



June 5, 2014

To: Robert Stacey, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences  
Werner Stuetzle, Divisional Dean, Natural Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences

From: David L. Eaton, Vice Provost and Dean *David L. Eaton*  
Rebecca Aanerud, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Planning *Rebecca Aanerud*

RE: Department of Psychology 2013-2014 Review

This memorandum outlines the recommendations from the review of the Department of Psychology B.A., B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. degree programs. Detailed comments can be found in the documents that were a part of the following formal review proceedings:

- Charge meeting between review committee, department, and administrators (October 14, 2013)
- Department self-study (November 7, 2013)
- Site visit (January 13-14, 2014)
- Review committee report (February 21, 2014)
- GPSS report (February 7, 2014)
- Psychology response to the review committee report (March 17, 2014)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (May 15, 2014 )

The review committee consisted of:

Richard Folsom, Professor and Chair, UW Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences  
(Committee Chair)

Toby Bradshaw, Professor and Chair, UW Department of Biology

Stephen Hinshaw, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of California, Berkeley

James McGaugh, Professor, Department of Neurobiology and Behavior,  
University of California, Irvine

A subcommittee of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations to the full Council at its meeting on May 15, 2014. Specific comments and recommendations regarding the department and its degree programs include the following:

### **Program Strengths**

The review committee emphasized that the quality of the department overall is very high.

- The faculty are top-notch, and new Assistant Professor hires have been exceptional.
- Many faculty members have strong national and international reputations and are very successful both in securing external funding and delivering high-quality teaching.
- The department Chair, Professor Sheri Mizumori, is an effective leader. The department is also managed well by the Administrator.

- Undergraduate programs are also of high quality and students highly regard the advising staff.

### **Challenges & Risks**

The most important challenge is the rigid “silos” of the eight research areas within the department’s organizational structure.

- The primary effect of this has been to hamper the intellectual collaboration between faculty on cutting-edge topics in the field that sit at the intersections of these silos.
- Graduate students have difficulty pursuing research agendas in these innovative intersections because they are constrained through coursework, advising, and the culture of the department to stay mainly within one silo. Junior faculty also repeatedly pointed this out as a barrier to their research aspirations and career development.
- The situation goes beyond research, however, impacting resource allocation decisions, recruitment and retention, mentoring, hiring decisions, and an overall lack of department vision and social cohesion.
- The review committee expressed concern that the tendency to compartmentalize the department’s research areas could result in an otherwise excellent program failing to remain in step with clear trends in the field toward interdisciplinarity and innovative approaches to research.
- The problem with the organizational structure is not new. It was identified in the 2004 review of the department, but the committee found little evidence exists that any improvements were made in the intervening decade. The committee noted that this is a common problem in other departments of Psychology. The best departments have addressed the problem head-on. The department is in serious danger of deterioration in quality and reputation if it continues to allow the situation to fester.

To address issue, the committee recommended the following:

- “A re-examination of department procedures that would move the department away from an area-specific model and towards . . . a department-wide model of decision-making . . . ,” specifically a broader decision-making process on faculty hiring, TA and space allocation, and graduate student recruitment.
- Appoint a blue ribbon panel with consultants and members from outside the UW.
- Incentivize collaboration across areas.
- Encourage graduate student rotations across multiple areas.
- Have faculty identify both a primary and secondary research focus area.

### **Other Challenges**

- Faculty and students are spread across eight buildings on campus and two located off-campus. This lack of physical cohesion contributes to the intellectual and social division within the unit. The department deserves high priority from the College for improved space; however, the department could be more pro-active in seeking external fundraising for the effort.
- Due to limited discretionary funds, the department relies on “release/recapture” from faculty buying out courses.
- The department lacks a systematic merit review process, although it was noted that the proposed UW salary policy may address many of these issues.

- Although the quality of undergraduate instruction is high, the committee was concerned with an over-reliance on non-tenured, part-time instructors. They recommended that all tenure-track faculty participate in the undergraduate teaching.

### **Areas of Concurrence and/or Disagreement**

In its response, the department overall concurred with the review committee's recommendations.

- In response to the challenge of "silos," the department listed concrete steps its plans to take in the next year to address the problem.
- The department disagreed with a recommendation to seek a new accreditation (PCSAS), since most states (including Washington) do not recognize this accreditation.
- The department agreed with the recommendation to form an "Advisory Board" (separate from the blue ribbon panel) to inform its direction and improve its visibility with the local community.

### **Graduate School Council Recommendations**

The review committee recommended a review after only 3 years. The department did not object to the recommendation although it noted that resolving in 3 years the issues the committee identified would be challenging.

The Council recommended that the Department of Psychology develop an action plan and submit an Interim Report in 3 years, specifically by Spring Quarter 2017, that articulates the progress it has made on the challenges the review committee identified. If, at that time, it is determined by the Graduate School Council, in consultation with the College of Arts and Sciences Dean, that significant progress has not been made, a full program review would then occur in 5 years, specifically in the 2018-2019 academic year. But, if it is deemed that satisfactory progress has occurred, the department will then be scheduled for a ten-year review, which would be scheduled in the 2023-2024 academic year.

We concur with the Council's comments and recommendations.

c: Sheri Mizumori, Professor and Chair, Department of Psychology  
James Clauss, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs  
Members of the Psychology Review Committee  
Members of the Graduate School Council  
Augustine McCaffery, Senior Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School