

**Assessment Report for Student Learning  
In The Psychology Major  
2008-2009 Academic Year**

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**Executive Summary**

This assessment report on the psychology major examines student learning during the 2007-2008 academic year. Our assessment of student performance provided evidence that students met or exceeded our evaluation benchmarks for each of the 3 learning goals. The current status of our assessment data, using the performance indicators, would be at the Yellow Level, meaning that we have begun to collect and demonstrate accomplishment of student learning goals, but have several areas of further improvement. Our plans for improving our assessment indicators are discussed.

**1. Student Learning Goals in the Psychology Major**

The 3 learning goals for the Psychology major are:

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to distinguish between non-scientific v. scientific approaches to mind and behavior and critique the similarities & differences between psychology and other sciences.
2. Students will demonstrate their ability to understand critical variables that influence mind and behavior from the 4 core areas: biopsychology, learning and cognition, developmental/social psychology, and applied psychology, and evaluate theoretical orientations within these approaches.
3. Students will demonstrate their ability to perform psychological research. That includes surveying the literature on a research topic using professional databases (such as PsycINFO and PubMed), developing an appropriate empirical research design, conducting the study in an ethical manner, and analyzing and reporting their data and interpretations in accordance with the professional standards of the discipline.

Psychology graduates achieve the goal of *professional success* by demonstrating their ability to:

- a. distinguish between non-scientific v. scientific approaches to mind and behavior and critique the similarities & differences between psychology and other sciences.
- b. understand critical variables that influence mind and behavior from the 4 core areas: biopsychology, learning and cognition, developmental/social psychology, and applied psychology, and evaluate theoretical orientations within these approaches.
- c. demonstrate their ability to perform psychological research. That includes surveying the literature on a research topic using professional databases (such as PsycINFO and PubMed), developing an appropriate empirical research design, conducting the study in an ethical manner, and analyzing and reporting their data and interpretations in accordance with the professional standards of the discipline.

Psychology majors will develop a discipline-based understanding of *citizenship in a global environment* goal by:

- a. understand critical variables that influence mind and behavior from the 4 core areas: biopsychology, learning and cognition, developmental/social psychology, and applied psychology, and evaluate theoretical orientations within these approaches.
- b. demonstrate their ability to perform psychological research. That includes surveying the literature on a research topic using professional databases (such as PsycINFO and PubMed), developing an appropriate empirical research design, conducting the study in an ethical manner, and analyzing and reporting their data and interpretations in accordance with the professional standards of the discipline.

Psychology majors will develop discover and develop a *personal life of meaning & value* by:

- a. understand critical variables that influence mind and behavior from the 4 core areas: biopsychology, learning and cognition, developmental/social psychology, and applied psychology, and evaluate theoretical orientations within these approaches.

## 2. Snapshot

The Department of Behavioral Sciences includes majors in Sociology, Human Services, and Psychology. We have one full-time faculty member in Sociology, two in Human Services, and three in Psychology. In addition, several long-time adjuncts also support our majors. Two practicing clinical psychologists teach our Principles of Psychopathology.

Facilities include the Behavioral Sciences Computer Laboratory and two other rooms devoted to faculty and student research. Research is supported by specialized software for data collection (E-Prime™, developed by Psychology Software Tools, Inc.) and analysis (SPSS™ and SYSTAT™).

There are 49 Psychology majors, 17 Sociology majors, and 50 Human Services majors.

Though not directly relevant to the Psychology major, the courses in Psychology also serve many other majors. Basic Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences and Social Psychology are both cross-listed with Sociology. Majors in Human Services are required to take three Psychology courses. Majors in Nursing are required to take at least four Psychology courses, and those in Art Therapy are required to take at least four.

Table 1 reports the Psychology courses offered for 07-08, along with their enrollments.

PS13001	St. James	63	PS13001	St. James	47
PS13002	St. James	38	PS13002	Verry	30
PS20101	Collinsworth	30	PS13003	Verry	25
PS20102	Collinsworth	34	PS20101	Collinsworth	37
PS20201	Verry	28	PS20102		

PS34001	Crowley	1

#### 4. The Psychology Learning Story

The Psychology major was extensively revised in 2003 to emphasize preparation for graduate school. This change in emphasis was made possible by a recommitment of resources within the Department of Behavioral Sciences, with one full-time faculty position in Psychology switched to Human Services, permitting the hiring of a second full-time faculty member for that major. Traditionally, the psychology major has served two groups of students – those planning to continue on to graduate school in Psychology and those interested in a four-year degree as entrée to jobs in the helping professions. Because of the improvements in the Human Services course offerings, the latter group are now far better served by the major in Human Services.

There are two groups of courses for our majors in Psychology at Millikin University. One group provides coverage of the major content areas of Psychology; the other provides a background in psychological research. For the content areas, students take one course from each of the four core areas (biological psychology, developmental/social psychology, cognition/learning, and applied psychology), plus at least one additional course from one of those areas. The research component includes basic and advanced courses in statistics and in experimental psychology (research methods), and culminates in the Capstone.

**The developmental strategy.** Courses in the four core areas are not sequential. The specific selection of courses in each area is usually based on discussion with the advisor, and based on the specific interests of the students.

The developmental strategy of our curriculum is most evident in the research courses, which are clearly sequential. We typically advise students to take Basic Statistics in the Spring of the Freshman year or the Fall of the Sophomore year, with Experimental Psychology taken during the Sophomore year. Advanced Statistics and Advanced Experimental Psychology are then taken during the Junior year. Students in Advanced Experimental Psychology begin working on their



With that as prologue, how does our curriculum compare to other schools? In regard to

Illinois Wesleyan University	R	R		
Mount Union College	R	R		O
Ohio Northern University	R	R	R	
Sienna College	R	R	R	O
St. Mary's University	R	R		
Stetson University	R	R		R
Stonehill College	R	R		O
Valparaiso University	R	R		

As shown in Table 3, grades for the Capstone were generally good. Grades of A and B were earned by 83.3% of students, while 5.6% earned Cs. The two Fs were for students who did no work toward the Capstone, but also did not withdraw.

As shown i





Biological Core<sup>3</sup>

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
1	1		1			3	1				

Cognitive/Learning Core<sup>4</sup>

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
3	3	3	7	3	1						

Developmental/Social Core<sup>5</sup>

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
7	1	1	11		1	5	1				

Applied Core<sup>6</sup>

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
9	1	3	2	1	1						

<b>Survey Item</b>	<b>N<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>Mean<sup>8</sup></b>
Convenience of scheduling appointment	60	4.67
Amount of time spent with advisor during class scheduling appointment	61	4.59
Advisor's feedback about progress in meeting graduation requirements	60	4.58
Advisor's knowledge about course options or selections in the major	61	4.65
Advisor's knowledge about course options or selections in university studies MPSTL	60	4.66
Advisor's availability throughout the academic year	61	4.58
Timeliness of responses to my questions or concerns	60	4.54
Ability to answer academic or plan of study questions	61	4.57

Knowledge about whom to contact to answer academic questions

60 4.69

<p>Ability to distinguish between non-scientific v. scientific approaches to mind &amp; behavior, &amp; critique the similarities &amp; differences between psychology &amp; other sciences.</p>	<p>Restates some general ideas but shows no evidence of key distinctions or ability to critique.</p>	<p>Understands most key distinctions; but process of moving from explanation to conjecture to analysis to synthesis is incomplete.</p>	<p>Demonstrates thorough understanding of key</p>
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Final Course Grades			
PS201	70% of majors achieve a rating of adequate (C) or excellent (B or A)	60% of majors achieve a rating of adequate (C) or excellent (B or A)	Less than 50% of majors achieve a rating of adequate (C) or excellent (B or A)
PS202	70% of majors achieve a rating of adequate (C) or excellent (B or A)	60% of majors achieve a rating of adequate (C) or excellent (B or A)	Less than 50% of majors achieve a rating of adequate (C) or excellent (B or A)
PS301	70% of majors achieve a rating of adequate (C) or excellent (B or A)	60% of majors achieve a rating of adequate (C) or excellent (B or A)	Less than 50% of majors achieve a rating of adequate (C) or excellent (B or A)
PS304	70% of majors achieve a rating of adequate (C) or excellent (B or A)	60% of majors achieve a rating of adequate (C) or excellent (B or A)	Less than 50% of majors achieve a rating of adequate (C) or excellent (B or A)



We are interested in your experiences with a number of features of the department. Your feedback will help us identify what we do effectively and what we could improve. Please take a moment to answer these confidential questions so that we can work together to provide you with a department that tries to help you accomplish your goals. Fold this form in half, tape or staple it, and return it via campus mail to the department. Thank you for your participation!

Major 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Major 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Minor  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_Senior \_\_\_\_\_First Year \_\_\_\_\_Sophomore \_\_\_\_\_Junior

\_\_\_\_\_First Year \_\_\_\_\_Sophomore \_\_\_\_\_Junior \_\_\_\_\_Senior  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_White Collinsworth \_\_\_\_\_Crisler \_\_\_\_\_Garrison \_\_\_\_\_St. James \_\_\_\_\_Troy \_\_\_\_\_Verry

1. Very dissatisfied 2. Dissatisfied 3. Neutral 4. Satisfied 5. Very satisfied

- \_\_\_\_\_ Convenience of scheduling your appointment with your advisor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Amount of time spent with advisor during the class scheduling appointment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Advisor's feedback about progress in meeting graduation requirements
- \_\_\_\_\_ Advisor's knowledge about course options or selections in the major
- \_\_\_\_\_ Advisor's knowledge about course options or selections in university studies (MPSL)

During the school year, you likely email, call, or meet with your department advisor about questions you have about your plan of study, internship or work opportunities, research opportunities, etc. Based on your year round experiences with your advisor in these areas, please mark your answer using the scale below.

1. Very dissatisfied 2. Dissatisfied 3. Neutral 4. Satisfied 5. Very satisfied 6. Not applicable

- \_\_\_\_\_ Availability throughout the academic year (e.g., questions, meetings)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Timeliness of response to my questions or concerns (e.g., phone, email, meeting)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ability to answer academic or plan of study questions
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Knowledge about campus support programs (tutors, Learning Center, Counseling Services, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Knowledge about co-curricular opportunities (student organizations, speakers)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Knowledge about whom to contact to answer academic questions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helpfulness with career preparation and planning
- \_\_\_\_\_ Information about job opportunities on campus or in the community
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attitude toward me as an individual

Any additional comments: