Proposal for a Psi Chi Collective Research Initiative and Research Collaboration with Psi Beta

Psi Chi now requires that schools applying for a charter provide their students with experiential learning and research opportunities, and this proposal supports Psi Chi’s view that research is an important aspect of undergraduate psychology education. Previously, I have argued (Grahe, 2010; Grahe et al. 2012a) that undergraduates can and should engage in collective undergraduate research projects in order to experience transformative educational benefits in addition to generating data that can meaningfully contribute to the advancement of psychological theory. Partly influenced by the successful involvement in collaborative teaching research projects organized by Alan Reifman (School Spirit Study Group, 2004; Grahe et al. 2012b) and partly motivated to address resource limitations inherent at teaching institutions, I started a pilot project called the Collective Undergraduate Research Project (CURP; <https://sites.google.com/a/plu.edu/curp/>). The website contains a short list of research questions that undergraduates are invited to answer as part of their research methods or capstone class projects. When I have offered this opportunity to my own students in research methods classes and to students interested working with me on their capstones, two thirds generally choose one of the provided questions for their own project. If replicated across institutions, the effects on sample size, power, and generalizability could be amazing.

At WPA, 2012, I learned that Psi Beta has conducted a national research project for three years. Each year, the national office publishes a question and invites Psi Beta chapters to contribute to the project. The purpose of this project is to allow members to engage in additional research opportunities, particularly those enrolled at institutions that do not include research courses in the curriculum. To date, they have collected data for three questions. These data sets represent contributions 10+ institutions with hundreds of participants. Because the purpose of the project is pedagogical rather than scientific, these data have hereto only been analyzed for local purposes and have not been published. However, the quality of the data and the findings are secondary to the demonstration that students are interested and willing to engage in a national research project. There are currently two other groups (Psych File Drawer, <http://psychfiledrawer.org/>; and the Open Science Framework, <http://openscienceframework.org/>) that are trying to replicate established findings. These are organized by leaders of our field and aimed at making important scientific contributions through replication of existing research. Presently, Brian Nosek (organizer of the Open Science Framework) has invited contributions from Psi Chi members on two research questions (see Nosek, 2012) specifically for this initiative. Psi Chi should adapt the existing models of collective undergraduate research to advance our strategic plan (leadership and diversity are both advanced with collective research) while fostering contributions to the field of psychology.

In addition to the OSF projects, I propose that Psi Chi partner with Psi Beta to expand on their groundbreaking collaborative research effort by including multiple research questions. This collaboration can be as simple as sharing the same list of questions, but we can follow Psi Beta’s model where chapters can be invited to participate in answering one or more research questions (http://psibeta.org/site/current-events/psi-beta-news). If chapters or individual members are interested in participating, they will commit to the following: (a) obtaining IRB approval at their home institution, (b) following an established research protocol, (c) submitting their data for collective use. In exchange, principle investigators will have access to the combined data for their own purposes.

While other collective efforts seem focused on replicating existing findings, Psi Chi could also solicit research questions that are novel. Specifically, we could also create a research/travel grant to specifically reward research that supports collaborative questions. The applicants would create the materials and conduct a pilot test. The two winners could represent our questions for coming years until sufficient data are collected.

*Expected Costs:* Presently, the Psi Beta project has not cost any money, but there are administrative costs to organizing such a research initiative. Answering questions and providing guidance to researchers will require time. For the first year, guidance can be provided by the researchers who offer questions and Jon Grahe. Other administrative considerations will impact the Central Office. Answering questions about accessing material or direction to other research support will include significant time commitment if the program is successful. In time there might be further administrative and computing costs, if the project becomes popular.

References

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Grahe, J. E., Reifman, A., Herman, A., Walker, M., Oleson, K. C., Nario-Redmond, M., Wiebe, R. P. (2012b). *Harnessing the potential of undergraduate research: An example examining emerging adulthood and political decisions.* Manuscript in Preparation.

Hauhart, R. C., & Grahe, J. E. (2012). A national survey of American higher education capstone practices in sociology and psychology. *Teaching Sociology,* [*http://tso.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/03/29/0092055X12441715.full.pdf+html*](http://tso.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/03/29/0092055X12441715.full.pdf+html)

Nosek, B. (2012). Project possibilities for Psi Chi membership and the Open Science Collaboration.

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*Action Item*: I propose that Psi Chi engage in efforts to coordinate research activity across Psi Chi chapters both with the Open Science Framework and Psi Beta as part of their National Research Project.

*Action Item:* I propose that Psi Chi form a subcommittee that will bring a five year plan with further recommendations to the Winter Board of Directors Meeting.