



WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Social & Behavioral Sciences

May 20, 2024

Dean Response to the Department of Psychological Science (DPS) 2023-2024 Program Review

I have had the opportunity to read the *Psychological Science Program Review*, the *Psychological Science Program Review External Report* and the *Psychological Science Program Review Faculty Response*. I would like to thank Dr. Aaron S. Richmond, Metropolitan State University of Denver, Dr. Garrett Strosser, Southern Utah University, and Dr. Ron Meyers, Weber State University, and the Chair, Dr. Aaron Ashley and the faculty of Psychological Science Department, for the time and effort in providing a thorough review of the program. I appreciate the thought and time that went into determining the recommendations as outlined by the external review committee and note the faculty/chair response to their analysis. My comments are as follows:

- 1. Department of Psychological Science Mission Statement:** The department has developed a comprehensive mission statement that aligns with the mission statement of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the university. The mission statement is also aligned with national standards, emphasizing critical thinking, research skills, and the well-being of students.
- 2. Curriculum:** I commend the DPS for its high quality and relevant curriculum, which aligns with current APA guidelines plus state and university demands. Maintaining this relevance requires continuous investment in faculty development and curriculum updates. The review team suggested that the department establish a more structured process for regular curriculum review and updates to keep pace with evolving industry standards and educational requirements. I agree with their assessment, but also support the department in wanting to undertake curricular changes when there is a better understanding of the forthcoming General Education changes. Another recommendation by the review team that I highly support is to increase the focus on career preparedness and workforce readiness. I note that DPS is considering requiring PSY 2010 for all program majors. This is an important step to take in addressing this area of opportunity.
- 3. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment:** DPS has developed excellent student learning outcomes (SLOs) and assessment plans, including various comprehensive tools and tests, outperforming national norms and is to be commended for their efforts. The SLOs align with APA Guidelines 3.0, indicating a strong commitment to best practices in curriculum design. Opportunities for improvement, which I support, include integrating career preparedness and workforce readiness SLOs across multiple courses, beyond PSY

2010, to enhance students' professional development. I recommend adopting a comprehensive approach to career readiness, such as teaching skills-based resumes and incorporating resources, recommended by the review team, such as *LinkedIn*, *Indeed*, and the *Skillful Psychology Student* framework.

4. **Academic Advising:** The "open advising week" has been effective and is supported by students and faculty, and I commend the department for creating a comprehensive advising handbook. A high number of graduating seniors met with an advisor, and students found the guidance helpful. However, bottlenecks in advising and difficulties in scheduling appointments need addressing. DPS has acknowledged challenges with the current advising model and is working towards developing a new strategy, which I support. Solutions include a new 3-person advising committee, faculty office hour advising, and possibly a dedicated staff advisor. I recommend that students have earlier contact with psychology advisors and more career-related guidance.
5. **Faculty:** The strength of the DPS is its faculty. They are talented, engaged, and focused on student success. They are accessible, accommodating, and dedicated. The DPS faculty are to be commended for providing research opportunities for students, covering high-demand courses, and maintaining open communication in order to help students feel prioritized and supported. A significant concern identified by both the review team and DPS is the workload of faculty. As Dean, I am aware of the challenges and recognize the pressures on existing faculty who are already managing various responsibilities. Faculty workload issues are exacerbated by the lack of sufficient support staff and resources. Fortunately, there will be two new faculty members added to DPS, one faculty member as part of an agreement to support the Rocky Mountain Center for Occupational and Environmental Health and the other to support the Behavioral Health Technician Certificate program. It will be interesting to see if the additional faculty members will help with some of the workload issues. The Dean's office is aware of the need for an additional faculty line, as requested in the program review, and is working to meet that goal. Given we are in a period of budget cuts, navigating this piece will be challenging. I recommend including the ask for an additional faculty member in the DPS strategic planning report.
6. **Program Support:** The Department of Psychological Sciences is the largest in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and it benefits from excellent facilities in the remodeled Lindquist Hall. The program has strong interdisciplinary ties, such as the Neuroscience minor. Budget cuts within the college and across campus have reduced financial support for DPS, impacting faculty and student research funds. The college's development director has been trying to identify donors to help contribute to an account that will allow the college to sponsor high impact educational experiences (HIEEs) for students. Fortunately, the college was able to help pay for student travel to the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association Conference so they could present their research this year. The college has also set up a Professional Development Fund to help sponsor faculty research. The external review team suggested expanding the tutoring program by recruiting students from upper division courses and the honor society (*Psi Chi*). I would encourage DPS to explore expanding the tutoring program. Additionally, I fully support the development of a B.S. in Neuroscience,

leveraging faculty expertise and research interests. I recommend moving ahead with the Neuroscience major, but let's ensure we have faculty that can teach the necessary courses, and enough administrative help to support the expanding program. The Administrative Specialist, Ms. Alicia Guthrie is dedicated and talented and is a key component to the program support. She works extremely well with faculty, staff, and students at the department, college, and university levels.

7. **Relationships with the External Community:** DPS excels in community engagement and offers diverse educational modalities, including face-to-face, virtual, and online classes, as well as a robust and expanding Concurrent Enrollment (CE) program. Faculty are also engaged in community service and incorporate practical elements into their courses. The review team suggested DPS communicate its support needs clearly to manage the CE expansion without compromising departmental balance. I support their recommendation and suggest reaching out to other departments in the college, primarily History, Criminal Justice, and Political Science to share "best practices" targeting management of CE and maintaining course integrity and robustness. The review team encouraged DPS to strengthen its collaborations with other departments within the university and with external partners. I agree with this recommendation and know that building strong relationships with industry partners can enhance internship and job placement opportunities for students. Additionally, interdisciplinary collaborations can lead to innovative program offerings and research opportunities.

In conclusion, DPS has demonstrated resilience and adaptability in the face of various challenges. It boasts several strengths and excels in undergraduate education. The faculty are committed to student success, continuous improvement, and community engagement. By focusing on strategic planning, curriculum relevance, and external collaborations, DPS can continue to thrive and make significant contributions to the university and its students.

Best regards,



Julie Rich, D.Phil.

Dean

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