

Weber State University  
Department of Psychology  
Program Faculty Response to the 2017 Program Review

Date: March 24, 2017

The Department of Psychology would like to thank the review team (Drs. Christopher Hoagstrom and Kenneth D. Keith) for their thorough and insightful review. The departmental response to the review team's comments on each of the standards is addressed below.

**A. Mission Statement**

We are pleased that the reviewers recognize our mission statement emphasizes the department's belief that our role is to facilitate academic and career goals of students through providing them with the ability to apply the scientific principles of psychology in their everyday lives. This statement aligns with the mission statement of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the overall mission statement of Weber State University, and the curricular guidelines outlined by the American Psychological Association for undergraduate psychology programs.

**B. Curriculum and Assessment**

We are also pleased that the reviewers found our curriculum consistent with, not only the previous curricular guidelines suggested by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2007) on which the current curriculum was based, but that it is also consistent with the current guidelines (APA, 2013). The department's curriculum was adopted in 2014 and was based on the APA 2007 guidelines, but includes a diversity component based on feedback during the previous program review. The forethought of inclusion of a diversity requirement in our curriculum makes our curriculum in line with the APA 2013 guidelines.

We appreciate the reviewers' recognition that the Psychology Department views the curriculum as a dynamic entity that changes in response to student learning outcomes. As was highlighted by the review team, this approach has led the department to develop multiple new courses (i.e., PSY 2255: Conditioning, Learning, and Behavior Modification; PSY 3615/3616: Psychological Statistics & Methods I/II). These changes are, and have been, directed by student feedback, assessment reports, and empirical research. By having a curriculum that is dynamic and changing we are better able to provide students with the most effective pedagogical approaches.

The reviewers, unfortunately, found the department's new assessment plan somewhat excessive, and potentially inefficient. The new assessment plan, adopted by the department in March 2016, is designed to have every course assessed every time it is taught. This strategy is designed to ensure that all courses are adequately assessed in a timely manner. The site-team proposed a sampling perspective in regard to assessment. This approach utilizes a rotating plan in which courses are assessed based on a specific calendar schedule. The idea in using

this approach is that it would allow for all courses to be assessed with a 3-4 year period. This method represents the approach utilized in the previous assessment strategy. Although this approach works well for the standard “core” courses in the department; however, some of the less popular elective courses in the department are not taught on a specific schedule, and as such, were not being adequately assessed. The department recognizes the time and resource costs associated with the type of complete assessment. However, we do believe that part of the arduous nature of assessment is the infrequent implementation. That is, faculty typically find assessment difficult or arduous, because it is not part of the normal procedure for the class. The department’s belief is that by making assessment the norm, faculty will find the process much less difficult, and, in return, we will get better, more reliable and valid assessment data.

### **C. Advising**

The site-team found the dedicated advisor position to be an effective mechanism for providing students with the curricular advising. Specifically, the team found the dedicated advisor position provides students with clear, consistent, and organized information regarding the department curriculum, career opportunities, and a definite faculty that aligns with the student’s career or research interests. The site-team particularly appreciated the advising handbook as a mechanism to provide students with a succinct and readily available guide to help students become acquainted with the department, major, and discipline overall. The department appreciates the teams’ openness to considering the value of a dedicated advisor position, and further appreciates their understanding of the value this service provides for our students overall.

### **D. Faculty**

The review team found the department faculty to be strong and effective in providing students with educational material. Additionally, the team found the faculty to share a sense of camaraderie, and all are focused on a common goal of providing opportunities to students. The team found the faculty in the department to be dedicated to the point of sacrificing their own research goals to further the needs and goals of the students. The team recognizes the difficult nature of getting students in an open-enrollment university involved in high-impact learning experiences, and commends the faculty on the staggering number opportunities available.

The ability of the department to the number of high-impact opportunities that are is due to the high quality adjunct faculty in the department. The department attempts to integrate adjuncts with the department overall, and is pleased that these attempts are seen as effective.

### **E. Program Support**

The department thoroughly appreciates the team’s assessment that the department does a lot with only moderate resources. They were quick to point out that not only is a 4-4 teaching load heavy, but that this arduous teaching load is also combined with the fact that many faculty in the department also teach overload. The team noted that although there is a mechanism in place for faculty to receive release time for work individual work with students

this mechanism is rarely taken advantage of due to the program demands. They further expressed considerable concern that faculty may experience “burnout” over time.

The team further noted that all faculty expressed high regards for Mickey Cole, the Psychology Department Administrative Assistant. In particular, they noted Mickey’s overall assistance in coordinating classes and conducting research projects. It was noted that several faculty mentioned teaching assistants as a mechanism to help offset the challenges associated with the heavy teaching load. We have attempted to better utilize teaching assistants by expanding the teaching practicum experience. Although this does provide one alternative, the number of students capable to take advantage of this type of opportunity is relatively small.

It was repeatedly stated that the faculty in the department are doing a lot with a little, and that we would be well served by additional staffing and funding for research and travel resources. We completely agree with this position, but recognize that it isn’t really a viable possibility.

## **F. Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations**

The department appreciates the site-team’s comprehensive review of the department. We also agree with their conclusions that the department is strong and provides students with educational and research opportunities that facilitate knowledgeable and prepared students. We also appreciate the team’s continued reiteration that the department is doing a lot with little resources. Although the potential for obtaining additional resources via administrative mechanisms may not be possible, the faculty are continuing to develop resources through different funding opportunities (e.g., RSPG, ARCC, etc.).

In regard to the overall recommendations of the reviewers, we completely agree with the belief in the importance of integrating a cross-cultural approach into the curriculum. We have not yet discussed plans for implementing this need. We have discussed the development of a cross-cultural course, however, this represents only the first attempt at implementation of cross-cultural understanding across the curriculum.

In addition to continuing offering dedicated academic advising, the team suggests developing more formal mechanisms to ensure students are receiving the appropriate and relevant information. While the department cannot require mandatory advising for every major every semester, we do try to ensure that students do receive advising when declaring as a Psychology major. Also, the continued development of the advising handbook including curriculum maps can assist students in their academic planning.

The Psychology Department thoroughly embraces the conclusions of the review team, and appreciate their time and effort in the review process.