



# Social Psychology Program Review 2018-19

Closing MOU

Date: August 15, 2019

## Overview

**Degree/Certificate Programs Reviewed:** Master of Arts in Social Psychology  
Ph.D. in Social Psychology

**Department Chair & Dean:** Markus Kemmelmeier, Director; David Zeh, Vice Provost, Graduate Education/Dean, Graduate School

**External Reviewers & Affiliation:** Dr. Jessica Collett, Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles  
Dr. Steven Hitlin, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Iowa  
Dr. Narina Nunez, Department of Psychology, University of Wyoming

**Date of External Visit:** April 18-19, 2019

## Review Process Summary

The Social Psychology program was scheduled for regular program review as mandated by the Board of Regents and University policy. A self-study document for the department and its programs was developed by the department faculty and completed in Spring, 2019. The report was provided to the three reviewers before they conducted an on-campus visit on April 18-19, 2019. The external reviewers reviewed the program and met with relevant faculty, staff, students and administrators to determine the department's accomplishments, examine strengths and weaknesses, and identify opportunities as it plans for the future. A final report was issued by the site visitors shortly after the review visit. In accordance with institution practice, responses to the review were solicited from the department and the dean. A final meeting took place on August 15, 2019. This document represents the final MOU of recommendations and findings from the review.

## Signatures

Executive Vice President & Provost:

Kevin R. Carman

Date: 9/27/2019

Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education:

David Shintani

Date: 09/27/2019

Vice Provost, Graduate Education & Dean, Graduate School

David Zeh

Date: 09/27/2019

Director, Social Psychology Ph.D. Program

Markus Kemmelmeier

Date: 9/28/2019

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## Major Findings and Conclusions

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1. The program is highly regarded both on campus and within the industry due to the quality of the students and the program's methodologies and theoretical training across disciplines.
2. Faculty are highly motivated to participate in this interdisciplinary program due to the strength of leadership and the opportunity to work with the students attracted to the program.
3. The internships and assistantships that have been developed by this program, including those in industry, are unmatched at other universities.
4. The program has made significant strides in recent years in the time to degree.
5. The program may be the only truly interdisciplinary Social Psychology program in the nation, exposing students to multiple ways of conceptualizing and approaching research.

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## Next Steps for this Program/Department

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### 1. Strategic Planning and Building a Vision for the Department:

The program recently celebrated 50 years of success and growth; it is recognized as one of the few truly interdisciplinary Social Psychology programs in the nation. It was noted that the program receives whole-hearted support from the Graduate Dean, Dean of Liberal Arts, Vice-President for Research & Innovation and the Provost's Office. With the recent move of the Department of Psychology from the College of Liberal Arts to the College of Science, concern was expressed whether the same level of support would be continued. Articulation of support and encouragement of participation in the program by the Provost Office is encouraged, as well as recognition of work performed in support of the program by participating faculty was suggested in the review.

Alumni of the Social Psychology program hold noted positions in private and public sector industries, ranging from placements at companies such as Facebook and Adobe to roles in academia. Given the rich network of alumni from the program, working with Development and Alumni Relations to establish a development plan was recommended and would be expected to have positive outcomes. Funds received through development could support faculty and administrative staffing needs and fund assistantships, both areas of identified challenges with the program lacking adequate administrative support. The Dean of the Graduate School is supportive of this recommendation.

### 2. Graduate Curriculum & Education

The program is recognized as having a positive reputation both in academia and in industry. The curriculum is rigorous and provides students with methodological and theoretical training across disciplines. Students who enter the program are of high quality and faculty appreciate the opportunity to work with them, which is a motivator for faculty involvement in the program. Due to community and alumni support, students in the program have access to internships and assistantships not normally available at other universities. It was recommended to invest in a Center for Teaching Excellence and explore other sources to provide graduate student pedagogical training and support, which is another area where development funds could be used.

### 3. Graduate Recruitment/Enrollment/Progression

There are concerns with the funding for assistantships. Although, students state that they annually receive funding via assistantships, commitment cannot be made beyond one year. This results in uncertainty and related stress. Providing 3 years of committed assistantship funding per position was recommended. Other issues related to assistantships include discrepancy between types of work performed and training received among peers in various assistantship positions, lack of funding opportunities for those with a focus outside of law, and the loss of tax-exempt status and the heavy workload for those who teach through a letter of appointment.

#### 4. Faculty

Faculty, staff and students alike recognize and appreciate the value and hard work that the Director brings to the program. There is concern that Director position is called upon to do more work than one faculty member can reasonably accomplish. As the only full time formally dedicated position to the program, the Director is responsible for operations and the development of partnerships with other departments and programs to ensure adequate program staffing. The suggestion of an Associate Director position was put forth, as a means of relieving the workload of the Director and ensure succession. The Dean of the Graduate School is supportive of this suggestion and willing to provide a modest stipend for the Associate Director role.

Currently, beyond the Director there are two faculty members with a 50% teaching commitment to the program. It was observed that in order for the program to be successful as it has been, it is incumbent upon the Director to recruit faculty members via professional connections and good will. This process results on the program's success being dependent upon the individual in the Director role rather than ongoing recognition and explicit support by associated departments. There was also concern regarding ambivalence toward refilling positions vacated by individuals whose work is in support of the Social Psychology program with new faculty who are charged with the same focus/responsibility. The use of MOUs was suggested as a means of codifying support of the program, by both administration and other departments, to ensure ongoing commitment and dedication of resources ("supportive core"), thus shifting the lone burden of continued success off the Director role. The addition of faculty lines to the program was also recommended as a means of continued program support.

#### Action Items:

- Explore with current core faculty the interest in creating an associate director role.
- Develop MOU with COS/Psychology department and CLA/Sociology department recognizing the importance of their engagement and a commitment to make efforts for continued support. The MOU is to include that major changes, such as discontinuation of pivotal positions, are via joint agreement and allow the director of the program to participate in hiring process for new faculty in the Psychology and Sociology departments and explicit language regarding work with Social Psychology program in role statements.
- Develop language to communicate that although GTA/GRA funding can only be committed for one year, historically continued funding has been provided and the program is committed to make every effort to provide ongoing GTA/GRA support.
- College of Science, College of Liberal Arts and the Graduate School to explore pooling resources to provide the administrative assistant support. The director will work with College of Science on finding workspace for the administrative assistant.
- Comparison will be completed with peer institutions regarding program requirements. Using appropriate analytics, the college and program will look at degree pressure points (where students are not on track to be successful in the program), identify ways to simplify degree paths and give advising to those students who appear not on the track to be successful. This is being asked of all programs across the University.

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#### Vital Statistics on NSHE Reports

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##### Master of Arts in Social Psychology

Number of students with declared major in the program area 2018-19:	2
Number of graduates from the program, 2016-17:	0
Number of graduates from the program, 2017-18:	7

Number of graduates from the program, 2018-19:	3
Headcount of students enrolled in any course related to the program (duplicated), Fall 2018:	37*

**Ph.D. in Social Psychology**

Number of students with declared major in the program area 2018-19:	36
Number of graduates from the program, 2016-17:	4
Number of graduates from the program, 2017-18:	4
Number of graduates from the program, 2018-19:	7
Headcount of students enrolled in any course related to the program (duplicated), Fall 2018:	37*