

Department of Psychology Self-Study Response
March 9, 2009

The Department of Psychology was very appreciative of and pleased with Dr. Randy Smith's evaluation. Following is the response to his recommendations:

1. Consider adding Cognition or Cognitive Psychology to the curriculum.

This has been under consideration in the Department for some time. While we lack a faculty member with that specific expertise, a 3000-level intro course could be taught by existing faculty. As the current budget situation stabilizes, the development of an Introduction to Cognitive Psychology course will be assigned. The current plan is to provide it as one of two choices in an experimental psychology requirement rotation so that the total required hours remain the same.

2. Consider adding Sensation and Perception to the curriculum.

The Department of Psychology currently requires PSYC 3010- Physiological Psychology, which has a very strong 'Sensation and Perception' component, and the proposed Introduction to Cognitive Psychology course will have a strong perception component. Given this, we believe we can accomplish the goal of the suggestion without adding an additional required course.

3. If the department accomplishes #1 and/or #2, consider developing a menu of Experimental Psychology content courses (Learning, Motivation, Cognition, Sensation and Perception) and giving students an option within that menu.

The Department, after reviewing our curriculum in light of Dr. Smith's suggestions and the American Psychological Association's draft advisory report on a developmentally coherent curriculum, has begun work on the development of a degree program that has the option of choosing one course from a menu that includes Learning, Motivation or Cognition. The revised degree plan will be submitted to the Curriculum Review Committee during the 2009-2010 academic year to begin Fall 2010.

4. Consider whether virtually all courses must be specified (required) within the major requirements. Can the department figure out a way to allow some choice for students? At the same time, the department needs to ensure that students will still derive the same outcomes from the program (for assessment purposes).

The decision to have limited choices within the program was based on two issues: graduate school requirements and resource availability. As the field of psychology continues to expand (there are currently some 72 different professional areas recognized by the American Psychological Association), undergraduate curriculum must cover an increasingly broad area. Having thirteen required courses insures that students receive exposure to a range of theories and skills instead of the relatively narrow 'sexy' courses many would choose. As to resource availability, with limited faculty and with over-

reliance on adjunct instructors, the Department of Psychology is simply unable to develop and schedule a menu of optional courses. However, the current degree plan allows students 30 hours of free academic electives, which they may use to take any additional psychology courses that are offered. Additionally, as resources become available, the Department would like to pursue the possibility of at least two interdisciplinary concentrations, which give students additional choices with these free electives.

5. Should there be a program coordinator for the clinical master's program?

The Department has a Director of Clinical Training for the master's program in Clinical Psychology. The DCT is synonymous with program coordinator and currently has Dr. Kathryn Kelly in this position.

Items 6 – 9 are responded to collectively:

- 6. Ensure that ELOs are aligned with outcome data.**
- 7. Examine the APA goals and outcomes to ensure that students get adequate coursework to develop the desired outcomes (elective courses may not be sampled by enough students to achieve those outcomes).**
- 8. Consider an alignment of the departments' ELOs, the APA goals and outcomes, and the department's Continuous Improvement Plan. Having too many different plans with too many different goals can result in less momentum for planning and assessment.**
- 9. Consider using the APA taskforce's assessment cyberguide to help with assessment.**

The APA has produced a draft copy of an advisory for a developmentally coherent curriculum, based on the 'APA Guidelines For the Undergraduate Major', along with educational learning outcomes and suggestions for assessments. After additional review, the APA is planning on publishing the revised draft as 'Undergraduate education in psychology: A blueprint for the future of the discipline.' This document is expected to become available by late fall of 2009. After we review the APA guidelines, the Department will be reviewing (and where necessary re-writing) its expected learning outcomes (ELOs) and Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). We will then review the required (and elective) coursework and make any changes needed to achieve those ELO's. Assessments of those ELO's and CIP will also be based on the APA recommendations where possible.

TIMELINE: If the APA document becomes available in late fall of 2009, then reviewing and revising ELO's and CIP will be accomplished by the end of the Spring 2010 semester. Any resultant changes in curriculum will be submitted to the curriculum review process by Fall 2010 and new assessments will follow approval of any proposed changes as soon as the changes are implemented in the classroom.

10. Add 2 faculty members as soon as possible. To achieve more balance in departmental faculty, these additions should have experimental/research specialties.

The Department of Psychology is significantly understaffed. The Department's efforts to increase the size of departmental faculty have not been successful for various reasons at the University level, mostly budget related. The Department will request to advertise and hire two positions, and respectfully requests that the University identifies these positions as a priority as replacement positions are made available. The two positions recently vacated were for Clinical Psychologists. Currently, there is no full-time Clinical Psychology faculty, which is essential for the Clinical Psychology program. The department did hire an Experimental Psychologist last year (2008). This hire was not obvious in the self-study report because it covered 2002-2007. Therefore, the two requested positions will be divided between the two departmental demands: one specialty in experimental psychology and one in clinical psychology.

11. Ensure that faculty receive credit of some sort for serving as stewards for online courses.

The Department currently gives one course-load reduction to Ms. Neeru Deep since she monitors the most sections among the faculty. While there are other faculty members deserving of such a reduction, the Department is understaffed and therefore it is impossible to provide all the deserving reductions and meet the course demands of the students. The faculty senate passed a resolution calling for course-load reductions or extra service contracts. The Department will pursue the option of extra service contracts to compensate the faculty and resolve the dilemma of meeting the students' course demands.

12. Address deficiencies in departmental facilities.

- a. Faculty need standard office space.**
- b. Department needs more dedicated classroom space.**
- c. Department needs dedicated research space, if scholarship is a major factor in tenure and promotion.**

The Department will continue to make requests related to these recommendations. The Department is located on the third floor of Bienvenu. This floor also houses three Biology faculty members and the Veterinary Technology faculty. The rest of the Biology faculty is located on the first and second floors and there is considerable space allocated for Veterinary Technology on the first and second floors as well. The Department requested office space for new faculty on the third floor so that psychology faculty could be on the same floor and easier access for students. A small office was made available on the second floor. While the Department is appreciative of the office, making minor renovations and moving faculty for each of the departments together would address the office space recommendation.

If the University considers reviewing low-enrollment programs, and additional space becomes available, we hope administration considers the Department and the need for

additional dedicated classroom space and research space. In the meantime, as outlined in the self-study report and Dr. Smith's evaluation, the majority of the psychology classes are taught outside of the psychology department. This affects the department's efforts for recruitment and retention. Having at least one more dedicated classroom would help address this need.

Scholarship is indeed a major factor in tenure and promotion and there is currently no dedicated space for faculty to conduct research. Therefore, the faculty is limited in the type of research they can conduct, and they use classrooms and labs when they are available. Having a research lab will offer more research opportunities and support the faculty effort's to conduct the required research.

13. Address department deficiencies in technological teaching resources.

The Department agrees with Dr. Smith's recommendation and sees the lack of technological teaching resources as a serious issue. The department has borrowed a LCD projector from another department and will use any available funds, after purchasing basic supplies, toward technology. However, given the great reduction in the department's operating budget, any major improvements in technological resources relies on assistance from the University.

Submitted by Cynthia Lindsey and Terry Isbell