

Psychology Department and Program Assessment 2017-18

May 24th, 2018

Part 1: Assessment Rubric (provided by the Hendrix College Assessment Committee)

| Rubric for Department Assessment Meeting Report | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Past decisions | Changes made were in response to evidence of student development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets/Exceeds Standards | Changes were made using weak, anecdotal, or indirect evidence of student development <input type="checkbox"/> Approaches Standards | Changes were made with no reference to evidence of student development OR no changes were made <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Attention |
| Looking forward | Area of focus is clearly defined and measurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets/Exceeds Standards | Area of focus is either unclear or cannot be measured <input type="checkbox"/> Approaches Standards | Area of focus is unclear and cannot be measured <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Attention |
| | Evaluation Plan is evidence-based and evidence collected clearly speaks to area of focus and can be used in decision making <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets/Exceeds Standards | Evaluation plan is evidence-based but it is unclear how evidence collected can be used in decision making <input type="checkbox"/> Approaches Standards | Evaluation plan is not evidence based <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Attention |
| Departmental Goals | Department has clear learning goals that reflect desired student outcomes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets/Exceeds Standards | Learning goals are a work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> Approaches Standards | Department has no discernable learning goals <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Attention |
| | Learning Goals are mapped to curriculum | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Capstone | Capstone plays clear role in achieving departmental learning goals <input type="checkbox"/> Meets/Exceeds Standards | Relationship between capstone and department learning goals is not clearly articulated <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approaches Standards | Capstone has no obvious relationship to departmental learning goals <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Attention |
| | Departmental learning goals are evaluated through the capstone using direct and indirect evidence <input type="checkbox"/> Meets/Exceeds Standards | Evaluation of departmental learning goals through capstone is a work in progress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approaches Standards | Assessment of capstone experience is unrelated to departmental learning goals <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Attention |
| VSL | Departmental Learning Goals are mapped to the Vision for Student Learning | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Part 2: Narrative of Strengths

The Psychology department is committed to making evidence-based changes to our curriculum and program that are justified by our current assessment program, which include: 1) external consultation (every seven years); 2) data gathered annually from our seniors regarding their experience and reflection on our department and curriculum; 3) data gathered annually from faculty regarding their productivity in the areas of classroom teaching, supervision of experiential learning, professional development, and community work; 4) data gathered annually regarding department and related program enrollment,

including numbers of Psychology majors and minors (which reflect curricular demands so we can adjust offerings accordingly), and; 5) an annual meeting following spring registration to identify current curricular demand. These rich sources of data have given way to several changes of the last several years:

- 1) At the recommendation of our last external consultant, Charles Brewer, we added a new tenure track position in the area of adult development and aging—Dr. Ruthann Thomas.
- 2) In response to growing demand from a recently re-structured Health Sciences Program, we have incorporated some of our courses into that program, including Childhood and Adolescence, Adult Development and Aging, and Health Psychology.
- 3) In response to the establishment of a new Neuroscience Program, we have added a new tenure track position in the area of neuroscience and biological psychology—Dr. Sara Taylor. We have also added several new courses that contribute as electives (Psychopharmacology, Behavioral Endocrinology) or as a required course (Brain and Behavior) for the Neuroscience major.
- 4) We hired a new social psychologist—Dr. Lindsay Kennedy—as a replacement position for a social psychologist who left the college. Dr. Kennedy has added to our curriculum in the area of applied and social psychology (Health and Emotion).
- 5) In response to growing demands from a rising number of Psychology majors and minors, we added a temporary, visiting professor of Psychology—Dr. Adrienne Crowell—who has contributed to our course offerings across the curriculum, including our required methodological sequence (Statistics and Research Methods) and who has added a much-needed course with lab, Social Neuroscience. Her term has been renewed twice, and she will begin her third year in 2018-19.
- 6) In response to growing demand from our students (as requested on the senior survey) for more applied courses, we added Health Psychology to our curriculum and are adding a course in Psychotherapy beginning in 2020. In 2017 and in 2018, we submitted for, but were denied, a new tenure track line in an area of applied, experimental psychology.
- 7) In response to growing demand from our students (as requested on the senior survey) for more diversity in the area of 100- and 200- level courses, we have added new courses to our curriculum (Brain and Behavior, PSYC 220; Psychopharmacology, PSYC 280; Adult Development and Aging, PSYC 245) or reinstated courses (Sleep and Dreaming, PSYC 185) that had once been offered through a Maymester program that ended several years ago.

Part 3: Action Plan for Improvement

We are currently working to restructure one of our capstone offerings, Advanced Research. The course was designed to serve as a capstone experience (which it does) and to give faculty an avenue through which they can be compensated (through teaching credit and time) for their programmatic research involving students. The consensus of our department is that the latter goal is not being met by the course as it is currently

structured; the course, which requires oversight of up to eight independent research projects to be completed in a single semester, requires sometimes nearly double the work of other more traditional classes, and the work extends throughout the entire year—beyond the life of the course, when most or all of the students go on to take their research to professional conferences. With help from our external consultant, Dr. Tyler Lorig, we have focused our efforts this year on restructuring the way our faculty engage students in programmatic research and professional development.

From our discussions in department meetings and our discussions with Tyler Lorig (along with his subsequent report), the department agrees that the following two options are valuable and feasible revisions to our Advanced Research dilemma, as both options incentivize student participation (by offering them course credit) and more appropriately compensate faculty for their work with students (by offering them teaching credit):

- 1) Advanced Research could be taught as it is currently listed, with enrollment caps of 8 students, but with significant revisions to how the course is structured and taught. As discussed with Dr. Lorig during his visit, an alternative model could be to run the course like a graduate laboratory, where students contribute to one or a few group projects and where most class time is spent discussing the literature, addressing theory, developing hypotheses, designing experiments, collecting and analyzing data, and preparing co-authored presentations or manuscripts. Importantly, many Psychology faculty are already doing this, but find our current model (of running a laboratory with no course re-assignment or for unpaid time in the summer) unsustainable. This revised version of teaching Advanced Research as part of our teaching load is a viable and sustainable solution to our scholarship challenge.
- 2) Create a banking system that would include giving faculty course teaching credit for supervision of theses, research, or internships resulting in student credit hours. Faculty could accumulate credit hours and “bank” them towards a course release after a fixed amount of hours and in coordination with other department members and Committee on Faculty.

With these two models in mind, our department has plans to refine both models (Advanced Research and the Banking system) and combine them to develop a Mixed Model Approach that would allow faculty to teach Advanced Research for a single course credit in any given year and/or supervise/work with individual student researchers and bank those experiences for a single course credit to be applied later. This mixed model is more flexible, in that it can accommodate faculty whose programmatic research benefits most from the intense work from a small group of students in a single semester (i.e., Advanced Research) and faculty whose research might benefit more from a sequence of one-on-one student intensive learning experiences with student researchers (i.e., the Banking System). Our department looks forward to developing this idea more clearly in the next year to submit for approval to Curriculum Committee. Part of our deliberation will include a focus on how the new mixed model will be evaluated and how we will use the feedback to strengthen student and faculty experiences.