Goals Statement Department of Educational Psychology
Assessing Student Learning Outcomes for Graduate Education

Department Mission Statement
Educational psychology involves the study of cognitive, emotional, and social learning processes that underlie education and human development across the lifespan. Research in educational psychology advances scientific knowledge of those processes and their application in diverse educational and community settings. The department provides training in the psychological foundations of education, research methods, and the practice and science of counseling psychology, school psychology, and special education. Faculty and students provide leadership and consultation to the state, the nation, and the international community in each area of educational psychology. The department’s scholarship and teaching enhance professional practice in schools and universities, community mental health agencies, business and industrial organizations, early childhood programs, and government agencies.

The purpose of this document is to provide specific goals for faculty, students, and the program as a whole so that we as a department can:

(1) be responsive to items that need improvement
(2) better manage expectations of our students, faculty, and external parties with relationships to our program
(3) provide a clear mechanism for program accountability.

The current document is a joint effort of the faculty, graduate students, and staff of the Department of Educational Psychology to present a set of common goals that we share and would like to perpetuate. We view this as a living document that should be revisited on an ongoing basis. The task of putting our goals to paper will help clarify our reason for being as well as provide transparency about how we view ourselves as a department that is privileged with the task of training the next generation of scholars in our discipline.

The first step to continuous improvement is a list of goals. The next step is an assessment mechanism to determine the extent that these goals are met. Without a goal statement, self-evaluation is impossible and without an assessment mechanism, one would not know there is a
problem or where there is a problem. This document provides a living “yard stick” for the department’s continuous improvement process that is ongoing, but more important, on point.

Managing expectations is important so that students and external audiences will have less opportunity for misconceptions of the work of the department and/or the value of a Department of Educational Psychology degree. By defining and sharing our goals, everyone should have a better idea of what to expect of our program, our faculty, our students, and our graduates. This transparency should be useful in marketing our program and providing potential students better information to make informed decisions about whether we are a good fit for their prior training, experience, and personal goals. Also, a clear goals statement will allow external organizations to make better decisions about forming alliances and partnerships that will be beneficial to both the department and their organization.

The faculty in the Department of Educational Psychology welcomes the opportunity to state the goals of our program as the starting point to being held to those goals. We live in a world of accountability. There is no justification for exempting ourselves from that process. By stating, and measuring our goals, we are in a better position to answer questions of the value of our department given the public’s investment. We should be willing and able to give justification for our existence based on data. This goal process allows us to give thoughtful consideration to the data we need and to develop mechanisms to collect that data so that we are in a position to answer questions about departmental expectations and the degree to which we are meeting them.

Our goals are centered on research, dissemination of information, and engagement to our communities; local, national, and international relative to disciplinary knowledge of our department. Our expectations are relative to both faculty and students. We realize that there is a wide range of activities to demonstrate fulfillment of our goals and expect much diversity in the ways that we demonstrate our engagement in these activities. We also realize that research, dissemination of information, and engagement are inter-related and some activities cut across each—for instance, consulting, working on research teams, engaging with external partners to solve problems, etc.

**Research:**

We expect our faculty and students to be participants in the creation of knowledge around core aspects of our discipline. Such efforts should be evident in scholarly papers and presentations, theses and dissertations, as well as classroom papers and projects. As a faculty we
encourage research activity among ourselves and our students, as well as other students and colleagues within and outside the university. Faculty and students are expected to have their own research interests with motivation to undertake projects that address those interests. Our department supports a large number of graduate assistants who work alongside faculty in a host of research activities. Our faculty is also welcoming to student volunteers who wish to obtain research experience. Moreover, there are project, department, and other funds that assist students in research and to attend research conferences. Class assignments, theses, dissertations, and other requirements also provide opportunities for student initiated research activities. Our faculty and students have ongoing opportunities to help plan, manage, and implement research projects. Specifically, each faculty member has an obligation to insure the research productivity of their advisees via encouragement, opportunity, and other forms of assistance. We also promote research via a student research day where students present their research in presentations and posters. The department has yearly reviews of students and as part of that process we ask documentation of a student’s research activities. Research activity is also a large part of the yearly evaluation of faculty members.

Dissemination:

We expect our graduate students to be active scholars absorbing the knowledge of our discipline, and expect our faculty to be life-long learners actively engaged in the creation and dissemination of disciplinary knowledge. We also expect our faculty and students to be able to share their disciplinary knowledge via teaching, writing, one-on-one tutoring, research, consulting, etc. Our department supports teaching assistantships in which students work alongside faculty in providing course content, as graders, and as recitation leaders. Some of our students also have the opportunity to be instructors in our classes and/or serve as adjunct faculty at surrounding colleges.

Students also disseminate their disciplinary knowledge as part of research teams, research assistantships, consultations (via their work as interns, on projects, or through centers such as the Office of Research Consultation). Faculty have teaching responsibility and are often called on by external agencies to share their expertise. Student advising and mentoring provide ongoing opportunities for faculty to share disciplinary knowledge. In some of our program areas students also take licensure exams that provide evidence of a student’s ability to be certified in a given area. Students also have classroom grades and take various oral and written exams to ascertain
disciplinary knowledge. The department has yearly reviews of students and as part of that process we ask about their teaching activities as well as opportunities to share their disciplinary knowledge. Teaching and mentoring is also a large part of the yearly evaluation of each faculty member. Student teaching evaluations and direct observation of faculty teaching provide evidence of proficiency in this area.

Engagement:

We expect our faculty and students to be involved with a wider audience than just their peers. Our research and dissemination efforts should and often take us beyond our walls. Given that the University of Minnesota is not only a public institution, but a land-grant institution, the university and its agents are expected to provide expertise to outside audiences. As in the realms of research and dissemination, all service is to be provided with the highest degree of ethics and professionalism. Our engagement takes place across the lifespan (from cradle to grave) and takes many forms including providing classes, workshops, and other formats for disseminating knowledge as well as partnering with external organizations on research efforts that the organizations could not undertake on their own.

Problems surrounding education are complex and solutions need to draw on a multitude of available resources. We often work with others across disciplines to provide answers to mutual problems that are multifaceted and must be addressed from multiple perspectives. While students often do not have as much opportunity to lead such efforts, they often make valuable contributions due to their involvement via graduate assistantships, volunteering, fulfillment of internship requirements, etc.

The department has yearly reviews of students and as part of that process we ask students about their engagement activities. Service to the profession at all levels of community (local, state, national, international) is also a part of the yearly evaluation of each faculty member. We typically measure different aspects of service to the profession via professional organizations and service to those organizations as officers, reviewers, discussants, and organizers of professional meetings. Service to local institutions is measured by committee assignments, as well as responsibility in those committees (e.g. office held). National and international reputation is also assessed via a faculty member’s activities.

A final form of evaluation of our departmental efforts comes in the positions our students accept after graduation. Our mission statement says that we provide leadership at all levels
(local, state, national, and international) in each area of educational psychology in our program. It also says that we enhance professional practice in schools and universities, community mental health agencies, business and industrial organizations, early childhood programs, and government agencies. Tracking our students after they graduate is important in ascertaining the extent to which our students subsequently fill the ranks of these positions.

**In Summary**

We expect all graduate students and faculty of the Department of Educational Psychology to be engaged in the creation and dissemination of new knowledge and to be engaged in local, national, and international communities. In support of that goal we provide opportunity, encouragement, and assistance to colleagues and students. We measure the extent to which we are creating new knowledge by the quality, quantity, and impact of disciplined inquiry (e.g., published articles, professional presentations). We measure the extent to which we are disseminating knowledge through measures of teaching (e.g., course evaluations, statements from course supervisors for graduate teaching assistants) and statements from external organizations that utilize our students via internships, consultancies, and other shared agreements. Finally, we measure the extent to which we are engaged with the community by the quality and quantity of these interactions (e.g., consultations, partnerships, products created).