



University of Nevada, Reno

Office of  
Executive Vice President & Provost

**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: September 30, 2016

TO: Michael Crognale, Chair, Psychology  
Debra Modellmog, Dean, College of Liberal Arts

FROM: Kevin R. Carman, Executive Vice President & Provost  
Joseph I. Cline, Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education

SUBJECT: Psychology Program Review



Joseph I. Cline

We write to set forth the conclusions and our recommendations regarding the Psychology Department external program review in 2016.

We commend the department chair and program representatives for engaging in the program review and carefully preparing the self-study and arranging the external visit schedule. The reviewers observed that the department is strong, not only in terms of enrollment, but also in terms of the production of credit hours and degrees and grant and research productivity. The Behavior Analysis undergraduate and graduate programs and the clinical program have no doubt contributed to the institution's national reputation. Additionally, the Cognitive and Brain Sciences program is seen as a flagship program which supports our goal of becoming a Carnegie R1 institution. The reviewers noted that faculty are highly productive and energetic, even as they serve multiple roles as teachers, researchers, advisors, supervisors, and mentors. The team was also impressed the many community outreach programs and activities offered by the department.

After reviewing the external reviewers' report and the department chair's and interim dean's responses, a closing meeting was held on June 8, 2016, to discuss the outcomes of the review and come to an understanding on the directions that the department should take in the coming months. After identifying the strengths noted by the reviewers, there was a discussion of the various opportunities for improvement that the department, with the support and guidance of the college, can take in the future to begin to address them.

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We offer the following recommendations for action in the coming months:

- Undergraduate Advisement/Retention. While there are no concerns with the undergraduate curriculum, the reviewers expressed concern with the state of advising for department undergraduates. It was reported that an additional lecturer/advisor will join the department this academic year to assist with this load, and the chair indicated the department would begin using some peer advising as well. The interim dean suggests that a better solution might be a professional advisor. We also have concerns with the plans to use peer advising. We ask that whatever advising model is decided upon, that it be carefully thought out and planned. Further, we encourage the department to seek the advice of the Assistant Vice Provost for Undergraduate Advising and Achievement, Derek Furukawa, in the planning for this new model. As the university and college move toward hiring and using more professional advisors, particularly for lower level undergraduate students, departments will need to clearly articulate and plan for the role of faculty in advising students, which role we foresee as being more specific advising for higher level undergraduate students as well as career advising. Although it was not discussed at the closing meeting, freshman retention of incoming Psychology majors averaged 76.2% over the last four years, below the University-wide average of 81%. The department should make use of new EAB-SSC tools to identify and provide special support to at-risk undergraduates.
- Graduate Stipend Level. The chair mentioned that the graduate stipend level is not competitive. This is a concern being expressed by most departments, and the university is looking into this. It was suggested that we should look at what California institutions are paying; however, we feel the appropriate research will be to look at the stipend levels at the institutions identified as our aspirational peers as well as looking at stipend levels by discipline. As this research is completed, we will keep the colleges informed as to what we are learning and what our plans are to address this issue in the years ahead.
- Graduate Student Progression. The progression of graduate students in the CBS and Clinical graduate programs was deemed somewhat low by the reviewers. The chair reported that these programs have taken steps to address this problem, including revising program manuals to include plans and clarifications and instituting annual meetings of students (in CBS) with directors to review their progress. With these and other changes the college makes and the resolution of the time to degree rates, we anticipate improvement in this area.
- Teaching Load Considerations. The reviewers cautioned that the university's objective to move to R1 status would require examination of faculty roles and loads in the CBS area of the department. The interim dean points out, and we agree, that the issue of appropriate teaching load is likely a problem for all 3 areas of the department. In his response, the interim dean provided some direction on what type of information the department should gather and from where to prepare to tackle this issue. This information should be brought to the attention of the new dean for her consideration.
- Department/College Alignment. The issue of appropriate teaching loads in the department led to a resurgence of the questions on the appropriate college home for the CBS faculty and program. We believe this issue should be solved sooner rather than later, so that the department has some clear direction going forward as it works on the other issues that were identified in the review. Whatever is

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decided will need the full support of the faculty and mutual agreement from the colleges. In the coming weeks, this matter will be discussed with the deans of both the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Science so that next steps regarding this issue can be determined and shared with the department chair.

- Department Planning. The interim dean's response to the program review closes with a recommendation that the department determine its overall priorities going forward. The loss of two senior faculty in Behavioral Analysis, the likelihood that other senior faculty will retire in the next 5-10 years, and the fact that many very successful department endeavors like the BA satellite program and the SPIN program are only one person deep are very real issues that should be thought through. The satellite program is a unique offering for which an expansion should be considered. It is important that the department faculty continue conversations on the future directions of the department and its programs and how any agreed upon directions should impact the way it allocates resources, requests new resources, and conducts faculty searches in the years ahead.
- Department Conflicts. While the reviewers expressed some concerns regarding faculty conflict and impact on the department, the chair and interim dean have indicated that faculty members and interactions are mostly positive at this point in time. The chair reports that faculty interactions during the department retreat and afterward have been productive and collegial, and that he feels the faculty are now poised to tackle the projects and issues recommended by the reviewers. We ask that the dean and chair continue to monitor this and take steps to ensure productive relationships continue going forward.
- Evaluation, Merit and Promotion & Tenure of Faculty. There were concerns from the reviewers that some department faculty perceived inequities in the evaluation and merit process, or at least felt there was a lack of transparency in the process. The department has agreed to have the merit committee review this issue in the coming year, and we assume this work has begun and that improvements will be made in the 2016 process. Regarding promotion and tenure, the department should keep in mind that it is the expectation at the university that tenured faculty in all departments continue to build a portfolio of scholarly work following achievement of tenure so as to move successfully through the promotional ranks to full professor.