

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Program Performance Review Department
of Psychology
B.A., Minor, M.A., and M.S.

Dean's Summary Report and Recommendations

June 24, 2014

In the Department of Psychology's last Program Performance Review (2006/07), the program's self-study, the reports of the external reviewers, and the recommendations of the Dean of H&SS noted a few problems facing the department. These included their lack of lab space and updated technology, their need to create a more systematic, program-based assessment plan, the unequal distribution of advisement responsibilities, and the problems created by the hiring of 14 new tenure-track faculty in the previous 7 years. It is clear that since the last review, however, the department has, in large part, successfully addressed most of these problems.

On January 31, 2014, after reading the department's self-study a team of external reviewers, which included Stewart Donaldson (Professor of Psychology and Community & Global Health at the Claremont Graduate University), Carl Sneed (Associate Professor of Psychology at California State University, Dominguez Hills), and Pamella Oliver (Professor of Child and Adolescent Studies, at California State University, Fullerton) visited the CSUF campus and met with various members of the Psychology department, including tenure-track and tenured faculty, part-time lecturers, staff, undergraduate and graduate students, assessment coordinators, MA/M.S. program advisors, and alumni. The reviewers' recommendations, the department's responses to the reviewers' report and plans for the future as reflected in their self-study, and my recommendations are outlined below.

I. FACULTY

Department

During the period since their last PPR, to replace retired faculty and those in the FERP the department hired 9 tenure-track colleagues, two of whom left. In order to keep pace with current and future retirements, the department wants to pursue a program of continuous and steady hiring of assistant professors in order to avoid the problems that resulted from past practices (spurts of hiring during prosperous years, with no hiring during lean years). This will enable them to avoid having a department "largely populated by late-career individuals over the next decade or so."

Reviewers

The reviewers noted that tenure-track and tenured faculty praised the collegial work environment created by the department as well as the quality of their undergraduate and graduate students. They also mentioned that the RTP process is transparent and fair.

Both groups, however, did have specific complaints. The tenure-track faculty they met with wanted a reduced teaching load. They currently teach a 3/4 – 4/3 load, with one course of assigned time per faculty member per year. They also wanted more support for travel and research. Tenured faculty also asked for more money for research and travel as well as a reduced teaching load (2/2) and assigned time to develop grant proposals. In addition they requested more administrative support for pre and post-award grant management. Finally, they complained of the increased demands on their time by the administration to perform tasks such as assessment.

Lecturers expressed an appreciation for the support they received from the staff, the department chair, and graduate/teaching assistants, but they too had some requests. They would like to receive their teaching assignments earlier, and they asked for more opportunities for professional development, which would enhance their job skills and provide them with a sense of community. They also suggested the department hire an experienced lecturer who would be responsible for such activities.

Dean

In fall 2007 the department had 28 tenured and tenure-track FTEF (including 4 in FERP). The department currently has 27 FTEF dedicated to tenured and tenure-track positions: 4 assistant professors, 12 associate professors (with several applying for promotion to full this year), 10 full professors, and two in the Faculty Early Retirement Program. In spite of their steady efforts to hire in the past 7 years, they have slipped a little. The department's current tenure-track ratio (AY 13/14) is 55%. They are also committed to two full-time lecturer positions. They are slated to search for a new tenure-track hire in AY 14/15. The department clearly has room to hire more tenure-track faculty. Of course, with a commitment to provide faculty with an office and lab space, it will be difficult for them to do so with the limited space available.

The College has consistently worked to speed up the hiring process for part-time lecturers. In the meantime, the department can certainly assign faculty to courses—with the standard stipulation that the assignment is pending funding, enrollment, and performance—as early as it wishes. This would be especially true in the case of faculty with 3-AY entitlements. And while the College is not likely to fund a position for the department of Psychology dedicated to the professional development of its part-time faculty, as it has requested, we are organizing professional development activities and funding opportunities for adjunct faculty. The department should make every effort to bring this to their attention.

II. STUDENT SUCCESS

CURRICULUM

Department

The Psychology department has worked hard to revise their undergraduate and graduate curricula. They have added new classes that reflect methodological and intellectual shifts in their disciplines as well as in the expertise and interests of their new faculty hires. In order to discourage concurrent enrollment, they changed prerequisites for specific research classes to ensure that these courses will be taken in sequence. Moreover, in hopes of increasing graduation rates they have expanded the range and number of electives offered during the year. They are also offering them on non-traditional meeting schedules. 50% of their major can now be completed on line, and the department has offered many classes at the Irvine Campus, in the evenings, and on Saturdays. There are currently no bottleneck classes in the major. Finally, in order to insure that their students have access to high-impact practice experiences, in addition to sponsoring undergraduate research projects for independent studies courses (PSYCH 498 and 499), the department requires internships for all undergraduate majors. In order to add to these experiences, the department is currently working to revise PSCY 495 (Fieldwork) to include a

section on professional development skills related to job searches. And they are considering adding a capstone course to the major.

Because of its relatively low pass rate, PSYC 101 has been identified as a “bottleneck” course in the University’s GE curriculum. In spring 2014 the department received funding to address this problem by establishing a peer-assisted learning program, which allowed them to hire and train several graduate assistants to intervene with at-risk students—those who have already taken the class, were on probation, or did poorly on course assignments early semester—who are likely to fail the class. The graduate assistants took attendance and conducted study and review sessions on course materials. They also offered workshops on study skills in general. The results are currently being assessed, and they have applied for funding to continue the program.

The department has also been at work revising the curricula for their M.A. and M.S. degree programs. They have expanded what they will accept as an M.A. thesis to include clinically as well as empirically-based research projects. In line with the requirements established by the State of California Board of Behavioral Sciences, the department has revised its M.S. program to accommodate those seeking to become marriage and family therapists or Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors. They have, for example, expanded the number of units required for the degree as well as the number of hours required by clinical internship and fieldwork classes. They are also trying to revive their effort to bring the number of units for the M.A. degree from 30 to 36 by requiring students to take more courses in quantitative methods and research.

Two common complaints with regard to their curriculum, however, are noted in the department’s self study. The supervision of thesis projects is not equitably distributed, and those who supervise undergraduate and graduate independent studies courses (PSYCH 498, 499, 598, and 599) are not compensated for their efforts.

Reviewers

The reviewers noted that the experiences of undergraduate students varied based on whether they entered the program as freshmen or as upper-division transfers. Freshmen were early introduced to research practices and procedures in their lower-division courses, while transfer students felt they lacked this background and found it difficult to catch up. These students asked that a course in research skills be offered to them early in their junior year. The reviewers support this request and encourage the department to offer more substantive research-based courses, including those that are quantitatively oriented.

M.A. and M.S. students commended the department, noting that the courses required to complete their degrees were readily available. While they “were very positive about their experience in the program,” they also mentioned specific problems. Students in the M.A. program wanted more classes offered, including more 500-level courses, specifically asking for more core and statistics courses. M.A. students also asked that an orientation to the program be conducted at the beginning of their graduate careers, where the requirements for the degree would be more fully discussed. Also, even though some students mentioned that their advisors helped them when they applied to PhD programs, they asked for an orientation program that would guide them through this process. Alumni from the M.A. and M.S. programs asked for the creation of areas of concentration (e.g., industrial/organizational and quantitative psychology). They also

asked for more professional advisement for those not interested in going on for a Ph.D. And, as the reviewers reported, some alumni from the M.S. program wanted an option other than a thesis as the culminating experience. Both M.A. and M.S. students complained that it was difficult to find thesis mentors with similar interests. More to the point, the reviewers noted that the mentoring of M.A. and M.S. students is unequally distributed among the faculty. Finally, the reviewers echoed the department's complaint that those who supervise M.A. or M.S. theses and undergraduate and graduate independent studies courses and internships are not compensated for their efforts.

Dean

In addition to creating a cap-stone course for the major, or transforming an existing major requirement into a cap-stone course, the department should consider creating a class specifically geared toward upper-division transfer students that would remedy deficiencies in their qualitative and quantitative research skills. The department should also continue to monitor and attempt to remediate the relatively low pass rates of sections of PSYC 101. With regard to their graduate program, efforts should be made to create a better fit between the research interests of grad applicants and department faculty, and to rectify the unequal distribution of graduate students assigned to each faculty member. Pending funding changes at the College and University level, the department should think of ways to use its resources to encourage this.

ADVISEMENT

Department

The department maintains an office that is dedicated to the advisement of Psychology minors and majors. It is staffed by three faculty advisors and a half-time graduate assistant. Faculty advisors and the graduate assistant provide advice on fulfilling major and University graduation requirements.

Students in Psychology's M.A. and M.S. programs are advised by graduate coordinators and thesis advisors. The M.S. program has developed "mentor groups" made up of first year semester students who meet regularly with a faculty mentor.

Reviewers

The external reviewers met with the three undergraduate faculty advisors, who noted the difficulty of advising transfer students. When they enter the program, these students are near the end of their undergraduate careers and they often come for advising too late. This matches the complaints of undergraduates noted above, who mentioned that while freshmen were early introduced to research practices and procedures in their lower-division courses, transfer students felt they lacked this background and were thus at a disadvantage. Students who entered the program as freshman and as juniors, however, both praised the department's peer mentoring program, as well as faculty willingness to work with them and help them to improve their skills and learn more about professional life. The reviewers also note that the department has "a well-functioning peer mentor system and the advisors are available at the times needed by the students."

Dean

The department's undergraduate and graduate advising system seems to be working well, except in the case of transfer students. I encourage the department to set up mandatory advisement sessions with transfer students when they begin the program.

GRADUATIONS RATES AND RETENTION

The number of undergraduate Psychology degrees awarded has steadily increased from 264 in 2003/04 to 506 in 2012/13. Except for a few dips that occurred in AY 04/05 for both the M.A. and M.S. programs (07/08 for the M.A. program and 08/09 for the M.S. program), the number of graduate degrees awarded has remained relatively constant (M.A. AY 03/04 = 12 and AY 12/13 = 13; M.S. AY 03/04 = 15 and AY 12/13 = 15).

While the number of those who have enrolled in the department's M.A. and M.S. programs has remained fairly constant, the number of primary and secondary Psychology majors has increased from 1518 in fall 2006 to 2176 in fall 2013 (up 43%). In order to slow down the growth of new majors the department has requested program impaction, asking that the minimum GPA for admission be raised by .1 for both transfer students and first-time freshmen. This has been agreed to by the Office of IRAS, who argued that this change will slow down future growth without drastically reducing the number of majors.

The University average for first-time freshmen graduating in 6 years or less "in major" grew during the period between fall 2000 (21.5%) and **fall 2006 (24.0%)**. The average for the College of H&SS declined slightly during the same period (fall 2000 – 27.6% and **fall 2006 – 27.2%**). The average for Psychology went up from 23.8% in fall 2000 to **33.3% in fall 2006**, so during the period under review they have exceeded the "in major" graduation rates for the College and the University.

The University average for transfer students graduating in 6 years or less "in major" declined slightly during the period between fall 2000 (63.1%) and **fall 2006 (62.5%)**. The average for the College of H&SS also decreased slightly during the same period (fall 2000 – 61.8% and **fall 2006 – 60.7%**). While the average for Psychology also declined during this period (61.2% in fall 2000 to **59.2% in fall 2006**), the department's "in major" graduation rate is on a par with that of the College and the University.

The department substantially increased their 3-year "in major" graduation rates for M.A. students from fall 2000 (25%) to fall 2008 (58.3%). The percentage of those who graduated in 4 years rose as well, from 50% in fall 2000 to 58.3% in fall 2008. It should be noted that the 3 and 4-year M.A. graduation rates spiked in fall 2003 (3-year = 77.8%; 4-year = 77.8%), fall 2005 (3-year = 83.3%; 4-year = 83.3%), and fall 2007 (3-year = 76.5%; 4-year = 82.4%).

While their fall 2000 3-year M.A. graduation rate is substantially lower than that of the College of H&SS (42.8%) or the University (46.9%), their 4-yr average (50%) more closely aligns with that of H&SS (54.2%) and the University (53.7%). With regard to their fall 2008 3-year (58.3%) and 4-year (58.3%) graduation rates, with the exception of the 4-year rate for the University they

are on a par with the graduation rates of the College (3-year = 51.8%; 4-year = 58.6%) and the University (3-year = 58.6%; 4-year = 67%).

Even though there were spikes in their 3-year and 4-year “in major” graduation rates for M.S. students in fall 2001 (3-year = 83.3%; 4-year = 83.3%), fall 2003 (4-year = 80%), fall 2005 (3-year = 84.6%; 4-year = 84.6%), and fall 2006 (4-year = 81.3%), the department’s graduation rates have declined slightly from fall 2000 (3-year = 72.7%; 4-year = 72.7%) to fall 2008 (3-year = 63.2%; 4-year = 68.4%).

Their fall 2000 3-year (72.7%) and 4-year (72.7%) M.S. graduation rates, however, have exceeded the M.A. graduation rates of the College (3-year = 42.8%; 4-year = 54.2%) and the University (3-year = 46.9%; 4-year = 57.3%). Similarly, with regard to their fall 2008 3-year (63.2%) and 4-year (68.4%) graduation rates, they exceeded the graduation rates of the College (3-year = 51.8%; 4-year = 58.6%) and the University (3-year = 58.6%; 4-year = 67%).

III. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT

Department

In the period since their last PPR the department has created well-developed student learning goals and outcomes, and it has gone far toward implementing an effective assessment plan. During a four-year cycle, for example, they are evaluating 2 of their SLO’s per year. Using a sampling of course assignments from 200, 300 and 400-level courses they have and will measure student success with rubrics that are thorough and specific. As they argue in their self-study, the department’s Assessment Committee and their Curriculum Committee “work jointly to integrate findings from assessment of learning outcomes with the curriculum review and development process.” If an SLO is not adequately met, feedback is given to the Curriculum Committee, which will then implement changes in the curriculum. The department is also considering adding a capstone course to the major as a way to strengthen their assessment program. Currently there is no plan in place for the assessment of online learning in their undergraduate program.

The department’s M.A. and M.S. programs are assessed through an evaluation of students’ theses. In addition, in hopes of reshaping these programs they are looking for ways to better capture the post-graduate professional experiences of their students by keeping track of such things as job placement, admission to graduate and professional schools, and licensure success rates.

Reviewers

The reviewers noted that the department's "student learning outcomes are clear and there is an ongoing assessment process in place." They also recommend creating a capstone course for undergraduate majors for assessment purposes.

Dean

While it is commendable that the department uses the results of their assessment activities to modify their curriculum, they did not provide many examples of this. Except for the recommendations to improve the assessment process in Appendix VI (Using Assessment results/acting on assessment) and their efforts to sequence their statistics, research methods and experimental lab courses, it is not clear from their self-study how assessment data has been utilized. Future assessment efforts will need to be sure to demonstrate the ways assessment data is used to improve their undergraduate program. The same is true with regard to their use of M.A. and M.S. theses as assessment tools. No mention was made in their self study of how the assessment data that is retrieved from them is used to reshape their graduate curricula and programs.

Along with the reviewers, I would also encourage the department to create a capstone course for their undergraduate major. This would provide an effective way to create a program-based form of direct assessment that reflects on students' mastery of student learning goals and outcomes at the end of their careers in the major. I also support their goal of tracking the professional and academic lives of their M.A. and M.S. graduates in hopes of better preparing them for both. They should perhaps think of working with the SSRC to accomplish this.

IV. BUDGETS AND TARGETS

While the department's SFR grew during the recession years (2008-2010), overall it decreased from 25.9 (2006/07) to 25.0 (2012/13). Their FTEF grew from 42.7 (06/07) to 51.0 (12/13). They are currently (AY 13/14) at 55.1 FTEF (including their Irvine allocation). During the period under review, even with fairly substantial augmentations, they consistently met their FTES target.

V. FACILITIES

Department

The goal of renovating the 6th floor of Humanities outlined in their last PPR has been achieved with impressive results, adding much needed space and updated equipment for teaching, research and scholarship. The department notes, however, that because they are committed to providing an office and a lab for each tenured and tenure-track faculty member, space for full and part-time faculty offices, faculty labs, computer labs for students, and classrooms will soon be in short supply. The department has specifically asked for a new computer classroom for students.

Reviewers

The reviewers agree with the department's self-study that while the renovation of the 6th floor created much needed lab and office space, and remedied one of the problems mentioned in their last PPR, the department still needs more office space for teaching assistants, graduate assistants, and part-time faculty. They also note that the department's computer labs are currently used to capacity, and that more space for instruction and student research is needed.

Dean

Space continues to be a problem for all H&SS departments and programs. With no new construction likely in the near future, unless new space opens up for the College as a result of new building purchases the department will have to make due with current facilities. Their request for additional space for student research has been noted, and we have recommended to Facilities Planning and Management that H-519 be renovated and transformed into a computer lab for student research. Moreover, impaction, by slowing down the growth in majors, should relieve some of the strain on classrooms, computer labs, and offices for part-time faculty.

VI. STAFF

Department

The department has correctly noted that even though their staff is incredibly efficient, hard working and supportive, their growth in FTEF, FTES and majors has not been matched by an augmentation of their staff. They specifically want to hire someone to help the department Analyst with budgets and grant administration. This aligns with the goal the department has set for itself of working to obtain more externally funded research grants and to seek more financial support from their alumni.

Reviewers

The reviewers also argue that the department is short-staffed, and they recommend hiring either a receptionist or someone who would be responsible for helping faculty deal with the pre- and post-award management of external grants.

Dean

The department of Psychology's administrative unit is a model of efficiency and effectiveness. They are currently budgeted at 4.0 staff positions. This includes an Analyst, an ASC I, and two ASA II's. They have an IT tech funded by, and dedicated to, their department. The department staff lead was recently reclassified from an ASC II to an Administrative Analyst-Specialist, the first in the College at the department level. In addition, the Dean's office has submitted to HRDI a management initiated In-Range Progression request for their ASC. Unfortunately, support staff are in short supply throughout the College. We are, however, currently investigating the possibility of creating a position at the College level that would in large part be dedicated to managing faculty grants.

VII. DEAN'S SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In his review of the department's last PPR, the Dean described the department of Psychology as "a premier department in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Its faculty is distinguished by large number of productive researchers and excellent teachers, including senior faculty whose record of accomplishment has brought recognition to the department and the University. The department has established a long tradition of excellent department chairs and highly competent professional staff." In this year's PPR, the external reviewers similarly described the department's faculty as "excellent teachers, mentors, and researchers," and they specifically noted their collegiality, the strong leadership provided by the department chair, and the efficient and effective support provided by department staff and their IT coordinator.

I could not agree more with both assessments. During the period under review the department not only maintained the high level of achievement noted in the past, but they have actually improved upon it. They have successfully recruited a host of new faculty and integrated them into a department culture characterized by high expectations with regard to teaching, research and publication. They have distinguished themselves as excellent teachers and productive scholars who have published in high-quality peer-reviewed venues, presented papers at prestigious national and international conferences, and won an impressive array of awards and grants that have greatly contributed to the quality of the department of Psychology, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the University. And they have been led and supported by a stellar department chair and staff. The high regard in which the department of Psychology is held by the campus community as well by their discipline is well deserved, and their contributions to the College of Humanities and Sciences are highly valued by the Dean's office.

As the Dean argued in their last PPR, however, all programs are capable of improvement. In light of that, I would like to make the following recommendations. The department should:

- continue to hire to keep up with faculty who enter the FERP and retire, ensuring a balance between junior and senior faculty;
- assign classes to part-time faculty as early possible;
- 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;
- create a cap-stone course for the undergraduate major;
- consider developing a course in research/quantitative methods geared toward upper-division transfer students in their first year in the major;
- continue to work on improving the pass rate of PSYC 101 students;
- create mandatory advisement sessions with new upper-division transfer students;

- carefully monitor the consequences of program impact on the department's FTES enrollments and number of majors;
- better correlate M.A. and M.S. admissions decisions to match the availability and research interests of faculty.
- work to ensure the equitable distribution of mentoring and committee responsibilities for M.A. and M.S. theses;
- 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;
- strengthen current assessment efforts by further demonstrating how evidence is used to reshape their undergraduate and graduate curriculum;
- create a program-based assessment experience that measures undergraduate mastery of student learning goals and outcomes, such as a capstone course; and
- develop a tracking system to monitor the post-graduate professional experiences of their M.A. and M.S. alumni.