

Academic Program Review Report

Department of Psychology
California State University, Sacramento

Review Team

Dr. Cristy Jensen, Department of Public Policy and Administration, Chair

Dr. Susan Taylor, Division of Social Work

Dr. Claudia Bridges, College of Business Administration

Dr. Rachael Gonzales, Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation and School
Psychology

External Consultant

Dr. Ken Green, Department of Psychology, CSU Long Beach

September 2007

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies

Documents Consulted:

The Department of Psychology: Department Self Study (Spring 2005) and attached Appendices

Report of the External Consultant Dr. Ken Green (CSU Long Beach)

Psychology Department Website

APA Website, including websites for California and Sacramento Region Chapters of APA

CSUS Catalog, 2004-06

Department of Psychology Advising Brochures

Office of Institutional Research Website: Reports on Retention, Graduation

Persons Interviewed

Faculty were interviewed on multiple occasions, sometimes as members of a particular departmental specialization, sometimes in their governance roles, and yet others in their status as part timers, junior untenured, “mid-career”, and senior tenured faculty.

Department Chair. Bruce Behrman

Chairs of Departmental Committees: Rachel August (Vice Chair), Lisa Bohon (Graduate Coordinator); Emily Wicklegren (Chair, Budget and Part Time Faculty Committee), Marya Endriga (Chair, Curriculum Committee) Lisa Harrison (Chair, Graduate Studies Committee)

Members of I/O faculty group

Members of Clinical faculty group

Members of Behavior Analysis faculty group

Members of Research/Methods faculty group

Staff members Tara Spainhower, Lynda Young, and True Moua

Part Time Faculty members (3)

Graduate Students (Psych 200 class: Professor Cameron)

Undergraduate Students (Psych 107: Professor Jensen)

Membership of Psi Chi: student group

Members of Alumni Council (approximately 15)

Dr. Cathi Christo, Assessment Coordinator

Dr. Otis Scott, Dean, College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies

Introduction

The Program Review affords the opportunity for both departmental faculty and their peers in the university to look at academic program priorities to guide decisions which can ensure quality education in what appears to be a persistent environment of declining and inadequate resources.

The Program Review team members have given considerable thought to the information and understandings acquired during the period of review, reading the self study, meeting with numerous groups of faculty, students, alumni, consulting with the external reviewer, reviewing the thoughtful recommendations of the previous team and finally, meeting extensively as a team. We would like our work and recommendations to really make a difference and seek to engage the department in the examination of a number of issues. We share these thoughts in the spirit of initiating a departmental conversation – a literal face to face conversation.

The concept of “strength management”, where a “strength” has the potential to evolve into an unanticipated “weakness”, seems helpful in discussing what we feel are the essential challenges facing the Psychology faculty. We note several areas in which the focus of commendation, e.g. the strength and commitment of the faculty to high quality teaching (e.g. maintaining small classes) and scholarship (intensive support of graduate, particularly, pre-doctoral students), can generate concerns/recommendations when that commitment runs the risk of turning into burnout and low faculty morale. Similarly, a strong commitment to breadth and depth in the curriculum can lead to limited resources inadequately spread. We think “strength management” can provide another way to look at challenges in new ways and offer our insights and suggestions.

We are struck by the observation from a senior faculty member that during the construction of Amador Hall several decades ago, the department had planned and thought in terms of a long term goal of 50 faculty. Although everyone would now acknowledge the unreality of that expectation, we wonder if it is not possible that assumptions and choices made in that world view continue to influence the departments decision making re: the curriculum, new hiring patterns, etc.

Yet, amid the challenges of larger classes, workload pressures, etc., we found a remarkable energy and enthusiasm among the younger faculty to tackle these issues and an encouraging strong level of support of more senior faculty, particularly by the department chair, for working on these issues. Indeed, during the period of the self study and our review, the faculty has developed a strategy for workload management, has initiated a serious review of the graduate program, and a pilot for competency based testing of course materials in key lower division “gateway” courses (Psych 5 mastery)

Response to the Previous Program Review Report

We have reviewed the department's response to the previous program review report. The faculty made a number of important curricular changes based upon or at least supported by the recommendations of the previous program review team. The most notable include the addition of a qualitative methods course at the undergraduate level, the development of advising brochures, and strengthening the behavioral analysis track at the undergraduate level and interest in making it available at the graduate level. The previous team had recommended consideration of an applied track at the undergraduate level which both the department and this year's external consultant reject as inappropriate and uncommon in the Psychology major. After much discussion with the department faculty we understand their opposition and defer to their judgment on this issue. We have made a number of recommendations related to advising and career planning in the section below which we hope will suggest an alternative channel for responding to the student concerns identified in that section. Additionally there are several recommendations, also made by the external consultant, which address earlier recommendations re: course availability and advising support for graduate students.

It is not uncommon for departments to get caught in the crossfire of differing observations, conclusions and therefore, recommendations, by different teams and external consultants. We acknowledge two here: one is related to our concerns about the overly specific and elaborated mission statement which we judged a barrier to action planning; the second relates to the extensive collection of assessment data which again, we feel needs a stronger feedback loop in terms of addressing issues raised by the data. We elaborate on both these issues in appropriate places in the report.

Organization of the Report

We have organized the program review report along five dimensions which include: mission/values; student learning and student success; faculty development and support; and, relations with the larger community. We begin with commendations and follow with a more detailed set of recommendations embedded in each section.

Commendations

COMMENDATION 1

The faculty of the Psychology Department are remarkable colleagues, of exceptional quality as individuals, strongly committed to their discipline and students. They are to be commended for being strong and effective teachers and active scholars in the midst of a difficult resource environment that does not adequately reward their work.

COMMENDATION 2

The Department is to be commended for the strength of their curriculum, the strong commitment to offering an academic program that is comprehensive and affirms both breadth and depth in the discipline. The emphasis on strong methodological preparation is particularly noteworthy. This program is offered by a faculty whose number has shrunk to 17 tenured faculty members. It includes: undergraduate major in Psychology (approx. 1300 majors) with emphases in clinical psychology, industrial organization, behavioral analysis; the certificate program in behavior analysis (producing state certification); the general education (GE) program; the graduate program (approx. 250 students) that includes essentially four unique graduate emphases: a pre-PhD preparation track, the MFT, the M.A. in Industrial Organization, and M.A. in Behavioral Analysis.

COMMENDATION 3

The Counseling Service Program provides a much needed service to the community. The master's students who provide the service and the faculty who guide and support them deserve special recognition.

COMMENDATION 4

The faculty are steadfast and generous in the provision of research opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students. They truly "walk the talk" in terms of the importance of methodological training and rigor in the discipline.

COMMENDATION 5

Coursework in Psychology provides strong, high quality general education to the College and University. The level of FTES enrollment generated by the Psychology department faculty is not inconsequential to the college and university.

COMMENDATION 5

The department is commended for the comprehensive self study and evidence of broad participation in its development, and active participation of all faculty in discussions with review team.

COMMENDATION 6

The assessment plan demonstrates a serious commitment to the collection of data to gain understanding of student learning and demonstrates conscious linkages to learning goals articulated in the Mission statement.

COMMENDATION 7

The development of advising brochures is an important first step in facilitating greater student retention and success. We also commend the reactivation of the Alumni Group and use of that group to hold career workshops for students.

COMMENDATION 8

The strong departmental culture which supports active involvement by all faculty in decision making is evident. We also note the effective departmental leadership in that culture by Bruce Behrman, Chair. Dr. Behrman is assisted in that responsibility by a very strong staff team of Tara Spainhower, Lynda Young and True Moua.

COMMENDATION 9

We commend the student participation in the Psi Chi organization, particularly its goals of developing a peer advisor program.

COMMENDATION 10

We commend the hard work of the faculty in the Departmental Committees; especially noteworthy is the “9 Unit Workload Committee”.

COMMENDATION 11

We noted the serious effort invested in socializing and building relationships/integrating junior faculty.

COMMENDATION 12

The Psychology department is fortunate to have a very talented and committed group of part time faculty members who provide a significant part of the instruction in General Education and Lower Division courses.

Recommendations**Mission/Values**

We find the mission statement, notwithstanding the department’s affirmation of a broad statement of educational goals, to be lengthy and lacking focus, more a statement of educational or curricular goals (with the goals really becoming strategies or activities). What seems lacking is a focused sense of priorities and values which could guide the department in making decisions. For example, it seems from our meetings with faculty that pre-doctoral preparation is a strong value of the department, generating serious commitments of resources to upper division and graduate student research work,

teaching/research assistant, support, and faculty time. Yet, again as an example, that explicit commitment is not clear from the mission statement. A mission statement which identifies the department's commitment to pre-doctoral education could then help guide the department in establishing resource or curricular priorities.

A second use of a mission statement is in providing a feedback loop for the faculty to glean information from the larger community about changing needs in professional practice. To the extent that the mission statement can focus attention on sources in the community, be they alumni, professionals, state legislative or regulatory decisions, the faculty can glean important information about trends. We suggest two trends that we have become aware of during the course of study: the recent legislative changes in the law re: a return to non education majors for undergraduate teacher preparation and the potential impact on demand for psychology majors; and second, recently enacted legislation, the Mental Health Services Act, which we understand would create new expectations of mental health worker training and education and explicit expectations of increased capacity in postsecondary institutions and calls for regional partnerships between public agencies and institutions of higher education. (Section 5822, Mental Health Services Act).

Third, we observe that the broad delineation of learning goals which have been developed have generated significant data as part of the assessment effort. The data is rich and varied. We stress the importance of linking that data (closing the loop) to an assessment of how well the curriculum, etc. meets the mission/values and goals. Assessment data should be useable, measureable across the levels of education; linking the learning data to action steps and linking community feedback to curriculum review.

An important shared value among the faculty in this department has been "direct democracy". This value is manifest in the decision making structure of the department, including the significant work of many committees within the department. We urge faculty to explore possible unintended consequences: first, the workload demands are significant for participation on the multiple subcommittees; second, more opportunities for full department discussions of issues, challenges, choices may open up new communication possibilities for the faculty, the students and the department.

Recommendations

1. We recommend that the department engage in a **significant process of strategic planning**. We are suggesting a strategic approach to the mission and values of the Psychology Department which asks the questions:
 - Who are our major constituencies?
 - What are our goals/concerns/expectations/needs?
 - When, where, and HOW will we meet those expectations, etc.?
 - What resources do we need to meet those expectations?

2. We recommend that the faculty **examine the committee structure, the charges of the committees, the decision rules** which are followed in making decisions and determine if there are changes, consistent with their values, which will reduce workload and add to the efficiency of decision-making.
3. We suggest that the department look for opportunities for **full departmental discussions or retreats to discuss challenges together.**
4. We support the external consultant's recommendation that the department consider **initiating a development program** to generate resources to support faculty work/travel.

Student Learning

Students uniformly expressed their respect and admiration for the high quality of the faculty – at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. They expressed satisfaction with the rigor of the coursework, the high expectations of faculty in terms of quality, and the support and care they received. Those expressions of appreciation extended to the caring staff. Students seem to understand that and appreciate the breadth and diversity of the discipline and, for the most part, recognize its grounding in methodological rigor.

The SNAPS data (although the numbers are small) confirm the issues raised by students below. The data show a desire for more interaction with faculty as guides for career planning as well as academic advising.

There are a number of interrelated aspects of the student experience which we feel deserve serious consideration by the faculty:

- Students expressed frustration with the availability and delivery of advising at both the graduate and undergraduate level
- Graduate students expressed an interest in a more comprehensive orientation, possibly connected with assignment to advisors orientations
- Related to the advising is concern about the scheduling/availability of courses, both in terms of space/capacity for key pre-requisite or core courses *and* what is perceived as a scheduling pattern which reflects historical faculty choice preferences, e.g. T-Th 10-2
- Also related to the advising issue, there is a desire at the undergrad level for more links to career pathways

The cumulative importance of these issues emerged during our meetings with undergraduates students who expressed 1) inability to complete a set of concentrated courses from the elective alternatives (i.e. complete three courses in a required area rather than just one as required) 2) in some measure because of the persistent pattern of certain courses ALWAYS being offered in the same time periods semester after semester, and 3) overall desire for more guidance and direction in securing internships.

We are aware of recent efforts to activate alumni links/mentoring, etc. and think the external consultant's suggestion about courses, designation of undergraduate advisor, peer advising programs has potential.

These outreach initiatives are related to the assessment process (to be discussed in more detail elsewhere) which is intended to provide a valuable feedback loop from the applied practice of the undergraduates career placement world to the content of the curriculum. They will also assist in developing measureable learning outcomes with feedback loop into curriculum.

We concur with a number of recommendations from the external consultant and emphasize them along with our own recommendations below.

Recommendations

5. We urge the faculty to **examine the current system of providing advising for the graduate and undergraduate students and consider adjustments to strengthen the effectiveness of advising**. The external consultant recommends a number of strategies including a course, a peer advising program, and enhanced communication with majors. A number of departments, most notably the Economics Department in terms of faculty workload, have experimented with new models of advising as part of the Faculty Senate's Advising Initiative. We applaud the development of brochures as recommended by the previous program review and urge that they be continually updated and posted on the department's website. However, we think that additional efforts to improve the formal advising function may complement the University's overall goals of increasing retention and progress to degree. The external consultant notes that "they (students) need direct contact and conversation with advisorssomething more is needed."
6. We recommend that the faculty carefully **examine the course scheduling process of undergraduate courses** to determine if repetitive patterns of certain courses being consistently offered on the same days/times every year limits students' ability to complete the program in a timely fashion and/or limits the students' ability to complete a desired sequence of courses as referenced in the catalog. We note the expressed interest of students for a clearer ability to complete what they called a specialization (in reality a cluster of courses identified in the catalog as being options for a subdiscipline and not an intentional "specialization"). The department's website says: "At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, students may choose course work, fieldwork, and research experiences that allow them to emphasize such areas as Clinical/Counseling, Cognitive, Developmental, Industrial/Organizational, Social, Personality, and Applied Behavior Analysis".
7. We recommend **development of a more intentional career advising component for undergraduate majors in cooperation with the Career Center and the Advising Center**. While we note the department's (supported by the external

- consultant) strong feelings on the inappropriateness of an applied career track, we still think there needs to be a more **intentional career advising component** for the majority of undergrad majors who are not headed for graduate (e.g. MFT or pre-doctoral) work; this need affords a real opportunity for involvement by alumni who expressed desire in meetings for more connections between the academic community and the professional practitioners noted in the section on Community Linkages to follow.
8. The External Consultant recommended that the department consider increasing the common core in the graduate program. He did a good job of addressing the workload dimensions of the current 4 quite distinct graduate degrees. Because of workload and resources demanded by the existing patterns, we urge the department faculty to examine his recommendations in this area. We did not have time to explore the potential curricular barriers, but think it a worthwhile recommendation to explore. The comparison of graduate (40) to undergraduate (43) courses in the catalog is enough to warrant a look.
 9. We recommend that the faculty examine the **process for assessing the course scheduling needs of graduate students (based on expressed intentions at the time of admission) and better align with the course offerings, number and timing of needed sections of required courses, etc.** The external consultant suggests adding a component to the graduate student application process which has applicants identify potential faculty advisors, etc. The previous review suggested scheduling more evening classes for the majority of part time grad students; we understand the late afternoon accommodation but still urge consideration of the possibility of coursework in early evening to accommodate working professionals.
 10. The learning assessment effort is quite robust and rigorous in the collection of data and mid level analysis. The department has exceeded the curve in terms of the comprehensiveness of the data collected. There are multiple sources of data and there are many interesting analyses offered. What isn't clear is the plan for utilizing the data in planning for changes suggested by the data. We encourage the faculty to **"close the loop" by considering what their assessment data reveals about areas of change in the curriculum, student support, etc.**
 11. Related to earlier recommendations about the course scheduling, we support the external consultant's recommendation that the department **revisit the pre-requisite structure and enforcement mechanisms.**
 12. We find the current work in developing a mastery strategy for the satisfaction of Psych 5 to have a lot of potential for student learning assessment and for faculty workload. It is a valuable experiment and may offer possibilities for other coursework.

13. We urge the department to **examine the feasibility of offering more courses in alternative time/place**; more Saturdays in 7-8 week formats is “gaining momentum” as noted by the external consultant. We are aware of several departments considering this format which may assist students in completing required courses in a timely manner.

Faculty development and support

As noted earlier, the team and the external consultant note the high quality, energy and commitment of the faculty – as teachers, researchers, and in departmental service. The collegial and peer support given to junior faculty is significant. The department’s commitment to a collective governance process is noted and respected. The desire to preserve high quality in classic terms of class size and pedagogy is also noted and respected.

Of course, the continuing (and anticipated) rise in enrollments, number of majors accompanied by the decline in FTEF positions for the department is a cause for concern. **We note that the department is in line for more positions and strongly support their efforts to secure those positions.** We also fear the reality, at least in the foreseeable future, of continuing inadequacy of straight position by position replacements (aka the Noah’s Ark model). As we urged in the section on mission/values, the **department faculty needs to consider together how it wants to move forward in establishing hiring priorities linked to concentrations in the discipline. We also encourage the faculty to aggressively look for opportunities to recruit applicants to achieve the University’s goal of a more diverse cross-cultural faculty**

We are concerned with the potential for burnout, reduced morale, and inability to retain junior faculty. We know that the leadership of the department and other members of the senior faculty are aware and share these concerns. We think the work of the faculty group on workload and their impending recommendations are a good beginning. **The challenges of meeting student needs, responding to community needs, and extending research and service activities are significant. This faculty has a strong commitment to quality; if we cannot ask them to confront these challenges if there is no infusion of new resources.**

We agree with the a number of recommendations from the external consultant for addressing the workload issues (#14, #15, #17,) and include them along with our own.

Recommendations

14. We engaged the faculty on the issue raised in the previous review (and by the current external consultant) about combining Psych 1 and 5. The earlier recommendations related to the statistics issue which the department has addressed in the self study. The external consultant speaks to the fact that a single course is the norm and fits with the large community college transfer/articulation

- agreements. **We urge the faculty to consider the issue anew in light of the faculty workload considerations.**
15. Classroom space and other pressures remain barriers to the use of megasections in the CSU; despite these problems, we urge the department to continue to **examine use of megasections as a way of addressing workload issues. There is a link to the earlier recommendation about long term course planning efforts and possibilities of two year course scheduling.**
 16. We urge the department to consider **reducing the size and complexity of the departmental governing structure** which is very time consuming. We don't have a particular configuration in mind, but suggest that the department look at the external consultant's suggestions in this regard.
 17. We recommend that the faculty **consider, on a selective basis, increasing the cap on selected graduate courses.**
 18. We are aware that the entire University is **looking at the uneven assignment of supervisory units for thesis guidance across the campus.** We think the department's own workload committee is also proposing means of addressing this serious workload issue. We also urge the Dean and Provost to continue to provide leadership on this important issue. We also include this recommendation in the section below related to the Dean and Provost.
 19. In order to more effectively meet the advising needs of students, we **recommend a more intentional training/development program for faculty who are selected or who volunteer to assume the responsibilities for advising.**
 20. We urge the faculty to continue to **look aggressively for opportunities to recruit a highly diverse group of applicants** for any new faculty positions.

Relations with Community

There are several dimensions to an academic department's relationship with the larger community: service related opportunities for faculty and students; career mentoring/internships and placement opportunities; and, venues for faculty research. Increasingly, there are development/fundraising (as suggested by the external consultant) and growing needs to track the legislative and practitioner community for changing community expectations for our graduates. We noted in the mission/values discussion earlier the importance of new legislation (Mental Health Service Act).

We think the reactivation of an alumni council is a good start. The meeting this spring included a wide cross section of alums ranging from doctoral students, university faculty, community college faculty, and private sector/business types. Our discussion with alumni council generated some good recommendations—particularly related to

community college transfer advising and faculty involvement in local professional associations -- which we have included with our own below.

Recommendations:

21. We urge the department faculty to **strengthen relationships with local or regional practitioner associations** such as the Sacramento Chapter of the California Psychology Association (www.sacpsy.org).
22. We urge the faculty to **utilize the alumni who are members of the faculty at community colleges to recruit, advise, and guide Sac State bound students.**
23. We urge the department to continue active meetings with alumni on both a social and professional level, using that **alumni network to help identify internship and job placement opportunities for departmental graduates.**
24. We recommend the department consider the development of an **on line mentoring program between alumni and students.**
25. We recommend that the department establish a mechanism which permits it to **scan the legislative and regulatory environment in the practice** to heighten awareness of changing legislation and its impact on curriculum and enrollment.

Recommendations to the Dean

1. We urge the Dean and Provost to **approve positions** requested by the Psychology Department in their hiring plan and urge them to provide support and encouragement to the Department in its efforts to recruit a highly diverse applicant pool.
2. We urge the Dean to continue to work with the CIO to finding opportunities for **strengthening support for SMART classrooms and move toward a standard of laptops for faculty office use.**
3. We recommend that the Dean support the department's current efforts to reclassify **the lead Administrative position to the previous and appropriate level** and examine ways to support a third full time position (currently half time).
4. We urge the Dean to establish **a workgroup to develop proposals for college wide efforts to support retention such as peer advising networks and faculty advising models.**

5. We urge the Dean to work with department to **establish or support a development program for the Psychology Department.**
6. We commend the Dean's leadership in urging the department (along with others in the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies) to examine workload issues and hopes he can find ways to **support the recommendations of the department's "9 unit workload study".**

Recommendations to the Provost

1. As recommended above, we urge the Dean and Provost to approve positions requested by the Psychology Department in their hiring plan and urge them to provide support and encouragement to the Department in its efforts to recruit a highly diverse applicant pool.
2. We urge the Provost to continue to provide leadership to **support the actual costs of graduate programs which includes provision of workload credit for the supervision of thesis work.**
3. **We urge the Provost to continue to work on increasing the number of SMART classrooms and the development of more large classroom spaces.**

Recommendation to the Faculty Senate

The Program Review Team recommends that the Bachelor of Arts, Master of Family Therapy (MFT), and Master of Arts Degrees offered by the Department of Psychology be approved for six years or until the next program review.