Reimagining How We Teach Introductory Psychology: Support for Instructors Adopting the Recommendations of the APA Introductory Psychology Initiative

William S. Altman, Melissa J. Beers, Elizabeth Yost Hammer, Erin E. Hardin, and Jordan D. Troisi

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Reimagining How We Teach Introductory Psychology: Support for Instructors Adopting the Recommendations of the APA Introductory Psychology Initiative

William S. Altman1, Melissa J. Beers2, Elizabeth Yost Hammer3, Erin E. Hardin4, and Jordan D. Troisi5

1 Psychology and Human Services Department, SUNY Broome Community College
2 Department of Psychology, The Ohio State University
3 Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Faculty Development, Xavier University of Louisiana
4 Department of Psychology, University of Tennessee Knoxville
5 Center for Teaching and Learning, Colby College

The future of the Introductory Psychology course rests on the ability of its instructors to teach in ways aligned with our field’s learning objectives, using evidence-based practices to engage and inspire their students. In this article, the Teacher Training and Development Team of the American Psychological Association’s Introductory Psychology Initiative (IPI) provides models that will enable both novice and experienced instructors to integrate IPI’s student learning outcomes and offers examples of assignments that instructors can adopt immediately. Concrete examples will help Introductory Psychology instructors find practical ways to enhance their teaching and to help their students achieve greater success in learning both the skills and content of psychological science. Finally, the team offers suggestions for chairs, developers, and course administrators to support the instructors teaching in their institutions in aligning their courses with these objectives. They also provide recommendations for training and professional development more broadly, to provide sustained support that will enable Introductory Psychology instructors to maintain and expand course changes over time.

Keywords: Introductory Psychology, course design, teaching of psychology, Introductory Psychology Initiative, professional development

Teaching Introductory Psychology is hard to do. Introductory Psychology is an intimidating course, and not just for the students, but for those of us who teach it as well. The course includes massive amounts of information, primarily from parts of the field that are outside the instructor’s specific area of expertise. In addition, because Introductory Psychology is one of the most popular courses on any college campus and at many high schools, instructors serve a wide variety of students who have a little scientific background and may come to the course with many misconceptions (Beers et al., 2021). Furthermore, because the introductory course is often required

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to William S. Altman, Psychology and Human Services Department, SUNY Broome Community College, P. O. Box 1017, Binghamton, NY 13902, United States. Email: altmanws@sunybroome.edu
by majors other than psychology, students may represent a wide range of majors and levels of interest in the subject matter and represent all possible forms of diversity. In addition, sections of the course can vary in size from small, seminar-like groups to massive lectures serving 1,500 students or more. For reasons such as these, Introductory Psychology is a tough course for most instructors to prepare for and to teach. Compounding this complexity, the course is frequently taught by graduate students or early-career teaching professionals with little teaching training or experience, and in high schools by teachers who were not specifically trained as psychologists. Further, it is rare that instructors at any level have been trained specifically to teach Introductory Psychology.

Yet, in thousands of classrooms every day, teachers arrive to help their students learn the science of psychology. They come, some with years of experience, some with none, but all with a fascination for the field, and with a fervent wish to help their students learn, understand, and apply as much as they can. What considerations must we make to help these teachers fulfill this important, some might say sacred, duty? We will begin with an overview of the American Psychological Association’s Introductory Psychology Initiative (IPI) and its most significant recommendation for Introductory Psychology, new student learning objectives.

Supporting a New Framework for Introductory Psychology

Professional development is important for success in any field. With regard to Introductory Psychology instructors, it is critical. In this regard, we must acknowledge three salient points. First, teacher training in higher education, teacher training in psychology, and teacher training in Introductory Psychology at the collegiate level are for most instructors lackluster at best, and absent at worst. While there are many reasons for this, more importantly, we wish to propose remedies for this state of affairs. Second, despite a flourishing field of textbooks, psychology has lacked a comprehensive, student-centered framework for teaching the Introductory Psychology course. Third, we lack a framework or methods for providing training and professional development for teachers of this specific course. Together with other members of the IPI, our group, the Teacher Training and Development Team, has proposed such a framework to support instructors who teach the Introductory course, so they may understand and align instruction with the goals and objectives developed by the IPI (see Beers et al., 2021). What we propose is no small task for instructors, institutions, and the field of psychology. That is exactly the reason why this article is needed and needed now.

Learning Objectives and Integrative Themes

Deciding what material and skills need to be taught and how to assess whether students have been successful in learning them are among the most difficult, yet critical things we do. Coladarci (1956) argued that we should think of teaching as a continual process of hypothesis testing. That is, we have some goals that we want our students to achieve, and we design our course as a set of interventions that we evaluate for their effectiveness in achieving those goals. Because Introductory Psychology is such a foundational course, and because situations in which it is taught are often very different, the IPI list of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) should serve as the basis of any Introductory Psychology course design.

The Student Learning Outcomes

1. Psychology Content: Identify basic concepts and research findings:
   1. Define and explain basic psychological concepts.
   2. Interpret research findings related to psychological concepts.
   3. Apply psychological principles to personal growth and other aspects of everyday life.

2. Scientific Thinking: Solve problems using psychological methods:
   1. Describe the advantages and limitations of research strategies.
   2. Evaluate, design, or conduct psychological research.
   3. Draw logical and objective conclusions about behavior and mental processes from empirical evidence.
   4. Examine how psychological science can be used to counter unsubstantiated statements, opinions, or beliefs.
3. Key Themes: Provide examples of psychology’s integrative themes:
   A. Psychological science relies on empirical evidence and adapts as new data develop.
   B. Psychology explains general principles that govern behavior, while recognizing individual differences.
   C. Psychological, biological, social, and cultural factors influence behavior and mental processes.
   D. Psychology values diversity, promotes equity, and fosters inclusion in pursuit of a more just society.
   E. Our perceptions and biases filter our experiences of the world through an imperfect personal lens.
   F. Applying psychological principles can change our lives, organizations, and communities in positive ways.
   G. Ethical principles guide psychology research and practice.

Take these SLOs and themes as a starting point for building Introductory Psychology courses.

Building or rebuilding an entire course around them might look like a pretty daunting task. To help you make it easier, we next suggest ways to streamline this process.

Course Design or Redesign for Introductory Psychology

We developed and presented workshops at several regional and national teaching conferences to help instructors use the IPI’s recommendations to design or redesign aspects of their Introductory Psychology courses (e.g., Altman & Beers, 2019; Altman & Hardin, 2019). These workshops were based on ideas from The Ohio State University’s University Center for the Advancement of Teaching (UCAT), as well as from Fink (2003), Hardin (2018), McTighe et al. (1999), and Wiggins et al. (2005). Here, we share the basic components of these workshops as a course design process, to allow readers to reconsider their own courses, either independently or perhaps in collaboration with a small group of peers.

The IPI’s recommendations are centered on the idea of backward design. While many seasoned professionals are well aware of this approach to course design, many more, especially those who were not well trained before teaching, are not. This was made evident by the reactions of the participants in our workshops, as well as those in many teaching workshops and courses the authors have conducted over many years. Instructors often approach designing new courses in a forward design manner by focusing first on the content they will cover and the teaching and learning activities they will include, then assessing what students learned. Backward design begins with a focus on learning objectives and on the skills, knowledge, or values with which instructors want students to leave the course at the end (Bowen, 2017; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Backward design encourages intentionality in the planning and delivery of a course, and careful and thoughtful alignment of instruction and assessment. Over time, and with successive iterations of teaching a course, instructors continuously work to better align and improve learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment to produce significant learning experiences (Fink, 2003).

The Backward Design Process

1: Intentionally Reflect on Your Introductory Psychology Course Context. Because all teaching and learning take place in a certain context, the first step in any course design or redesign process should be to examine carefully the context in which one is teaching. One of the challenges in teaching Introductory Psychology is the vast array of course sizes, institution types, student motivations, and levels of instructor autonomy. These considerations represent what Fink (2003) refers to as situational factors. Thus, instructors designing or redesigning their courses should assess the particular challenges—and opportunities—they face. This would be a good opportunity to engage with a teaching expert in your department or an educational developer at your university teaching center and to consider factors in your environment you may not have previously considered. For example, questions you may reflect on could include:

- Are General Education or other goals required in your course?
- What prerequisite(s) does your course meet?
- How big is your course, and what kinds of facilities are available for you to teach in?
With salient situational factors in mind, comes.

What are your options for the frequency and duration of class/lab meeting times?

Are your students majors/potential majors, nonmajors, or both?

In what way might your students use what they have learned in your course in the future?

What is the composition of students in your course in terms of age, race, gender, and ethnicity?

What constraints might your students have in terms of access to resources (technology, time, etc.)?

Are graders, teaching assistants, or other helpers available to assist you in teaching this course?

Are you the primary troubleshooter, or do students have others to whom they can turn if they run into difficulty with a problem in your course?

What campus supports or resources (if any) would be appropriate for your students in this course?

These are only a few questions you might consider, and there are likely others. Conferring with colleagues, supervisors, or teaching consultants will help you achieve the broadest view of your own context as you prepare to design or redesign your course within it.

2: Prioritize and Incorporate Key Learning Outcomes. With salient situational factors in mind, and the challenges and opportunities that accompany them, the next step is to reflect on the key learning outcomes for your course. The SLOs and themes recommended by the IPI were developed through a backward design process that emphasizes the kinds of enduring understandings with which students should leave the course. While we recommend that instructors incorporate as many of IPI’s recommended SLOs as possible, how they do that may vary considerably. For example, instructors designing the Introductory Psychology course from scratch could incorporate many or all of the SLOs from the beginning. However, those who have been teaching the course for some time may be better off modifying their course bit by bit, to keep things manageable, prioritizing those SLOs that most closely match their existing course structure, and incorporating the others over a period of time. Course design is an iterative process, and changes can be made and evaluated over time.

The simple process of reflecting on key outcomes benefits students because it helps instructors identify or improve ways to enact the goals in their own courses. As a starting point, we recommend reflecting on the question, “In 6 months or 6 years, what do I want my students still to know or be able to do?” For each answer you come up with, ask yourself, “Why? Why is that important for students to know or do?” Continue interrogating each answer with another “why” until you feel you have arrived at the essential pieces for your Introductory Psychology course. For example, many instructors will say that helping students think critically is a key learning goal for the course, but after exploring why this is important, may arrive at deeper goals such as “making better decisions.” With such a deeper, more life-long goal in mind, the IPI’s Student Learning Outcome 2.2, helping students “evaluate, design, or conduct psychological research” often takes on new meaning and purpose. Moreover, by highlighting these critical outcomes (e.g., helping students think critically about scientific evidence so that they can make better decisions or improve their communities), instructors can more readily identify which course content best helps achieve these outcomes and which details might be de-emphasized or skipped entirely.

Some instructors may have a high degree of autonomy in identifying or establishing learning outcomes for their course. However, the reality is that many instructors, particularly graduate student teachers, high school teachers, and contingent faculty may be provided with established learning objectives for their courses that were written by someone else. This is often the case when Introductory Psychology serves a General Education requirement within an institution, or if the Introductory Psychology course has been aligned with specific program goals or with the APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major (2013). Even if you do not have the opportunity to fully develop or completely revise your own learning objectives, taking time to reflect on the importance and meaning of all the objectives in your course is an indispensable step in planning a course that will fulfill those objectives for your students, and can help you see
opportunities to incorporate IPI objectives or key themes as you are able.

3: How Will You Know Students Have Met These Objectives? Planning Assessment. Having reflected on critical learning outcomes within a particular context, an instructor can next consider ways to align assessments with those outcomes. As described below, these assessments may take many forms, ranging from low-stakes formative assessments embedded within a single class session or course module to higher-stakes summative assessments that might reflect course-length projects. From a backward design perspective, the key to aligning learning goals with assessments is to ask, “What evidence would I accept that students have achieved this learning outcome?” The answer often helps instructors identify not only particular assessment strategies, but teaching strategies, as well. For example, an instructor might decide that having students raise critical questions about information they encounter in their daily life would be evidence that they have achieved the goal of thinking critically. This, in turn, may lead an instructor to create classroom activities in which students are presented with (or invited to find) popular press headlines trending in social media (perhaps related to that unit’s content focus) and asking students to generate questions about them (e.g., “What is the evidence? Is a causal conclusion appropriate here? Is this claim consistent with what I know about how [development, cognition, the brain] works?”).

4: What Content Supports Students in Meeting the Learning Objectives?. In contrast to the forward-design approach which begins with content, it is at this point instructors should turn to the specific content of the course and reflect on ways to teach and assess the critical SLOs within each content area. Thus, rather than asking, “How do I cover all the information in the learning chapter in the time I have?” instructors can ask, “How can I use the content in the learning chapter as a vehicle for one or more of these learning goals?” In any introductory course, the amount of content we could possibly teach is enormous and constantly changing as new research develops. Thus, learning specific facts is far less important than being able to leverage different kinds of information toward one or more objectives.

Given that teaching contexts are highly variable, we know not all instructors have complete dominion over the content required to be covered in their courses. Instructors teaching in contexts with less flexibility around content coverage may need to focus on ways in which to infuse the learning goals into their course structure. For example, rather than teaching the basic vocabulary and process of classical conditioning because students need to know it to meet a content-focused learning goal, instructors might teach classical conditioning as an example of a general principle that governs behavior (cf., SLO 3.B) or as a way for students to understand their own reactions or ways they might change behaviors in themselves or others. This embraces SLO 1.3 (Apply psychological principles to personal growth and other aspects of everyday life). Having the deeper goal in mind can shift the ways in which we present or use the material in class, even as the actual content covered changes very little. Instructors with more autonomy might choose to focus less on basic vocabulary (“Do I really care if students remember what a UCS is in 6 months?”) and more on underlying processes (“What kinds of behaviors are learned through classical vs. operant conditioning?”).

Indeed, backward course design often leads instructors to redesign their courses around overarching themes and questions rather than specific content. For example, content related to learning and social influence can be used to answer a question such as, “How can I change someone’s behavior, including my own?” And content related to stress, coping, happiness, health, disorders, and treatment can all serve to answer the question, “How can I be happier and healthier?” (see Bernstein’s Mythbusting approach Bernstein, 2017; Bernstein et al., 2018; Nordmeyer et al.,’s 2018, 7 Big Ideas; Landrum’s, 2018, 5 Themes; and Gurung’s, 2017, Key Themes, for additional examples). Such overarching questions can allow instructors to incorporate the new SLOs by shifting the ways in which content is discussed without necessarily changing coverage itself or assessment strategies.

Instructors should also keep in mind that the IPI maintains the American Psychological Association’s earlier content recommendations. Gurung et al. (2016) identified five “pillars” of content in Introductory Psychology: Biological (neuroscience, sensation, consciousness), Cognitive (cognition, memory, perception, intelligence), Developmental (learning, lifespan development, language), Social & Personality (social,
personality, emotion, multicultural, gender, motivation), and Mental & Physical Health (abnormal, treatments, stress & health). They recommended that to ensure a broad and strong foundation for all students taking the introductory course, instructors should cover at least two topics from each pillar (Gurung et al., 2016). Thus, instructors can be strategic in the content they include to best serve the learning objectives, and not necessarily feel obligated to cover more than two chapters per pillar, or not even an entire chapter but rather select portions of each chapter to support the selected objectives.

These basic processes can be used to design or redesign an entire course or portions of existing courses. Below we describe in more detail ways in which instructors might design assignments that implement the IPI’s SLOs into their courses.

Developing Assignments

We recommend designing low-stakes and higher-stakes assignments in ways that allow students to apply the new SLOs. At the simplest level, instructors could use frequent low-stakes formative assessments to encourage students to identify examples of key themes in the most recently covered content. For example, an instructor might begin or end each class session with a minute paper asking students to discuss an ethical principle relevant to that day’s content (SLO 3.G) or to identify a psychological, biological, social, and cultural factor that influences the particular mental processes and behaviors discussed that day (SLO 3.C). Alternatively, an instructor could use a jigsaw approach to the latter theme, assigning each student one of the four factors to identify, and then regrouping students to share out across the four factors. Instructors could ask students in class or online discussions to identify ways that applying psychological principles can change our lives, organizations, and communities in positive ways (SLO 3.F).

Higher stakes or more summative assessments could also be used to help students achieve the new learning outcomes. For example, students could be asked to read an original source article relevant to the content at hand and write a paper or create a presentation that highlights their abilities to analyze or evaluate scientific investigations (SLO 2.2). Alternatively, students could Examine how psychological science can be used to counter unsubstantiated statements, opinions, or beliefs (SLO 2.4) relevant to that particular unit (either with the instructor providing the myth or claim or with students generating claims relevant to that unit). As another example, the fourth author implemented a self-reflection blog assignment in her fall course to help students apply psychological principles to personal growth and other aspects of everyday life (SLO 1.3) and recognize that applying psychological principles can change our lives, organizations, and communities in positive ways (SLO 3.F). At the end of each module (roughly equivalent to each textbook chapter), students submitted a paper in which they reflected on ways that they can apply the content in that module to (a) their success in college, (b) to their major or career, (c) to their life outside of school and work (e.g., personal relationships), and (d) to their understanding of some Big Problem (e.g., climate change or systemic racism). Details about the assignment are available here.

The assignments discussed so far include smaller and in-class tasks. In addition to using these kinds of frequent assignments to highlight the goals and learning outcomes within any particular course module, which would not necessarily require significant course redesign, instructors could also use more comprehensive semester- or term-long projects to instill and assess the SLOs.

Semester-Long Projects

Applying Social Influence: Designing a Cult

One way to unify material across chapters is to provide a capstone exercise, toward which the class builds during the course of the term. The first author uses this technique to help students integrate what they learn about perception, attention, cognition, memory, identity, social pressure, and many other topics (SLOs 1.1), which they will apply (SLO 1.3) as they decide whom to target, how to recruit adherents, and how to acquire and maintain long-term control, as a device to help students recognize principles of social influence at work in groups and teams in which they participate. It also serves as an organizing strategy for the course, piquing students’ interest unit by unit, as each concept is covered, and they speculate about how it will be used in creating the cult
nutrition control to reduce members and outsiders, using sleep deprivation and methods of recruiting adherents, mind control strategies, designing the facilities for feeding, housing, and working with members, control of communication with the outside world, security, and releasing adherents into the world. Students mine their notes and textbooks for examples from every unit of the course, to assist in the development of an effective cult. Examples include manipulating the perceptions of adherents and outsiders, using sleep deprivation and nutrition control to reduce members’ cognitive abilities, using shaping to control members’ behavior, and using the search for identity in adolescence as a key to finding recruits.

Once the cult is fully designed, the instructor draws parallels to other commonplace groups, organizations, and institutions (e.g., universities). It is often useful to point out how many members of the class already seem to have succumbed to the wiles of the “cults” in which they are immersed, as shown by wearing or using items with institutional or team logos, such as sweatshirts, notebooks, water bottles, pens, etc. Some students may begin to catch on at various points in the discussion, recognizing dormitories, dining halls, classes, and extracurricular activities. Some ex-military students are also likely to recognize many aspects of this exercise, in relation to their own training and service.

This leads to a discussion about the many kinds of organizations that operate in cult-like ways, and how students can guard themselves against being taken in. This is usually a lively part of the conversation, tying the exercise back to critical thinking beyond the classroom and how to use what has been learned in the course in students’ daily lives (SLOs 1.3, 2.3, 2.4, and 3.3).

This basic idea could be adapted to suit many kinds of course formats and contexts, with the central organizing theme of applying principles of social influence. In large or online courses where interactive discussion is a challenge, this exercise could be implemented as a weekly reflection or ongoing discussion board about understanding various forms of influence in students’ lives. While the idea of a “cult” has a dramatic flair, instructors might alternatively ask students to design a not-for-profit organization or a group to advance a pro-social cause to achieve the same thematic integration and focus on application in their courses.

**Scaffolded Hands-On Research Projects**

Another example of an assignment that fits several of the learning outcomes is a scaffolded, course-length, hands-on research project. This approach integrates the underlying foundation of basic content (SLO 1.1) and scientific thinking (SLOs 2 and 3.3) with the cross-cutting themes of ethics (SLO 3.3), application to daily life (SLO 1.3 and 3.3), and variations in human functioning (3.3). Depending on the project, it may also deal with countering myths or unsubstantiated beliefs (SLO 2.4), or with various aspects of diversity (SLO 3.3). The first author does this in his Introductory Psychology class. Rather than simply assigning a report or research article at the start of the term and waiting until the end for the students to produce their final reports, the project is scaffolded in several parts, each scheduled for specific due dates throughout the course. The current version of the project has students working in teams from the beginning, and the instructor provides coaching about working successfully in teams.

**Procedure.** Each stage of the process is graded, with rubrics that are available to the students before they begin. Students can get critiques and guidance throughout the process and have the opportunity to rewrite their articles for improvement. The project proceeds as follows:

1. **Topics Paper:** Students develop a list of four or five research questions, based on a list of topic areas provided by the instructor. Currently, all topics include
some physiological measure (e.g., EEG, ECG, etc.). The instructor vets these research questions for suitability.

2. Thesis and Hypothesis Paper: Students choose one of their approved research questions, do a literature search, develop a hypothesis, and write what is essentially the introduction to a scientific article.

3. Research Proposal: Students add a method section to their Thesis and Hypothesis papers, designing an appropriate study for the investigation of their hypotheses.

4. Execution: Students carry out their studies and analyze the data.

5. Presentation: Students create a conference-style poster and present it to the class and visitors (e.g., other instructors, administrators, staff members, students’ friends) at the end of the term. Having to present energizes them to want to “show their stuff,” as one student put it.

Projects have covered a broad range of topics, including the effects of texting on driving ability (using a driving simulator, of course); the effects of different kinds of music, comfort foods, or other stimuli on stress; evaluations of readability scales; and the effects of various approaches to studying. Visiting alumni have mentioned not only how much fun they had while working on the projects, but also how they have used the skills they acquired in their further studies or doing their jobs.

This project creates an opportunity for students to gain experience in conducting research, but not all course formats are able to accommodate such an approach. Recall that according to SLO 2.2, students should have an opportunity to evaluate, design, or conduct research—not necessarily all three in one course. In course contexts where conducting research is not feasible, instructors could create opportunities throughout the term for students to evaluate the merits of various research designs or propose designs to test research questions. This can be accomplished as an online discussion board or with reflective prompts. Rather than relegating research methods to one unit at the start of the course, this approach meaningfully integrates methods throughout the course, and creates opportunities to connect with other SLOs and key themes, such as applying psychological principles to personal growth and everyday life (SLO 1.3), examining how psychological science can counter unsubstantiated claims (SLO 2.4), or the key theme that science adapts as new data develop (SLO 3.A).

**Big Problems**

Another type of full-term project involves asking students to use psychological science to address *Big Problems* throughout the term in order to help them see how applying psychological principles can change our lives, organizations, and communities in positive ways (SLO 3.F). For example, Freberg (2019) has students choose a Big Problem and each week of the term they write discussion posts about how recently covered content is relevant to the issue (see https://laurafreberg.com/blog/?p=3549). As another example, the fourth author has students work in groups to curate resources relevant to how psychological science informs understanding of issues such as climate change, systemic racism, and inequities in health or education (SLOs 1.3, 2.3, 3.E, and 3.F; see https://tiny.utk.edu/110BigProblems).

**A Cycle of Course Improvement**

What all of the examples shared in this section have in common is alignment to one or more of the IPI’s learning objectives. In considering how to adapt your course to integrate the IPI’s recommendations, begin by prioritizing one or more of the objectives (considering your course context, opportunities, and constraints), and then think of assignments and activities that align meaningfully with them. Approaches to course design can be as diverse and varied as the instructors and students who engage with Introductory Psychology themselves.

Remember, no course is ever perfect, and the best courses develop and evolve with each iteration. Assessment data can inform you about what students mastered and what could be improved in the next term. By following a continuous process of prioritizing key learning outcomes and aligning teaching and learning activities using feedback and assessment, instructors can continuously integrate and enhance their courses to achieve significant student learning (Fink, 2003).
How Can Chairs, Developers, and Course Coordinators Best Support Introductory Psychology Instructors?

In this section we turn away from the IPI’s recommendations for individual instructors, and toward our recommendations for the professional development needed to support the instructors who teach Introductory Psychology. Administrators should recognize that educational development is a specialized discipline focused on supporting and enhancing teaching and learning experiences in higher education (Amundsen & Wilson, 2012; Felten et al., 2007). It is an inclusive approach to supporting all who teach in colleges and universities including graduate students, contingent and adjunct instructors, administrative leaders, and tenure-track faculty (Little, 2014). With regard to Introductory Psychology, this also includes high school teachers. Training should be encouraged and available to any and all instructors of the course. Further, just as with the teaching of students, instructor training should have realistic, well-defined, specific, measurable objectives that are assessed regularly and that allow for continuous improvement. Training for instructors should be sustained and strategic, as opposed to “one-shot wonders” (Ferlazzo, 2018; Vega, 2015). Educational development is not an event, but a process that is relevant throughout an instructor’s career (Harwell, 2003), one that creates communities of support and innovation. Like students, teachers learn and develop over time, constantly integrating new insights into their thinking and classroom approaches, and they should be supported as they grow.

Our recommendations to support teachers of Introductory Psychology, based on the work of the IPI (see Beers et al., 2021) are as follows:

- Instructors teaching Introductory Psychology should receive training and support to develop content knowledge, course design expertise, strategies to support student skill development, and developing authentic, equitable assessments aligned with learning outcomes.

- Training offered to instructors of Introductory Psychology should share the following characteristics:
  - be driven by specific outcomes and objectives,
  - be regularly assessed and modified,
  - provide long-term, sustained training opportunities,
  - draw on evidence-based pedagogy,
  - model evidence-based pedagogical practices,
  - allow for the creation of communities of support and innovation, and
  - ensure institutional cultural relevance and alignment for equity and inclusion for all.

- To supplement formal training opportunities, sustained, collaborative networks and communities of practice are needed to support instructors in implementing their courses after IPI recommendations are adopted.

- Institutional and organizational support for change and innovation is needed to sustain change and support instructors over time.

Why should administrators and developers embrace these principles? For the vision presented by the IPI to be fully realized, instructors need relevant, high-quality training that embodies the components we propose. Teaching Introductory Psychology presents unique challenges for instructors and requires thorough and intentional training to be done successfully (see Beers et al., 2021). We hope that, in time, a series of workshops or “course design institutes” focusing on addressing and incorporating the recommendations of the IPI into courses and programs may be a recurring part of national and regional conferences, as well as departmental training programs.

There are many unique challenges to teaching Introductory Psychology. The breadth of content and skill development in this course requires just about any instructor to teach outside their expertise. Moreover, creating a unified course with the kind of integrative themes advocated by the IPI is a challenge that requires the ability to draw connections across ostensibly disparate topics and the ability to know which content not to cover to make room for these integrative themes. Finally, the different audiences in the course—majors, nonmajors, students fulfilling general education versus major requirements—can present additional
challenges as instructors strive to make the course relevant and meaningful to students with different goals and motivations. These are the challenges that Introductory Psychology instructors will meet and should be supported in meeting with ongoing training and development.

Conclusion

Our primary goal in this article has been to offer instructors support for incorporating the SLOs into their courses, and also to acknowledge that this is not a negligible task. Like the discipline of psychology itself, what we know about teaching and learning is constantly evolving. Reimagining the introductory courses requires that teaching professionals at every level be supported to adopt these changes and to enhance and enrich their teaching. We ask readers to remember that no matter how long you have been teaching Introductory Psychology, there is value in training and development. Central to the philosophy of our team is that the most valuable training experiences are not “how to” sessions that deal with learning to implement a particular technique or technology, or to advance a specific form of pedagogy. Rather, the development of effective teaching is a gradual process of inquiry and self-reflection. All teachers benefit from formal and informal opportunities to increase their skills and perspectives, to integrate outcomes, to acquire new teaching strategies, and to generate and use assessment data. Teachers of Introductory Psychology especially need such support given the breadth, scope, and complexity of the course. We urge departments and institutions to invest in the breadth, scope, and complexity of the course.

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