School Psychology PhD Specialization Receives Initial Accreditation

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The Utah State University Psychology department’s School Psychology doctoral specialization has been granted initial accreditation as a Health Service Psychology training program by the American Psychological Association (APA).

School psychologists provide behavioral and mental health services to support youth, schools, families, and communities. The USU School Psychology PhD specialization focuses on helping graduates develop scientific problem-solving skills as well as broad competencies in assessment, intervention, and consultation. The specialization emphasizes science-based, culturally competent, ethically informed, and legally compliant practice. Graduates of the specialization are prepared to pursue careers as researchers, trainers, practitioners, and leaders in school psychology and related fields.

“Initial accreditation is a pivotal achievement, as it both opens doors for our grad students and elevates the visibility of our training program,” said Tyler Renshaw, School Psychology specialization director. “Graduating from an APA-accredited program smooths the path to psychology licensure for our doctoral students, and it makes them more competitive for internship, post-doctoral, and faculty positions.”

Renshaw said that accreditation will also make the specialization more attractive for prospective students. The specialization anticipates accreditation will boost its profile and result in increased interest and applications from more diverse prospective students across the nation.

The School Psychology PhD specialization began matriculating students in the 2018–19 academic year and currently enrolls 16 full-time students. APA has granted the specialization “accredited, on contingency” status, meaning the specialization meets APA’s accreditation standards and will continue to provide outcome data until two cohorts complete the specialization. The specialization anticipates its first student will graduate in 2022 and that they will apply for full accreditation by 2024.

USU’s school psychology program prepares graduates for a variety of career paths, including becoming faculty at research institutions or psychologists practicing in versatile settings such as schools, clinics, and even private practice. The specialization is supported by accomplished faculty with expertise in school mental health, mindfulness-based intervention, Autism and neurodevelopmental disabilities, self-regulated learning, and parent training.

“Our faculty and students are thrilled with this accreditation news. We’ve invested a lot of time and effort in building a strong specialization and are happy to see our work validated in this way,” said Renshaw. “We would also like to acknowledge the efforts of many others in our department and college who made this possible. We couldn’t have accomplished accreditation without the help of administrators, faculty, and staff at our local level. We are grateful for their support along the way.”