

Program Review
Psychology
Institutional Response (draft)
June, 1996

The Department of Psychology appears to pursue all of its missions vigorously. It seems both thoughtful and innovative in its approach to basic management. For example, there has been much progress in applying technology to teaching; effective multi-media presentations are increasingly common. Indeed, the department is a pioneer in the creation of instructional video modules and its products are used nation-wide. New modules are scheduled for production supported by a large grant. Other forward-looking student services, such as a career advising center, are readily available.

Much progress has been made in laboratory equipment, particularly in Behavioral Neurosciences (part of the Experimental program). Instructional labs have all been extensively renovated.

The undergraduate program is well thought out. The major may prepare students for diverse advanced professional education possibilities as well as careers in human services areas. The curriculum continues to undergo revision. At present, our curriculum features more basic science and more "hands on" experience than is the case at peer institutions. Indeed, the emphasis on field placements is a clear strength, though some reduction in the hours required for the major is under consideration. The establishment of a "pre-psychology" status as a way of controlling admission to the major has produced mixed results and alternatives are under consideration.

Not only are the department's program innovative and effective, but they appear to be accomplished with a very low level of state resources. Systematic comparison with CCHE peer institutions shows that we produce more majors per FTE faculty than any of the others. Similarly, the department produces 150 student credit hours more per year per faculty member than is the average among them. Such figures seem an even greater bargain when one considers that department salary levels are significantly lower (at all three faculty ranks) than is the case at any of the peer schools and that is reported as the national average at APA accredited departments. Similarly, in order to increase the "person-power" applied to undergraduate instruction, the department has made good use of teaching assistants. This too has been accomplished at low cost as the stipends are lower than at other universities.

Goal 1: Teaching and Advising--The department has explicitly determined what graduates should know about the field. They have developed appropriate tests and questionnaires to measure them. Seniors are systematically assessed to see if they have acquired the requisite abilities and their scores are compared to those of freshmen psychology students. The department is well satisfied that the seniors display much deeper knowledge and more understanding of psychological principles, design problems, methodology, and the process of drawing inferences. In addition, the seniors are better able to read and understand complex passages and have greater grasp of statistics.

The department reports data from standard ASCSU course evaluations and the results are uniformly positive. A survey of undergraduate department majors shows a high level of satisfaction in more detail. For example, the variety of course offerings, the accessibility of faculty, and even the efforts of graduate laboratory assistants receive high marks. Surveys of alumni not only confirm that students appreciate their experiences in this department, but also indicate appropriate professional advancement with time.

Field placement supervisors from various external agencies uniformly give our students high marks; the self-study supplies some appropriate excerpts from their comments. It appears that some 76 undergraduates out of a total of 406 are on the College Dean's list. This means that 19% of the Psychology students are in the top 5% of the College's students.

No results regarding admission to prominent graduate programs nor on the award of prestigious fellowships are provided. Perhaps this is due to the fact that relatively few bachelors graduates go on to graduate school. Since true professional credentials in psychology require a graduate degree, it would be interesting to know if this is of concern to the department.

There are graduate programs in three distinct areas of psychology. Admission to all three is highly competitive, a good indicator of quality in itself. The Counseling program is American Psychological Association accredited and the unit is distinguished by having received highly competitive NIMH minority training grants.

A most impressive piece of information is that the GRE scores of our psychology students are high, significantly better than the national averages reported by Educational Testing Service.

These graduate students, when queried in a departmental survey, showed a high level of satisfaction--with a full 100% reporting themselves as happy with their decision to attend Colorado State.

The acceptance rate for graduate student internship applications is 100%. It is extremely gratifying to see that students are routinely in the process of preparing research results for presentation of publication. Indeed, students present or publish in appropriate professional venues an average of two times before they complete their degrees.

Not surprisingly, the students have won many competitive awards including Fulbrights and APS dissertation fellowships. Further, they have received some excellent professional placements.

A departmental survey of alumni indicates continuing favorable regard for the department at least in part a result of good professional placement record reported. Interestingly, the alums continue the high level of professional activity begun during the student years. Over half report having published their dissertation research and some 44% indicate that publication of research is an important part of their careers.

Goal 2: Research--Faculty research productivity is very high: 2.5 significant items (books, refereed presentations, or articles) per faculty member per year. Similarly impressive is the \$2.6M in annual grant support. Both of these figures are far in excess of the average performance at psychology departments in CCHE peer universities. One could only wish to know how these comparative data were acquired, so that this impressive claim could be strengthened.

This kind of faculty excellence has been recognized by the designation of the department's Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research as a University Program of Research and Scholarly Excellence. Such distinction can come only if the unit is determined to be one of the very best in the University.

Faculty awards and recognitions add to the picture of vital scholarship. Fourteen are fellows of major psychological associations. Five are Diplomates of the American Board of Professional Psychology. Many members have served as editors of major journals or on editorial boards. Their list of service as officers of major national professional units is long and impressive.

The department has fared well in various national ranking exercises. The National Research Council's recent effort indicated that this department was viewed similarly to those of CCHE peer institutions. One would conclude from this that our department has in general a perfectly satisfactory reputation. The self-study declined to present the actual ranking that the NRC assigned to the department. A separate study showed that the Industrial-Organizational program was ranked fourth in the nation for research productivity, while Counseling is reported to have been ranked eighth according to some unidentified account.

Goal 3: Outreach--Outreach functions of the department are numerous. The Psychological Service Center seems to function as a clinic where many of the students receive necessary training. But in the training process, many community clients are well served, particularly those from "underserved" segments of the population. Several faculty were involved in a major project to streamline the personnel system of the federal government. Faculty also provide professional services to the local community.

The Tri-Ethnic Center is not only a research unit, but also a source of data on substance abuse. Various agencies around the nation depend on it for key information and so it has become well known as a professional resource.

Faculty are involved in many presentations to lay groups on important topics like youth violence, school drop outs, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease. They also are active in many non-professional community service activities.

Goal 4: Community--Faculty development services are many. They attend workshops and programs on topics like multicultural sensitivity and gender issues. Guest speaker programs are common and financial assistance to attend professional meetings is provided.

As noted above, graduate students are obviously provided with a number of important professional socialization experiences. Support for attendance at professional meetings is especially important. Undergraduates are well served by an active chapter of the disciplinary honorary society; it provides access to speakers, conferences, and a variety of professional interactions with the faculty.

The diversity record of the department is very good. There are several ethnic minority and women faculty, including those appointed at the full professor level. Proportions compare favorably with national averages among Psychology departments. About 20% of the graduate students are of ethnic minority status and the comparable figure for undergraduates is 12%.

Goal 5: Resources--The Department is reasonably well positioned. It has well conceived plans for the future, though the proposed addition of four faculty may seem ambitious in light of current realities.

The future resource configuration cannot be well addressed in this document as the College Dean declined to participate in the program review process.

Conclusion--This is a superior department with many successes to its recent credit. One can expect that the same level of energy and ingenuity will be available during the next review period and so equally impressive accomplishments are anticipated.