

**Assessment Report for Student Learning  
In The Psychology Major  
2010-2011 Academic Year**

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*Note: In light of the changes in department personnel, it makes little sense to examine grades in the same way as in previous years. Until the new hire is made and we have made the needed curricular changes an assessment is largely meaningless. I have updated the assessment numbers from last year for the record.*

Linda Collinsworth and I met on July 13, 2011 to plan for changes to the departmental curriculum in light of the changes in staffing that have and will occur. Such changes offer opportunities as well as headaches.

**Review of the current curriculum and proposed changes**

We reviewed the entire Psychology curriculum course by course in terms of which

course (he is a Ph.D. clinical psychologist in private practice who teaches a rigorous course.)

*Split the Capstone among the faculty.* At present, all Capstone students are enrolled with me. A number of them are actually working with Linda (and, in the past, a very few with Rene), who assigns their grades and directs their work. We plan to re-configure this so that each of us teaches the courses and students enroll with the appropriate person. This will not figure directly into course load, since it would amount to 5-6 students each year for each faculty member (and some of those will overlap with JMS).

*Add Tests and Measurements to our required research methods core.* A major distinction for our department is in having a truly rigorous core of courses in research methods, leading up to the empirical Capstone research project. This would give all students a good introduction to a set of techniques that many use in their Capstone research. By requiring Basic Statistics as a prerequisite, this would permit Linda to build on material already covered.

each core, with one additional course from any core. We plan to change this to two cores, with each student taken over by the requirement of Tests and Measurement, so the number of courses would be unchanged. The two new cores would be:

Physiological Psychology

# **The Updated Assessment Report for 2010-2011**

## **Executive Summary**

This assessment report on the psychology major examines student learning during the 2010-2011 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,

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

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-

**Spring 2011**

<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Instructor</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>
PS13001	Introductory Psychology	St. James	41
PS13002	Introductory Psychology	St. James	36
PS20101	Statistical Methods		

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 Capstone by choosing a research topic and beginning to develop the literature survey and the research itself. It is expected that Institutional Review Board approval will be sought during that course. The intent is that students will be completely ready to begin collecting data for the Capstone early in the Fall of their Senior year, so that the project can be completed, written, and reviewed by the faculty advisor by the end of that semester. Because applications for many graduate programs have deadlines between December and February for admission the following Fall, this timeline permits students to include copies of their final Capstone paper with their graduate applications.

Because of the sequencing of courses, some students—especially our strongest—can jumpstart the process by taking Basic Statistics in the Fall of their Freshman year, then taking both Experimental Psychology and Advanced Statistics in the Fall of their Sophomore year, and taking Advanced Experimental Psychology in the Spring of their Sophomore year. In this case, the research designed during Advanced Experimental Psychology is completed as a Junior, leaving the Spring of the Junior year and the Fall of the Senior year for a second research project that serves as the Capstone.

**Learning community.** Because cohorts of students tend to take the sequence of research courses together, we encourage appropriate collppy

asked to rate the importance of various factors in graduate admissions. In all three areas, **research experience** was the most important factor ahead of invited visits to the department, computer skills, paid or volunteer human service experiences, and a double

strong or broad preparation stressed the importance of research experience. *There is simply no better w*

added). On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the most important, clinical psychology programs rated research experience a 4.28. The second-most important factor, a personal visit to the department, was rated only a 3.14. Ratings were similar for counseling and school psychology graduate programs. It is worth emphasizing that these were graduate programs in professional/applied psychology. We can safely assume that graduate programs in experimental psychology, neuroscience, or other scientific areas would value research experience even more highly. Also, though the survey is older than most of our current students, the emphasis on research experience has certainly not decreased.

With that as prologue, how does our curriculum compare to other schools? In regard to research experience, we are among the best. Table 2 reports the course requirements in

chosen by Millikin for purposes of a variety of comparisons. The other schools in the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin are also included.<sup>1</sup>

Millikin is the only one of the schools that requires both basic and advanced courses in research methods and statistics.

Millikin is among only three schools that require an empirical research capstone. Most schools require a capstone, but it is usually a literature survey, rather than an empirical study. Only about half (13 of 25) of the other schools even *offered* the opportunity for an empirical research capstone. This does not mean that none of their students are doing research, of course, but student research is not built in to the curriculum for **all** students.

**Table 2. Requirements in research methods and statistics.**

**R = required, O = offered**

	Basic Statistics	Advanced Statistics	Basic Research Methods	Advanced Research Methods <sup>2</sup>	Empirical Research Capstone
Millikin University	R	R	R	R	R

Peer Institutions

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<sup>1</sup>





Learning Goals 1 and 3 will also be evaluated by monitoring student research and publication.

**Advising** will be evaluated via the Behavioral Sciences Advising Survey, which has been administered each semester as an anonymous questionnaire. The questionnaire is given to each student during advising for the following semester. Students are requested to turn in the survey (completed or not) in order to have our administrative assistant enter them into a registration group. The survey is included below as Appendix 5.

## **5. Assessment Results**

### **Learning Goal 1.**

As shown in Table 3, grades for the Capstone were generally good. Grades of A and B were earned by all but two students. The single F was earned by a student who simply did not do the expected work

As shown in Table 4, grades across the four research methods courses were also generally good. Grades of A and B were earned by 73% of the students, and Cs by 28%.

### **Learning Goal 2.**

Grades in the four core content areas are reported in Table 5. Grades of A also

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Basic Statistics

A A- B+ B B- C+ C C- D+



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Ability to distinguish between non-scientific v. scientific approaches to mind & behavior, & critique the similarities & differences between psychology & other sciences.	Restates some general ideas but shows no evidence of key distinctions or ability to critique.	Understands most key distinctions; but process of moving from explanation to conjecture to analysis to synthesis is incomplete.	Demonstrates thorough understanding of key distinctions, & can readily move from explanation to conjecture to analysis to synthesis.

Students will demonstrate their

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)

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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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

You just met with your advisor to schedule classes for the Fall "year"

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:



