

Department of Psychology
Program Performance Review 2014
Response to Dean's Summary Report and Recommendations

The Psychology Department is very grateful for the continued support and guidance provided by the deans of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences over the years covered by this PPR. In the dean's summary report, we appreciate the noting of many strengths of the department's faculty, staff and students.

What follows are a list of the dean's recommendations and the department's responses:

1. Continue to hire to keep up with faculty who enter the FERP and retire, ensuring a balance between junior and senior faculty

The Department plans to continue a steady rate of hiring new faculty every year or two to fill gaps left by retirements and to keep current with changes in the field. Ideally, the percentage of FTEF represented by tenure track faculty will grow. Limitations on this growth are a finite amount of office and lab space and limited funding for professional activities such as travel.

2. Assign classes to part-time faculty as early possible

In general, we are ready to assign classes to lecturers as soon as we receive approval from the dean's office to do so. We will continue to work with the dean's office to allow us to assign classes as early as is practical.

3. Create department-based professional development opportunities for part-time faculty, and encourage them to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the College of H&SS and the Faculty Development Center

We are investigating ways to enhance lecturer training and morale. One idea we have discussed is appointing a very experienced individual as a head lecturer, who would focus on enhancing lecturers' professional development. However, the dean's report notes that "the College is not likely to fund [such] a position." Thus, the department must determine whether it has sufficient resources to fund this position. If not, the department will explore more traditional ways to enhance lecturers' professional development within the current departmental structure.

4. Create a cap-stone course for the undergraduate major

This is a reasonable long-term goal, one that the department's Goals and Directions Committee will explore. One potential limitation would be developing the capstone class without increasing the number of units required for the major. The department is considering several options for this capstone class, including a 1-unit online class. We are uncertain how receptive the college and university would be to such a proposal.

5. Consider developing a course in research/quantitative methods geared toward upper-division transfer students in their first year in the major

During spring '14, the department began discussing substantially revising the curriculum of Psyc 300 – Computer Applications in Psychology to make the class a broader upper division methodology class. Psyc 300 is the first course that most transfer students take. Therefore, as

the dean's report highlights, a revised Psyc 300 would enable upper division transfer students to enhance their quantitative skills before enrolling in experimental psychology classes and labs.

6. Continue to work on improving the pass rate of PSYC 101 students

Once grades for Sp '14 become available, we will be able to assess our peer-assisted learning intervention. We are also investigating the possibility of participating in the CSUF Supplemental Instruction program in F '14.

7. Create mandatory advisement sessions with new upper-division transfer students

The department will need advice and support from the college about how to enforce mandatory advisement. Currently, if upper-division transfer students come to in-person college orientations, we strongly encourage them to obtain individual advisement as soon as possible. If they take an on-line orientation, however, it is harder to appeal to them to seek out advisement. In general, the perception is that those who take on-line orientations have more academic difficulties at CSUF. Perhaps the College can consider making in-person orientations mandatory for all upper-division transfer students.

8. Carefully monitor the consequences of program impaction on the department's FTES enrollments and number of majors

The outgoing and incoming department chairs have met with Nancy Dority and Jessica Wagoner of Enrollment Services to more fully develop impaction criteria. We intend to monitor the effect on enrollment closely and to adjust criteria as necessary. The goal is to maintain current levels of enrollment.

9. Better correlate M.A. and M.S. admissions decisions to match the availability and research interests of faculty

This is a difficult recommendation to enact. In particular, to maintain viability, Psychology's graduate programs must admit sufficient numbers of students to fill classes. Linking applicants' admissions to a match with a faculty member would probably cause a substantial drop in the number of admitted students and would likely exclude many highly qualified students from admission. Many students do not know before entering the program which professor they would like to do their thesis with, and many students who have a professor in mind change their plans once they are exposed to more faculty after matriculating. Ideally, graduate coordinators can help students broaden their ideas about what type of topics they can research for a thesis. They can also have a co-chair of the thesis committee in another department at CSUF or off campus. Not all students end up working with their top choices, but all students eventually find a thesis advisor. Students are not necessarily pleased with the process, but this may be an area in which 100% satisfaction is not achievable. Trying to reach 100% satisfaction may cause more problems than it solves.

10. Work to ensure the equitable distribution of mentoring and committee responsibilities for M.A. and M.S. theses

Some faculty members' research areas naturally attract more students than other professors' research does. The question becomes, does the department want to assign students to faculty members, rather than let students and faculty negotiate mentoring over the course of students' first semester in the grad programs? While the current situation leads to some dissatisfaction, forcing students and faculty to work with each other likely would result in even greater

dissatisfaction. Faculty willingness to take on students varies considerably. Point 11 below addresses this topic further.

11. Utilize department resources (assigned time and professional development funds) to reward department service, and make every effort to note this service in the RTP process

The department has a general value that mentoring students in research, both undergraduate and graduate, is an expected aspect of being a faculty member. However, the department has not articulated the specifics of those expectations. Once it is possible to get department personnel standards approved, it would be fruitful to enumerate and potentially quantify expectations for mentoring, as is done with teaching and scholarship (i.e., how many students should faculty be expected to take on each year?). Currently, mentoring is considered in the RTP process as an optional indicator under teaching. It probably should be made a mandatory indicator.

12. Strengthen current assessment efforts by further demonstrating how evidence is used to reshape their undergraduate and graduate curriculum

This lack of clarity was a defect of the current PPR self-study, which did not go into sufficient detail about this process. Future assessment documents and the next PPR should give more specific and explicit examples of how assessment data are used in the curriculum review process (i.e., closing the loop).

13. Create a program-based assessment experience that measures undergraduate mastery of student learning goals and outcomes, such as a capstone course

One of the main reasons for considering a capstone course is to facilitate assessment of learning goals and outcomes across the major. The capstone class seems like a worthwhile goal.

14. Develop a tracking system to monitor the post-graduate professional experiences of their M.A. and M.S. alumni

In general, the department desires to keep in better touch with alumni. This is particularly true for master's students. The department can seek out assistance from the SSRC or advice from other successful departments.

Additional Comments Related to the Body of the Report

1. P. 3 of the report notes that "those who supervise undergraduate and graduate studies courses (PSYCH 498, 499, 598, and 599) are not compensated for their efforts."

It is a worthwhile goal to give credit for this currently un-credited teaching. A university or college policy for counting WTU's for such classes would give useful guidance to the department and would ensure that the department's awarding of credit was consistent with practices of other departments.

2. On p. 6, the report addresses time to degree for the graduate programs.

It should be noted that, beginning with AY '12-'13, M.S. degree units increased from 50 to 60 to meet changes in California State licensure requirements. In addition, the number of client hours required for internship has risen from 175 a few years ago to 280 currently. All other degree requirements, including the thesis, remain the same. Because of this increased workload, it should be expected that 3-year and 4-year M.S. student graduation rates will decline.

3. On p. 8, the report notes that H-519 has been recommended for renovation and transformation into a computer research facility. However, the report notes that, in general, "the department will have to make due with current facilities."

Space will continue to be a constraint on the department's ability to expand. Impaction should help limit the need for growth, as will offering more classes online. Future college development of part-time faculty space will be especially welcome, as the department has lost multi-lecturer offices over the past several years.

4. On p. 8, the report states: "We are...currently investigating the possibility of creating a position at the College level that would in large part be dedicated to managing faculty grants."

This would greatly benefit the department staff, especially our analyst-specialist, who is burdened by doing the paperwork for numerous small requests for grant expenditures. In addition, a centralized college-level person dedicated to travel would provide relief to the staff.