

# PsyD in Clinical Psychology

## Research Sequence and the Doctoral Dissertation

The program views research training as a means of enhancing students' critical thinking skills as well as their understanding of scientific approaches to disciplined psychological inquiry. Our research opportunities have been expanded by the establishment of the Center for Behavioral Health Innovation (BHI) and the Antioch University New England Multicultural Center.

The dissertation and research components of the program are overseen by the Director of Research.

Our goal is to help students learn disciplined inquiry and experience research as an interesting and meaningful tool relevant to their professional interests to become local clinical scientists. As such, we encourage students to engage in research consistent with their career goals and, of course, to be good consumers of the research literature. In addition, our goals include: (a) providing students with basic knowledge of the ways evidence can be used to publicly support a theoretical viewpoint, both with colleagues in the mental health community and in the literature; (b) instilling an attitude of healthy skepticism toward clinical theory, scientific research, and their own clinical observations; and (c) developing a sense of personal responsibility and authority in determining the adequacy of particular applications of psychological knowledge and in developing well-articulated, supportable accounts of local clinical events.

The research curriculum begins with a course in Tests and Measurements in Psychology, which covers basic applied statistics and measurement theory. It continues with a two-semester sequence entitled Research Methods and Statistics I and II, which continues statistical training and familiarizes students with philosophy of science, the logic and design of formal experimental and naturalistic field studies, quantitative and qualitative techniques, program evaluation methodologies, and the ethics of research. In keeping with our overall philosophy, effort is made throughout to make explicit linkages between this material and the realities of professional practice.

The process of developing a dissertation begins during the second year research sequence, and continues throughout the third and fourth years with Doctoral Research Seminars I, II (1 credit each in fall and spring of Third Year), and III, IV (2 credits each in fall and spring of Fourth Year). In these seminars, a small number of students (typically three to four) work with a faculty advisor/mentor to complete the dissertation. These seminars provide a support and consultation group wherein students share ideas, progress, dilemmas, and experiences in developing and executing the dissertation, and, in both group and individual meetings, they can draw on the expertise of the faculty in addressing the research areas of their choosing.

The core faculty leaders of these seminars are assigned at the beginning of the second semester of the second year, on the basis of student preference in the context of equitable distribution of faculty workload. Each of these faculty serve as the student's Dissertation Committee Chairperson as well as the student's advisor.

## The Doctoral Dissertation

The PsyD dissertation is viewed primarily as an educational vehicle that contributes to the development of a

practitioner with the knowledge and skills of a scholar, capable of bringing scientific inquiry into the various realms of professional psychology. Purposive, disciplined inquiry and formal research for the PsyD are seen as integral to, rather than distinct from, his or her professional practice in real, locally meaningful situations. The dissertation is viewed as both an educational process, contributing to the practitioner's professional development, and a distinct contribution to identifiable domains of professional psychological practice and/or scholarship.

The dissertation process asks students to integrate specific areas of psychological theory and research, which are consonant with their professional mission, with a repertoire of scholarly and scientific methodologies in order to develop answers to a set of problems. Our students are encouraged to tap into a broad range of research questions and methods in their consideration of the dissertation design. Examples of projects a student might pursue include empirical studies, theoretical papers, program evaluations, integrative case studies, design and implementation of innovative programs, and public policy issues. The dissertation should seek to inform an identifiable audience. Students are expressly required to identify exemplars within the current psychology and social science professional literature (e.g., published journal articles and book chapters) upon which to model their dissertations. These dissertations range in length from approximately sixty to one hundred pages.

A wide range of dissertation topics is allowed.

Policies and procedures surrounding the dissertation process are detailed in the Clinical Psychology Handbook.