The rapid increase in the Hispanic population in the United States has resulted in a greater need for appropriate mental health services, especially for those who require services in Spanish. The OLLU psychology department began offering Spanish language supervision of Spanish language psychological services in the mid-1980s. We observed that many students who were heritage speakers of Spanish did not take advantage of the opportunity for training to provide services in Spanish because their Spanish “wasn’t good enough.” We also concluded that supervision alone was not sufficient to produce graduates who were fully competent to provide professional services in Spanish.

Initially, we hired a visiting professor from Mexico to supervise the Spanish language team at CCS and to consult with faculty regarding the development of a training program. We conducted surveys of our bilingual graduate students and psychologists in the San Antonio region. Of the 300 bilingual licensed psychologists in San Antonio, only 11 actually offered services in Spanish. Of these, the nine who responded to the survey all said that they had received inadequate graduate school training in providing services in Spanish.

On the basis of the established need and survey results, the OLLU Psychology faculty developed the PSSSP program, which from its inception has had the goal of training mental health professionals who are equally competent to provide services in Spanish and English.

A unique feature of the PSSSP program is that the core courses are taught in Spanish or bilingually. These courses include a technical Spanish course taught by a faculty member from the Spanish Department, a course focused on service delivery in Spanish, and a culture and language immersion course taught in Mexico. A course in Latino Psychology is required for all doctoral students and is taught in English. Students spend a minimum of 8 hours per week at a bilingual practicum site for four consecutive semesters, including one semester of supervised supervision of Spanish language service. Optional practica in Mexico or other Spanish speaking countries are available. To date, more than 150 students have completed the immersion course in Mexico.

In 2002 the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funded the development of the Communicative and Cultural Competency for Mental Health Providers (CCC-MHP) training program. The CCC-MHP project offered training to mental health providers. The outcome evaluation for the CCC-MHP program indicated that participants gained confidence in their ability to deliver mental health services in Spanish, increased their competence in delivering services in Spanish, improved their conversational proficiency, and increased the amount of time they thought in Spanish when conducting interviews in Spanish. The CCC-MHP Instructors Manual, which includes a Spanish/English Glossary of Terms can be found on the psychology department web page on the OLLU web site at ollu.edu.

Since implementing the PSSSP program, the percentage of Hispanic students admitted to the PsyD program has risen from 18% to 42%. Data collected by the American Psychological Association indicated that Hispanics comprised only 6% of all incoming psychology doctoral students in 2002-2003. The APA 2001 Employment Survey found Hispanics comprised fewer than 5% of the new doctorates in psychology. Since 2002 (the first year that students who entered the program after the inception of the PSSSP program graduated), 42% of the PsyD program graduates have been Hispanic. Also, since 2002, 78 of 198 masters degrees in psychology were awarded to Hispanic students, representing 39% of the degree recipients.

The composition of the faculty in the graduate programs is also diverse, including full-time and adjunct faculty who are bilingual and/or culturally competent practitioners. Currently, 2 of the 5 full-time faculty members in the PsyD program are Hispanic and 4 of the remaining 7 full-time faculty in the Psychology Department are Hispanic. All faculty members in the Psychology program are strongly committed to preparing culturally competent practitioners.

Faculty and student research and scholarship include topics related to the Spanish language services and training bilingual students. Faculty and students have published in refereed journals and presented papers or workshops at state, regional and national professional meetings on our training model. To date, the program has also generated five doctoral dissertations directly related to Spanish language services. The APA Monitor published a feature story on the program (http://www.apa.org/monitor/feb01/bilingual.html) in 2001. The PSSSP certificate may be earned as an elective concentration in both the MS and PsyD programs. Master’s degrees are offered in Counseling Psychology, School Psychology and Marriage and Family Therapy.
OLLU was able to obtain federal funding to expand the training to undergraduates and to postgraduate professionals. Funding for the development of the undergraduate biliterate (dual language programs) was provided by the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE). Students in the biliterate programs take specialized Spanish classes and fulfill a portion of their general education and major/minor requirements by taking courses taught in Spanish. Information about the biliterate programs is available at the OLLU web site.

New Faculty Profile:
Carrie Castañeda-Sound, PhD

After graduating with my PhD in Counseling Psychology in 2005, I entered the job market with the hopes of attaining my first academic position. I was ecstatic when I realized that Our Lady of the Lake University had an opening in their PsyD program. As a graduate student in Utah, I had heard about the PSSSP program and even considered attending their summer program. I just knew I had to apply for the position even though it would take me even further away from my family in California.

After 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. Finally, in my experience the Spanish-speaking clients are returning to subsequent sessions, reflecting a decrease in a traditionally high drop-out rate. Unfortunately, the PSSSP program at OLLU is unique within the field of psychology. Not only is there a great need for Spanish-speaking therapists, but it is critical that these therapists be trained. Hopefully the PSSSP program will serve as a model for training programs nationwide.

Psyd Student Profile:
Mónica Escamilla, MS

Spanish is my first language and along with many immigrants I struggled with the translation of not just language but of cultural practices. As my life developed in this new country I made efforts to hold on to my Hispanic roots while learning to navigate the majority culture with its unique beliefs, practices, food, celebrations, and idioms of the new language. During my graduate studies I was drawn to Our Lady of the Lake due to its unique focus on addressing the needs of Spanish-speaking populations. I was excited about the opportunity to learn how to address the needs of this population within their worldview and not impose on them the further stress of being misunderstood.

The training I received was essential in my growth as a therapist. While I was aware of my cultural practices and values and spoke the language I had been missing key pieces. I gained a professional vocabulary that allowed me to appropriately communicate theory and assessment terms with other professionals and clients. Further I learned about choosing appropriate psychological assessment measures, modifying the structure of sessions, paying attention to unique family dynamics, and the incorporation of cuentos, reforanes, and dichos in therapy sessions.

I now take great pleasure in sharing what I have learned with the students I supervise at the clinic and when speaking at workshops and seminars. The Spanish-speaking population is quickly growing in the U.S. Understanding the unique challenges they face and learning how to use the distinctive array of coping mechanism and resources they possess can only enrich our work.

Publications


Dissertations


Certificate Coursework Required

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<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>PSYC 5377 G</td>
<td>Professional/Technical Spanish</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSYC 8331</td>
<td>Language and Psychosocial Variables in Interviews and Assessments with Latinos</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSYC 8356</td>
<td>Normal Family Processes Across Cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 8430</td>
<td>Socio-cultural Foundations of Counseling Mexicans and Mexican-Americans</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSYC 9356</td>
<td>Latino Psychology</td>
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Practica
Must spend a minimum of eight hours per week at a bilingual practicum site for three consecutive semesters. An optional practicum in Mexico or other Spanish-speaking country may be arranged.