

Charting a Course for Introductory Psychology: Issues, Innovations, and Better Practices

General Psychology is ubiquitous on college campuses. One could argue it is the bedrock of the psychology major. The class provides a foundation for students in the major. What do we do know about how it is taught? What are different models of presenting information in the course? Are there optimal ways to assess knowledge and learning in the class? The call for a focus on General Psychology has its origins from the 2008 APA National Conference on Undergraduate Education in Psychology held at the University of Puget Sound (*Undergraduate Education in Psychology: A Blueprint for the Future of the Discipline*, Halpern, 2009), and the resulting APA Principles for Quality Undergraduate Education in Psychology (APA, 2011). While a recommendation from the Puget Sound Conference included modelling the General Psychology course to mirror the major (Dunn et al., 2009), there was insufficient information, and no discussion on how General Psychology could be strengthened. The American Psychological Association's Board of Educational Affairs charged two working groups to address the course. The BEA Working Group on Strengthening the Common Core of the Introductory Psychology Course, and the BEA Working Group on Introductory Psychology Assessment both advanced work on the topic providing instructors guidelines for content selection for the course and assessment possibilities but more was still needed. Recognizing this, the Committee on Associate and Baccalaureate Education (CABE) and BEA created a group to explore key questions related to general psychology. The General Psychology Initiative (GPI) brings together a group of psychologists who can identify the learning goals and outcomes and related assessments, Course Models and Design, Teacher Training and Development, and Student Success and Transformation. The APA General Psychology Initiative will make recommendations for the future of the teaching of General Psychology. This project will take place over a 30-month period and began in March 2018. It will culminate at the APA Convention in Washington DC, in August 2020, in the form of a pre-conference General Psychology Summit. In this presentation I will provide a comprehensive review of scholarship related to the introductory psychology course, discuss current practices and provide a thorough review of the work of GPI to date. I also provide four major recommendations for future research on the general psychology course. In particular, I will highlight the need for multi-site studies, measures of moderators of learning, assessment of long-term retention, and the testing of different models of teaching general psychology.