Council for Higher Education Accreditation

2006 CHEA Award for Institutional Progress in Student Learning Outcomes

Contact Information of Person Submitting Application

Name	**Bryce Sullivan**
Title	**Department Chair**
Institution	**Southern Illinois University Edwardsville**
Department/Program	**Department of Psychology**
Street Address	**Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Campus Box 1121**
City, State, Zip	**Edwardsville, Illinois 62026-1121**
Phone	**(618) 650-5390**
Fax	**(618) 650-5087**
Email	**bsulliv@siue.edu**
Signature	*Bryce Sullivan*

Institutional Endorsement

Chief Executive Officer or Chief Academic Officer

Name	**Vaughn Vandegrift**
Title	**Chancellor**
Institution	**Southern Illinois University Edwardsville**
Phone	**(618) 650-2481**
Fax	**(618) 650-2270**
Email	**vandegr@siue.edu**
Signature	*[signature]*

Application Summary

This section should provide a summary of the award application and include a brief review of the evidence used to address the four award criteria. Please do not exceed 100 words. The text box may be increased in size as necessary.

The senior capstone at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) was highlighted in the 2006 issue of U.S. News and World Report: America's Best Colleges as one of the "stellar" examples nationwide. SIUE's Department of Psychology senior capstone assesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of graduates in a manner that is relevant, verifiable, representative, cumulative, and actionable. Data are provided that show improvements in student learning outcomes corresponding to the evolution of Psychology's senior capstone and related curricular development. The capstone program demonstrates the benefits of an ongoing system of assessment and is one of the many reasons SIUE is considered a premier metropolitan university.

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Award Criteria

CRITERION 1: ARTICULATION AND EVIDENCE OF OUTCOMES

Evidence of development and application of expectations of student learning outcomes in one or more majors, program areas or institution-wide. Describe how the major, program or institution:

- Develops and publicly commits to specific student learning outcomes associated with various courses of study.
- Determines and clearly communicates what counts as evidence that outcomes have been achieved. This may include, e.g.,
    - faculty designed comprehensive or capstone examinations and assignments, or performance on licensing or other external examinations;
    - professionally judged performances or demonstrations of abilities in context, or portfolios of student work compiled over time; or
    - samples of representative student work generated in response to typical course assignments.
- Regularly collects and interprets evidence of outcomes.

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.

A key feature of undergraduate degree programs at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) is that seniors in all programs are required to complete a "senior assignment" that demonstrates breadth commensurate with our general education expectations and proficiency in the academic major. The senior assignment is designed to represent the culmination of the entire undergraduate experience at SIUE, and it integrates the core components of each student's baccalaureate education. This requirement arises from the faculty's belief that the ability to integrate a general education perspective into one's academic discipline is an essential mark of a university-educated person. SIUE's senior assignment fosters creativity and self-reliance by encouraging each student to gain control over his or her own educational experience.

In developing student learning outcomes for the psychology undergraduate major, the Department of Psychology adopted an approach in which the core knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of students were identified. Additionally, specific competencies and expected levels of student performance were delineated. Faculty developed the undergraduate learning goals and review them regularly for possible changes. Faculty also designed reliable and valid methods of assessment that provide direct and representative evidence of students' goal attainment. Faculty are intimately involved in gathering data on student learning, making assessments and interpretations based on the data, and drawing conclusions from the evidence. Through the faculty members' intimate involvement in the senior assignment process from conception to completion, student learning outcomes and curricular and departmental effectiveness become clearly visible. Such clarity of outcomes enable faculty to address student or program deficiencies and nurture student and program strengths. These faculty activities result in a coherent undergraduate experience for students and evaluation processes for assessing student learning goal attainment.

To promote the development of appropriate learning proficiencies for each psychology major, the curriculum is structured in a developmental manner: core knowledge, skills, and abilities developed in lower-level courses are required to achieve mastery of higher-level skills and knowledge. While passing specific courses provides some evidence of whether students have achieved the desired learning outcomes, department faculty believe that a developmentally structured program demands a culminating senior experience to assess whether students have attained the desired knowledge, skills, and abilities. As the department refined its assessment processes over the years, some changes were implemented in the senior assignment capstone, yet it continues to contain features from earlier models. Starting as a psychology graduation requirement in the 1990s, majors are required to design and conduct an empirical research study and publicly present the research findings at departmental poster or paper sessions or at professional research conferences. A nonempirical research paper option was available during some of these years, but few students used this method of completing the senior assignment, and the option was removed for pedagogical reasons.

The following Department of Psychology Undergraduate Baccalaureate Goals are used to assess the senior assignment. Students are expected to . . .

- Clearly and concisely capture the history and context of a specific area of psychology.
- Develop a well constructed and testable hypothesis.
- Design and conduct a methodologically sound research study.
- Correctly analyze and interpret data.
- Relate research findings to a broader cultural, social, historical, ethical, or economic realm.
- Effectively communicate orally.
- Effectively communicate in writing.

The department publicly commits to these learning outcomes in a number of ways. First, department faculty developed and approved the outcomes. Second, these goals were reviewed and approved by school-level and university-level committees. Additionally, university web pages (http://www.siue.edu/assessment/) and department web pages (http://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/undergrad/senior-assignment.shtml) provide extensive information on the learning outcomes.

The learning outcomes (or baccalaureate goals) developed by Department of Psychology faculty were translated into an assessment device for use in evaluating the senior assignment. The instrument utilizes a Primary Trait Analysis technique and is a reliable and valid method of collecting student outcome data. Using the Primary Trait Analysis, the direct assessment of students' performance in the senior capstone experience is achieved. Department faculty periodically re-examine the learning outcomes to assure that they continue to be relevant and comprehensive. All faculty participate in the evaluation of students' senior assignments, and the assessment evaluation form is available to students, alumni, and others on the senior assignment web page.

A successful senior assignment program requires clear evidence of the achievement of learning outcomes at the individual student level and the academic program level. Evidence is collected in a multi-factorial manner and includes: 1) the quantitative results of the Primary Trait Analysis of research presentations at departmental paper or poster sessions across all learning goals; 2) the interpretation of the results of the Primary Trait Analysis integrated with qualitative findings; and 3) behavioral indicators of student outcomes including the number of student research studies presented at peer-reviewed professional conferences. Student research presentations at professional conferences represent a strong external validation that the students are achieving their learning outcomes.

In addition to web page postings, faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders are informed of the learning outcomes in a number of other ways. Relevant objectives and outcomes have been identified for each course and these appear on course syllabi and are discussed in class. Meetings administered by a senior assignment faculty coordinator provide information to students about the purposes and processes of the senior assignment. Students attend these informational meetings through their senior capstone class before they begin their senior assignment projects. Learning outcomes are also discussed in detail in classes that culminate in the senior assignment research projects. Students also receive copies of the Primary Trait Analysis assessments so they may understand what constitutes the evidence of successful learning outcomes. Information on the learning outcomes and senior assignment assessment is also posted on the undergraduate bulletin board located in the main hall of the Department of Psychology.

Evidence of learning outcomes is collected from every student and the results are analyzed and interpreted on a semi-annual and annual basis. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses are conducted on the Primary Trait Analysis and related data. Strengths and weakness in achieving the learning outcomes are identified. The analyses of these strengths and weakness are used to inform curricular changes. As a result of this process, the faculty makes changes to the curriculum in four major areas: 1) course specific changes; 2) changes to course offerings; 3) curricular redesign; and 4) other pedagogical changes.

The Department of Psychology is accountable to the University for its student learning outcomes and regularly reports these outcomes and the changes that are implemented as a result of these findings. The findings are posted on the department's web site and the University's assessment web sites noted above, and they are also presented to the Provost and all of the deans at the Provost's Academic Affairs Council. These processes result in a visible and public statement of student learning outcomes along with plans to address any areas of concern.

The work samples of all students remain posted in the halls of the Department of Psychology to show other students, alumni, and visitors the outcome of our students' work. Photographs of selected student research posters and copies of selected research papers are posted on our submission web page.

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CRITERION 2: SUCCESS WITH REGARD TO OUTCOMES

Evidence of the extent to which expectations with regard to outcomes are successfully met by a major, program or institution-wide. Describe how a major, program or institution:

- Determines whether student learning outcomes have been achieved, either at an individual or aggregate level for the major, program or institution.
- Documents whether actual achievement levels of students are acceptable given the mission, student population and resources available to the major, program or institution.
- Supplements evidence of student achievement levels with information about other dimensions of institutional effectiveness, e.g., graduation, retention, transfer, placement or admission to graduate school.

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.

Student learning is assessed in a number of ways in our department with our senior capstone experience being one of the primary methods. All seniors at SIUE complete a senior project called a senior assignment. In Psychology, seniors complete a research project typically in groups of three or four students in the context of a Senior Capstone in Psychology course. The evolution of the senior assignment process was an integral part of the Department of Psychology's recent curricular redesign. Two new courses were developed that introduce students to the psychology major (Careers in Psychology) and provide a culminating experience (Senior Capstone in Psychology). These courses serve as bookends to a student's psychology undergraduate experience. Along with presenting the senior capstone research projects in a public forum, students individually write thesis-level research papers. Samples of senior capstone research presentations and research papers may be viewed at the submission web page (http://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/chea.shtml). Students' senior capstone research is presented in a departmental research poster session held each semester, at the annual Psi Chi (the honors society in psychology) paper reading session, and/or at the Midwestern Psychological Association's (MPA) annual meeting in Chicago. Each of these presentation venues requires that the research be judged by psychology faculty either from the department, or, in the case of the MPA conference, acceptance to the conference is decided by psychology faculty judges from various institutions.

Over time, the senior assignment capstone experience has changed in response to an ongoing assessment of the program as noted above. Efforts to improve the senior assignment started slowly but gained speed in the 1990s. At that time, a formal assessment process was adopted. Department faculty evaluated the students' research presentations in a department-wide poster session held each semester. The department fine-tuned the evaluation of student achievement through the senior assignment. In the 2002-2003 academic year, faculty began using a Primary Trait Analysis to assess the senior capstone projects. After refining the goals for the senior assignment (available for examination on a department web page: http://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/undergrad/goals.shtml), faculty created an assessment method whereby the senior assignment goals are mapped onto a Primary Trait Analysis rubric. This method of assessment allows faculty to address any areas of deficiency in a more focused manner. Although prior methods of assessment were adequate, the adoption of a Primary Trait Analysis assessment provided the opportunity to make specific curricular and educational interventions based on the learning outcomes generated by faculty and made clear to students in advance. For example, one class or cohort is occasionally lower or higher on a trait or outcome than other classes or cohorts. When this occurs, the faculty are able to address the deficient outcome through a recursive assessment process. Specifically, these differences can be traced to the instructional methods or other course- or program-dependent issues that may have led to the differences in student outcome.

A specific example of this recursive assessment process will show how this works. In 2004, although overall ratings were in the acceptable range, the ratings on some Primary Trait Analysis criteria were lower than expected or desired. One criterion that is somewhat difficult for students to achieve is "relating research findings to a broader cultural, social, historical, ethical, or economic realm." In 2004, 12.4% of our students did not meet faculty expectations in this area. In response to these findings, faculty redoubled instructional efforts to address this learning outcome. In 2005, as a result of this recursive assessment feedback system, only 6.4% of students

did not fully meet expectations in this area. Improvements are still needed, but the evidence of improved outcomes is clear. Assessment results for the past five years are available on our senior assignment web page (http://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/undergrad/senior-assignment.shtml or our submission web page (http://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/chea.shtml).

The mission of the Department of Psychology is to provide excellent and rigorous training in the science and practice of psychology at both the undergraduate and graduate level. We emphasize both research-based and applied experiences in our curricula often through individual, faculty-guided projects and opportunities. Our goal is to develop educated individuals who are competitive in both top quality graduate programs and the job market (http://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/mission.shtml). Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is a public comprehensive university dedicated to the communication, expansion, and integration of knowledge through excellent undergraduate education as its first priority (www.siue.edu/about/mission.shtml). The Department of Psychology and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville are dedicated to excellence and national recognition at the undergraduate level.

Our mission of excellence is supported by a commitment from faculty, staff, and administrators. Funding provided by the Provost and Dean—along with innovative faculty ideas and a strong departmental commitment—gave the Department of Psychology the resources to develop a strong and meaningful senior capstone program. From FY02-FY04 we received annual university funding of approximately $14,500 to support this program. The program's graduate assistant administrative support was the largest budget item. The next largest expenditure was in the area of student travel support. The faculty believe the money devoted to this program, and particularly student travel, is money well spent. The following data show some broad measures of student success related to the program.

Year	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	Averages
Student participants	113	111	128	129	128	122
Percent of students meeting expectations	98.9%	99.5%	98.3%	92.4%	96.0%	97.0%
Percent of students completing department research presentations	96.5%	97.3%	98.4%	100%	99%	98.2%
Percent of students completing external research presentations	27.4%	39.6%	20.3%	42.6%	26.6%	31.3%

These data show a high level of overall success. Starting in the 2002-2003 year, the Primary Trait Analysis assessment method was implemented. As indicated by the data, these newly developed criteria were more rigorous than the prior criteria which resulted in some previously hidden deficiencies being uncovered. Please visit our submission web site for more information (http://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/chea.shtml).

Graduation data, job placements, and admission into graduate school are among the criteria examined to measure students' learning outcomes. Incoming freshman do not enter the major directly but instead declare as majors at some point following admission to the university. Therefore, program graduation data must be looked at retrospectively using the annual surveys of our graduates conducted by our university's Office of Institutional Research and Studies. Baccalaureate surveys one year after graduation show that between 1998 and 2000 65.1% of our program's graduates graduated within 5 years. For the three years between 2001 and 2003, these rates increased to 78.6%. When looking at students graduating within 6 years over these same three-year periods, our program showed an increase of 78.9% to 90.1%. Regarding job placements, for the six years between 1998 and 2003, 94.6% of our graduates were either employed or not seeking employment one year after graduation. We are very pleased with the number of our undergraduate majors furthering their education after their undergraduate degree. Of the 229 survey respondents, 38.1% reported being enrolled in college after graduation with 72% pursuing masters degrees and 10.3% pursuing doctoral degrees. These outcome data are important indicators that should be viewed in the context of the department and university missions. Please visit our submission web site for more data (http://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/chea.shtml)

Time to degree of new freshmen who become psychology graduates	3-year period 1998-2000	3-year period 2000-2003
5 years cumulative percent	65.1%	78.6%
6 years cumulative percent	78.9%	90.1%

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CRITERION 3: INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC ABOUT OUTCOMES

Evidence of the ways in which students and the public are informed of the success of a major, program or institution in achieving these outcomes. Describe how a major, program or institution:

- Routinely provides students and the public with information about major, program or institutional performance in terms of attainment of student learning outcomes, either individual or in the aggregate.
- Supplements this information with additional evidence of the soundness of operation and overall effectiveness of a major, program or institution with respect to mission fulfillment.

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.

The Department of Psychology and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville regularly informs prospective students, current students, alumni, stakeholders, and the general public about our student learning outcomes using a variety of methods. On a department level we make use of department web pages, e-mails to students via the department's listserv for majors, informational bulletin boards in the halls around our classrooms and labs, informational meetings in classes, outreach through our undergraduate advising office, outreach via the department's Psychology Club, and similar activities through our department's Psi Chi chapter (psychology's honors society).

There are a number of communication methods the department uses to provide information to students, alumni, and the public about our program and student learning outcomes including web pages on our department's web site. We have a senior assignment web page (http://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/undergrad/senior-assignment.shtml) a program review web page (http://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/undergrad/index.shtml), and a web page devoted to student research publications (http://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/studentpubs.shtml). Additionally, the department makes use of an e-mail listserv for communicating with our students. Another important method of communicating with students is in-class meetings. As noted earlier, as a result of an ongoing assessment of the major through the senior capstone experience, we significantly redesigned the curriculum and program requirements. To inform students of these changes and new expectations, the Department Chair and Undergraduate Advisor visited eight different psychology classes in the spring of 2005 to make a presentation on the new program and how the senior capstone and other new courses fit into the new program. The slide presentation from these talks may be viewed on our submission web site. Two different department bulletin boards were also devoted to these program changes and improvements. These methods and activities, along with a formalized mentoring system in which students are paired with faculty mentors, provide students with the information and support they need to succeed.

The Department of Psychology, School of Education, and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville all make efforts to inform the public about our accomplishments in the area of student learning. Below are a selection of media reports about the psychology major and the senior assignment.

    Psychology Senior Capstone Newspaper Articles:
        Alton Telegraph article on students' senior assignment projects
        Alestle article on the Psychology Major at SIUE
        Each article is text-linked above and available on our submission web page.

    Senior Capstone Recognition:
    In the 2006 issue of U.S. News and World Report: America's Best Colleges, SIUE's senior capstone was identified as a stellar example of programs that are believed to lead to student success. U.S. News and World Report called these programs: "Programs to Look For." Using ratings from college presidents, chief academic officers, and deans of admission, the SIUE capstone experience was identified as one of the top 15 in the country receiving this distinction. Among those listed are institutions such as Harvard, Duke, MIT, and Princeton. In fact, only 3 public institutions are listed in the top 15.

Additionally, SIUE's senior capstone was also highlighted as "A Campus Example" by the Association of American Colleges and Universities in their recent publication entitled The Art and Science of Assessing General Education Outcomes (2005).

This recognition by U.S. News and World Report and the Association of American Colleges and Universities led to a number of features in media publications. Each of these articles features a discussion of the Department of Psychology's capstone due to its reputation and leadership in the university's program.

These articles include:
An article in The Alestle on the senior capstone
An article in the Edwardsville Intelligencer on the senior capstone
A university press release on the senior capstone

All of these articles are text-linked above and are available on our submission web page.
http://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/chea.shtml

Although the University, the School of Education, and the Department of Psychology are pleased with the media recognition we receive, we do not rely on these outlets exclusively for sharing learning outcome information. Instead, we develop targeted web pages and other publications to inform students, alumni, and the public.

Here is a sampling of University-level web pages related to senior assessment capstone experiences:
The University's Senior Assignment web site http://www.siue.edu/assessment/
The University's AQIP web site http://www.siue.edu/AQIP/
The University's Fact Book web site http://www.siue.edu/factbook/
The University's Fact Book Annex http://www.siue.edu/factbook/annex.shtml
The Fact Book Annex includes information on Baccalaureate Follow-up Surveys, measures of SIUE's Long Term Goals, and other relevant information.

Additionally, the School of Education publishes Strides of Excellence on an annual or semi-annual basis. Strides of Excellence is available on the alumni web page (http://www.siue.edu/education/alumni.shtml). There are articles on the Department of Psychology's senior capstone experience in volumes 1 and 2 (spring) of Strides of Excellence.

The Department of Psychology works to provide excellent and rigorous training in the science and practice of psychology in its efforts with undergraduate students and in all other activities related to its mission. This is a broad mission that encompasses everything we do. Our recent university-sponsored program review highlighted our achievements in many areas. We provide excellence in teaching, research, and service to our majors, the larger student body, and our community. We do all of this while teaching a large number of majors and nonmajors. With 405 undergraduate majors enrolled in the fall of 2005, we are among the largest programs on campus. Nevertheless, our 19 full-time faculty provide individual, student-centered learning activities for all students. The data provided in this report covered a period of significant growth for the Department of Psychology. For example, the number of psychology majors increased 37% from the fall of 2001 to the fall of 2005. Through the addition of new faculty lines, the increase in instructional activities by full-time instructors, the revision of our undergraduate curriculum, the dedication of exceptional faculty, and the participation of highly-engaged students, we continue to make progress in student learning outcomes. The Department of Psychology does all of this in an efficient manner. When compared to the undergraduate costs of all 12 public universities in Illinois over the most recent 5 years for which data is available (FY2000-FY2004), the department's undergraduate costs were 78.8% of the state-wide average for all state-supported departments of psychology.

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CRITERION 4: USING OUTCOMES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Evidence of how information about student leaning outcomes is used to further improve a major, program or institution. Describe how a major, program or institution:

- Incorporates information about success with student learning outcomes into regular discussions and decision-making processes about a major, program or institution.
- Shares information about student learning outcomes across, e.g., departments, faculty and schools.
- Uses information about student learning outcomes when making specific changes in, e.g., curriculum, pedagogy or policy.
- Ensures that evidence of student learning outcomes is used to assure and improve the quality of a major, program or institution.

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.

The Department of Psychology is ever-cognizant of our baccalaureate goals and learning outcomes. We utilize the results of our assessment of student learning outcomes during regular faculty meetings and in the department's decision-making processes in a number of ways. In addition to the reviews of senior assignment capstone projects each semester, there are university-mandated annual reviews of the senior assignment. This annual review and the resulting report are focused on this central question: "Do the complete range of experiences provided to our undergraduate majors result in appropriate student learning outcomes?" This review is also an integral part of the state-mandated department program review that occurs every six years. Continuous assessment and reporting strategies reveal a cumulative and verifiable assessment. Results of student learning outcomes are also shared with the department's Student Advisory Committee. The purpose of the Student Advisory Committee is to be an advocate for the educational interests of the undergraduate and graduate students completing courses and/or programs in the Department of Psychology at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. For example, through working with the Student Advisory Committee, two large samples of psychology majors were surveyed in 2002 and 2005 to assess student satisfaction on a number of dimensions. In ways such as this, the Student Advisory Committee serves to enhance students' abilities to achieve the learning outcomes. Their insights are shared with the department faculty and are used to inform the decisions of the Undergraduate Curriculum Design Committee. The work of the Undergraduate Curriculum Design Committee epitomizes how information about student learning outcomes has a direct impact on the curriculum implemented, pedagogies utilized, and instructional policies created in the Department of Psychology.

Before the Undergraduate Curriculum Design Committee was constituted in the fall of 2002, the results of the department's culminating capstone assessment were solely used to make changes in specific courses or in global senior assignment procedures. Results of the senior assignment were used to address areas of deficiency in a tightly focused manner. Specific interventions were designed for outcomes that were identified as needing additional work. For example, as noted in the response to Criterion 2, some students are occasionally found to be lower or higher on one or more outcomes than another group of students in the same cohort. When this occurs, the faculty are able to address the matter through a recursive assessment process. Differences can be traced to the instructional methods or other course-dependent issues that may lead to differences in student learning outcomes. Department instruction in the areas of statistical techniques and psychological research design provides an example of important pedagogical issues identified by the senior assignment assessment. Specifically, it was discovered that students did not uniformly meet the learning goal to "correctly analyze and interpret data." It was clear that students did not utilize statistical techniques and research methods appropriately in all cases. Changes were made to the statistics class to strengthen the students' conceptual understanding of statistical analyses so they that could more intelligently present them in oral and written communication. In addition, it was found that students were designing studies that demanded more sophisticated statistical analyses than those presented in their statistics class. If the senior assignment was to address student learning outcomes, it was imperative that the research studies not employ statistical analyses more sophisticated than the ones the student had learned. In this instance, a discussion was held with senior assignment faculty requesting that they approve only those research designs that utilize statistics that the students had already learned.

While course specific changes such as the ones described were important results of the learning outcome findings, it became clear that the assessment results also dictated that pedagogical and policy changes be made.

The Undergraduate Curriculum Design Committee used the senior assignment assessment findings and other department assessments as the basis for significant curricular changes that were implemented in the fall of 2005. These curricular changes included the development of a Careers in Psychology course, the consolidation of the statistics and research methods two-course sequence into an integrated two-semester course, and the development of a Senior Capstone in Psychology course in which the senior assignment would be completed.

The development of the Careers in Psychology class was predicated on findings from department assessments indicating that students were not clearly and concisely capturing the history and context of a specific area of psychology (baccalaureate goal 1). Additionally, the class was designed to improve student learning in relating research findings to a broader cultural, social, historical, ethical, or economic realm (baccalaureate goal 5). Furthermore, the course provides information about careers and graduate school issues early in the undergraduate major.

The development of the integrated two-semester course Research Design and Statistics I and II occurred due to findings from the senior capstone experience indicating that students had some difficulty connecting research methodologies with the appropriate statistical analyses. These topics are fundamental in psychology, and a good understanding of these concepts is crucial to achieving many of the student learning outcomes. Given that statistics and research methodology were taught as separate and distinct entities, the difficulty students experienced connecting the two domains is not surprising. However, it was the faculty's attention to student learning outcomes that revealed this difficulty and provided the justification for the new courses that integrated the instruction of statistics and research methods.

The senior assignment experience also provided the evidence and justification needed to pursue creating a culminating senior capstone course. While the Careers in Psychology class is the first bookend of the psychology major, the Senior Capstone in Psychology is the closing bookend. In the past, the senior assignment could be accomplished through two primary activities. While the vast majority of students completed a senior capstone-type research project with a public presentation of the findings, some students completed a comprehensive literature-review research paper. The senior assignment assessment results showed that student learning outcomes were not comparable for these different methods of completing the senior assignment. It was clear that some pedagogical techniques were more effective in achieving the desired learning outcomes than others. These findings served as the basis for a new senior capstone class that is a true culminating senior experience. The senior assignment is the central component of this course—and the senior capstone experience is the culmination of a student's undergraduate experience. As with all curricular changes instituted based on the analysis of the senior assignment data, the effectiveness of the Careers in Psychology course, the two-semester course Research Design and Statistics I and II, and the Senior Capstone in Psychology course will be determined by their impact on student learning outcomes. Psychology faculty are in the process of systematically assessing the effectiveness of our new Careers in Psychology course and the two-semester course Research Design and Statistics I and II. The Department of Psychology is creating and fine-tuning a cutting-edge undergraduate psychology curriculum to prepare students for the 21st Century.

The Department of Psychology shares its findings about student learning outcomes at the university, state, and national levels through consultations, presentations, and publications. At the university level, the department makes university-wide presentations describing its senior assignment processes and culminating senior capstone. Department faculty consulted, for example, with other departments when they were considering modifications to their senior assignment requirements such as the Department of Biology and Department of Economics and Finance. The Department of Economics and Finance redesigned its senior assignment into a senior culminating experience modeled after the Department of Psychology's senior culminating capstone described in this submission.

Department faculty also present findings on student learning outcomes and assessment procedures at the state and national level conferences in the fields of psychology and assessment. The submission web page provides a list of the book chapters and journal articles written about or based on the department's and/or university's program. Within Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, the Department of Psychology's senior capstone experience is recognized as an exemplary model for effectively assessing student learning outcomes and using these outcomes to make informed changes to the curriculum. This recognition is based upon departmental accomplishments as well as contributions to the university's overall assessment program. The program's recognition in the SIUE community was exemplified when the Department of Psychology was chosen by the Provost's Office to make a special senior assignment presentation to the Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees in the spring of 2005. This presentation is available for review on our submission web page.

Psychology's senior capstone is one of the many reasons SIUE is considered a premier metropolitan university.