

Bryce F. Sullivan, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor and Chairperson  
Department of Psychology

0118 Alumni Hall, Box 1121  
Phone: 5390 Fax: 5087  
bsulliv@siue.edu

*Interoffice Communication*

To: Doug Eder, Director  
Undergraduate Assessment & Program Review

From: Bryce Sullivan 

Date: March 17, 2004

Re: Psychology Undergraduate Program Review

The Department of Psychology appreciates the hard work of the Psychology Undergraduate Review Committee in completing its review of our department. The thoroughness and care with which they completed the review is evident in their findings. Our comments on the report are organized based on the Review Committee's recommendations.

**Recommendation #1:** The Department should continue to pursue—and implement—thorough curriculum reform.

**Response:** The department is in the middle of reviewing, modifying, and adopting the Undergraduate Program Committee's curriculum proposal. Our goal is to complete the revisions and adopt the new program by the end of the spring semester. Related to program issues, the Program Review Committee provided some comments in their report from students and faculty regarding the Senior Assignment (SRA). The SRA is one of the major components in our undergraduate redesign currently underway. How well the SRA works in our current curriculum is largely dependent on the two experimental psychology classes each semester in which it is embedded (one summer class). Faculty will have the opportunity to make modifications that will involve more faculty in the SRA, increase the number of research options for students, and better integrate the SRA into the curriculum.

**Recommendation #2:** Continue to refine the advising process.

**Response:** In addition to the full-time professional advisor available to students, all of our psychology majors are assigned a faculty advisor when they declare as majors and they are notified of this assignment by letter. The faculty advisor is available to talk with students about graduate school (prerequisites, application procedures, etc.), career issues (classes to take for various career paths, etc.), program issues, or other academic matters. The department also presents workshops for students each semester on the topics of "Going to Graduate School" and "Getting a Job with a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology." There is also extensive information on these issues in both our Undergraduate Handbook and our department web site. We also have an Ad Hoc Committee on the Assessment of Undergraduate Advising that is currently working on a comprehensive assessment program for our advising office. We anticipate this assessment process will give us timely and pertinent information that will be used to improve our Undergraduate Advising Office. Advising procedures will also be further evaluated as the University moves to a web registration system.

When students take advantage of the advising offered through our Undergraduate Advising Office and/or their assigned faculty advisor, the sequencing of classes (one issue mentioned in the Program Review) is not a problem as long as students register during the early registration periods. Additionally, courses are offered in sufficient quantity and frequency to allow students to complete their program in four years.

**Recommendation #3:** Acquire more space and redevelop existing space.

**Response:** The Program Review Report accurately reports that the department lost significant laboratory space in past years. The loss of space in past years was exacerbated by the subsequent increase in faculty lines and the increased research focus of the new faculty when compared to some of the faculty retirees. The Dean of the School of Education supported major renovations of our allocated space that will take place this summer. These renovations will allow our current space to be optimized for current needs. Even with these renovations, our instructional and research space needs outstrip our space allocations.

**Recommendation #4:** Closely monitor growth and respond accordingly.

**Response:** Psychology is a popular major in a strong department. The report correctly states that the Department of Psychology represented 27% of the Student Credit Hour (SCH) production in the School of Education in FY02 and was among the top five University departments in SCH production. The report also correctly states that faculty are not in favor of capping enrollment at this time. This is in part due to the negative impact this would have on prospective majors. It is also important to provide an appropriate level of course offerings for the University's growing enrollment of students who need to complete Introductory, Social Science Distribution, and elective courses. Additionally, at least ten other departments and programs require that their students take one or more psychology class.

Overall, our five-year growth in majors in the spring semester of 2003 was 22.7% compared to a five-year growth rate of 19.5% in the fall 2003 semester. Additionally, from FY00 to FY02, the average of the lower and upper division Psychology costs as a percent of statewide weighted costs fell 77.85% to 71.80%. We currently have ten tenured faculty, six untenured faculty, and one full-time term instructor. We are conducting three faculty searches (one of these is a replacement position and two are new faculty lines). The report is incorrect where it states we completed eight searches over the past three years. While we conducted some unsuccessful searches that required us to start the search over the next year, we only conducted five successful searches over the past three years.

This academic year we were allocated two new faculty lines. The first was authorized early in the year by Dean Lessen and the second came with the support of Dean Lessen from the allocation of new faculty lines provided by the Provost's Office. These new faculty will help alleviate the large number of waitlisted classes in Psychology unless we receive a corresponding drop in our budgeted funds available to hire part-time instructors. If our budget for part-time instruction is reduced on a one-to-one correspondence with our increase in full-time faculty, limited faculty resources will be reflected in the continuation of significant course waitlists and/or course availability limitations. The department is working with Dean Lessen to develop plans that will minimize the negative effects on students that are related to the high demand for Psychology classes.