

Detailed Assessment Report
As of: 10/07/2013 01:46 PM EST
2012-2013 Psychology BA/BS

Mission / Purpose

Psychology is the study of human behavior, and application of that knowledge for the betterment of humankind. Accordingly, students learn to think like scientists within a broad-based liberal arts tradition. Throughout the program, students develop effective communication skills and demonstrate technological competence. Graduates are prepared for a wide range of career opportunities, as well as advanced degrees in psychology, law, and business

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Knowledge Base of Psychology

Students will demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, and empirical findings in psychology.

Related Measures:

M 1: Capstone Research Paper - PSY 418

Capstone students (PSY 418) will write an integrative research paper highlighting their knowledge of major psychological theories and critical research within a historical context.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

70% of students will score 3 and above (out of 5) on a holistic rubric.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Not Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 79.7% of Capstone students (110 of 138) earned a score of 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 65.3% of Capstone students (32 of 49) earned a score of 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric.

M 2: Competency Exit Exam

As part of the senior sequence, students will take a locally developed competency test designed to assess all pertinent domains in the program. Questions consist of varying difficulty levels- average, above average, and excellent.

Target:

70% of students taking the test will score 70% and above on the exit exam.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Not Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 71.5% of Capstone students (88 of 123) scored 70% and higher on a standard exit exam. Gulf Coast Campus: 30.8% of Capstone students (4 of 13) scored 70% and higher on a standard exit exam.

M 11: Senior Survey - Courses and Content

Capstone students respond to a Senior Survey that measures degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:

70% of students responding will indicate that they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that there is

adequate emphasis in each of the required content areas.

70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that there is adequate quality of instruction in each of the required content areas.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg campus: 90.7% of Capstone students (N = 43 reporting) agreed that there was adequate emphasis on the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology in their courses. No data were reported for the Gulf Coast campus. Hattiesburg campus: 88.4% of Capstone students(N = 43 reporting) agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of the course offerings and the comprehensive coverage of the field of psychology. No data were reported for the Gulf Coast campus.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

M 23:Alumni Survey - Quality of Courses

Alumni respond to an Alumni Survey to measure degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Alumni survey or tracking of alumni achievements

Target:

70% will indicate they "strongly" or "somewhat strongly" endorse the quality of courses on a 7-point scale.

70% of alumni responding will indicate that they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that there was adequate emphasis in each of the required content areas.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 100% of alumni (3 of 3 reporting) agreed that there had been adequate emphasis on the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology in their courses when they attended USM. No reports were received from Gulf Coast Campus alumni.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

SLO 2:Research Methods in Psychology

Students will understand and apply basic research methods, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation

Related Measures:

M 3:Course Tests - Research Methods (PSY 361)

Course instructors - construct tests that measure knowledge of research concepts and ability to apply that knowledge.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

70% of students in PSY 361 will receive a 70% or higher on course tests which measure their understanding of research methods in psychology.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 81.0% of students (115 out of 142) scored 70% and higher on course tests on research methods. Gulf Coast Campus: 81.8% of students (45 out of 55) scored 70% and higher on course tests on research methods.

M 4: Research Project - PSY 361

Students in the department's Writing Intensive class (PSY 361) will write an empirical research paper. Some course sections may write multiple papers; other sections write a longer paper with multiple drafts. Papers will be evaluated for structure, content, and attention to APA style using a five stage holistic rubric.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

70% of students will receive a 3 and above (out of 5) on a standard holistic rubric.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 84.5% of students (120 out of 142) scored 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 81.1% of students (45 out of 55) scored 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric.

M 12: Senior Survey - Research Methods

Capstone students respond to a Senior Survey that measures degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:

70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that there was adequate emphasis on research methods.

70% of students will "strongly" or "somewhat strongly" endorse the quality of coverage with regard to research methods.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg campus: 82.4% of Capstone students (N = 68 reporting) agreed that there was adequate emphasis on research methods, including research design, statistics, data analysis, results interpretation, and scientific reporting. No data were reported for the Gulf Coast campus. Hattiesburg campus: 86.9% of Capstone students (N = 46 reporting) agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of instruction in research methods in psychology. No data were reported for the Gulf Coast campus.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

M 21: Alumni Survey - Research Methods

Alumni respond to an Alumni Survey to measure degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Alumni survey or tracking of alumni achievements

Target:

70% of the respondents will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that there was adequate emphasis on research methods.

70% of alumni will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the quality of coverage of research methods is adequate.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 100% of alumni (3 of 3) agreed that there was adequate emphasis on research methods in psychology in their courses. 100% of alumni (3 of 3) reported being satisfied with the quality of instruction on research methods in psychology in their courses. No responses were received from Gulf Coast Campus alumni.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Response to alumni rating of research emphasis as deficient.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our numbers for Research Methods quality and emphasis have improved since last academic year. The remaining deficient finding is...

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

SLO 3: Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology

Students will use critical thinking, and, when possible, the scientific approach to solve problems.

Related Measures:

M 5: Critical Thinking Assignment - PSY 361

Given a research article or scenario, students will be able to identify flaws in research and suggest changes in design.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

70% of students in PSY 361 will competently identify flaws in research and propose alternatives as demonstrated by earning satisfactory or better on a standard holistic rubric.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 83.1% of students (118 out of 142) competently identified flaws in research by earning 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 81.1% of students (45 out of 55) competently identified flaws in research by earning 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric.

M 6: Critical Thinking Assignment - PSY 418

Capstone students are presented with assignments requiring them to apply their knowledge to new situations.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

70% of students will successfully apply their knowledge to new situations as demonstrated by earning satisfactory or better on a standard holistic rubric.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Not Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 78.6% of students (110 of 141) successfully applied their knowledge to new situations by earning 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 54.8% of students (17 of 31) successfully applied their knowledge to new situations by earning 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric.

M 14:Senior Survey - Critical Thinking Coverage

Capstone students respond to a Senior Survey that measures degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:

70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the current level of emphasis, with regard to critical thinking skills, is adequate.

70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the current level of quality of training, with regard to critical thinking skills, is adequate.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg campus: 82.3% of Capstone students (N = 68 reporting) agreed that there was adequate emphasis on training in critical thinking skills. No data were reported for the Gulf Coast campus. Hattiesburg campus: 86.7% of Capstone students (N = 68 reporting) agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of training in critical thinking skills in psychology. No data were reported for the Gulf Coast campus.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

M 28:Alumni Survey - Critical Thinking Coverage

Alumni respond to an Alumni Survey to measure degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Alumni survey or tracking of alumni achievements

Target:

70% of the respondents will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the level of emphasis, with regard to critical thinking skills, was adequate.

70% of alumni will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the quality of courses, with regard to critical thinking skills, was adequate.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 100% of alumni (3 of 3 reporting) agreed that there had been adequate emphasis on training in critical thinking skills. Hattiesburg Campus: 100% of alumni (3 of 3) reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of training in critical thinking skills in psychology. No responses were received from Gulf Coast Campus alumni.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

SLO 4: Career Planning and Development

Students will emerge from the major with well-developed plans for career or postgraduate education after graduation.

Related Measures:

M 7: Career Assignments - PSY 418

Career assignments in PSY 418 will be evaluated for knowledge of options, specific plans, realistic self assessment.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

70% of students in PSY 418 will receive satisfactory or higher on a standard holistic rubric with regard to the student's demonstration of their career plans. Career assignments will be evaluated for knowledge of options, specific plans, realistic self assessment .

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Not Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 84.9% of students (118 of 139) received a score of 3 and above on the standard rubric for career plans. Gulf Coast Campus: 61.3% of students (19 of 31) received a score of 3 and above on the standard rubric for career plans.

M 18: Senior Survey - Career Plans

Capstone students respond to a Senior Survey that measures degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:

70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the current level of emphasis, with regard to career planning and development, is adequate.

70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the current level of quality of training, with regard to career planning and development, is adequate.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Partially Met

Hattiesburg campus: 61.8% of Capstone students (N = 68 reporting) agreed that there was adequate emphasis with regard to career planning and development. No data were reported for the Gulf Coast campus. Hattiesburg campus: 70.6% of Capstone students (N = 68 reporting) agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of training in career development in psychology. No data were reported for the Gulf Coast campus.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Student & Alumni ratings of career development emphasis & quality below target.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010

The trend regarding career planning is undeniably clear. We continue to have students and

alumni report that career planning and...

Response to alumni and senior student ratings of career training as deficient

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our Career Development numbers on the student and alumni surveys continue to be low for emphasis and quality. The plans for reme...

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

M 27:Alumni Survey-Career Plans

Alumni respond to an Alumni Survey to measure degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Alumni survey or tracking of alumni achievements

Target:

70% of the respondents will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the level of emphasis, with regard to career planning, was adequate.

70% of alumni will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the quality of training, with regard to career planning, was adequate.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Not Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 50.0% of alumni (1 of 2 reporting) agreed that there had been adequate emphasis with regard to career planning and development. Hattiesburg Campus: 66.7% of alumni (2 of 3 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of training with regard to career development in psychology. No responses were received from Gulf Coast Campus alumni.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Student & Alumni ratings of career development emphasis & quality below target.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010

The trend regarding career planning is undeniably clear. We continue to have students and alumni report that career planning and...

Response to alumni and senior student ratings of career training as deficient

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our Career Development numbers on the student and alumni surveys continue to be low for emphasis and quality. The plans for reme...

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

SLO 5:Communication Skills

Students will be able to communicate effectively in a variety of formats.

Relevant Associations:

This outcome is consistent with the guidelines of the American Psychological Association and will replace "Historical Trends".

Related Measures:

M 8:PSY 361 Writing Assignment:Composition

Students in the department's Writing Intensive class (PSY 361) will write an empirical research paper. Some course sections may write multiple papers; other sections write a longer paper with multiple drafts.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

70% of students will write a research report in an organized, logical, and coherent manner as demonstrated by earning a 3 and above(out of 5) on a holistic rubric.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 84.5% of students (120 of 142) wrote a research report in an organized, logical, and coherent manner demonstrated by earning 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 89.1% of students (49 of 55) wrote a research report in an organized, logical, and coherent manner demonstrated by earning 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric.

M 9:Capstone Writing Assignment: Composition

Students in the department Capstone class (PSY 418) write 5000 words outside of class. Some sections write multiple papers while other sections write a longer paper with multiple drafts.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

70% of Capstone students will demonstrate the ability to write in an organized, logical, and coherent manner as measured by earning satisfactory or better on a standard holistic rubric.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Not Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 81.4% of Capstone students (114 of 140) wrote a research paper in an organized, logical, and coherent manner measured by earning a score of 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 58.1% of Capstone students (18 of 31) wrote a research paper in an organized, logical, and coherent manner measured by earning a score of 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric.

M 10:Capstone Oral Presentation

Capstone students will focus and develop an idea in their final oral presentation.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

70% of Capstone students will successfully focus and develop an idea in their final oral presentation as demonstrated by earning 14/20 points or better on a standard analytic rubric.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 84.1% of Capstone students (116 of 138) successfully developed an idea in the final oral presentation by earning 14/20 and higher on a standard analytic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 87.1% of Capstone students (27 of 31) successfully developed an idea in the final oral presentation by earning 14/20 and higher on a standard analytic rubric.

M 16: Senior Survey- Communication Coverage

Capstone students respond to a Senior Survey that measures degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:

70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the current level of emphasis, with regard to communication skills, is adequate.

70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the current quality of instruction, with regard to communication skills, is adequate.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg campus: 80.9% of Capstone students (N = 68 reporting) agreed that there was adequate emphasis on coverage of development of communication skills, including description and explanation of procedures, results, and interpretations. No data were reported for the Gulf Coast campus. Hattiesburg campus: 80.9% of Capstone students (N = 68 reporting) agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of training in communication skills in psychology. No data were reported for the Gulf Coast campus.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

M 25:Alumni Survey-Communication Coverage

Alumni respond to an Alumni Survey to measure degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Alumni survey or tracking of alumni achievements

Target:

70% of the respondents will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the level of emphasis, with regard to communication skills, was adequate.

70% of alumni will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the quality of instruction, with regard to communication skills, was adequate.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 100% of alumni (3 of 3 reporting) agreed that there had been adequate emphasis on coverage of development of communication skills, including description and explanation of procedures, results, and interpretations. Hattiesburg Campus: 100% of alumni (3 of 3 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of training in communication skills in psychology. No responses were received from Gulf Coast Campus alumni.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)**Student & Alumni ratings of career development emphasis & quality below target.**

The trend regarding career planning is undeniably clear. We continue to have students and alumni report that career planning and guidance are lacking. Although Psychology is a very popular undergraduate major, many undergraduates pursue a BA or BS in psychology without a clear idea of how the degree will translate to a career choice, short of pursuing graduate education. There are several ways to address this problem. We can

develop and maintain a "Careers in Psychology" website and feature it prominently as a link on the Psychology Department home page. We can formalize some transmission of career guidance information within the advisement process. For example, the SOAR page the student uses to register for courses can feature a link to a career information page and checklist survey, that each student must visit at least once before registering. Advisors can also check each student's familiarity with career options during advisement. We can also create a physical presence for career information within the psychology department spaces at each campus, such as a small information kiosk or prominent bulletin board space. These approaches were recommended last cycle, and are being developed for implementation. We also continue to represent the psychology department at the multiple Black and Gold career day events each year. One significant action, which has been taken, was the creation of a Careers in Psychology course (PSY 251). The course has been delivered once so far (summer of 2009). It will be a year or two before we know if the course, or other actions, will improve student ratings, and at least two years to see effects for alumni ratings of career development.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Alumni Survey-Career Plans | **Outcome/Objective:** Career Planning and Development

Measure: Senior Survey - Career Plans | **Outcome/Objective:** Career Planning and Development

Implementation Description: Department staff, advising faculty, and PSY 251 instructors will implement the actions proposed.

Responsible Person/Group: Department staff and faculty.

Response to alumni and senior student ratings of career training as deficient

Our Career Development numbers on the student and alumni surveys continue to be low for emphasis and quality. The plans for remediation implemented thus far have been to: instruct advisors to offer more career information; add a career development project to the capstone course; and create a new "Careers in Psychology" course (PSY 251). Our rating from both senior students and alumni, for both quality and emphasis of career preparation, have increased from last year, but remain deficient. We believe there will be a lag in improvement in these numbers as most seniors, and all alumni did not benefit from some, or all of our actions to improve performance in career planning and development. We believe the addition of the PSY 251 class will be particularly effective in improving performance, but we will not see that improvement in our number for another year or two. We also plan to make PSY 251 a required course in our BA/BS degree plan. Other steps that could be taken include: adding a careers website; formalizing career guidance content in the advising process; and dedicating highly visible department space to career information materials.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Alumni Survey-Career Plans | **Outcome/Objective:** Career Planning and Development

Measure: Senior Survey - Career Plans | **Outcome/Objective:** Career Planning and Development

Response to alumni rating of research emphasis as deficient.

Our numbers for Research Methods quality and emphasis have improved since last academic year. The remaining deficient finding is from the alumni survey rating of research emphasis. The alumni numbers are from graduates from the academic year two years prior to the current year, so there will always be a lag in change in alumni numbers in response to program changes. Previously the methods course instructors developed a plan to include a "hands-on" course project in response to deficient student and alumni rating regarding research methods, as well as specific comments requesting more "hands-on" research experience. Previous actions have been taken to address perceived dissatisfaction with specific research methods instructors in previous years. Those actions, and the addition of hands-on course content appear to be having

the intended effect.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Alumni Survey - Research Methods | **Outcome/Objective:** Research Methods in Psychology

Response to low survey numbers

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-assessment process, as evidenced by the number of domain associations, and arguably provide our most objective data. Managing the survey process requires a significant investment of time and labor. For the survey process to have any chance of achieving its potential as an information source the process needs to be properly resourced by assignment to staff with time and facilities to manage it, or by provision of release time to faculty to manage it. The consistency of our numbers across years, even with low response rates, demonstrates the reliability of the instruments. The congruence of survey response with frequent student and alumni comments, as well as informal observations, suggests validity of the instruments. In addition, the changes in ratings in response to actions taken supports validity of the instruments. The process seems to be of value. Maybe it is time to resource it.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Senior Survey- Communication Coverage | **Outcome/Objective:** Communication Skills

Measure: Alumni Survey - Critical Thinking Coverage | **Outcome/Objective:** Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology

Measure: Alumni Survey - Quality of Courses | **Outcome/Objective:** Knowledge Base of Psychology

Measure: Alumni Survey - Research Methods | **Outcome/Objective:** Research Methods in Psychology

Measure: Alumni Survey-Career Plans | **Outcome/Objective:** Career Planning and Development

Measure: Alumni Survey-Communication Coverage | **Outcome/Objective:** Communication Skills

Measure: Senior Survey - Career Plans | **Outcome/Objective:** Career Planning and Development

Measure: Senior Survey - Courses and Content | **Outcome/Objective:** Knowledge Base of Psychology

Measure: Senior Survey - Critical Thinking Coverage | **Outcome/Objective:** Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology

Measure: Senior Survey - Research Methods | **Outcome/Objective:** Research Methods in Psychology

Critical Thinking Improvements

Better coordination with the Gulf Coast campus in terms of curricular expectations, consistency of teaching faculty and similarity of course content across both campuses may improve critical thinking skills. The undergraduate coordinator for Hattiesburg will work more closely with the Gulf Coast undergraduate coordinator to ensure sufficient attention to this outcome. Revisions to the WEAVE goals may be expected.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: High

Review and Revisit BA/BS WEAVE outcomes and measures

The Department of Psychology's Undergraduate Committee will be charged with reviewing, revising and updating the WEAVE measures and objectives for the coming cycle. Considerations including creating a new capstone course and expanding the major requirements to include a "Careers in Psychology" course.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: High

Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives?

The psychology department again met goals related to research requirements, communication skills, writing and critical thinking, particularly on the Hattiesburg campus. These areas have received emphasis in our department and in our instruction of relevant courses, so we are pleased that progress has continued. The coordination of data collection efforts on the two campuses has improved over previous years, although more work is needed on obtaining data (i.e., Senior Survey) through other means than instructor reports.

What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?

As with the previous reporting year, career planning continues to be an area that the psychology department is targeting through an elective class (PSY 251, Careers in Psychology), the department's significant involvement in the College of Education & Psychology's undergraduate advisement center, and more of a mentoring focus for meetings between faculty and undergraduate advisees. The Department Undergraduate Committee and the departmental faculty as a whole will explore the possibility of making this course a requirement. We have not yet developed consensus on the timing of the course in our curriculum and the depth/breadth of material to be covered in this course. Also, the current capstone course is being revisited, and there is preliminary discussion about the possibility of developing a new capstone required course which will help students access better information related to career planning, rather than attempting to integrate this information into the History and Systems course.

Secondly, there appeared to be a significant discrepancy between the proportion of students who met departmental objectives on the Hattiesburg campus versus the proportion who did so on the Coast campus. We will examine whether there are uniform guidelines used by instructors across the two campuses to evaluate whether students meet these objectives and encourage instructors on both campuses to be intervene with students early in the semester who are demonstrating poor performance on research, communication, and critical thinking objectives.

The Alumni Survey continues to demonstrate a very poor response rate. We will consider various approaches toward increasing the response rate in the coming year, including through multiple e-mail reminders and through posting the link to the survey on the Psychology Department's Facebook page.

Annual Report Section Responses

Program Summary

The Psychology Department continues to work to improve the undergraduate program through the direct delivery of services to psychology undergraduate majors. One important example is through the offering of PSY 251 (Careers in Psychology) on both the Hattiesburg and Gulf Coast campuses. We hope that this course continues to help address career development objectives for our undergraduate students, as this area is one in which the Senior Survey reflects a relative shortcoming of our curriculum among graduating students. Although we have made improvements in this area, we will continue to focus on additional efforts directed at improvement, including but not limited to, web site information, information dispensed through social media, special career sessions offered regularly to our majors, and continued development of the Undergraduate Advisement Center. We have also appointed an Undergraduate Coordinator who will oversee assessment activities, issues surrounding career development, coordinate discussion of proposed curriculum changes with our faculty, and enhance the activities of undergraduate-oriented activities in our department. For example, the Undergraduate Coordinator will work with the faculty advisers of the Psychology Club and the local chapter of Psi Chi to provide activities directed at career planning and development. Records of these activities will be submitted to the Chair of the Department during the academic year with an outline of those activities that occurred. We have continued to include careers information in our undergraduate Preview packets (early registration packets) for incoming first year and transfer students new to the Department of Psychology. The opening of the Undergraduate Advisement Center and coordination with the College of Education and

Psychology to assist current undergraduate students with course selection and scheduling decisions continues to be a pearl of the Department. The Center is open a minimum of 30-35 hours per week during the regular semesters and during the summer semester. The Department is committed to the success of the Center and pays stipends to two Counseling Psychology Masters students each semester for staffing the Center. The center allows faculty advisers/mentors additional time to engage in career and research mentoring for our undergraduates. Although some program objectives have been met, others are still in progress and require our continued attention.

Continuous Improvement Initiatives/Additional Action Plans

Based on the data collected for 2012-2013, further coordination between the Hattiesburg and Gulf Coast campuses is needed on evaluation of objectives, collection of assessment data, and approaches for best meeting the needs of students, particularly those who are struggling with core concepts in our curriculum.

The Department has undertaken, and continues to undertake, several activities to address program improvement issues based on our assessment data. In addition to the addition of on-line versions of General Psychology (PSY 110) and Forensic Psychology (PSY 440) in response to a requests by our undergraduates to offer more on-line courses, we have also implemented on-line versions of Developmental Psychology (275) and have approved an on-line version of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Intervention (PSY 435). These offerings will allow broader access of undergraduate students to coursework in the Department. During the past year, we also offered a course in Abnormal Child Psychology for the first time. We plan to continue this course as well as continue to expand our course offerings based on curriculum need and student interest. The Undergraduate Advisement Center, under the guidance of Dr. Emily Yowell, has continued to receive a tremendous response from our undergraduate students and departmental faculty. The department's Advisement Center served as the springboard for an expanded College of Education and Psychology Undergraduate Advisement Center. The Center is available to undergraduates approximately 30-35 hours per week on a walk-in basis or for scheduled appointments and is staffed by two Counseling Psychology Masters students funded by the Department. Having the Undergraduate Advisement Center frees up faculty to spend more time in the mentoring aspect of support to our undergraduate majors. Mentoring takes the form of career guidance and support in the research process. This model is essential in assisting students in successful undergraduate careers and for planning for careers and/or further training after graduation.

In addition, to continue to address the career planning and development needs of our undergraduates, PSY 251 (Careers in Psychology) is being consistently offered on an elective basis not only in regular and summer semesters, but also during mini-sessions. In addition to offering information pertinent to careers in the field, information related to the graduate school process is also covered during the class. The Department is currently assessing whether to make the course a required course in the major and the timing of the course in our curriculum (i.e., early vs. just prior to graduation). As a departmental faculty, we still need to weigh the resources needed for providing such a required course to our large number of majors, specifically adequate classroom space and faculty personnel.

Career development information is also routinely offered to our undergraduates through participation in the Psychology Club and Psi Chi, but such efforts will continue to be more systematic during the 2013-14 academic year, particularly as related to recruitment. Such information is also contained in the Preview packets distributed to incoming students during early registration sessions conducted during the summer. The College Research Committee, with the support of the Dean's Office, also offered a session on undergraduate research success that was well-received by our faculty and was heavily attended by top undergraduate psychology majors. We have also had preliminary discussions related to whether PSY 418 (History of Psychology) will continue to serve as the Capstone course of the Department. The question has arisen as to whether this approach is the best treatment of that course and whether the development of a true capstone course would better serve the Department and better serve the needs of our majors. That question should be put before the departmental faculty during the fall 2013.

Closing the Loop/Action Plan Tracking

Actions plans for 2012-2013 will continue to be addressed during the coming year. We have observed some improvement regarding the reports of graduating seniors on their training in communication skills and critical

thinking. We need to continue to target coverage of career planning in our courses and our general outreach to students. The Undergraduate Coordinator will work with relevant faculty on promoting this emphasis for our majors. In addition, the Undergraduate Coordinator will work with the instructors of PSY 361 (Research Methods) and our capstone course (PSY 418) to ensure consistency in instruction, expectations, and collection of assessment data, particularly across the two campuses. Lastly, increased efforts for improving the response rate to the Alumni Survey will be made through various approaches to disseminating the link to recent graduates and encouraging their input. The Department of Psychology looks forward to reporting on the Continuous Improvement Initiatives undertaken, yet not completed, during 2013-2014. We anticipate continued improvement in supporting our undergraduates.