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## Online course primes students for real-time teaching

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With questions swirling about distance education's effectiveness, it may seem odd that somebody would use it to teach others how to teach. Yet that's exactly what psychology professor Jim Korn, PhD, did this past summer in a teaching preparation course for psychology graduate students.

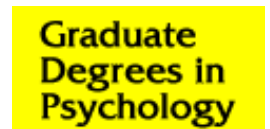
Korn taught the course online through the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Summer Institute on Teaching--a program that primes students for faculty roles. While the online format wasn't without its drawbacks, the course's five enrollees were impressed with its convenience, structure and surprising degree of intimacy, thanks to intensive feedback from Korn.

Most importantly, they say, the course did what it promised: It prepared them for the classroom. "The course gives insight into many aspects of teaching that I wouldn't have had otherwise," says Ammancis Wright, a second-year experimental psychology student at the University of Connecticut (U Conn). "The assignments are very applied--creating a syllabus, teaching module and course materials, even down to testing items. I'm ready to go," she says.

UNH has always valued teaching preparation, giving all its psychology students a teaching course before they enter the classroom as teachers or teaching assistants. To help students at less teaching-focused places, UNH Vice Provost and Professor of Psychology Victor Benassi, PhD, developed an online version of UNH's preparatory coursework on syllabi development, testing, grading and teaching approaches. To produce the eight-week course, he used funding from the Preparing Future Faculty program--administered through APA's Education Directorate--and from a university grant awarded by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. He enlisted veteran teaching scholar Korn, of Saint Louis University, to teach the course.

Participants included Wright and Joshua Lawrence of U Conn, Mercedes Ebanks of Howard University, Melissa Lea of Miami University of Ohio, and Courtney Rocheleau of the University of Colorado. (Psychology departments at the latter two universities have been developing APA-supported PFF programs.) The enrollees met at UNH for a course orientation and completed their discussions and assignments online. They earned two credits apiece for the \$472 course.

Most entered the course with little to no teaching experience, though some had taught small lab sections. Colorado social psychology student Rocheleau took it at the same time that she taught her first lab section. "It was great," she says, "because I could immediately apply the teaching concepts I learned."



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Major assignments covering those concepts included:

- \* Completing a teaching goals inventory.
- \* Considering testing and grading practices.
- \* Discussing the role and function of introductory psychology.
- \* Developing a teaching unit, complete with a syllabus, objectives, assignments and a test.
- \* Crafting an overall course evaluation plan.
- \* Drafting a statement of personal teaching philosophy.

"This gives them a good solid structure from which they can plan any course they'd ever want to do," Korn says. "Teaching is hard, just as hard as working with clients. There's no way we'd send people out to do therapy or assessments without extensive preparation, but we do that with teaching. We can do better."

U Conn's Wright and Colorado's Rocheleau agree.

"The course has given me a greater appreciation for how much time and effort goes into preparing a course," says Rocheleau.

**--B. MURRAY**

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*Interested students can sign up for an expanded online teaching preparation course (Grad 980), offered next year by the UNH Summer Institute on Teaching. Information on the course will soon be available at [www.gradschool.unh.edu/pff/pff\\_institute.html](http://www.gradschool.unh.edu/pff/pff_institute.html).*

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