Annual Report of the Psychology Undergraduate Program
2012-2013

Karyn Plumm and Taylor Walkky

We intend with this report to describe the status of the Psychology Department Undergraduate Program and the activities associated with it during the 2012-2013 academic year. Karyn Plumm served as director of the program during this time. Taylor Walkky served as ½-time assistant during the year. In the narrative that follows we first describe our analysis of progress associated with the significant opportunities and challenges that were raised in last year’s report. This is followed by an account of this year’s major projects and a description of other activities. The report concludes with a presentation of activities either planned or contemplated for the year ahead and the identification of significant issues for the department.

Last Year’s Significant Issues

There were a couple of issues identified last year that were thought to require substantial attention on the part of the department. Those issues are identified below along with actions undertaken to address them.

1. Understanding assessment information from the ACAT/Creation of the DAE. The department has long been struggling with interpretations for various scores that come from the administration of the Area Concentration Achievement Test (ACAT) that we had been using for many years to assess student mastery of various areas within psychology. The scores from this exam were directly linked to many of our assessment goals. It became clear that because we did not have enough information about the types of questions on the exam, we could only guess as to why scores were sometimes high and sometimes very low. Additionally, the higher scores in areas such as statistics and research methods did not match the experience students were describing during focus groups. Specifically, we have consistently heard from students that they do not believe they are prepared in those areas and find the course work to be more difficult than others. The ACAT scores for those areas have often been higher than others. This past year, the department decided that in order to better understand the knowledge base our senior students truly had, we could devise and administer an exam that would better capture knowledge of areas and skills we have set specific goals for as a department. We accomplished this task in a series of steps:
   a) We first discussed the areas of interest that are relevant to our goals as a department and concluded that all areas previously connected to the ACAT could be better met with an alternate examination.
   b) We then solicited items from instructors in the various areas we intended to capture (e.g., instructors of introduction to psychology, statistics, research methods, diversity and history and systems). We had large pools of items in each area to cut down and try to choose those that best captured the knowledge we wanted our students to be leaving the program with.
   c) A preliminary Department Assessment Exam (DAE) was then created in order to garner feedback from all faculty regarding wording and types of items.
   d) We were able to administer the exam to students for the first time during the Fall 2012 semester and have outlined the results and understanding of student knowledge in psychology in
this report.

   e) We plan to continually monitor the exam as it may call for updates in the types of questions and/or wording given any changes to the field but believe that it will allow us a much stronger picture of the assessment of knowledge students have gained from the program itself.

2. Completion of the departmental seven year self-study. As part of the Undergraduate Program Review, the Office for the VPAA required that the Department of Psychology complete a seven year study detailing the condition and changes of the department over the previous seven years. This study was completed by Dr. Plumm in January 2013 and contained sections detailing the program description, activities, resources, and summary. Thanks to Dr. Terrell for her help with the faculty teaching evaluation data included in the program activities.

Major Projects

1. Continue to assess the undergraduate program

   The data that are reported here relate both to the official plan and other assessment information. There are essentially four types of assessment data: (1) data from focus groups held with students in History and Systems classes; (2) scores from the DAE given to all psychology majors in the History and Systems class, (3) evaluation of the writing of a sample of students from upper-level courses, and (4) data from student transcripts. Reported below are, first, a description of the results associated with the four types of data and, second, a summary of the findings associated with the assessment plan.

   Focus Groups

   The main purpose of the focus groups is to gain feedback directly from seniors about their experiences as psychology majors. Students are asked about strengths of the program, concerns about the program, and future career plans. Opportunities for anonymous written feedback, in addition to the oral feedback, are also given. This was the tenth year that the focus groups were held in conjunction with the History and Systems class which is restricted to seniors only. Thanks to the graduate students who helped to conduct the focus groups!

   Some of the major findings include:

The major strengths of the program that the students perceived were:

   • Research/TA experience/Practical Experience
   • Advising
   • Variety of courses
   • Labs (GTAs)
   • Teaching

The first strength has consistently been mentioned over several years as a strong point of the program. It is gratifying to see the Orientation to the Major course was mentioned as a strength
in advising. It was also mentioned that some faculty are willing to advise students who are not their “official” advisees which is viewed positively. Four strengths mentioned last year – SONA, Online Degree, printing system in computer lab, and workshops/seminar – were not mentioned this year.

Students identified the following concerns:

- **Advising.** Although many students’ experiences were reported as positive, others had concerns with advising. Specifically, some faculty were not knowledgeable enough, some faculty seemed to dislike advising students, students reported feeling disrespected and unimportant in their interactions with faculty (a couple of students reported being told to find a new advisor because theirs could not answer their questions), and students expressed concern for advising toward the clinical degree and nothing else (i.e., other graduate degrees or job placement at the bachelor level).
- **Research.** Students reported receiving little encouragement from faculty and/or advisors in getting involved in research activities (especially earlier on in their career) as well as practical experiences. Students would like a wider variety of experiences (not just running studies).
- **Courses.** Students expressed a desire for more elective classes to cover many different areas of psychology. They also reported a lot of redundancy between many psychology classes, an interest in having more discussion based courses and a need for a course on APA formatting and writing.
- **Labs.** Rooms utilized for lab experiences are not adequate.
- **Statistics Experience.** Students do not feel prepared to use statistics (SPSS) on their own. A stats tutor would be helpful.
- **Teaching.** Again, although many students expressed positive impressions of teaching, others had concerns. Specifically, receiving too little feedback from instructors teaching online and the offering of courses in the afternoon only.
- **Online degree.** Distance students would like more information on navigating the program and requirements. Students would like more courses offered online. They do not like using Citrix for the SPSS software needs.
- **Practical Experiences.** Students would like opportunities arranged for them but the department does not do this. They would like more assistance in finding possible experiences.

Students were much more diverse in their concerns about courses and/or teaching this year. The concern about SPSS and understanding of statistics is one the department has identified as well. The Curriculum Committee is currently working to resolve some of these issues through a possible change to required courses for undergraduate psychology majors aimed at improving statistical skill and knowledge as well as scientific writing ability. The involvement for research and practical experiences was mentioned last year. The director of the undergraduate
program is aware of the difficulty in getting students involved and as such has been working to put together courses and readily available information directed at increasing student involvement in practical experiences.

One of the aspects reported directly this year was the notion that many students meet with faculty other than their assigned advisors. They reported that negative experiences with their advisors keep them from wanting to meet with them, and they also reported being grateful for those faculty that are willing to meet with students who are not their assigned advisees. This has been an intermittent problem identified by the department previously. There has been an attempt to address this issue previously in the advisor evaluation forms; however, the same problems are continuously reported. This will need to be addressed in an alternate way.

We asked students to report short-term and long-term career plans. We categorized their responses and organized them into the following table. A consistent finding over several years of collecting this type of data is that 2/3 to 3/4 of the students have plans that include graduate or professional school. That pattern was repeated this year again. Many students reported working with their bachelor degree initially to begin paying off student loans before continuing on to graduate school.

**Percent of Students Indicating Different Categories of Short- and Long-Term Plans (Last Three Year’s Values are in Parentheses)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Response</th>
<th>Short-Term</th>
<th>Long-Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate/Professional School (Career) in Psychology</td>
<td>16 (12, 16, 41)</td>
<td>30 (18, 24, 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate/Professional School (Career) in Non-Psychology Discipline</td>
<td>32 (48, 19, 30)</td>
<td>38 (53, 22, 30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate/Professional School (Career) Undecided</td>
<td>4 (3, 3, 0)</td>
<td>6 (15, 6, 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue Undergraduate Education</td>
<td>2 (13, 1, 0)</td>
<td>0 (5, 0, 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment with Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>29 (23, 18, 28)</td>
<td>9 (7, 4, 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Undecided</td>
<td>11 (0, 0, 9)</td>
<td>11 (2, 1, 13)</td>
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**DAE**

The second assessment component was the Department Assessment Exam (DAE), which the department administered for the first time during the Fall 2012 semester. The exam was given to students in the History and Systems course. There are 5 subtests covered in the DAE. A total of 117 students completed the DAE exam this year. The following table summarizes student performance by indicating the mean percentage correct for students in each sub-area.

**DAE Performance by Sub-Area**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Psychology</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Psychology</td>
<td>67%</td>
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Under the department’s writing assessment plan, the ability of our advanced students to write empirical research papers is assessed. A sample of papers from laboratory-based and other 300 and 400-level courses where complete APA-format empirical research paper, literature reviews, research proposals, or analysis papers are assigned is assessed annually by members of the Curriculum Committee. Each paper was read and assessed by at least two committee members using previously established rubrics depending on the type of paper format being read (i.e., empirical vs. non-empirical rubric). This year we read 20 papers at both the 300 and 400 level. Our sample consisted of 4 papers at the 300 level and 16 at the 400 level. We read 10 analysis papers, 6 empirical papers and 4 research proposals. The entire committee discusses the results of each paper and prepares a report for the department, describing the major strengths and weaknesses. Using as a standard what the committee expected of advanced undergraduate writing, 4 of the 20 papers was judged to be A-level, 6 were B-level, 9 were C-level, 1 was D-level. None were judged as failing. This is consistent with the prior year’s findings overall.

The strengths (in order of most common to least common) that were identified were:

- Grammar/sentence structure (“well-written”)
- Integration of literature (synthesis)
- Proper use of APA citation (professional sources)
- Discussion/logic
- Concepts well defined
- Organization
- APA format

The major weaknesses (in order of most common to least common) were:

- Writing style (not professional/choppy/informal language)
- Poor introduction (lit review lacking/weak integration of material)
- Concepts not well defined / Topic unclear
- Use of improper content (unprofessional internet sources)
- Analysis/ Critical thinking
- APA format (especially in-text citation)
- Statistics (missing, incorrect, lack of understanding)
- Gaps in literature review / Illogical jumps
- Incorrect or lacking citations
- Poor discussion/conclusions
- Spelling/grammar
**Assessment Plan**

Seven student learning goals constitute the official assessment plan of the undergraduate program.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Student Learning Goals &amp; Objectives</th>
<th>Assessment Methods</th>
<th>Assessment Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students will know the origins of the field of psychology and its major schools of thought</td>
<td>Department Assessment Exam (DAE), History and Systems subtest—50% of majors achieve a score of 70% or higher</td>
<td>2013 – 57.3% (met)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Thinking and Reasoning (critical, creative, and quantitative): Students will understand the essentials of psychological research, how psychological phenomena are investigated and analyzed</td>
<td>DAE, Research Methods and Statistics subtests—50% of majors achieve a score of 70% or higher</td>
<td>Research Methods 2013 – 39.3% Statistics 2013 – 50.4% (met)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students will develop a broad background in the field of psychology</td>
<td>DAE, General Psychology subtest—50% of majors achieve a score of 70% or higher</td>
<td>2013 – 93.2% (met)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Communication and Information Literacy: Students will learn how to write empirical research papers on a psychological topic.</td>
<td>Psychology Department writing assessment instrument—75% of majors sampled achieve a rating of “average” or “above average,” where any paper judged below a B-level was considered “below average.” Improvement over time. This is the second year of use of this process.</td>
<td>2009 – 80% of papers judged to be “average” or “above average” (met) 2010 – 80% of papers judged to be “average” or “above average” (met) 2011 – 60% of papers judged to be “average” or “above average” 2012 – 50% of papers judged to be “average” or “above average” 2013 – 50% of papers judged to be “average” or “above average”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students will experience a department (faculty, staff, and facilities) that supports and encourages their learning and their career goals.</td>
<td>Focus groups of students in the Psyc 405 class—feedback themes that indicate general satisfaction with experiences as a psychology student.</td>
<td>There is a mixture of satisfaction and concern that is difficult to summarize in a few sentences. We continue to look at ways to address the major concerns that students describe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Service/Citizenship</td>
<td>Number of psychology</td>
<td>2008—13.89%</td>
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Students will engage in experiential learning

| Graduates who have enrolled in Psy 395 or Psy 397—percent increases annually with an eventual goal of 25% |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 2009 – 10.20%     | 2010 – 11.3%      |
| 2011 – 0.05%      | 2012 – 10.5%      |
| 2013 – 9.7%       |                  |

7. Diversity

| DAE, Diversity subtest – 50% of majors will achieve a score of 70% or higher |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 2013 – 47.9%      |                  |

In regard to goals 1-3 and goal 7, this is the first year we have used the DAE to describe the outcome of our assessment goals. We have met 3 of the 5 goals assessed by the DAE. For the two goals we did not meet, there are different areas of concern:

1. Our students are not learning at the level we desire in Research Methods or Diversity.
2. Given that we now have the ability to analyze particular items, we can say that students have difficulty specifically with the following subject matter:
   a. For Research Methods: within-subjects design, operational definitions, and quasi-experimental design.
   b. For Diversity: modern prejudice and benevolent/hostile sexism.
3. The students did not have incentive to do well on the exam. Although the administration of the exam did require set times, we are working on a more flexible option for students to complete the exam in the future, making the requirement less “burdensome” for students.

Student writing for goal 4 was similar to the previous year and falls below the goal set for this aspect of assessment. There have been concerns about the basic writing mechanics ability of students that they should have learned by virtue of the Engl 110, 120/125 sequence that is required of all UND students. The department has previously discussed the notion of adding a writing course to the curriculum but given our limited budget and course allotment, has been unable to do so. We will continue to teach writing mechanics in the appropriate courses. Alternatives that have been suggested include a student run journal to further engage students in the writing process as well as courses specific to professional writing in the discipline.

Our assessment of the fifth goal with focus group data has revealed a consistent pattern over several years with research assistant opportunities as a consistent perceived strength. It is heartening to see apparent effects of our efforts to improve advising, as many students valued the Psyc 120 course and faculty advising. Students have once again however, mentioned advising by some faculty as a negative experience in the department. Although the perception of advising is changing for some students, others continue to have poor experiences. It is our goal to see these experiences continue to improve through the use of Psyc 120, drop-in advising, and helpful advising tools such as the My Psychology Advisor Blackboard Organization. In addition, the Curriculum Committee will focus on improving the advising of distance students as well as making such advising easier for faculty.

Results relating to the sixth goal are encouraging. As we have made an effort to focus on experiential learning and improving the process for practical experiences in particular, we have witnessed an increase in students partaking in such experiences. It is interesting to note as well that student participation as a research assistant has decreased slightly from 54% of last year’s graduating seniors to 49% of graduating seniors having earned credits as a research assistant. This drop echoes the concerns students raised during focus groups about not having opportunities or being aware of such opportunities to engage in RA experiences. These experiences are great opportunities for students to
experience research first-hand, and it has become a part of the culture of the department for undergraduate students to participate in that way. Given our efforts, it is likely we will see a change in the percentage of students partaking in practical experiences in the years to come.

2. **Continue to improve student advising.**

*Drop-In Advising*

Judging from the focus group data as well as from informal feedback, many students continue to value the drop-in advising program that is held for about a month during the registration period. We appreciate the support of the faculty who volunteered their time to staff the drop-in advising periods. Thanks to Drs. DeYoung, Ferraro, Kehn, Looby and Ruthig as well as to Taylor Walkky for their time this year. In past years, we’ve had about 40 – 60 students participate. Last year we saw in decrease in students utilizing drop-in advising with only 26 participants over both semesters. This year we had 54 students partake in drop-in advising (21 in Fall and 33 in Spring).

*Advising Efforts*

Since the implementation of the Psyc 120 course, we have had much more positive feedback about advising. We have completed the “My Psychology Advisor” Blackboard site which has served to replace the previous listserve of students and to provide one place for students to be able to view advising checklists and find out how to best contact their advisor. The site also serves to announce practical experience opportunities for students, applications and deadlines for things such as awards, emphases, and information sessions. We also engaged in several other activities, in which the primary intent was to improve the quality of advising, including:

- Meeting with prospective students (either during visits to the department or the campus-wide open house events), prospective majors, minors (declared and prospective), and majors with questions about the program. The Director of the Undergraduate Program meets with dozens of students (in addition to his or her advisees) over the course of the year with various types of questions. Some of the meetings are simply phone calls, some are e-mail contacts, and many are face-to-face meetings. Enrollment services had over 50 schedule meetings with Karyn throughout the year. Many other faculty in the department have similar types of contacts with students and their efforts are greatly appreciated.

- Serving as the contact person for transfer students who wish to have transfer psychology courses count toward the psychology major at UND. Sometimes to answer their questions the student is required to submit course syllabi and the Director of the Undergraduate Program asks the relevant Psychology Department instructor(s) to examine the syllabus for its comparability to the corresponding UND course. We appreciate the faculty’s cooperation in helping with this process.

3. **Assist first-year teaching assistants.**

First year TAs (graduate and undergraduate) attended bi-weekly one-hour meetings for eight sessions during the semester. A major component of each of our weekly meetings was
discussion of teaching-related issues that had arisen during the prior week. In addition, specific teaching-related topics were discussed, including Grading written assignment/creating rubrics for writing, Dealing with difficult students – behavior in the classroom, online, and cheating, Instructing in an online environment, Teaching with technology/communication, Lecturing, Leading classroom discussions, Evaluation – grading and aiding, Motivation in the classroom, Valuing student differences, Creating and grading group projects, Teaching large classes (not just lecturing), Lab instruction and Teaching students how to learn (the dreaded “how do I study for the test?” question). Near the end of the semester we discussed how to deal with end-of-semester issues. Undergraduate students received 1 credit of Psychology 492: Independent Projects for their participation (they also had additional expectations, including writing summaries of their experiences of being a TA as well as what they were learning in the seminar and observing other TAs in their teaching). During the spring semester, eleven undergraduate teaching assistants met with Taylor to discuss teaching issues. We are seeing an increase in interest of undergraduate students to serve as TA, and as a department we support these positions and offer the same training as we do for our graduate TAs.

4. Manage the undergraduate student awards program.

This was the ninth year of our student awards process. This year, awards were presented during the Northern Lights Psychology Conference rather than alongside the Psi Chi initiation (as we had done in previous years). The three awards made are for Outstanding Undergraduate Research, Outstanding Undergraduate Service and Outstanding Psychology Student. In September we solicited both student applications and faculty nominations, and three-person faculty committees conducted blind reviews of the materials. As a result of that process, Ken McGurran received the award for Outstanding Undergraduate Service and Kayla Ford was honored for both Outstanding Undergraduate Research and Outstanding Psychology Student. These students were chosen from a total of 11 applications overall. Recipients received a certificate, monetary award, and their names were added to our department plaque. We wish to thank Drs. Derenne, DeYoung, Ferraro, Kehn, Legerski, Looby and Weatherly for their assistance in conducting the reviews.

Other Activities

There were several other activities in which we engaged during the year, including:

- Monitored the undergraduate emphasis system, with 15 students earning emphases with their summer, fall or spring graduations. This total compares with 9 students last year and 14 the year before. To date (since the Fall 2000 Semester up through this summer), 233 students have received emphasis documentation, 3 in five areas, 12 in four areas, 31 in three areas, 76 in two areas, and 111 in one area. One hundred sixty-nine emphases have been earned in Clinical Science, 77 in the Psychology of Human Development, 65 in Social and Cultural Psychology, 57 in Psychology of Education and Learning, and 49 in Biological and Physiological Psychology.
- Maintained the undergraduate bulletin board.
- Maintained and updated the faculty/staff/GTA picture bulletin board.
- Maintained an undergraduate publication board. Photocopies of the title pages of
articles with undergraduate student authors are posted on a bulletin board near the main psychology office. This is updated on an ongoing basis.

**Future Projects**

We have the following responsibilities that we believe to be **ongoing**:
- Maintain an advising site through Blackboard for undergraduate students
- Maintain the undergraduate web page (thanks to Dr. Poltavski for his help in this endeavor)
- Coordinate drop-in advising
- Conduct focus groups with History and Systems students
- Work with the History and Systems instructors to administer the DAE
- Monitor assessment data according to the department’s undergraduate assessment plan and report to the department
- Meet with prospective psychology majors
- Monitor the undergraduate emphasis system
- Maintain the undergraduate bulletin board (changed once a year)
- Maintain the undergraduate publication bulletin board (ongoing)
- Maintain the faculty/staff/GTA picture board (changed once a year)
- Coordinate the cooperative education course credits
- Coordinate the practical experiences course credits
- Coordinate the student awards
- Lead the teaching enhancement training of first-year GTAs and undergraduate teaching assistants
- Conduct special informational sessions for psychology majors