

**University of Dayton Department of Psychology**  
**Assessment Report**  
**2010/2011**

The Department of Psychology is a comprehensive department within primarily an undergraduate institution. This past year, we serviced our programs with 15 tenure track faculty (including the chairperson) active in the department, one full time non-tenure track appointment, one lecturer (for one semester), and 9 part-time adjunct faculty per semester. Each full-time faculty member advises 24-25 undergraduate students, which is significantly higher than the advising loads in other departments in the College. In addition, many faculty mentor graduate students in thesis projects. This coming fall we have one newly hired tenure track faculty and one lecturer joining our ranks. We also have a faculty member returning to the Department following years of administrative service. Thus we will have 18 full-time (tenured, tenure track, and nontenure track) faculty active in the department (including the chairperson). At the undergraduate level, the Department serves approximately 420 psychology majors and has 150-225 minors at any point in time. In this coming 2011-2012 year, we are entering a record breaking number of majors ( $n = 90$ ). With their arrival, we will have over 450 majors. In 2010-2011, we generated nearly 9500 undergraduate student credit hours, with a minimum number of general education courses. Thus we are a strong majors-oriented department. At the graduate level, we operate two graduate programs (Clinical, General-Psychological Science) with approximately 20-25 full-time graduate students overall. Students in each program are expected to complete a research-oriented thesis. In 2010-2011, we generated 419 graduate student credit hours.

In May 2010, the Department submitted a preliminary assessment plan consisting of 6 learning outcomes. The plan was informed by the student learning outcomes as described in the Assessment CyberGuide for Learning Goals and Outcomes (2009) developed by the American Psychological Association to address undergraduate psychology education and by the University of Dayton's Habits of Inquiry (HIR; 2006). In June 2010, feedback regarding the plan was received. Although the changes recommended to that plan have not yet been implemented, the report submitted here will reflect the proposed assessment strategies which were in place at the beginning of 2010. Additionally, although they do not directly measure learning outcomes, results from the annual senior survey will also be used to inform the assessment report.

1. Scholarship:

A. *Students will be able to describe the basic characteristics of the science of psychology (Goal 2.1; APA, 2009).*

Measure: Students in PSY 101, which is required of all majors, will be required to take an online quiz related to the science of psychology and the methods and tools used to address questions in psychology. Students in major capstone courses (to be proposed to the AAC in Fall 2010), which will be required of all majors, will be required to take an online quiz related to the science of psychology and the methods and tools used to address questions in psychology. It is expected that significant improvements in scores will be noted with 100% of students achieving at least 70% on the post-test.

This test will be developed in academic year 2011/2012 for initial administration in F2012. The capstone options will be proposed to the AAC in Fall 2011. Scores from quiz administration in PSY 101 will be matched to the administration in the capstone course in order to assess change over time and achievement of this outcome.

*B. Students will design and conduct basic studies to address psychological questions using appropriate research methods (Goal 2.4; APA, 2009).*

Measure: As part of their course work in PSY 217, a course required of all majors, students will design and conduct studies to address psychological questions. These research studies will then be publically presented at one of the following forums: Stander Symposium, Social Science Symposium, and Student Research Website (to be developed). Students in PSY 216 will be required to evaluate at least one study and provide comments or questions regarding the study to the investigator. A syllabus audit will ensure that this is a requirement in all sections of PSY 216. Although currently a majority of our majors complete PSY 216, a number take MTH 207 to meet the statistics requirement which is a prerequisite for PSY 217. This fall a proposal will go before the AAC to remove MTH 207 as an option for meeting the statistics requirement. Once this is in place, 100% of majors will be required to take PSY 216.

Based on the feedback regarding assessment of this outcome, this method of assessment will need to be restructured. However, the purpose of this outcome was to focus on further development of students' quantitative and research skills, and evidence of our progress in this area is presented here.

Consistent with the desires of the Department, comments from the senior survey indicate that further development of statistical and research skills would be perceived as valued by the students. We have taken steps to further develop students' quantitative skills. In Spring 2011, the AAC approved our proposal to no longer accept MTH 207 in place of PSY 216 (Elementary Statistics). This change was proposed after consulting with the Mathematics Department and determining that the two courses are not equivalent. Working with the Dean's office, we have also made changes in the recommended courses for incoming students. Because we believe it will be better preparation for PSY 216, Psychology majors are now recommended to take MTH 207 in place of MTH 114. This year a proposal will go forward to the AAC requiring (rather than recommending) that Psychology majors take MTH 207 prior to PSY 216. Working with the Mathematics Department, PSY 216 will be restructured to build on the material covered in MTH 207, thus allowing us to cover more advanced statistical methods.

With respect to scholarship, a large number of students were active in research and scholarship this year. Our students were involved in two University sponsored symposia, the Social Science Symposium and the Stander Symposium. Five of our undergraduate students presented research at the Social Science Symposium in December 2010. Consistent with past semesters, our students were much more involved in the Stander Symposium. Ten different faculty members in the Psychology Department sponsored 25 posters presented by 44 different students (40 undergraduates, and 4 graduate students). In addition, a number of students coauthored, and in many cases presented, their work at regional, national, and international conferences. Three graduate students presented and/or co-authored work at an international conference. Six

graduate students and one undergraduate student presented and/or work at national conferences and seven graduate and four undergraduate students presented and/or co-authored work at regional conferences.

Data from the NSSE also support greater student involvement in research. In 2007, 40% of responding graduating seniors indicating that they had worked on a research project with a faculty member, outside of course or program requirements. This increased to 60% for the graduating seniors who responded in 2010. Additionally, comparing responses of seniors from 2007 to those in 2010 for the item “Coursework emphasized: Making judgments about the value of information, arguments or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions”, seniors responding in 2010 indicated a greater emphasis on judgment than those of 2007 ( $t(58) = -1.92, p = .06$ ). This question was also examined for developmental changes; first year majors of 2007 were compared to graduating majors in 2010. A significant increase ( $t(37) = -2.08; p = .045$ ) was found, with mean scores moving from 2.64 to 3.16.

Information from the senior survey indicates that graduating students perceive our program as developing skills in statistical strategies and research methods, tools which are critical to scholarship. Additionally, over 95% indicate that our program help to develop critical thinking skills.

## 2. Practical Wisdom:

*A. Students will identify appropriate applications of psychology in solving problems (Goal 4.2; APA, 2009).*

Measure: Students in the capstone courses will produce either a research project or analytic writing product which addresses a question in psychology. All majors must obtain a minimum grade of C- in the capstone course in order to successfully complete the course. A syllabus audit will ensure that this is a requirement in all capstone courses.

A plan for a capstone requirement was approved by the Department in 2010. Given the size of the Department, it was decided that three options will be offered: advanced research; topical readings courses; or PSY 471 History of Psychology. An AAC proposal for these options will be submitted to the AAC in F2011. Because grades cannot be used as an indicator of having met the learning objective of solving problems, the assessment of this learning outcome will need to be further developed.

Anecdotally, student comments on course evaluations often express appreciation for the practical application and examples utilized by Psychology faculty. However, this does not directly assess students’ application of concepts. Because the data for this outcome have not yet been developed, results from the NSSE were examined for evidence of the development of practical wisdom. Using the item “Coursework emphasized: Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations”, first year majors of 2007 were compared to graduating majors in 2010. A significant increase ( $t(36) = -2.90; p = .006$ ) was found, with mean scores moving from 2.71 to 3.42.

*B. Students will apply psychological concepts, theories, and research findings as these relate to everyday life (Goal, 4.4; APA, 2009).*

Measure: Syllabus audits will be performed to ensure that PSY 101 students will be assigned writing assignments in which they apply psychological concepts, theories and research findings to their lives and reflect on that application. A random sample of 5% of papers will be evaluated to determine whether application and reflection is presented. It is expected that at least 80% of sampled papers will provide evidence of application and reflection.

A plan for implementation will be developed this fall for full implementation in F2012.

3. Diversity:

*A. Students will explain how individual differences influence beliefs, values, and interactions with others and vice versa (Goal 8.3; APA, 2009).*

Measure: 100% of majors will obtain a C- or better in two of the following courses: PSY 341 Social Psychology; PSY 351 Child Psychology; PSY 361 Personality; and PSY 363 Abnormal Psychology, courses which specifically address individual differences and their impact on interpersonal interactions. A syllabus audit will be performed, and 100% of sections in these courses will address individual differences and their impact on interpersonal interactions.

An audit of the syllabi for all sections of PSY 341, 351, 361, and 363 was conducted, and it was found that all instructors addressed the influence of individual difference on beliefs, values, and interactions. However, it is noted that this measure addresses exposure to an idea and does not measure students' ability to explain. This measure will be reworked to address more specifically students' abilities to explain how individuals differences influence beliefs, values, and interactions with others and vice versa.

*B. Students will recognize and respect human diversity (Goal 5.5; APA, 2009).*

Measure: Using items Ie (Included diverse perspectives in class discussion or writing assignments) and II.1 (Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds) on the National Survey of Student Engagement, responses from Psychology majors as first year students will be compared with their responses as seniors. Aggregate ratings will move from neutral or low in the first year to high in the senior year.

NSSE data collected from first year psychology majors in 2007 were compared with data from senior psychology majors collected in 2010. Questions specific to diversity were examined for changes in ratings. Data are presented below.

<b>Question</b>	<b>2007 PSY majors (n = 14)</b>	<b>2010 PSY majors (n = 25)</b>	<b>2010 all majors</b>
Included diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments	2.36	3.28	2.67
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	2.36	2.56	2.29

Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	2.50	2.56	2.56
Tried to better understand someone else's view by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	2.57	3.08	2.82
Institutional contribution: Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	3.14	2.80	2.53

Those items that displayed the greatest change include an item (first item) that indicates that over the course of the major, students were provided class based opportunities to examine issues of diversity. Average student ratings for majors increased significantly ( $t(37) = -3.28$ ;  $p = .002$ ) and moved from “sometimes” to “often”. Additionally, students appear to have utilized some of those experiences in their interactions with others as evidenced by rating changes in the item “tried to better understand someone else’s view...” although average ratings are still in the “often” range. This change was in the desired direction and approached, but did not reach, significance ( $t(27) = -2.01$ ;  $p = .052$ ). With respect to more active interactions with others, responses showed less movement over time; average scores remain in the “sometimes” range. This may be in part due to the homogeneity of the student body. Regarding the decline in score on the last item, “understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds”, it may be that having increased exposure (as evidence by the first item), students can appreciate the difficulty in truly understanding people with significantly different backgrounds. Additionally, ratings of the institutional contribution to understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds moved declined over time; however, the decrease was not significant.

### Senior survey

In addition to the learning outcomes proposed in the Department’s assessment plan, the Department also examines postgraduate outcomes and aspects of the Department that may appear to be more closely related to student satisfaction. Data are obtained through the annual senior survey. Approximately three weeks prior to graduation, an email containing a link to the senior survey was distributed to our majors who had applied for graduation. Thirty-eight of those students responded to our anonymous senior survey (51.35%). The senior survey asks students to rate the Department on a variety of aspects of our mission. Ratings are on a 5-point scale with higher scores indicating greater agreement or more favorable ratings. Results of the survey are presented below.

Survey Questions	Overall Rating	% rate positively	% rate negatively
Courses & Faculty			
Breadth of Curriculum	4.26	94.8	2.6
Quality of curriculum	4.32	100	0.0
Course availability	4.11	89.7	5.2
Accessibility of faculty	4.37	89.7	5.2
Quality of instruction	4.13	92.3	7.7
Job preparation	3.47	53.8	12.8

Preparation for graduate study	3.74	64.1	15.4
Advising			
Advisor's availability	4.32	87.2	5.3
Advisor's helpfulness	4.39	79.5	2.7
Advisor's knowledge of requirements	4.22	76.9	7.9
Advisor's knowledge of student's goals	4.38	84.6	10.5
Career advising	4.16	76.9	10.5
Graduate study advising	4.07	70.0	10.0
Psychology Program contribution to skills development			
Critical thinking	4.47	97.4	2.6
Finding/using information	4.37	100	0.0
Using statistics in decision making	3.92	76.9	10.3
Designing scientific research	3.95	74.4	5.1
Synthesizing and integrating information	4.42	97.5	0.0
Written communication skills	4.18	87.2	7.7
Oral communication skills	3.79	66.7	15.4
Teamwork & advocacy skills	4.03	76.9	5.1

The data indicate that, overall, students perceive the education, advising and experiences they received in the Psychology Department to be of positive value.

Previous years' surveys had indicated that students' ratings of advising were lower, relative to other areas assessed, particularly in the area of career advising. Given the "pre-professional" nature of the Psychology degree (i.e., one cannot become a psychologist with only a bachelor's degree), one ongoing concern in our department is potential differences in the experiences and perceptions of students who plan to attend graduate school and those who do not. In order to examine this issue, responses from seniors who applied to graduate school were compared to those who did not. No significant differences were found in any of the specific or broader categories assessed by this survey. Additionally, ratings of knowledge of student goals, career advising, and graduate study advising improved over last year.

Although the senior survey asks about future plans, the chair sent out an email to all graduating seniors asking for their plans following graduation. Fifteen students who had not chosen to complete the senior survey provided information regarding future plans. Regarding future plans, 71.62% ( $n = 53$ ) of our graduating seniors provided information regarding their future plans. Of these respondents, 50.94% ( $n = 27$ ) indicated that they have been accepted into graduate programs. Two were still waiting to hear whether they have been accepted, and two were not accepted. The graduate programs into which our graduates have been accepted vary from PhD, PsyD and masters programs in psychology to medical and law school and graduate programs in schools of education. Of the 26 respondents who are not pursuing graduate studies, 14 sought employment, 8 of whom received offers, 5 of whom accepted those offers. Three respondents will be performing a year of service; one respondent will be joining the military.

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