

Weber State University  
Department of Psychology  
Program Faculty Response to the 2012 Program Review

Date: April 8, 2012

The Department of Psychology would like to thank the review team (Drs. Jim Bird, R. Eric Landrum, Marjukka Ollilainen, and Melanie M. Domenech Rodríguez) for their comprehensive and insightful analysis. We respond below to the review team's comments on each of the 8 standards.

A. Mission Statement

We take great pleasure in the recognition by the review team that department's mission statement is clear and that the outcome goals not only follow from the statement, but also resonate with national standards of the discipline and institutional standards.

B. Curriculum Standards

We are also pleased that the curriculum, which has undergone a complete revision over the past 6 years, was seen by the review team as corresponding to the mission and goals. We appreciate the team's recognition of our efforts to create a well thought-out curriculum that provides a rigorous training to students in the science of psychology.

We note the team's suggestions about configuring the capstone experience in terms of a range of well-publicized classes (including research and practicum) and strengthening attention to ethics in our curriculum. The department has recognized that there remains this kind of additional work to do on the curriculum and these suggestions will be central in the work of our department Curriculum Committee over the next year. Diversity-related curriculum issues (brought up in the Program Summary) will also be addressed in a new department Diversity Committee. The committee's full charge will be determined in the fall, but would likely address the broad effectiveness with which the department embraces diversity (preliminary data suggests that we are less effective in attracting diverse students to the major than we expected). Finally, we will explore the possibility that the departmental assessment committee chair (who is responsible for writing all reports and keeping abreast of all changes in assessment procedures and policies) receive compensation in the form of one course reduction per year for his or her efforts.

C. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

We welcome the comments about the department's efforts in defining and assessing student learning outcomes (SLO). Over the past decade, our assessments have focused on assessments of general SLO using instruments that were separate from class assessments. We are gearing up to perform class-specific assessments starting next year, based on work performed this year which involved faculty working out common class goals and assessments for classes they teach in common.

As the class-specific assessments are just now being initiated, we have not systematically documented how such data have been used for decision-making. This point was raised by the team in commenting that there was little documentation of how assessment data have been used to drive program changes. The self-study document details how older assessment data have been

used by the department as *evidence* to justify the changes that were made (e.g., the relation between perceived rigor and student satisfaction), but not as the *driver* of the change themselves. We expect more data-driven program changes will be demonstrated as more specific data about students' performance in classes are collected. With specific regard to the issue of students' perception of classes as rigorous, we will consider changing how classes are evaluated in the graduating senior survey and other assessments to get a better indication of which and why classes are valued.

#### D. Academic Advisement

We welcome the positive comments about our new advising procedures, which require that newly declared majors and minors schedule a meeting with the Departmental Advisor. Students plan their undergraduate academic careers on CatTracks with the advisor. Besides meeting with students, the advisor is also responsible for the handbook, major fest, and other advising activities including chairing the department's Advising Committee, for which a course reduction per semester is received.

The review team's suggestion for greater coordination of between the Departmental Advisor and Psi Chi is a good one, which will benefit all parties. One response to the suggestion we will discuss is to consider having a Psi Chi student representative serve on the Assessment Committee who could provide a student perspective to the committee and bring to students additional advising information.

#### E. Faculty

The quality and hard work of the faculty is a constant refrain in the past several reviews as is the call for "further efforts to support faculty are warranted." The psychology department will continue to work with the Dean and others to fully compensate faculty for their extraordinary work, particularly their supervision of students. In particular, we will seek ways for faculty to be fairly recognized for their supervision of students, both in terms of work-load issues and as research activities.

The department as a whole shares the review team's concern about the tenure process for clinical faculty. We will work with future Tenure and Promotion Committees and the Dean to ensure better understanding of the responsibilities and work-load of clinical faculty.

The department has been indebted to the adjunct faculty over the past several years, given the challenge of covering classes with less than a full complement of faculty. We are pleased to hear that departmental mechanisms to "train and integrate" adjunct faculty members are perceived as effective. We are also delighted to hear of adjunct faculty member's interest in becoming more involved in the intellectual life of the department, particularly supervising student research. The department will consider policies to address adjuncts' requests in reference to their work with students and related issues (research support, space requirements, subject-pool access, etc.).

#### F. Program Support

The department is pleased that our office staff, particularly Aubrey Jenkins, the departmental secretary, was recognized as an extraordinary person who works on projects outside her job description on a daily basis. As suggested by the Review Team, the chair has already began

working with the Human Resources office on a job audit to document the secretary's work-load. It is unclear whether a new job description is possible, but we hope that formal documentation of the actual position may someday be full recognized in both job classification and pay.

We appreciate the review team's recommendation that the department funding be increased, but do not expect that college or university budgets will allow it. Nonetheless, the department has sought various additional sources of funding, including funding from class fees and through alumni giving. The suggestions about other sources of funding (external community) will also be pursued.

Finally, the entire issue of the use of space in the department is a topic for future department discussion, as department needs and policies need to be reviewed. The recommendation to include space issues in a broader strategic plan is very helpful as it will help the department view issues in both shorter and longer time frames.

#### G. Relationships with External Communities

The recommendation that the department create an External Advisory Committee is an interesting one, particularly with regard to strategic goals that the department embraces. The department will explore the proposal through the departmental Practicum Committee, which is primarily involved in placing students in community settings.

#### H. Program Summary

The department embraces the recommendation that we create a broad-based 5-year strategic plan that is coordinated with the college and the university. The recommendation comes at a good time as the department is now emerging from a period of resolving old long-standing issues (e.g., the organization of the curriculum, the role of faculty, and the value of research and practicum), and is now ready to consider directions of future long-term growth. We have already approached Dr. Kim Wheatley, facilitator for the university planning process, to help the department in its process. He has agreed and will begin to plan out the process in the fall.