1   **Strengthening the Common Core of the Introductory Psychology Course**

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5   APA Board of Educational Affairs Working Group on

6   Strengthening the Common Core of the

7   Introductory Psychology Course (2012)

8

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Strengthening the Common Core of the Introductory Psychology Course

Participants at the 2008 APA National Conference on Undergraduate Education held at the University of Puget Sound articulated several high-priority recommendations later published in *Undergraduate Education in Psychology: A Blueprint for the Future of the Discipline* (Halpern, 2010) and embodied in the *Principles for Quality Undergraduate Education in Psychology* (APA, 2011). Conference participants made two strong recommendations about the importance of the introductory psychology course (henceforth Intro Psych). The first was that the Intro Psych course should be a prerequisite for all other psychology courses. The second was that the Intro Psych course should mirror the core model for the psychology major.

To address these recommendations, APA's Board of Educational Affairs (BEA) established a Working Group to Strengthen the Common Core of the Introductory Psychology Course**.** BEA charged the Working Group to:

1. Examine the common core of the Intro Psych course at the college level including the content, outcomes, possibility of a laboratory component, and implications for a major vs. a non-major directed course.

2. Recommend potential action steps to BEA on strengthening the common core.

Background

Psychology has been an active scientific area for over 100 years. The field has made significant technological and methodological innovations, with new areas evolving and pre-existing areas merging. Yet most Intro Psych textbooks are still comprised of the same 14-16 chapters (Griggs & Jackson, 2013). Correspondingly, the structure of the Intro Psych course has remained relatively consistent.

Although there have been major studies of the psychology curriculum over the years (e.g., Brewer et al., 1993; Perlman & McCann, 1999; Stoloff et al., 2010), none of the reports focused on the content or organization of Intro Psych. In one notable exception, Homa and colleagues (2013) examined the objectives and content of Intro Psych courses and found considerable variance nationally, with some focused more on psychology as a science and others focused on psychology as a means of self-understanding and improvement.

Psychology is a growing discipline that concerns the enormous complexity of human behavior in its cultural context, and psychological research contributes in important ways to solving a wide range of problems. For example, many of the most pressing contemporary social problems (and likely problems of the next century) reflect, to an appreciable extent, modifiable cognitions, emotions, and behaviors. These problems include prejudice and discrimination, exploitation and violence, depression and dysphoria, child neglect and parental divorce, and the rising medical costs associated with behavioral and cultural factors. More young people die or become disabled from unfortunate behavioral choices (e.g., drug use, gang violence, drinking and driving) than from all diseases combined (Gurung, 2014). In addition, many intriguing scientific

56 problems facing humankind – ranging from the neural basis of thought, emotion, and a

57 sense of the self; the cognitive operations underlying effective problem solving and

58 optimal decision making; the sociocultural factors that make education effective and

59 enjoyable; the best means of dealing with life's stressors; and humankind's place within

60 the tree of life – are questions that fall within the purview of psychology.

61   At the same time, psychological science has a demonstrated track record of

62 enhancing human functioning at both the micro and macro-levels (e.g., APA, 2005;

63 2010). The procedures for optimizing human potential are the subject matter of

64 psychology: successful parenting and aging, athletic and artistic flow, extraordinary

65 memory and reasoning, and maximizing the development of intelligence, environmental

66 conservation, are but a few topics that have been subjected to scrutiny in psychological

67 laboratories.

68   However, the contemporary Intro Psych course structure tends to not accurately

69 reflect the discipline as it stands today. Specifically, most textbooks still treat different

70 areas of psychology (e.g. social, personality) as if they are distinct and studied in

71 isolation of other areas. In fact, psychological research today rarely utilizes material

72 covered in just one chapter of an Intro Psych textbook (Cacioppo, in press). This silo-like

73 representation is also seen when psychology is divided into 'domains', referred to in such

74 documents such as the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (APA,

75 2011) and *Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major* (APA, 2007). Domain

76 may not be the best way to demarcate the contemporary nature of our field.

77

78   In this report, we summarize previous efforts to create a common core for the

79   Intro Psych course and address the question of whether such a core is desirable. We first

80   review historical attempts to create a common core and research on what in taught in

81   Intro Psych. Then, based on a yearlong review of extant information on the Intro Psych

82   course from a variety of sources (e.g., Homa et al., 2013, publisher surveys, expert

83   teachers), we advance five recommendations regarding Intro Psych. These

84   recommendations are intended to help teachers of Intro Psych design a high-quality

85   foundation to the discipline of psychology as it exists today.

86   **Historical Attempts to Create a Common Core**

87   There have been many calls for national guidelines and/or a common core relating

88   to different aspects of Intro Psych. More than 70 years ago, Wolfle (1942, p. 687)

89   suggested Intro Psych should have five goals: (a) teach facts and principles of

90   psychology, (b) develop scientific method or habits of critical thoughts, (c) provide better

91   ability in making personal adjustments, (d) prepare students for later courses, or interest

92   them in psychology, and (e) teach what psychology is and is not, or eliminate popular

93   superstitions. More recently, Smith and Fineburg (2006) drew attention to the lack of

94   consistency in Intro Psych and suggested using the *Standards* and the *Guidelines* to help

95   shape Intro Psych.

96   The *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (henceforth

97   *Standards;* APA, 2011) first published by APA in 1999 and revised in 2005 and 2011,

98   define psychology content for the high school classroom. The *Standards* are structured as

99   seven overarching content domains (i.e., scientific inquiry, biopsychological,

100   development and learning, sociocultural context, cognition, individual differences, and

101 applications of psychological science), with each domain including standard areas that

102 cover the breadth of Intro Psych. Each domain's standard areas include relevant unit

103 topics such that by teaching at least one unit from each domain, students in high school

104 psychology courses receive a representative picture of contemporary psychology. The

105 *Standards* could consequently also be used to organize, plan, and direct college-level

106 Intro Psych (Smith & Fineburg, 2006).

107   The *Guidelines for the Psychology Undergraduate Major* (henceforth *Guidelines;*

108 APA, 2007) capture "a set of optimal expectations for performance at the completion of

109 the baccalaureate degree by students who major in psychology. The document outlines 10

110 goals and suggested learning outcomes that represent reasonable departmental

111 expectations for the undergraduate psychology major across educational contexts" (APA,

112 2007, p. v). The most recent revision of the *Guidelines* -- APA Guidelines for the

113 Undergraduate Psychology Major 2.0 (hereafter *Guidelines 2.0*) -- incorporates changes

114 that reflect emerging best practices and integrate psychology's work with benchmarking

115 scholarship in higher education. *Guidelines 2.0* abandoned the original distinction

116 between psychology-focused skills and psychology skills that enhance liberal arts

117 development. Instead, the new guidelines describe five inclusive goals for the

118 undergraduate major that represent more robust learning and assessment activities (APA,

119 2013). Similar to the *Standards,* the *Guidelines 2.0* also help to shape a common core for

120 Intro Psych.

121   Conceivably, Intro Psych could mirror the core model for the psychology major

122 but there is little consistency in requirements for the major (Stoloff et al., 2010). The

123 undergraduate psychology major differs markedly from one institution to another, in

124   areas such as semester hours needed, the implementation of capstone courses, or even

125   required and elective class topics. Dunn and colleagues (2010) suggested a curricular

126   model for the psychology major and recommended that Intro Psych mirror the same

127   model. But their recommendation from the 2008 APA National Conference on

128   Undergraduate Education remains just that – a recommendation without implementation

129   or other action.

130   **Should Intro Psych have a Common Core?**

131   Intro Psych enrolls between 1.2 million and 1.6 million students annually (Steuer &

132   Ham, 2008); it is the second most popular college course in the nation, second only to

133   English Composition (Adelman, 2004). Intro Psych is required for the psychology major

134   in 98% of U.S. colleges (Stoloff et al., 2010) and is taken by 60% of high school students

135   (Adelman, 2004). Intro Psych serves not only as a prerequisite for other courses in the

136   discipline, but for most college students as their only formal exposure to psychological

137   science.

138   "Given the ubiquitous relevance of psychology to other majors and fields, most

139   jobs, and the world in general, as well as the many contributions an understanding of

140   psychology can have to personal growth and development, all students need to receive a

141   common core of content" (Dunn et al., 2010, p. 59). The recent expansion of methods to

142   deliver Intro Psych in new ways, such as UPACE, hybrid/blended, online, and Massive

143   Open Online Courses (MOOCs), allows the breadth and depth of Intro Psych content to

144   evolve rapidly and to fit easily the new formats.

145   A core provides a singular message to students and the public about what

146   constitutes the field of psychology. A common core for all institutions offering the course

147   will ensure greater consistency in what majors and students taking the course as a general

148   education requirement receive. "Internal and external pressures on the discipline …

149   suggest a need for a common, coherent core curriculum for the undergraduate psychology

150   major" (Dunn et al., 2010, p. 53). Having a common core for Intro Psych will map nicely

151   onto calls for a common curriculum (for the major), the use of quality benchmarks

152   (Dunn, McCarthy, Baker, Halonen, & Hill, 2007), and the *APA Guidelines for the*

153   *Undergraduate Psychology Major 2.0* (APA, 2013). Having a common core in Intro

154   Psych should also help students prepare for the forthcoming behavioral components in

155   entrance exams for medical school (i.e., MCAT 2015).

156   There is also an additional compelling reason to have a common core. Currently,

157   psychology lacks a universal assessment of knowledge. Assessment, whether across

158   instructors or across time, at the department level or across institutions, necessitates a

159   similar, if not standardized, experience. It will benefit the field to have a universal

160   assessment. At the Intro level, it would be beneficial for psychology to have a standard

161   set of assessment questions, perhaps tied to the *National Standards,* which can be used to

162   assess student knowledge. Having a standard assessment would allow departments to

163   compare their students directly to other programs. It would also be extremely useful as a

164   research tool for studying effective pedagogies. Departments or faculty could pick and

165   choose specific modules they want to assess, but there is no easy way to compare student

166   accomplishments if there is no consistency of content.

167   A common core could also be used across institutions. Fields such as physics

168   have common content assessments such as the Force Concept Inventory (Hestenes,

169   Wells, & Swackhamer, 1992). The discipline of psychology has no such measure, and we

170   lack thorough knowledge of the extent to which Intro Psych students are achieving

171   learning outcomes.

What is being Taught in the Intro Psych Course?

173   Before one can strengthen a common core, one needs a common core. Before

174   proposing a viable model for such a core, the Task Force searched for evidence of what is

175   currently being covered in Intro Psych.

176   There is a surprising dearth of information on this point. The majority of research

177   focuses on content analyses of Intro Psych textbooks. Textbooks have little similarity in

178   content, and vary in length, and comprehensiveness (Griggs, Bujak-Johnson, & Proctor,

179   2004; Landrum, Gurung, & Spann, 2012). Miller and Gentile (1998) found little

180   consensus among instructor ratings regarding important topics and those topics covered

181   in the class. The Task Force found only one published article on whether Intro Psych

182   courses share learning objectives or a common core.

183   Homa et al. (2013) examined student learning objectives and course content in

184   158 Intro Psych syllabi. Student learning objectives were mapped to the 2007 version of

185   the *Guidelines*. Over 50% of the syllabi contained objectives specific to the science and

186   application of psychology (knowledge base, research methods, application). Analysis of

187   content coverage revealed that instructors spent significantly more time on topics related

188   to physiological and cognitive psychology and spent significantly less time on topics

189   related to the history and scope of psychology, research methods, and developmental

190   psychology. Importantly, this was across instructors in all specialty areas.   Instructors

191   spent a disproportionate amount of time on certain content areas. Additionally,

192   instructors whose expertise was in social and clinical/counseling psychology spent more

193   lecture time on their own areas than most other content areas.

194   Based on the review of the material described above and in line with the BEA

195   charge, the Task Force advances the following five recommendations:

196   1. Establish a Common Core for Intro Psych

197   2. Offer a National Assessment Plan for Intro Psych

198   3. Provide Similar Content for Intro Psych for Psychology Majors and Non-majors

199   4. Provide a Research/Lab-like Experience in the Intro Psych Course

200   5. Foster Special Training Opportunities for Intro Psych Instructors

201

202   **Task Force Recommendations**

203

204   **Recommendation 1. Establish a Common Core for the Intro Psych Course**

205   The Task Force examined existing domain models for psychology (e.g.,

206   *Standards, Guidelines*) and created a new set of domains that build on extant models to

207   better reflect the contemporary state of the field.

208   Both the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* and the

209   *Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major* demarcate the field into sections

210   from which an instructor should cover topics. The domains approaches (APA, 2007;

211   2011) do include all the traditional areas in psychology (or chapters in an Intro Psych

212   book), but there is no explicit call for integration when using domain models even if an

213   Intro Psych course includes at least one topic from each domain.

214

215   Cacioppo (2007) presents one alternative, a novel representation of modern

216   psychology. In his view, many of the most exciting advances in psychology today are

217   emerging at the intersections – across traditional training areas within psychology and

218   across disciplines. Comprehensive understandings of the mind and behavior are requiring

219   a combination of perspectives. For instance, it is widely recognized that the level of

220   testosterone in male rhesus monkeys predicts their sexual advances toward females in the

221   colony. However, research has also shown that the level of testosterone in these male

222   monkeys is influenced by the availability of receptive females (Bernstein, Gordon, &

223   Rose, 1983). That is, the hormonal influence on behavior and the social environment in

224   which that behavior is being expressed are mutually influencing the other. One cannot

225   develop a comprehensive understanding of their behavior by focusing on only a

226   biological or a social perspective (Cacioppo, in press). The implication is that the

227   centrifugal forces that not long ago threatened to splinter the discipline appear to be

228   receding in favor of new centripetal forces fueled by the search for more comprehensive

229   and predictive theories.

230   No longer simply a collection of independent domains based on historical or

231   administrative distinctions, psychology in the 21st century appears to becoming an

232   integrative multilevel science. Specifically, there has been a trend in the direction of

233   partitioning the science of mind and behavior into different levels of organization, with

234   each contributing to our understanding of human behavior. The *biological* perspective in

235   psychology concerns the material substrates for the mind and behavior; the *cognitive*

236   perspective emphasizes the information processing representations and operations; and

237   the *social* perspective stresses the role of the presence of conspecifics, imagined or real,

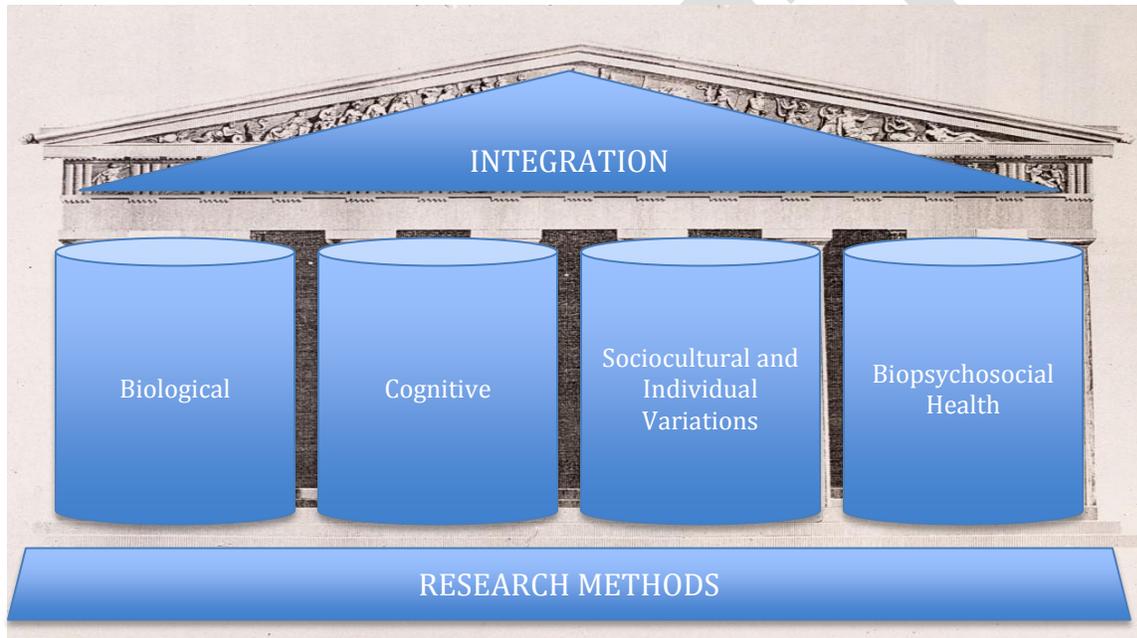238   and of the sociocultural context.

239   Additionally, there are cross-cutting perspectives that offer valuable insights into

240   the mind and behavior. The study of the nature and influence of changes over time (e.g.,

241   growth, decay) in neural substrates, information processing operations, and social

242   influences represents a *developmental* perspective in psychology; the investigation of the

243   causes and consequences of failures in neural substrates, cognitive operations, and social

244   organizations and what such failures mean for understanding the healthy system

245   represents a *biopsychosocial health* perspective; and attention to the variation around the

246   central tendency to gain leverage in formulating and testing psychological theory

247   represents a *sociocultural and individual variations* perspective. These cross-cutting

248   vectors are illustrative rather than exhaustive, of course, as there are other cross-cutting

249   perspectives, as well. Among these are *Applications*, *Research Methods*, and *Social*

250   *Responsibility* (Cacioppo, 2007).

251   The point is to underscore that each domain has substantive implications for the

252   others in the pursuit of comprehensive psychological explanations and applications. The

253   in-depth study of any one of these domains is essential, but a comprehensive

254   understanding of the mind and behavior is more likely to be achieved by an *integration* of

255   what we know and can learn across multiple levels/perspectives than by focusing on

256   individual domains.

257   Psychology is no longer a gathering of individual, isolated areas, as a cursory look

258   at many Intro Psych textbooks suggests to students. The Intro Psych course should

259   reflect the reality of an integrative multilevel science. Furthermore, Intro Psych can serve

260   as a stand-alone structure or as the foundation for the psychology major. We build on

261   this metaphor and represent recommendations for teaching the course using an

262   architectural analogy.

263   The content of Intro Psych can be conceptualized using the schematic of a classic

264   Greek structure. Consistent with national recommendations for the major and with

265   reviews of the contemporary nature of the field, the BEA Working Group recommends

266   that instructors of Intro Psych cover:

267

INTEGRATION

| Biological | Cognitive | Sociocultural and Individual Variations | Biopsychosocial Health |

RESEARCH METHODS

268   1. **The scientific method**, the true foundational basic building block and core of our

269   discipline. Consistent with Goal 2 of the *Guidelines 2.0*, students in Intro Psych

270   should learn skills involving the development of scientific reasoning and problem

271   solving, including effective research methods. Students should learn basic skills

272   and concepts in interpreting behavior, studying research, and applying research

273   design principles to drawing conclusions about behavior.

274

275   **2. At least two topics** from each of the main pillars of the field.

276

277   • **Pillar 1: Biological** (e.g., Neuroscience, Sensation, Consciousness,

278   Motivation)

279   • **Pillar 2: Cognitive** (e.g., Cognition, Memory, Learning, Perception)

280   • **Pillar 3: Sociocultural and Individual Variations** (e.g., Social,

281   Personality, Intelligence, Emotion, Multicultural, Gender)

282   • **Pillar 4: Biopsychosocial Health** (e.g., Abnormal, Health, Clinical)

283

284   3. **Each of the following** should be covered for **each topic.** Just as concrete is

285   composed of different elements, each pillar is composed of different elements that

286   are now common themes across the field.

287   • **Ethics**: What are the major ethical considerations of conducting research

288   or applying the topic or phenomenon?

289   • **Diversity**: What are variations across individual and roles, including those

290   based on age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity,

291   culture, national origin, religion, disability status, language, and

292   socioeconomic status?

293   • **Development**: What is the developmental nature of the phenomenon

294   under study, whether it be a neuron, human, or behavior?

- **Variations in Human Functioning:** What are the positive and negative extremes of the phenomenon under study? Highlight failures/successful examples.

- **Applications**: How does the content of the course apply to everyday life?

4. The structure is **capped by an Integration Module** that ties together the different areas into a coherent whole and represents the integrative nature of contemporary psychology. In contrast to focusing on just cognition or biology or just social situations, modern psychology integrates different approaches. Similar to the call for capstone courses for the major (Dunn et al., 2009), the Task Force recommends that students in Intro Psych receive explicit examples of how the different pillars of psychological science are integrated. For example, conflict in close relationships can be better understood by personality characteristics, social or situational factors, developmental histories of each partner, and underpinning biological factors.

In offering these recommendations for a common core in Intro Psych, the BEA Working Group has tried to strike a nuanced balance providing flexibility yet guidance. We aimed to avoid either a prescriptive, overly standardized approach on the one hand, or the extant idiosyncratic approach on the other. We cherish academic freedom and recognize the diversity of faculty members, teaching situations, and student audiences. At the same time, a mature science should be able to agree upon and communicate its unifying core while embracing diversity.

318

Recommendation 2. Offer a National Assessment Plan for Intro Psych

Although our recommended model does not specify explicit content topics, the

components of the pillars need to be assessed. As stated previously, there is limited

research on what exactly takes place in the Intro Psych class. Most information on the

Intro Psych course comes from publishers' market research (e.g., pubtracker) and

textbook extrapolations. In order to establish how our students perform or where reform

is needed, we first need basic information on how the course is taught, how students

perform on learning outcomes, and how reliable and valid the assessments are.

The *Guidelines 2.0* and the *Assessment Cyberguide for Learning Goals and

Outcomes in the Undergraduate Psychology Major* (APA, 2009) provide learning

outcomes. The *Guidelines 2.0* also identify potential assessment instruments for each of

the outcomes. Regardless of whether instructors use the learning outcomes in the

Guidelines 2.0 or their own, the Working Group believes that a nationally coordinated

focus on the assessment of Intro Psych learning outcomes in general is sorely needed.

That can be better accomplished once a common core becomes accepted and established

across the discipline.

Recommendation 3. Provide Similar Content for Intro Psych for Psychology Majors
and Non-majors

The Intro Psych course should contain the same content and experiences for all

students at a given institution regardless of why students are taking the course (Halpern,

2010). Although some psychology departments may be tempted to create an Intro Psych

341   course specifically for psychology majors, there is no evidence in the literature that

342   suggests that this is differentially effective.

343   Departments that want a more robust Intro Psych course for their majors may

344   instead modify other requirements and sequencing. For example, although most

345   psychology departments require their majors to take Research Methods early in their

346   undergraduate experience (Stoloff et. al., 2010), departments that want to provide more

347   early experiences might be better served by creating another course such as one that

348   addresses career preparation (Atchley, Hooker, Kroska, & Gilmour, 2012; Brinthaupt,

349   2010; Thomas & McDaniel, 2004), preparation for the major (Atchley et.al, 2012;

350   Dillinger & Landrum, 2002), or writing in the major (Goddard, 2003).

351

352   **Recommendation 4. Provide a Research/Lab-like Experience in Intro Psych**

353   Introductory courses in most sciences are joined with required laboratories to

354   foster a deeper, integrated understanding of the science. It is not sufficient to learn the

355   laws and equations of chemistry or physics. To understand fully these sciences, students

356   need hands-on experience with classic and contemporary methods. In fact, offering Intro

357   Psych with a lab component has been shown to be effective at increasing scientific

358   literacy (Thieman, Clary, Olson, Dauner, & Ring, 2009). However, most institutions do

359   not offer a lab component for the Intro Psych course. In a sample of 364 institutions, only

360   6% offered a lab component (Stoloff et. al., 2010). Instructors of introductory psychology

361   courses have not required laboratory experiences in part because of limited resources and

362   in part because the methods and content were thought to be self-evident.

363

364   Laboratory experiences in introductory psychology may be particularly important

365   because students arrive with so many misconceptions about the discipline. For instance,

366   many students begin Intro Psych believing that psychology is mostly about

367   psychotherapy and relationships, when in fact it is also about the brain, information

368   processing, genetics, behavioral plasticity, and social determinants and moderators.

369   Students also tend to arrive believing they already know the causes of behavior. For

370   example, it is commonly said that birds of a feather flock together, but of course it is also

371   commonly said that opposites attract. Everyone knows that two heads are better than one

372   but also that too many cooks spoil the broth. Students are often surprised to learn that

373   they hold many logically inconsistent beliefs about the causes of behavior.

374   The BEA Working Group is well aware that many smaller colleges or

375   departments will not be able to fund separate lab courses or complex research

376   assignments; nonetheless, there are a number of creative ways to integrate more scientific

377   research throughout the course. One option is to use virtual experiments as class

378   assignments. For example, APA maintains the *Online Psychology Laboratory (OPL).*

379   Simple assignments using OPL can give Intro Psych students a hands-on taste of doing

380   research.

381   A second option is to provide lab-related activities through existing departmental

382   resources. For example, students at the University of Chicago are introduced to the

383   discipline through a Foundations in Psychology course in which faculty work with each

384   student to design a simple study for which they do a literature search, collect data,

385   conduct rudimentary statistical analyses, and prepare a poster for a science fair similar to

386   those seen at our national meetings. Other innovative models for integrating lab-like,

387   hands-on experiences for Intro Psych students can be developed with existing faculty,

388   graduate students, and even advanced undergraduates under supervision.

389

390   **Recommendation 5. Foster Special Training Opportunities for Intro Psych**

391   **Instructors**

392   Psychological science has changed dramatically over the past few decades, and

393   Intro Psych should reflect the evolving science of psychology. Faculty members who

394   teach Intro Psych may need to adjust both the content of the course and their methods of

395   teaching it. In particular, it is important for faculty to understand and implement new

396   technologies (from clickers to mTurk) in their courses. The teachers of Intro Psych have a

397   variety of existing resources for their continuing education (e.g., Society of Teaching

398   Psychology conferences, APA programming, *Teaching of Psychology, Current*

399   *Directions*), but we believe the larger challenge involves convincing faculty members of

400   the importance of changing their textbooks or teaching styles instead of relying on what

401   has worked reasonably well in the past.

402   Below is an initial list of resources for supporting the ongoing learning of faculty

403   members and TAs to teach a contemporary Intro Psych course.

404   1. *Seek out training in interdisciplinary science (or attendance at conferences that*

405   *focus on integrative science).* Interdisciplinary science was the focus of the 2011

406   APA Education Leadership Conference, and related training is likely to become

407   more available in the future. Some interdisciplinary meetings are quite narrow

408   (intersection of fields) and others are quite broad. Attendance at the latter types

409   of conferences is more likely to foster integration.

410   2. *Complete an Intro Psych-focused teaching practicum or teaching assistantship*

411   *during graduate training.* Consider developing a "Teaching of Psychology"

412   course for TAs that is linked to Intro Psych so that the TAs' time with the students

413   serves as a practicum for their teaching.

414   3. *Attend conference sessions throughout one's career relevant to the teaching and*

415   *learning of psychology.* At present, a variety of excellent training opportunities

416   are available at the APA and APS national conferences and multiple regional

417   teaching conferences. The Society for the Teaching of Psychology held two Best

418   Practice conferences on Intro Psych. Stanford University is now offering a

419   summer conference that focuses exclusively on Intro Psych. Within these

420   conferences, workshop and exchange opportunities that allow for the sharing of

421   creative ideas about teaching Intro Psych would also be useful. Perhaps a larger

422   challenge is to convince more professors and TAs to attend these types of

423   teaching conferences.

424   4. *Maintain current knowledge of psychology through journal articles focusing on*

425   *the theory and scholarship of the practice of teaching*. Some journals already

426   include regular features about teaching Intro Psych (e.g., *APS Observer*, *Teaching*

427   *of Psychology*, as well as more specialized journals such as the *Psychology of*

428   *Women*). In addition, a variety of review journals offer integrated updates of the

429   field and can serve as excellent continuing education opportunities. Some of

430   these journals include *Annual Reviews of Psychology, Current Directions,* and

431   *Psychological Bulletin.* Once the findings of this BEA Working Group are

432   disseminated, a series of relevant journal articles seems appropriate.

433   5.   *Make use of the many on-line psychology teaching resources.* Information sharing

434   has become increasingly efficient through the various websites and internet-based

435   options available to psychologists. For example, the APA Division 2 Project

436   Syllabus could be used to model creative ways of organizing Intro Psych. The

437   expansion of a catalogue of useful internet-based resources is likely to be of value

438   to Intro instructors (http://intropsychresources.com/).

439   6.   *Create and use mentoring networks within national organizations and local*

440   *communities of learning.* Mentoring relationships can be useful for enhancing

441   creativity. The APA's Membership Board has created a group to put together a

442   set of recommendations for creating mentoring programs with APA divisions as

443   the target audience. Mentoring can also occur more locally, within colleges and

444   universities, for example.

445   7.   *Attend the many teaching-related workshops and conversations within one's local*

446   *teaching community.* Faculty from different fields and disciplines share common

447   challenges in teaching introductory courses, and interdisciplinary workshops that

448   focus on good pedagogy for the teaching of the social/natural sciences can be

449   quite valuable. Cornell College, for instance, is part of a multi-institutional

450   consortium that provides regular workshops on pedagogy, and "conversations

451   about teaching" are held routinely on the local campus. The University of

452   Chicago, for another instance, has a Center for Teaching and Learning

453   (http://teaching.uchicago.edu) that provides a wide array of classes, workshops,

454   resources, certification programs, and seminars to promote excellence in teaching.

455   Most institutions of higher education have programs to develop and support

456   excellence in teaching. However, many graduate students and faculty are

457   unaware of these programs, and many of those familiar with the programs do not

458   attend them.

459   8. *Read books on the scholarship of teaching and learning.* A variety of publishers

460   (including APA Press) publish excellent sources on teaching. In the future, a

461   book that provides examples based on the model that emerges from this BEA

462   Working Group may prove of value.

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