The first in a two-part PTN series, this essay addresses the practical reasons why educators should focus on the acquisition of skills by undergraduate psychology students and majors. In Part 2, I will address how well those educational goals are being achieved, from a disciplinary-based assessment perspective and from the perceptions of employers and society.

For some time there has been this tug-of-war in higher education about the goals of a college degree. These goals, particularly the goals of a liberal education, are often inspirational and aspirational. There is perhaps no more eloquent expression of these ideas than by Cardinal John Henry Newman in 1852—see the sidebar (on page 3) for what he said long ago about the aims of a university education. However, some counter these lofty goals with a practical perspective, that is, an educated citizenry armed with critical thinking skills may be able to effect change more efficiently when critical thinking skills are employed. Thus, higher education has (at least) two goals—to inspire the ideals of a liberal education as well as provide practical skills for meaningful employment. Although some may view this as the “education” vs. “training” dichotomy, it appears much more complicated. Graduation with a liberal education in psychology without the requisite skills to be meaningfully employed

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The Aims of a University Education (Newman, 1852)

If then a practical end must be assigned to a University course, I say it is that of training good members of society. Its art is the art of social life, and its end is fitness for the world. It neither confines its views to particular professions on one hand, nor creates heroes or inspires genius on the other. Works indeed of genius fall under no art; heroic minds come under no rule; a University is not a birthplace of poets or of immortal authors, of founders of schools, leaders of colonies, or conquerors of nations. It does not promise a generation of Aristotles or Newtons, of Napoleons or Washingtons, of Raphaels or Shakespeares, though such miracles it has before now contained within its precincts. Nor is it content on the other hand with forming the critic or the experimentalist, the economist or the engineer, although such too it includes within its scope. But a university training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life. It is the education which gives a man a clear, conscious view of their own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them.

Table 1

Necessary Skills for Workplace Know-How

**WORKPLACE COMPETENCIES**

Effective workers can productively use:

- **Resources**—they know how to allocate time, money, materials, space, and staff.
- **Interpersonal skills**—they can work in teams, teach others, serve customers, lead, negotiate, and work well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- **Information**—they can acquire and evaluate data, organize and maintain files, interpret and communicate, and use computers to process information.
- **Systems**—they understand social, organizational, and technological systems; they can monitor and correct performance; and they can design or improve systems.
- **Technology**—they can select equipment and tools, apply technology to specific tasks, and maintain and troubleshoot equipment.

**FOUNDATION SKILLS**

Competent workers in the high-performance workplace need:

- **Basic skills**—reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking, and listening.
- **Thinking skills**—the ability to learn, reason, think creatively, make decisions, and solve problems.
- **Personal qualities**—individual responsibility, self-esteem and self-management, sociability, and integrity.

Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), and a SCANS report was published concerning workplace know-how. Authors of the report divided the qualities needed for adequate job performance into two categories: competencies and the foundation. These items are depicted in Table 1.

There are certainly other methods by which to organize and characterize the skills needed for successful employment. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2004) suggested that the five key outcomes for a liberal education include (a) strong skills (analytical, communication, quantitative, information); (b) deep understanding and applied experiences within disciplines that study nature, society, and culture; (c) collaboration skills and intercultural knowledge; (d) civic responsibility with a proactive approach; and (e) habits of mind that promote integrative thinking and the ability to apply/transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another.

continued from page 1

seems to highlight a lost opportunity for personal growth as well as professional development. Graduation with a specialized skill set that makes one immediately employable but lacks higher order skills such as critical thinking, sociocultural awareness, and an appreciation of values and ethics seems to lock someone into an entry-level job rather than enable a career or a calling. Educators need to encourage students to acquire both knowledge and skills from their liberal education in psychology; as a discipline, we have no problem emphasizing the knowledge that we believe psychology majors should possess, that is, the knowledge we see as core to a liberal education. It is now time to bring the acquisition of skills into the spotlight as an additional aspirational goal. This journey is not entirely new, but strong GPS navigation is needed to get where we need to be.

The study of workforce skills has been ongoing for some time. In 1991 the U.S. Department of Labor formulated the Secretary’s Commission on
TABLE 2

APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major

Goals 1-5 are thought to be psychology specific, that is, consistent with both the science and the application of psychology.

1. Knowledge base of psychology. Students will demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.

2. Research methods in psychology. Students will understand and apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation.

3. Critical thinking skills in psychology. Students will respect and use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and, when possible, the scientific approach to solve problems related to behavior and mental processes.

4. Application of psychology. Students will understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues.

5. Values in psychology. Students will be able to weigh evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and reflect other values that are the underpinnings of psychology as a discipline.

Goals 6-10 are thought to be broader, liberal arts education goals, to which psychology education can contribute.

6. Information and technological literacy. Students will demonstrate information competence and the ability to use computers and other technology for many purposes.

7. Communication skills. Students will be able to communicate effectively in a variety of formats.

8. Sociocultural and international awareness. Students will recognize, understand, and respect the complexity of sociocultural and international diversity.

9. Personal development. Students will develop insight into their own and others’ behavior and mental processes and apply effective strategies for self-management and self-improvement.

10. Career planning and development. Students will emerge from the major with realistic ideas about how to implement their psychological knowledge, skills, and values in occupational pursuits in a variety of settings.

Broad, general works such as provided by the SCANS report and the AAC&U are helpful in thinking about the college graduate, but what about the specific expectations from a psychology graduate? Fortunately, efforts to identify what psychology majors should be able to know and do have been discussed for decades (Beins, 2003; Boneau, 1990; Green, 2005; Halpern, 1988; McGovern, Furumoto, Halpern, Kimble, & McKachie, 1991). For example, McGovern et al. suggested common goals for psychology majors, such as knowledge base, thinking skills, language skills, information gathering and synthesis skills, research methods and statistics skills, and interpersonal skills, as well as ethics and values and the history of psychology. The momentum of this accumulation of work about what psychology majors should know and be able to do led to the formation of the Task Force on Psychology Major Competencies in 2000 by APA’s Board of Educational Affairs. The work of this task force ultimately resulted in the APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major (APA, 2007), hereafter the Guidelines. Brief descriptions of the 10 guidelines are presented in Table 2.

Even in draft form, departments began to design an assessment model for the Guidelines that leveraged work under way (e.g., Firment, Devine, & Whittlesey, 2004). Later work specifically employed the Guidelines into both the development of departmental goals (Peden & VanVoorhis, 2009; Tuskenis, Johnson, Howell, & Jaroszewski, 2009) and an organizational rubric for the evaluation of those goals. Two efforts particularly relevant to this latter point are the emergence of the APA Board of Educational Affairs Task Force document Teaching, Learning, & Assessing in a Developmentally Coherent Curriculum document provides specific advice on how to achieve the Guidelines goals across the curriculum as a student progresses through the undergraduate major, and the quality benchmarks provide rubrics for departments in their evaluation of the extent to which goals are achieved, using an evaluative continuum of underdeveloped, developing, effective, and distinguished levels of accomplishment.

In general, we tend to focus more on our students’ knowledge acquisition than on skill acquisition. This could be due to the classic “education vs. training” debate and that educators who focus on skill development may be seen as abandoning the ideals of a liberal education. Perhaps we are more comfortable and possess more expertise in assessing knowledge acquisition
comparing to assessing skill acquisition (more on this in Part 2 of the series). However, close examination of the Guidelines presented in Table 2 yields a pronounced emphasis on skills, perhaps articulated more clearly than ever before in our discipline. Seriously embracing the Guidelines could (and perhaps should) lead to a sea change in how we teach the undergraduate curriculum and how we assess student performance. The importance of the acquisition of skills is a sentiment (or perhaps sediment) that has been brewing for some time. “Put simply, the objective of liberal education is to produce thinkers, not workers; the education is taught but of how it is taught. The question is not so much a question of what is taught but of how it is taught. The question is not so much about subjects, but about processes” (Chen, 2004, p. 3 [italics in original]). The importance of the acquisition of skills may be on par with the acquisition of knowledge. Eugene Zechmeister, the director of the Undergraduate Program at Loyola University (IL) at the time, said “I know this will sound sacrilegious, but skills are actually more important than course content” (Clay, 1998, p. 2). We do say this out loud occasionally, but perhaps now, with the emergence of the Guidelines, serious dialog can begin about the value of knowledge and skills in an undergraduate psychology education. PTN

REFERENCES


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R. Eric Landrum, PhD, is a psychology professor at Boise State University. Dr. Landrum has a doctorate in cognitive psychology, with an emphasis in quantitative methodology. His research focuses on educational issues, and particularly, the factors that are associated with college student success.
A s a collaborative learning experience, cooperative learning occurs when groups of students work together to enhance their own and each other’s learning (D. W. Johnson, R. T. Johnson, & Smith, 1992). As such, cooperative learning holds common ground with the APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major (APA, 2007) as a skill applied to liberal education that is further developed in undergraduate psychology curricula. In my own undergraduate psychology teaching, I rely on cooperative learning as a means of encouraging active student participation in both course content and group processes. Consequently, my role as instructor shifts from dispensing knowledge to facilitating learning (Millis, 2002).

Review of the extensive literature available on cooperative learning shows that it fosters higher-level thinking, generation of new perspectives, group-to-individual transfer of learning, and social competence (see D. W. Johnson & R. T. Johnson, 1989). My own classroom research and practice using small-group peer review of writing assignments, large-group classroom poster presentations, and whole-class scored discussion support the favorable outcomes of cooperative learning (Mayo, 2010). However, simply placing students in groups to complete assigned work does not necessarily promise success. Rather, vital to the success of cooperative learning is considering group performance as a whole, along with holding individual students in the group accountable for their own work (Palmer, Peters, & Streetman, 2003). Although an interdependent balance between group task-effectiveness and participatory individual learning is not always simple to achieve, a systematic approach to using cooperative learning will allow educators to promote individual accountability within an overall context of group accountability. Refer to the following guidelines (D. W. Johnson, 1991, 1993; D. W. Johnson, R. T. Johnson, & Holubec, 1998; R. T. Johnson & D. W. Johnson, 1994; Mayo, 2010) as a road map to successfully blending individual with group in the process of cooperative learning.

1. **Exercise caution in group assignment.** Avoid allowing students who know each other well to work together in groups. For example, when friends are permitted to work cooperatively in a group environment, several undesirable outcomes are possible. First, as a “team of two” they may isolate themselves from the ebb and flow of entire group processing. Second, they may engage in irrelevant “sidebar discussion” in the face of assigned in-class group work. Third, they may demonstrate unwarranted personal bias when asked to evaluate each other’s contribution to the group.

2. **Emphasize the dual responsibility involved in supportive interdependence.** In cooperative learning, the goal is to ensure that each student in the group learns assigned material, while at the same time allowing opportunities for each person to assist every other group member in the learning process. Where possible, design group work that holds the potential to draw from a wide range of skill sets so that each student can make a relatively unique contribution to the group. Moreover, communicate to the group that each member possesses the dual responsibility not only to learn, but also to assist other group participants in their learning.

3. **Focus on both task work and team work.** Cooperative learning requires that students concurrently learn academic content (task work) and function effectively as a group (team work). Nonetheless, you cannot assume that all students are automatically prepared for task and team work. Some may enter

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the learning situation improperly equipped with the academic skills (e.g., critical thinking and organizational skills) and social skills (communication and conflict-resolution skills) needed to succeed. Ascertain which skills are most germane to the groups’ success, and then spend appropriate time—as your own teaching agenda permits—to instruct students in these areas.

4. Define functional roles. At the beginning of the cooperative learning task, allow the group to assign functional roles to its members. Although these roles should be well defined, they should remain flexible in being rotated intermittently among the group’s membership. This kind of flexibility helps to broaden the nature and level of contributions of each person to the group. Important roles include recorder, facilitator, time monitor, and periodic “spot checker.” In this last role, students are asked to explain to one another what has been accomplished within the group, which has been shown to increase comprehension while encouraging individual accountability (Hamm & Adams, 1992).

5. Allow for group reflection. At the end of each in-class cooperative group experience, provide sufficient time for group members to reflect on positive and negative aspects of their work together. Plus, encourage students to do the same in cooperative group sessions that occur outside of class. The goal of this type of reflective processing should be to search for general agreement among the performance feedback offered, with an eye toward improving future cooperative learning activities. Where applicable, it is also helpful for instructors to offer feedback to the group on how effectively its members are working together.

6. Design a rubric that assesses both individual and group performance. Consistent with the approach to performance assessment inherent in Bloom’s revised taxonomy of educational objectives (Krathwohl, 2002)—and the one adopted in the APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major (APA, 2007) and the more recent APA follow-up report, Teaching, Learning, and Assessing in a Developmentally Coherent Curriculum (APA, 2008)—construct a grading rubric that clearly articulates student learning outcomes in behaviorally stated terms (i.e., “action verbs”). Moreover, share this rubric with students in advance of assigned work. When used this way, rubrics can prioritize outcome expectations in addition to offering formative feedback to students about the strengths and weaknesses of their work (Allen, 2004). In balancing individual and group responsibility, integrate a component within the rubric that allows students in each group to anonymously rate one another in terms of individual contributions to the group (e.g., individual effort, cooperation, leadership, and dedication to team work), with an average within-group rating used in scoring each student’s performance.

As one of the most thoroughly researched teaching strategies (R. T. Johnson & D. W. Johnson, 1994), cooperative learning integrates academic and social benefits. In deriving the most from cooperative learning experiences, however, it is important to strike a comfortable balance between individual and group accountability throughout the learning process.
Recent years have seen an explosion in national high school science fairs targeted at specific types of projects, sadly none of them in psychology. While some of our nation’s oldest and most prestigious science fairs, like the International Science and Engineering Fair sponsored by Intel, include psychology, it is as part of a larger Behavioral and Social Science category. As a result, students present to judges whose expertise may lie in fields other than psychology, and judges have to compare projects in fields from economics and anthropology with those in subfields of psychology as disparate as neuroscience and social psychology.

Lamenting this state of affairs, I suggested starting an interscholastic psychology fair to a few of my local colleagues. In 2009, the Long Island High School Psychology Fair was born. Unlike most traditional science fairs, we have adopted a symposium format in which entrants are divided into rooms and each presenter or team of presenters gives a PowerPoint presentation to an audience composed of the other competitors in that room, their guests, their teachers, and a panel of judges. This way, in addition to getting a chance to present their own research, students get to hear about the research of their peers.

In our fair, we not only limit entrants to projects that focus on psychology, we also make every effort to place students into rooms based on the subfields of psychology. For instance, 2011 saw an Educational Psychology room, a Social Psychology room, a Bio and Clinical Psychology room, a Cognitive Psychology room, and an Interdisciplinary room for projects that did not fit well into the other areas.

Our fair has been well received, and the number of applicants has grown every year. In the first year, we had about 40 applicants, and this last year, our third, saw that number increase to over 70.

FIRST STEPS

After we determined some basic details such as place, time, and cost, we put together a website to which we could direct interested parties. The site, created by Michelle Sorise of Great Neck South High School, can be seen at: www.longislandpsychologyfair.com. We currently charge a fee of $35/student, which covers the cost of our supplies; our website; food for judges, students, and guests; and awards.

To find people who might be interested in participating the first year, my school principal sent out an e-mail to all of his peers on Long Island with a link to our website and a flyer announcing the fair. I also sent several e-mail announcements out in the weeks leading up to the application deadline to all of the teachers I knew who were involved with students doing research.

Because we had no idea how many students might apply, we set up an application process. We tried to keep this step as simple as possible so as not to deter anyone from entering. In our first year, we asked students to submit an abstract of about 250 words; since then, based on feedback from our judges, we have asked students to submit a one-page project description (400 words maximum) divided into the following sections: background, method, results, discussion. An example of a highly rated project description can be seen on page 10.

These descriptions are then blind reviewed by three readers. I recruited a pool of readers to look at groups of about 20 project descriptions so that none would be overwhelmed. Over the course of a week, they rated each description from 1 to 10. The scores are then averaged, and the top students invited to present at the fair.

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The limiting factor on how many projects we invite is how many qualified judges we can provide. We have three judges in a room, and each judge fills a different niche. The hardest judges to find are college professors. Early on, a parent of one of my students put me in touch with a wonderful group of professors at a local community college, and they have formed the backbone of our judging staff. We deliberately schedule the fair during early January to utilize another source of judges: our former students who have gone on to conduct research at the university level. These students are typically home on vacation and make excellent judges, as the experience of conducting research in high school is fresh in their minds. In addition, many like the opportunity to return to high school and experience a science fair from a new perspective. The third group of people we tap to judge in the fair are psychology teachers. The students participating in the fair are accompanied by their teachers. We select teachers with extensive research experience and assign them to judge in categories other than the ones in which their own students are competing.

We are always looking for more help. If you would like to review project descriptions via e-mail (October) or live on or around Long Island and

continued on page 10
would be interested in judging (January), please contact us at lipsychfair@aol.com.

**BENEFITS OF RESEARCH**
Of course, there’s no reason to run a psychology fair like this unless you have students conducting psychological research. I therefore feel the need to put in a quick plug for this type of experience. Psychology is a scientific discipline that demands an understanding of research design and statistics. Conducting research is the best way to make ideas like confounding variables and statistical significance come alive, and it is my experience that students find running their own studies to be engaging and worthwhile. I have had students run simple studies as part of both one-semester and full-year psychology courses and as independent study experiences, and the opportunity to present their research makes the process even more meaningful. Learning how to present their work orally and via a PowerPoint presentation is also a valuable skill. Many excellent students struggle to present their work clearly, and providing a forum for them to do so motivates them to give it a try.

Finally, gathering so many students interested in psychology in one place at one time presents many potential avenues for expansion, such as coupling it with a Psych Bowl event or inviting local researchers in to present their work.

While the work of putting on the fair can sometimes seem daunting—and this year was particularly stressful because we had to reschedule it due to snow, the fair has been a wonderful experience for students. Research is the core of psychology, and there is no better way to teach students about psychology than to have them perform and present their own research. We would love to be in touch with other teachers around the country who run similar events, and we hope that one day high school psychology researchers will have a national forum in which to showcase their work.

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**SAMPLE PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**FACTORS RELATING TO ADOLESCENT DIGITAL MUSIC PIRACY**

**Background**
In our current society, music piracy has developed into a major legal and economic issue, especially among adolescents. Past research has shown that adolescents tend to follow the actions of their peers (Martino, Ellickson, & McCaffrey, 2009) and parents (Gupta & Derevensky, 2007) and acknowledge their parents’ requests (Oliver, Guerin, & Coffman, 2009). Additionally, previous literature has indicated males would be more likely than females to pirate music (Malin & Fowers, 2009). As no research to date has applied all of these principles to music piracy while focusing on high school students, this study investigated how adolescent involvement with digital music piracy relates to their perceptions of their peers’ and parents’ attitudes and behaviors.

**Method**
Eighty participants from randomly selected high school senior social studies classes were given surveys about their perceptions of their parents’ attitudes toward digital music piracy. Participants also reported how often they pirated digital music and their perceptions of how often their peers and parents pirated digital music. In addition, a 4-item scale about participants’ attitudes toward digital music piracy was used to minimize the possibility of the good participant effect, which could result from participants inferring the purpose of the study based on the items within the survey.

**Results**
It was found that adolescents’ tendencies to pirate music had a marginally significant relationship to their peers’ tendencies to pirate music (p=.077). Similarly, parents’ tendencies to pirate music had a significant positive correlation with adolescents’ piracy (p=.017), yet parents’ attitudes toward (level of disapproval of) their children’s piracy had a significant negative correlation with adolescents’ piracy (p<.001). Additionally, there was no significant difference between males and females’ tendencies to pirate music.

**Discussion**
This study’s findings deviate from those of past studies, showing that males and females did not have a significant difference in their tendencies to pirate music. In addition, this study suggests that less involvement with peers who commonly pirate music, awareness that their parents rarely or never pirate music, and strong parental disapproval of piracy might help to dissuade adolescents from pirating music.
Historically, the integration of technology into curricula had been widely considered as technological in scope and was commonly structured as such in academic organizations, falling under the auspices of information technology departments. As adoption and usage of instructional technologies increased, a more concrete understanding developed, and the classification began to shift from technological to one of a more academic foundation. The successful marriage of education and technology has a solid pedagogical base and requires curriculum development and design, creation of learning objects and instructional materials, facilitation of instructor/student interactivity, and evaluation and assessment.

Education technology is still considered by some to be a specialized facet of the teaching and learning exchange; however, this perspective is waning. Foundational theories such as constructivism and collaborative learning solidly support the integration of technology into curricula. Moreover, the American education system has been the “beneficiary” of much legislation and regulation in terms of technological innovation and integration. The expense of compliance takes many forms—monetary and resistance to change, as examples. However, there are no greater costs than those that will be realized if education fails to embrace technology.

Perhaps the greatest motivators are the students of today.

Students of all ages—including the critical populations of 12-17 and 18-29-year-olds—are entering elementary and secondary schools and college with extensive technological skills and a dependence on connectivity to the Internet. According to research from the Pew Internet and American Life Project (see Chart 1), 93% of the age groups 12–17 and 18–29 (also known as Millennials) are Internet users. The same chart indicates that 81% of the 30-49 age group and 70% of the 50–64 age group are using the Internet. Further research by The Pew Internet and American Life Project indicates that 82% of 14–17-year-olds and 75% of 18–29-year-olds have a social networking site, as compared to 50% of 30–45-year-olds and 30% of 46–60-year-olds (see Chart 2).

In an ideal “education” world there would not be such a significant digital gap between what can be perceived as age groups of students and teachers. According to Marc Prensky, an authority on education and learning, the students of today are known as digital natives. When students state that they have to “power down” when they come to school, we have a problem. “Our students have changed radically. Today’s students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach.” (Prensky, 2001)

The more we as educators and members of the community can live in “their world” with our academic message, the better the chance of getting their attention.

Three challenges immediately present when the topic of education technology arises:

• Cost
• Resistance
• Lack of training opportunities

This is not by any means an exhaustive list but, more often than not, these elements appear on almost every list of challenges—“cost” is usually at the top. It is widely understood that times of economic contraction are accompanied by reduced—often eliminated—funding for necessary upgrades of existing technology and installation of new; however, the need for the integration of technology into education is greater than ever before.

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The above statistics certainly influence any debate there may be surrounding the issues of cost, adoption, and training. Lack of funds, teachers’ reluctance to adopt technology, and low motivation to attend training are not valid reasons to avoid integrating technology into the curriculum. In fact, one would be defied to find any validity in a strategic plan which avoided technological investment. Moreover, compliance with standards of accreditation agencies requires schools to face and address the challenges presented by technological investment.

Consider the following statement:

“In the 21st century, schools can’t be throw-backs to the state of education fifty, twenty, or even ten years ago. The instructional content they provide, the learning experiences they offer, the teaching methods they employ, and the assessments they use, must all keep pace with this century. In the 21st century, students must be fully engaged. This requires the use of technology tools and resources, involvement with interesting and relevant projects, and learning environments—including online environments—that are supportive and safe. In the 21st century, educators must be given and be prepared to use technology tools; they must be collaborators in learning—constantly seeking knowledge and acquiring new skills along with their students.”

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan made this statement as part of his March 2010 speech at the Association of American Publishers Annual Meeting. It is his office, the U.S. Department of Education, which has been charged with developing the 2010 National Education Technology Plan. The 2010 National Education Technology Plan accompanied the $100 billion allocated to education through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

First steps and things to consider

Often, teachers are not resistant to working with technology due to skepticism of its validity or importance, but for much more basic reasons, such as not knowing how to use a technology or, simply, not knowing where to start. What follows are suggestions to help you choose a technology and get started.

- **Determine why you want to use a particular technology.** Review your course or class objectives—don’t use the technology “because it’s there” or because it is the “hot new thing.” Technology should not be a focus, but an enhancement to the learning process.

- **Know that training and support are key.** Take advantage of every opportunity to learn, practice what you learn, and use resources such as users’ forums. Do not

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**CHART 1**

**WHO’S ONLINE? THE INTERNET BY AGE GROUPS**

[Chart showing internet usage by age group: 12-17: 93%, 18-29: 93%, 30-49: 81%, 50-64: 70%, 65+: 38%]


**CHART 2**

**DO YOU HAVE A PROFILE ON A SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% SAYING “YES”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial (18-29)</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen X (30-45)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomer (46-64)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent (65+)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

introduce a technology to your classroom without knowing how to use it and where to find assistance. Remember, you are the first line of support for your students. Proficiency includes staying apprised of changes in the technologies you are using, especially given the expediency and dynamic of technology innovation.

**Do not let cost be a barrier.** While large/any purchases may not be feasible, free web-based educational resources are limitless. Users’ forums are especially useful for free resources, as product support for those tends to be minimal.

**Be aware of availability of equipment.** Unfortunately, access to equipment is still an issue nearly 50 years after computers entered the classroom. However, the issue manifests differently. Suffice it to say, when assigning homework or at-home projects, etc., that require the use of technology, be aware that some students may not have sufficient equipment/software at their homes.

**Assess the outcomes.** Not everything you try will be successful, but the successes you have will be strong and compelling and should be measured, documented, and shared.

There are no economies of scale to be faced when experimenting with technology in your classroom; you do not have to be the most proficient or use the most sophisticated technology available, especially at first. Keep it simple and use what you find to be interesting; this will help to ensure a short experiential curve and early assessment of what is working and what is not.

**REFERENCES**


One essential task in Introductory Psychology courses is to help students understand the importance of evidence-based decision making in psychology. Students usually come to the course with an interest in understanding people or in clinical practice, but often with little understanding in the scientific core of our field. The emphasis that psychologists place on the quality of data can be seen in both the basic and applied areas of our field, from the rigor of experimental methodologies in research to the emphasis on evidence-based practice for clinicians. One important part of teaching this aspect of psychology is certainly basic lecture on research methodology, but an even more important part is getting students to generalize this emphasis on evaluating evidence to other areas. It is rarely the case that we can use direct experimental methods to address the everyday decisions that we must make. We have to rely on information provided by others. In fact, the use of information provided by experts is a recognized part of both science and education. The task for us and for our students then is to make good decisions about what to believe, and often this decision about “what” is based on determining the credibility of the source of the information.

The current generation of students has grown up with easy access to the Internet and familiarity with Google and other search providers. This ability to access information all the time with little effort is a positive development. Unfortunately, this ease of access also means that there is no reference librarian or other gatekeeper to ensure the validity of the information. We are swimming in a sea of data, some valuable and some not. If we are to make good decisions, we must all become experts in evaluating information sources. Learning to evaluate information is thus an important tool for achievement in class, but it is also an invaluable life skill. Getting students to appreciate the importance of this evaluation process can be a challenge. They are often uncritical in their use of what they find from sources as varied as friends, cable television shows, Facebook posts, and YouTube videos. A practical demonstration of the fallibility of the available information can be a useful tool in convincing students that critical analysis of information is important in life as well in the science of psychology. Following, I describe an exercise that I have found helpful. The exercise uses urban legends to engage students in the process of critical evaluation.

Urban legends are stories that are told about improbable events that are purported to have actually happened, perhaps to a friend of a friend of a friend. The person telling the story usually believes that the story is in fact true. Examples of traditional urban legends include the small stray dog brought home as a pet from a vacation to Mexico that turns out to be a large variety of exotic rat, the hitchhiker who vanishes from the car and later turns out to be someone who has been dead for several years, and the shopper charged $250 for a famous chocolate chip cookie recipe. Traditional urban legends can be selected from several sources, such as the compilations of stories found in Craughwell (2005), Hunter (2005), or Brunvand (2001). A large body of more recent folklore has also emerged from the Internet. These newer “legends” come in a variety of forms, such as e-mail chain letters, false warnings about computer viruses, and rumors about dangerous products. Online collections of some of these newer “legends” can be found at Snopes.com and Truthorfiction.com.

I begin my preparation for the assignment by selecting an appropriate number of legends for the class.
I have found that having students work in groups of two or three seems to work well for this project. Each group of students is given a legend and asked to determine if the legend is accurate. In the first part of the activity, students are instructed to choose their own sources and to make independent decisions about the validity of the statements. They are given until the next class meeting to collect the information. Each group then presents an explanation of what they have found to the class. They state the decision they have come to regarding the truth of the legend and describe the sources they used to reach this decision. At the end of the presentations we have a general class discussion on critical analysis and the validity of information. Several university libraries have developed good online resources about validating sources. For example Randolph-Macon has a web document with general information on determining if a source is popular or scholarly (http://library.rmc.edu/faq/popular.html). The University of Oregon libraries (http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/findarticles/credibility.html) also have an excellent web document with a guide to evaluating information. It includes guidelines to help students determine the objectivity and credentials of an author and the quality of the information presented in the source. After a brief discussion of the techniques that can be used to insure the reliability of information, the groups reevaluate their previous decisions based on a reasoned evaluation of the available sources. In the second part of the exercise, the students write a short report. The report describes the initial decision, the sources they have decided to reject, the sources they have decided to retain, an explanation of the decision process they used in evaluating the sources, and a summary of what they have learned. This report is then turned in at the next class period.

Once students have completed this initial project, the class can move on to a more in-depth investigation of a more serious issue. For example, the autism vaccine controversy is currently in the news, is generally of interest to students, and has generated information from a wide variety of sources. Discussion of these more serious issues can serve as a gateway to discussions of research methodology, replication, and peer review. I have found that these hands-on exercises have been very effective in getting students engaged and in encouraging them to critically evaluate evidence both in and out of the classroom.

RESOURCES

WEB RESOURCES FOR URBAN LEGENDS
http://www.snopes.com
http://www.Truthorfiction.com
http://www.americanfolklore.net/

WEB RESOURCES FOR EVALUATING SOURCES
http://library.rmc.edu/faq/popular.html
http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/findarticles/credibility.html

SOURCES FOR URBAN LEGENDS AND PSYCHOLOGY RELATED MYTHS

Today, teachers of psychology are facing many of the same challenges as all postsecondary educators when it comes to encouraging student engagement in the classroom. Much has been written about teaching approaches that will actively involve students in their learning process during class lectures, as well as the importance of presenting a lecture that is compelling enough to hold students’ attention. But there are other challenges that we face that often seem out of our control, such as students arriving late or unprepared for class and students becoming distracted during class by their electronic gadgets, regardless of how hard we may work to present interactive and engaging lectures.

To get students to arrive to class on time, with the assigned reading completed, I begin each class with a quiz. To encourage students to remain attentive during class, I offer the option of re-taking that same quiz at the end of class. The way the quiz grading works is that I offer a possible 15 points for each quiz question. Typically, I pose just four or five questions, focusing on key concepts from the reading. When a student answers a question correctly at the start of class, full credit is earned for that item on the quiz. A question that is answered incorrectly at the start of class but correctly at the end of class yields 10 points. This approach rewards the student who may not have read the assigned material carefully, or perhaps did not comprehend the reading, but who paid close attention during the class and learned the material in that way. To allow for fair grading, quizzes must be taken in pen, and a separate space is provided on the quiz for answers corrected at the end of class.

If a question that was answered incorrectly at the start of class is not corrected at the end of class, the student still earns 5 points for that quiz item. This encourages and rewards timely arrival to class. A latecomer who misses the quiz given at the beginning of class may still take the quiz at the end and can potentially earn 5 points for each item answered correctly at that point.

I devised this plan to encourage students to arrive to class on time, prepare for class, and engage in learning during class. I have been extremely pleased with the results I have seen using this method of quizzing in all three areas where I had hoped to measure student improvement. My students have also reported their appreciation of how this approach motivates them to fully engage in their learning. Depending on the frequency of class meetings, I offer 15-20 quizzes per semester, with each carrying a grade weight of just one or two percent of a student’s final grade in the course. Despite the low grade value of each quiz, students take quite seriously these opportunities to demonstrate their learning. Attaching a grade to an academic experience seems to motivate students to engage more seriously in reading assignments and class sessions.

Quizzing and re-quizzing offer even more than motivation for students to read, show up, and pay attention. Testing is also a powerful learning tool. Cognitive scientists view testing not only as a form of assessment, but also as a way to learn. The process of recalling a fact or an idea alters the way the information is then stored in the brain, making it much more accessible in the future. This is why we educators encourage our students to spend as much time on practicing retrieval as on reading, when they are studying for a quiz or exam. So, too, quizzing presents that same opportunity for students. The harder it is to recall something, the harder it is to forget it. Engaging with quiz questions a second time within a class session gives students yet another opportunity to practice retrieval, enhancing the likelihood that they will remember the material for the unit exam, the cumulative final, and even beyond the semester.
FOSTERING SUCCESS IN PSYCHOLOGY COURSES

David P. Nalbone, PhD
Purdue University Calumet

Perlman, McCann, and Prust (2007) report the results of a survey of undergraduate psychology students’ grades and ratings of how useful various behaviors were to good academic performance. Students reported most behaviors as being unhelpful in earning a desired grade. My primary purpose in this report is to examine further their data and to assess whether any of the reported student characteristics examined do, in fact, relate to better or worse performance in psychology courses.

Perlman et al. (2007) focused their analysis on a series of items (such as “Sit in front of classroom” and “Work on assignments one week or more before due date”) that might be linked to better or worse performance in the classroom. However, as is well documented in the psychometric literature, individual items can often be unreliable, and pools of related items might more reliably address questions in lieu of reliance upon individual items. In light of this general weakness of individual items, I performed a factor analysis upon the items they used and computed factor scores (composites of the items that are highly related to a factor) in order to work with factors (as opposed to individual items). The factors I examined, and sample items on each, are displayed in the Table.

The first factor, Studying and Preparation, contained seven items that measured the frequency and intensity of studying and preparation activities such as:

- Study readings weekly, read text/readings carefully
- Ask classmates for notes after missing class, discuss class topics with other students
- Sit in front of classroom (R), look at the professor’s website (R)
- Use study groups (R), use tutors (R)
- Cut back on socializing M-F, cut back on extracurricular activities
- Work on assignments one week or more before due date (R), begin studies the night before an exam (R)
- Talk to professor outside of class (R), participate in class voluntarily (R)

1 A reverse-coded item is one that works opposite the other items—thus, high scores on it are negatively associated with high scores on other (non-R) items.

continued on page 18
of student studying and classroom preparation. The second factor, Active Interpersonal Strategies, contained 10 items that measured students’ activities indicating use of active interpersonal strategies to engage the material and better master the content. The third factor, Disengagement, contained two items that measured the tendency to avoid sitting in the front of the classroom and looking at the professor’s website. The fourth factor, Avoid Outside Help, contained four items that measured the tendency to avoid study groups and tutors and other outside assistance designed to improve a student’s classroom performance. The fifth factor, Focus on Studies, contained four items that measured the tendency to reduce time and effort on outside activities (presumably to devote more time and energy to classroom activities). The sixth factor, Procrastination, contained four items that measured the tendency to delay work on assignments and studying for exams until near the deadline. The seventh factor, Avoid Interactions, contained four items that measured the tendency to avoid contact with the professor outside of class and voluntarily participate in classroom activities.

I then conducted a series of tests to compare groups on the seven factor scores. Three of the factors revealed gender differences: Active Interpersonal Strategies, Disengagement, and Focus on Studies. Women performed better on all counts, by being more interpersonally active, less disengaged, and more focused on studying.

Two of the seven factors revealed differences between those students earning higher than a C and those earning a C or lower in the course: Disengagement and Avoidance of Help. Students earning less than a C were more disengaged yet less likely to avoid outside help than students earning a C or higher. Thus, poorly performing students are not engaged in the classroom or with the professor, yet are inclined to seek outside help. This pair of seemingly contradictory findings might indicate a lack of rapport between the instructor and these students.

One of the seven factors, Avoidance of Help, revealed a difference between first years and non-first years, with first years avoiding help less than non-first years. Two of the seven factors revealed differences between introductory and non-introductory students: Focus on Studies and Avoidance of Interactions. Non-introductory students performed better on both accounts, by being more focused on studying and less averse to interacting with others.

Overall, several conclusions can be drawn about introductory psychology students from these results. First, women engage in better academic behaviors than men; men should thus devote extra attention to their academic behaviors to close this gender gap. Second, introductory students are particularly vulnerable to attaining lower grades, as they are more distracted than non-first years. However, given that many introductory students are first-year students, the finding that first years seek help more than more-advanced students may mitigate this potential for earning lower grades. Third, better students are more engaged in the classroom but also avoid interactions (outside of class) more—perhaps indicating that they have learned “the system” better than weaker students have or have become successful independent learners. Those students who are struggling early in their academic careers should seek out extra help outside of class if they find the course material to be challenging.

More generally, the results indicate that doing well in an introductory psychology course is predicated on a few key factors: engagement with and studying of the material; absence of procrastination about doing so; and active interactions with others, both in and outside of the class, to clarify any confusion about the course material. In short: Do the work, don’t put it off, and ask for help when needed!

These results are bound by a few limitations, however. First, the sample used by Perlman et al. (2007) consisted of undergraduates from a single public Midwestern university; other types of institutions might see a different pattern of results, owing to differences in student populations. Second, these results are exploratory. Neither Perlman et al. (2007) nor I developed or presented a theoretical model for why these items might predict student performance—other than to say that, in general, better studying behaviors (which most of the items measure) ought to lead to better performance. Whether the same pattern of results would be found in another sample is a question that can only be addressed via replication.

As a whole, these results indicate that some students out-perform others—even if they don’t engage in behaviors (e.g., seeking help) that most instructors think would benefit them. Finding ways to capitalize on these discrepancies—such as using better students as peer mentors for their struggling classmates or emphasizing student–instructor rapport for poorly performing students—might help both groups of students improve their academic performance.

**REFERENCE**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**
I would like to thank Baron Perlman for making this data set available to me and answering several queries about it and Chris Aberson and several anonymous reviewers for providing helpful comments on an earlier draft of this manuscript.
STP e-books are free to anyone who would like to access them and may be downloaded in their entirety or by chapter. You can access these e-books in one of two ways—either by going to the STP homepage (http://teachpsych.org/) and clicking on the “e-books” icon found on the menu on the left side of the page or by simply going to http://teachpsych.org/resources/e-books/index.php.

Since 2001, STP has published seven books, with two of them including several volumes. Here is a listing of those books:

- Developing, Promoting, & Sustaining the Undergraduate Research Experience in Psychology (2008)
- The STP Guide to Graduate Student Training in the Teaching of Psychology (2007)
- The Teaching of Psychology in Autobiography: Perspectives From Exemplary Psychology Teachers
  - Volume 1 (2005)
  - Volume 2 (2006)
  - Volume 3 (2010)
- Essays from E-xcellence in Teaching
  - Vol. I (2000-01)
  - Vol. VI (2006)
  - Vol. IX (2009)
- Preparing the New Psychology Professoriate: Helping Graduate Students Become Competent Teachers (2004)

ANNOUNCING APA TOPSS POSTER COMPETITION FOR HIGH SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS

The APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) is pleased to announce the 2011 APA TOPSS Poster Competition for High School Psychology Students. There will be four winners, each of whom will receive a $250 award. The submission deadline is June 1, 2011.

TOPIC

Although psychology has historical roots in the discipline of philosophy, a contemporary definition of psychology states it is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes. The American Psychological Association (APA) recognizes psychology as a diverse scientific discipline with nearly boundless applications to everyday life.

In this competition, students will design an original visual poster on the theme “Psychology is a Science” and also submit a written explanation of the poster and theme.

The winning posters may be made available through the APA website for teachers and students to download and print. Students are requested to authorize reprint permission when they submit their project online.

PART I: POSTER

Select one or more theme(s) or topic(s) within psychology that demonstrate(s) that psychology is a science. Students should design a poster that includes the phrase “Psychology is a Science.” The poster should illustrate at least one psychological concept, theory, or research discovery or an application of psychology in the community. The poster can have text, photographs, graphics, and/or any other medium. Please see Rules for size and formatting limits. Original or credited artwork must be used.

The poster should be based upon psychological research and should visually demonstrate the contemporary definition of psychology as the scientific study of behavior and mental processes.

The poster can address topics in basic and/or applied research. In basic research, psychologists explore fundamental questions about human and nonhuman animal behavior; whereas in applied research they study how these principles can be put into practice to improve our quality of life.

For example, a student might design a poster around one of the following themes: behavioral psychology, health psychology, sports psychology, anti-bullying, or forensic psychology. These are merely examples and are not meant to be inclusive.

PART II: WRITTEN COMPONENT

The written component must explain the concepts presented in the poster and state how the poster illustrates that psychology is a science. Students should also explain how they developed the idea for their posters and discuss how the poster topic or theme was researched, citing the sources used (e.g., journal articles, textbooks, academic websites, and/or books) to develop their poster. At least one citation is required. All resources should be cited in APA style. A reference list is required.

The written component must not be longer than 500 words, double-spaced, and should also include a cover page and reference(s). The cover page and reference(s) do not count toward the word limit.

ELIGIBILITY

• Entrants must be high school students.
• Entrants must have been enrolled or be presently enrolled in a high school psychology course.

THE PROCEDURE

• No more than 10 submissions per school are allowed.
• Psychology faculty at the college and high school level will serve as judges.

Please visit http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/topss/poster-competition.aspx for full rules, scoring rubric, and submission information. The paper must be submitted online through the APA website by June 1, 2011.

Questions? Contact Emily Leary at eleary@apa.org or phone (202) 572-3013.
NEWS FROM PSI CHI

Psi Chi is pleased to announce the creation of a new advisory position, Diversity Director, and the appointment of Melanie M. Domenech Rodríguez, PhD, to the position. The Diversity Director will be responsible for promoting Psi Chi’s diversity initiatives by developing relationships with key people in relevant groups and organizations and serving as a resource to the Board of Directors, Central Office staff, and Psi Chi members. Dr. Domenech Rodríguez is an associate professor of psychology at Utah State University and served on the Psi Chi Board from 2005-2009 as the Rocky Mountain Vice President.

COME TO THE 2011 APA CONVENTION IN WASHINGTON, DC!

The 119th APA Annual Convention will be held in Washington, DC, August 4-7, 2011. Information about convention registration and programming will be available through http://www.apa.org/convention/. The TOPSS and PT@CC committees will sponsor programs at convention. We hope you and your students will make plans to attend!

PT@CC CONVENTION PROGRAMMING

Washington, DC • August 4-7, 2011 • www.apa.org/convention

PT@CC Invited Address: The Diane Halpern Address
Jill Biden, PhD, The White House and Northern Virginia Community College
Invited but not confirmed as of April 21, 2011

PT@CC/Psi Beta Symposium: Innovations in Teaching Psychology at the Community College
Sue Frantz, MA, Highline Community College, Donelle C. Posey, PhD, Washington State University, Tri-Cities, and Robin Musselman, EdD, Lehigh Carbon Community College
Teaching Study Skills Through the Introduction to Psychology Course

PT@CC Invited Address
Martha Kanter, PhD, Under Secretary for Education
Invited but not confirmed as of April 21, 2011

PT@CC Symposium
Maureen McCarthy, PhD, Kennesaw State University, and Eric Landrum, PhD, Boise State University
Assessing the APA Learning Goals: Student- and Course-Level Challenges

PT@CC Panel Discussion
Sue Frantz, MA, Highline Valley Community College; Craig Cowden, PhD, Tacoma Community College; Solomon Fulero, PhD, JD, Sinclair Community College; Ladonna Lewis, PhD, Glendale Community College; Lillian McMaster, PhD, Mohawk Valley Community College; and Larry Venuk, MS, Naugatuck Valley Community College
Promoting Psychological Literacy Through the Introductory Psychology Course

PT@CC/Psi Beta Awards Ceremony and Reception
Lillian McMaster, PhD, Mohawk Valley Community College; Sheri Chejlyk, PhD, State College of Florida at Sarasota/Manatee; and Robin Musselman, EdD, Lehigh Carbon Community College

All sessions will be held Friday, August 5 and Saturday, August 6, 2011.

Please check the PT@CC or APA convention websites for information later this spring.
COMING UP AT THE G. STANLEY HALL/ HARRY KIRKE WOLFE LECTURES

G. STANLEY HALL LECTURES
An Attentive Exploration of Ethnic Identification Perspectives and Influences on Change, Measurement, and Theory
Joseph E. Trimble, PhD, Center for Cross-Cultural Research, Department of Psychology, Western Washington University
Behavioral Economics, Impulsivity, and Health Decision Making
Gregory J. Madden, PhD, Department of Psychology, Utah State University
The Why, What, and How of Human Consciousness
Roy F. Baumeister, PhD, Department of Psychology, Florida State University

HARRY KIRKE WOLFE LECTURE
Cultivating a Reflective Classroom: Incorporating Contemplative Pedagogy in Psychology
Elizabeth Yost Hammer, PhD, Center for the Advancement of Teaching, Xavier University of Louisiana

TOPSS INVITED ADDRESSES

APA ANNUAL CONVENTION
August 4-7, 2011, Washington, DC
www.apa.org/convention

We hope you will join us in DC for these great sessions!
Barney Beins, PhD, Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY
Psychology: Gateway to Critical Thinking and Scientific Literacy

April Bleske-Rechek, PhD, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI
The Lee Gurel Lecture: A Primer on Evolutionary Psychology: Foundational Ideas, Exemplary Research, and Criticisms

Jessica Henderson Daniel, PhD, Boston Children’s Hospital, Cambridge, MA
Teaching Adolescents About Adolescents: Using Mirrors That Focus on Race, Ethnicity, and Gender

Gil Einstein, PhD, Furman University, Greenville, SC
Remembering to Perform Actions in the Future: Can Intentions Pop Into Mind?

Regan Gurung, PhD, University of Wisconsin Green Bay, Green Bay, WI; Maureen McCarthy, PhD, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA; Katherine Minter, Westwood High School, Austin, TX; and Steve Behnke, PhD, JD, APA Ethics Office, Discussant
Ethical Issues in the Introductory Psychology Course

All sessions will be held Friday, August 5, and Saturday, August 6, 2011. Please check the TOPSS or Convention websites for information later this spring.
2011 PT@CC STUDENT PRESENTATION CONTEST

The APA Committee of Psychology Teachers at Community Colleges (PT@CC) invites your students to participate in the ninth annual PT@CC Student Presentation Contest! Supported through funding by the APA Education Directorate and Allyn & Bacon Publishing Co., the Student Presentation Contest recognizes innovative and high-quality electronic presentations. PT@CC looks forward to receiving an expanded set of presentations including original videos, websites, and electronic presentations.

The PT@CC Student Presentation Contest aims to promote active learning through the submission of psychology student presentations developed in either of the following categories:

- Presentations designed as demonstrations or teaching modules that illustrate and explain a psychological concept, theory, or research discovery; or
- Presentations that illustrate and explain a service-learning experience or other application of psychology in the community.

Entries should be developed primarily by students and designed to explain the concept, research, or application to a 2-year college student audience. Nearly any class project that can be put into a PowerPoint, video, website, or similar electronic format will be acceptable.

The competition is open to students currently enrolled at a community college or other 2-year school. Students are eligible for the contest if they are community college students who have not previously completed a bachelor’s degree. Faculty sponsors must be members of the APA Psychology Teachers at Community Colleges (PT@CC). If you have students who might be interested in entering, tell them about this opportunity and urge them to begin work on their presentations right away. The entry deadline is June 1, 2011.

The first-place winner will be awarded $500; second- and third-place winners will receive $300 and $200, respectively. Certificates for all winners will be presented at the APA annual convention.

The contest guidelines and entry form for the 2011 Electronic Project Contest are on the web at www.apa.org/ed/pcue/ptatcchome.html. For more information about this competition or PT@CC, please contact Martha Boenau at MBoenau@apa.org.
REMEMBER: APF HIGH SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY TEACHER NETWORK GRANTS

The purpose of the APF High School Psychology Teacher Network Grants is to support professional development opportunities (workshops, conferences) for teachers that could lead to the formation of local and regional networks of psychology teachers. APF will award $1,500 in grants in 2011. These grants are made possible through a generous gift from Dr. Lee Gurel.

The application deadline is May 1, 2011. For details on how to apply, visit http://www.apa.org/apf/funding/psychology-teacher-network.aspx.

APF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARDS FOR HIGH SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY TEACHERS

The purpose of these awards is to help high school psychology teachers travel to and attend regional or national teaching and/or psychology conferences.

Applicants may be awarded up to $250. Funds can be used to offset costs of travel, conference registration, and housing accommodations. Applications to attend the APA Convention (August 4-7, 2011, Washington, DC) are encouraged--$2,500 is available for funding. These grants are made possible through a generous gift from Dr. Lee Gurel.

The application deadline has been extended to May 1, 2011; for details on how to apply, visit http://www.apa.org/apf/funding/professional-topss.aspx.

2011 PT@CC TEACHING RESOURCES AWARD FOR PSYCHOLOGY TEACHERS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The APA Committee of Psychology Teachers at Community Colleges (PT@CC) invites submissions for the new PT@CC Teaching Resources Award! Sponsored by the APA Education Directorate and PT@CC, the 2011 Teaching Resources Award aims to encourage sharing of instructional techniques that community college faculty have developed and used in face-to-face, hybrid, or online psychology classes. The committee is particularly interested in teaching activities, resources, presentation slides, or other materials, along with a brief description of the teaching resource, what class it is used in, what topic is covered, and evidence of its effectiveness. The winning entries will be posted on the PT@CC website.

The competition is open to psychology teachers who are members of PT@CC. Faculty members interested in joining PT@CC can obtain more information on the web or by contacting Martha Boenau at 1-800-374-2721, ext. 6140 (e-mail: Mboenau@apa.org). An award of $400 will be given to the first-place winner; $300 to the second-place winner; $200 to the third-place winner; and $50 each to two honorable mention winners. Certificates for all winners will be presented by PT@CC at the American Psychological Association annual convention. Attendance at the convention is not required.

Submissions for the 2011 PT@CC Teaching Resources Award may be mailed to Martha Boenau (APA Education Directorate, 750 First St, NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242 or sent via e-mail). Entries must be postmarked by May 2, 2011.
CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: TOPSS COMMITTEE 2011 ELECTIONS

The mission of the APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) is to promote introductory and advanced high school psychology, meet curricular needs of secondary school teachers, and provide opportunities for high school students to be recognized and rewarded for their academic excellence. If you would like to become more involved in TOPSS, and are interested in gaining leadership experience and having a positive impact on the teaching of high school psychology, we encourage you to consider serving on the TOPSS Committee. TOPSS is especially interested in encouraging individuals from diverse backgrounds (including diversity in race/ethnicity, gender, ability/disability, sexual orientation, age, and religion) to consider running for TOPSS Office.

In 2011, the following three elected positions will be filled:

- Chair
- Member-at-Large
- Membership Coordinator

The Chair is a 3-year position, and the others are 2-year positions. The TOPSS Committee meets twice a year, in spring and fall, in Washington, DC. The APA covers travel and accommodation expenses. Please consider nominating a colleague you think would make a positive impact. Self-nominations are also welcomed.

Nominations are due by **July 1, 2011**.

Nominees for the 2011 TOPSS election are asked to submit the following materials/documents:

- Vita or Resume
- Platform Statement

Platform Statements must provide information in three sections:

1. Education and Professional Experience,
2. Professional Activities and Honors, and
3. A Platform Statement.


Please send nominations and materials to:

Emily Leary  
APA Education Directorate  
750 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002-4242

Electronic submissions will be accepted. Please send electronic files of nomination materials to Emily Leary at eleary@apa.org.
CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: APA COMMITTEE OF PSYCHOLOGY TEACHERS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES (PT@CC) 2011 ELECTIONS

Consider serving on the APA Committee of Psychology Teachers at Community Colleges (PT@CC)! The PT@CC Committee consists of six members whose mission is to:

- Promote, within the 2-year college community, the highest professional standards for teaching psychology as a scientific discipline;
- Cultivate a professional identity with the discipline of psychology among psychology teachers at community colleges;
- Develop leadership qualities among psychology teachers at community colleges and increase their participation and representation in professional psychology activities and organizations;
- Establish and maintain communication with all groups involved in the teaching of psychology and with the greater psychological community; and
- Encourage psychological research on teaching and learning at community colleges for the purpose of giving students the best possible educational opportunities.

The members of PT@CC will elect two new members who will join the committee in January 2012 for 3-year terms of office. The PT@CC Committee conducts business during monthly conference calls and meets twice a year in Washington, DC. APA covers travel and accommodation expenses.

Consider self-nominating for a position on the PT@CC Committee or nominate a colleague who would make a positive impact. Nominations are due by June 1, 2011.

Nominees for the 2011 PT@CC election must submit the following materials/documents: curriculum vitae, brief personal statement, and a photo. Please send electronic files of nomination materials to Martha Boenau at mboenau@apa.org.
This book is very interesting for any teacher interested in becoming more effective, but even more so for the psychology teacher. Willingham takes on many ideas currently prevalent in educational circles and disputes or supports them one at a time. He also provides a wonderful description of the working memory that helps students and teachers of psychological science come to a more complete understanding of that particular platform. After reading this book, a teacher will have a better understanding of the students before him or her and some useful strategies to help make each student succeed.

Willingham asks an interesting question fundamental to all teaching, which is represented in the title of his book. In addition, he organizes the nine chapters of his book by asking a number of other questions, like “why do students remember everything that’s on television and forget everything I say?” and “how should I adjust my teaching for different types of learners?” His answers to each of the questions he poses provide good information for teachers interested in being as effective as they can; they also give the psychology teacher a glimpse into the world of cognitive research and the mind.

Willingham’s argument begins with the proposition that the brain is designed not to think, but to react. That is, the brain is designed to save us from having to think: Thinking takes work; the brain is designed to save us from work. Therefore, the task of the teacher is to create an environment in which the students before us want to think and want to work hard. As students, we need moderate challenges that are interesting and engaging, but each challenge must also respect the limits that any really interesting question poses, specifically, a lack of knowledge to solve the problem or a huge array of unconnected facts. This means that, as teachers, we need to help students connect the facts; we also need to create engaging learning environments and pose challenging problems that need authentic solutions.

When it comes to learning styles, Willingham’s proposition is that, while they might exist, they are irrelevant, since, as learners, we are much more alike than we are different. Thus, as teachers, our task is to think carefully about the outcome we want our students to achieve and to plan the delivery of the content we want them to master accordingly. Despite learning differences, teachers need to change it up often to maintain students’ attention and to use the differences among students to improve instruction.

Like other cognitive psychologists, Willingham maintains that our students do differ in intelligence, but he also contends that intelligence can be changed through sustained hard work. As teachers, we should praise effort rather than ability and teach our students that effort matters. We need to help our students see failure as an opportunity and explicitly teach the skills that will make them more effective learners.

Willingham ends his book with a serious challenge to teachers. He maintains that we need to work in critical partnerships and to film ourselves to see what we are doing all the time. He challenges us to criticize one another with a view to making each of us become more effective in the classroom. Essentially, Willingham would like each teacher to think more carefully about every step of teaching and to become more self-critical than we are. His challenge is a serious one that will be hard for any of us to accept. But his presentation of the structure of the mind and what teachers should do to improve student learning is a good place to start. And maybe someday we will have the courage to take up his whole challenge.
FROM THE ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ASSESSING THE UNDERGRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR

Robin Hailstorks, PhD
APA Education Directorate

I n this column, I want to share with you some resources available through the American Psychological Association’s website that can help you assess the undergraduate psychology major. I will begin by discussing the APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major, referred to herein as Guidelines. The Guidelines includes 10 learning goals that represent reasonable departmental expectations for the undergraduate psychology major. The Guidelines provides details for these 10 suggested learning goals and related learning outcomes in two major categories. The first category is Knowledge, Skills, and Values Consistent with the Science and Application of Psychology, and the second category is Knowledge, Skills, and Values Consistent with a Liberal Arts Education That are Further Developed in Psychology. APA also has created an Assessment CyberGuide to accompany these Guidelines. Both of these resources can be accessed at http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/index.aspx.

The Assessment CyberGuide is an invaluable resource that accompanies the Guidelines and provides an outstanding overview of assessment strategies and plans. The Assessment CyberGuide is essentially an e-book that is divided into four sections—understanding assessment, designing viable assessment plans, applying strategies, and sustaining an assessment culture—that complement each other and provide an excellent orientation to assessment and best practices for conducting departmental and course assessments. This publication includes a critique of assessment tools that have been used to evaluate each of the 10 learning goals and outcomes that appear in the Guidelines. This resource also includes abstracts of recent articles and websites on assessment for further exploration on this topic.

APA has also provided a resource titled Teaching, Learning, and Assessing in a Developmentally Coherent Curriculum for you to use as you begin to think about assessing the first five learning goals presented in the Guidelines. This resource includes examples of embedded and authentic assessments that can be used in introductory psychology courses as well as upper division psychology courses. This resource was developed in response to the need for psychology teachers to articulate what students need to know across various institutional contexts as they complete their undergraduate studies, recognizing that students are often concurrently enrolled in community colleges and at baccalaureate degree granting colleges and universities.

DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

You are strongly encouraged to begin your departmental review by examining these two APA resources: (1) APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major and (2) Teaching, Learning, and Assessing in a Developmentally Coherent Curriculum. Both resources will help you determine which learning goals and outcomes are most important for your program and how you might use different assessment strategies for assessing these learning goals. While the Guidelines focuses almost exclusively on the undergraduate psychology major, the second resource focuses on a developmental model for examining learning outcomes and suggests different types of assessment strategies that may be useful. This latter resource is invaluable to psychology teachers at community colleges who want to make certain that their students get the basic and developing skills they need to be competitive at baccalaureate degree institutions, especially if they are currently enrolled at the latter. After determining which learning goals and outcomes are most relevant to your department, I strongly encourage you to examine the Assessment CyberGuide to identify strategies for conducting your departmental review.

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In October 2007, APA published an article in the *American Psychologist* titled “Quality Benchmarks in Undergraduate Psychology Programs,” written by Dana Dunn, Maureen McCarthy, Suzie Baker, Jane Halonen, and Bill Hill. The authors proposed a set of quality benchmarks for conducting program reviews of undergraduate psychology programs and formulated a developmental framework of attributes of undergraduate programs that focused on activities in eight domains: curriculum, assessment issues, student learning outcomes, program resources, student development, faculty characteristics, program climate, and administrative support.

As you plan your departmental review, I encourage you to examine the template presented in the “Quality Benchmarks” article and adapt it to meet the needs of your department and college. I also encourage you to visit the Society for the Teaching of Psychology’s website (www.teachpsych.org) to learn about their Departmental Consulting Service (DCS) (http://www.teachpsych.org/otrp/deptconsult.php) and how you might find an external reviewer for your departmental self-study. (The DCS is a joint effort of APA and STP.) Under the Office of Teaching Resources in Psychology (OTRP), you will find a link to an electronic workbook prepared by Michael Vigorito (http://teachpsych.org/otrp/resources/index.php?category=Outcomes) that faculty can use to evaluate the quality benchmarks proposed by Dunn et al. This electronic workbook includes Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and step-by-step instructions for using these spreadsheets.

Please let us know how you are using these APA resources to assess your undergraduate psychology program. We look forward to hearing from you and to learning about your success.  

**REFERENCES**


Psychology and You... Contributing to the Nation’s Health and Well-Being

- Aging and Dementia
- Bullying
- Crisis Intervention
- Disordered Eating and Obesity
- Immigration
- The Mindful Brain
- Relationships and Sexuality
- Science and Practice of Social/Individual Conflict
- Social Consequences of Technology

New this year—a technology exhibit (co-sponsored by Hewlett-Packard and Pearson), a science showcase, and special family-friendly events (co-sponsored by the APA Committee on Early Career Psychologists). You can also attend as many sessions offering continuing education credits as you want for one low price!

Follow APA and connect with your colleagues on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Featured plenary speakers include:

Teresa LaFromboise, PhD
Boundless Youth: Encountering Stress in Cultural Context

Julie S. Gottman, PhD and John M. Gottman, MD
The Challenge of Treating Couples: A Research-Based Approach

John W. Pilley, PhD and Chaser
Chaser and Her Toys: What a Dog Teaches Us About Cognition