

April 1996
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Response to AIM ONE
Program Review of Department of Psychology

AIM 1: PROVIDE A QUALITY UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

A. Summary of department's accountability assessment for the review period.

The department seeks to provide its undergraduates a superior baccalaureate education which exceeds American Psychological Association guidelines. For more than 15 years, the department has systematically assessed student outcomes, primarily using pre- and post-test strategies, with the "test" itself being administration of the undergraduate curriculum. For the current review period senior students were given knowledge and aptitude tests, results of which were compared to those obtained from beginning undergraduates in introductory courses.

Advanced students show great levels of understanding than beginning students of experimental design, learning principles, history of psychology, testing and measurement, and physiological psychology.

The department reports that other assessment methods were proposed but not implemented due to costs involved in applying those methods to the large number of undergraduates taking the program. For example, it has not been possible to require all undergraduates to participate in extra-class research experiences or engage in career exploration as originally proposed. A Career Advising Center has been established in the department to provide assistance to students seeking help with career exploration.

All faculty administer course surveys, and results consistently show high student satisfaction with undergraduate teaching.

The department reports to recent (1994 and 1996) surveys of graduates. The latest one showed graduate employed in a wide range of fields, 24% in psychology-related and 22% in organization fields. Respondents expressed satisfaction with their education in psychology.

B. Assessment of those aspects of undergraduate education not included in the accountability assessment (if appropriate).

Based on comparison with eight other Psychology departments in the CCHE peer group, the department offers more rigorous exposure to the basic science areas of psychology and more hands-on experience, although peer departments appear to offer both more courses and wider variety of specializations.

In 1989 enrollment controls were established for the undergraduate major. Over time the

number of admitted majors was reduced from 716 to approximately 400, with some 200 "pre-majors" advised largely through the HELP/Success Center. Among current majors, women outnumber men three to one.

C. Assessment of support available.

1. Budget

As GTAs are heavily employed in the undergraduate teaching program, the department may need increased R.I. funds to replace current DA/RSP money if that funding source is no longer permitted to apply to instruction.

2. Facilities and equipment

Technology fees have so benefited the outfitting of laboratories that the department feels it now has the best-equipped laboratories for undergraduates in the country. The department's upper division instructional labs are state-of-the-art.

3. Library and computer

The self study does not comment on library or computer facilities. Presumably they are deemed adequate.

4. Other

D. Future plans (goals, objectives, and resources needed in order of priority).

The department plans to continue to revise its curriculum, and is considering reduction of its major requirements from the present 39-40 credits. A number of courses offered through auspices of the Commission on the Undergraduate Experience provided opportunities to experiment with curriculum. Field placement was expanded, and efforts in that direction will continue. As well, the new Career Advising Center is slated for expansion.

Reviewer's recommendations:

a. Enhance aspects of the Department programs?

b. Maintain the current level of support, or

The department disputes OBIA's calculations, which report 26.7 FTE in 1994-95, and a student/faculty ratio of 17.7. The department reports an FTE of 25.15 and a student/faculty ratio of 29.38. Thus, the department's student/faculty ratio, no matter which figures are used, is higher than certain other programs' in the College. For example, Mathematics is at 22.19 and Computer Science is at 17.08.

The department should be encouraged to revise its curriculum so that its main objective (exceeding APA guidelines) can be met with fewer credit hours. If the major requirement were reduced by six hours, the net reduction in credit hours per year would be 600 (given 400 majors), which approaches the average credit hour production per FTE (723). In effect, the department would gain nearly a full position.

In view of the enrollment pressures and demand for its courses as service to other units, the department may also wish to consider dropping its minor. Doing so would further free faculty resources, which would be re-directed toward the objective of providing additional field experience and enhancing the Career Center. Without evidence describing the value a psychology minor has to those to complete it, one wonders whether the minor can be afforded, in the face of great demand both for the major and for general service courses.

c. Review specific program deficiencies for improvement or possible discontinuance of the program(s)?