

Psychological Science Program: Addressing Reviewer's Recommendations

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“Separating the program out to become its own department with a chair who is a member of the Psychological Science faculty.”

Psychological Science faculty submitted an AUC proposal that was approved by the AUC and signed by the president to become its own department to be housed within the Division of Health & Natural Sciences. This change will allow faculty to have more meeting time devoted to psychological science issues (in lieu of the time spent on discussing criminal justice, sociology, and human services matters). Leadership by a chair with a background in psychological science is important – especially with matters of evaluating faculty, hiring new adjunct and tenure track faculty, and course offerings.

Address interest in cognitive/neuroscience direction in the field of psychology. Develop identity (message and theme) between cognitive/neuroscience and clinical/applied directions.

The Psychological Science field has been greatly influenced by advances in neuroscience research. With the development of neuroscience, faculty added Introduction to Cognitive Neuroscience to the course offerings. Psychology faculty collaborated with faculty in the Biology Department to create the interdisciplinary minor called Neuroscience, Behavior and Cognition. Also, psychology faculty implemented a program for psychological sciences to pursue a concentration in cognitive science. In the last five years, two faculty members have been hired to teach Introduction in Cognitive Neuroscience. One option being currently considered with the new track program would require all students to take Introduction to Cognitive Neuroscience.

Psychological Science has faculty who have been trained as cognitive scientists and faculty who have been trained as professional psychologists (counselors and organizational psychologists). The Psychological Science program has many students who would like to pursue graduate work/careers in cognitive science and many students who would like to pursue graduate work/careers in professional fields such as counseling and organizational psychology. To meet the educational goals and interests of the students, the psychological science faculty have proposed a new program that involves three tracks: Brain & Cognitive Science Track, Professional Psychology Track, and General Psychology Track (Please see Appendix). Each student would select a track and be assigned to an advisor with expertise in that track. Students who have broad interests and/or would like to design their own course of study could pursue the General Psychology track. This track may be desirable to transfer students who would like flexibility in order to graduate in a timely manner.

Curriculum Concerns: Lower the number of required courses, lower the number of courses offered, combine the 3 research course sequence to 2 and cut down the number of electives. Review the numbering system.

The psychological science faculty carefully reviewed the course offerings and numbering system. As suggested by the reviewer, the faculty reduced the three research course sequence (Research Design & Analysis I, Research Design & Analysis II, Experimental Psychology) to a two course (8 credit) sequence by eliminating Experimental Psychology as a course offering.

Socio-emotional Personality Development, Cognitive Development and Perceptual Development have been dropped as course offerings and replaced by a single class: Child Development. Addictive Behaviors (cross-listed in Human Services) was dropped as a psychological science course. Contemporary Theories of Mind and Psychological Testing were dropped as course offerings. Dropping Contemporary Theories of Mind and Cognitive Development reduced the course offerings for the Neuroscience, Behavior & Cognition (NBC) minor. However, a new course, Memory has been implemented to fulfill an elective for the minor in NBC as well as the major/minor in Psychological Science.

Faculty have discussed dropping Psychology in Action from course offerings and replacing Psychology of Human Resources and Organizational Psychology with a single course (which is consistent with most undergraduate programs).

The faculty reviewed the course numbering system for each course in Psychological Science. It was decided that 1000 level courses are survey courses, without prerequisites, that introduce students to the field of psychological science. The 2000 level courses are courses that cover subfields of psychology. The 3000 level courses have some primary source literature (articles from journals). 4000 level courses are courses that have a narrow focus on a specific topic and that rely on primary source literature as reading material.

Some points raised that will be discussed as the faculty move forward with the new curriculum:

- 1) Cognitive Neuroscience serving as an introductory (1000) level course with no prerequisites
- 2) Developmental Psychopathology becoming a 3000 level course
- 3) Changing the name of Adolescent to Adolescent Development to be consistent with titles of other courses (Child Development, Aging & Adult Development).
- 4) Requiring General Psychology for all majors

Assessment Plan: Develop a comprehensive assessment plan to document student learning outcomes.

The faculty decided to develop assessment plans within each track and an overall assessment plan. The faculty are planning to meet within their designated track over the summer to develop assessment plans to discuss at the first Psychological Science meeting in fall of 2015.

APA Principles: Align more strongly with APA Principles for Quality Undergrad Education in Psychology by integrating ethics and diversity issues with Psychological Science courses.

The faculty discussed how ethics and diversity issues are being addressed in courses. It was agreed that faculty should include ethics and diversity issues in the learning objectives listed in the syllabi.

Graduate Program: Discuss and determine the role and purpose of the graduate program.

The graduate program is a counseling program that is separate from the undergraduate program. The graduate program will change the course designations from PSY to COUNS. The counseling program is housed in Behavioral Sciences in Arts and Sciences. Psychological Science is housed in Health and Natural Sciences. Some Psychological Science faculty will continue to teach in the graduate counseling program.

Faculty: Increase faculty. Increase diverse faculty. Develop a faculty mentoring program.

A faculty member with an expertise in perception has been hired for a tenure track position in psychological science beginning in fall of 2015. Current faculty have begun assisting the new faculty member with designing the syllabus, selecting the textbook, and course development.

Students: Increase faculty availability. Increase required course availability. Address concerns with regard to favoritism and collegiality. Strategies for including students more. Develop an advising model.

Currently, the psychological science faculty have offices that are spread out across three different floors in the Percival Building. Such spatial distance hinders communication among faculty members. Students may have difficulty finding their advisor's or professor's office. The move to McKay will improve the communication among faculty and make professors seem more accessible to their students.

The faculty discussed the need to increase the availability of required courses. The faculty decided to offer more sections of Research Design Analysis I and Research Design Analysis II.

Also, the faculty discussed offering more sections of Breadth Requirements (Abnormal Psychology, Biological Psychology, Cognition, Cognitive Neuroscience, Developmental Psychopathology, Psychology of Learning, Psychology of Personality, Social Psychology). One possibility being considered for the new curriculum would be to allow students to take at least four of the following foundation courses (instead of Breadth Requirements): Abnormal Psychology, Biological Psychology, Child Development, Cognition, Memory, Motivation, Psychology of Learning Psychology of Personality, Sensation and Perception, Social Psychology. Taking four of the courses would allow more flexibility in scheduling; students would have more options when selecting courses that best match interests and academic goals.

Currently, students take History & Systems. Faculty are considering that the proposed track curriculum might provide more flexibility by enabling students to select two of four capstone requirements (History & Systems, Advanced Seminar, Internship, Practicum, Independent Study).

Student representation on the curriculum committee will be in accordance with the MSCA contract.

Retreat: Deal with departmental stress, strategic planning, curriculum streamlining.

Faculty have been working together to develop the new tracks, to streamline the curriculum, and to address the reviewer's concerns. These Psychological Science meetings have been productive, collegial and enjoyable. The faculty have planned to meet informally during the summer to further discuss and develop the new curriculum.

As an independent department, the Psychological Science faculty will have more opportunities (with time freed up from the monthly Behavioral Science meetings) to meet as a department to discuss strategic planning and curriculum. The faculty will also have more time in future meetings to discuss issues such as collegiality and professionalism.