MEMORANDUM

TO: Academic Program Review

FROM: Psychology Unit Program Review Committee

RE: Psychology Program Review Progress Report

DATE: July 3, 2000

There has been considerable change in the Psychology department as a result of Psychology’s participation in Academic Program Review (APR). Culminating with a departmental retreat held on June 8, 2000 the department addressed each of the points outlined in its Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the APR Committee and University. Attached to this report is a copy of the agenda for this retreat, the minutes taken, as well as handouts that were distributed during the meeting.

The following depicts how the MOA requirements directly map into discussion points at our retreat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retreat Topic</th>
<th>MOA points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Program Review &amp; Purpose of Retreat</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report from Office of UG Studies Staff Advisor &amp; Director</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Student Learning</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology Core</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, 3 members of the Psychology unit APR committee met with Dean Mezey to address differences in understanding the number of lines that the department has (MOA #10). This meeting was considered to be quite successful. First, it forced us to concretely lay out our lines and staffing issues to provide a factual basis from which to
base the discussion. This resulted in an understanding that Dean Mezey is counting people, not tenure track lines, whereas the department usually refers to tenure track lines. It was suggested that when discussions occur in the future, that everyone make an effort to be more explicit in their language. (This discussion later led to a longer discussion within the department on how to integrate non-tenure track faculty into the departmental community better.) The discussion with Dean Mezey also proved to be useful in considering specific ways in which the department might be able to expand in tenure-track lines in the future. Specifically, Dean Mezey encouraged keeping track of undergraduate concentrations with the program to assess whether faculty positions appropriately match undergraduate interests. With mismatch, there might be room for growth. Additionally, Dean Mezey suggested that the department consider splitting its large Introductory Psychology (PSY 105/106) sections into smaller sections. He felt that this might improve student retention. Again, with such a move, a larger faculty might be justified.

PROGRAM REVIEW FACULTY RETREAT

June 8, 2000

Last year’s Academic Program Review (APR) resulted in an agreement with the university and the college regarding aspects of the department which need to be improved. APR revolves around communication within the unit itself and an evaluation of the department’s work. Other aspects that are important to APR include strategizing change and then assessing that change in a structured manner.

Report from Office of UG Studies Staff Person & Director - combined with Mentoring

Advising needed attention in the department. Because of the concern regarding advising, students were surveyed to see what their needs were as part of the APR with the university. One of the results was that a staff coordinator for the office of undergraduate studies was hired. This person’s duties would take into account items 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the MOA. Since Liz Jackson began working at DePaul, she has treated the job as if she were a new student just beginning as a psychology major. She visited various departments of the university, such as the career center and liberal arts advising, to see what she could learn in this capacity. Liz has drawn up a brochure for each concentration to serve as a guide for students and faculty and an advisement form to assist her in keeping track of both students advised and the issues which they raised. In addition, she researched web sites as to “what I can do with my psychology degree.” During this discussion, faculty were reminded that Jeanne McIntosh has materials on reserve in the library under psychology advising which deal with the same issue - career planning. It seems that the
Career Center also has a list of where our psychology graduates are employed and what their positions are. Faculty felt that the above-mentioned brochure was an excellent idea and asked that Liz make these brochures available to faculty for advising.

Faculty agreed that keeping track of students’ concentrations would be a good idea, but no completely accurate method of discovering concentrations could be agreed upon. When students declare a major, their concentration could be recorded, but many times students declare without stating a concentration.

A suggestion was made that materials pertinent to all advising issues be kept in a binder in the office to serve as a general reference point, but it was stated that most of this information is already in the catalogue and on the web.

After lengthy discussion it was determined that Liz would serve as an initial contact person for walk-in advising, but that faculty would in no way delegate all course advising to her. Liz could deal with at-the-moment issues and refer students to appropriate faculty. Faculty advising would still involve mentoring students in addition to assisting them with their course selections. Faculty would become more involved in career planing and personal objectives - a more holistic advising approach.

(Liz asked the faculty to let her know what jobs could be obtained with which concentrations. This could be e-mailed to her at ejackson. She will then distribute this information to all faculty to assist them in career advising.)

A great deal of discussion was held on how to get students to come to faculty for advising. It was decided that when a student completes the declaration of major, the student would have to take that form to their assigned advisor and have it signed before an advisor would be approved. This would insure that the student had an initial and intensive contact with their advisor; this initial contact should prove to be such a good experience for the student that they would want to return. This system would be tested next year in the fall and a further decision would then be made as to whether additional contact points need to be established. A suggestion along this line would be to require that students see their advisor prior to registering for 241 and then at the end of their college experience, possibly during the capstone course. A final meeting with the advisor would no longer be optional. However, these additional suggestions were tabled for the
time being while the effectiveness of the ‘sign the form’ system is evaluated. An evaluation process should be built in here to see if the process is effective.

Another suggestion was to have a built in advising time at the beginning of the quarter to encourage students to come to faculty for advising. If the beginning of the quarter is not a good time, then some time during the quarter before registration was suggested. Faculty agreed that they have to make more time to be available to students, especially if a concentrated advising time was planned. This process will also be assessed in the fall.

(Someone should let the faculty know when registration will take place for each quarter so time could be set aside for advising. Lucinda will also put common dates and deadlines for graduate advising on the web over the summer.)

Another topic which was raised was the issue of graduate students mentoring undergraduate students. This process has been felt to be beneficial to both the graduate student and the undergraduate and should be encouraged. Graduate students give undergrads hands-on experience in research. It was suggested that this system be publicized as much as possible within and outside of the university, with ‘human interest’ stories on this subject being suggested to Denise Mattson of PR. This would potentially raise the university’s appreciation of the graduate program, since graduate students would be contributing to undergraduate students’ education and add to their understanding of science in general.

(Math 130 is no longer a requirement for Psy 240. The requirement now is Math 101.)

Assessment of Student Learning

The next major discussion on the table was that of assessment. Assessment does not require a complicated system. The concerns and benefits of assessment were first expressed. The department does not have a good idea of what it is doing in terms of assessment or what it wants to be doing. Many faculty would like to assess the hoped-for increase in a student’s ability to think after taking a class with them. This would be in addition to knowledge obtained through course content itself. Did they improve in writing ability? Psych Night was cited as an example of an opportunity for students in
Psy 396 to learn to present papers. Students also improve in technology through this course, since many want to utilize PowerPoint to make their presentations. After discussion, it was discovered that many faculty are already assessing students above and beyond course content. One faculty member requires position papers of students, where they pick a topic, write a two page ungraded paper on it, and then discuss it in class. This improves their critical thinking and writing abilities. The internship program consistently monitors enrolled students, both during course work and during the internship itself. Students are evaluated at the end of 242 in their ability to write and critically read. A focal point instructor assesses students on how they evaluate the media prior to and then after taking his class to assess their growth. This discussion illustrated the fact that assessment can be performed in many ways other than grades.

(Faculty were asked to send Nancy examples of how students are assessed in their particular course(s).)

The Introductory Psychology Task Force reported on what they learned by having students complete a questionnaire on “Is Psychology a Science” before and after they completed intro. It was discovered that students’ perception of psychology as a science increased after completion of the course. Discussion was held as to the validity of students’ answers and what the numbers all meant. This is just one small aspect of student learning here and should be taken as such.

Some discussion was held as to the importance of the quantitative score on the GRE and the fact that this score does not include any statistics. The quantitative score reflects more on the student’s ability to reason. Students who are going to take the GRE’s should be advised to take geometry and calculus, or at least read books on the subject.

Psychology Core

As a result of the last departmental retreat, the core psychology courses (PSY 105, 106, 240, 241, & 242) were established. The issue was raised whether this curriculum structure was effective. Numerous concerns were raised with the present way that the courses are being taken from students. For example, students do not seem to be taking PSY 240, 241, 242 in sequence. Further, they seem to be waiting until late in their junior year or their senior year to even start taking these courses. Both issues are incredibly problematic in that (1) students enter upper-level courses without the appropriate methodological background and (2) instructors who teach these courses have to teach to a much wider range of student skills than was initially conceived.
Although ultimately this issue was deemed large enough to warrant the creation of an ad-hoc committee next Fall, numerous suggestions were raised as possible solutions to the present state. First, the 240/241/242 sequence could be considered a year-long integrated sequence and deemed the “Sophomore Methodology Sequence.” This might result in having the courses be team taught. To have greater control over the material our students are learning, we might consider not accepting transfer credit for statistics and methods courses in the future. (Ralph will send a memo to LA&S as a result of faculty reporting that numerous students have been told by LA&S advisors to not start taking this course sequence until later in their academic career. He will encourage just the opposite: that students begin this sequence as soon as they have declared Psychology as a major and have completed PSY 105/106.) Other concerns were raised that we now offer several of these methodology courses as Liberal Studies courses. As a result, we will consider developing a Statistics for the Non-major. Additionally, we will consider developing an Honors and Remedial Statistics course given the incredibly wide range of quantitative skills in the courses. Students would have to earn a C or better in MA 101 (PSY 240 prerequisite) to take the regular statistics course (PSY 240); they would be referred to the remedial course if they didn’t meet this requirement. Again, this issue was sent to committee for Fall.

**General Departmental Functioning**

Several issues were raised at the end of the retreat that had more to do with general departmental issues than undergraduate programmatic issues. Given lack of time at departmental meetings throughout the year, this time was deemed the most appropriate for raising these issues.

First, a report was made from the Intro Psych Task Force on improvements made in student research participation. Several years ago there was a large problem getting enough students to complete their research participation requirement (from PSY 105/106) to support faculty/student research projects. In response to this, introductory faculty began providing bonus points to students’ (1) midterm exams if they had completed 3 of the 6 required hours at a set date prior to the midterm and (2) final exams if they had completed all of their required hours at a set date prior to the final. Although the data seemed inconclusive, introductory faculty anecdotally reported having to file fewer change of grade reports for students failing to complete the participation requirement.

The department is in the process of developing a Constitution. Several minor changes were suggested and faculty were encouraged to read through the document more carefully for Fall departmental meeting consideration.
In efforts of improving departmental communication among subcommittees, faculty departmental meetings will include a more structured time for brief Committee Reports. The suggestion was made that information could also be dispersed in the new departmental hypernews.

Conclusion

In conclusion, faculty expressed agreement that this retreat proved quite useful in taking a concentrated look at our undergraduate issues. They agreed that such a retreat on a yearly basis would be beneficial in maintaining the quality of our undergraduate program.