# Department of Psychology
# Program Performance Review 2014
# Response to Site Visit Report

The Psychology Department is grateful to the site visit team, composed of Drs. Stewart Donaldson, Pamella Oliver and Carl Sneed, who spent Friday January 31 on campus. They met with numerous constituencies, including administrators, full- and part-time faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students. The site visit team prepared a report that fairly and accurately depicts the strengths of the department, as well as areas that deserve focus to achieve future growth. Some of this growth can be accomplished by the department on its own, while other areas of growth require assistance or support from the college or university.

## Strengths

The site visit team noted many strengths. The Psychology Department boasts excellent professors, who successfully teach and supervise a large and rapidly growing number of majors. Faculty members were described as "excellent teachers, mentors and researchers," who display a high level of collegiality. Untenured faculty feel supported during the RTP process, and part-time faculty are pleased with their departmental support and their student assistants. The staff was described as "extremely experienced and capable"; this includes the "invaluable" IT coordinator. Psychology students are a diverse and high quality group, who are effectively informed by academic advisors and peer mentors. Assessment and Curriculum Committees work together synergistically: "student learning outcomes are clear and there is an ongoing assessment process." Class sizes are generally small. A range of online and Saturday classes increases opportunities for timely graduation by students who have restricted schedules. Finally, the department boasts a "state of the art" sixth floor, including labs, classrooms, and computer facilities that are well used.

## Areas for Growth

The report sites several areas on which to focus to foster future growth. Some of these are under the control of the department. Other areas require policy or resources from the college or university to be resolved.

### Department

Most of the suggestions for growth focused on the graduate programs. Suggestions for enhancing undergraduate education centered on early outreach, in particular to transfer students.

**Undergraduates.** The department will seek out ways to encourage more students to get academic advisement early in their studies at CSUF. In addition, the department will seek out ways of enhancing communication with students, particularly transfers, about the importance of getting research experience. The department will also explore developing a capstone class for all psychology majors, which will aid with the assessment of learning outcomes.

**Graduates.** The M.A. program will explore a variety of curriculum changes that will enhance the educational experience of students. This includes the continued creation of 500-level classes, especially quantitative methods classes. In conjunction with the increased course offerings, the M.A. program will consider offering concentrations. The M.A. program will also begin having an orientation for incoming students prior to the start of the academic year. The site visitors recommended including research

interest matching as part of the admissions process. The M.A. program will consider this, although this may not be feasible to implement at the current time.

The M.S. program will explore reformatting the substance abuse class from its current two-Saturday format. This will entail creating a new three-unit required class and making other curricular adjustments.

The department overall will work on developing protocols for systematic assessment of master's program learning outcomes. In addition, the department will explore ways to help master's students prepare for transition to the work force. Finally, the department needs to develop policies concerning supervising thesis research. Currently, there is not an equitable distribution among the faculty of chairing theses. This is in part due to the different research areas of faculty members. However, the lack of compensation for thesis mentoring discourages faculty members from taking on the very time-consuming task of mentoring (see below for a related discussion). Ultimately, the department needs to develop policies specifying expectations of faculty regarding thesis mentoring; these policies should be incorporated into the Department Personnel Standards.

## College/University

To implement several of the recommendations from the site visit team, support, funding or policies are needed from the college or university. These can be broken down into three general areas: faculty compensation/support, staff, and facilities/space.

**Faculty compensation/ support.** The site visitors believed that additional faculty compensation – independent of salary – would enhance the educational environment of the Psychology Department. For tenure track faculty, this includes (a) increased funding for professional travel; (b) release time for grant writing, as well as additional institutional support for grant writing, such as help with creating budgets; and (c) compensation for faculty mentoring of undergraduate and graduate research students taking Psyc 498, 499, 598 and 599. A and b require funding infusions from the college or university. C requires creation of a policy at the university level. Once the university adopts a policy that governs credit for all research supervision courses, the department can implement it.

Part-time faculty wish to be attached to classes earlier. Accomplishing this will require the college to analyze entitlements and to approve part-time schedules at an earlier date. Alternatively, it may be possible to develop a two-tiered system by which instructors of long standing at CSUF could be attached to classes early and with less oversight, whereas newer part-time instructors would receive more extensive vetting. It seems that the university has recently become more open to lecturers' moving up to full-time status. Coordinating between the department and college could allow the most skilled long-time lecturers to attain full-time status.

The proposal to develop a senior lecturer position is an excellent idea. Such a position would enable a very experienced lecturer to engage in professional development activities for less experienced instructors. Having such a position would likely increase part-time faculty's identification with the department and university, as well as provide them with a greater sense of being supported. Funding for such a position, which would entail course releases for administrative duties, would need to come from the college.

**Staff.** The site visitors recommended hiring an additional staff member: "Additional full or part-time staff is needed to help manage the department." (This suggestion was also made during the previous site visit in 2007, when the department was vastly smaller in terms of the number of students and part-time faculty.) As the university has decentralized many functions, such as processing contracts and administering dispersing of grant funds, the workload for office staff has increased. Thus the same number of staff people are doing a much greater amount of work than they were seven years ago. This

new staff position could be a receptionist, although it would also help to hire a staff person to help administer dispersing grant funds. Finally, although the direction of the university seems to be toward centralizing IT, the site visitors recommended that the department maintain its own IT coordinator position, because this individual is most familiar with how technology is used in the department and is available on short notice for trouble-shooting with academic and research equipment and software.

**Facilities/space.** While the department was praised for its state of the art computer lab and classroom facilities, these facilities are used to capacity. Therefore, to accommodate future growth, the department seeks to expand its computer facilities. For example, last year the department applied for funding to convert H-519 into a computer research laboratory. This funding did not come through. The department has moved some computers into 519, but the facility is not working to its potential. More funding would allow this computer lab to fully serve student and faculty research interests.

With the large number of part-time faculty (53 during the current semester), as well as the large number of students participating as paid and unpaid course assistants, the department is hampered by its lack of office space for those who need to meet with students as part of their responsibilities. Obtaining more space from the college or university for the purpose of lecturer and student assistant offices would enable the department to serve its large number of students better.

Finally, although this was not discussed during the PPR process, the department is now in discussions with the provost's office to explore declaring the major impacted. After very rapid growth in the number of majors, impaction may be needed to ensure that Psychology maintains high quality instruction within the confines of limited space and resources.