



To: Su Swarat, Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness

From: Dr. Sheryl Fontaine, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Dr. Jessica Stern, Associate Dean for Student Relations, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Date: May 16, 2022

Subject: Dean's Summary and Evaluation of the Psychology MS Program

During the Academic Year 2021-22 the Dean's Office requested that the Psychology Department conduct a separate Program Performance Review of its Psychology MS program, rather than doing so in combination with the Psychology BA and MA department-wide PPR review. We had heard from multiple stakeholders in the Psychology Department that the MS program was experiencing a moment of self-reflection and that having adequate space to explore crucial questions, with the help of an External Review Team made exclusively of experts in clinical psychology and counseling, would greatly benefit the program and the Department.

First, we want to acknowledge the extraordinary work performed by the External Review Team and the corresponding transparency and responsiveness of the members of the department (in particular, those faculty in the MS program). The external review team was comprised of Lori A. Barker, Ph.D., Professor, Director of M.S. in Psychology (MFT) Program, Cal Poly Pomona; Leah Brew, Ph.D., LPCC, CCMHC, NCC, Chair and Professor in the Department of Counseling at California State University, Fullerton; and Laura Ibarra, Assistant Program Chair and Professor for MS in Educational Counseling and University of La Verne. In addition to the Self Study and related appendices the External Review Team requested and reviewed blank internship forms, assessment reports since 2017-18, Supervisor Responsibility forms since 2017, contracts for practicum Sites, completed hour logs for students, site descriptions, syllabi, and semester-by-semester offerings that identified faculty teaching the course and their status as tenured/tenure-track or lecturer. The department made all of these items available and executed the review transparently. The department also hosted a site visit that welcomed all stakeholders to the table including students across all levels, full- and part-time faculty from the program and department, department staff, and internship representatives. This extensive review has produced an External Review report that is comprehensive and fair and which identifies concrete



improvements that align well with the vision of the program and department and recommends directions that the program members and the department are eager to follow. We are pleased that the program and department have taken the time to engage with these recommendations and have pinpointed their clear action items in their response.

The PPR process has confirmed to us that the PSYC MS program is a valuable part of the graduate curriculum at CSUF that is drawing a stable stream of applicants and is preparing them well for clinical professions or to enter PhD programs. This process further confirmed that the Department's decision to ground the program in scientist-practitioner model is a sound one that, by preparing students for entering PhD programs, provides students an alternative to the M.S. in Counseling offered by the Department of Counseling at CSUF, which also prepares students to seek the LMFT and LPCC licenses. As the External Review Team notes, the option to continue graduate study is particularly important for undergraduate students who, during their undergraduate education, may have faced barriers to entering PhD programs. Thus, as the Team notes, the current MS program "increases access for diverse student populations."

As both the Department and External Review Team note there is significant work to be done to better knit the MS program into the gestalt of the department, create a clear and transparent succession plan for coordinator, and revise the curriculum to prepare students to work with diverse populations by increasing their cultural competency.

We have summarized below the recommendations from the PPR that the program members have committed to and, where appropriate, added suggestions.

Department coordination and communication

1. The program will deliver an informational presentation to the Department about the MS program in order to begin to address the finding that the larger department has gaps in their understanding in the scope and purpose of the program.
2. To close the gap between the department and the program, faculty from both constituencies will discuss the possibility of adding a non-clinical faculty member to the MS Graduate Studies Committee.
3. The program will create a succession plan and elect a co-coordinator who will be on-boarded by the current coordinator. The criteria for choosing a new co-coordinator will include demonstrated cultural competency.

Dean's comments:

-Ensure that the election of the co-coordinator is done transparently with an open call that includes clear qualifications rooted in a revised



description of the MS coordinator roles in the department's Administrative handbook.

-Department and program should discuss the appropriate time that a coordinator should serve and, consequently, how long the co-coordinator serves and how this service is acknowledged. These policies would also become part of the administrative handbook that provides collegial governance for the department.

4. MS Graduate Studies (MSGS) Committee will determine and make public a regular meeting schedule and also hold an annual or semi-annual meetings that include all faculty who teach in the program

Curriculum

1. The program will evaluate and, where needed, revise syllabi of core PSYC MS courses, and key elective courses, to incorporate readings and assignments that provide students with cultural competency and reflect the new 2022 scope of practice laws for LMFT. They will ensure that anyone assigned to teach the course is aware of the new content requirements and addresses this in their syllabi and pedagogy.
 - a. **Dean's Request:** The Dean's Office has received multiple complaints about the dearth of cultural competency content of the curriculum and are very pleased to see the program embrace this course review and set curricular change as a priority. We request that the MSGS create a plan and timeline to execute this evaluation and these revisions. In your response to the Dean's Recommendations, please include the timeline by which you will have this plan completed.
2. The MSGS Committee will continue to develop a plan to replace Psyc 510 with an M.S.-specific alternative that would benefit students by (a) removing the Psyc 465-Advanced Stats prerequisite and (b) tailoring the content of the class to clinical phenomena.
3. The program will remove the LPCC from the MS Program.
 - a. **Dean's Comment:** After the MSGS finalizes this decision please use Curriculog to request a Program Change.
4. The program will drop the GRE from the Program Admissions
 - a. **Dean's Comment:** Please work with Graduate Programs ASAP to start the process of removing this requirement.
5. The program will ask the department to search for a new tenure track clinical faculty



member with expertise in family therapy, particularly serving a Latinx clientele. This new faculty member's primary teaching focus would be graduate classes in the M.S. program.

- a. **Dean's Comment:** It is our understanding that there are faculty in the department who have clinical expertise and were originally hired to participate in the MS program but have since stopped teaching in the program. The revision of the program would be a key time to reincorporate those faculty into the program/courses they were hired to teach and to align their expertise with the revised program. Before considering a new hire, it is important to complete this faculty needs assessment and complete curricular changes.
6. The program will clarify and make more transparent the student evaluation process, which, though rare, can result in remediation. Explore using the BBS template.
 - a. **Dean's Comment:** The Dean's Office has received multiple reports from students who are fearful about being removed from the program for unclear reasons. We have discussed these reports with the Program Coordinator as they have occurred and he shared that he went out of his way during orientation to alleviate these concerns. We endorse the External Review Team's suggestion that the program explore using the BBS template for evaluating clinical skills, develop a separate Professional Disposition assessment, detail the remediation process, and provide to students very clear information about evaluation in the Student Handbook. Because "Professional Disposition" can be laden with cultural norms we also recommend that you work with the Department DEI committee when developing this document. Please provide information about any updates to the Dean's Office so that we are in the loop should student concerns come to us.
 7. The program will clarify and elaborate thesis expectations
 - a. **Dean's Comment:** We thank the program faculty for the effort they have put into making the thesis expectations clear in the Student Handbook and at Orientation. We thank them for continuing to identify other ways that students are clear about these expectations.
 8. The program will revise the fieldwork contract to add the expiration date of supervisors' licenses, to make sure that students are not left in the lurch should a supervisor's license expire during internship.
 9. The program will continue efforts to provide an inclusive environment in which students feel supported and valued in response to reports of microaggressions. To this end, they will continue having an elected graduate student representative attend MSGS meetings to make sure that student voices are heard during the decision-making process.



Dean's Comment: The PAGSOCA Juneteenth 2020 letter provides good examples of microaggressions that students are experiencing. The regular PAGSOCA meetings to which the PSYC MA and MS coordinators are now invited also provide avenues to understand and discuss the climate with students. We are hopeful that the revisions of courses and curriculum discussed above will go a long way towards improving the climate for students and current and future faculty. The MSGS committee can also request professional development trainings and workshops on the HR website using the "Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Training Request" form. We also want to make sure that faculty are aware that they need to report any suspected incidents of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation to HR using the "DHR Misconduct Reporting Form."

In summary, we commend the program for its long-standing success at preparing students for PhD programs and clinical work and for their commitment to revising the program to ensure that students are fully prepared to work in an array of communities and with a diversity of individuals. We look forward to seeing the results of their efforts and will continue to make ourselves available for consultation and support.