



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

April 5, 2007

Ming-Tung Lee, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President and Dean for Academic Programs
California State University, Sacramento
6000 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95819


Dear Mike:

Enclosed is the External Review of the Department of Psychology, based on my site visit on March 22-23, 2007.

I hope I have addressed matters of most concern and that at least some of my recommendations prove useful.

Thanks you for the opportunity to perform this review.

Best regards,


Kenneth F. Green, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair

**External Program Review
Department of Psychology
California State University, Sacramento**

Site Visit: March 22 and 23, 2007

External Reviewer: Kenneth F. Green
Department of Psychology
California State University, Long Beach

Introduction

This review is based on two major sources of information: written materials provided by the Department of Psychology and interviews with individuals and groups in the University, College, and Department.

Written Materials:

- Self Study, Department of Psychology, California State University, Sacramento, 2005-2006 with Appendices.
- Web based materials including University Catalog and Psychology Department web site.
- Copies of certain Internal Department Documents: Accounts, Alumni Council Meeting Agenda, Assigned Time, Committees, and a Faculty Development Plan.

Interviews:

- Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies Greg Wheeler
- Mike Lee, Associate Vice President and Dean for Academic Studies (during exit interview with Program Review Team)
- Otis Scott, Dean, College of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Studies
- Members of the Program Review Team: Cristi Jensen, Claudia Bridges, Rachel Gonzales, and Susan Taylor
- Bruce Behrman, Chair, Department of Psychology
- Fourteen faculty members, individually and collectively
- 20+ students collectively
- Tara Spainhower, Administrative Coordinator

Overview

The Department of Psychology is marked by a generous, dedicated, and collegial faculty who are led by an effective chair and supported by a capable staff. They teach a well chosen curriculum to an exceptionally large number of undergraduate and graduate students. They have responded conscientiously to the 2000-2001 Program Review, as seen in their Self Study of 2005-2006. They are a center of excellence in the University and should be praised, recognized, and supported.

My primary aim in this review is to identify areas where efficiency can be increased. My major recommendations are to increase the use of mega sections, consolidate introductory courses, reduce committee membership numbers, examine the necessity of theses, and to increase the core requirements of the graduate program. A major problem in the undergraduate program is advising, and I recommend an undergraduate advisor be appointed with responsibilities to teach a course on psychology as a discipline and profession and to run a peer advising program. The graduate programs are highly ambitious and resource-intensive, but they provide valuable service to the academic profession and the community. Resources are slim, and I recommend that the Department consider initiating a development program.

Issues Raised in Interviews

In this section I introduce issues that were of concern to university officials, faculty members, and students with whom I met. I will attempt to address the issues in my next section, incorporating suggestions stemming from the Self Study.

During my entrance interview I was briefed by Greg Wheeler, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and Cristi Jensen, Chair of the Program Review Team. Dr. Wheeler suggested issues for special attention: for graduate programs, courses in the central core; for the undergraduate program, interaction between General Education and major requirements, information competency, response in the self study to recommendations made during the 2000-2001 review, advising, flexible ways of delivering courses, class availability and sequencing, and the suitability of an applied undergraduate track; and, finally, a request for suggestions for dealing with faculty overloads.

During the first morning I was briefed by Dean Otis Scott, whose primary concerns were focused on increasing the efficiency of the Psychology program in the interests of maintaining educational quality while preventing problems of burnout and lost morale. Dean Scott (as well as Associate Dean Wheeler) was appreciative of the Department's efforts and wanted to provide as much support as the institutional resources allowed.

After lunch on my first day I met with a set of at least 20 students, mostly from Dr. Parrot's PSY 101 laboratory, with a smattering of others mixed in. Most were transfers from local institutions, most were about to graduate with a BA, and a couple were grad students. The most striking aspect of the meeting for me was that very few of the graduating seniors had specific career plans. Frustrations that seemed common in this group concerned availability and sequencing of courses, crowding in classrooms, a desire for more contact with and first-hand knowledge about faculty members, and a desire for more colloquia and opportunities to come together as a group.

In late afternoon on my first day I met with a half dozen members of the Psychology Department's graduate faculty. Concerns included admissions criteria, computer access (especially the availability of lap tops for use in SMART classrooms), teaching credit for

thesis work, best utilization of faculty for advising theses, enforcement of prerequisites, best use of statistics experts in theses, and the workload.

In late morning of my second day, I met with members of the Program Review Team for a wide ranging conversation about the place of the Department in the University, Psychology-specific ethos and issues, implications for the graduate clinical program of the recently passed Mental Health Act, advising, committee responsibilities, computer lab bottlenecks, resources, and flexibility in meeting enrollment targets.

In addition, I met with six faculty members individually, and discussed workload, assigned time, fiscal support, classroom issues, RTP, special coursework requirements for certificate programs, laboratory resources (including the animal facilities), advising, graduate admissions requirements, scheduling, history, and a host of other issues.

I met with Tara Spainhower, the Department's Administrative Services Coordinator and learned about office organization, the workload of the office staff, sources of departmental support, faculty service assignments, staff job classifications, and other issues. Ms Spainhower recently replaced an office manager who had been in place for 30 years, and thanks in part to her years of experience in the Dean's office appears to have settled in comfortably; she is a remarkably effective asset to the department.

Finally, I was in frequent contact with Chair Bruce Behrman for wide ranging conversations stemming from my experiences and observations, for questions about all aspects of department functioning, and for a sense of history. Dr. Behrman's knowledge and perspective were invaluable.

Comments on Self Study's Reactions to Prior Recommendations

The department's Self Study of 2005/06 is an exceptionally thorough document that covers all aspects of departmental functioning with great care, large quantities of data, and thoughtful discussion.

The initial portion (Section I.B.1-21) of the self study addresses the 17 recommendations made by the Program Review Team in its review of Fall 2000. These recommendations provided impetus for reflection and change, and the 21 responses of the department provide my focus.

Mission Statement. The Department has developed a 15-point mission statement that sets its aims for instruction, critical thinking, appreciation of diversity, scholarship, collegiality, and community involvement in such a way that measurable, assessable, and quantifiable actions support each point. This statement reflects major effort and is a model for other departments to follow.

An Alumni Council has been formed. An agenda from the March 19, 2006 meeting of the Council lists 13 alumni who lunched with Dean Scott and three new faculty, met with the Program Review Team, conducted a career panel for students, and were then

available to meet with small groups. In addition, the department initiated a colloquium series associated with Homecoming, featuring alumni speakers who provide information for students about career paths and professional developments. These actions improve relationships between the department and the community and provide a strong grounding for faculty and students alike.

Assessment has been taken seriously. The department's heroic efforts and careful plans are given in a voluminous set of reports that are spread over sections of the self study and three appendices. Suffice it to say that the assessment process has been examined thoroughly, data on all aspects of the program except the graduate programs have been considered, and cogent plans are spelled out.

Four aspects of the undergraduate program were addressed by the earlier Program Review Team: advising, career planning, development of an applied program, and dropping the Behavior Analysis Certificate program. The department's response was directed at each of the four issues.

1) Advising brochures were developed that provide information about specific career paths. They are available in the Department office, from faculty members, and on the department web site. They are an improvement, but more attention to advising is needed at the undergraduate level. I have specific suggestions in the final section of my report, below.

2) Career planning was addressed in the brochures. The Department once had a course devoted to career planning but dropped it owing to its unpopularity and budgetary constraints. I suggest revisiting the idea of such a course, implementing it in a different way, among my suggestions below.

3) An applied career program is, as the Department justifies and as most psychology departments believe, inappropriate at the undergraduate level. The current undergraduate curriculum provides sufficient opportunities for practical experience, but emphasis must always be placed on the basics of scientific methodology and behavioral phenomena.

4) Behavioral Analysis has been one of the traditional strengths of the Department, and their Certificate program has been not only continued but it has been nurtured. This is not at all a perverse move, but rather it perpetuates a relatively unique program within the CSUs which is valuable because it provides direct preparation for a career and useful insight into the techniques of behavioral control.

The graduate program was the focus of several suggestions, addressed separately in the self study. First, does the core meet needs for graduate and teaching preparation? Second, a course in qualitative methods was suggested. Third, medium-range planning should schedule courses to accommodate student matriculation and faculty preferences. Fourth, the core should be expanded to at least 5 courses, and a writing course should be considered. The department cogently addressed each of these concerns in its self study, and I will not comment on them. However, much remains to be considered. For example, for practical purposes there are actually four graduate programs: MA-predocctoral; MA-MFT; MA-Industrial-Organizational; and MA-Behavioral Analysis. Of the 40 graduate courses listed in the catalog,

-4 are required by all four programs (the core: 200 Methods, 203 Design I, 292 Laboratory, and 500A Culminating Experience);
-1 is required by three programs (500B Culminating Experience)
-1 is required by two programs (206 Tests and Measurements);
-3 are required by one and serve as an option in another;
-2 are options in 2 programs;
-19 are required by only one program (12 by MA-MFT, 4 by MA-IO, 3 by MA-BA);
-2 are options in only one program;
-1 is merely recommended, and by only one program (205 Multivariate by MA-IO); and
-7 are elective, capable of fulfilling requirements in one or more programs but not required, optional, or recommended by any program.
These facts alone ought to be cause for careful consideration in terms of degree requirements, faculty workload, and scheduling effectiveness. I have some specific suggestions offered below.

Foundational undergraduate courses were seen by earlier reviews to be heavily statistics-laden. Suggestions focused on combining PSY 1 and 5, offering ways to test out the redundant statistics components, and adding a course in Qualitative Methods. The Self Study addresses these suggestions satisfactorily. For reasons other than statistics, I concur that combining PSY 1 and 5 should be considered and elaborate on this in my suggestions below.

Publicity for the good work of the clinical program was recommended. The Department has responded by publishing two brochures that are readily available, but cautions that the clinic's limited facilities are in danger of being over-subscribed if publicity is too effective.

Communication with undergraduate students needed improvement during the last review. The Department has taken constructive steps to address the situation with brochures, bulletin boards, material on its web page, and increased awareness by faculty. More needs to be done, however, and I have some specific suggestions to offer below.

Room size continues to be a problem. The Review Team recommended working with the Dean so classes could be scheduled in rooms large enough to accommodate enrollment. The department has been able to gain access to a number of classrooms of reasonable size. One of my specific suggestions below is to continue this trend. The department also has been able to gain access to SMART classrooms, a valuable trend that I assume will be encouraged as the university budget allows more rooms to become SMART.

Integration of computer and other labs with classes was seen as needing improvement, as was the training of the students staffing them. Now the major application, SPSS, has been installed widely and student assistants are selected on the basis of their merit. Progress thus appears to be satisfactory.

Paid assistants were suggested as useful to SPSS labs and for administering departmental web pages. The department has responded well to both suggestions: the stat lab is

supported by using student assistants and teaching assistants; a faculty member, Greg Hurtz, is the web master and a look at the department web page indicates that he is doing an excellent job.

The University Visiting Scholars Program was suggested as a mechanism for addressing areas of the curriculum not covered by present faculty members. The Department has taken the suggestion seriously and has hosted some internationally known scholars on lengthy visits that have made a large impact on students. The Department also has continued its own colloquium series, with eminent speakers presenting their work to faculty and students.

The Program Review Team suggested that the Department develop searchable data bases on its web page listing fieldwork internship, and research opportunities, and while so doing post the opportunities in a list on its web site. In a related suggestion, the Program Review Team recommended redesign of the internship program and PSY 194 Cooperative Research to increase accessibility to students. The Department's response has been to increase the accessibility of information available to students and to make clear the limited, unique, and independent-study nature of placements in both the internship and research courses. The accessibility for the research course is in the form of links to faculty research interests; the nature of the course is spelled out better in a revised catalog description. For the internship courses, listings of resources are readily available, as are indications of faculty interests, thus allowing students better guidance to supervisors. Given these considerations, a data base format is not needed.

The Program Review Team suggested that the Department develop two graduate degree tracks, one for teaching of psychology and one for applied behavior analysis. The Department's response is appropriate: in accord with thinking in the field of Psychology, there is little value to a master's level track devoted to teaching; the course work in a track for certificate work in applied behavior analysis is already in place.

Classroom visitation for post-tenure and RTP purposes was recommended. The Department has discussed the issue and has successfully encouraged candidates on the tenure track to invite observers to their classes for purposes of providing written comments to RTP committees. The issue is under discussion for post tenure reviews. I am a strong advocate of the value to observers and observed alike of classroom visitation, both inside and outside the evaluation processes, so I encourage any efforts in this direction. However, there is very strong resistance to this among many members of the professoriate (not just in Psychology or in CSUS), and until direct observation of teaching is required by the University an optional approach is the best that can be asked or expected.

Impressions and Recommendations

The faculty members of the Department of Psychology are a remarkably collegial group, concerned about the welfare of their students and working indefatigably to meet demands

of courses, committees, and scholarship. They are supported by an administration that is aware of their hard work and appreciates it, that seems heavily restricted in access to resources needed to reward or nurture the programs, and that is uniformly concerned about the ability of the faculty to maintain their levels of contribution without damage to morale and motivation.

Indeed the faculty morale is very good considering the workload. There are 19 tenured/tenure track faculty, half a dozen more in or entering the FERP program, and 11 part time faculty. The support staff consists of 2.5 positions – filled by highly capable people -- and some energetic student assistants. These people are charged with serving upwards of 1300 undergraduate majors, a large number of additional students taking GE or service courses, and some 250 graduate students. There are 43 well-chosen courses at the undergraduate level and 40 courses at the graduate level; all graduate students are required to perform a “culminating experience.” Service loads are heavy: in addition to RTP and Search Committees, there are 12 committees that each require 3-5 members, and 5 coordinatorships. Finally, all tenure-track and most tenured faculty have programs of scholarship.

Space for laboratory work seems adequate. There are many labeled cubicles throughout Amador Hall, and I heard no complaints about lack of places to do work. Research support is minimal but apparently adequate; major equipment purchases are difficult to justify in a climate where large numbers garner preferences, but major items have been acquired. Operating expense budgets are modest, but the faculty manage to make do.

Undergraduate Program.

Undergraduates are well served by the curriculum. The introductory course sequence is two courses taken over a year's time. (These are GE courses, and, consistent with recommendations from the Program Review Team, should continue to be allowed to stand for GE credit for Psychology majors.) Following that, majors are offered a firm grounding in methods and statistics, are guided through a well balanced program that allows exposure to major areas of Psychology, are offered the opportunity to obtain hands-on training in fieldwork or laboratory settings, and they actually have a certificate program – in applied behavior analysis – available to them. Information Competency is appropriately addressed by the Department via its emphasis on writing, manifested by training students to write research reports in the style of the American Psychological Association (so-called APA style); all 5 requirements of the university policy are met.

However, undergraduates do not appear to be able to take advantage of the clear and approachable advising tools that the Department makes available in the form of bulletin boards, brochures, catalog copy, and web site directions. They need direct contact and conversation with advisors. Unfortunately, the traditional method of advising, where the students are assigned in equal numbers to individual faculty members, simply cannot work (in round numbers, each faculty member would be responsible for 60+ students, an enormously time-consuming responsibility). Something more is needed.