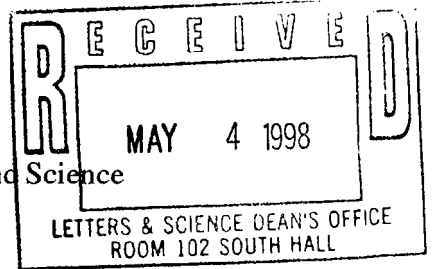


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Assessment Report
Psychology Department, College of Letters and Science
May 1, 1998

Abstract

The Psychology Department assessed both the Undergraduate Major and the Graduate Program during 1997 and 1998. The popular Undergraduate Major was primarily assessed with specially designed questionnaires administered to both graduating seniors and graduates from five years ago. The results indicated very positive impressions of the program—especially instruction, with a few areas of concern such as advising and facilities. To the extent possible in such a large major with so few faculty, the Department’s Undergraduate Committee has begun to address the concerns and further strengthen the positive aspects of the program. The Graduate Program has been assessed using a wide variety of direct and indirect indicators. Much of this assessment was ongoing before the current period of institutional emphasis on assessment. The program is viewed quite positively by both current and former students. The major problem of financial support has been addressed by the Graduate School in ways we believe will benefit our program. A concern about integration of applied and scientific training by the clinical students has been the topic of renewed faculty efforts at resolution since before this round of assessment. The graduate program has improved by objective standards such as a shorter mean time to the degree and more national awards received by our students. For several years, both the undergraduate and graduate programs have been actively changing with addition and deletion of courses, changes in degree requirements, and evolving instructional, advising, and research mentoring practices. These changes have been in response to both formal and informal assessment.

Assessment Tools Used*

Direct Indicators

	Undergraduate Major	Graduate Program
National Exams	no	no
Local Exams	no	no
Capstone Course(s)	yes	no
Embedded Testing	no	no
Student Portfolios	no	yes- c.v. 's
Review theses & dissertations	no	yes
Performance Evaluations	no	yes
Pre and Post Testing	no	no

Indirect Indicators

	Undergraduate Major	Graduate Program
Student Surveys	yes	yes
Exit Interviews	no	no
Alumni Surveys	yes	yes
Employer Surveys	no	no
External Reviews	no	yes-Clinical Program

*All activities took place during 1997 or 1998, with the exception of the Clinical Graduate Program External Review. The survey of potential graduate students who declined our offers of admission was begun four years ago, but analyzed more thoroughly during the just-completed period of assessment.

Narrative Report

Undergraduate Assessment - Coordinated by Keith Kluender, Associate Chair, Undergraduate Studies

In order to learn how to improve the educational experience for undergraduate psychology majors, the Department conducted two surveys to learn what it does well and what it can do better from students' perspectives. Because the major is one of the most populated in the University, about 330 graduates per year accounting for roughly one in ten bachelors's degrees in the College of Letters & Science, comprehensive use of most other methods of assessment (e.g., interviews, portfolio reviews, writing samples) are not feasible owing to problems of cost and/or sampling. Extensive effort, including gathering information on useful surveys from Psychology departments across the country, went into the design of our survey instruments. Since they were constructed, the survey have been shared with over 30 other Psychology departments as well as other L&S departments.

One survey was administered to graduating seniors in the 1997 Spring semester. Four different types of questions were asked: (1) background/demographic information, 19 questions; (2) course and skill development, 46 questions; (3) advising, registration and facilities, 15 questions; and (4) open-ended questions, 3 questions.

A second survey was administered to 347 individuals who graduated in 1993. Seven different types of questions were asked: (1) undergraduate activities, 8 questions; (2) post-undergraduate activities, 6 questions; (3) job search and first employment, 10 questions; (4) job search and current employment, 11 questions; (5) satisfaction with major in psychology; 10 questions; (6) background/demographic information, 2 questions; and, (7) open-ended, 4 questions. For (3) and (4), questions addressed the extent to which different aspects of the psychology major contributed to preparation for employment.

Results from the first survey, Class of 1997, have been analyzed and presented in a report. Overall, student satisfaction with the major was overwhelmingly positive. Instruction was rated particularly highly. Reservations by students were restricted to particular areas in which the department already had identified for improvement (advising, facilities, writing). In each case, remedies were in progress for underclassmen and it is anticipated that future assessments will reflect these efforts. For example, the department is considering a limited internship program for seniors, and efforts are underway to find funds to bolster the advising office.

Analysis of results from the second survey are nearly complete. That survey was conducted by mail, and the response rate (50%) was very high for a survey of this type, possibly owing to several follow-up communications with recipients.

We also provide two capstone courses for each senior in our program. Although many of our courses are necessarily large, these capstone courses have a limit of 25 students. We continually monitor student satisfaction with these courses and attempt to offer courses the students will practical and important (e.g., Forensic Psychology, Organizational Psychology, and many specialized clinical topics). Satisfactory work in these highly participatory capstone courses is evidence of achievement of the students in our entry and intermediate level courses.

With the survey results from graduates from 1993 and 1997 in hand, two new surveys will commence in Fall, 1998. Based upon experience with this inaugural effort, survey instruments will be refined. Most importantly, results from these efforts have already begun to inspire efforts within the Department of Psychology to maintain existing strengths and to initiate changes in areas that can be improved. The Undergraduate Committee is charged with initial responsibility for initiating these changes.

Graduate Assessment - Coordinated by Charles T. Snowdon, Associate Chair, Graduate Studies

Survey of students accepted to our department but attending another program: For the past four years, we have sent surveys to students we have accepted and funded but who have declined our offers of admission. The two most common reasons for attending another University were greater compatibility of interests with another Department and better financial support. We are working to improve our graduate brochure and web page to communicate more clearly the interests of our faculty and the type of training we provide. We are pleased to see that payment of in-state tuition from RA and TA stipends has been eliminated for 1998-99 since this was a major financial impediment to recruiting.

Surveys of graduates, 1986-1996. We sent out 110 surveys and received 49 responses. Of those responding all were employed with more than 95% in academic positions as faculty members or research scientists. Our graduates responded favorably with respect to most aspects of our training program: first year project, methodology courses and requirements, quality of graduate courses and seminars, adequacy of financial support, quality of research training. Almost everyone liked our style of mentored training where a student works closely with an individual faculty member. Nearly all respondents said they would recommend our program to future students if they were interested in a rigorous research training program. The one complaint raised, which was echoed by current students (see below) concerned the need for a better integration of clinical and research training for students in the Clinical Area. The Clinical faculty are aware of this problem and are working toward developing solutions.

Surveys of current students: We sent out surveys to all current graduate students, but had a somewhat disappointing return rate. The feedback was similar to that of recent graduates. Strong points included first year projects, quality and rigor of methodology training, quality of courses and seminars, research training, mentored experience, and financial support. The integration of clinical with research training was noted and as mentioned above we are working on this now.

Evaluation of vitae of current students. We asked students to submit current curriculum vitae and analyzed these for evidence of student professional development. Several of our students are receiving highly competitive predoctoral grants from places like the National Science Foundation, and National Institute of Mental Health. Several of our students have received dissertation awards from the American Psychological Association and in 1997-98, we received the maximum number any department could receive. Our students present research at conferences and conventions at the rate of 1.4 papers per year and they are publishing papers in peer reviewed journals at the rate of 0.75 per year. Many of our students are displaying excellent progress in terms of awards, conference presentations and scholarly publication.

External review of the clinical training program. Two years ago, the clinical program underwent an extensive external review to maintain its accreditation. This year-long process began with a self-study, followed by the visit of a team of nationally prominent psychologists chosen by the American Psychological Association. The team's two-day campus visit was very thorough and included interviews of faculty, clinic personnel, administrators, and students. The report was extremely positive, and the program was granted five more years of accreditation.

Other evidence: With the help of funds from the Graduate School, the Department, and two endowments (one supported by gifts and royalties from current faculty), we have been able to pay up to \$400 for travel support for each student presenting a first-authored paper at a national or international conference and we can make up to ten awards of \$500 each to students for independent research that is not related to the work of their major professor. To our knowledge we have been able to provide support for all students in residence through their 6th year by means of training grants, Research Assistantships, outside fellowships and Teaching Assistantships. We have reduced the mean years of completing the Ph.D. over the past decade. We continue to receive extremely positive feedback from students and faculty about our first year project requirement which culminates in the First Year Symposium each fall when students present formal research talks. These highly professional talks give students and faculty great pride in the high quality of graduate students in our program.