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## Competencies Acquired in the Psychology Major

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COMPETENCIES ACQUIRED IN THE PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR

**Competencies Acquired in the Psychology Major**

A Thesis Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Designation  
University Honors

Jake Harrington  
University of Northern Iowa  
May 2023

COMPETENCIES ACQUIRED IN THE PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR

This Study by: Jake Harrington

Entitled: Competencies Acquired in the Psychology Major

has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation  
University Honors

Approved by:

Adam Butler, Honors Thesis Advisor

Dr. Jessica Moon Asa, Director, University Honors Program

## **Abstract**

The psychology undergraduate degree is not linked to any specific occupation in the same sense as other degrees, such as accounting or education. The lack of a clear connection between the psychology degree and distinct employment opportunities can make it difficult for stakeholders, such as prospective students, their parents, and even faculty, to develop a clear understanding of which careers psychology students are prepared for after graduation. Until these stakeholders are given a framework to conceptualize the degree's benefits better, the psychology department may fail to optimize its recruitment of valuable young minds into its ranks; furthermore, prospective students may fail to consider the bright future that comes from graduating with the degree.

By determining which competencies or clusters of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) that are acquired while completing the psychology degree, this study attempts to reduce the ambiguity surrounding the skills value of the degree. This study surveyed psychology students and faculty to gauge the perceived usefulness of individual competencies during the completion of the undergraduate psychology degree. While our findings indicate that many competencies are useful in completing the undergraduate psychology degree, about a dozen appear to be useful and essential. Due to specific competencies being useful or essential to the completion of the degree, it would stand that those competencies are also the most likely to be acquired or improved upon while working toward graduation. Our findings' implications and potential uses are likely beneficial to higher education institutions, students, and employers.

## Introduction

The field of psychology is often viewed as a versatile and intriguing discipline that provides a deep understanding of human behavior and the mind, and is an attractive area of study for prospective students. However, unlike other degrees such as accounting or education, a psychology undergraduate degree does not lead to a specific occupation. This lack of clarity about the specific career opportunities available to psychology graduates can be a barrier for prospective students, their parents, and even faculty in understanding the benefits of pursuing this degree. Despite the need for data on this topic, almost no research has been done regarding competencies acquired within the undergraduate psychology degree.

To address these issues, my study attempts to identify the competencies or clusters of knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired during a psychology degree's completion. Identifying the competencies acquired can help reduce the ambiguity surrounding the skills value of a psychology degree, highlight the most important competencies that students are likely to acquire or improve upon during their studies and help fill the significant knowledge gap surrounding this topic.

This study's findings are significant for universities and prospective and current students. By providing a clearer framework for understanding the benefits of a psychology degree, this study sheds light on the valuable skills and knowledge that psychology graduates possess, and highlights the potential for a bright future in many occupational fields.

Understanding the competencies acquired during the completion of a psychology degree is valuable for several reasons. First, it can provide a clear framework for stakeholders to better conceptualize the degree's benefits, including prospective students, their parents, and faculty members. Second, it can help psychology departments optimize their recruitment efforts by highlighting the valuable competencies and skills that students acquire during their studies. Finally, it can help psychology graduates understand the specific competencies that they possess, making it easier for them to articulate their skills and experience to potential employers. Overall, a clear understanding of the competencies acquired during a psychology degree can help to reduce ambiguity surrounding the degree's value and benefits.

## **Literature Review**

Significant confusion exists among the public regarding the value of the psychology undergraduate degree, and there is a need for a more formal emphasis on the unique skill sets that the degree provides graduates (American Psychological Association, 2013). Despite an understood need for this information and the American Psychological Association (APA) having set forth learning goals for the psychology degree, very little research has been done into the competencies acquired by psychology students while completing the undergraduate degree.

Competencies and competency models have been used in numerous ways within academia and other organizations for decades. For instance, some academic institutions have utilized competency-based education (CBE) for more than 40 years, but usually to increase access and decrease student costs (Klein-Collin, 2013). Within the business world, competencies and competency models are much more common, as they are regularly used to hire, train, evaluate, and promote employees (Campion et al., 2011

The work most relevant to the present thesis is featured in a 2017 case study involving the application of CBE to an Introduction to Psychology course; in this case study, researchers looked to answer several research questions pertaining to the melding of CBE and more traditional education implementations. During the case study, researchers identified several competencies against which to assess student performance, such as scientific reasoning, professionalism, and application of applied content (Simonds et al., 2017). While this case study provides an excellent example of competencies being used in education, its scope is limited to only a single Introduction to Psychology Class.

When developing a competency model, it is important to understand the context in which it will be used; this ensures the final product is as useful as possible. During the modeling process, there are a number of best practices that can be used to guide the process; for example, determining the KSAOs that make up each competency, the levels of proficiency possible for each competency, and the total number of competencies that will make up the model. However, these steps for creating a competency model may not be effective if a traditional job analysis has not been completed (Campion et al., 2011). A traditional job analysis involves determining what competencies are required for a specific job, allowing the modeling process to be properly informed.

## **Method**

### ***Competency Surveys***

To find possible competencies that are useful for completing the undergraduate psychology degree at UNI, I began searching for lists of competencies that have already been identified within Industrial and Organizational psychology. I found two relevant competency libraries that were suitable for our purposes; one was freely available online (TMA, 2022); while a talent-management consulting firm developed the second proprietary library. Both competency libraries were crosschecked to eliminate any duplicates, leaving us with a list of 56 distinct competencies shown in Table 1.

***Table 1.***

<b>Competency Definitions</b>
<b>Accountability</b> Being accountable and passing on accountability for one's own actions and those of peers and an organization.

<p><b>Active Citizenship &amp; Community Engagement</b> Develops a consciousness about one's potential contributions and roles in the many communities one inhabits, in person and online, and takes action accordingly. Actively engage with the communities in which they are involved. Build awareness of how communities impact individuals, and how, in turn, an individual impacts, serves, and shapes communities. Evolve their awareness of culture and power in community dynamics.</p>
<p><b>Adaptability &amp; Flexible Behavior</b> Adapts and responds well to change. Manages pressure effectively and copes well with setbacks. The ability to change one's behavioral style and/or views in order to attain a set goal.</p>
<p><b>Administration &amp; paperwork</b> Handling paperwork requirements; performing day-to-day administrative tasks such as reviewing assignments, going through e-mail, and so on; keeping accurate records.</p>
<p><b>Ambition &amp; Need to Achieve</b> The drive to climb up, to pursue an education or career, to strive for success and make an effort to achieve this. The need to set high standards for one's own performance, to show dissatisfaction with average achievements.</p>
<p><b>Analysis &amp; Problem Analysis</b> The ability to detect problems, recognize important information, and link various data; to trace potential causes and look for relevant details.</p>
<p><b>Assertiveness</b> The ability to bring one's views across clearly without damaging the relationship with the other party.</p>
<p><b>Attention to Detail</b> The ability to process detailed information effectively and consistently.</p>
<p><b>Building Working Relationships &amp; Building Trust</b> Developing and maintaining smooth and effective working relationships with professors, peers and co-workers; displaying personal concern for others; backing up and peers as appropriate; and encouraging and fostering cooperation between peers.</p>
<p><b>Business Acumen</b> The ability to recognize opportunities for new services and products and to act accordingly, taking measured risks into account.</p>
<p><b>Career-Focused Development</b> The life-long growth process involving the search for, and acquisition of, new knowledge, skills, and abilities that are beneficial within work and education.</p>
<p><b>Coaching</b> Training, coaching, and developing the abilities of others.</p>
<p><b>Communication</b> Communicating effectively and keeping others informed: Communicating orally and in written form; keeping others informed; and obtaining and then passing on information to those who should know</p>
<p><b>Conduct</b> Making a good first impression and sustaining it for a long time.</p>
<p><b>Conflict Management</b> The ability to handle conflicting interests diplomatically and to help solve them.</p>
<p><b>Contributing to Team Performance &amp; Cooperation</b> The ability to work effectively with others in order to achieve a shared goal - even when the object at stake is of no direct personal interest.</p>
<p><b>Courage</b> The ability to take risks in order to benefit (in the long run).</p>
<p><b>Creativity/Innovation &amp; Creating and Conceptualizing</b> The ability to come up with original and innovative ideas and solutions, to adopt points of view outside the usual parameters.</p>
<p><b>Decision Making &amp; Decisiveness - Translating Strategy into Action &amp; Problem solving</b> Making sound and timely decisions, paying attention to and taking into account all relevant information in making decisions and developing effective solutions to organizational problems.</p>
<p><b>Delegating</b> The ability to assign responsibilities and authority to the right people.</p>



<p><b>Digital Literacy</b> Assess sources of information. Use technologies responsibly. Adapt tools to new purposes. Keep up with the evolving technology landscape.</p>
<p><b>Discipline</b> The ability to adjust to existing rules, procedures and policy. Finding reinforcement from the right authority when in doubt.</p>
<p><b>Energy</b> The ability to be active for a long period of time when required; having stamina.</p>
<p><b>Ethical Reasoning &amp; Decision Making</b> Recognizes ethical issues arising in a variety of settings or social contexts, reflects on the ethical concerns that pertain to the issue and chooses a course of action based on these reflections.</p>
<p><b>Focus on Quality &amp; Workmanship</b> Setting high quality standards and striving for continuous improvement and quality assurance.</p>
<p><b>Forming Judgment</b> The ability to balance facts and potential approaches taking the appropriate criteria into account.</p>
<p><b>Functional/Technical Knowledge &amp; Skills</b> Keeping up-to-date technically, solving technical problems, possessing sufficient technical job knowledge to perform effectively in own specialty and providing technical advice to others in an organization.</p>
<p><b>Inclusion &amp; Diversity</b> Understand how culture affects perceptions, attitudes, values and behaviors. Recognize how social structures and systems create and perpetuate inequities, resulting in social and economic marginalization and limited opportunities.</p>
<p><b>Independence</b> The ability to perform actions and make statements that reflect an opinion or view of one's own; not to fawn.</p>
<p><b>Influence &amp; Persuasiveness</b> Persuading others in an organization to accept own good ideas, presenting own positions clearly and decisively and arguing effectively for position when appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Initiative</b> The ability to recognize and create opportunities and to act accordingly. Rather starting something than waiting passively for it to happen.</p>
<p><b>Innovative Power &amp; Innovation</b> The ability to direct one's inquisitive mind toward initiating new strategies.</p>
<p><b>Insight</b> Having and gaining insight into situations, problems and processes. Deconstructing problems and systematically investigating the various components. Having a complete picture of the context and overview of the whole problem.</p>
<p><b>Integrity</b> Adherence to the standards, values and rules of conduct associated with one's position and the culture in which one operates. Being incorruptible.</p>
<p><b>Leading &amp; Deciding</b> Builds and maintains collaborative relationships based on the needs, abilities and goals of each member of a group. Understand their own roles and responsibilities within a group and how they may change in differing situations. Are able to influence others. Takes control and exercises leadership. Initiates action, gives direction and takes responsibility.</p>
<p><b>Learning Ability</b> The ability to absorb new information readily and to put it into practice effectively.</p>
<p><b>Listening</b> The ability to show one absorbs and understands important verbal information and to ask further questions when necessary.</p>

<p><b>Managing Others</b> The ability to manage and take charge of others in order to enhance their performance</p>
<p><b>Negotiating</b> The ability to obtain maximum results from meetings in which interests conflict both in terms of content and maintaining good relations.</p>
<p><b>Networking &amp; Expanding Professional Networks</b> The ability to develop and maintain relations, alliances and coalitions within and outside an organization and to use them in order to obtain information, support and cooperation.</p>
<p><b>Oral &amp; Written Communication</b> Have proficiency in, knowledge of, and competence with the means of communication (Including relevant language and technical skills). Ensure that communication is functional and clear.</p>
<p><b>Organizational Commitment</b> Working effectively within the framework of organizational policies, procedures, rules and so on; carrying out orders and directives; and supporting reasonable policies of higher authorities in organizations.</p>
<p><b>Organizational Sensitivity</b> Showing awareness of the consequences of one's choices, decisions and actions for parts of or the entire organization.</p>
<p><b>Performance Management</b> The ability to control the progress of employees' processes, tasks, or activities and of one's own work and responsibilities.</p>
<p><b>Perseverance</b> Persisting with extra effort to attain objectives and overcoming obstacles to get the job done.</p>
<p><b>Planning &amp; Organizing</b> The ability to determine goals and priorities and to assess the actions, time and resources needed to achieve those goals.</p>
<p><b>Interacting &amp; Presenting - Formal Presentations</b> The ability to present ideas and plans clearly, using available resources.</p>
<p><b>Project Management</b> Planning, Organizing, Process Management, Managing and Measuring Work.</p>
<p><b>Result-Orientedness</b> The ability to take direct action in order to attain or exceed objectives.</p>
<p><b>Self-Development</b> The ability to gain insight in one's identity, values, strengths and weaknesses, interests and ambitions and to take action in order to enhance one's competencies where and when possible.</p>
<p><b>Sensitivity</b> Being susceptible to the attitudes, feelings, or circumstances of others and being aware of the influence of one's own behavior on them.</p>
<p><b>Sociability</b> The ability to be comfortable in people's company, to meet people easily, to mingle freely.</p>
<p><b>Social Awareness</b> Being aware of relevant social, political and professional trends and developments and using this information for an organization's benefit.</p>
<p><b>Stress management</b> Recognizing and responding effectively to unexpected situations, handling crises and stress calmly and effectively, responding well to tight time deadlines and addressing conflict appropriately.</p>

**Expression- Written & Verbal**

The ability to communicate in clear language and to adjust one's use of language to the audience's level. The ability to express ideas and views clearly to others in writing.

**Vision**

The ability to step back from one's daily routine, explore ideas for the future, regard the facts from a distance and see them in a broader context or in the longer term.

IRB-approved protocols were used for this study. The first step was to turn the list of 56 competencies into a survey. An initial paper and pencil survey was used to discard any competencies that were either not applicable to the psychology major or were otherwise superfluous. Using this first survey, I hoped to shorten the final surveys I would later send to larger groups. For use in later analysis, I would collect the usefulness data for each competency that wasn't discarded. I distributed this survey to professors at UNI (N = 4) who have a background in Industrial and Organizational Psychology or were otherwise qualified to provide useful input. All four copies of the survey were completed and returned, with the professors rating each competency on whether it was Useful and Essential (2), Useful (1), or Not Useful (0) for completing the psychology major.

Upon receiving the results of the initial faculty survey, I summed the responses for each competency to develop a sense of each competency's possible usefulness. I decided that any competency that received a sum of fewer than four points and received two or more zeros would be eliminated from the competency list. The elimination of the competencies that were deemed not useful was done to reduce the overall length of future surveys, which I hoped would yield an increased response rate. Based on the resulting analysis, I dropped the seven competencies shown in Table 2. Most of the dropped competencies were specific to business or to managing others within an organization.

**Table 2.**

<b>Discarded Competencies</b>
Business Acumen and Business Orientation
Coaching
Courage
Delegating and Empowering Others
Managing others
Negotiating
Performance Management and Controlling Progress

I then developed our final instruments, both of which were online surveys featuring the remaining 49 competencies, this time asking both students and faculty to rate each competency on whether it was Useful and Essential (2), Useful (1), or Not Useful (0) for completing the psychology major. These surveys were identical; however, the student survey forwarded participants to a web form that allowed them the chance to collect minimal compensation. I used survey and statistics software to build these new surveys in a digital format so they could easily be sent to larger groups. One survey was sent to professors (N = 8) within UNI's Psychology department that were not participants in the initial survey. In contrast, the other survey was sent to senior students (N = 119) completing the psychology major at UNI.

## **Results**

I took the data from the original faculty survey and combined those responses with the second faculty survey; however, the discarded competencies from the first faculty survey were not included. The combining of this data was done to increase the number of overall faculty responses that could be analyzed. In total, I received six completed faculty surveys out of 12 for a response rate of 50%. I received 35 completed student surveys out of 119 for a response rate of

29%. Upon receipt of the completed faculty and student surveys, I completed a statistical analysis of the results. For each item on the survey, I looked at the mean response, standard deviation, and the percentage of respondents who selected either Useful and Essential (2) or Useful (1), as seen in table 3.

**Table3.**

<b>Descriptive Statistics and Percent of Competencies Rated Useful</b>						
<b>Competency</b>	<b>Students</b>			<b>Faculty</b>		
	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>%</b>
Accountability	1.77	0.43	100.0	2.00	0.00	100.0
Active Citizenship & Engagement	1.31	0.68	88.6	1.33	0.52	100.0
Adaptability & Flexible Behavior	1.89	0.32	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Administration & Paperwork	1.66	0.54	97.1	1.33	0.82	83.3
Ambition & Need to Achieve	1.66	0.48	100.0	1.50	0.55	100.0
Analysis & Problem Analysis	1.80	0.41	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Assertiveness	1.49	0.51	100.0	1.50	0.55	100.0
Attention to Detail	1.77	0.43	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Building Relationships & Trust	1.71	0.46	100.0	1.17	0.41	100.0
Career-Focused Development	1.83	0.38	100.0	1.17	0.98	66.6
Communication	1.89	0.40	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Conduct	1.51	0.51	100.0	1.50	0.55	100.0
Conflict Management	1.57	0.61	94.3	1.17	0.75	83.3
Team Performance & Cooperation	1.66	0.48	100.0	1.33	0.52	100.0
Creating and Conceptualizing	1.40	0.60	94.3	1.50	0.55	100.0
Decision Making & Decisiveness	1.69	0.47	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Digital Literacy	1.63	0.55	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Discipline	1.74	0.44	100.0	2.00	0.00	100.0
Energy	1.31	0.58	94.3	1.83	0.41	100.0
Ethical Reasoning & Decision Making	1.83	0.38	100.0	1.33	0.52	100.0

Expression- Written & Verbal	1.77	0.49	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Focus on Quality & Workmanship	1.57	0.56	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Forming Judgment	1.94	0.24	100.0	1.50	0.55	100.0
Functional Technical Knowledge & Skills	1.46	0.66	91.4	1.17	0.75	83.3
Inclusion & Diversity	1.57	0.61	94.3	1.67	0.52	100.0
Independence	1.91	0.28	100.0	1.50	0.55	100.0
Influence & Persuasiveness	1.31	0.68	88.6	1.00	0.63	83.3
Initiative	1.51	0.51	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Innovative Power & Innovation	1.69	0.58	0.9	1.17	0.75	83.3
Insight	1.74	0.56	94.3	1.50	0.55	100.0
Integrity	1.71	0.46	100.0	1.83	0.41	100.0
Interacting & Presenting	1.54	0.66	91.4	1.33	0.52	100.0
Leading & Deciding	1.46	0.56	97.1	1.17	0.75	83.3
Learning Ability	1.91	0.37	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Listening	2.00	0.00	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Networking & Expanding Professional Networks	1.51	0.56	97.1	1.33	0.82	83.3
Oral & Written Communication	1.80	0.41	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Organizational Commitment	1.71	0.52	97.1	1.33	0.52	83.3
Organizational Sensitivity	1.57	0.56	97.1	1.17	0.75	100.0
Perseverance	1.80	0.41	100.0	1.83	0.41	100.0
Planning & Organizing	1.86	0.36	100.0	1.83	0.41	100.0
Planning, Organizing, & Process Management	1.43	0.70	88.6	1.83	0.41	100.0
Project Management	1.46	0.66	91.4	1.67	0.52	100.0
Result-Orientedness	1.60	0.55	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Self-Development	1.77	0.43	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Sensitivity	1.77	0.43	100.0	1.33	0.52	100.0
Sociability	1.49	0.56	97.1	1.33	0.52	100.0
Social Awareness	1.66	0.48	97.1	1.33	0.52	100.0
Stress Management	1.86	0.36	100.0	1.83	0.41	100.0
Vision	1.63	0.60	94.3	1.67	0.52	100.0

According to the mean response scores for each competency on both the student and faculty surveys, all were deemed at least “Useful,” with an average mean response score being 1.6. In the faculty surveys, 41 of 49 competencies were rated as “Useful and Essential” or “Useful” by 100% of respondents. In the student survey, only 23 of 49 competencies were rated as “Useful and Essential” or “Useful” by 100% of respondents. However, 47 of 49 competencies were rated “Useful and Essential” or “Useful” by at least 90% of respondents in the student survey.

While the mean response scores for each competency could have fallen between 0-2, all scores ranged from 1-2. Students reported “Influence and Persuasiveness,” “Energy,” and Active Citizenship & Engagement” as the least useful competencies, all with a response mean of 1.31. Among students, the only competency to receive a perfect score of Useful and Essential (2) was “Listening.” Among faculty, the lowest rated competency was “Influence & Persuasiveness,” receiving a response mean of 1. Also, among faculty, “Discipline” and “Accountability” were the highest-rated competency, with a mean score of 2. The top 10 competencies for students and faculty can be seen in Tables 4 and 5, respectively.

**Table 4.**

<b>Top Competencies Identified by Students</b>			
<b>Competency</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>%</b>
Listening	2.00	0.00	100
Forming Judgment	1.94	0.24	100
Independence	1.91	0.28	100
Learning Ability	1.91	0.37	97.1
Adaptability & Flexible Behavior	1.89	0.32	97.1
Communication	1.89	0.40	97.1
Planning & Organizing	1.86	0.36	100

Stress Management	1.86	0.36	100
Career-Focused Development	1.83	0.38	100
Ethical Reasoning & Decision Making	1.83	0.38	100

*Table 5.*

<b>Top Competencies Identified by Faculty</b>			
<b>Competency</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>%</b>
Accountability	2.00	0.00	100
Discipline	2.00	0.00	100
Energy	1.83	0.00	83.3
Integrity	1.83	0.41	100
Stress management	1.83	0.41	100
Focus on Quality	1.83	0.75	83.3
Perseverance	1.83	0.41	100
Planning & Organizing	1.83	0.41	100
Adaptability & Flexible Behavior	1.67	0.52	100
Ambition	1.67	0.82	83.3

The top ten competencies identified by students all have expectedly high mean response scores, with an average response of 1.89, ranging from 1.83 to 2.00, as shown in Table 5. This data set also contains the smallest standard deviations within the student survey data, ranging from 0.00 to 0.38. Seven of the top competencies were rated as “Useful and Essential” or “Useful” by 100% of respondents, while the remaining three competencies came in at 97.1%.

The top ten competencies indicated by faculty have an average mean response of 1.83, ranging from 1.67 to 2.00. This data set has wider-ranging standard deviations of 0.00 to 0.82. Seven of the competencies were rated as “Useful and Essential” or “Useful” by 100% of respondents, while the remaining three were deemed “Useful and Essential” or “Useful” by



83.3%. Three of the items from both surveys appeared in both the student and faculty top 10 indicated competencies: “Adaptability & Flexible Behavior,” “Stress Management,” and “Planning and Organizing.”

## **Discussion**

According to the data collection and analysis, all competencies on the survey were deemed at least “Useful,” with an average mean response score being 1.6. The lack of any mean response score falling below “useful” is not entirely unexpected due to our initial survey being used to screen out the least useful competencies. These results indicate that a wide range of competencies is beneficial in the completion of the undergraduate psychology degree. The data analysis suggests that psychology students acquire a broad range of competencies during their studies, including knowledge in various areas of critical thinking, research, communication, and problem-solving skills, among others.

When comparing the results from the student survey to the faculty survey, it becomes apparent that each cohort has somewhat differing viewpoints on what types of competencies are most important to the completion of the degree, as all but three top indicated competencies were exclusive to either faculty or students. When looking at the top ten competencies indicated by students, it is clear that from the viewpoint of the students, the most important competencies are mainly academic skills such as “Listening,” “Forming Judgement,” and “Learning Ability.”

In juxtaposition to the student data, the faculty data appears to focus more closely on competencies that describe self-management, such as “Accountability,” “Discipline,” and “Perseverance.” The difference between each group's choice of most important competencies may stem from each individual's level of experience with the undergraduate psychology degree and their vantage point from within the educational system in general. While these differences

are significant, the fact that three competencies, “Adaptability & Flexible Behavior,” “Stress Management,” and “Planning & Organizing,” all fall within both faculty and students' top ten indicated competencies points to some overlap in viewpoint.

The standard deviations for each item on the survey also presented interesting insights. While a few competencies were entirely agreed upon by their respective cohort, most were not. The faculty data demonstrated notably more variability than the student data, which is likely due to the smaller sample size of the faculty survey. Among the student data, I observed the highest degree of variation in competencies that may not have a direct impact on the absorption of educational material. These competencies include "Active Citizenship & Engagement" (.68), "Planning & Organizing," and "Process Management" (.70), and "Project Management" (.66). Conversely, the least amount of variation within the student survey was observed in competencies that are widely valued in any organizational setting, such as "Forming Judgement" (.24), "Inclusion" (.28), and "Communication" (.32). These findings suggest that competencies that are necessary and ubiquitous for the completion of most organizational tasks will exhibit lower variance.

With the collection of the above data, I believe that a rudimentary core competency model can be assembled. Such a model should include multiple competencies that were highly rated by both faculty and students, especially those that appear in both the student and faculty top ten indicated competencies or otherwise received a mean response score of 1.5 or greater; an example of such a competency model can be seen in Table 6.

**Table 6.**

<b>Core Competency Model</b>						
<b>Competency</b>	<b>Student</b>			<b>Faculty</b>		
	M	SD	%	M	SD	%
Accountability	1.77	0.43	100.0	2	0.00	100.0
Adaptability & Flexible Behavior	1.89	0.32	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Ambition & Need to Achieve	1.66	0.48	100.0	1.5	0.55	100.0
Analysis & Problem Analysis	1.8	0.41	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Attention to Detail	1.77	0.43	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Communication	1.89	0.40	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Conduct	1.51	0.51	100.0	1.5	0.55	100.0
Decision Making & Decisiveness	1.69	0.47	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Digital Literacy	1.63	0.55	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Discipline	1.74	0.44	100.0	2	0.00	100.0
Expression- Written & Verbal	1.77	0.49	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Focus on Quality & Workmanship	1.57	0.56	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Forming Judgment	1.94	0.24	100.0	1.5	0.55	100.0
Independence	1.91	0.28	100.0	1.5	0.55	100.0
Initiative	1.51	0.51	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Integrity	1.71	0.46	100.0	1.83	0.41	100.0
Learning Ability	1.91	0.37	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Listening	2	0.00	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Oral & Written Communication	1.8	0.41	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Organizational Commitment	1.71	0.52	97.1	1.33	0.52	83.3
Perseverance	1.8	0.41	100.0	1.83	0.41	100.0
Planning & Organizing	1.86	0.36	100.0	1.83	0.41	100.0
Result-Orientedness	1.6	0.55	97.1	1.67	0.52	100.0
Self-Development	1.77	0.43	100.0	1.67	0.52	100.0
Stress Management	1.86	0.36	100.0	1.83	0.41	100.0

## Conclusion

As previously mentioned, the ambiguity surrounding the value of the undergraduate psychology degree is a concern for many stakeholders, including students, employers, and higher education institutions. To address this issue, my study explored the competencies acquired during the completion of a psychology degree and looked at potential uses for a competency model based on the collected data.

Within the data, 49 competencies evaluated in the students and faculty surveys were considered to be "Useful" or better. This suggests that a diverse array of competencies can contribute to the successful attainment of an undergraduate degree in psychology. These competencies are highly esteemed in various fields and can prepare psychology graduates with a broad range of career prospects.

There were contrasting perspectives between faculty and students regarding the most crucial competencies required for the successful completion of an undergraduate degree in psychology. Students placed great importance on academic skills. These competencies are crucial to academic excellence and are indispensable for students to accomplish their educational objectives. In contrast, the faculty data seemed to prioritize competencies that revolve around self-management. These competencies are critical for students to excel in their future careers and are highly sought after by employers.

The variability of responses in the student survey showed that there was exceptional agreement among the respondents regarding the importance of different competencies, except for a few that were universally agreed upon. The faculty data had more variability than the student data, likely due to the smaller sample size. Among the students, competencies related to non-academic skills had the highest degree of variation, while those related to widely useful

organizational skills had the least variation. This suggests that competencies that are necessary for most organizational tasks will have less variability in their perceived importance.

The development of a core competency model consisting of 25 items was based on an analysis of the raw data collected from the surveys. While the model is considered rudimentary, it lays a foundation for building a more sophisticated competency model that can be customized to address specific needs related to the psychology undergraduate degree.

### *Limitations*

With only six faculty respondents and 35 student respondents, this study suffered from small sample sizes. These small sample sizes can affect the accuracy and reliability of my findings, resulting in low statistical power and a likelihood of sampling errors. These sample sizes can also limit the generalizability of my results. Ideally, future studies of this nature will incorporate significantly larger sample sizes.

My core competency model was rudimentary. Future attempts at a competency model for the psychology undergraduate degree should be expanded and refined by incorporating additional data and feedback from students and faculty, as well as insights from industry professionals and employers. By tailoring the model to meet the specific demands of the undergraduate psychology degree, it can better equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in their future careers.

### *Importance of Work*

Understanding the competencies acquired during the completion of a psychology degree can have significant benefits for both the university and the students. For instance, the university can better convey the actual value of the psychology degree in terms of preparedness for future careers, thereby making it more appealing to potential students. This understanding can also

provide the psychology department with new avenues for designing learning opportunities and evaluating student performance.

Additionally, this information can be useful for students in a number of ways. For instance, students can use the data to assess their current competencies and identify areas for improvement. By understanding the competencies they possess and the ones required in their desired career, students can be better equipped to succeed in their chosen field.

Furthermore, student familiarization with competencies and competency models can lead to the use of a common language of competencies, providing students with an advantage in the job market. Being able to articulate their knowledge, skills abilities, and other beneficial characteristics in terms of competencies, a language that is familiar to employers, may increase their likelihood of being hired.

Finally, the competency model may help employers better understand the skills and competencies that psychology graduates possess and how they can contribute to their organizations. This can lead to a more efficient and effective hiring process, as employers can identify candidates with the right skills and competencies for the job

In conclusion, understanding the competencies acquired during the completion of a psychology degree can be highly beneficial for both the university, students and potential employers. The use of competencies provides a common language that can be used to evaluate student performance, design learning opportunities, and assess career readiness. It provides students with a framework for self-improvement and a language familiar to employers, increasing their likelihood of success in their chosen careers. Lastly, the implementation of competency models within higher education and the psychology undergraduate program may improve hiring practices by helping them select candidates with adequate skills for the job.

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