

March 6, 1996

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Professor Hill Goldsmith  
Department of Psychology

From: Alexander Nagel  
Associate Dean

Re: Department of Psychology Assessment Plans

I am responding (at long last) to the Department of Psychology Assessment Plans for the undergraduate major and the graduate program. Your plans articulate a set of educational goals at each level, suggest a variety of means for measuring the attainment of those goals, and propose a feedback mechanism for making changes in the program. The L&S Academic Planning Council has reviewed these plans.

I believe that the Department of Psychology plans to do too much all at once. For the undergraduate program, you suggest ongoing assessment, portfolio evaluation, exit interviewing, follow-up surveys, and standardized testing as assessment instruments. On the other hand, you point out a variety of procedural and scientific difficulties with some of these. For example, you raise the important question of how one can motivate students to seriously engage in standardized testing so that the results are meaningful. Since this is indeed an important and substantial difficulty, and since the cost of standardized testing is high, I would suggest that the Department's assessment plan be scaled back, at least initially.

A complete assessment of any complicated program certainly requires a great deal of effort. However, the College wants to proceed slowly with the Assessment Plan since we have limited resources and do not want to impose unnecessary additional burdens on the faculty. Would it be possible for the Department of Psychology to concentrate on ongoing assessment, portfolio evaluation, and some follow-up surveys? My understanding is that this would not require substantial additional support, and would be carried out by the Undergraduate Education Committee. I would also ask that you provide the College and the Academic Planning Committee with report of this Committee. We want to pass along information about successes or failures to other departments in the College.

Your plan for assessment of the Graduate Program seems more manageable. I hope that you will make use of the information available from the Graduate School when this is appropriate. My understanding is that the Graduate Education Committee will prepare a report on the basis of this

information. Again, the College would appreciate receiving even preliminary versions of these reports that we could share with other departments.

If the Department appropriately scales back the undergraduate assessment plan, it seems that you will not need additional financial resources at this time. As we gain more experience with assessment, the Department may wish to expand its plan again, and we would be happy to consider requests for needed support at a later time.

xc: Dean Phillip R. Certain