



NASP Annual Report of Graduate Education in School Psychology: 2014–2015

Daniel L. Gadke
*Mississippi State University; NASP Graduate
Education Committee*

Sarah Valley-Gray
*Nova Southeastern University; NASP Graduate
Education Committee*

Eric Rossen
National Association of School Psychologists

Scott A. Loe, PhD, Editor
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Jeffrey L. Charvat, PhD, Coeditor
National Association of School Psychologists

ABSTRACT

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) collects data annually on both specialist and doctoral school psychology programs via its National School Psychology Program Database Project Survey. The project goals are to maintain transparency regarding the status of graduate education in school psychology, inform the field about relevant trends, and provide prospective students and other stakeholders with a wide variety of information on school psychology graduate programs. This report summarizes the data from 171 specialist and 88 doctoral programs during the 2014–2015 academic year. Programs reported data on applications, enrollment, financial support, graduation requirements, internship placements, and more. Applicant acceptance rates were 40.7% across specialist programs and 31.0% across doctoral programs. There was a wide range of credit hours required for graduation, with 50–124 needed for specialist programs and 48–189 needed for doctoral programs.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has participated in ongoing data collection regarding graduate education in the United States since the mid-1970s. Initially, data were collected every 6 to 10 years and then annually since 2010. Such data collection over the years has allowed for the monitoring of trends that impact the health of school psychology, including enrollment, program availability, and shifts in graduate education requirements. However, each data collection effort differed regarding which data were collected, response rates, and definitions for master's, specialist, and doctoral level degrees.

More recently, annual data collection has helped generate an online, publically accessible database (NASP,

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Daniel L. Gadke at dgadke@colled.msstate.edu.

n.d.) to help identify trends in graduate education on a regular basis and to assist prospective students as they are applying to graduate school. The data collection effort and focus of the survey were generated from the NASP Graduate Education Committee with input from various stakeholders within NASP leadership. Each year since, the committee has slightly refined the survey in response to feedback and input during the data collection process.

Given NASP's attention to addressing shortages in school psychology, including faculty shortages and wide variations in availability of programs in certain regions of the country, regular maintenance and tracking of these data become critical to the health of school psychology. For example, the overall availability of graduate preparation programs in school psychology has increased only 9% over nearly 40 years (Rossen & von der Embse, 2014), suggesting potential barriers for the development or sustainability of new programs, though this is marked by a shift away from master's degree programs to specialist-level and doctoral programs only. Additionally, the number of total students enrolled in doctoral programs has slowly risen over the last several decades, though the last few years of data collection revealed a marked reduction (11%) in specialist-level first-year student enrollment in contrast to a growth in first-year student enrollment in doctoral programs (20%; Rossen & von der Embse, 2014). Such trends may suggest that, despite a generally increasing overall enrollment in school psychology programs, perhaps fewer students are preparing at the specialist level to practice in schools. Monitoring of such data over time will help identify such trends and potential strategies to address concerning developments. This paper provides a summary of selected data collected from graduate education programs in school psychology for the 2014–2015 academic year.

METHODS

The National School Psychology Program Database Survey was conducted during the fall of 2014 through the early spring of 2015. The survey is delivered annually as part of an ongoing effort to maintain updated and accurate information on the various school psychology programs available for graduate education.

Participants

Participants included the program coordinators of the 234 specialist-level and doctoral programs in school psychology across the United States during the 2014–2015 academic year that minimally led to a state school psychology credential. Among those contacted, 183 institutions (78%) responded to at least some portions of the survey, while 158 (68%) completed the survey in its entirety. Overall, data were collected from 88 doctoral programs and 171 specialist-level programs. Only programs that provided complete data within a given area (e.g., credit hours, financial support) were included in the analyses involving that area.

Measure

The National School Psychology Program Database Survey is an annual survey distributed to both specialist- and doctoral-level school psychology programs. The survey requests program data across several domains, including general program information, financial support offered to students, respecialization opportunities, program credit-hour requirements, enrollment information, internship placements, and faculty information. The data are collected and maintained as part of the NASP Graduate Education Database in efforts to promote and maintain transparency on the current state of graduate education in school psychology, provide information regarding graduate trends, and provide information

on programs and the field to prospective students and other potential stakeholders. The database can be accessed at <http://apps.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/graduate-education/index.aspx>.

Procedure

School psychology program coordinators were contacted via e-mail and asked to complete the National School Psychology Program Database Survey, the Annual Program Report. Program coordinators were identified through NASP records. Once identified, coordinators were sent an e-mail requesting completion of the survey and a link for a Web-based survey platform. Program coordinators were also provided with a Word document of the survey to use as a worksheet so they could research the various questions in advance of completing the online survey. Components of the survey included program approval or accreditation status, financial support, respecialization availability, program delivery format, credit hours, enrollment information and demographics, and internship requirements.

Following the completion of the survey, a trained graduate student reviewed the responses and compiled the data into a single file. If data were missing or an error was clearly made (e.g., a whole number given when asked for a percentage), efforts were made to contact the coordinators by e-mail or telephone to complete the missing data or correct the error. Once all the data were collected, the data were cleaned for missing information, notable outliers, and other errors in responding. Given data analyses consisted of descriptive statistics, Microsoft Excel was used for all analyses.

RESULTS

Data were separated by degree (i.e., doctoral and specialist level) across each of the areas of the survey. For the purposes of this report, data are provided for the areas of program credit hour requirements, level of financial support, number of students enrolled, and internship placement variables.

Credit Hours

On average, the number of credit hours required for the completion of the specialist-level degree was 70.5 ($n = 116$), with significant variability across programs ranging from 50 to 124 credit hours, resulting in some question regarding whether programs reported credit hours using the same metric. Doctoral programs required an average of 112.6 credit hours ($n = 75$), ranging from 48 to 189 credit hours required for graduation, again calling into question the metric used. APA program accreditation or NASP approval status for specialist-level and doctoral programs accounted for negligible variability regarding the number of credit hours required to graduate. A detailed description of credit hours by degree program, including ranges, is found in Table 1.

Financial Support

Specialist-level programs reported that 59.7% ($n = 145$) of first year students and 61.7% ($n = 145$) of all students enrolled in the programs received some form of financial support. On average, students who received financial support were required to engage in a minimum of 13.2 ($n = 117$) graduate or teaching assistantship hours per week. Students in doctoral programs were slightly more likely to receive financial support than students in specialist-level programs, with an average of 75.4% ($n = 75$) of the first-year doctoral students and an average of 77.2% ($n = 77$) of all students in the programs receiving such support. Doctoral programs required on average a minimum of 13.4 ($n = 69$) hours of work per week by graduate

Table 1. Number of Required Credit Hours Necessary to Graduate Across School Psychology Programs in 2014–2015

Programs	Specialist			Doctoral		
	n	\bar{x} (hours)	Range	n	\bar{x} (hours)	Range
NASP Approval						
Approved	92	69.9	50–104	46	114.7	60–189
Not Approved	11	72	63–90	4	114	96–145
No Response	13	73.8	60–124	25	108.6	48–159
APA Accreditation						
Programs	n	\bar{x} (hours)	Range	n	\bar{x} (hours)	Range
Accredited	—	—	—	28	115.7	60–189
Not Accredited	—	—	—	0	—	—
No Response	—	—	—	47	101.0	48–160
Total	116	70.5	50–124	75	112.6	48–189

or teaching assistants. A detailed summary of the data regarding financial support can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Students Receiving Financial Support in School Psychology Programs in 2014–2015

	Specialist				Doctoral			
	n (programs)	\bar{x}	%	Range	n (programs)	\bar{x}	%	Range
% 1st Years Supported	145	—	59.7%	—	75	—	75.4%	—
% All Years Supported	145	—	61.7%	—	77	—	77.2%	—
Min. Weekly GA/TA Hours	117	13.2	—	2–30	69	13.4	—	4–20

Enrollment

Among reporting specialist-level programs, 35.2% (\bar{x} = 10.6; n = 1,611) of enrolled students (N= 4,575) were in their first year of study. Of these students, 14.8% (\bar{x} = 4.3; n = 653) were male, while 25.7% (\bar{x} = 7.7; n = 1,176) of students were of minority status. In addition, 28.9% (\bar{x} = 8.7; n = 1,321) were completing the internship year. Specialist-level programs reported a 40.7% acceptance rate.

Across doctoral programs, 19.5% (\bar{x} = 5.8; n = 420) of enrolled students were in their first year of study, 16.9% (\bar{x} = 5.0; n = 365) of students were male, 24.0% (\bar{x} = 7.1; n = 518) of students were of minority status, and 16.5% (\bar{x} = 4.9; n = 356) of students were completing internships. Doctoral-level programs reported a 31.0% acceptance rate. Enrollment data for reporting specialist and doctoral programs can be found in Table 3.

Internship Placement

Results from specialist-level programs (n = 153) indicated an average of 8.9 interns on internship per program during the 2014–2015 academic year. Of these interns, 99.2% (n = 1,346) completed the entirety

Table 3. Student Enrollment Data Across School Psychology Programs 2014–2015

Students	Specialist (n = 152 programs)				Doctoral (n = 73 programs)			
	n	\bar{x}	%	Range	n	\bar{x}	%	Range
Total	4,575	30.1	—	4–125	2,158	29.6	—	5–107
Males ^a	653	4.3	14.3%	0–16	365	5.0	16.9%	0–21
First Year	1,611	10.6	35.2%	0–45	420	5.8	19.5%	0–36
Minority	1,176	7.7	25.7%	0–53	518	7.1	24.0%	0–45
Interns	1,321	8.7	28.9%	0–40	356	4.9	16.5%	0–22
Accepted	2,099	13.8	40.7%	0–80	727	10.0	31.0%	0–56
Applicants	5,158	33.9	—	0–131	2,345	32.1	—	0–140
Completed Program	1,417	9.3	—	0–46	312	4.3	—	0–22

Note. The data reported do not represent all known programs in school psychology, and thus do not represent the entire enrollment population in school psychology graduate preparation.

^a The survey did not ask for enrollment numbers for females. Those figures can be estimated by subtracting the number of enrolled males from the total number of enrolled students.

of their internship in school settings. Reporting doctoral programs (n = 58) indicated an average of 5.0 students per program completing internship during the 2014–2015 academic year. Approximately half (54.0%; n = 156) of doctoral-level interns completed all of their hours in a school setting, 25.6% (n = 74) completed a portion of the internship in a school setting, and 27.7% (n = 80) were at placements that were entirely in nonschool settings. Additional data regarding internships accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA), the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) members, and/or meeting the Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs (CDSPP) criteria can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. Internship Data Across School Psychology Programs in 2014–2015

Interns	Specialist (n = 153 programs)			
	n (students)	\bar{x}	%	Range
Total	1,357	8.9	—	0–40
100% School based	1,346	8.8	99.2%	0–40
Interns	Doctoral (n = 58 programs)			
	n (students)	\bar{x}	%	Range
Total	289	5.0	—	0–21
100% School Based	156	2.7	54.0%	0–21
Part Time School	74	1.3	25.6%	0–6
100% Out of School	80	1.4	27.7%	0–9
APA Accredited	94	1.6	32.5%	0–10
APPIC Listed/CDSPP Criteria Met (Not APA Accredited)	50	0.9	17.3%	0–10
CDSPP Criteria Not Met	1	0.0	0.4%	0–1
Non-APPIC/CDSPP Criteria Met	155	2.7	53.6%	0–21
Non-APPIC/CDSPP Criteria Not Met	18	0.3	6.2%	0–6

DISCUSSION

Data reported during the 2014–2015 academic year include information on enrollment status, program credit hour requirements, financial support offered to students, and internship placements. Both specialist-level and doctoral programs reported a wide range of variability regarding required credit hours, with specialist-level programs ranging between 50 and 124 hours, and doctoral programs ranging between 48 and 189 hours. Reported hours in the lower range could be due to programs admitting students with existing graduate degrees (e.g., master’s degree in a related discipline or a master’s degree from a state that does not offer a respecialization option) and, therefore, requiring fewer total hours to complete the degree program. Programs in the upper range may have reported graduate quarter hours in the survey or used some other metric. Finally, some institutions that have both specialist-level and doctoral programs may have reported the range across both programs rather than responding specifically for each degree type.

Data trends suggest a small, yet noticeable, *credit creep* in terms of the number of credit hours required for graduation. Based on data collected in 1982, 1988, 1997, and the current analysis, specialist-level programs on average reported 63, 66, 68, and 71 required credit hours, respectively. Similarly, doctoral programs on average reported 91, 101, 106, and 113 required credit hours, respectively (Rossen & von der Embse, 2014).

More than half of all students enrolled in school psychology graduate programs receive some financial support. While doctoral students seem more likely to receive support than those in specialist-level programs, students across all programs seem to maintain or to increase the support available to them as they move through the program. Additionally, in order to receive support, the data indicate that both specialist-level and doctoral students participate in graduate or teaching assistantships that require a range of 10–20 hours per week. Notably, these data suggest a more promising picture than in previous studies, particularly for specialist-level students (see Rossen & von der Embse, 2014).

In general, the data suggest that specialist-level students are finding internships regardless of what program they attend and that nearly all of these students are placed in school settings. Internship settings are considerably more varied for doctoral students. This variability includes school versus nonschool settings and differences regarding APA accreditation, APPIC listing, and CDSPP criteria.

Limitations

These data should be interpreted with caution due to several limitations. Largely, limitations are associated with potential reporting errors. For example, when asked for median internship stipends, some programs reported percentages while others reported what could only be presumed to be maximum salaries (e.g., internship stipend of \$59,000). Also, when requesting numbers, some respondents wrote out comments such as “less than half” or “all students.” Finally, some program responders left out entire sections of data or only partially completed domains. If data were missing or appeared to be reported in error, those data were removed from the final data set in an effort to minimize any inaccuracies.

Unfortunately, this resulted in an incomplete representation of all the current programs. Finally, it is possible that some programs did not report certain data that would potentially reflect poorly on the program, leading to the potential for skewed data.

Conclusion

The NASP National School Psychology Program Database Survey serves as a valuable resource to the profession. In particular, it can be used to help address shortages in school psychology, one of NASP's key initiatives. In order to address these current and anticipated shortages effectively, it is essential to have accurate data about school psychology programs and graduates. It is crucial that faculty participate in this ongoing effort in order to maintain accurate data that can help target strategies to address the current shortage and to develop strategies to ensure the health of the profession.

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