Texas A & M University – Corpus Christi

Academic Program Review

Psychology Department

Dates of Review
June 3-5, 2009

Reviewer
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I. Mission/goal/vision

Mission

The Psychology Department at Texas A & M – Corpus Christi describes its mission in the following manner:

“...the Psychology Department is devoted to discovering, communicating, and applying knowledge in a complex and changing world.” As part of this mission, the department spells out three components to the mission of the undergraduate program. These are:

1.) provide basic education within the field of psychology as a foundation for graduate level work,

2.) to provide disciplinary knowledge through a broadly-based curriculum which can be applied to related careers, and

3.) to contribute to the education of students majoring in other areas of study.

This mission is appropriate for an undergraduate program in psychology and emphasized graduate preparation, career preparation and support for programs across the campus.

Goals

It is very noteworthy that the Psychology Department at TAMU-CC has adopted the goals set forth by the American Psychological Association. What better method could there be than to adopt the goals of the National Association in the discipline. I encourage the faculty to explore the next natural step in this process and that is to use APA’s guidance in articulating those goals into specific student learning outcomes. APA has very useful guidance on this step in this process on the main APA website at apa.org.

Vision
The department’s vision of being the leading psychology program in the region and responsive to the needs of the South Texas region and its students is also quite appropriate.

II. Observations:

A. Faculty

The Psychology Department has roughly 10 FTE faculty in the department. Despite some ebb and flow in recent years, this is slightly ahead of where the department was in 2003. With the exception of a significant decline in semester credit hour production in Spring 2008 (the department needs to explore the reasons for this significant decline – likely it is linked to the fact that several tenure-track faculty left abruptly) – the department has generally shown a steady increase in SCH production over the last 5 years with very little increase in faculty FTE. In Fall 2003, for example, the SCH to FTE ratio in the department was 387.03. This means that for each FTE within the department 387.03 SCH were produced for the university. That number increased to 431.43 in Fall 2008. This, coupled with teaching loads of 3-3 for most faculty due to scholarship expectations, means the department has generally increased its credit hour production with fewer sections of courses being taught. This appears to be due to increasing class sizes. Although the faculty may not be in favor of the following suggestion, I strongly recommend that they explore two possible changes in the 4 credit hour Experimental Methods course: (1) move it to a 3-credit hour course – given the coverage of content there appears to be little justification for keeping it as 4 hour level, or (2) make it a 3+1 course with larger lecture sections (3 credit hours) with break out labs (1 credit hour) conducted by well trained graduate students.
One faculty member could teach the larger lecture section (with an upper level undergraduate or graduate student grader), and supervise the graduate lab instructors.

The undergraduate degree program at Texas A & M University – Corpus Christi is a very traditional degree program. “Traditional” means the degree has the courses available that are most typical of undergraduate programs in psychology. Currently the department has 9 full-time (tenured and tenure-track) faculty. Five of these faculty are tenured and 4 are tenure-track. The department has no full-time or part-time instructors and appears to have only 2-3 courses per semester taught by adjuncts. Although most departments would find this admirable, the department may want to have a conversation about the possibility of hiring 1-2 highly qualified full-time instructors. These individuals could be Ph.D. qualified but not interested in doing research. In exchange for not doing research, these individuals might teach 4 courses per semester or have some responsibility for supervising practicum placements for students. This would allow a few more sections of courses to be offered each semester.

The faculty appear to be well qualified to administer the undergraduate and graduate programs. Both faculty and administration mentioned the development of a PhD in psychology (likely one in Clinical Health Psychology). This could be a very appropriate degree to move toward given the interests of the department, the demographics of the region, the views of the Coordinating Board and the availability for collaborations on the TAMU-CC campus. Since graduate programming is not the purview of this reviewer, I will limit myself to the above statement about this and two notes: (1) there might be some concern about moving in that direction with several
faculty being PsyD qualified, and (2) the department would likely need to have at least 13 full-time faculty (either in the department or at least joint-appointed) in order to be seriously considered for a PhD degree.

B. Students

The department has around 375 majors. This is a fairly large number and close to what one would expect given the enrollment on campus. This represents about 4% of the student population. Psychology enrollments at UT and Texas State, in comparison, account for a little over 5% of the student population. I believe the department can increase its number of majors with a stronger and more formal emphasis on research and with a more consistently visible and active Psychology Club and Psi Chi National Honor Society in Psychology. In my meeting with students, multiple strengths were mentioned. These include: (1) the fact that several (but students made it clear NOT all) faculty are encouraging and help to lead students in career directions they have not thought of before, (2) that faculty have “open doors” and students feel welcome when they stop by to see faculty, (3) that several faculty – the newest tenure-track faculty specifically – began a more formalized research assistant program with students (this was cited by the students as VERY welcome and they would like to see it continue), and (4) that faculty are formally assigned as advisors to students and this is actually reflected on the degree plan. All four of the students wanted to make it clear that they think many students do not avail themselves of the opportunity for mentoring and advising despite faculty efforts. They also noted, however, that not all of the faculty make these efforts and that these efforts are not always visible.
In terms of areas for improvement, students noted the following: (1) information on career advising (including jobs after graduation and graduate school) is not available or visible, (2) they would like more formal and consistently visible opportunities for research, (3) they would like to see more readily available information on the department webpage, and (4) they pleaded for the department to bring back its own statistics course.

I concur with each of these areas for improvement. The department webpage is very sparse and provides little information for students. I recommend that the department create very visible links to faculty research, links to career advising (such as who to approach for questions about graduate programs in clinical psychology or who to approach for questions about social service jobs), faculty vitae, sample syllabi and a CURRENT course catalogue.

C. Curriculum/program

Currently the department has a “one size fits all” curriculum. Given the small number of full-time faculty, this makes perfect sense. It does not, however, provide as well as it could for the varied post-graduation goals of the students. This will be especially important as the university moves toward more graduate offerings. Students must be provided with flexible options that train them for the range of post-graduation options they will have available to them. When the department has reached 11-12 full-time faculty, I strongly encourage the department to reorganize the curriculum into two or three tracks. Many of the courses will be required across all tracks such as methods and statistics. Other courses, such as Internship and History and Systems, however, make more sense for some students than others given career goals.
I recommend the development of three tracks as part of the department’s strategic plan:

1.) applied track (preparing students for jobs in social service agencies),
2.) clinical track (preparing students for graduate work in clinical/counseling), and
3.) research track (preparing students for experimental oriented graduate programs).

The required curriculum is:

Required Courses: 10 hrs
PSYC 2301 General Psychology 3 hrs
PSYC 3411 Experimental Psychology 4 hrs
PSYC 4309 History & Systems of Psychology 3 hrs

Choose 2 of 4 from: 6 hrs
PSYC 3342 Cognitive Psychology
PSYC 3343 Learning & Memory
PSYC 4352 Physiological Psychology
PSYC 4354 Sensation & Perception

Choose 2 of 4 from: 6 hrs
PSYC 2314 Lifespan Developmental Psychology
PSYC 2326 Social Psychology
PSYC 3361 Psychology of Personality
PSYC 3363 Abnormal Psychology

Psychology Electives - 5 courses 15 hrs

Multiple things stand out in terms of this curriculum:

1.) It is currently the case that students could graduate from the program WITHOUT taking either the Sensation and Perception or the Physiological Psychology course. This is likely being reflected in low scores on the biological bases of behavior subtest of the Major Field Test (this issue of subtest scores was mentioned above),
2.) The department does not offer its own Statistics course, hence students are likely not getting any exposure to the use of statistical software (this is essential for those students wanting to go to graduate school), and
3.) History and Systems is required of all students. Personally, I believe that every student graduating with a degree in psychology should have to take the History and Systems course but, if the department does create tracks in the curriculum, then different courses might make more sense as “capstone” courses depending on the track. History and Systems might work well as the capstone for the “Research Track” (grad school prep), whereas an internship course might make more sense as a capstone for the “Applied” track or the “Clinical” track. **In the opinion of this reviewer, it is imperative that the department move back to offering its own Statistics course with a requirement for students to learn and use SPSS or some comparable statistical software package.** If the department continues to teach the methods course as 4-credit hour, it would make sense for statistics to be 4-credit hours so that a lab in SPSS could be taught. Again, the stat course could be a larger lecture class, with graduate student graders and with SPSS break out labs taught by graduate assistants.

It might make more sense for the department to move away from two “clusters” or courses to four group requirements. This would ensure that students take at least one course from each of the four content areas that seem to be represented within the clusters. These would be:

1.) **Biological Bases of Behavior** – choose between sensation and perception or physiological psychology,

2.) **Individual Differences in Behavior** – choose between either personality psychology or abnormal psychology,
3.) **Social Bases of Behavior** – choose between either industrial psychology or social psychology (Lifespan Developmental Psychology could be used here instead of I/O as long as social or socioemotional development is a key component of the course), and

4.) **Learned Bases of Behavior** – choose between either cognitive psychology or learning and memory.

**D. Facilities & resources (e.g., library, funding, external funding if appropriate, equipment program, program budget – all within context of resources available to TAMUCC).**

The library resources available for the undergraduate program are very consistent with what would be expected given number of majors and overall university budget. The space available to the faculty in the department for research is very nice and well-equipped. Space can (and appears to somewhat be) a contentious issue within any department. It is recommended that the Chair take on the primary responsibility for space allocations and to make those decisions based on: (1) proposals for use of space, and (2) productivity as a result of the use of that space. In other words, faculty should be asked prior to each academic year to submit FORMAL requests for use of the departmental lab space (1-2 page summary of: (a) what is needed, (b) how long it will be needed, (c) how easily the space could be shared, and (d) productivity plans for the resulting research – e.g., conference submission, publication, which conference, which journal, when, etc.). By making this process more formal, the chair protects those faculty who would like to use that space, ensures that space is not “taken” just because of seniority, etc., and that space is not commandeered never to be shared again!
III. Outcome Assessment:
   A. Provide information on assessments in place

   1) course

   Some of the departmental syllabi include student learning outcomes. Virtually all of the syllabi in the department include goals for student learning. These are, primarily, written as “affective” goals such as “students will develop an appreciation for psychology as a science.” Affective goals are very problematic from an assessment standpoint. How does one, for example, measure a student’s “appreciation”? This is not to say that these could not be rewritten to be measurable goals, but this has not been done. The faculty might decide, for example, that the real idea behind such an objective is that students understand: (1) that psychology IS a science, and (2) why that is an important distinction. If this is the case, this could be written in the form of cognitive (instead of affective) objectives that then lend themselves well to measurements that become documentation of student learning outcomes. These objectives could be written in the following manner (using General Psychology as the example):

   “By the end of this General Psychology course, students will develop well-articulated responses to the following learning objectives: (1) explain why psychology is considered “scientific”, and (2) describe what elements of the discipline distinguish it from disciplines that are not scientific.”

   For core courses in the degree (those courses all students in the degree program must take – currently PSYC 2301 General Psychology 3 hrs, PSYC 3411 Experimental Psychology 4 hrs, and PSYC 4309 History & Systems of Psychology 3 hrs – the department might consider developing “core concepts” that all faculty in the department agree are essential learning outcomes for those courses.
Some departmental syllabi are very slim on details. Students would be hard pressed in some cases to really know what course expectations are, when things are due, how the course fits into the broader curriculum of the degree, etc. It should be noted that some of the departmental faculty are doing an excellent job of articulating student learning outcomes in their syllabi that are both active and measurable. Two of the best examples (in this reviewer’s opinion) are the PSY 3363 syllabus for Fall 2008 for Rabinowtz and the Fall 2008 PSY 3374 syllabus of Houlihan. This statement is not meant to suggest that others are doing poorly, just that these faculty are doing a particularly good job of spelling out learning objectives that can easily translate into measurable student learning outcomes. **The department needs to do the following in terms of course specific student learning outcomes:** (1) discuss and agree upon a set of minimum guidelines for what faculty need to include in all syllabi, and (2) make sure that all student learning outcomes are stated as cognitive outcomes that are measurable.

2) **program**

The department is aware of the need to assess student learning outcomes and currently “requires” all students to complete the Major Field Test in Psychology in the History and Systems course. I placed “requires” in quote marks because it is really an option system (students can earn points for taking the test). It is very likely, since students earn the points regardless of how they perform on the test, that some students are not even reading the questions and are just randomly selecting answers. To the extent that this is happening, the assessment data coming from the test is suspect at best. It is noteworthy that the university pays for this test to be administered. I applaud that and would like to see it continue should the department continue to use this test as part of its
assessment efforts. If it does, thought should be given to how to promote a commitment from students to “do their best” on the test. Perhaps there could be a “competition” in which the students scoring the highest on the test are recognized with some kind of certificate or some other form of recognition at a departmental award ceremony.

A significant problem with using the Major Field Test is that departments do not typically see how students perform on individual questions. What is reported are subtest scores. Using subtest scores can only identify if a problem area exists (if students are performing below departmental goals) but cannot really identify areas in the curriculum that may need to be strengthened.

3) final project/theses/capstone

The department uses the History and Systems course as a capstone course. I believe this is very appropriate for a general curriculum. If the department, however, explores the development of tracks within the degree (and I strongly encourage them to do so), it would be wise to consider the goals of a capstone experience in relationship to the purposes of each of the tracks. If the department proceeds with three tracks as I have already outlined: (1) applied track (career preparation), (2) clinical track (clinical/counseling grad school preparation), and (3) research track (preparing students for experimental oriented graduate programs) then each of these would be better served by a different capstone. History and Systems makes sense for career preparation – understand the history of one’s discipline as one is about to go out and work in the field, an Internship course makes sense for clinical/counseling grad school preparation – this course will need to be developed, and Independent Study in Research makes sense for students wishing to pursue graduate school in more experimentally oriented programs –
this course is already in place. I recommend that the department pursue the development of these tracks in the degree AND the implementation of different capstone requirements for each track.

4) other outcomes - student employment, further grad school

No information was provided in this area. I encourage the department to include plans for the development, administration and analysis of an employer survey (surveying employers of alums and other employers) to get a sense of employer perceptions of strengths and areas for improvement in psychology alumni employees and to get a sense for employment needs within the community that can factored into curricular changes the department might make in the future.

IV. Conclusions
A. Strengths: Identify practices or activities that should be maintained and enhanced

1.) Maintain and expand the newly started Research Assistantship program. Students noted that students should be accountable for making the effort to get involved as long as the faculty make the effort to provide the opportunities for involvement. This program should be expanded to include ALL of the faculty with assigned time for research and every effort should be made to ensure that students are generating products (e.g., conference presentations and submissions for publication) as a result of this work. The department might explore a student-faculty research day or some other method of demonstrating and celebrating this collaborative work. I noted that copies of posters of student and faculty research presentations were on the walls in the hallway outside faculty offices. I like this but would like to see them out in more public areas.

2.) Continue and expand efforts to involve new tenure-track faculty in departmental decision-making. This is an extremely important aspect of the future of the department. To the extent that changes are going to be made, the newer faculty need to continue to be welcomed into that conversation and their voices heard. The department is doing a fairly good job of this (especially the department chair) and it is crucial that their views be given considerable weight as future decisions are being made.

3.) Continue to develop Student Learning Outcomes process. The department made a wise decision to link student learning outcomes to the goals for undergraduate education of the American Psychological Association. It is now time for the department to move
beyond the articulation of those goals to specific learning outcomes and measurable methods. Again, APA provides assistance in this area.

4.) **Continue to “manage” enrollment in creative ways.** The department should be commended for not solely handling increased enrollment demands by increasing class sizes. Although faculty will likely always suggest that classes are too large, the sections of History and Systems and Experimental Methods have been kept relatively small (compared to other schools) and this should continue. The department, however, will need to be willing to consider “trade offs” for how to increase enrollment without jeopardizing these small class sizes.

5.) **Continue and expand encouraging attitude with students.** Students like the faculty in the department (with, perhaps, the exception of some who have now left) and feel that many of the faculty are strong mentors when the students seek it out. This mentoring, however, needs to become more visible and more formal and ALL faculty should be involved.

B. Weaknesses: Identify concerns that impact program quality (Attempt to prioritize the top five if more than 5 concerns are identified.)

1.) **Student Learning Outcomes.** I have spent a great deal of “time” in this report discussing student learning outcomes. The department needs to make substantial progress in this area before the SACS review. There are some, relatively, simple ways this can be done. I have already outlined concerns with using overall Major Field Test scores as they do not allow the department to determine precisely what students do or do not know about the areas of interest within the assessment plan. Likewise, many departmental syllabi do NOT reflect student learning outcomes that are active and measurable. Many that do list objectives have ones that are affective in nature. These are not measurable.

2.) **Backing Away From Tough Decisions.** In an effort, perhaps, to keep the peace, the department seems to have a tendency to approach important issues but “back away” if anyone expresses concern or angst over the issues. This might be “healthy” in the short run if avoiding conflict is the goal. In the long run, however, this stagnates growth and reinforces bad behavior. Allocation of space is one example. There is generous amount of space available, but it is not well utilized because faculty and, perhaps, the chair, are concerned about upsetting people. The faculty must be willing to put personalities aside, and do what is in the best interests of the department and the students.

3.) **“One Size Fits All” Curriculum.** As already mentioned, the department has a one size fits all undergraduate curriculum that, in the long run, might not serve most students well. Students, contrary to some faculty opinions, are not afraid of structure. The faculty should decide (and, again, APA offers excellent guidance on this issue) what courses a student really needs and they must require those courses. This may require more structure in the curriculum and fewer electives.
4.) **Need for Collaborations With Other Departments.** One important method for increasing interest in psychology and increasing upper level undergraduate enrollment without, necessarily, increasing the number of psychology majors is through specialty offerings. The department offers little that would appeal to students outside of the major. This will be especially important as the department explores developing a PhD program that will likely need to be collaborative in nature.

5.) **Lack of Creativity in Course Offerings.** Because of the curricular demands of the undergraduate program, the relatively small size of the department in terms of faculty lines, and the presence of the masters program, little creativity or flexibility appears in the course offerings. The department needs to look to the community for people to offer courses on an adjunct basis. But these hires need to be **by design.** What this means is that the size of the full-time faculty should be large enough to fit the needs of the majors so that adjuncts can be hired to teach specialty courses and to allow the beginning development of new certificates and minors. As these programs grow, then, the university should be committed to the hiring of new full-time faculty to support those areas.

**C. Recommendation: Identify items/parameters for improvement and suggest modifications that may lead to improvement.**

1.) **Need for Collaborations With Other Departments.** One important method for increasing interest in psychology and increasing upper level undergraduate enrollment without, necessarily, increasing the number of psychology majors is through specialty offerings. The department offers little that would appeal to students outside of the major. Increased upper level enrollment that is not tied to an increase in the number of majors can generate income for the university and some of those resources could be funneled back to the department. There are many opportunities for offering new programs, minors and certificates.

Given the strength of the Criminal Justice Major and the Nursing and Health Sciences degree, for example, the department could pursue collaborative minors (or certificates) in Forensic Psychology (with CJ), addiction studies (with nursing), and human development (again with nursing). The department might also pursue a minor (or certificate) in Sport Psychology in collaboration with Kinesiology or Political Psychology in collaboration with the Political Science Department. Yes, this is a bit of a double-edged sword. Class sizes will increase and there will be a need for additional courses and sections of courses to be offered. In the short run, this may tax an already overloaded faculty given increasing scholarship expectations. In the long run, however, the department can use the increased SCH production to request new faculty lines.

Each of these program areas (be they developed as minors or certificates) might actually be more attractive to students than the regular minor in psychology because they are much more focused (and, potentially, rigorous) than the traditional psychology minor. These also will give students more credibility for job placements in related jobs with the undergraduate degree than the traditional minor.
2.) **Student Learning Outcomes.** Assessment has already been mentioned. I will now discuss some specifics. I mention several elements of assessment from the Texas State psychology department just to illustrate how some of these things might be done. I am **not** suggesting that our way is the right way. It is simply helpful to see how others have gone about this process.

Because our degree requires students to choose between two courses in each of four group areas, we felt it was wise to begin by reflecting on what was similar enough about those courses that we allowed students to choose between them. Teams were brought together of faculty that taught the courses in those groups and they were required to delineate a list of core concepts that would be covered in either course. This, of course, now gives us common assessment ground to assess how students are doing on those core concepts and to make course changes if we are not satisfied with their performance. A sample of these core concepts are attached to this report.

As an example of how we are using these concepts, we noted a very significant overlap between the cognitive and the learning and memory courses. We are seriously considering creating a combined course titled **Learning and Cognition** and making it one of the required courses.

**Course Grid**

Before the department can make a determination as to how to potentially change the curriculum, it is important to have some standard to which those courses can be compared. Like the TAMU-CC psychology department, Texas State uses the learning goals outlined by the American Psychological Association. Now the TAMU-CC department can begin to generate specific student learning outcomes with guidance from APA.

**Sample Learning Outcomes**

One of the most difficult things to do is translate the learning goals into specific learning outcomes. Again, APA has provided guidance. To illustrate the level of detail that might be needed, I include one example from the APA for Goal 1:

**Knowledge, Skills, and Values Consistent with the Science and Application of Psychology**

**Goal 1. Theory and Content of Psychology**

Students will demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.

**Suggested Learning Outcomes:**

**Students will be able to:**

1.1 Describe the nature of psychology as a discipline.
a. Explain why psychology is a science.
b. List the primary objectives of psychology: describing, understanding, predicting, and controlling behavior and mental processes.
c. Compare and contrast the assumptions and methods of psychology with those of other disciplines.
d. Describe the contributions of psychology perspectives to interdisciplinary collaboration.

1.2 Use the concepts, language, and major theories of the discipline to account for psychological phenomena.
a. Describe behavior and mental processes empirically, including operational definitions
b. Identify antecedents and consequences of behavior and mental processes
c. Interpret behavior and mental processes at an appropriate level of complexity
d. Use theories to explain and predict behavior and mental processes
e. Integrate theoretical perspectives to produce comprehensive and multi-faceted explanations

1.3 Explain major perspectives of psychology (e.g., behavioral, biological, cognitive, evolutionary, humanistic, psychodynamic, and sociocultural).
a. Compare and contrast major perspectives
b. Describe advantages and limitations of major theoretical perspectives

1.4 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding representing appropriate breadth and depth in selected content areas of psychology:
a. theory and research representing each of the following four general domains:
   (1) learning and cognition
   (2) individual differences, psychometrics, personality, and social processes, including those related to sociocultural and international dimensions
   (3) biological bases of behavior and mental processes, including physiology, sensation, perception, comparative, motivation, and emotion
   (4) developmental changes in behavior and mental processes across the life span
b. the history of psychology, including the evolution of methods of psychology, its theoretical conflicts, and its sociocultural contexts
c. relevant levels of analysis: cellular, individual, group/systems, and culture
d. overarching themes, persistent questions, or enduring conflicts in psychology, such as
   (1) the interaction of heredity and environment
   (2) variability and continuity of behavior and mental processes within and across species
   (3) free will versus determinism
   (4) subjective versus objective perspective
   (5) the interaction of mind and body
e. relevant ethical issues, including a general understanding of the APA Code of Ethics

The first step was to (1) determine where in our curriculum students are exposed to work that would facilitate progress on those learning goals, and (2) discover at what level that exposure is taking place. We chose to use Bloom’s taxonomy of cognitive objectives but a simpler analysis could also be done. The faculty could, for example, complete a course grid showing each course, the 10 learning goals, and use a three-point rubric of (a) introduction, (b) practice, and (c) mastery. I have attached our grid to show how we have done this.

Major Field Test

The department needs to set performance goals for student scores on the Major Field Test. The department might decide, for example, that students taking the Major Field Test will score within one standard deviation of the mean for the national sample. Although this is a perfectly acceptable goal, it is important for the department to ensure that the sample is comparable. When it comes to any assessment, it is important that the department ask and answer a series of questions. These questions include:
1.) what should students be able to do?,
2.) how will we know if they are able to do those things?, and
3.) what changes will we make if students are not able to do those things?

Although it is important to motivate students to try hard on the assessments, I do not believe it is appropriate to hold them “accountable” for their performance. In other words, it is acceptable to require students to complete the assessment; it is NOT acceptable to make their grades dependent upon their performance. At Texas State, for example, we require students to complete the Major Field Test as part of the requirements for receiving a grade in the History and Theory course. In other words, if they do not take the test, they receive an incomplete “I” grade in the course until they do take the test. To motivate students, we share the general findings from the previous year, challenge the students to do better than the previous group and also share their individualized reports with them (if they want them) once the tests are scored.

3.) **Develop a “Focus” Within the Department.** Because TAMU-CC cannot (and should not) attempt to be “all things to all people”, it should attempt to do what makes the most sense for people in the South Texas region and do those things as well as possible. The Psychology Department should do this as well. Multiple people within the department and administration suggested a “Health” focus for the department. This makes sense and is one that can be implemented immediately with collaborative certificates or minors at the undergraduate level and lends itself well to the development of a PhD in Clinical Health Psychology later on. All strategic planning and future hires should be filtered through this focus.

4.) **Address the Experimental Methods and Statistics Issues.** The department knows what needs to be done here and they should do it. The methods course should either be made a 3-credit hour course (for the reasons and via the means outlined earlier), or it should be made into a large lecture course with break out labs taught by supervised graduate students. These students could be trained via a newly developed graduate course in Psychology Applied to Teaching (which also generates graduate SCH and would appeal to students outside the department – and could be taught by qualified adjuncts if need be or other courses could be taught by an adjunct so that a full-time faculty member could teach the teaching course) and teaching the labs could be a required part of the course or funding could be sought to pay these lab instructors. This same model could be used at the undergraduate level to develop a cadre of undergraduate teaching assistants that would not need to be paid. In terms of Statistics, the department absolutely MUST bring the statistics course back online and that course MUST include exposure and training in a statistical software package such as SPSS. Students going on to graduate school are at a distinct disadvantage by taking a Math oriented statistics course and one without exposure to SPSS.

5.) **Targeted Hires.** The department simply must be allowed to continue to hire new tenure-track faculty AND make specialty adjunct hires. I believe the administration
is amenable to funding more adjunct hires and a concerted effort should be made to do so with specific goals and purposes in mind. This can be used as a stop-gap method while curricular changes are being made and while collaborations are being built with other departments. The SCH to FTE ratio in the department is too high and the average class size in the department of around 41 is also too high given the size of the university.

Additional Thoughts

The Psychology faculty at Texas A & M University-Corpus Christi are a remarkably personable and caring group. It is obvious that they care about their students and the students sense and appreciate this caring attitude. Because the department is so small and both the undergraduate programs are growing, there is increasing pressure to pull the full-time faculty away from undergraduate instruction to shore up the graduate offerings.

Kudos to the Department Chair

Dr. Steve Seidel should be commended for his job as Department Chair. He is well-liked, works exceptionally hard, maintains a positive attitude, works very hard to mentor and nurture the new tenure-track faculty, is a strong advocate for students, and appears to work well with the university administration.

Additional Recommendations

I have already outlined very specific recommendations and offered guidance and advice as I saw fit. I expand and/or offer slightly different summary thoughts here.

1.) hire one full-time faculty member immediately with the ability to teach a variety of the required courses & linked to collaborative programs (e.g., certificates or minors) with other departments - to be in place in Fall 2010,

2.) be allowed to hire a second new full-time faculty member in the next biennial budget – again linked to collaborative programs (to be in place in Fall 2013).

3.) consider developing own student learning outcomes measure – core contents, common questions on intro, final, etc.
   ● an assessment plan linked to APA’s learning goals,
- a course grid analysis of where and at what level students are being exposed to each of these goals,
- continued use of the Major Field Test – but subtest scores,
- development and implementation of a senior survey (or full use of existing one),
- development and implementation of an alumni survey, and
- plans for curricular change as a result of the assessment data,

4.) **the development of tracks within the major** – this will be essential to meet the growing needs of the changing student population *especially* as the university grows to four-year status. I recommend the following tracks:
- applied track (with an eye toward social service employment)
- clinical/counseling (with an eye toward clinical/counseling graduate programs)
- research (with an eye toward experimental oriented graduate programs and immediate employment),

5.) **exploring development of new minors and/or certificate programs** to take advantage of interdisciplinary opportunities but *only* if new full-time faculty will be hired to shore up existing programs and assist with managing enrollment growth. The potential growth areas appear to be:
- forensic psychology
- addiction studies
- human development
Appendix A - Assessment

Core Concepts For Group Courses

Content for Courses -- PSY 3331 Social Psychology & PSY 3333 Industrial

**Required**

The Field of Social Psychology  
Social Perception  
Social Cognition, Turn in research topic  
Attitudes  
Social Identity  
Prejudice and Discrimination  
Interpersonal Attraction  
Close Relationships  
Social Influence  
Pro-social Behavior  
Aggression  
Groups and Individual Behavior

PSY 3333 – Industrial Error! Reference source not found.

**Required**

Research Methodology  
Psychological Testing  
Performance Appraisal  
Training and Development  
Organizational Structure  
Stress in the workplace  
Motivation and job satisfaction  
Engineering Psychology  
Consumer Psychology  
Leadership

**Recommended**

EEOC Guidelines  
Women in Management  
Drug Abuse in Industry  
Interviewing Techniques  
Role Playing Techniques

Psychology 3341 - Cognitive Psychology & 4342 – Learning & Memory
Required

Historical roots of Cognitive Psychology: Philosophy & Learning theory.
Information Processing Theory.
Defining and quantifying information, the use of computer simulations.
Decision making in math, science, humans, and machines.
Pattern recognition.
Parallel processing theory.
Chunking.
Cognitive neuroscience (brain-mind relations).
Attention.
Working memory.
Levels of Processing.
Visual Imagery.
Problem solving.
Creativity.
Expertise.
Designing and conducting cognitive psychology experiments with computers.

PSY 4342 (Memory & Learning)
Required:
- Principles of classical & instrumental conditioning
- Overview of different memory systems (i.e., sensory, working, semantic, episodic, procedural, implicit/explicit, autobiographical)
- Basic processes: encoding, storing, retrieving
- Knowledge representation & reconstructive processes in memory
- Neuropsychology & different memory systems/functions
- Memory disorders (e.g., amnesia, Alzheimer’s, frontal lobe syndrome)
- Emotion & memory

Recommended:
- Developmental changes in memory
- Assessment & treatment of selected memory deficits
Assessment Plans for 2003-2004

1.) develop a plan for the administration of the Major Field Test. The test was given in Spring 2003 in all sections of History & Theory. This pilot project required that all students complete the test as part of course requirements (in order to get credit for the course) but no points or part of the course grade was based on the test.

Comparisons are being made between the Spring 2003 data and a volunteer sample of students who took the test in Spring 2000.

Spring 2000 – Volunteer Only

The overall mean performance of our students was 158.7 (Spring 2000). This placed our majors at the 56th percentile of the sample of 3071 examinees. The comparison group was comprised of all participating schools with Psychology Departments. The range of schools is quite diverse from small, private colleges, to large state funded universities. Subscale scores combine student scores on:

1.) learning and cognition 58th percentile
2.) perception/sensation & physiological 72nd percentile
3.) clinical/abnormal/personality 41st percentile
4.) developmental/social 45th percentile

On the “assessment indicators” we enjoyed solid performance as well.

Mean % Correct

1.) Memory and thinking 57.5
2.) Sensory and physiology 41.2
3.) Developmental 41.5
4.) Clinical and abnormal 47.5
5.) Social 62.3
6.) Measurement/methodology 51.7

Spring 2003 – Required of All Students Taking 4391 – History & Theory

The overall mean performance of our students was 155.1 (Spring 2003). This placed our majors at the 37th percentile of the sample of 14,327 examinees. The comparison group was comprised of all participating schools with Psychology Departments. The range of schools is quite diverse from small, private colleges, to large state funded universities. Subscale scores combine student scores on:

1.) learning and cognition 27th percentile
2.) perception/sensation & physiological 56th percentile
3.) clinical/abnormal/personality 23rd percentile
4.) developmental/social 50th percentile
On the “assessment indicators” we enjoyed solid performance as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mean % Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.) Memory and thinking</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.) Sensory and physiology</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.) Developmental</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.) Clinical and abnormal</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.) Social</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.) Measurement/methodology</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We plan to look at specific questions on the MFT based on core content summaries we have created for the group requirement courses in the major. The next time we administer the MFT (Spring 2004), we can then request a report comparing how our students performed on particular subsets of questions in comparison with the national sample. This will allow us to determine how well our students are performing on questions that are specific to the core content we have for the major. We believe this type of targeted assessment will be much more informative than overall scale scores.

2.) we plan to pilot the development of a “common comprehensive final exam” to be administered in multiple sections of Psychology 1300 in Spring 2004. In Spring 2003 the department approved a set of “core concepts” to be covered in introductory psychology. The chair and several other faculty teaching PSY 1300 in the Spring, will develop a common final based on these core concepts. The same exam will be given in all sections involved in the pilot study and performance on the core concepts will be assessed. This will allow us to begin to examine how students are performing on what we believe to be crucial concepts and to address issues of consistency or difference across PSY 1300 sections.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes - Psychology Department Update - 2-17-03

1.) Course Grid developed

2.) Core concepts being developed for Group Requirements
   * common conceptual and theoretical coverage for course choices within groups
   * minimum expectation for coverage (content and level of expectation)

3.) These will be brought forward by core concept teams, moved and seconded for departmental vote by the end of the Spring 2003 semester

4.) We will then update course grid for level of expectation for each of the 10 APA goals for undergraduate programs in psychology

5.) Next, we plan to conduct an “assignment assessment” in which we look at the types of assignments that are being used in the core courses. Several questions to consider include:
   * what assignments are faculty using to assess student performance based on
cognitive level of expectation?
* what assessment data is being gathered to assess the “relative” effectiveness of these assignments?
* what changes will we make if we are not satisfied that students are achieving at the cognitive levels we have established?

6.) 4391 – History and Theory is our departmental capstone
* this semester all faculty teaching the course required completion of the Major Field Test in Psychology as part of the course requirements (required for receiving credit but not factored into the grade)
* Major Field Test outcomes can inform us about the appropriateness of the “core concepts” we have established for the group requirements within the major as well as assist us in setting departmental outcome goals.
* questions to consider include:
  * how are students performing on questions related to core concepts within the major?
  * are students consistently performing above or below our expectations for particular content areas?
  * if so, what does this tell us?
  * if so, does this suggest to us that changes need to be made? If so, what changes?
  * are curricular changes warranted based on these outcomes?
    * 2315 – Human Development – is an example
    * students consistently perform lower than average
    * are we concerned about this?
    * is this a function on where the course is taken in the curriculum?
    * are a majority of our majors transferring this course in from other institutions?

**Report from the Assessment Conference**
September 27-29, 2002 in Atlanta, GA

Attendees from SWT: Randall Osborne, John Davis, Paul Raffeld, and Marc Turner

**Overall impressions**
Portfolios are the buzzword, but too labor intensive for us given number of majors and most end up being reduced to a numerical rating at the end.
Most departments have 400 majors or less, typical faculty to major ratio 1:25 – 1:30, ours closer to 1:43.
Assessment is becoming a national priority, with many departments mandated to do assessment and just now trying to figure out where to begin.
Few departments actively doing assessment, and even fewer making changes based on data they have.
We are further along than many other departments, but need to keep moving forward
**General comments**
Creating a climate of assessment helps improve response rates and sets expectations for students to participate in the assessment process.
Students need to be involved in the assessment process, something they do, not something done to them
Share information gathered with the students
Okay to require assessment as part of course grade, common in other psychology departments

**Where we currently are in the process**
We have started collecting data with MFAT and alumni surveys, but need to focus on what to do with it.
Have started with bottom-up approach to defining our goals, but also need to work on a top-down approach.
Decide on what are we aiming toward; perhaps using the APA Goals (on back) as a starting point.

**Proposed Future Assessment Plan**
Track students through the program
Analysis of course sequences and frequency of course selections by students
Assessments to be given, when, and how:
  - Introduction to Psychology give -- what do they know at beginning?
    - Recognition test via the web
    - Perhaps an in house content test via p&p
    - Beginning survey via web (what do they expect to get from program)
  - Experimental Design & Research Methods – who are they, what do they know
    - Recognition test via the web(?)
    - Gather general demographic information (age, gender, ethnic, etc.) via web
    - Gather additional data: previous major(s), personal goals, interests, etc via web
    - Mid-program survey – perceptions after a few courses – via web
  - History & Theory
    - Recognition test via the web
    - General demographic information via web
    - MFAT for content assessment via p&p
    - Perhaps in house content test via p&p or web
    - Senior Exit Survey – via web
    - Senior Exit Interviews/Focus Groups
  - Alumni
    - Addendum to university alumni survey via assessment office
    - Web-based survey 2 years after graduation, informed via email
Major Field Test – Student Perceptions of Understanding in the Content Areas

Texas State University-San Marcos

Department of Psychology

For each of the following content areas you will be asked to do three things: (1) address what you believe to be the most significant issues (concepts, ideas, major theories, major applications, etc.) that you know about that area, (2) describe which courses you took that you believed facilitated your understanding of these issues, and (3) describe areas in which you feel you are particularly weak and discuss why.

If you have not taken course work in a particular area, note that and then explain why you are taking the History and Theory course before these content courses. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers and your performance is NOT being graded. This is simply to assist the department in understanding what our majors know, where they learn it, and areas for improvement.

Please spend two hours on this. When you are done, submit your responses either in writing or as an email attachment. Be sure and include your name just so we can note that you have completed the assessment requirement for the History and Theory course.

Content Area A: Experimental or Natural Science Oriented Areas

1.) Learning, Cognition and Perception

2.) Comparative and Ethology

3.) Sensory and Physiology

Content Area B: Social or Social Science Oriented Areas

1.) Clinical and Abnormal

2.) Developmental
3.) Personality

4.) Social

**Content Area C: Other Areas**

1.) Statistics and Experimental Methods

2.) General – Anything you can think of that does not fit elsewhere