**2009 Psychology Report**

**Step1: Department/Program Mission (Due May 15, 2009)**

Psychology scientifically studies the behavior and mental processes of humans and other animals. As a discipline, psychology spans the natural and social sciences and is based on rigorous scientific analysis and methodologies. We strive to instill in our students an appreciation for and understanding of the breadth of psychology, and to provide them with the skills necessary to a personally engaging and satisfying future in psychology or a related discipline.
 **Step 2: List goals/outcomes (Due May 15, 2009)**

By the time that they complete the major our students

1. will have a broad understanding of the discipline,

and they will be able to:

1. develop testable questions and hypotheses,
2. define variables operationally,
3. gather and analyze data,
4. interpret results,
5. communicate their empirical research findings clearly, both in writing and verbally
6. think critically by (a) critiquing empirical research, and (b) extending existing research in theoretically-meaningful ways
7. use computers, and in particular, SPSS, proficiently.

**Step 3: Identify program components (Due May 15, 2009)**

Required courses that address each of our goals:

1. have a broad understanding of the discipline:

All courses; but especially the combination of methodology courses and the requirement that students take a variety of courses (Lists 1 and 2).

1. develop testable questions and hypotheses:

Intro Psych (PSY 101), the Research Design & Analysis Core (204, 206), Upper level lab courses (336, 348, 351, 378)

1. define variables operationally,

Intro Psych (PSY 101), the Research Design & Analysis Core (204, 206), Upper level lab courses (336, 348, 351, 378)

1. gather and analyze data,

The Research Design & Analysis Core (204, 206), Upper level lab courses (336, 348, 351, 378)

1. interpret results,

Intro Psych (PSY 101), The Research Design & Analysis Core (204, 206), Upper level lab courses (336, 348, 351, 378)

1. communicate their empirical research findings clearly, both in writing and verbally

The Research Design & Analysis Core (204, 206), Upper level lab courses (336, 348, 351, 378)

1. think critically by (a) critiquing empirical research, and (b) extending existing research in theoretically-meaninful ways

All classes

1. use computers, and in particular, SPSS, proficiently.

The Research Design & Analysis Core (204, 206), Upper level lab courses (336, 348, 351, 378)

The combination of courses that our majors take, with required courses spread across both applied and basic areas, helps to ensure breadth of coverage of the discipline. All psychology courses contribute to the goals by providing information about psychology that in turn feeds the abilities that are fostered in goals 1 - 7.

Out-of-class experiences such as empirical directed studies, independent research, and senior thesis also achieve many of these objectives. The Practicum (internship) addresses some of them.

**Step 4: Select methods/data sources and instruments (Due May 15, 2009)**

Psychology administers the ETS Major Field Test annually to all graduating seniors. The test assesses knowledge of our students across the discipline, and provides information about our student’s breadth of knowledge as well as their abilities outlined in Goals 1 – 4 above. This test provides a breakdown of scores of subarea of psychology. It does not probe students' ability to analyze results of empirical research. We will continue to administer this test annually.

Each year graduating seniors will be asked to identify their best piece of writing within Psychology. Permission will be sought to examine this paper (blindly) with regard to the following three questions:

1. Does this work reflect a basic understanding of the psychological topic addressed?

2. Does this work reflect critical thought about the topic?

3. Is the paper well written and are ideas expressed clearly?

In alternate years we will survey alumni who graduated 5 – 6 years earlier with regard to the following questions (answered on a 5- or 7-point scale):

1. Did your Psychology major prepare you to think critically?

2. Did your Psychology major assist you in situations in which ideas had to be communicated either in writing or orally?

3. Did your Psychology major prepare you to examine data and understand their meaning?

4. Have you used the computer skills that you developed as a Psychology major?

Respondents will be encouraged to provide examples in each case.

Alumni will also be asked this open-ended question:

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the extent to which the Psychology major prepared you for things that you have done after college?

At this time, we have rubrics for assessing empirical writing and oral conference presentations that we used in our classes. We do not have a formal rubric to assess SPSS skills.

**Step 5: Analyze and interpret the data (Due Early Fall 2009)**

**Step 6: How will the data collected be used for decision-making, strategic planning, etc. (Due Early Fall 2009)**

Attached are our support documents. Let me explain what's here.

1. The PDF file contains student performance on our major field test during the past several years.

2. We have attached the two rubrics we use for assessing poster presentations and empirical papers....do you want the stats we have (only have 2 yrs of data, just means, SDs, medians, simple stuff)?

3. We have, in response to these data, drafted a proposal to change major requirements...this document is NOT in final form yet, but is close to going to C&RC. Thus, how we "plan" to use our assessment data. I am not exactly sure what all the assessment committee will need from the proposal, as all of it relates in some way, shape, or form to assessment activities of some sort.

4. Related to the previous point, we have made some changes (small changes) to some of our courses; these proposals to course are attached, and they contain rationale.