

Psychological Services for Spanish-Speaking Populations Program

(PSSSP) - Department of Psychology

Our Lady of the Lake University

San Antonio, Texas

"... working with the PSSSP program the last two years, I have witnessed the impact such training has on the quality of services provided. Beginning with the initial phone call, clients are able to speak with a trained Spanish-speaking therapist. The process of therapy also is culturally congruent for Latinos. Rarely are individual clients seen for therapy, instead extended families are able to attend sessions.... the PSSSP program at OLLU is unique within the field of psychology. Hopefully the PSSSP program will serve as a model for training programs nationwide.

--Carrie Castañeda, PhD, faculty at Our Lady of the Lake University

Meeting the Needs of the Community

A 1996 survey conducted by the Psychology Department at Our Lady of the Lake University revealed that of the 300 bilingual licensed psychologists in San Antonio, Texas only 11 actually offered services in Spanish. Of these, nine felt that they had received inadequate graduate school training in providing services in Spanish.

The Psychological Services for Spanish Speaking Populations Program grew out of graduate students' concerns that they were inadequately prepared to provide professional services in Spanish and a recognized need in the local community for bilingual therapists. "I don't want to hear about another family that has to draw a picture to explain a feeling or bring in a janitor to translate things to a therapist who can't understand them. That shouldn't be happening anymore," said former graduate student Selia Servín-López during a 2001 interview for *Monitor on Psychology*.

Key Program Elements

Offered through the Department of Psychology at Our Lady of the Lake University as a certificate to participating master's and doctoral students, the PSSSP offers core courses taught in Spanish or bilingually. These courses encompass 21 semester hours and include Latino psychology, theories of multicultural counseling and a rigorous professional/technical Spanish class designed to teach students how to think theoretically in Spanish. Students must also spend at least eight hours a week at a bilingual practicum site for three consecutive semesters and spend a semester supervising others at a bilingual site. Most students fulfill these requirements at the university's own clinic, which is located in the heart of San Antonio's barrio.

National Context

Meeting the needs of Spanish speaking patients continues to be a challenge when there are small numbers of Latino and other Spanish speaking students in graduate psychology programs. The American Psychological Association (APA) indicated that Hispanics

comprised only 6% of all incoming psychology doctoral students in 2002-2003. The same year fewer than 5% of new doctorates in psychology were awarded to Hispanic students and less than 1% of psychology practitioners were Hispanic, according to the APA Employment Survey.

In the 10 years since the development of the PSSSP, the representation of Hispanic students admitted to the Psy.D. program at OLLU has increased from 18% to 42%. Further, since 2002 (when the first cohort of students graduated), , 39% of master's degrees in psychology and 42% of the graduates in the counseling psychology program (PsyD) at OLLU have been Hispanic. As a result, OLLU ranks as one of the top institutions awarding graduate degrees to Latinos in psychology.

Increased representation, graduates, and research

Beyond its positive impact on student outcomes, the implementation of the PSSSP program has focused faculty and student research and scholarship on topics related to Spanish-language services and training bilingual students. Faculty and students have published articles in refereed journals, submitted manuscripts for publication, and presented papers or workshops at professional meetings regarding the training model. All faculty members in the Psychology program are strongly committed to preparing culturally competent practitioners.

For more information about this program, contact:

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