

Weber State University
Department of Psychology
Program Faculty Response to the 2006 Program Review Evaluation

Date: April 13, 2006

Recommendations/Commendations

A. Mission Statement

We agree with the report's conclusion that the department's mission statement is clear and that the goals they embody are being met. Those goals address student acquisition of knowledge within the discipline of psychology as well as the skills to think in a disciplinary manner.

B. Curriculum Standards

We are in agreement with the review team that the current curriculum—with core, breadth, and elective course requirements—is sound. The curriculum has provided students with a strong foundation in the field of psychology while allowing them flexibility to develop individual interests that prepare them for future graduate studies and employment. The addition of the “Toolkit Course” (a course designed to teach various foundational concepts and skills) will improve the success of psychology majors and minors and enhance their learning throughout their studies in psychology. This course will be implemented on an experimental basis in the Fall 2006 and Spring 2007 semesters, and will be evaluated thereafter for formal inclusion into the curriculum.

We are also in agreement with the evaluation team that the department currently lacks a formal integrative capstone experience for graduating seniors. Although a formal capstone course has not been designated and required by the department, many if not most students are enrolled in one of a variety of courses which would provide the integrative experience central to a capstone. These courses include directed readings, practicum, research, and cooperative work experience, Advanced General Psychology, to name a few. Future department faculty discussions will address the creation and standardization of a designated capstone experience based on students' involvement in any one of a variety of designated courses. Such discussions will have to carefully evaluate whether such a capstone experience can be offered to all students (including those who take courses on-line or at satellite campuses), without further burdening the faculty or lowering department productivity.

C. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

We agree that the department has assessed the goals contained within the mission statement. The outcome data presented to the evaluation team indicated that the departmental goals are being met, but they were lacking in sufficient specificity regarding the extent to which the demonstrated changes in student learning can be attributed

directly to students' psychology curriculum. The full data, with those analyses included, are available in the detailed yearly reports submitted regularly to the office of academic affairs. To clarify these issues, the data in detail and summary form will be placed on the department web site (<http://weber.edu/psychology>), in addition to the university web site. (<http://programs.weber.edu/assessment/participants/psychology.htm>). The web site with these data will be available by Fall 2006.

D. Academic Advising Standards

The evaluation team suggests that although adequate for many students, the department's current academic advisement procedures can still be improved. In the past, students have been informed of their assigned academic advisor by the department secretary when they declare a major in psychology. Additionally career and academic advisement sessions are held multiple times throughout the year. However, these procedures involve a good deal of student initiation. For example, students have been largely left to initiate contact in scheduling an appointment with an advisor. The review committee suggested that the department can become more proactive in transmitting important academic and career advisement information to students early in their academic careers. We consider this a helpful suggestion and plan to hold departmental discussions regarding how to implement new mechanisms to facilitate improved communication with students as soon as they major or minor in psychology.

E. Faculty Standards

Research Efforts and Learning Opportunities. The current practice of involving students in out-of-class learning experiences (practicum, research, directed readings, etc.) was highly valued by the review team, as it is by the department faculty members. This has been a major strength of the psychology department. The review team supports the faculty perception that students' involvement in these activities is contributing not only to their success but also to attaining department goals.

F. Program Support Standards

Promotion/Encouragement of Faculty Research. The review team was complimentary regarding the faculty talents, achievements, productivity, community involvement, student engagement, and overall hard work. The review team expressed concerns that care must be taken to ensure continued faculty performance by adjusting the teaching loads of faculty to reflect the heavy demands involved in supervising students' out-of-class activities (research, practicum, directed readings). The department has begun to recognize this issues and now compensates faculty by a one-course-per-year course reduction for 12 credit hours of student supervision performed by a given faculty member. This is consistent with university policy (PPM, 4.6A.4, <http://documents.weber.edu/ppm/4-06.htm>) and has been widely supported in the department. The department will continue to find ways to have faculty members' important and valuable work with students more adequately compensated in terms of teaching load and recognized in terms of tenure and promotion adjudication.

Funding. The department agrees that more funds are required to adequately address the growing needs of the department. The funding priorities the review team identified include a new faculty line (for applied psychology), research support, and facility enhancements, including lab space and equipment. Over the upcoming year this issue will be addressed by a department Funding Committee. Although some donations are made currently, it is hoped that the effectiveness of this committee in developing contacts with the community and alumni will increase gifts and donations. The committee will also be charged with exploring equipment grants from national funding organizations (e.g., NSF).

Leadership. As noted by the review team, the department is currently undergoing a transition in leadership. Dr. Eric Amsel was named chair at the beginning of this calendar year and he will be the third department chair over a 4-year period. There is recognition of the need for a shared vision and governance for the department, which is being created through regular faculty meetings, faculty development activities, faculty retreats, and other activities. With the number of faculty turnover in the past year, it is important for the department to continue to establish itself as a supportive and collegial environment.

Physical Facilities. As noted by the review team, the available physical facilities for laboratory, research, and instructional uses are inadequate. This is in part due to the growing student population interested in the study of psychology and growing needs of an increasingly productive faculty. A department space utilization committee was formed this past year in order to inventory our current space usage and needs. Upon finalization of their report, the department will discuss these needs with the Dean of Social Sciences. Also, the department is exploring ways to share resources with other departments on campus. With the renovation of the Social Science Building it is hoped that the department's facilities will be addressed.

G. Relationships with External Communities

We appreciate the review team's recognition of the faculty's involvement in the community. The community involvement of faculty is an important basis for them to supervise students in practicum and service learning, both valued activities for students.

H. Results of Previous Program Review and Future Directions

The review team, like the faculty, are committed to seeing the department remaining devoted to excellence teaching, and growing in offering research, practicum and experiential learning opportunities.