The College of New Jersey

Psychology Department

Strategic Plan 2018-2023

**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, we strive to provide experiences through which our students can become analytical, critical, and creative thinkers, conscientious and active global citizens, and lifelong learners and leaders. Through the entwined roles of teaching and scholarship, we strive to prepare our students to contribute to their communities and pursue their chosen careers.

**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.

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 further strengthen our robust program of *Experiential Learning Opportunities in Psychology* (ELOPsy), particularly with respect to mentored undergraduate research and internships. We need the time and resources that enable faculty to involve a wider and more diverse span of students in these meaningful and impactful learning opportunities that directly advance the TCNJ Signature Experiences. With this support, we expect that the department can continue to raise our 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.**

Our goals in this theme are to:

1. *Promote equality and inclusion in our department*. We will:
   1. Create and maintain a supportive environment for faculty, staff, and students of all backgrounds.
   2. Support and encourage faculty to constructively engage with issues relating to diversity, equality, and opportunity in their courses.
   3. Develop and strengthen courses that focus on diversity in psychology.
   4. Work to make involvement in ELOPsy experiences, such as internships and research labs, more accessible to students of all backgrounds.
   5. Support students in seeking campus-wide learning experiences that address issues of social justice.
2. *Refine and develop our curriculum*. We will:
   1. Evaluate our specialization structure to ensure that it is meeting the needs of students and facilitating our curriculum.
   2. Review our course catalog to update new or obsolete courses, and to identify new course needs.
   3. Explore ways to improve the delivery and experience of our core methodological courses, which are among our most challenging preparations.
   4. Build on our assessment data to refine our series of advising courses (i.e., PSY96-99).
   5. Evaluate and build on intersections with other departments and academic units.
   6. Explore the potential for a B.S. degree option.
3. *Enhance our quality teaching, advising, and mentorship of students in the face of growing institutional enrollment goals*. We will:
   1. Maintain a student/faculty ratio no greater than 28/1 through a major size of approximately 560 students served by 20 full-time faculty members. This ratio will ensure that students receive the attention and quality of teaching and mentoring that we hope to provide them without severely departing from institutional norms.
   2. Work with the Dean as needed to hire new tenure-track faculty in response to any retirements or losses among the existing faculty.
   3. Review, expand, and better support our pool of qualified adjuncts for select courses in which they have expertise to supplement the courses offered by full-time faculty.
   4. Work closely with the Enrollment Management Division to manage how students enter the major and how we will monitor their progress throughout their course work.
   5. Strengthen our advising practices to ensure that students receive the guidance that they need.
   6. Identify new curricular assessment opportunities to continually gauge the quality of education we are providing to our students.
4. *Strengthen our program of Experiential Learning Opportunities in Psychology (ELOPsy), including mentored undergraduate research, internships, and study abroad*. We will:
   1. Explore new ways to promote the importance of ELOPsy to Psychology majors and identify potential barriers that dissuade students from pursuing these opportunities.
   2. Support the faculty’s ability to offer Collaborative Research (PSY390/492), our primary experiential research course, by pursuing the opportunity to keep these course offerings within our teaching load.
   3. Collaborate with the Dean and the Office of the Provost to secure the material and fiscal resources needed to offer meaningful research opportunities to students.
   4. Support more students in gaining work experience in different areas of psychology through Field Study (PSY383) and internships completed with individual faculty sponsors (PSY399 and PSY499).
   5. Collaborate with the Office of Global Engagement to update our recommended study abroad locations that would be of most interest to Psychology majors, and explore more ways to promote study abroad to freshmen and sophomores.
   6. Explore connections with other research institutions to allow students to be involved in research-based student exchange programs (e.g., summer research fellowships).

**Theme 2: Faculty Development. The Psychology Department is committed to developing its faculty throughout their career 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.**

Our goals in this theme are to:

1. *Support faculty efforts to engage in professional development activities that deepen their skills as teachers, scholars, and mentors*. We will:
   1. Support the personnel actions of qualified faculty, including applications for tenure, promotion, and range adjustments.
   2. Expand our practice of forming faculty mentoring dyads, which are a regular and integral part of development for faculty.
   3. Improve internal support for development through opportunities for regular classroom observations and collegial reviews of peer work, when desired.
   4. Develop faculty’s ability to provide mentoring within and beyond their areas of specialization through regular Departmental Best Practices discussions.
   5. Support faculty efforts to participate in workshops and other programming designed to help develop their professional skills.
2. *Support the research programs of our faculty and promote their efforts to disseminate scholarly work in the face of changing practices in Psychology, which include expectations for more rigorous designs and different publishing models*. We will:
   1. Explore means to secure an increase to our annual budget for lab needs given our addition of new research-active faculty.
   2. Maintain and improve dedicated lab space and equipment for each research-active faculty member as needed.
   3. Work with the Dean and the Office of the Provost to create a longer-term budget of impending research resource needs (e.g., expected degradation of lab equipment that may need replacement).
   4. Pursue ways of funding travel for faculty to attend professional conferences where they can disseminate their own work and network with other professionals.
   5. Expand our series of regular “Brown Bag” faculty research presentations for student and faculty audiences to foster interest in research and participation in faculty labs.

**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, develop mutually-beneficial campus-community partnerships, and facilitate faculty research and teaching.** Our goals in this theme are to:

1. *Build stronger relationships within TCNJ*. We will:
   1. Work to better publicize our events to other departments, and to publicize the events of other departments to our own students.
   2. Develop and welcome more jointly-sponsored event programming on campus.
   3. Collaborate with other majors inside and outside of HSS to develop streamlined minors and double major options, and encourage our students to pursue them.
   4. Look for opportunities for teaching and scholarly collaborations with faculty from other TCNJ departments.
   5. Pursue opportunities to support College-level programs through our curriculum (e.g., offering FSP, CEL, and Honors courses).
2. *Publicize our accomplishments to a wider extent inside and outside of TCNJ*. We will:
   1. Celebrate achievements more openly within the department.
   2. Work with the Office of Communications, Marketing, and Brand Management to share our significant accomplishments with the TCNJ community.
   3. Leverage social media to share our accomplishments with students, alumni, and external community members.
3. *Expand our efforts to build relationships with local employers and educate students about careers*. We will:
   1. Hold more event programming for students who are not planning to attend graduate school to share information about job opportunities.
   2. Identify more organizations that offer regular internship opportunities to further develop our internship spreadsheet for students.
   3. Better disseminate information about job or internship opportunities that we receive from organizations in the community.
4. *Enhance the sense of community in the department so that students, adjuncts, and full-time faculty all feel like valued members of the department*. We will:
   1. Draw on students’ perspectives through a Student Advisory Board and student representation in faculty meetings.
   2. Foster interaction between research labs through research presentations and social events.
   3. Give adjunct faculty the opportunity to participate in relevant committee meetings, introductory sessions, and social events.
   4. Expand our “Brown Bag” series of talks and encourage student participation.
5. *Continue our efforts to increase connections with TCNJ psychology alumni*. We will:
   1. Work with Alumni Affairs to strengthen our exit survey.
   2. Hold an annual alumni event.
   3. Invite alumni to participate in job panels and other programming directed toward current students.
   4. Increase participation in our alumni Facebook group.
   5. Interview and highlight alumni accomplishments in a newsletter each semester.
   6. Work with the Division of College Advancement to discuss the possibility of a psychology-related giving campaign.