

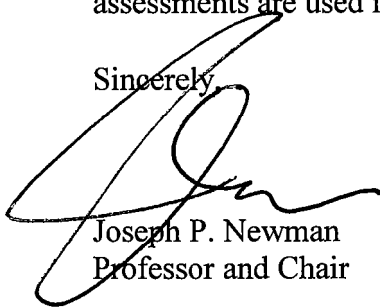
Date: May 1, 2006

To: Dean Gary Sandefur

From: Joseph Newman, Chair

Enclosed please find a copy of the Psychology Department's updated assessment plan. Many of the actions in our assessment plan are on-going, routine matters that the Psychology Department attends to very diligently. Other actions are periodic and occur at intervals as required by outside assessors. The Psychology Department is rather "assessment intensive." Our internal assessments are used in modifying our program content.

Sincerely,



Joseph P. Newman
Professor and Chair

Department of Psychology

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Psychology Undergraduate Program Review and Assessment- Coordinated by Catherine Marler (Associate Chair, Undergraduate Studies) with help from Jeffrey Henriques (Senior Lecturer), Jill Cohen Kolb (Instructional Program Manager), and Arlene Davenport (Undergraduate Advisor)

In order to improve the educational experience for undergraduate psychology majors, the Department has been conducting a yearly survey to learn what it has done well and what it can do better from students' perspectives. Because the major is one of the most popular in the university with over 700 majors, comprehensive use of most other methods of assessment (e.g. interviews) 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, our surveys have been shared with over 30 other Psychology departments as well as other L&S departments.

The survey for 2005 was administered to 260 students and 141 students responded. Satisfaction with the program had dropped from over 75% in previous years to less than 65% in 2005. This coincided with a perceived drop in ability to register for psychology courses on a schedule to allow normal progress towards a degree (from over 70% to 50%). A drop in faculty numbers from 34 to 30 may have influenced this drop in satisfaction. The ratings were 90% for learning the content of psychology, 90% for learning critical thinking, 70% for communication, and 90% for understanding data and research methodology. We have therefore been very successful in some areas, but need to improve in others.

In response to the survey and to improve our undergraduate educational experience we have made several changes that also point to the next steps in our program.

- 1) **Instructional Program Manager:** We have hired an instructional program manager to help run and oversee the undergraduate program in collaboration with the Associate Chair of Undergraduate Studies. This allows focus specifically on the undergraduate program and separates this function from other administrative duties. It allows us to oversee the instructional staff more carefully and to monitor changes or improvements that are required. We are gathering data on enrollment patterns and developing long range plans that will most benefit the students and their choices in coursework within the department. By looking at courses that fill quickly and courses that are consistently requested we can make better decisions regarding our instructional programming.
- 2) **Advising:** A primary critique students reported in the survey (approximately 50% of general complaints) was related to advising. Our current advisor is partially retiring and we will be hiring a new advisor whose duties will include continuation of the one-on-one advising, but will also include more advising information on the psychology website, as well as disseminating information via mass emails such as seminar, advising and research opportunities. This should allow for more efficient advising. While this will not solve the complaint that we need more advisors, we will be able to improve the quality of the advising through other mechanisms. The Madison chapter of the national honors society, Psi Chi, has six working committees which serve all majors in the department

with newsletters, faculty research talks, and an annual research fair, as well as a peer advising service. We propose to strengthen this advising component in the future. Our senior lecturers have also become significantly involved in advising and two lecturers participate extensively in advising L&S Cross College Advising.

- 3) **Undergraduate Research Opportunities:** There are two programs which have resulted from the department's active involvement in scholarship and research. The Madison chapter of the national honors society, Psi Chi, has six working committees which serve all majors in the department with newsletters, faculty research talks, and an annual research fair, as well as a peer advising service. For six summers we have had NSF funding to support minority and/or first generation college students from across the county to spend 9 weeks on campus carrying out research in a faculty mentor's labs. Each summer 9-12 scholars have been funded. Psi Chi has also just initiated a Research Day which involved a half day of direct contact between students and faculty. This was a very successful event with a number of faculty and students attending. Each year some of our majors win various honors and awards. In the spring of 2006 we received 10 Hilldale awards, 1 Bookstore award, a Leadership Award, the Chandler Young Award and 3 sophomore honors grants.
- 4) **Number of Psychology Courses:** The second most common complaint is that we need more psychology courses taught. As the department grows this problem should solve itself.
- 5) **Level III Courses:** Comments were extremely positive about psychology's Level III courses. These are capstone courses that have a limit of 25 students. There is considerable variation in these courses that cover topics that are both important and practical such as Prejudice and Stereotyping, Neurochemistry of Drugs and Behavior, Stress and Health, and Media and Mental Illness.
- 6) **Honors Classes:** Over the past three years more honors classes have been added. This addressed a previous issue that there were no enough honors courses available.
- 7) **Outreach Activities:** Students in the department are very active as volunteers in campus and community services. Majors in the department are the fifth most numerous among those studying abroad. A new course is being added in which students can arrange a service learning project in consultation with both a professor and a community agency or campus organization. This class will increase outreach opportunities for students.

Graduate Program Assessment Plan Update Narrative, May 2006

Prepared by Colleen F. Moore, Associate Chair and Director of Graduate Studies
(Note: this is a working document and should be regarded as such).

The goal of the graduate program in Psychology is to train top psychological scientists who will advance the future of psychology through their own careers in teaching, research and service. We expect our students to graduate with several publications in top refereed journals and to compete for excellent jobs and post-doctoral training positions.

The graduate program of the Psychology Department consists of the following areas of concentrations: Biology of Brain and Behavior, Clinical, Cognitive and Cognitive Neurosciences, Developmental, Perception, Social and Personality, and the Individualized Graduate Major (IGM). The Department sets some overall requirements that apply to all graduate students, and the faculty of each area group set requirements. In the Individualized Graduate Major the student consults with a mentoring committee of 5 faculty members to set specific requirements beyond those required by the Department.

Those assessment actions in the plan that are carried out at least annually by the Department are marked with an asterisk. Other assessment actions are done periodically and are marked by the symbol π . We regard our program as "assessment intensive" in that many internal forms of assessment and program modification are on-going.

Performance evaluations:

*1. *Fulfilling course requirements.* The Graduate Records Office tracks student courses and which department, area group, or IGM requirement they fulfill, as well as the grades in those courses. This information is given to the faculty for use in evaluations of courses and faculty teaching by the faculty.

*2. *Individualized student evaluations by area group faculty.* Area group faculty evaluate all students in their area annually by discussing the students as a committee, and writing each student a letter noting particular accomplishments as well as areas of weakness. Some area groups also meet with students individually to establish individualized curriculum plans and discuss progress in both courses and research. Area groups regularly discuss and modify their curricula based on both evaluations of students and student feedback.

*3. *First year research project.* All graduate students in Psychology are required to present a first year research project in the Fall of the 2nd year. The Department holds a whole day symposium at which all the students present their talks. Each student's talk and written paper is then evaluated by a committee of 3 faculty members.

*4. *First year retention decision.* Performance in the first year graduate curriculum, including the first year research project, is used by the department in making a decision about whether the student should be retained in the graduate program.

*5. *Preliminary examinations.* Preliminary examinations vary in form across area groups. In all cases, student performance is evaluated by a committee of faculty members. For most area groups the preliminary exam consists of a written exam in which the student answers essay questions, an original paper on a research topic, or

both.

*6. *Dissertation proposal and dissertation defense* are evaluated in the normal manner by the dissertation committee. Some area groups have an open defense in which the student gives a department colloquium on the research project. The open defense is followed by a closed defense involving the committee alone.

π 7. *Number of years to complete the PhD.* The Director of Graduate Studies periodically evaluates the average number of years our students are taking to complete the PhD.

π 8. *Retention/completion of the graduate program.* The Director of Graduate Studies periodically evaluates the % of students who entered the program who successfully completed it.

π 9. *Retention/completion of the graduate program by targeted minority students.* The Director of Graduate Studies periodically evaluates the % of students who entered the program who successfully completed it.

*10. *Graduate student recruiting/applicant statistical report.* The Graduate Records Office annually tabulates the applications, admissions, enrollments. These data include targeted minority applications.

Other indicators of Graduate Program Quality

*1. *Tracking fellowship/grant/award recipients.*

Our students regularly apply for outside funding. We have begun tracking grad student awards such as NSF fellowships, NRSA pre-doctoral awards, Ford Foundation fellowships, and other smaller grants.

π 2. *Research presentations and publications.*

We periodically ask graduate students to submit a CV in order to tabulate the number of publications and presentations at professional conferences. Using gift funds, the department is able to provide some limited funding for travel expenses to present research at professional conferences (\$300 each for 20-35 students per year, depending on the amount of money available). In the current year we funded 37 trips.

*3. *Financial support.* Currently we are able to provide financial support at 50% time during the academic year for all students in residence through the 6th year of graduate study. The Director of Graduate Studies tracks graduate student support, and all current students in satisfactory standing are funded. Currently, we offer incoming students a 5-year 50% support guarantee.

*4. *Supplemental financial support for student research.* Through the generosity of a bequest, donations of book royalties by a current faculty member, and a foundation grant, the department has been able to give grants of \$400 each to 10- 20 students per year (contingent on the amount of money available). These awards are initiated by applications from the students that are evaluated by the Graduate Committee. In the current fiscal year we funded 21 research awards.

π 5. *National ranking of the Psychology Department.* The Psychology currently ranks #1 in external research funding, and #15 in overall quality.

Other evaluations

*1. *Student course evaluations.* Graduate courses are evaluated by the students by

anonymous rating forms, in accordance with university and department policy.

**2. Exit interviews with students leaving the program without a PhD.*

The Director of Graduate Studies meets with graduate students who have decided on their own to leave the program to discuss the reasons for the student's departure. The information is relayed to key parties (such as the area group and the Graduate Committee) and is used for program improvement.

**3. Exit interviews with degree recipients.* In the past, exit interviews with degree recipients have been sporadically conducted. The Director of Graduate Studies will consult with the Graduate Committee to develop an interview protocol for exit interviews with Ph.D. graduates. The target date for the protocol is September 2006.

π 4. Periodic surveys of graduates. Approximately every 10 years, the department has surveyed PhD recipients as to their current employment and their retrospective views on their graduate training. This was last done in 1996, and 95% of respondents were employed in academic positions as faculty members or as research scientists.

π 5. External evaluation of the Clinical Training Program. Every 7 years the American Psychological Association sends a team of nationally prominent psychologists to evaluate the clinical program for accreditation (the frequency of evaluation depends on the quality of the most recent evaluation and our department received the highest quality evaluation). The department has maintained its accreditation continuously without interruption. The clinical area group also surveys its graduates separately from the survey of all graduates in psychology.