

TCNJ Psychology Department Strategic Plan 2011

The College of New Jersey Psychology Department

Strategic Plan 2011

Adopted June 15, 2011

Mission Statement

The Psychology Department is a vibrant community of faculty, staff, students, and alumni who value the processes of critical inquiry and discovery in the laboratory, the classroom, and the community. Consistent with the mission of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, our students learn how to read and think analytically about theory and research in psychology and related disciplines, solve problems creatively, work with diverse partners, communicate effectively in speech and writing, and use technology wisely. Our faculty intertwine teaching and scholarship in order to prepare students for lifelong learning and to address significant social issues.

Strategic Plan

The teacher-scholar model is at the heart of the Psychology Department's Strategic Plan. Teacher-scholars in psychology engage students in the processes of critical inquiry and discovery, which link teaching and research in a dynamic, reciprocal process. Fundamentally, we believe that being a *teacher-scholar* means that teaching and mentoring students enriches our scholarship and professional practice, and that our professional activities make us engaging and expert teachers in turn. A key element of the teacher-scholar model in psychology is support for undergraduate research apprenticeships with faculty scholars. Accordingly, undergraduate research collaboration is highly valued in our department. In respect of disciplinary and methodological diversity of the psychology faculty, there are many different kinds of scholarship in which students may become involved. In addition to serving as research apprentices on empirical projects, students may also be involved in collaborations with faculty in which they apply psychological theory and research findings to real-world problems in real-world settings.

The psychology major at TCNJ provides an innovative and unique research experience for our undergraduates. The variety of faculty scholarship within the department rivals that of large research schools, with faculty currently sponsoring 16 research labs spanning six specializations within the field. This kind of diversity and number of research experiences is not typically found at small liberal arts colleges. Nevertheless, our students benefit from the close interaction with faculty that liberal arts colleges provide. Our undergraduates act as collaborators with faculty researchers at a level that is typically reserved for graduate students. To provide these experiences, the Department must carefully balance the size of our faculty and students. The Department needs enough majors to ensure an adequate participant pool and an adequate number of research assistants, whereas limiting the number of majors is necessary to ensure that students have adequate access to faculty.

Looking forward, our goals and objectives for the next five years center around three themes: student education, faculty development, and community engagement. Within these themes, it

is clear to us that our most pressing objectives concern the need to balance our student-faculty ratio with the addition of new faculty members who will bring our department size to 20 faculty members. Concurrently, we also seek the physical space and financial resources that would enable prospective new and current faculty to teach classes, conduct their research, and involve students in meaningful and impactful learning experiences. With this support, we expect that the department can continue to raise the profile of faculty and student learning and scholarship inside and outside of TCNJ.

Theme 1: Student Education. Our mission is to educate students to understand and practice psychology as a science. We also aim to ensure that graduating students have a common set of skills that are applicable to their future education and careers.

1. Because psychology is a diverse discipline, our goal is to offer a layered sequence of courses in each of six areas of specialization.
 - a. We will continue to have regular offerings of foundation-level and upper-level courses in each specialization.
 - b. In order to have full time faculty cover the full range of courses (core through upper-level), we would like to hire two additional tenure-track faculty members.
 - c. Qualified adjuncts will be used for select courses in which they have expertise in order to supplement the courses offered by full-time faculty.
 - d. Students will have access to advisors affiliated with each specialization to give them tailored advice for course and post-graduate planning.
 - e. We will explore how the course offerings in each specialization can help fulfill the community engaged learning initiatives of the College.
2. Our mission is to be able to offer the quality of education that will best serve our students.
 - a. We strive to maintain a student/faculty ratio no greater than 30/1. This ratio will ensure that students receive the attention and quality of teaching and mentoring that we hope to provide them.
 - b. To that end, we will work with the Dean to achieve of goal of returning to 20 full time faculty members, which would require the hiring of 2 additional tenure-track faculty.
 - c. Additionally, our goal is to have 550 to 600 majors. We will develop and implement a strategy to manage the size of the major both in terms of how students enter the major and how we monitor their progress throughout their course work.
 - d. We plan to continue the assessment practices that are currently in place to gauge the quality of education we are currently providing to our students. We also plan to examine areas in which assessment can be improved upon and/or expanded; for example developing an assessment of our graduating students' skills for critically reading empirical articles.
 - e. We plan to seek ways to encourage our students to study abroad and to identify study abroad locations that would be of most interest to psychology

majors. We will expand our study abroad programming into the PSY097 advising course.

3. Because psychology is an empirical science, we strive to provide interested students in all specializations with research and internship experiences at the 300 and 400 class levels that build on what students have learned in the required core courses (PSY101, PSY121, PSY203, and PSY299).
 - a. Faculty will continue to support students in completing internships in different areas of psychology through Field Study courses (PSY383) as well as internships completed with individual faculty sponsors (PSY399 and PSY499).
 - b. We will continue to regularly offer Lab Learning (PSY390) and Senior Lab Learning (PSY492) courses across all specializations.
 - c. Faculty will continue to support student research through individualized independent research courses.
 - d. We will continue to support the faculty's ability to offer the Lab Learning courses by allowing these courses to be included in the regular course load once per academic year and in overload in the other semester.
 - e. We will provide the resources faculty need to offer research courses by providing faculty with the necessary laboratory space and budgets.
 - f. We will seek sources of revenue to allow students the opportunity to attend and present research at regional, national, and international conferences.
 - g. We will create and enhance connections with other research institutions to allow students to be involved in research-based student exchange programs.
 - h. We will support summer research assistantships and training programs at other institutions for students.
4. We plan to maximize the competitiveness of our students for admission to quality graduate programs and post-graduate employment.
 - a. We hope to maximize the effectiveness of our advisement process through the 4 semester advising seminar (PSY096, PSY097, PSY098, and PSY099). These seminars take care of many advisement basics allowing more time for advisers to discuss future education and career goals.
 - b. We will work with students to assign advisors according to area of specialization to increase the effectiveness of advising.
 - c. We will develop faculty's ability to provide mentoring within and beyond their areas of specialization through Departmental Best Practices.
 - d. Through our required methodology sequence (PSY121, PSY203, and PSY299) all students will learn to generate, analyze, interpret, and present data.
 - e. The majority of our 300 and 400 level courses will provide the experience of working as part of a team to produce written and oral reports.
 - f. We will provide students with skills that can be applied to a variety of careers. These skills include, but are not limited to: The ability to generate, interpret and present data in a variety of formats; the ability to work as part of a team;

the ability to critically evaluate different points of view; the ability to write and speak effectively.

5. We promote and embrace diversity in our teaching, research, and service.
 - a. We will encourage faculty to include issues relating to diversity in their courses.
 - b. We will support students in seeking ELOPsy experiences that address issues of diversity.
 - c. We plan to maintain an atmosphere that welcomes a diverse faculty and student body.
 - d. We plan to create a mentoring process for psychology majors of diverse backgrounds, and we will work with the Dean to find the necessary resources to implement our mentoring plan.

Theme 2: Faculty Development. The Psychology Department is committed to developing its faculty at every level (from pre-tenure through promotion to professor) to achieve excellence as teacher-scholars. Goals for faculty development encompass efforts to support and facilitate the development of productive and rewarding research and teaching careers.

1. We will foster active involvement in scholarly and professional work by balancing department responsibilities to yield an equitable and manageable workload for all faculty.
 - a. Achieving a student/faculty ratio of 30/1 will help create opportunities for faculty to identify time to promote excellence in research, teaching, and mentoring.
 - b. We hope to maintain administrative support at its current level to continue to support faculty. This support is necessary to ensure faculty have time to focus on their scholarship and teaching while serving a major of 550-600 students.
 - c. Advising loads will be equitably distributed among faculty.
 - d. We will continue to support our advising program that educates students about the research opportunities with faculty as well as the requirements and available experiences of the major and specializations. These efforts serve to provide faculty with more time to devote to their scholarship and teaching and enhance outreach to students.
 - e. The chair will work with faculty to ensure that the course schedule for each faculty member in an academic year is reasonable and allows time for professional development.
2. We will support the research programs of our faculty and promote their efforts to disseminate scholarly work.
 - a. The department will work with the Dean to continue the practice of providing each faculty member with the option of having one semester per academic

- year in which a Lab Learning course (PSY390/492) is counted in load. This goal supports their ability to conduct research while giving students opportunities to be involved and develop research skills.
- b. We will work with the Dean to support annual budgets for lab needs because psychology is a research science with regular laboratory expenses.
 - c. Our goal is provide dedicated lab space available for each faculty member who conducts research that tests human or animal subjects.
 - d. We will pursue ways of funding travel for faculty to attend professional conferences where they can disseminate their own work and network with other professionals.
 - e. Regular “Brown Bag” faculty research presentations for student audiences will foster student interest in research and participation in faculty labs.
 - f. Regular speaker series for the broader TCNJ community will provide opportunities for our faculty to network with others and showcase their scholarship.
3. We will seek to maintain and grow our professional networks inside and outside of TCNJ to provide new opportunities for learning and development.
 - a. Outside speaker colloquium series will be organized each semester to bring experts to consult with our faculty.
 - b. Funds to support use of expert mentors outside of TCNJ will be sought to develop faculty expertise and professional networks. Because our faculty were selected to represent and teach a broad set of specialty areas in psychology, outside mentors are often needed because the department does not have multiple faculty doing related work.
 - c. Faculty will work towards developing scholarly conferences that cross specialty areas.
 4. We will support faculty efforts to engage in professional development activities that deepen their skills as teachers and mentors.
 - a. We will continue our practice of forming faculty mentoring dyads, which are a regular and integral part of development for junior faculty.
 - b. We will continue to provide internal support for development through regular classroom observations and collegial reviews of peer work when desired.
 - c. We will seek out mechanisms to support faculty development of new courses and learning experiences.
 - d. We will work to support faculty efforts to develop and/or attend workshops and other programming designed to help develop their professional skills.

Theme 3: Community Engagement. We recognize the importance of partnering with communities inside and outside of TCNJ, as well as nurturing our own

departmental community. Stronger connections will contribute to student learning and placement after graduation and will facilitate faculty research and teaching.

1. Our goal is to build partnerships between faculty members and local community organizations in order to engage faculty and students in research and practice that serves the needs of the local community.
 - a. We plan to establish new community engaged learning (CEL) courses.
 - b. We aim to develop shared initiatives with the Bonner Center.
 - c. We hope to acquire additional administrative support in order to establish and maintain community partnerships.
 - d. We will seek support (e.g., course releases, mini-grants, etc.) for faculty to develop community partnerships.
2. We plan to build connections with local employers in order to educate students about careers available to them as psychology majors and place them in jobs once they graduate.
 - a. We plan to hold employer fairs/panels about psychology job opportunities for students.
 - b. We will reach out to local employers that would hire psychology graduates for internships or jobs.
 - c. We aim to offer “Field trips” to local employers for students.
3. Our goal is to enhance the sense of community in the department so that students, adjuncts, and full-time faculty all feel like valued members of the department.
 - a. We will include student representatives in faculty meetings.
 - b. We will foster interaction between research labs through research presentations and social events.
 - c. We will include adjuncts in departmental meetings, introductory sessions, and social events.
 - d. We plan to expand our “Brown Bag” series.
4. We hope to increase connections with TCNJ psychology alumni so that graduates of our program remain connected with the department after graduation and are motivated to share their resources and expertise. This will also help us to assess the long-term impact of our program in students’ lives by tracking alumni accomplishments.
 - a. We will conduct an exit survey with graduating seniors.
 - b. We will improve and formalize procedures for collecting data on alumni outcomes.
 - c. We will hold an annual alumni event.
 - d. We will invite alumni to participate in job panels for current students.

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- e. We will try to increase participation in an alumni Facebook group.
- f. We will produce an alumni newsletter each semester.
- g. We plan to start campaigns for alumni giving.
- h. We will investigate the possibility of creating a Psychology Department chapter of the Alumni Association.