Subject: STP Presidential Task Forces for 2014
To: Eric Landrum <elandru@boisestate.edu>

Dear Colleagues,

It is the time of year for a list and checking it twice. You are receiving this email for a specific reason –
we've worked together in the past, you've indicated your interest in greater involvement in STP, we met
at a conference, you are (also) passionate about one or more of my task force topics, and so on.

My STP (Society for the Teaching of Psychology; APA Division Two) presidential year begins in January,
and I would be pleased and honored if you would serve on one of my three task forces. The topics are
described at the end of this email, and the work would start in January. Once the groups are formed, I'll
provide a formal charge for each task force, and work to provide the necessary resources for your
digital/electronic collaboration (such as for conference calls, Google Hangout assistance, and so forth).
Although the task force could work for the entire calendar year, I'll need task force reports (interim or
final) on or about July 1 so that I can (a) include your work in STP annual reports and (b) work to
implement your task force recommendations as possible.

The link below will take you to a brief Google Form where you can provide some details about you, and
indicate your task force topic preference. If applicable, you can indicate your interest to more than one
task force—that provides me with some additional degrees of freedom in trying to form roughly
equivalent groups. If you are interested (or still interested) in task force participation, please respond
via the Google Form by Friday, December 20. After that time, I'll arrange for task force co-chairs and
then I'll update all task force members with more details – I hope to wrap up all of this organizational
start-up by the end of December so that in January everyone is good to go.

    Google Form link: http://goo.gl/8TP52c

If you earlier indicated an interest in serving, but your availability has changed or the details of the task
forces are not as appealing as initially thought, please do not worry about not participating. And for
those of you receiving this email as a "cold call," no worries if you do not want to participate--but I
thought of you. If you have any questions for me, email me at elandru@boisestate.edu – otherwise,
you'll hear back from me again after December 20 if you volunteered to serve on a task force.

Best wishes to all!

Eric

2014 Presidential Task Forces

==Skills Matter:== My goal for this task force is for the members to coordinate division-wide efforts, identify resources, and propose an action plan centered on the assessment of undergraduate student skills. How might we measures the skills attained by students in our courses, and what core set of skills might introductory psychology students gain which will serve them for the rest of their lives? Can we share resources nationwide to measure and document the skills of our psychology majors/graduates? How can we encourage employers of psychology graduates to help document graduates' accomplishments as well as provide persuasive evidence to faculty members, administrators, accreditation bodies, legislators, and the general public about the value of the bachelor's degree in psychology?

The Power of Story: Given the lack of retention from typical introductory psychology course approaches (based on available data), perhaps storytelling is an alternative pedagogy that could lead to improvements in the retention of content knowledge in psychology. What is the current research evidence available about the power of story; if an educator wanted to adopt this pedagogy, what might 'best practices' be based on the available literature? My goal is that we can utilize STP resources to develop a repository of supportive documents and practices regarding the use of story-telling as an instructional practice to encourage long-term retention of information and the development of skills. This initiative should be cross-divisional and should reach out for participation beyond the discipline; additionally, this topic will be featured in my August 2014 Presidential Address in Washington, DC during the APA Convention.

National Advocacy for Psychology Undergraduates: In order to better serve the teaching and learning of psychology, undergraduate students should benefit from advocacy just as teaching of psychology can derive benefits through advocacy. There is no national advocacy group in the U.S. that represents the full spectrum of undergraduate psychology majors. I encourage members of this task force to explore the need and logistics of this vast population; how might we better serve all undergraduate psychology majors and psychology baccalaureates? I hope a particular focus of this task force can include an emphasis on curriculum effectiveness and career advising provided to those with and without post-baccalaureate education plans.

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If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together --- African proverb

Skills Matter: Meeting Expectations for a 21st Education in Psychology

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Skills Matter: Meeting Expectations for a 21st Education in Psychology

While still considered essential for success in today's workplace, higher education is under increasing public scrutiny. Many are openly questioning whether a college degree adequately prepares individuals to enter the workforce, particularly in light of the rising cost of attendance and student indebtedness (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; "Most Americans and Business Leaders," 2013; Shear, 2014). In response to these concerns, several national organizations surveyed employers as to the types of skills they consider necessary or important for a college graduate's long-term career success.

Employers reported a preference for college graduates who have a broad range of skills and knowledge beyond those specific to one's major (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Hart Research Associates, 2013; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2014). Employers desire college graduates with developed skills in critical thinking, written and oral communication, and complex problem-solving. Graduates should also be able to apply their acquired knowledge to real world situations. Other desired "soft" skills include a demonstrated ability to work in teams; plan, organize, and prioritize one's work; effectively communicate verbally with individuals; to obtain and process information; and analyze quantitative data (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2014). As a specific example, Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006) asked 400 employers to rank the basic knowledge and applied skills important to the career success of their employees. Their analysis revealed that the skills employers listed as "very important" were invariably of an applied nature and included professionalism, communications, teamwork, and critical thinking. The Job Outlook 2014 Survey found similar results, emphasizing the importance of applied communication, information literacy, collaborative problem solving, and teamwork skills (NACE, 2014). An applicant's demonstrated leadership skills are also valued in hiring decisions (NACE, 2014).

The problem that higher education is facing is that many employers view recent college graduates as deficient in these applied skills, particularly written and oral communication and problem-solving skills (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Chronicle of Higher Education, 2012). Employers are questioning whether colleges are developing students' leadership abilities, professionalism/work ethic, creativity/innovation, and life-long learning/self-direction (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). Some are criticizing new hires' information literacy skills, particularly research competencies skills that go beyond simple online searches (Head, 2012). It is clear that while one's major is an important consideration in the hiring process, so are the other broad skills associated with being a college graduate. The question is, how can students' best develop and demonstrate these broad skills?

Re-conceptualizing a College Degree with an Emphasis on Skills

One strategy from the employers' perspective is for students to pursue internships and other forms of relevant employment while in college (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2012; Hart Research Associates, 2013). Internships provide students with opportunities to develop and demonstrate their ability to apply knowledge in professional settings. This is important as it is clear that undergraduate institutions must integrate liberal and professional learning and eliminate the false dichotomy between education and career preparation models to facilitate the

career of success of graduates. Employers value student experiences that involve applied learning within a liberal arts framework. These experiences enable students to engage in collaborative, real world problem solving, ideally while working in teams with others who hold divergent views. Employers also prefer experiences in which students can develop leadership skills and apply ethical reasoning to professional settings.

The challenge is how to integrate the benefits typically associated with internships throughout the undergraduate curriculum as a whole. One strategy is to reconceptualize an undergraduate education to emphasize the broad skills and knowledge one should acquire, regardless of major. These skills would then inform curricular and course development. One example of this approach is the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative (AACU, 2011). With its emphasis on quality student learning, the LEAP initiative focuses on the importance of preparing students for today's realities and the world they will face upon graduation. Drawing upon research collected from many sources including educational, business, community, and policy leaders, the LEAP initiative identified five essential learning outcomes for a 21st century education. These outcomes are clear descriptions of the knowledge, skills, responsibilities, and applied learning that college graduates need as thoughtful people, as democratic and global citizens, and for economic opportunity and success. These Essential Learning Outcomes include Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World, Intellectual and Practical Skills, Personal and Social Responsibility, and Integrative Learning (https://www.aacu.org/leap/essential-learning-outcomes). The Essential Learning Outcomes are meant to be fostered and developed across the breadth of a student's entire educational experience, as well as within the context of his or her major field of study.

Another national initiative to provide a framework for student learning is the Lumina Foundation's (2014) Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). The DQP lays out a set of learning outcomes that students should achieve across five primary areas of competence, again regardless of major or field of study.   The DQP makes explicit expectations regarding learning outcomes across the following five areas of competence: Specialized Knowledge, Broad/Integrated Knowledge, Applied Learning, Intellectual Skills, and Civic Learning (http://www.luminafoundation.org/dqp/). These expectations represent a shared understanding of what associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees represent in terms of student learning. These expectations acknowledge the incremental and cumulative nature of learning while incorporating employer priorities for graduates. In addition to expected deep learning within disciplines, the DQP defines the skills and knowledge that are critical in workforce settings, and emphasizes the importance of educational experiences rich in field related projects, performances, demonstrations, and other learning-intensive activities.

Arguing for a Skill Driven Major

National initiatives such as LEAP and the DQP focus on broad learning goals and outcomes for undergraduate students, regardless of major. Nevertheless, the specific knowledge and skills developed through one's major does matter in the hiring process (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2012). While it may be easy to specify the content knowledge one learns within a major, what skills the student is also developing may not be as clear. This can lead to questions as to the value of that major in helping students achieve success after college. The

undergraduate psychology degree, despite being one of the most popular majors across college campuses, has come under such scrutiny (Halonen, 2011).

Part of the problem is that the psychology major often has two overarching, but seemingly contradictory purposes. One is to provide students with the knowledge and research skills necessary to successfully pursue postgraduate education. This is an important consideration given the number of psychology majors who attend graduate or professional school within five years of graduation (Stoloff, Curtis, Rodgers, Brewster, & McCarthy (2012). The second purpose of the psychology major is to provide students with the skills desired by potential employers. Landrum and Harrold (2003) found that the five most important applied skills that employers specifically hiring graduates with a baccalaureate degree in psychology included excellent listening skills, the ability to work with others as part of a team, the ability to get along with others, a desire and ability to learn, and a willingness to learn new, important skills. A survey of psychology alumni also acknowledged the value of developing interpersonal and teamwork skills along with self-discipline for career success (Landrum, Hettich, & Wilner, 2010).

It is clear that psychology programs should identify and help students develop the skills they need in order to be successful both in graduate or professional school and in the workplace. The challenge is how to design a curriculum, including individual courses like introductory psychology, which provides multiple opportunities for such learning. To help programs meet this challenge, the American Psychological Association has developed a set of expected learning outcomes or competencies for the psychology degree (2013). These Guidelines (originally adopted in 2007 and later revised in 2012) describe what a student should know and be able to do upon completion of either an associate or baccalaureate degree in psychology. Using these guidelines, individual psychology programs can develop a curriculum that optimizes student success in both the workplace and in graduate or professional school.

The APA Guidelines include only one content focused goal (a knowledge base in psychology) which is reflective of the Lumina Foundation DQP's 'specialized knowledge' proficiency. This goal focuses on students' ability to describe key psychological concepts, theoretical perspectives, historical underpinnings and empirical research as they apply to behavioral problems. The remaining four goals emphasize skills deemed necessary for success after graduation. These goals are congruent with the broad learning goals promoted in the DQP and the AAC&U's LEAP initiative. For example, the second goal of scientific inquiry and critical thinking and the fourth goal of communication in combination reflect the skills described within the DQP's 'intellectual skills' and AACU's "intellectual and practical skill' outcomes. Goal 2 of the APA guidelines involves students' ability to demonstrate "the development of scientific reasoning and problem solving, including effective research methods "(p. 17). Complementing this skill, Goal 4 involves students' demonstrating their oral and written communication skills in addition to the important professional skill of interacting well with others.

Goal 3 of the APA 2.0 guidelines highlights the importance of cross cultural knowledge and skills. This goal of ethical responsibility and social responsibility in a diverse world outlines the need for students to be able to apply ethical standards, build and enhance interpersonal relationships, and adopt values that build community in both professional and personal settings in an increasingly diverse world. The importance of these cross cultural competencies is also

reflected in the AACU's "Personal and Social Responsibility" outcome as well as the DQP's 'Civic and Global Learning" priority.

Professional development is the fifth goal within the APA 2.0 Guidelines. Included in this goal is the recommendation that students demonstrate the ability to: 1) apply psychology content and skills to their career goals; 2) exhibit self-efficacy and self-regulation; 3) refine project management skills; 4) enhance teamwork capacity; and 5) develop meaningful professional direction for life after graduation. Some of the specific skills graduates of the psychology major are recommended to demonstrate include using research design knowledge, meta-cognitive skills and assessment strategies to effectively solve problems in the workplace; exercising information literacy skills and applying ethical principles in non-psychology settings. In addition, psychology majors with a baccalaureate degree are recommended to demonstrate leadership, diversity, team, and collaboration skills to enhance outcomes on a complex project (APA, 2013).

The APA Guidelines can be construed as a "covert career counselor" for both psychology programs and students alike (Hettich, 2014). Psychology programs may use the Guidelines to inform decisions regarding expected student learning outcomes and curricular development. Understanding how their psychology curriculum reflects and incorporates the Guidelines will help students identify and subsequently communicate to potential employers the underlying skills they acquired through the psychology major. For example, students can expand a discussion of their completed coursework to include the specific opportunities they received to develop and demonstrate the very skills that employers deem desirable in recent college graduates. To assist students in these efforts, psychology programs should explicitly link their content and skill requirements to the Guidelines to emphasize and make salient the desired learning outcomes for their degree program. This idea of emphasizing what students are learning at the program level in terms of desired skills should also extend into individual courses, including the introductory psychology course.

Creating a Foundation for Skill Development within the Introductory Psychology Course

Introductory psychology is an immensely popular undergraduate course, with more than 1.7 million students electing to enroll in it each year (Gurung, 2013). Although it is a required course for the psychology major in 98% of colleges in North America, most students who complete the course will never pursue additional coursework in psychology (Stoloff et al., 2010). This dynamic creates tension between the potentially conflicting goals for introductory psychology instructors: how can they best provide an adequate foundation for psychology major students while keeping the course accessible and relevant for the majority of students who take the course as an elective? Dunn and his colleagues described the challenge of designing the introductory psychology course succinctly: "How can one course satisfy the demands of a general or liberal education course elective while still providing would-be majors with the information they need for upper level courses in the psychology department's curriculum?" (Dunn, Beins, McCarthy, & Hill, 2010, p. 5). To this we would add the additional challenge of how this course might also introduce the types of employable skills inherently developed through the psychology curriculum and incorporated into the APA Guidelines?

Just as psychology programs can use the APA Guidelines to inform decisions regarding expected student learning outcomes and curricular development in the psychology major,

introductory psychology professors can use them to guide the integration of skills into their course. This is not a new idea. Over 70 years ago, Wolfle (1942) argued that a course in introductory psychology should have five objectives, the majority of which are what we would now refer to as skills:

1) Gaining a knowledge base (theories, concepts, and principles);
2) Developing critical thinking skills and an understanding of the scientific method;
3) Applying psychological insights to one's own life;
4) Gaining an appreciation for the field of psychology; and
5) Understanding both the reach and limits of psychological science.

More recently, Stoloff and his colleagues (2010) recommended the following five objectives for introductory psychology courses:

1) Mastering the topics, findings, theories, and concepts;
2) Appreciating of the relevance of the discipline;
3) Adopting a scientific approach to studying human nature;
4) Developing critical thinking skills; and
5) Engaging in self-reflection or analysis and appreciating human diversity

Considering shifting paradigms and emerging insights from the fields such as cognitive, evolutionary, and cultural psychology, the degree of overlap between Wolfle's (1942) and Stoloff et al.'s (2010) models is remarkable in its implicit emphasis on skill development over explicit content knowledge. It is clear that introductory psychology instructors should be encouraged to embrace the principles of backward course design and design the course around skills and learning outcomes over content (McTighe & Wiggins, 1999; Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). By doing so, instructors will be able to meet the recommendations of the APA guidelines to identify and emphasize skills and knowledge based learning outcomes. Introductory psychology professors working collaboratively with their departments would then be incorporating into their course the desired skills that external stakeholders have identified as desirable for the 21st century graduate. Once instructors have intentionally adopted these critical skills and learning outcomes into their course, then, and only then, should an instructor begin to plan the specific content for meeting those objectives.

A Proposed Action Plan to Emphasize and Assess Skills within Psychology

To ensure the success of our graduates and to meet the call from employers and government agencies, psychology departments and the instructors within them need to focus on skills in their curriculum design and pedagogy. The following recommendations are designed to aid departments and instructors in identifying these skills and incorporating them within their syllabi and course and program design.

Actions for Individual Departments

1. Individual programs should explicitly and intentionally link how their curricular program reflects the APA 2.0 guidelines. This could be achieved using strategies such as

curricular mapping. Departments should review their sequencing of courses and types of courses in the context of the skills outlined in the APA 2.0 guidelines (cf. Stoloff et al., 2010).

2. Psychology departments should publicly share and promote how their undergraduate psychology program reflects national standards and expectations of skills for college graduates. This could be done on departmental websites and published materials. One such example can be found on Monmouth University's Department of Psychology website: http://www.monmouth.edu/school-of-humanities-social-sciences/psych-career-advising.aspx.

3. Instructors should use a developmental approach in structuring their individual courses within the psychology program to allow students to identify, develop, strengthen, and demonstrate the hard and soft skills reflected in the APA 2.0 guidelines. Regional and national teaching conferences might consider offering workshops and training in the ideas of backward course design to assist instructors in this venture.

4. Psychology departments should help students identify and communicate to external constituencies the employable skills they are developing through their psychology coursework. One strategy is for instructors to intentionally and explicitly share with students the skills being developed through their coursework. This could be done by including a description of these skills on course syllabi, course assignments, and grading rubrics.

Actions for the Society for the Teaching of Psychology

How can the Society for the Teaching of Psychology contribute to the national discussion that has resulted in initiatives such as Project Leap and DQP? We recommend the following:

1. We should explicitly articulate how the APA guidelines support and extend national initiatives including Project Leap and DQP.

2. There should be STP workshops to assist programs in incorporating the national initiatives into psychology curriculum.

3. A dialogue should be established both at the national and local levels between employers and advocates for undergraduate psychology to ensure that the expectations for the major in psychology align with employer expectations for career success. For example, departments might consider creating advisory boards comprised of alumni and local employers. The creation of alumni/current student mentoring programs could be also useful. STP could support the initiation of this dialog by: 1) encouraging departments to create employers/alumni/departmental advisory boards; 2) to use the Project Syllabus forum to post syllabi that stress skill development; 3) to use the Partnership Grants to encourage schools to work together in forming employer/alumni advisory boards; and 4) to offer best practice workshops focusing on the development of external collaborations and partnerships with alumni and employers at the Annual Conference on Teaching, the regional APA conferences as well as the annual national conference.

4. STP should identify and promote exemplar departments that intentionally incorporate APA guidelines with an emphasis on skill development that can serve as a model for other programs.

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