

External Reviewers' Responses to Dean's Questions

1) As Dean, I have a few items I would like for the reviewers to address. The first is an extension of the last paragraph above in Section III related to Academic Learning Compacts. If you could, please address:

- a. the extent to which the existing Academic Learning Compact represent the most up to date when measured against other Psychology programs considered benchmarks of our size and scope and purpose,

When developing undergraduate psychology program curricula and learning outcomes, departments will typically adopt (with amendments) those set forth by the American Psychological Association (APA). In August of 2013 the APA published an updated version of their Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major. The USFSP Psychology Department has begun the process of revising their Academic Learning Compact (ALC) and its Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) so that they reflect the new guidelines. In the Table entitled "APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major" the Psychology Department has clearly outlined the specific APA outcomes, the student indicators of achieving these outcomes, and the courses in which the outcomes are addressed and assessed (see file labeled "APA_Guidelines_Matrix2013"). Beginning on p. 11 of the document labeled "Self-Study Final 4.1.14.pdf" the Psychology Department provides a detailed description of their ALC. It is evident from the Self-Study document that the USFSP Psychology Department has clearly aligned their ALC with the five goals set forth by the APA in their revised guidelines (2013). The general outcomes of the ALC are "content/discipline skills, communication skills, critical thinking skills, and civic engagement," which the department has made align with the five goals of the APA: (1) knowledge base in psychology, (2) scientific inquiry and critical thinking, (3) ethical and social responsibility in a diverse world, (4) communication, and (5) professional development. The guidelines set forth by the APA are purposely general and the department has adopted the APA's layering approach in which outcomes define the types of learning required to reach a general goal. Additional specificity is provided by indicators (see pages 11-14 of the Self-Study Report).

Based on all of the above the reviewers believe that the USFSP Psychology Department's ALC represents the most recent, APA-guided learning outcomes and objectives for the undergraduate psychology major. In addition, their ALC is comparable with benchmark institutions (e.g., Florida Gulf Coast University, University of Tampa, and USFSM) that are similar in size, scope, and purpose. We also note that their ALC is comparable to much larger and longer-established departments (e.g., USF Tampa). Again, because their bases for their ALC are the APA's most recent Guidelines for the Undergraduate Major (2013), their ALC compares favorably with any psychology program.

APA (2013). APA guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major, (Version 2), retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/about/psymajor-guidelines.pdf>

b. the extent to which the student learning outcomes/goals in the ALC match with the current career and professional trajectory of our typical student at USFSP,

Admission into a psychology graduate program is a common goal of a majority of undergraduate psychology majors. Given that undergraduate psychology programs are typically among the largest in Arts and Sciences and that a high percentage of these students apply to graduate school, the competition for admission to graduate programs in psychology is fierce. The USFSP psychology faculty have done several things to increase psychology students' success for both admission into psychology graduate programs and success in these programs. First, they have strengthened their quantitative sequence by beginning it during the second semester of students' freshman year and moving some of the SLO's that were once housed in PSY 3204 (psychological statistics), currently not a required course, to PSY 3213, which is required of all majors. The quantitative component of the degree was also strengthened by requiring students to complete required quantitative courses in a specific sequence (Psychological Statistics → Research Methods → Design and Analysis), which allows each course to build on the foundation of the one that precedes it. A strong methodological background will improve students' ability to excel in graduate school. Second, the department has developed the 4+1 plan, which allows students who qualify (pass a qualifying exam in Design and Analysis) to enroll in graduate courses during their senior year. The 4+1 plan not only prepares students for graduate school, it also prepares students for positions in Pinellas county and other regional agencies that require a strong methodological background. Finally, the psychology department prepares students for graduate school and/or jobs requiring a strong methodological background by collaborating with undergraduates on research. Conducting and presenting research with undergraduate students is extremely time-consuming. Therefore, the amount of collaboration that the psychology faculty have done over the past decade is truly outstanding and demonstrates a commitment to training the next generation of scholars. Without such experiences USFSP students would not be competitive applicants for Ph.D. programs in psychology.

In addition to the department's focus on scientific inquiry, they also focus communication and professional development. Communication is extremely important for careers in social/human service agencies that require employees to synthesize information gathered into clear and cohesive reports and/or present findings to the community or other agencies. The focus on scientific writing in a number of psychology courses (e.g., Research Methods, Design and Analysis, and Test and Measurements) as well as having some type of writing assignment in most upper-level courses (e.g., reviews of journal articles) will prepare student well for social service type jobs, as well as help them present themselves well on graduate and job applications.

Professional development is fostered not only in the classroom, but through student clubs and associations. For example, the psychological science organization began a career panel this year and has worked with the career center to get people from the

community to come in and discuss their jobs. In addition, students state that faculty often send out job opening announcements to students. Finally, many of the faculty are active in the community and conduct research in it, which fosters connections between students, faculty, and future employers.

c. the extent to which the department is truly using this tool to enhance and tweak the program on an annual basis.

In the document labeled “Psychology ALC’s 2011-12 & 2012-13 Final Submission” (along with ALC reviews from previous years) the psychology department provides a detailed review of their yearly ALC assessment, along with revisions made to the program and assessment procedures based on the outcomes of these assessments. It is evident from the annual ALC review documents that the department uses the ALC in the development and modification of course syllabi, assignments, methods of assessment, program modifications, and requests for resources. We provide two examples below that we believe highlight the manner in which the department uses this tool to continually improve the undergraduate psychology program.

One example how the department has used their ALC to “enhance and tweak the program” is provided in the “Psychology ALC’s 2011-12 & 2012-13 Final Submission” document. The SLO 1a, which is “understand and distinguish among the field’s major theoretical traditions”, is only assessed in the Introduction to Psychology course (PSY 2012). Realizing this short coming in their assessment the department collected pilot ETS data from a small convenience sample (N=15) of USFSP undergraduate psychology majors during their senior year. What they found was that compared to the other areas assessed (Developmental and Social) this sample performed more poorly on the area of Sensory/Physiology. To begin to remedy this deficiency, the department hired two assistant professors in 2012 (Drs. O’Brien and Salnaitis) whose research and training focused on biological bases of behavior. These new hires allowed them to offer multiple sections of Physiological Psychology (PSB 4004) in 2012-13. When the department reassessed this SLO in 2012-13, they found that students “enrolled in PSB 4004C courses met benchmarks for competencies.” To assess whether there has been an overall change in student competencies in the area of Sensory/Physiology the department plans to have a larger sample of undergraduate seniors take the ETS in 2013-2014. This systematic approach to assessing SLOs and then implementing changes to remedy any deficiencies, followed by reassessment suggests that the department takes the assessment process seriously and uses it as a tool for continual enhancement of its undergraduate and graduate programs.

A second example of the use of the ALC to strengthen and enhance the psychology program is evident in the example provided above involving strengthening the quantitative sequence and development of the 4+1 plan. The department realized a student and community need that they could fill by making changes to their quantitative sequence and then offering students with strong methodological backgrounds to participate in their 4+1 plan. The strengthening of the quantitative component of the degree was necessary to create a pool of students with the necessary

methodological background to succeed in the 4+1 plan, which allows students who qualify for the program to take graduate classes in their senior year. Again, the systematic approach taken by the faculty to improve the program is truly impressive.

Based on all of the above, and the extensive documentation in the annual ACL reports, the reviewers believe that the psychology department is using their ALC to enhance and modify their program on an annual basis.

2) Please address the extent to which the implementation of a Master's Program has impacted the department. What can we anticipate in the short run and the longer run as a result of launching a new degree in terms of faculty resources and productivity, student demand, impact and role of graduate students within the department and others?

Master's Program Fully Engages Faculty to Enhance Creative Productivity. The desire to offer students opportunities to extend learning past the Bachelor's level and careful development of the Master's program are evidence of the full engagement of faculty in the Psychology Department. The department chair has guided the planning of two Master's program tracks in Experimental Psychology and Risk, Resilience, and Prevention (RRP). The corresponding curricula are born of collective work to which faculty members contribute complementary ideas, skills, and educational backgrounds in family, community, health, social, cognitive neuroscience, and clinical psychology. During site visit interviews of faculty, it was clear that all were highly motivated and engaged.

Recognizing, supporting and rewarding full engagement of faculty are foundational to maintaining and optimizing motivation for teaching and research endeavors of a premier, productive department. Recognition of the time essential to maintaining research and teaching necessary for the undergraduate and Master's programs is evident. A teaching load of 2 courses/semester should be maintained. The department chair and program directors will benefit from decreased course loads. The greatest need for support is for a fulltime administrative assistant. The department chair, other department faculty, or administrative assistants at the College level currently do the necessary support work. Department faculty need to reserve time for teaching and research; college support staff members are likely stretched by serving many departments in Arts & Sciences. Admirably, Psychology faculty serve approximately 400 undergraduate majors, which represents tremendous growth over the last 10 years, and now the department serves graduate students in the fledgling Master's program. We recommend recognition and support of this productivity by hiring a fulltime administrative staff person that will allow appropriate use of faculty time and training. An experienced and dedicated grants person to assist in searching and applying for external funding and follow-up maintenance of would be beneficial to psychology faculty as well as to all departments in USFSP College of Arts and Sciences.

Impact and Role of Psychology Graduate Students. In addition to receiving an advanced degree and enhancing employment opportunities, graduate students in these programs have opportunities to collaborate in the active research programs of core faculty. The Department Faculty have an impressive average of 1.5 scholarly articles published each year; students are co-

authors on many of these articles which benefits both faculty and graduate students. In addition to research, graduate students have opportunities learn communication skills and to serve as teaching assistants.

Graduate and advanced undergraduate students' association and collaboration with faculty members allow learning and application of critical thinking skills as well as writing and oral presentation skills implicit in research and teaching. Having and demonstrating these skills enhance employment opportunities, and in the long run, the reputation of the department, the college, and the university. Students seeking admission to Ph.D. programs, especially competitive in Psychology, and professional programs such as medicine and law, are better prepared to apply, gain admission, and perform successfully in these programs.

A Master's program with two tracks, one in Experimental Psychology and one in Risk, Resilience, and Prevention (RRP), address and meet student demand. Having both tracks offers students interested in research experience the opportunity to gain experiences that makes them competitive for Ph.D. programs across many fields in basic psychological science, such as, cognitive, neuroscience, social, and health psychology; the RRP program offers experience relevant to working in agencies as well as to applying to PhD programs in clinical/counseling psychology and health-related graduate and professional programs. This Master's program in the Psychology Department offers a model for growth and development for other departments in the USFSP College of Arts & Sciences.

Broader Impact. The Master's program also addresses the health and well-being of residents of South Florida in ways that enhance quality of individual and family life. Critical areas addressed by the new Master's program - diversity, ethical responsibility, and social issues- are important to the well-being of people in St. Petersburg and surrounding areas. As a public institution, areas addressed are worthy of state support and have demonstrated ability to attract external grants.

3) One of the more important topics to emerge from the University Strategic Planning process has been student internships. . .

Experience in the workplace is desirable to solidify choice of academic major and may benefit graduates seeking jobs; however, due to the nature of work in Psychology, very different from business and educational settings, in which psychological services are provided, internships may be inappropriate for students without specialized, advanced training. What might be appropriate internships in applied graduate Psychology programs may not be the best places for undergraduate Psychology majors. Students may be required to undergo lengthy background checks that may use up some of the beginning weeks of the semester. Students may need malpractice insurance coverage before they are able to have contact with clients/patients and pose potential for liability risk of the department and the university. In certain settings, students themselves may be at risk.

If students are to receive academic credit for meaningful internship work, internship placements must be carefully selected and cultured, and carefully mentored by a site supervisor and a faculty sponsor. Psychology Departments of other universities that offer internships assign this as one regular course to the supervising faculty member. Internships may be appropriate after the Risk,

Resilience, and Prevention Master's program is well established; at this point, it is best to reserve faculty time and other resources for the development of the RRP track of the master's program. Many universities' career development centers establish and provide liaisons between off-campus sites and students interested in gaining work experience. Alternatively, resourceful students may be encouraged to seek volunteer experience on their own with agencies accustomed to training and handling volunteers.

4) Looking ahead, what would you recommend as the key qualifications/background/ characteristics of the next priority hire in the Department. ... In addition to qualifications, would you recommend that the next priority hire in Psychology be FT Teaching Faculty or tenure-track?

Given the growth in number of majors and attentive research mentorship of undergraduate and graduate students, the department needs both tenure-track and teaching faculty. New hires should have experience mentoring undergraduates and graduate students to contribute to the department's success in mentoring. We recommend that the next faculty hire be for a tenure-track position in an applied area (agreed upon by faculty in the department), perhaps blended, such as clinical health psychology/industrial-organizational with strong potential for research productivity and experience securing research grants. New hires for the tenure track faculty may have graduate school experience with an REU program that would aid ability to mentor undergraduates and graduate students. Experience teaching courses online, especially for teaching faculty would be an added benefit.



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