

Department of Psychology
BA Program Performance Review 2023
Response to Site Visit Report

The CSUF psychology department is grateful for the work of our site visitors, Gabriela Chavira, Math Cuajungco, and Catherine Reed. They visited our department on February 28th, 2023. During their visit, they met with a large number of individuals, including students, administrators, tenure/tenure-track faculty, lecturers, and staff. These reviewers noted many positive aspects of our department. They also focus on areas for growth and development. Some of these changes can be accomplished by the department, and others will require institutional support.

Strengths

The site visitors noted many areas of strength within our department. One strength is our faculty. They teach a wide range of courses and conduct research in a number of different areas, embracing the teacher/scholar model. In addition, the reviewers found that lecturers felt supported by the department. Faculty research was indicated as an area of success for the department, with a large number of publications reported, along with several large external grants. The reviewers also pointed out the department's excellent record in service and mentorship. Another strength indicated is our incredible staff, who are supportive to both faculty and students. Within our major curriculum, our emphasis on scaffolding was commended, as was the breadth of field-specific content students are exposed to in the major. The reviewers pointed out the addition of numerous new courses to the curriculum, reflecting changes in the field.

Areas for Growth

The report included several areas that could be addressed to improve the undergraduate major in psychology at CSUF. Some of these can be accomplished within the department and others require resources from the university or policy changes outside of the department.

Department

Curriculum. One of the largest tasks recommended for the department is updating the curriculum. The reviewers suggested using American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for undergraduate majors. Since the reviewers' report, APA has issued an update, the [APA Guidelines for Undergraduate Psychology Major 3.0](#). We will use this newer set of guidelines to guide our changes. We will plan a comprehensive review of our course offerings and, as suggested, will apply for external funding to provide a course release to those working on this task. We will explore adding new courses, such as a qualitative methods course, and expanding lab offerings.

The reviewers suggested the possibility of eliminating the internship requirement, making it an elective, or restructuring it. We would like to retain the internship as a major requirement, as it is a High Impact Practice that gives students valuable hands-on experience within the field. We are

currently working on improvements to the implementation that should make it more structured. For example, we are now hosting orientations for students taking the internship in the semester before they take it. We are working on ways to make this orientation required, to assure that students get the information they need. In addition, we have improved the website so that the requirements are more apparent. We are also working with the Center for Internships and Community Engagement (CICE) to make the process of searching for internships easier. Finally, our advisors and the internship coordinator are working together to improve outreach to students.

To address the need for inclusive pedagogy, we will implement the psychology major diversity requirement starting for the Fall 2024 catalog year. We are currently devising a plan for updating all of our curriculum so that it includes justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Considering the magnitude of this task, we expect it will take several years. We will also work to increase the content rigor in courses.

Advising. For advising, we have now hired three full-time staff advisors, and we still have three graduate students and four faculty members who continue to do advising. We are now working to shift the graduate students and faculty to a model where they focus on advising on course content, graduate school, and careers. Our staff advisors will focus more on schedule advising and checking to ensure students have fulfilled graduation requirements. This new model will better serve our students.

Resources. With the rapid growth of our department, the lack of corresponding resources has become problematic. Within the department, we will explore potential systems for replacing old computers in faculty labs. We also look at ways we can encourage more faculty to apply for external grant funding. Another issue the department needs to address is how to adequately distribute workload. The department needs to take a critical look at committee work and find ways to spread out the heavy service load needed to serve such a large number of students. The department should also explore faculty mentoring as a way to increase faculty connections within psychology. Another way we are working on improving the department is creating a better onboarding process for new lecturers. This semester we are paying a stipend to a full-time lecturer to coordinate informational meetings and provide mentoring to our new lecturers. We will evaluate the program the end of the semester to determine if it was successful.

Department Climate. The reviewers indicated that there was a lot tension among faculty. To address this, we hosted our first ever department retreat in the fall. We used the retreat to work on community guidelines for our department. We also began the process of creating a department vision and a mission statement. It is hoped that these documents will help us focus on our common goals and values. We have also implemented using secret ballots for voting in faculty meetings. We are also working a lunch talk series so that faculty and students can share their research with one another.

College/University

Significantly increased university support was recommended numerous times by the reviewers. The department is lacking resources in large part due to the rapid growth in the number of majors – 53% between the last PPR and when the site visit occurred. Since then, the department has grown even more. We are already seeing some increased resources, with the hiring of three staff advisors and the Dean’s office helping to pay for the fall retreat. In addition, there are plans for

psychology to gain more space. Currently, we are offering nearly a third of our sections online because we have no additional space to offer them in person. The university also invested in a consultant to assist with the department's climate issues related to DEI. More resources are needed, however, for concentrated DEI trainings and additional targeted retreats. Finally, we will need to hire several more tenure-track faculty in our department. The number of tenure and tenure-track faculty has not increased at a pace that has kept up with our student growth. To competitively recruit faculty that will best serve our students, we will need to offer appropriate start-up packages. This will ensure that students are able to do the cutting-edge research that is needed for our students to be competitive in applying for graduate school and to obtain good positions in industry.

In terms of equipment, psychology research labs require updated computers, yet there is no systemic mechanism for researchers to obtain them without a large internal grant or external grant. In addition, the heavy workload required to update curriculum will require course releases for faculty working on those difficult tasks. There will also need to be increased investment in the infrastructure of the department, to accommodate the large number of undergraduates we serve. For example, the department needs a second (and maybe even third) vice chair with a course release. Additional vice chairs would further help to distribute the workload required to run such a large department. The reviewers also recommended hiring more staff, specifically someone who could provide support in a number of areas, as the need arises at different times of the year.

Overall, the department has a lot of strengths, but also many issues. With some strategic changes and the investment of university resources, the department will be able to reach its full potential and serve as a model department for the CSU.