Executive Summary:
Psychology Department Self-Study for the 2010-2011 5-year Regent Review

The self study is both a description and an analysis of critical aspects of the Psychology Department, which highlights the department's strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for change.

The Mission

The mission of the Psychology department is *to facilitate students' career aspirations and academic goals by excellence in training in the science of psychology in the context of an undergraduate, Liberal Arts University and a department which values teaching and research.* There are four central program goals that follow from the mission which have been embraced by the department and embodied in the curriculum: *Knowledge*: Students will acquire content knowledge and methodological skills to understand psychology as a scientific discipline; *Application*: Students will be able to critically apply psychological principles and research to themselves, others and society; *Values/Ethics*: Students will share key beliefs, attitudes, and values adopted by scientific psychologists; and *Interpersonal Relations and Communication*: Students will exhibit skills to professionally communicate their understanding of terms, concepts, research, and theories of the discipline to others via written and oral formats. A strength of the department's statement of goals is that they are a consolidation of the statement of goals recommended by the American Psychological Association for undergraduate psychology departments.

The Curriculum

The Psychology curriculum is structured to ensure that students achieve the departmental goals. The curriculum was revised in the past 5 years to better align requirements to the goals and ensure a depth, breadth, and consistency of coverage of the discipline. The curriculum includes 4 *Core General* courses, which include courses that address the skills necessary to think like a psychologist (i.e., Introductory Psychology, Psychological Statistics, Statistics Lab, and Research Methods); 9 *Core Content* courses, which consists of courses presenting the different approaches and domains of psychology; 21 *Elective* courses with most on 2 to 4 semester rotations; and 13 *Experiential and Individualized Instruction* courses, most of which are offered each semester.

The Psychology major is open to all students. They are required to complete 36 credit hours for a Bachelors of Science degree, which includes 4 required courses (11 credit hours taken from Core General courses), 5 breadth courses (15 credit hours from Core Content courses), and at least 10 additional credit hours which can be taken from any area. Although there is no formally required capstone course, there are a range of courses that serve the function of a synthetic and integrative capstone experience. Many students enroll in these classes which include Directed Readings, Projects and Research, Practicum, Capstone Research Project, and others. In addition to the major, the department offers a number of other academic paths to students, including a Bachelor's of Integrated Studies (BIS), a minor, and a teaching major or minor. In addition, students may pursue an Honors degree with a major in Psychology.

There remains work to do to formalize the senior capstone experience and the department is continuing to look for solutions, given the available capacitates and resources. Moreover, true to Psychology's role as a hub discipline, meaning its centrality in many interdisciplinary initiatives, the department is exploring ways to build on connections to Linguistics, Health Promotion and Human Performance, Criminal Justice, and other disciplines to forge new interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary majors, minors, and programs.

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

Student learning outcomes were defined on the basis of the department goals for the overall program and for key courses in the curriculum. With regard to the overall program, the data addressing student learning outcomes for the goal of *Knowledge* provide primary evidence of students' learning the scientific foundation of the discipline and the forms of critical skills (e.g., writing, reading, and thinking) it supports. Graduating seniors are satisfied with their training in psychology, judging that their courses have high standards and prepare them well for graduate school. They have no regrets about their investment in the Psychology major as they would choose the same major if they had to do it all over again. However, missing is evidence of students acquiring the specific content and methodological knowledge which will be available from course assessments. The evidence for the program goal of *Application* shows that students believe that they are learning how to apply psychological theory and research, and improving in their career planning. Moreover, they value the acquisition of such abilities. Future assessments will address students' actual performance in classes which emphasize application skills and personal growth, and their narratives about how they have used psychological theory to understand and help themselves and others, and to improve society. Evidence for the program goal of *Values and Ethics* reveals that faculty members serve as intellectual role models in promoting students' adoption of some beliefs, attitudes, and values of scientific psychology. Evidence also points to the impact of the departmental training of ethical reasoning. Future assessments will address students' adoption of ethics and values in classes which emphasize them, particularly classes such as research and practicum where faculty serve as mentors and tutors. Finally, evidence for the program goal of *Interpersonal Relations and Communication* highlights students' self-assessments that their experiences in the department improved their written and oral skills, and skills in working with others. Additional documentation is necessary from classes dedicated to promoting these skills. Overall, the results of the program assessments indicated that the student learning outcomes associated with each program goal were being fulfilled. Students valued their experience in the department and the knowledge, skills, values, and abilities they were acquiring. However, additional assessments, particularly class assessments, need to be performed.

Academic Advising

Upon recommendations from the last Regent's Review, the department's revised its advising policy. Major advising used to be performed in the manner that pre-major advising is performed in the university, that is, as a recommended but not required activity. But now, majors and minors have a required advising session with the new Departmental Advisor, who helps students understand the graduation requirements and, when possible, directs them to those who can provide them with career planning. Assessments demonstrate that students value the academic advising they receive from the Departmental Advisor, although career planning experiences are not as positive. Career planning activities sponsored by the department and Psi

Chi (the undergraduate honor society in the discipline) include a newsletter and handbook, social and specialized sessions about graduate school, and a graduate school fair. Moreover, career advising has become central in a handful of courses. However, more can be done to promote career advising for students looking for jobs than graduate school.

Faculty

The department faculty members are award-winning teachers (almost half the faculty have won college or university awards for teaching) who are engaged (they individually supervise many students in practicum or research) and effective (students' course evaluations are very positive). The faulty are a diverse group in terms of gender, becoming a diverse group in ethnicity, and are fully academically qualified (almost all have terminal degrees). All faculty members embrace three central pedagogical values in their teaching activities: Treating the discipline as scientific, serving as tutors and mentors, and promoting student achievement and success. However, there is expected diversity in how these values are instantiated by each faculty member. Faculty development opportunities in the department include regularly scheduled thematic discussions about such topics as technology, teaching strategies, and others. All regular faculty members are evaluated biennially at minimum, with junior faculty being reviewed formally for rank and tenure in their 3rd and 6th years. Junior faculty members also meet regularly with the chair to discuss their progress.

Adjunct FTEs have remained constant over the past 5 years at about 36% of the total departmental FTEs. Almost half the adjunct FTEs were regular faculty members teaching overload online classes. The other half is composed of a number of different individuals who provide students with even a greater diversity of backgrounds and experiences than the full-time faculty could. Most of the department's adjunct faculty members are emeritus faculty, counseling center staff, or persons with a long history with the department, with only a handful of new adjunct faculty members who have been hired over the past five years. Each adjunct is carefully reviewed prior to teaching, and given departmental and university support for their activities. Adjuncts are regularly evaluated, carefully supervised, and invited to join in departmental and university-wide faculty development opportunities. New adjuncts teaching multiple classes additionally meet regularly with the chair, and all adjuncts' courses are reviewed. The course reviews of the adjuncts are positive, although less positive than the overall course evaluations.

Program Support

The support staff of one secretary and multiple work-study students is similar to the support staff hired in other departments in the college. A new university funding initiative has made funds available to hire a student lab manager. The secretary who manages the office is formally evaluated yearly using a process that assesses a number of performance areas and establishes goals for future development.

The department is also supported by a host of facilities, equipment, and university-based resources. The institutional support includes the campus learning/testing centers, WebCT and WSU online facilities. All of the department classrooms are multimedia-equipped. The department also has a physiological laboratory, a computer laboratory, a statistics laboratory, four small psychological testing cubicles with psychological testing equipment and materials, and a series of rooms used for developmental, cognitive and social psychology research. Each

faculty member has a personal computer linked to the internet. The library's book collections, media collections, and journals are used regularly by faculty and students. What may be unavailable in the library is typically available through superb interlibrary loan facilities. The department budget is based on a long standing formula from the Dean, which has been sufficient in providing basic needs to run the office with some discretionary funds for each full-time faculty member. New revenues are being generated through student course fees. One weakness in the program support which we are taking steps to remedy is the low level of financial assistance from alumni. We are seeking ways to contact alumni and encourage more alumni giving to the department.

Relationships with the External Community

Over the past five years, Psychology faculty members have been involved in various community activities (such as engaging in activities outside the confines of the university) and community relations (such as bringing community members to the campus). Two notable community activities by faculty members are the George Washington High School Intervention project, which is a collaborative effort of department faculty members to provide social skill and mathematics training to inner city High School students. The other community activity is the Brain Awareness Initiative in which a number of WSU Psychology and Neuroscience students bring brain research and demonstrations to local area schools. Other community activities of the faculty include being formally involved as psychologists offering support to state initiatives (Governor's Family Initiative), serving on the board of directors of community agencies (Ogden-Weber Community Action Partnerships, Weber Human Services, Foster Grandparents, DaVinci Academy, and the Treehouse Children's Museum), or volunteering their expertise in reviewing IRB protocols at the local hospital, offering diversity trainings to businesses, collaborating with Air Force research, and providing supervision of clinicians serving internships. They have completed a number of different community research projects, supervised civic engagement projects, given lectures, and served as media resources. Faculty members have also encouraged community members (including alumni) to give lectures in their classes or to the entire department.

Review Team

The review team includes Dr. Eric Landrum, Ph.D. (Professor, Department of Psychology, Boise State University), Dr. Melanie M. Domenech Rodríguez (Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Utah State University), Dr. James Bird, Ph.D. (Professor of Child and Family Studies, Weber State University), and Dr. Marjukka Ollilainen (Professor of Sociology, Weber State University).