



University
of Houston
Clear Lake

Supporting Success in Graduate School: Making Explicit the Hidden Curriculum in Doctoral Study

Erik Reinbergs, PhD LP NCSP
Assistant Professor, School Psychology & Health Service Psychology
Email: reinbergs@uhcl.edu Twitter: [@ereinbergs](https://twitter.com/ereinbergs)

Hidden Curriculum

 **Jess Calarco** @JessicaCalarco · Sep 3, 2018
I'd define the #HiddenCurriculum as skills, strategies, and knowledge that aren't taught in school but still matter for success in school (in comparison to the formal curriculum, which is explicitly taught).

Course Design

The combined clinical/school PsyD program at UHCL requires all first-year students to take a three-credit introductory course called Orientation to Health Service Psychology. The course serves to provide an overview of various professional practice areas and competencies, highlight the combined program model, equip students with the basic clinical knowledge necessary to begin their internal practicum placement, and prepare students for success in the program.

This year's cohort consisted of 10 students, 4 of which were students of color, 4 of which were bilingual, and 2 of which were international students. The cohort included students with specialist degrees with considerable professional experience and bachelors students.

The syllabus was revamped this year to include at least 15 minutes at the end of each class to explicitly teach and discuss an aspect of the hidden curriculum of graduate school and academia.

Students expressed appreciation for this new format.

Faculty Responsibility

 **Jess Calarco** @JessicaCalarco · Sep 17, 2018
Replying to @JessicaCalarco and @asociologist
But really, the bulk of the responsibility for uncovering the #hiddencurriculum of #gradschool should fall to faculty members, not students. That means building the hidden curriculum into the formal one. Being open about our own struggles. Offering unsolicited support.

 **Jess Calarco** @JessicaCalarco · Apr 8, 2020
Faculty members tend to take the #HiddenCurriculum for granted - it's easy to forget that we didn't always know what we know now. But as @writingmonicker suggested, it should be on faculty to make that #HiddenCurriculum part of the formal curriculum, instead.

Importance for School Psych

The field of school psychology has placed additional emphasis on recruiting and retaining underrepresented students in the field (i.e., racial and ethnic minorities, working class students, bilingual students, gender diverse students, international students, etc.). These groups are more likely to not have the same access to the hidden curriculum as their more privileged peers. By explicitly teaching the hidden curriculum, we reduce the unequal burden placed on marginalized students to uncover the unspoken information necessary to succeed within graduate school.

Making the hidden curriculum visible aligns with our tradition of explicit instruction of key skills. It also aligns with our emphasis on understanding systems level factors of individual experiences / outcomes.

Topics Covered

- How to access academic research by connecting UHCL library access with a Google Scholar account
- The history of efforts to make academic research freely available (i.e., the work of Aaron Swartz & Alexandra Elbakyan)
- Tracking clinical hours with Time2Track
- “Managing up” with faculty
- Use of Zotero to manage references and produce APA bibliographies.
- Evidence-based study skills (i.e., the work of learningscientists.org)
- Academic conferences
- Observing limits / saying no
- Qualifying exam and dissertation processes
- Applying to internship and postdoc
- Asking for letters of recommendation
- Academic publishing, including the peer review process and the (questionable) business model of academic journals
- Dealing with rejection and feedback
- Commonly used statistical software
- Incentive structures in academia
- Overview of licensure requirements
- Resources and professional podcasts about professional psychology and academia

Unanswered Questions

The hidden curriculum of school psychology (and its teaching) is largely unexamined in the literature. Future research could examine whether explicitly teaching aspects of the hidden curriculum in a formal course such as this one (rather than informally through sporadic advising) improves outcomes and retention, particularly for marginalized students.

Additionally, research could investigate which aspects of the hidden curriculum are most meaningful or necessary for students to know - enabling trainers to target their instruction early in the trainee's education.

The extent to which specialist level and doctoral students face different hidden curricula also remains to be studied.

Recommended Resource

Calarco, J. M. (2020). *A Field Guide to Grad School: Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum*. Princeton University Press.

