



Department of Psychological Science
Program Faculty Response to the 2024 Program Review

Date: April 24, 2024

The Department of Psychology would like to thank the site review team (Drs. Aaron S. Richmond, Garrett Strosser, and Ron Meyers) for their thorough, deliberative, and insightful review. The departmental response to the review team's comments on each standard is addressed below.

A. Mission Statement

The department appreciates the reviewers' recognition that our mission statement emphasizes the department's belief that our role is to facilitate students' academic, career, and life goals through the scientific principles of psychology in their everyday lives. This statement aligns with the mission statement of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, the overall mission statement of Weber State University, and the curricular guidelines outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA) Undergraduate Guidelines 3.0 (APA, 2023).

B. Curriculum and Assessment

We are pleased that the reviewers found our curriculum to be a departmental strength consistent with the guidelines suggested by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2023). The current curriculum represents an iterative update of the curricular guidelines recommended by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2007; 2013). Our continued consistency with the APA undergraduate curriculum facilitates our alignment with other undergraduate psychology programs ensuring our student learning outcomes address professionally identified market demands and minimize transfer issues.

The one area where the review team found an opportunity for curricular improvement is increasing focus on career preparedness. One specific proposal is requiring PSY 2010 (Science and Profession of Psychology) of all departmental program majors. This course introduces students to the different areas within the discipline and, as a required course, would provide the department an opportunity to supplement advising and collect initial program assessment data that may be more representative than PSY 1010 (Introductory Psychology) data that includes nonmajors. The department wholeheartedly agrees with this suggestion. Currently, PSY 2010 is required of students in the AS program and students completing the Behavioral Health Technician Certificate of Proficiency. The department plans to implement the PSY 2010 requirement for BS students; however, we're delaying going through the curricular change

process until we more clearly know the effects of the impending General Education changes. These changes may require additional curriculum revision and we prefer to make changes once.

C. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

The department agrees with the site review team's evaluation of the department's student learning outcomes and its ongoing assessment plan. As previously stated, the review team highlighted the department's consistency with APA Guidelines 3.0 program learning outcomes (APA, 2023), and they appreciated the comprehensive assessment plan the department utilizes. We also agree with the recommended increased focus on career and workforce preparedness. In addition to the increased use of PSY 2010 for expanding the focus on career preparation, the department is also discussing different ways to incorporate career readiness throughout the curriculum.

D. Academic Advising

We were pleased that the review team understands the tremendous job the department currently does in advising students but also recognizes the need for a change in our advising strategy. The department is currently working on an updated advising structure that includes adding two additional faculty to the departmental advising team. Having a 3-person advising team will allow the department to meet with majors earlier in their academic careers better facilitating movement through the program and allowing for better career guidance. The department plans on working through and adopting a new advising structure in the 2024-2025 academic year.

E. Faculty

The department appreciates the site team's recognition of faculty strengths and highlighting the diverse range of faculty with various rankings, tenure statuses, and expertise in different psychological subdisciplines. The review team also noted faculty commitment to the department and students as reflected through their willingness to offer research opportunities outside the classroom, teach high-demand courses as overloads, and maintain open-door policies to enhance accessibility and communication with students and colleagues. This student-supportive environment has been crucial in helping us overcome challenges and underscores the collective commitment required to develop such a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere.

The review team emphasized that students in the department recognize faculty commitment and feel highly supported. They acknowledge that faculty prioritize student needs and intentionally strive to create and foster strong working relationships. The team noted that the department's focus on developing positive rapport between students and faculty aligns with best practices in education and facilitates effective teaching through high-impact educational experiences. The team also noted students' overt recognition and appreciation of the high expectations set for them but also acknowledged the robust support provided to help them succeed.

However, the review team also emphasized that the faculty's current workload presents a significant challenge. They noted that the high student demand for required courses in the

curriculum requires some faculty to regularly teach overload. Interestingly, students reported desiring more Summer semester courses. The student demand for core courses also restricts seminars and specialized courses because the department has to prioritize the core courses to meet program needs. Additionally, they acknowledge that faculty often engage in out-of-classroom activities like independent study and undergraduate research, which are not fully accounted for in their workload calculations, making it difficult to utilize accumulated release time effectively.

The department completely agrees with the site team's recommendation of adding a new tenure track faculty line to the department. This addition would help alleviate some of the overload demands and allow for more flexibility in course offerings. The team highlighted the recommendation from the 2016 program review suggesting adding two tenure-track positions in the department.

F. Program Support

We appreciate the review team's recognition of the excellent teaching and research facilities the department benefits from in the newly remodeled Linquist Hall. The team also highlighted the strong interdisciplinary departmental connections, including the successful Neuroscience minor in collaboration with the College of Health Professions and the College of Science, and new initiatives like the Behavioral Health Technician certificate. However, the team also noted that despite these strengths, the department faces several challenges impeding growth. Specifically, the team referenced recent university budget cuts that have significantly reduced departmental financial support, decreasing faculty discretionary funds thereby making student research and conference travel funding more difficult to obtain.

The department also appreciates the review team's recommendation we collaborate with the College Development Director to seek donors specifically for undergraduate research and travel funding. Such initiatives could also cultivate future alumni donations from students receiving this type of funding.

We also agree with the review team on the opportunity to develop a B.S. in Neuroscience. This type of program aligns with nationwide trends and leverages existing faculty expertise. We also believe that expanding the Neuroscience program into a major could further enhance the department's offerings and attract more students.

G. Relationships with the External Community

The department was pleased with the review team's recognition of departmental efforts to foster and maintain strong local community relationships through diverse educational offerings and outreach activities. The team explicitly noted how the department offers core courses in a variety of modalities, including face-to-face, virtual, and online, scheduled at various times and other campus locations such as the Davis and Farmington campuses, and how this flexibility in course scheduling helps to meet the educational needs of the community.

Additionally, we appreciate how the review team emphasized how the department's Concurrent Enrollment (CE) program has seen significant growth a trend that looks to continue. The expanded CE offering along with the introduction of the Associate of Science program further extends the department's reach, catering to students with diverse academic goals and providing "stackable" educational credits.

The review team also emphasized the department's engagement with the community through service. They specifically mentioned how faculty members serve on boards, volunteer at local agencies, and engage in community-focused research. They additionally highlighted the department's integration of service-learning and practicum elements into courses, allowing students to contribute to the community through initiatives such as social skills training and tutoring.

Despite the current levels of community engagement, the review team noted the challenges faced by the department in sustaining its high level of efficiency while expanding its course offerings. The review team expressed concerns about overextending faculty resources and time. The review team acknowledges that this expansion is driven by state and university demands, but the department must communicate the need for additional support to manage this growth without compromising the department's existing balance. We feel that community engagement provides us to provide students with experiential opportunities to demonstrate psychological literacy.

H. Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations

The department appreciates the site team's comprehensive review of the department. We also agree with their conclusions that the department is strong and provides students with transformational educational and research opportunities that create knowledgeable and prepared students. We also appreciate the team's continued reiteration that the department is doing a lot with few resources, and could greatly benefit from additional faculty to assist in taking advantage of the opportunities we do have.

Regarding the overall recommendations of the reviewers, we completely agree with the importance of integrating career preparedness throughout the curriculum. Although we have not yet discussed plans for implementing this need, we have plans to begin this discussion in the Fall semester.