

AAC Psychology Program Review

I. Introduction

The chair of the Psychology Program, Dr. Ryan Martin, submitted the self-study which was approved by the Psychology Department Executive Committee and forwarded to the AAC on December 2, 2015 by Dean Furlong. The AAC discussed and reviewed the self-study report on March 10, 2016.

According to the UWGB Psychology homepage, “Psychology is the systematic and scientific study of behavior and mental processes (e.g., memory, emotion). It seeks to explain how physiological, personal, cultural, social, developmental, and environmental conditions influence thought and action. Research aims to understand, predict, and influence behavior.” The Psychology program challenges students with rigorous course content and prepares graduates for entrance into graduate school, careers in counseling, scholarship and academics. The Psychology Program is housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and is a disciplinary major with five areas of emphasis: Brain, Behavior and Health, Cultural and Gender Diversity, General Psychology, Mental Health, and Sustainability (38-39 credits). Psychology majors must complete an interdisciplinary minor also. The program also offers a disciplinary minor (25-26 credits). There are 15 Professors (4 full, 9 associate, and 2 assistant). The program has a large enrollment with 342 majors in 2014-1015 and 106 minors. The number of graduates in 2014 with a Psychology major was 90.

II. Assessment of Student Learning

The self-study states that in 2014, the Psychology Program adopted the American Psychological Association Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major. These guidelines propose five goals (Goal 1: Knowledge Base in Psychology, Goal 2: Scientific Inquiry and Critical Thinking; Goal 3: Ethical and Social Responsibility in a Diverse World, Goal 4: Communication, and Goal 5: Professional Development). Each of these goals has 3 – 5 indicators under them.

During 2014 and 2015, graduating seniors were surveyed regarding their experience in the psychology program. While 100% of respondents felt they had at least one professor in the psychology major who made them excited about learning, 58% felt they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals, and 75% reported having an internship or job that allowed them to apply what they were learning in the classroom. Yet, only 26% reported involvement in extracurricular activities and organizations while at UWGB. As a result of this evaluation, the Psychology Program launched a promotional campaign to increase student interest in extracurricular activities* (see recommendations).

In the spring of 2015, the following APA outcome was assessed: Develop meaningful professional direction for life after graduate was evaluated. Results of the review of four sources of data reveal that students scored 74 – 100% on the measures that tested post college career preparation.* During the spring of 2014 the Psychology Department assessed Goal 4: Communication: Exhibit effective presentation skills for different purposes. It was found that out of 16 Psychology courses, four included oral presentation.* In the spring of 2011, the assessment outcome (version that preceded the APA Guidelines) was evaluated. To do this several research assignments in five different courses were reviewed using a rubric. Weaknesses were found in

Applying Research Design and in Understanding Data Analysis. In 2010 the faculty determined which courses were addressing which outcomes (version of outcomes preceding adoption of APA Guidelines) and what assignments/activities addressed specific outcomes. Based on this evaluation it was determined that two of the outcomes (Career Planning and Development and Information and Technological Literacy) were not receiving as much coverage as others. To address this weakness additional assignments and activities were introduced into classes on those topics.

III. Program Accomplishments

- Although it is noted that from 2010 through 2016 many Psychology majors completed research assistantships, teaching assistantships, internships, and honors projects, the self-study reports that the percentage of students who participate in these activities appears to be relatively low especially for teaching assistantships and honors projects.*
- In the last ten years, 300 students have published an article or book chapter along with a faculty member and 142 students have presented at regional or national conferences.
- Students experience great success in post-graduation employment.*
- Students experience great success in graduate school.*
- Faculty have published 206 journal articles since the last Program Review 10 years ago.
- The faculty have been the recipients of a number of Founders Awards in the last 10 years.
- Although there was a decline in majors between 2008 and 2009 due to a change in curriculum that cut back on the number of double majors, Psychology enrollments have stayed relatively stable during the last 10 years
- The possibility of a Master's Program was explored in 2006 by a taskforce with the conclusion that a master's program was not feasible at this time.
- Making research methods a pre-requisite to about half of the upper level psychology courses resulted in improved access to upper level classes by Psychology majors.

IV. Program Strengths and Areas in Need of Attention

Strengths:

- The Psychology Program is strong in that it continues to have a large enrollment and excellent faculty who produce much in the way of scholarly publication and teaching excellence (which has been recognized in the Founders Awards received for both excellence in teaching and scholarship).
- The faculty are currently developing a fully online major which will increase access and adult learners.
- The adoption of the APA Guidelines for Psychology Majors that are used for program/student evaluation since 2014.
- New positions have been allocated to Psychology over the last 10 years allowing for additional courses each semester.
- Student research with faculty and required Experimental Psychology course where students complete a research study from beginning to end.

Areas in need of attention:

- A specific assessment plan in relation to the newly adopted 2014 APA Guidelines for Psychology majors outcomes.*

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

*In spring of 2014 it was found that out of 16 Psychology, courses only 4 included the requirement of oral presentation. Therefore the AAC encourages the Psychology Department to increase the number of courses that include a requirement of oral presentation.

*In the spring of 2011, a weakness was found in Applying Research Design and in Understanding Data Analysis. Therefore the AAC concurs with the self-study report and agrees that more application-driven learning activities be included in courses other than Experimental Psychology.

*In the spring of 2015, it was found that students scored 74 – 100% on various measures testing post college career preparation. Therefore the AAC recommends that the program continue to focus on and increase coverage of career development.

* A survey conducted in 2014 and 2015 found that only 58% of graduating seniors felt they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals, 75% reported having an internship or job that allowed them to apply what they were learning in the classroom, and only 26% reported involvement in extracurricular activities and organizations while at UWGB. Based on these findings the AAC recommends that the Program look into ways to increase use of mentors, continue on an annual basis with campaigns that increase awareness of extracurricular activities. The AAC also recommends that the program continue to search out internships that encourage students to apply what they are learning in the classroom.

*Participation in individualized learning activities seems relatively low especially for teaching assistantships, internships, and honors projects. The AAC recommends that the program look at the necessity of the GPA prerequisite and how faculty sponsors can be reimbursed for their time (perhaps in teaching credit).

*The AAC recommends that the unit continue to work on finding a way to clarify what their graduates are doing post-college, i.e., the percentage that are in graduate school and therefore not seeking employment.

*The AAC encourages the Psychology Department to continue to assess graduating seniors on achievement of at least one APA Outcome each year. The assessment procedures seem balanced and appropriate.