

## **Educational Psychology Graduate Certificate 2016-2017**

The University of Arkansas Graduate Certificate program in educational psychology prepares graduates for evaluating educational or training programs, consulting with schools about implementing teaching and testing changes, and consulting with business and industry regarding implementing changes or evaluating programs. Graduates of this certificate program develop a foundational understanding of educational psychology theories, application of theory to educational practices and evaluation, and methods for identifying issues that arise in the learning process for learners of all ages.

An assessment of the effectiveness of the program would include students' ability to:

1. Compare psychological theories
2. Apply psychological theories to student or client behaviors
3. Design and conduct research to test hypotheses in the field of educational psychology
4. Critique interpretations made by others in the field

In order to assess the effectiveness of the student training in the EDPY graduate certificate program this year, we aggregated student data from course projects, research / scholarship activities, academic or professional awards, and degree completion.

### **Changes Planned Based on Assessment Findings**

Currently, there are no students enrolled in this certificate. The Educational Statistics and Research Methods faculty are currently completing a reconstruction of this certificate to create a certificate that better meets the needs of potential applicants in our community.

We first worked on diagnosing potential problems, and then developed a plan for identifying solutions. The first issue related to viability was that we did not have a faculty member to oversee the educational psychology certificate and teach the required coursework. We addressed this problem in 2016 by hiring a new faculty member specializing in the field of educational psychology who now oversees these responsibilities and is rebuilding the coursework in this area. She began in 2017 and has taken oversight of the certificate by advertising the certificate coursework via email, meeting with faculty members from interested disciplines individually (e.g., engineering education, education policy), and completing brown bag talks. Especially after the brown bag talk with the Educational Policy group, there was increased interest in the certificate. Furthermore, the ESRM program chair and the educational psychology faculty member are currently setting up meetings with department heads with a student body that are likely to be interested in the certificate (e.g., Curriculum and Instruction, Psychology, etc.).

However, during many of these outreach efforts and through discussions with our department head, an issue of the alignment of coursework with the level of the certificate was identified. This certificate is currently listed as a post-masters' certificate which only allows students who have completed their masters' degree to apply. However, the majority of the courses are at masters' level with two doctoral level research methodology courses included.

It was decided that the course be adjusted to be a masters' level certificate in which students can enroll after completion of their bachelors' degree. The doctoral level research methodology

courses will be replaced with masters' level research methodology courses that students taking the four educational psychology courses will be more prepared to complete. This certificate will now be available for a wider range of potential students, including those currently completing a masters' degree. The changes have been voted on by the ESRM faculty (December 2016) and are being submitted to the Graduate School and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education for approval.

The educational psychology faculty member has worked with the ESRM group and University Relations to create printable and electronic versions of an advertisement of the certificate. Although we have already discussed the current requirements with relevant faculty members, we are dispersing the advertisement once we finalize our suggested program changes.

Last, in the spring of 2016, the ESRM program was externally reviewed and we received very constructive feedback with regard to our certificate program. The reviewers noted that the "certificates are relatively new, but each are well conceived and have an appropriate curriculum", "have the ability to draw outside students into ESRM courses and thus strengthen the scholarship of those students", "offer opportunities for recruitment into the doctoral program", and "help to highlight the benefits of having a program like the ESRM program for the broader campus". The main finding of the educational psychology certificate analysis was "currently, there is a graduate certificate being offered that focuses on Educational Psychology. This certificate came into being in 2012. However, for 2.5 of the years since 2012, there has been no faculty member in the department with Educational Psychology expertise. This clearly explains the lack of student interest in this particular certificate. Clearly, with Dr. Cambria's arrival and her ability to teach the relevant courses, interest in this area will grow."