

Department of Psychology
March 1, 2015

Proposal for an Accelerated Professional Psychology Degree Plan in Psychology

Description

An increasing number of ACU departments and programs are offering qualified undergraduates the opportunity to integrate undergraduate and professional training by counting graduate course work toward both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Other prestigious universities are also following this path. Currently the number of graduate hours accepted toward ACU undergraduate degrees range from 6 to 24. The Department of Psychology is proposing to offer an integrated Accelerated Professional Psychology Degree Plan (APPDP) which will permit qualified students to count up to 24 hours of graduate study toward elective hours in the BS in Psychology and toward University general electives.

The 24 hours of graduate course work will be chosen from the required courses in the MS degrees in Counseling Psychology and Clinical Psychology and in the Specialist in School Psychology degree. Students who participate in this degree plan may take up to six semester hours of graduate work in the Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters after they have achieved 90 semester hours with an undergraduate GPA of 3.5. Students will be advised to take no more than 12 hours including the graduate courses in a regular semester and will not be permitted to take more than 15. Students will be awarded their BS degree upon completion of 128 hours.

Rationale and advantages

The most important advantage of the APPDP is that it will change the relationship between undergraduate and professional study in psychology at ACU. Beginning with degree advising in their first year psychology majors will be able to see their ACU career as a seamless program concluding in a respected professional credential. This is the professional aspiration most often expressed by beginning psychology majors. For the students who choose the APPDP we believe that the choice will change the way they view their undergraduate years from being "more school" to "professional training."

The fact that ACU undergraduates will be able to elect graduate courses will enhance the challenge of their undergraduate experience.

We believe the APPDP is a unique opportunity for students which will be a strong advantage for recruiting students to ACU who might otherwise choose competing schools. It will also be a strong incentive to ACU undergraduates to continue at ACU for professional training. No other “competitor” institutions have similar programs.

We have an advising and course scheduling plan to integrate 18 graduate hours into students’ degree programs in Fall 2015. Beginning in Fall 2016 the flexibility to add the additional 6 hours will allow us to create a true BS + MS integrated program so that students can achieve a professional degree and be eligible to apply for licensure in 5 years. The APPDP will allow us to accomplish this within a developmentally sound “ACU experience.”

Catalogue text — Accelerated Professional Psychology Degree Plan

Students who are committed to pursuing graduate training as a professional counselor or to pursuing doctoral study in psychology may participate in the Accelerated Professional Psychology Degree Plan (APPDP). Students who meet the admission requirements for the APPDP may take up to 24 hours of graduate course work in their senior year. The graduate course work will count toward both the undergraduate degree and toward an ACU masters degree in psychology.

Interested students may seek pre-admission to the APPDP after they have completed 30 semester hours. Students must apply for full admission to the ACU Psychology graduate program in the Fall semester after they have completed 60 hours and have a GPA of 3.50.

When accepted into the APPDP and after they have completed 90 semester hours, students may take six hours of graduates course work in the Summer and six graduate course hours in each of the Fall and Spring semesters. No more than 12 hours per semester – 6 undergraduate and 6 graduate hours – is recommended. However, no student may take more than a total of 15 hours in either the regular Fall or Spring semesters. Graduate courses will count as general electives or electives in the psychology major and may not be substituted for required courses in the psychology major. Individual students' academic programs must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies of the department each semester a student participates in the APPDP.