

San Francisco State University  
Department of Psychology  
Response to the External Review  
November 2019

The Psychology Department has reviewed the external review report. We are encouraged that there is significant overlap between the conclusions of the self-study and the recommendations from the independent reviewers. We also note the recurring acknowledgement of the resource constraints on our Department, which are referenced eleven times in the twenty-page report. The report clearly and unequivocally states that our Department is under-resourced, and that many critical recommendations, including impaction removal, enhancements to the writing curriculum, the development and implementation of undergraduate culminating experiences, and access to research lab experiences, are not possible without increased resources. The report suggests that our Department and SFSU administration work together to align resource planning with the proposed objectives. We agree.

The report outlined five objectives, each with specific recommendations. The Department response is presented below each recommendation, in italics.

**Objective: Increase student access to the major and student advising, given appropriate faculty resources**

- Think about ways to allow more students access to the major, and consider the administration as a partner in these efforts. There are ways to simultaneously grow the department, address faculty workload, and improve the educational experience of additional undergraduates.

- *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study. We request that the administration (including Academic Planning and Institutional Research) work directly with our department to address these issues.*
- Work with the administration to make a plan for increasing undergraduate students admitted to the major as a function of additional faculty hires.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study. We agree with the external review report which states, “Impaction removal would only be possible with increased resources.”*
- Formalize the input collected via the peer advising center (p. 15 from self-study, “the Psychology Department utilizes its Peer Advising Program to gather daily feedback from students regarding curriculum concerns”).
  - *We will work with the Department’s curriculum committee and the faculty who coordinate the Peer Advisor program to discuss the formalization of data collected from students; mechanisms to collect these data are already in place, so formalized communication of these data should be feasible.*
- Improve online advising for students seeking access to tenure-track faculty members.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study. Following the lead of several faculty members already increasing access in this way, we will work to increase online access to faculty for students seeking advising (e.g., Zoom video meetings, online scheduling).*
- Continue to improve training for new faculty members about student advising.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study. Our training initiatives will include both new and existing faculty members.*

- Explore the addition of a full-time undergraduate advisor.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study, and with our student success initiatives (e.g., mandatory advising, peer advising, one-unit entry and exit courses).*
- Work with the CoSE Student Success Center to expand and coordinate advising efforts.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study. Our department has worked closely with the CoSE Student Success Center to align our advising efforts (e.g., delegated authority to review graduation applications), and we will continue to do so.*

**Objective: Improve assessment of student learning and achievement**

- Develop better means of assessing student learning and program learning outcomes, decreasing reliance on self-report and exit surveys.
  - *The Department is committed to enhancing student learning and recognizes the role of assessment in this goal. We plan to take these suggestions under advisement in evaluating our continued assessment efforts, to the extent such modifications are possible given limited resources.*
- Change the assessment committee from “ad hoc” to a regular, standing meeting with clear deliverables. On many campuses, this committee has one of the highest degrees of workload.
  - *The Department will take this suggestion into consideration as we review service and committee obligations (see objectives relating to service and transparency, below).*

- Per the bullet point above, redesign the department’s assessment matrix to include specific course assignments (student learning outcomes) to address each of the psychology department’s program learning outcomes.
  - *The Department will take this suggestion into consideration as we review and revise our current assessment matrix.*
- Emphasize long-term educational and career outcomes in alumni surveys. Formalize the communication of data from alumni surveys in department meetings.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the previous recommendation for more formalized assessment mechanisms within the Department. The Assessment Committee and the Department will work with the development office and others who maintain communication with alumni to consider these proposed outcome measures.*
- Implement annual review of undergraduate exit survey data within department meetings.
  - *Like the previous point, this recommendation aligns with formalization of the assessment mechanisms in the department. The Department plans to implement this particular recommendation beginning in the Spring 2020.*
- Develop a formal evaluation of outcomes pertaining to PSY 303 and PSY 690 to assess the ‘bookend’ approach to the undergraduate major.
  - *We will work with the Department’s Curriculum Committee, Assessment Committee, and the faculty who teach PSY 303 and 690 to explore assessment and outcomes of these courses.*

- Think about new ways to evaluate writing and disciplinary communication within the curriculum. Perhaps introduce a writing course early in the major and then one during the culminating experience (e.g., senior seminar in a particular topic area). Such a senior seminar could also be used as a mechanism for assessing program learning outcomes. Explore whether the early writing experience could be covered by GTAs as a lab in conjunction with the research methods course.
  - *As we consider assessment tools generally (see above), we will consider assessment of writing and communication within the field. Development of additional writing-intensive classes is not feasible without substantial additional resources, and a consideration of the potential impact it would have on student success metrics such as time to graduation. There is serious concern about whether GTAs would have the necessary skills to fill this role. To the extent that this recommendation highlights concern about a lack of writing within the major, however, far more classes include a writing component (even those with 100+ students) than may have been apparent to the reviewers, including substantial writing assignments in PSY 200 and many upper-division Area and Elective courses (e.g., PSY 400, 431, 472).*
- Similar to the strategy described above, develop and initiate a formal Culminating Experience for all undergraduate students. Consider and evaluate the potential for an option of research experiences, community service learning, and/or internships.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study and University guidelines. We will take these recommendations under advisement as we evaluate*

*the role of culminating experience within the context of current departmental resources.*

**Objective: Improve departmental culture regarding transparency in decision-making and distribution of outcomes**

- Formalize service expectations. At the time of this report, much of departmental governance was provided on an “ad hoc” basis. Formalize regular committee meetings and establish expectations for faculty service (e.g., publication of names per committee has already been accomplished; consider adding a weighting for workload expectations).
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study, and work to accomplish these goals is already underway.*
- As pointed out in the department self-study document, quantify and incentivize service activities and expectations.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study, and we are in the process of developing a system to do this.*
- Establish guidelines for publishing and communicating financial support for faculty development opportunities.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study, in particular as related to the development of a Budget Committee, currently underway.*
- Choose concentration coordinators through consultation of the department chair, associate chair, and advisory committee, or another process deemed to fully represent the department’s interests, as well as the interests of individual faculty within each concentration.

- *Faculty had a variety of reactions to this recommendation; we will take the recommendation under consideration in discussions as we evaluate departmental and program structures as related to transparency and fairness.*
- Address possible gender/race/ethnicity inequity in hiring, mentoring, evaluation, resource allocation. Consider adding “contributions to diversity” as a formal factor in tenure and promotion.
  - *This recommendation aligns in part with the conclusions in the self-study. The department is committed to “diversity” (supporting multiple perspectives, multiculturalism, and other traditionally underrepresented perspectives) in every aspect of departmental life. We will continue to seek ways to increase and support equity in all aspects of department life, and will explore the possibility of including such a factor when our RTP policy undergoes revision in the coming months.*
- Increase the regularity of faculty and staff debriefing sessions around important policy decisions.
  - *We will incorporate this recommendation.*
- Establish a budget committee to review departmental expenditures, and bring relevant policy recommendations to the department.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study, and is on track for development beginning Spring 2020.*
- Include office staff in hiring decisions pertinent to office business.
  - *Office staff are currently involved in hiring decisions pertinent to office business, and we will maintain the current practice.*

- Create online access to policy documents for assessment, budget, RTP, hiring, and other important committees.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study, and efforts were initiated in the beginning of Fall 2019.*

**Objective: Identify student needs and improve faculty balance in the graduate concentrations**

- Consider reorganizing the graduate programs to have fewer areas of concentration.
  - *There has been some effort to reorganize the MA and MS graduate programs in recent years. In response to CSU Executive Order 1071 the Department spent considerable time over the past two years aligning the coursework of the three MA concentrations and the Clinical and School MS concentrations. These now, respectively, share 50% of required units which contributes to resource efficiency. The I/O concentration is under review for elevation to a stand-alone MS program. The structure of graduate programs and concentrations has been a part of discussions about departmental management and the distribution of resources; we will take this recommendation into consideration as we engage in these discussions moving forward.*
- Better align the goals of the graduate programs with the goals of the undergraduate program.
  - *Ongoing conversations raised by the self-study and highlighted by external review recommendations, particularly those related to the graduate programs, will include consideration of this recommendation.*



- Re-visit hiring priorities and decision-making, with clear links to support for programs at the graduate and undergraduate levels.
  - *There is some overlap between this recommendation and the self-study. Our hiring plan is due for revision, and we will consider the external reviewer suggestions related to hiring priorities. We are encouraged that the report identified the critical need in the area of Clinical Psychology. It should be noted, however, that this was identified as a critical need area in the spring of 2017. Our hiring requests have included a Clinical hire in each of the last three cycles, and Clinical will be the top priority in our next hiring request. Our hiring plan is due for revision, and we will consider the external reviewer recommendations to articulate clear links to both undergraduate and graduate support.*
- Improve transparency in the decision-making for a needs-based balance across the graduate concentrations.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study. The Department is committed to increased transparency in decision-making.*

**Objective: Improve mentorship and provision of feedback to junior faculty**

- Consider tenure and promotion in context of each faculty member's position. There are varying demands on different faculty in different concentrations.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study. The Department and RTP committee have already begun to work together on this objective. Our RTP policy is due for revision, so we will incorporate this recommendation into that process.*
- Formalize the onboarding procedure, and subsequent mentoring relationships.

- *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study. The formalization of onboarding and mentoring is a priority for the Department.*
- Consider diversity as a goal for hiring with a target for alignment with the demographic distribution of students and the existing pool of Ph.D. level psychologists.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study. Diversity and equity in hiring are priorities for the Department.*
- Establish safeguards to protect junior faculty. Resources should not be distributed by tradition or by concentration coordinators, and expectations should be context-specific and communicated explicitly to junior faculty.
  - *This recommendation aligns with the conclusions in the self-study regarding onboarding and mentoring of junior faculty, increased transparency, and equitable resource allocation.*