

Department Profile: Brooklyn College, City University of New York

January 22, 2002

Brooklyn College is one of the senior colleges of the City University of New York (CUNY). Situated on nearly 30 acres of broad lawns ringed by Georgian-style buildings in the Midwood section of Brooklyn, the college is one of the nation's leading academic and research institutes with a total student population of roughly 15,000, some 12,000 of whom are undergraduates. The Department of Psychology is one of the largest in the college with 27 full-time faculty, more than 800 undergraduate majors, and over 150 graduate students. Currently our faculty hold in excess of four million dollars in research grants and contracts.

The department has an interesting history. Over the years it has been the intellectual home for such illustrious psychologists as Abraham Maslow, Solomon Asch, Harry Helson, Heinz Werner, and Hal Proshansky. In its current incarnation, the department is broad-based with a deep commitment to research and teaching across a wide variety of areas in psychology. The primary focus is experimental but our sense of this term includes empirical and theoretical work in such diverse areas as basic and applied developmental psychology, social and evolutionary psychology, physiological foundations of behavior, health psychology, behavior genetics, color vision, psychology and the law, organizational behavior, cognitive and neurocognitive approaches to learning and memory, robotics, and psychoanalysis.

This background and intellectual heritage has made its mark. According to data collected by the National Science Foundation, between the years of 1966 and 1999, Brooklyn College was fourth in the nation in awarding undergraduate degrees to students who later went on to complete the doctorate in Psychology.

Undergraduate Program

The undergraduate major is a traditional one, designed to present psychology broadly as both a social and a natural science. In addition to standard course work, students are offered a range of opportunities to do independent research with faculty members. These opportunities run the gamut from "hands-on" laboratory work in neurophysiology to summer-long internships in developmental disabilities. As noted above, a high proportion of students take advantage of these opportunities and go on to advanced training in the field with remarkable frequency.

The Department also sponsors a successful Psi Chi chapter, an active undergraduate Psychology Club with its own colloquium series, and an academic mentoring/counseling program.

Masters Program

The Department has two programs leading to the MA degree, one in Experimental Psychology and one in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. The former is strongly focused on research and, in terms of course work, is roughly equivalent to the first 30 credits of the Ph.D. degree. The latter is an applied program with two tracks, one that focuses on Organizational Behavior and the other on Human Relations Training.

Graduates of the Experimental program tend to move into careers in pure or applied research or to continue with their education in doctoral programs. Graduates of the I/O programs typically have careers in applied settings in human resources and human relations, management consulting, and organizational development, typically starting with entry-level executive positions. A significant number also go on to further graduate training.

Doctoral Program

The Ph.D. Program is in Experimental Psychology and is one of ten specializations in psychology offered through the Graduate School of the City University of New York (CUNY). This consortial arrangement means that many of our faculty have supplemental appointments in other CUNY programs and that students may take courses and receive training in any of the other subprogram settings through the university. Additional arrangements with NYU and Columbia allow for cross-registration in course work. This unique educational setting provides for the broadest possible scope of training.

The Department's overall philosophy is to focus on experimental and theoretical approaches to psychology, considered broadly. First-level courses, usually taught as small lecture sections, cover basic areas. Advanced courses, usually in the form of seminars, focus on special topics in current research areas. Most are taken here at Brooklyn College, others elsewhere in the other nine subprograms and the facilities of the nearby Health Science Center of the State University of New York (Downstate Medical School). Each student's program is individually tailored to his or her interests and career goals.

The program stresses research experience. Students conduct research under the supervision of faculty advisors throughout their graduate careers. Besides acquiring skills specific to their research interests, students are also strongly encouraged to become familiar with sophisticated computer, mathematical, and statistical techniques relevant to a wide range of research problems.

Teaching experience is also encouraged. Students' financial support typically involves teaching undergraduate courses under the supervision of the faculty. The program includes a seminar on teaching and focuses attention on the professional possibilities and demands in settings both inside and outside of the university. These activities have led to a high rate of professional success for our graduates. A survey of our recent doctorates reveals that in the last 10 years, of the 25 doctoral degrees we conferred, 100 percent are employed in jobs related to their doctoral training: six hold tenured professorships in college and universities; six are on tenure-track lines; two hold postdoctoral fellowships; four hold research associate positions, and six work in various areas of applied psychology.

The demands of research, course work, and teaching ordinarily require that the program be restricted to full-time students. To facilitate the education of our doctoral students, the program has traditionally provided financial support to all who are admitted.

Department and Graduate Program Faculty

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Affiliated Faculty

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General issues

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Doctoral Program

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