Department of Psychology
Annual Assessment Report 2008-2009, Narrative Format


In AY 2008-2009 The Department of Psychology assessed Goal 5 of our Mission Statement as delineated in our 2005-2006 Self Study: “To teach students about diversity so that they can appreciate the differences, flexibly analyze situations, and to be mindful of equity.”

2. Methods used to assess the above learning goal and findings.

This year we addressed ethnic diversity in particular. We assessed this goal directly by administering pre–post tests to students in two upper division courses, Psych 100, Cross Cultural Psychology and Psych 135, Psychology of Multicultural Groups. Psych 100 is required of all majors and Psych 135 is one of the courses in our Diversity Category. The tests were multiple choice tests administered in the first and last week of the term (Fall 2008). The rubrics and learning goals for each course were discussed and agreed upon by the Department Curriculum Committee, and discussed and passed at meetings of the entire Department.

It was determined that successful completion of either Psych 100 or Psych 135 would meet the Psychology Department’s expectations concerning ethnic diversity. This can be seen from a summary of the primary learning goals of both courses.

The designated primary learning objectives for Psychology 135 are as follows.
The student should:
1. “become familiar with current research and perspectives on multicultural issues in psychology.”
2. “develop and understand an appreciation of diversity of people living in the United States.
3. “ be able to identify internal and external factors that may be related to human development and behavior. “
4. “ understand how our own values, socialization, and worldview may impact both positively and negatively our understanding of self and others.”

The designated primary learning objectives for Psychology 100 are as follows.
The student should be able to:
1. “develop knowledge of similarities and differences in human behavior across various world cultures.”
2. “ critically evaluate existing research on major psychological phenomena using knowledge of cross cultural research methods.”
3. “ identify personal assumptions and expectations about human behavior based on one's own cultural background.”
4. “ develop awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity from a global perspective.”

As noted above the degree to which students learned the material in both Psych 100 and Psych 135 was assessed using a pretest-posttest design. In such a design students are administered a test very early in
the semester covering knowledge that is scheduled to be taught in the course. Such a test is administered in the first week of the semester. At the end of the course students are administered the same test. All of test scores were converted to percentage-correct responses. Psychology 100 students averaged 42% correct on the pretest and 80% correct on the posttest. Psychology 135 students averaged 41% on the pretest and 72% correct on the posttest. Based on statistical analysis it was concluded that these results were statistically significant and the percentage differences constituted large effects. It was concluded that overall the Department’s objective of having students learn about and appreciate ethnic diversity was met.

Discussions with the faculty who teach Psych. 100 and 135 revealed several particular strengths of the courses and areas in which improvement is needed. The pre- and post test scores indicated that students did quite well in learning about the differences in behavior across various world cultures. In addition, the students especially appreciated the opportunity to identify their own assumptions about human behavior as a function of cultural expectations. Student comments indicated that they gained a great deal from class exercises and writing assignments which focus on self awareness and foster a sense of personal involvement with cross cultural topics.

In these courses students are exposed to a breadth of cross cultural theory and research. However, their backgrounds vary considerably in terms of research methodology, and so some students struggle with various methods issues. Future discussions among the faculty will concern designating at least one methods course, probably a lower division one, as a prerequisite for Psych 100.

3. Anticipated Program Changes

The faculty has concluded that all in all Psych. 100 and 135 have been very successful in addressing ethnic diversity issues. The curriculum committee will discuss the addition of possible methods prerequisites for Psych. 100. Psychology 8, our lower-division methods course is now a co-requisite for Psych 100; however, some discussion will center on whether Psych 8 should be a pre-requisite for this course. No other program changes are anticipated.

4. and 5. Other assessment activities and future assessment strategies.

The Department will discuss detailed rubrics for several of our upper division courses.