



# **Best Practices for Teaching Beginnings and Endings in the Psychology Major: Research, Cases, and Recommendations**

*Dana S. Dunn, Bernard B. Beins, Maureen A. McCarthy, IV, G. William Hill, James Goodwin*

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Introductory and capstone experiences in the undergraduate psychology program are crucial ways to engage students in their major and psychology department, impart realistic expectations, and prepare them for life beyond college. Providing the right orientation and capstone courses in psychology education is increasingly a concern of instructors, department chairs, program directors, and deans, and both types of courses have become important sources for gathering pre- and post-coursework assessment data for degree learning outcomes. The strategies presented here have been designed to help educators examine issues around teaching the introductory or careers course and developing a psychology-specific orientation program. The authors also provide concrete suggestions for building capstone experiences designed to fit the needs of a department, its pedagogical philosophy, or the educational agenda of the college or university.

Undergraduate psychology curriculum designers and instructors can benefit from learning innovative and effective strategies for introducing the major to first-year students and, at graduation, for bringing closure, reinforcing the overall departmental learning outcomes, and helping students apply their disciplinary knowledge in capstone experiences and post-graduate life. In this collection of articles, psychology instructors involved in the improvement of teaching and learning review the research and share their own successes and challenges in the classroom. Discussions include effective practices for helping students become acclimated to and engaged in the psychology major, application of developmental knowledge and learning communities to course design, and use of quality benchmarks to improve introductory and capstone courses. Other chapters describe innovations in the design of stand-alone courses and offer concrete advice on counseling psychology graduates about how to use what they have learned beyond their higher education experiences.

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