

Administrative Response to Program Review:  
Psychology  
Prepared by Charlie Sieracki  
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I would like to thank the members of the Psychology SAC for the excellent quality of the Program Review and for the lively presentation by so many instructors. It was a pleasure for the administrators to participate.

The Psychology Program Review clearly documents the strengths of the Psychology program. It is a program staffed by highly-qualified instructors who have a coherent vision of the nature and mission of the discipline.

The mission of the Psychology Department at PCC is to provide students with a knowledge base that will increase their ability to think critically about the world and help them to better understand their own behavior and those of others, and to provide transfer students with a fundamental base of knowledge to prepare them for advanced study in psychology.

The report makes a very strong case for how each psychology course supports student achievement of the six PCC core learning outcomes: Communication, Community and Environmental Responsibility, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Professional Competence, and Self-Reflection. In order to further clarify program outcomes, the report takes advantage of the program standards developed by the American Psychological Association to measure the integrity and effectiveness of psychology programs. The APA guidelines are consistent with the PCC core student outcomes. Only Guideline 6, dealing with information and technological literacy, is not regularly and consistently addressed within psychology courses. Psychology students' use of the library varies according to instructor and class. It includes use of books and periodicals as well as on line resources.

Student enrollment in psychology classes – except for gender and Asian/Pacific Islander ethnicity -- closely mirrors the demographic distribution of the overall PCC enrollment.

The psychology faculty members over the last three years have very actively involved in extensive professional development activities. The report documents each instructor's work, ranging from new course development, conference attendance and presentations, textbook writing, professional reading and collaboration with psychology instructors as well as instructors in other fields. Psychology faculty members are particularly active in developing strategies to increase enrollment and improve student retention and success. Feedback from students has been used to make individual course changes and on occasion a change in the Course Outcome Guide. However, there is no systematic attempt to gather and respond to student feedback. All psychology COGs were reviewed between 1999 and 2000, and they will continue to be refined as needed.

The Program Review concludes with a detailed list of areas for examination and improvement: curriculum, professional development, recruitment and retention, resources and community involvement. A great deal of work has already been done on the curriculum including development of the Psychology Department's mission statement, review of the CCOGs, and preliminary study of new courses such as Health Psychology, "honors," International Psychology, and Research Methods.

The areas for examination and improvement listed in the Program Review are extensive, totaling about 7 pages. Our recommendation to the Psychology SAC is to prioritize the action steps and map out the plan over a three-year period. There appear to be too many good ideas to implement immediately. Perhaps the most important contribution of the Psychology Program Review is that it has generated positive and specific items to work on in conjunction with a review of all major aspects of the program. By means of the report, administrators can see more clearly how they can assist.

The Program Review states that the Psychology SAC is currently discussing the issue of assessment of discipline/program student learning outcomes as well as possible methods to assess the overall effectiveness of the program and available resources for assessment. We would like to encourage continued work on the measurement of student achievement of program outcomes. This is not meant to be a criticism of the program. The Program Review has clearly documented the contributions that psychology faculty members are making to lead students to gain the skills and knowledge identified in the course outcomes. As mentioned in the Program Review presentation, the Psychology Department has exactly the professional expertise needed to identify what is measurable in the course and program outcomes and then to measure student progress in achieving these outcomes. The results of this study would give better focus to all of the recommendations for program improvement.

Since classroom assessment techniques are proving very effective, they might be developed to measure student outcomes for the program as well. The Task Force report on the undergraduate psychology major presented in Appendix C of the Program Review emphasized the need for student outcomes assessment. The Task Force considered a wide variety of both quantitative and qualitative assessment methods: objective tests, essay tests, formative assessments, projects, student portfolios, self-assessment practices, surveys of current students, alumni, and employers. A companion document to the report on the undergraduate psychology major was targeted for publication in September, 2002. In order to facilitate this work on student outcomes assessment, PCC should support attendance at conferences such as the one that was scheduled by APA in Atlanta, "Measuring Up: Best Practices in Assessment."

We would also like to encourage continued efforts to enhance teaching effectiveness. The Program Review listed a number of good suggestions regarding operational issues. Current budget difficulties are preventing the administration from making any major

financial investment. However, there may be ways to improve our support of part-time faculty without making a major financial investment. Our construction projects will yield many more “teaching-friendly” class rooms. The Executive Summary of the Program Review also referred to improvements that can be undertaken without additional resources. A number of good suggestions were listed in the section on professional development including creation of a FAQ/Fact Sheet on administrative, divisional, departmental procedures, and implementation of a Partnership Program between FT and PT faculty.

The psychology faculty members make a major contribution to retention and student success in achieving the core student outcomes. This contribution is a result of their commitment to educational excellence. We commend the psychology instructors for the high quality of the Program Review and their continued commitment to teaching excellence.