

Psychology 300, Online Degree Completion Program Assessment

In order to better understand how those outcomes came to be, our Teaching & Learning Innovations & Extended University leadership group conducted a retrospective analysis of the process. We reflected on the entire process of moving the program from an off site, in person program (Goleta) to fully online. In all, this process took place over about 2 years. Addressing the challenges in a single high DWF class does not happen in isolation, with a single faculty member, or with a single intervention. This understanding comes from both our successes with this program and past experiences, and it is reinforced by scholarship in our field.

Leadership

Our team included Megan Eberhardt-Alstot, Lead Learning Designer, Jaime Hannans, Associate Dean of EU, Lorna Gonzalez- Director of Digital Learning & me as Dean of EU and Digital Learning.

Learning Design

In addition to supporting the leadership and change management aspects of this project, TLI spearheaded a comprehensive design effort for the entire Psychology program.

A **need analysis** was conducted in three ways. First, the learning design team (TLI) collected and reviewed syllabi and existing versions of on-ground courses to prioritize areas of need and make recommendations from a learning design perspective. These foci included consistency across the program, development of a learner profile (to know who we would be designing learning experiences for), learning technologies, desired improvements from the on-ground program (e.g., lab experiences), etc. Second, the learning design team (TLI) met with faculty and discussed these same areas of need to build out the roadmap. Third, the learning design lead and faculty lead completed a needs analysis questionnaire to familiarize our third party learning design partners with agreed upon needs and values.

A **standardized program shell** (template) for the Psychology program was created based on faculty input by a learning designer. This shell provides a consistent, branded experience across all courses, offering visual uniformity and common navigation. This reduces cognitive load for students by offering a familiar structure in all courses, enabling them to focus on content rather than navigation. The template for the Psychology program provides a common home page and is based on a 16-week module structure, with the first module including course introductions and student support information (basic needs, LRC, WMC, etc). This integration of information across all courses means students don't have to search for support, as they know where to find it regardless of the class they are taking.

Before building out the courses, program faculty collaborated with TLI to select a **common suite of academic technologies** for use in their courses. The program identified a need for a tool not currently offered by TLI. TLI then procured this tool, ensuring it met all necessary standards and that support was available for easy integration into the courses. The common academic technology suite simplifies the learning process by eliminating the need to learn new technologies for each course, and also supports faculty by including technical support for the suite in the course template as needed.

Each course in the program was assigned a lead faculty member, who was the content expert and was expected to teach the course in the upcoming semester. Working with a learning designer, the faculty member reviewed the course content and developed a **storyboard** for the course. This process involved **weekly discussions** and refinements to ensure alignment with the learning outcomes. For courses with heavier workloads, additional consultations were held to ensure student success was achievable. This approach allowed faculty members to reassess the scope and sequence of their courses. It's important to note that this experience was a professionally developmental one for the faculty, as they were asked to consider each element of their course design and facilitation values. Likewise, the faculty were accountable for meeting deadlines and coming prepared to meetings in order for the project to stay on schedule.

After the courses were storyboarded, the program template designed, and the academic technology suite selected, external learning designers were hired to build the courses in Canvas. Following construction, the courses were reviewed by the lead faculty. After faculty approval, TLI conducted a quality review using the **QoLT rubric** and performed an additional **accessibility check** to ensure that each course was (mostly) accessible.

These final products are considered the course shells. Moving forward, these **complete shells** will be pushed to the live courses in Canvas each semester. This process allows the instructor of record to update and personalize the course without having to build from scratch. These shells are accompanied by a support guide, written by TLI, with detailed instructions about how to personalize the shell, where to find support, and what additional learning design opportunities are available at CSUCI. This approach ensures program continuity and reduces faculty workload in setting up their course each semester. It also addresses some of the concerns expressed by the Psychology faculty regarding course quality as they hire new personnel for specialized areas.

The next step involves TLI setting up a course review process to ensure each course shell is regularly updated.

Collaboration

Building on existing relationships and past collaborations laid a strong foundation for our endeavor. We established a close partnership with the Psychology program, fostering mutual trust and a willingness to take risks together. Moreover, we reached out to other collaborators to address specific challenges that arose during our discussions.

From day one, the faculty members teaching Psychology 300 and 301 expressed concerns about their ability to effectively teach these courses online. While the redesign portion was helpful, these concerns still lingered. Recognizing the need for further support, we decided to collaborate with the Learning Resource Center (LRC) to embed a peer tutor into our courses. This decision was a natural progression, given our prior collaboration with the LRC on projects like EPEC, as well as Psychology's expressed interest in peer mentors and tutors. Given the academic nature of the challenges faced by our students, and known high DFW rates for the EU and Stateside section of this course, our team met with Brook Masters, who identified an excellent peer tutor to be embedded in all three course sections. The faculty

members had exceptional experiences working with the peer tutor, leading them to request a peer tutor in each section moving forward. Unfortunately, the faculty that taught with the embedded tutor were not able to participate in the EPEC program.

The other partner we used extensively in this work was Institutional Research. While they may not know they were a partner, the collaborative work they have done with TLI and the support they have provided EU gave us the necessary data to move forward with the project. As we support this cohort we are able to examine cohort outcomes, course outcomes over time, and we are getting close to being able to easily track cohort retention.

Two-plus years of development are challenging to sufficiently capture the many components that contribute to success in PSY 300. You can see that there were many challenging moments along the way that threatened the project, but the combination of committed, capable leadership, professional learning design, and collaboration built on trust and shared goals were mission critical. We look forward to debriefing further with the Department as well to assure the success can be sustained.

Below are the pass rates for the EU sections of this course over the past three years.

Post-Transition

Fall 2023 Pass Rate: 92.5%

Pre-Transition

Fall 2022 Pass Rate: 71%

Fall 2021 Pass Rate: 77%