

Institutional Effectiveness Report

Name of Program/Department: Undergraduate Program in Psychology

Year: 2015-2016

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Program Mission Statement

The purpose of the undergraduate major is to provide students with an understanding of psychology as the science of behavior and experience, including the major theories and issues within psychology; to emphasize the role of the liberal arts in higher education and personal development; to promote an appreciation for individual and cultural diversity; to develop critical thinking skills; to develop competence with methods of scientific research and data analysis; to assure that students have the necessary research experiences and coursework to undertake graduate education; and to assist students in developing their skills in library research, scientific writing, public presentations, and computer applications. Psychology majors will become aware of the various career options related to the major. The program also provides opportunities for internships in applied settings. A major in psychology will provide students with a broad-based education that will equip them for entry-level positions in business, government, and a wide variety of human service organizations. The major also prepares students who wish to pursue further education in areas such as law, medicine, business, or seminary, as well as psychology.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

A graduate of the Psychology Program at Francis Marion University will:

PLO 1.0 Have an understanding of psychology as the science of behavior and experience.

PLO 2.0 Understand the major theories and issues in psychology.

PLO 3.0 Understand the significance of individual and cultural differences.

PLO 4.0 Engage in scientific thinking skills.

PLO 5.0 Understand and appreciate the scientific method.

Executive Summary of Report

During the 2015-2016 academic year, the Psychology Department assessed four Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). The SLOs covered areas such as understanding psychology as the science of behavior and experience and will understand the major theories and issues of the discipline, displaying critical thinking skills and analyze psychology concepts and literature, communicating psychological concepts and research in the style of the American Psychological Association, and examining diverse career options open to undergraduate psychology majors and graduate training options, and utilize professional development opportunities.

The Psychology Department utilized a pretest/posttest exam, an exit survey, and departmental rubrics to evaluate the SLOs.

Regarding our desire to ensure that students understand the theoretical underpinnings and science of behavior, we were successful in meeting our overall benchmark of 70% on the posttest exam in the areas of developmental, experimental design, learning/cognition, abnormal, and history. However, we did not meet our established benchmark of 70% and still show room for growth on our posttest of student understanding in the areas of biological basis of behavior, social and personality psychology, as well as statistics. While on our exit questionnaire our students indicated that the department was successful in meeting our benchmark of 6.0 in the areas of nature of psychology, theories of psychology, view of human nature, role of culture, and scientific method, the department did not reach our benchmark of 6.0 of 6.0 in scientific thinking.

The psychology department experienced great success in meeting our benchmark of 4.0 on our internal assessment and the benchmark of 6.0 on the exit survey for our expectations that students think critically and communicate effectively about psychology as a discipline. We hope to continue our success in these areas.

Our goal of a benchmark of 6.0 to have students examine career options in psychology has not been met. Students still report difficulties in determining what occupations they can pursue with their degree in psychology. Thus, we will place more emphasis of this aspect of the curriculum in PSY 220 (Careers in Psychology). In addition we would also like to assess this learning outcome in PSY 220, when students are first introduced to careers relevant to psychology. It is possible that students were aware of career options just after taking PSY 220 but have forgotten that they were made aware of this information by the time of their graduation.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Assessment Methods

SLO 1.0: Students will understand psychology as the science of behavior and experience and will understand the major theories and issues of the discipline.

SLO 2.0 Students will display critical thinking skills and analyze psychology concepts and literature. These skills involve the development of scientific reasoning and problem solving, including effective research methods.

SLO 3.0 Students will communicate psychological concepts and research in the style of the American Psychological Association.

SLO 4.0 Students will examine diverse career options open to undergraduate psychology majors and graduate training options, and utilize professional development opportunities.

Summary of Ongoing Assessment Activities

Table 1. Student Learning Outcomes, Measures, and Benchmarks for the Department of Psychology

Student Learning Outcome	Measures	Benchmark
Students will understand psychology as the science of behavior and experience and will understand the major theories and issues of the discipline.	FMU Psychology Exit exam: divided into 10 content domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70% correct for domains covered by core classes • 65% correct for domains only covered by optional classes or no upper-level classes
	FMU Psychology Exit Survey questions 2-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of at least 6.0 on a 7 point scale
Students will display critical thinking skills and analyze psychology concepts and literature.	Internal Assessment used in PSY 499	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of at least 4.0 on a 6.0 scale
	FMU Psychology Exit Survey questions 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of at least 6.0 on a 7 point scale
Students will communicate psychological concepts and research in the style of the American Psychological Association.	Internal Assessment used in PSY 499	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of at least 4.0 on a 6.0 scale
	FMU Psychology Exit Survey questions 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of at least 6.0 on a 7 point scale
Students will be examine diverse career options open to undergraduate psychology majors and graduate training options, and utilize professional development opportunities.	FMU Psychology Exit Survey question 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of at least 6.0 on a 7 point scale

Assessment Results

Student Learning Outcome 1: Understanding of Psychology

Exit Exam

The revised exam was given in December 2015 and April of 2016 to students enrolled in the Psychology 220 Careers in Psychology Course (Pre-Test) as well as to graduating seniors enrolled in Psychology 499 Senior Seminar (Post-Test). The revised exam consisted of 100 items. (Similar versions of the exam have been given for the past 10 years. The exam was originally developed from a previous 360 item exam.) All full-time faculty reviewed the exit exam in August of 2014 and made modifications to a few questions based on updated information (e.g. the switch from the DSM 4 to the DSM 5 for classification of psychological disorders). Changes were made to Biological, Cognitive, Developmental, Social, and Abnormal domains.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of students' knowledge and skills. As this is the first year that the pre-test has been given, no data from prior years is available. However, data is available from the 2011-2012 academic year to the current academic year (5 past years of data). In the rightmost column, department benchmarks are listed. As can be seen from pre-test to post-test scores, our students do appear to be gaining and understanding of psychology. Additionally, it appears that the students met benchmarks set for the areas of Developmental, Experimental Design, Learning/Cognition, Abnormal, and History. Our students did not meet the benchmarks set for Biological, Social, Statistics, or Personality. Therefore, we achieved our expected target for Developmental, Experimental Design, Learning/Cognition, Abnormal, and History and Systems. We did not achieve our target for Biological, Social, Statistics, or Personality Psychology.

Table 2. Students' Knowledge and Skills

Area Tested	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015-2016		Benchmark
	- 2012 1	- 2013 1	- 2014 16	- 2015 1	Pre-Test (n=78)	Post-Test (n=57)	
Biological ²	67	66	68	74	41	64	70
Developmental ²	66	75	74	73	43	77	70
Experimental Design ²	69	76	80	78	38	75	70
Learning/Cognition ⁵	64	65	68	76	42	73	70
Social ²	69	78	79	71	42	69	70
Statistics ²	52	57	59	66	38	61	70
Abnormal ³	86	88	86	90	58	77	65
Personality ³	62	70	64	65	43	64	65
History ⁴	63	72	75	73	42	65	65
Total	66	72	72	74	42	70	70
Required Courses	64	71	71	74	41	70	70

Notes: ¹Data in cells represent mean percent correct, ²Required of all majors, ³Optional course, ⁴No advanced courses offered
⁵Became required course in 2013-2014 ⁶Data from Spring semester graduates only.

Exit Survey

The senior exit survey is a 28-item questionnaire administered to graduating majors within approximately two weeks of graduation. Questions 2-7 assess students' perceptions about what they have learned from

the psychology major. These items are rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is equal to *extremely unprepared* and 7 is *extremely prepared*. Question text is included below:

2. To what extent has the psychology program enabled you to have an understanding of psychology as a science of behavior and experience?
3. To what extent has the psychology program enabled you to understand the major theories and issues in psychology?
4. To what extent has the psychology program enabled you to have a broader view of human life?
5. To what extent has the psychology program enabled you to understand the significance of individual and cultural differences?
6. To what extent has the psychology program enabled you to engage in scientific thinking skills?
7. To what extent has the psychology program enabled you to understand and appreciate the scientific method?

Table 3 provides means and standard deviations for students' responses to the questions regarding their perceptions of their knowledge and skills for five years. In the rightmost column, department benchmarks are listed. While there is some variation from year to year across the survey items, this table shows that scores generally have been consistent over the last six years. Although the benchmark was met for the knowledge of the Nature of Psychology, Theories of Psychology, View of Human Nature, and Role of Culture, and Scientific Method, benchmarks were not met for Scientific Thinking. Therefore, we achieved our expected target for knowledge of the Nature of Psychology, Theories of Psychology, View of Human Nature, and Role of Culture, and Scientific Method. We did not achieve our target for Scientific Thinking.

Table 3. Students' Opinions of Knowledge Gained

Knowledge Goals	Year					Benchmark
	2011-2012 (n = 43)	2012-2013 (n = 49)	2013-2014 (n = 58)	2014-2015 (n = 55)	2015-2016 (n=57)	
Nature of Psychology	5.98 (0.64)	6.10 (0.65)	6.02 (0.81)	6.15 (0.85)	6.04 (0.59)	6.0
Theories of Psychology	5.93 (0.51)	6.02 (0.72)	6.03 (0.94)	6.04 (0.86)	6.02 (0.63)	6.0
View of Human Nature	6.40 (0.66)	6.31 (0.94)	6.28 (1.00)	6.35 (0.87)	6.42 (0.62)	6.0
Role of Culture	6.05 (0.76)	6.12 (0.75)	5.91 (1.08)	6.11 (0.81)	6.09 (0.78)	6.0
Scientific Thinking	6.14 (0.77)	5.96 (0.98)	6.00 (0.97)	6.22 (0.94)	5.88 (0.70)	6.0
Scientific Method	5.98 (0.80)	6.10 (0.98)	6.03 (1.09)	6.18 (0.84)	6.18 (0.78)	6.0

Note: Numbers in cells represent: Means (Standard Deviation). Ratings were made on a 7 point scale where 1=extremely unprepared and 7=extremely prepared.

Student Learning Outcome 2: Critical Thinking and Analysis of Psychology

Internal Assessment

The psychology department developed an internal assessment of critical thinking about and analysis of psychological concepts. In its current form, the assessment has 7 questions, some of which assess critical thinking and some of which assess communication. Each question is rated on a 6 point scale with 1 indicating no evidence of the skill in question and 6 indicating complete mastery of the skill in question. Questions regarding critical thinking and analysis of psychology assessed the extent to which students 1) Considered context and assumptions, 2) Analyzed supporting data and evidence, 3) Used other perspectives and implications, and 4) Assessed conclusions, implications, and consequences.

This year, we assessed our graduating seniors. Table 5 below presents the means and standard deviations for each item. All means for these items exceeded our benchmarks..

Table 5. Instructor Assessment of Critical Thinking about and Analysis of Psychology Concepts

Skill Assessed	2014-2015 (n=7)	2015-2016 (n=57)	Benchmark
Considered context & assumptions	4.71 (0.76)	4.45 (0.99)	4.0
Analyzed supporting data and evidence	4.29 (1.11)	4.21 (0.98)	4.0
Used other perspectives and implications	4.14 (0.38)	4.26 (1.12)	4.0
Assessed conclusions, implications, and consequences	4.43 (1.14)	4.25 (1.14)	4.0

Note: Numbers in cells represent: Means (Standard Deviation).

Exit Survey

The senior exit survey is a 28-item questionnaire. Question 8 assesses “To what extent has the psychology program enabled you to enhance your ability to think critically about and analyze psychological concepts and literature?” This item is rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is equal to *extremely unprepared* and 7 is *extremely prepared*. The mean for this item exceeded our benchmark. Therefore, we achieved our Target on SLO number two.

Table 6. Student Perceptions of Ability to Analyze Psychological Concepts

	2015-2016 (n=57)	Benchmark
Analyze Psychological Concepts	6.18 (0.91)	6.0

Student Learning Outcome 3: Effective Communication

Internal Assessment

The psychology department developed an internal assessment of communication skills. In its current form, the assessment has 7 questions, some of which assess critical thinking and some of which assess communication. Each question is rated on a 6 point scale with 1 indicating no evidence of the skill in question and 6 indicating complete mastery of the skill in question. Questions regarding communication include 1) Summarized problem, question, or issue, 2) Communicated own perspective, hypothesis, or position, and 3) Communicated effectively.

This year we assessed our graduating seniors. Table 6 below presents the means and standard deviations for each item. All means for these items exceeded our benchmarks. Therefore, we achieved our Target on SLO number three.

Table 6. Instructor Assessment of Communication Skills

Skill Assessed	2014-2015 (n=7)	2015-2016 (n=57)	Proposed Benchmark
Summarized problem, question, or issue	4.42 (0.79)	4.45 (0.99)	4.0
Communicated own perspective, hypothesis, or opinion	4.57 (0.79)	4.29 (1.12)	4.0
Communicated effectively	4.00 (1.29)	4.16 (1.27)	4.0

Note: Numbers in cells represent: Means (Standard Deviation).

Exit Survey

The senior exit survey is a 28-item questionnaire. Question 9 assesses “To what extent has the psychology program enabled you to enhance your ability to effectively communicate about psychological concepts and research?” This item is rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is equal to *extremely unprepared* and 7 is *extremely prepared*. The mean for this item exceeded our benchmark.

Table 7. Student Perceptions of Ability to Analyze Psychological Concepts

	2015-2016 (n=57)	Benchmark
Effective Communication	6.05 (0.85)	6.0

Student Learning Outcome 4: Exposure to Career Options

Exit Survey

The senior exit survey is a 28-item questionnaire. Question 10 assesses “To what extent has the psychology program enabled you to have an awareness of the various types of career options for a psychology major?” This item is rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is equal to *extremely unprepared* and 7 is *extremely prepared*. Means and standard deviation information for the past 5 years plus the current year is presented in Table 8 below. For the second consecutive academic year, we did not meet our benchmark on this question. Students felt they were slightly underprepared, relative to our benchmark, in terms of their awareness of career options for psychology majors. Therefore, we did not achieve our Target on SLO number four.

Table 8. Student Perceptions of Awareness of Career Options

	Year					
	2011-2012 (n = 43)	2012-2013 (n = 49)	2013-2014 (n = 58)	2014-2015 (n = 55)	2015-2016 (n=58)	Benchmark
Awareness of Career Options	6.16 (0.84)	6.06 (0.85)	6.16 (0.97)	5.73 (1.25)	5.81 (0.91)	6.0

Action Plan

Student Learning Outcome 1: Understanding of Psychology

Exit Exam

Means for all domains except Biological, Social, Statistics, or Personality equaled or exceeded our benchmarks. While this is promising, there is still considerable deviation among the domains. This year students enrolled in PSY 220 took a pre-test. PSY 220 is one of the earliest psychology courses that majors take. This allowed us to assess how much our students improve from the beginning of the psychology major to the end. It is possible that students are gaining an equal amount of knowledge in all domains but start the program with less knowledge in some domains (e.g. statistics) than in others (e.g. abnormal).

Since the target was not achieved for Biological, Social, Statistics, and Personality, the department made changes to bring about improvement in Student Learning Outcomes. To improve performance in Biological, Social, and Statistics, new textbooks were chosen that are written at a lower reading comprehension level, have more worked examples, and are more culturally relevant to our students. The books that were originally chosen were less of an introductory text and more for upper level courses. To improve performance in Personality, lectures were added across the curriculum. Each of the core courses now has at least one lecture about personality development, whereas previously this was not the case. Thus, students will actually have more exposure to the content.

Exit Survey

Means for all items, except for Scientific Thinking, surpassed the benchmark.

Since the target was not achieved for Scientific Thinking, the department made changes to bring about improvement in Student Learning Outcomes. First, curriculum changes to the Statistics and Research Methods courses were implemented, whereby students are required to work on existing data sets as well as design their own study and have it approved by the IRB. Second, students who wish to carry out the study they have designed in Research Methods have the option of completing the Senior Research course. Third, several courses now require literature reviews to be written on specified topics with an emphasis on how to critique an article and integrate it into the existing models that are taught.

Student Learning Outcome 2: Critical Thinking and Analysis of Psychology

This year all graduating students were assessed on critical thinking and analysis of psychological concepts using both an internally developed measure as well as the exit survey. Means for both instruments exceeded our benchmarks. The department hopes to continue our success in this area.

Student Learning Outcome 3: Effective Communication

This year all graduating students were assessed on effective communication using both an internally developed measure as well as the exit survey. Means for both instruments exceeded our benchmarks. The department hopes to continue our success in this area.

Student Learning Outcome 4: Exposure to Career Options

We did not meet our benchmark with respect to students' perception of their awareness of career options for psychology majors. We plan to place more emphasis on this aspect of the curriculum in PSY 220 (Careers in Psychology) for the 2016-2017 academic year. We also plan to assess students' perceptions

earlier. We currently assess their perceptions as they're graduating (which is also around the time they are finishing their internships). We would also like to assess this in PSY 220, when students are first introduced to careers relevant to psychology. It is possible that students were aware of career options just after taking PSY 220 but have forgotten that they were made aware of this information by graduation.

Appendix

Other Assessment Information

Student Involvement in Faculty-Sponsored Research/Service

A key aspect of preparing students for graduate school and helping students decide whether they want to pursue graduate school is to be involved in faculty-sponsored research and/or service. For research projects this may include assistance with project development, data collection, data entry, data analysis, writing, or any other part of the research process. Service projects may include activities such as volunteering with local organizations providing psychological services, such as Homeless Connect and Lighthouse Ministries.

The psychology department has directly tracked the number of students engaged in these types of opportunities. Table 9 below presents the total number of students engaged in these opportunities and the number of students participating per faculty member.

Table 9. Student Involvement in Faculty-Sponsored Research/Service

	2014-2015	2015-2016	Proposed Benchmark
Number of students involved	42	41	30
Average students per faculty member	5.25	4.56	3

Student Presentations at Conferences and Manuscripts Submitted

A key aspect of preparing students for graduate school is for them to present their research, either at a conference or in a journal. The psychology department has directly tracked the number of students who are engaged in these types of opportunities. Overall our students were quite active this year. Table 10 below presents the raw number of students engaged in these opportunities and the number of students participating per faculty member.

Table 10. Student Presentations at Conferences and Manuscript Submissions

	2014-2015	2015-2016	Proposed Benchmark
Number of presentations	8	20	8
Average presentations per faculty member	1	2.22	1
Number of students who presented	10	25	8
Average number of students per faculty member	1.25	2.77	1
Number of manuscripts submitted	2	1	1

Student Exit Survey

In addition to assessing student learning outcomes, the exit survey also assesses students' perceptions of the program more generally. This is assessed both through Likert-scale questions regarding the quality of the program and the quality of the faculty, as well as open-ended questions about the program. Means and standard deviations for the past 5 years are presented in Table 11 below.

Table 11. Students' Attitudes and Opinions

	Year					Benchmark
	2011-2012 (n = 43)	2012-2013 (n = 49)	2013-2014 (n = 58)	2014-2015 (n = 55)	2015-2016 (n=57)	
<i>Quality of Program</i>						
Availability of Courses	4.98 (1.24)	5.20 (1.26)	5.17 (1.30)	5.07 (1.20)	5.37 (0.67)	6.0
Setting Objectives	5.79 (0.74)	6.12 (0.78)	6.10 (0.81)	5.96 (0.77)	5.84 (0.72)	6.0
Meeting Objectives	5.60 (0.88)	6.04 (0.84)	5.91 (0.80)	5.91 (0.82)	5.75 (0.80)	6.0
Instruction Quality	5.74 (0.79)	5.88 (0.75)	5.93 (0.79)	5.85 (0.93)	5.84 (0.70)	6.0
Fairness of Grading	5.72 (0.83)	5.86 (0.79)	5.74 (0.93)	5.91 (0.82)	5.74 (.076)	6.0
Quality of Courses	6.14 (0.68)	5.96 (0.82)	6.19 (0.76)	6.16 (0.69)	5.95 (0.80)	6.0
<i>Quality of Faculty</i>						
Knowledge of Material	6.51 (0.63)	6.53 (0.71)	6.48 (0.68)	6.51 (0.69)	6.32 (.073)	6.0
Conduct of Class	5.88 (0.73)	6.10 (0.77)	6.12 (0.80)	6.11 (0.76)	6.14 (0.85)	6.0
Treatment of Students	5.70 (1.08)	5.86 (1.04)	6.00 (1.06)	6.27 (0.89)	5.74 (0.89)	6.0
Approachability of Faculty	5.81 (1.16)	6.04 (0.94)	6.10 (1.05)	6.22 (0.81)	5.93 (0.81)	6.0
Quality of Advising	6.16 (0.84)	6.06 (0.85)	6.16 (0.97)	5.93 (1.02)	6.02 (0.93)	6.0

Note: Numbers in cells represent: Means (Standard Deviation). Ratings were made on a 7 point scale where 1=very insufficient and 7=excellent.

The exit survey also contains a number of open-ended questions. Several themes were evident in these responses, and are reflective of why students were less satisfied than we would have liked with several aspects of the program. Open-ended responses again indicated student frustration with course availability, class size, and course scheduling. Of the 42 students who mentioned a weakness of the department, 16 mentioned the limited availability of psychology courses and 8 mentioned the need for more faculty. Of the 41 students who suggested a way in which the department could be improved, 24 mentioned the need for greater availability of psychology courses or more faculty members.

It should be noted that continuing the trend from the previous academic years, this academic year there were more undergraduate courses taught by adjunct professors than in prior years. In addition, this year, for the fourth consecutive year, the ratio of part-time faculty to full-time faculty was 2:1. Of the courses that were taught in the undergraduate program, 22 were taught by adjunct faculty members and six full-time faculty members taught course overloads each semester. Hence, we have too few faculty members to adequately meet department goals and student expectations, and in comparison to other departments, we have a lower faculty to student ratio.

Our more general assessment of student perceptions of the psychology program revealed a number of ways in which we can improve. First, it seems obvious that the current staffing level (9 full-time faculty) is insufficient. In 2012-2013 we had 10 faculty, yet students still expressed considerable dissatisfaction with course availability. Clearly the psychology undergraduate program is popular as the number of graduates continues to grow. However, staffing levels have fallen over the past several years: the department had 11 faculty until 1999, when it dropped to 10. See Table 12 below which compares the number of full-time faculty to the number of graduating seniors.

Table 12. Faculty and Graduating Seniors in the Department of Psychology

	Academic Year Ending									
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
# graduating	22	12	30	10	33	43	49	58	55	57
# full time faculty	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	8	9

Additional full-time faculty members are likely required to see adequate levels of student satisfaction with course availability. The department has tried to cope with this problem by hiring more adjunct professors. In fact, for the 2015-2016 academic year there were 2 part-time faculty for every full-time faculty member in the department. Furthermore, of the 57 undergraduate courses (excluding 1 credit hour courses such as 216, 220, and courses that do not count towards faculty’s teaching load, such as 270, 370, and 470) taught in Fall and Spring semesters of 2015-2106, 35 (61%) were taught by an adjunct professor or tenure-track professor on overload. This further decreases student satisfaction as 1) classes taught by adjunct faculty are primarily taught at night and students dislike taking night classes as it interferes with work and family life, 2) reliance on adjunct faculty, rather than hiring additional full-time faculty, means that current full-time faculty have to take a larger role in other tasks (e.g. more advisees per faculty member) which decreases the time they can devote to each student, and 3) reliance on adjunct faculty, rather than full time faculty, provides students with fewer opportunities to be involved in research as fewer faculty are available for collaboration. Thus, the department plans to continue asking the administration for more full-time faculty as we do not feel we have fully resolved the staffing problem that leads to dissatisfaction with the availability of courses.