

## **Assessment Trends Report Student Learning Outcomes in Psychology**

November 11, 2009

The goal of this report is to evaluate the assessment of student learning outcomes in the Psychology Program. The report addresses four key questions to evaluate the quality of our assessment processes.

### **(1) How have we sustained the assessment effort over a multi-year period of time?**

How many years have you completed an annual assessment report?

\_\_\_\_\_ 2006    \_\_\_\_\_x2007    \_\_\_x\_\_\_2008    \_\_\_x\_\_\_2009

The Psychology program developed an assessment plan and developed learning outcome goals in 2006. It has sustained the tradition of assessment by submitting annual assessment reports for 2007 and 2009. All faculty has been involved in the data collection and analysis. The program, as reviewed in 2009, is aware of the problems within their assessment process and is planning on improve its assessment process.

### **(2) How do we systematically and comprehensively collect and analyze data about student learning?**

**The Psychology program has collected data to assess student learning in the following learning outcome goals:**

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to distinguish between non-scientific v. scientific approaches to mind and behavior and critique the similarities & differences between psychology and other sciences.
2. Students will demonstrate their ability to understand critical variables that influence mind and behavior from the 4 core areas: biopsychology, learning and cognition, developmental/social psychology, and applied psychology, and evaluate theoretical orientations within these approaches.
3. Students will demonstrate their ability to perform psychological research. That includes surveying the literature on a research topic using professional databases (such as PsycINFO and PubMed), developing an appropriate empirical research design, conducting the study in an ethical manner, and analyzing and reporting their data and interpretations in accordance with the professional standards of the discipline.

Both direct and indirect assessment methods are used. Direct assessment is conducted through the systematic collection of senior capstone projects and formal written assignments; the grades on these artifacts provide evidence as to whether or not the students are meeting the stated learning outcomes. Such indirect data as exams and SIR scores likewise indicate the effectiveness of the pedagogy and curriculum. Because all Psychology faculty collect this data, they are all involved in the analysis of it. The analysis relies heavily on the grades the artifacts receive from the faculty teaching the courses. There is no rubric that guides the data analysis; nor is there clear mapping of what part of the data measures which learning goal.

### **(3) How do we use the analysis to improve curriculum and pedagogy and to inform decisions about budgets and strategic priorities?**

Because all Psychology faculty collect this data, they are all involved in the analysis of it. However, the faculty does not discuss their results with one another, nor do they discuss the annual assessment report, which is circulated by the Chair of the Psychology department. Annual assessment reports have made no recommendation on improving curriculum and pedagogy. There is no data analysis used to inform budgetary decisions or strategic priorities.

### **(4) How do we evaluate, modify, and continue to improve the student learning assessment process in this program?**

It is clear that the faculty in the Psychology Department are systematically and comprehensively collecting and analyzing data concerning student learning, and they are using their analysis to validate the effectiveness of their curriculum and pedagogy. The department is aware that their assessment efforts need to be better sustained, and that the assessment methods should undergo regular review. The learning goals are realistic, and the department is moving in the right direction. Improved communication from the Dean of Teaching and Learning will result in timely feedback on annual reports, which will in turn lead to improved assessment of assessment. An review of our assessment process in 2009 indicates that there are several deficiencies in our assessment process that need to be addressed: we need to assess the capstone projects more formally with rubrics; we also need to implement collection of the final capstone project reports.

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**Evaluation from Focus Visit Leadership Team (includes Academic Deans, Program Leaders, and Focus Visit Report Writers)**

**Rating: Yellow**

Academic program	Goal 1 (multi-year)	Goal 2 (data collection)	Goal 3 (Use assessment to improve)	Goal 4 (improve assessment)	Total
<b>Psychology</b>	3	2	1	1	7

Based on the four questions/criteria, the Focus Visit Leadership Team rates the Psychology program as yellow and concludes that the Psychology has sustained its assessment. As the program is already aware, its assessment process needs to go under regular review and the program needs to be committed to more systematic and comprehensive analysis. It should move away from a heavy reliance on grades and implement actual data collection and data analysis. The annual assessment report should also clearly map which elements in the data are measuring what specific goal and specify how the Senior Capstone research projects can reflect student learning in each course within the major.