

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO  
OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY  
BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Psych-Out:  
Assessment of Educational Outcomes for Psychology Majors at California  
State University, San Bernardino

Mission Statement

Sections Relevant to Undergraduate Education

I. Preamble

We are a teaching and learning community dedicated to the actualization of human potential, an appreciation and respect for individual uniqueness, diversity and achievement, and the pursuit of knowledge within psychology as a scientific discipline and profession.

II. Whom We Serve

The primary recipients of the psychology department's services are students enrolled at California State University, San Bernardino . Students' needs are met by the faculty's active pursuit of teaching and scholarly excellence.

Since students have a diversity of interests and goals, an ever-present danger for departments of psychology is the temptation to attempt to satisfy all demands of the marketplace. The department will judiciously integrate various market demands and student interests to develop a realistic selection of courses/ programs for which we have the resources to maintain high quality instruction.

III. Department's Services

A. Teaching

The goal of the psychology department is to educate in a manner consistent with our students' personal interests and career objectives, and in a manner representing and upholding our professional responsibilities and guidelines. As a result we expect to create a positive reputation and market demand for graduates of our programs.

B.A. The general objectives of the Bachelor of Arts in psychology are to present the theoretical and methodological aspects of psychology to the undergraduate majoring in this field and provide service courses as electives for students throughout the university. The primary purpose of the degree program is to provide the student with a well-rounded, broadbased knowledge of the science of psychology. The degree program should: 1) prepare students for a variety of professional careers that benefit from undergraduate psychology preparation, 2) provide a strong general education that prepares students for careers emphasizing writing, quantitative, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills, 3) prepare students for paraprofessional careers in counseling or related fields where graduate training may not be necessary, and 4) provide an excellent base for those intending to enter graduate school.

#### Goals and Objectives for Psychology Majors:

The following goals and objectives are derived from our mission statement and appear in our assessment plan.

Goal 1. Psychology students will have substantial knowledge of the major theoretical and methodological aspects of psychology and psychological inquiry. Every student will be able to discuss and cite examples of

- \* Differences and similarities among psychology's schools of thought as exemplified by the cognitive, behavioral, psychodynamic, humanistic, and biological perspectives
- \* Developmental, cultural, and other social influences on thought, behavior, and affect
- \* Basic principles of research design
- \* Concepts in probability as applied to hypothesis testing

Goal 2. The Psychology Department will help students develop an appreciation and respect for individual uniqueness and diversity and individual differences in human behavior. Every student will be able to

discuss theories of the psychological underpinnings of socially-relevant issues such as

- \* Topics in prejudice and discrimination
- \* Applications of psychology to contemporary issues such as violence, mental illness, homelessness, or physical handicaps
- \* Variety of definitions of "normal"

Goal 3. We strive to advance the intellectual development of our students by engaging them in activities that will encourage a commitment to life long learning. We want our graduates to voluntarily engage in

- \* Reading and information gathering from other media formats and other learning activities that foster intellectual growth and participatory citizenship

Goal 4. The psychology curriculum will enhance intellectual skills that are broadly applicable in work and graduate school including written and oral communication, quantitative and computer skills, and critical thinking. Our graduates will be able to

- \* Write effectively in multiple formats, including the style of the American Psychological Association
- \* Defend and explain ideas orally in a clear and nondogmatic manner
- \* Create and understand tables and graphs
- \* Demonstrate information gathering skills, which includes electronic searches of data bases
- \* Support conclusions with reasons and evidence

Goal 5. Psychology students will develop their interpersonal skills

and high ethical standards so that they can participate in and lead groups in accord with ethical principles. They will demonstrate these skills by

- \* Working effectively and cooperatively in groups
  - \* Adapting to organization rules and procedures
  - \* Instilling confidence and demonstrating leadership
- Outcomes Assessment

We have planned multiple measures to assess this broad range of goals.

#### Outcomes Measure #1. Linking Teaching and Learning Experiences to Learning Outcomes

Outcomes measures that ignore learning experiences are of limited usefulness because they do not permit an assessment of the practices that are associated with good learner outcomes. For the first assessment measure, we tallied learning experiences for every course in the psychology curriculum. We assessed the amount and type of writing that students are required to do in each class, we looked at oral communication (especially type such as whether it was a formal presentation, informal discussion, etc.), library and other information gathering tasks, type of experimental and data collection and analysis required, and other group and individual learning activities. The results of this survey are available to interested parties. In brief, we found that all students can expect to serve as a subject in experiments, to conduct research with a group, conduct interviews, study cases, analyze data with statistical packages, and write lengthy integrative papers. The average student can expect to read 3630 pages of text in the psychology major. Ethical issues are discussed in several courses including the ethics of animal research, therapy issues, and legal aspects of psychology.

#### Outcome Measure #2. Student Self-Assessments of Their Learning

Responses were collected from almost 100 senior students regarding their perceptions of their own abilities, their life style choices (e.g., drinking

alcohol, voting, reading the news section of newspapers). We also collected overall satisfaction ratings and suggestions for improving the psychology major.

Outcomes Measure #3.

Examination of Work Products

A random sample of approximate 60 papers written in the laboratory course that serves as our capstone experience in the major were collected (5 from each section). These will be assessed by two impartial judges for evidence of clear and effective writing, ability to draw conclusions that are supported by the data, data analysis, synthesis of numerous sources of information, understanding psychological principles, and use of research materials. We would like to be able to use outside graders for these papers, but we would have to pay someone outside of the department, so it will have to be done by psychology faculty.

Outcomes Measure #4.

Alumni Surveys

We plan to collect data from alumni regarding the extent to which they believe that they were prepared for work and graduate school. We will ask specific questions about their thinking and communicating skills, content area knowledge, and interpersonal skills. We cannot undertake this outcome measure without funding because of the costs involved.

Outcomes Measure #5.

Thinking and Writing Skills

We plan to administer a test of critical thinking to a sample of seniors and to compare their scores on subscales and total with those at other comparable institutions. This test will also provide a writing sample.

Outcomes Measure #6.

Standardized Test Scores

For those students who take the GREs, we will examine scores to determine how well our "top" students are doing compared to those at comparable institutions.

Psych-Out:  
Assessment of Educational Outcomes for Psychology Majors  
At California State University, San Bernardino

Background and Introduction:

The Psychology Department is committed to providing a high quality education to all of its students. The purpose of an educational assessment is to allow us to collect data that we can use to determine how well we are achieving this goal. Although students and institutions are assessed in numerous ways for a variety of audiences (e.g., students receive grades in their classes, institutions are examined by accrediting agencies, faculty are evaluated by numerous committees), none of these traditional evaluations address the more difficult and more relevant issues that link educational practices to student learning. What do we want our students to know and be able to do when they complete their program of study? Which educational experiences and practices produce the desired outcomes? What are faculty goals for the students in their classes? How do students perceive their educational gains and their readiness for life after graduation?

An assessment of student educational outcomes was initiated in 1995 as a first step toward operationalizing the desired outcomes and linking learning experiences to the attainment of desired outcomes.

The second phase is underway for 1996. We are collecting random samples of student papers written in the advanced laboratory course that serves as our capstone experience. These will be assessed along several dimensions including writing ability, ability to analyze and understand original data, library skills, ability to synthesize information, and an overall score.

A third phase is being planned. We have requested funds to collect information from our alumni, a critical component in the assessment package.

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- \* Encourage reading, media selections, and other learning activities that foster intellectual growth and participatory citizenship

Goal 4. The psychology curriculum will enhance intellectual skills that are broadly applicable in work and graduate school including written and oral communication, quantitative and computer skills, and critical thinking.

- \* Effective writing in multiple formats, including the style of the American Psychological Association

- \* Defend and explain ideas orally in a clear and nondogmatic manner

- \* Ability to create and understand tables and graphs

- \* Information gathering skills, which includes electronic searches of data bases

- \* Appropriate generalizations from empirical findings

- \* Ability to support conclusions with reasons and evidence

Goal 5. Psychology students will develop their interpersonal skills and high ethical standards so that they can participate in and lead groups in accord with ethical principles.

- \* Work effectively and cooperatively in groups

- \* Adapt to organization rules and procedures Instill confidence and demonstrate leadership

Procedure for assessing these goals and objectives:

The process of outcomes assessment began with a conceptualization

of what the psychology department is "about." In other words, what we want to promote in the students we serve. After multiple revisions, the department articulated a "Mission Statement" that sets forth in broad terms the educational objectives for our students. This process was followed by statements about more specific and more easily measurable goals. We then surveyed faculty about the classes they taught as a way of examining faculty beliefs about how to promote high quality learning and the nature of the learning activities that take place in their classrooms. In addition, all senior students who are psychology majors were asked to complete a survey instrument that asked about the amount and type of learning activities in which they engaged and asked them to reflect on their learning and their future plans. Additional data were taken from student and other institutional records.

We had planned a similar survey of our alumni, but were unable to administer this portion of the assessment because an alumni survey was being conducted by the Office of Institutional Research. The department was asked not to send a separate mailing to our alumni at the same time that Institutional Research was conducting its alumni survey.

#### Part 1: What Happens in Our Classrooms

As a means of examining the effectiveness of the psychology program, curricular offerings, learning activities, and student and faculty perspectives were examined.

With multiple important goals for our students, a first step in examining whether we are promoting them in our students is to look at what is happening in our classrooms. Are we teaching in ways that are consistent with the goals that we espouse?

#### Basic Skills:

Four basic skill areas are listed in our departmental mission statement as goals for our students: writing, quantitative, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills. A fifth skill that is not stated explicitly, but is also inherent in our departmental mission, is the development of skills in the

use of computers. These goals appear in recently published documents on undergraduate education such as the Association of American College's Study in Depth, Psychology (McGovern, Furumoto, Halpern, Kimble, & McKeachie, 1991), the American Psychological Association Handbook for Enhancing Undergraduate Education in Psychology (McGovern, 1993), and articles on education that have appeared in the American Psychologist. In order to determine if we are teaching in ways that help students develop these skills, a typical course pattern for a psychology major was examined for evidence that students are writing, speaking, using thinking and mathematical skills, working with computers, and working cooperatively in a variety of group settings.

A typical psychology major will take an introductory course, a course in statistics, a course in experimental methods followed by an advanced course in research in a subarea of psychology, two courses from psychology's basic processes ("core" or fundamental courses), two courses selected from the various fields of psychology, an applied course, and 20 units of upper-division electives. These courses are described in greater detail in the section on curriculum. These courses are the minimum requirements for an undergraduate degree in psychology from California State University, San Bernardino. Most of our students take additional course work in psychology.

Psychology faculty responded to an anonymous questionnaire in which they answered questions about the courses that they teach. Responses were averaged by curricular category so that a learning activity profile could be calculated for a hypothetical average student in psychology.

### Written Communication

Courses in the psychology major comprise only a portion of students' total undergraduate courses. Many required courses in the general education portion of their degree require extensive writing, including the lower division requirements in composition, critical thinking, and communication, and most importantly in the university-wide upper-division writing course. Other courses in general education (e.g., perspective on gender, race and racism, etc.) require that students express their thoughts and knowledge in writing. Many elective courses also include written assignments. As seen in the data below, students also

write in the courses in their major.

As might be expected, instructors in the large lecture introductory class, with class size in the hundreds, tend to use multiple choice examinations. In general, the amount and type of writing increases in quantity and sophistication in the upper-division courses:

Introductory Psychology:

Written assignments are rarely used.

Research sequence (statistics, experimental laboratory course, an advanced laboratory course):

When students complete this three-course sequence, they can be expected to have written between 20-30 typed pages which include findings from their own research and library work. In addition, they will have written essay answers to examination questions, completed journals, and other sorts of writing that include the writing of instructions to be read to research subjects.

Basic Processes: 2 courses selected from a list

On average, students will write approximately 14 pages in each class for a total of 28 typed double-spaced pages. Multiple choice questions are also used frequently on examinations in these courses. The most frequently cited type of writing assignment is summaries of research.

Fields of Psychology: 2 courses selected from a list

Approximately 2/3 of the instructors in these courses require students to write a paper out of class. Most of these papers are based on independent library research. The average length of the required paper is 8 pages. In addition, approximately 1/3 of the instructors in these classes report using essay examination questions. Assuming that students select two courses from this category, the hypothetical average psychology major will write approximately 6-7 pages in these courses.

Applications of Psychology:

Students are required to write a paper in every course that is included in this category. Most of these courses also include essay examinations. The length of the written assignments vary considerably, with an average of approximately 5-9 pages.

Elective Courses in Psychology:

Students select 20 units of elective coursework that includes any psychology course that is not taken to fulfill one of the required categories. These courses can be selected from any of those already listed (e.g., a second course from the applied area) or any course that does not fit into one of the categories (e.g., advanced statistics, independent research). There is tremendous diversity in these courses. It is possible to select courses with extensive writing components or with none.

Conclusion: Students will be required to do a considerable amount of writing within the coursework in the psychology major. Many of the instructors reported that they require multiple drafts of papers, so revising one's writing will also be a common experience. Faculty are clearly teaching in ways that will allow students to practice and thereby enhance their writing skills.

Oral Communication

The ability to express one's self is an important determinant of success in virtually all work and other life settings. The general education course in oral communication is specifically designed to help students improve in this area. It is also a goal for students in the psychology major.

Introductory Psychology:

Students in this large lecture class can expect some small group activities and informal opportunities to speak up. Oral communication cannot be a major component in a large class.

Research sequence (statistics, experimental laboratory course, an advanced laboratory course):

Experiences in oral communication are significant in both type and amount in these classes. Students can expect a substantial amount of group work which requires oral expression. They will be required to make formal oral presentations and to provide oral instructions to subjects.

Basic Processes: 2 courses selected from a list

Fields of Psychology: 2 courses selected from a list

Applications of Psychology:

Virtually every instructor in these upper division classes reports that informal class discussions are a regular part of the class, although there were no measures of how often such discussions actually occur or the extent to which all students participate. In addition, a variety of small group experiences were reported that included simulations, role playing, and other verbal activities. Students can also expect an average of two formal presentations as part of this group of classes.

Elective Courses in Psychology

As explained above, students have a wide variety of types of classes to select from for their elective credit. Selections can vary from courses that require a great deal of speaking to those that require very little. It is probably not meaningful to describe an average experience.

Conclusion: Students will be required to make formal and informal oral presentations in many of their classes.

Quantitative and Computer Skills

One of the goals of the psychology department is to produce students who can use numbers in a thoughtful manner so that quantitative information can be understood and communicated. At this time, the thoughtful use of numbers also includes the ability to interpret and use computer packages and computer services that manipulate, communicate, and gather quantitative information. In psychology, and most other areas of social and physical science, the ability to understand and conduct research is a critical part of this objective.

Introductory Psychology:

A standard part of every introductory psychology textbook is a chapter on research methods.

Research sequence (statistics, experimental laboratory course, an advanced laboratory course):

All of the courses in this sequence deal the topics that are included in the quantitative and computer skills objectives. Students in the undergraduate statistics course can expect to be given 75 statistical problems to solve (on average). Approximately half of the professors who teach this class use statistical computer programs in this course (StatStar and SPSS were mentioned). The instructors in the laboratory research course do not use computers for data analysis, but almost all of the instructors in the advanced laboratory course use them. Most students will use data-analytic statistical packages in 2 of the 3 courses in this sequence. All of the courses require data analysis and presentation. Students are required to read, comprehend, and communicate statistical and other quantitative information in these courses.

Basic Processes: 2 courses selected from a list

Fields of Psychology: 2 courses selected from a list

Applications of Psychology:

In these course categories, statistical and other quantitative problems are assigned only in the applications category. None of the courses in these categories use data analytic statistical programs. Almost all of the courses require students to read research that is based on the collection and interpretation of statistical information.

Elective Courses in Psychology

Because elective credits can be selected from any course offering in psychology, there is much variability in student experiences. Students in the advanced statistics course (offered for the first time in 1995), will be given numerous statistical problems. Students with electives from other categories may have none.

### Conclusion:

The quantitative and computer skills are mainly developed in the three courses in the research sequence. Other courses require that students understand basic concepts, but, for the most part, they do not seem to be taught in other courses.

### Critical Thinking Skills

Virtually everyone agrees that we want students who can think effectively and that instruction in critical thinking is an important part of a college education. There is, however, not much understanding about the nature of critical thinking skills among most college faculty. Faculty almost always report that they require that their students think well. The distinction here is between the use of critical thinking skills and instruction in critical thinking. Just as writing is used in multiple settings, it is consciously taught as a subject matter only in those courses that are specifically designed for that purpose. It is the difference between an assignment that requires students to compare and contrast two major theories in psychology and instruction on how to compare and contrast theories. We believe that thoughtful learning occurs in all of our classes, but systematic instruction in topics such as how to weigh conflicting evidence, recognize propaganda, and solve problems, probably is not done systematically in most of the classes.

There is a psychology course in critical thinking (and other departments on campus) that is part of the general education package. As part of the advanced laboratory course in cognition, one research group investigated the question of whether or not students who took a course on critical thinking scored higher on a Piagetian measure of intellectual development. They found that critical thinking courses were associated with higher levels of cognitive development in the students who had taken them. Despite this positive finding, specific questions about the enhancement of critical thinking skills in each psychology course were not asked because of the expected bias in answering such questions, general misunderstanding of the difference between using thinking skills and teaching them, and the assumption that all thoughtful teaching would encourage their use and development.

### Ways of Enhancing Content-Area Knowledge

## Textbooks, Library Usage, and Other Learning Experiences

All college-level courses are designed, in part, to help students acquire the knowledge of a content area. This objective can be met in numerous ways. The table below lists the average number of textbook pages that students are assigned, the number of films that they are shown, library assignments, and other learning activities that were listed by the faculty.

Course	pages assigned to be read (total average)	library assignments	films/ other multimedia	other activities
Introductory	535	no	2	subject in experiment
Research Sequence	835(260+250 + 325)	yes--research topics	2 (total in all 3 classes)	conduct research group work
Basic Processes	840 (in 2 classes)	yes	3	group work guest speakers
Fields of Psychology	1000 (in 2 classes)	yes	3	interviews, case studies, group work
Applications of Psychology	420	yes	2	simulations, case studies, data analysis, group work

## Conclusion:

Students obtain content information in a variety of ways, but despite the variety of possible options, virtually all faculty use textbooks. The average student can expect to read 3,630 pages of text material, not including the reading that is needed for the additional 20 units of elective credit in the major.

### Interpersonal Skills

The goal of enhancing interpersonal skills is promoted through a variety of activities that require student-student, student-teacher, and student-subject interactions. The research courses are based on group activities in which the students assume much of the responsibility for the completion of research projects. Other sorts of interpersonal activities are listed above. There is ample opportunity to develop these skills given the high level of activity required of students.

### Ethical Issues

Many courses include sections on ethical issues. Instructors in courses in every category have indicated that they teach some topics that relate to ethics. Some focus on legal aspects, others on the ethics of research, therapy, dealing with families, especially children, and the ethical use of animals.

## Part II. Student Perceptions

Sixty-four students, who were senior psychology majors, completed a survey instrument in which they were asked questions about their educational experiences and the activities that they engaged in both in and out of school. We wanted to understand how our students spend their time while studying and in free time pursuits. We hoped to find that our majors who had reached senior status were curious about the world, open to new ideas, physically healthy, and showed a variety of good citizen indicators. Of course, we realize that we cannot infer cause from these data, but if the students had eschewed all intellectual activities, we would know that we were not successful in developing the type of person who personified our departmental objectives.

Students were asked to provide their identification numbers so that their responses could be matched to university data such as actual grade point average, years to graduate, etc. In interpreting these data, readers are urged to keep in mind that, although students were assured that their responses would be completely confidential (except for group level reporting), they were not anonymous.

Female: 42 (65% of respondents)  
 31.7 mean age  
 3.40 (GPA)

Male: 13 (20% of respondents)  
 28.3 mean age  
 2.80 (GPA)

(data are missing on some variables)

The GPAs were significantly higher for females than males, but the age differences were not significantly different.

Reading: (sexes are listed separately only when there are significant differences)

average number of textbooks read per quarter	3.2
Other books read (average per quarter)	1.5
Days per week newspaper is read	2.9

sections of paper of read (days per week)

Front section news	1.2
sports section	
female	1.8
male	1.4
business section	1.7
home/life	1.6

entertainment	1.5
comics	1.6
editorial	1.6
advice column	1.8
other – listed horoscope, classified, and crossword puzzles	

Average number of hours spent watching television per week 9.0

What is usually watched?	# who watch out of 64
news	46
movies	22
cartoons	4
talk shows	14
situation comedies	31
game shows	6
music videos	8
educational shows	24
tabloid news	2
soap operas	6

#### Computer Usage

Average number of hours per week on computer	
female	18.5
male	16.3
word processing	3.1
computer games	2.1
data analysis	2.3
on-line service	2.0
draw or music	2.0
other	2.7

#### Employment

female	28 employed
male	12 employed

Average number of hours employed per week, if employed

female	28.0
male	33.5

Type of employment: counter help (3), student assistant (4), crime analysis (1), law enforcement (1), post office (2), food service (4),

sales (6), Betty Ford Center (1), counselor (5), grocery clerk (1), government supervisor (1), learning disabled (1), manager (3), dock worker (1), administrative assistant (2), parts clerk (1), computer technician (1), bookkeeper (1), radiation therapist (1)

Do you have children?

female	14 yes (7 have 2 or more children)
male	0 yes

Activities (on average) per month

attend a party	1
read magazines	3.5 (number read)
listen to music	23 times
discuss politics	4.9
attend a sporting event	.5

On average, how many times do you speak up in a psychology class (per quarter)? 3.4 times

On average, how many times a month do you drink beer?

	# responding
Never	41
Once	3
2-5 time	11
6-10	5
15-30	4

On average, how many times a month do you drink an alcoholic drink other than beer?

Never	31 (48%)
Once	13
2-5 times	14
6-10	2
11-15	4

On average, how many times a month do you smoke?

Never	56 (87%)
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1-5 times	2
6-600 times	4

Student self-ratings on the following skills: (1 = very poor, 7 = excellent)

Write a coherent essay on a controversial topic	5.5
Speak effectively	4.3
Analyze data with a calculator	4.4
Analyze data on a computer	
Female	4.0
male	4.8
Read a research article in a journal	5.0
Use library database	5.2
Understand research issues	5.5
Think about political issues	5.0
Think about interpersonal issues	6.0

Number of faculty in psychology you would be comfortable with in informal discussions	4.0
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Overall quality of education at California State University, San Bernardino (1 = very poor 6 = excellent)	4.5
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Overall quality of education in psychology classes	
female	5.0
male	4.5

Have your experiences at California State University, San Bernardino changed your feelings or actions toward racial, ethnic, or other groups (e.g., older adults, the disabled, gays and lesbians)?

Yes	36(56%)
No	27(42%)

If yes, are you more or less tolerant?

More	32
Less	3

If possible, explain what experiences caused the change?

More educated friends	8
graduate school preparation	1
critical thinking class	2
race and gender class	6
studied abroad	1
dorm life	1
teachers sharing self	1
religion	1
competition	1
financial aid	1
I grew up	2
more broad minded	5
less threatened by others	1
felt better about self	3
more aware/ more tolerant	15
angry at whites and Mexicans	1
more open in class	1
more serious about education	1
personal growth	2
angry at minorities	1

What do you plan to do after graduation?

Attend graduate school	40
Full-time employment	15
Take time off	6
Don't know	3

Do you have any suggestions for improving your education as a psychology major?

Less reading	1
More coverage of public issues	1
More graduate school preparation	5
Master's program	1
Better counseling	8
Ethnic programs	1
Introduction to instructors	2

more real world experience	3
offer classes more often	1
more research preparation	1
psychology database	1
professor acceptance	1
more night classes	2
central location	2
older-student issues	1
more in-depth classes	1
more films & speakers	1

#### Conclusion:

Senior-level students in psychology are, in general, pleased with their education in their major and at California State University, San Bernardino. They tend to rate themselves quite high on a number of important skills, with highest ratings on interpersonal areas and lowest on public speaking. A large proportion of our seniors plan to attend graduate school. A majority are female, with sex differences most pronounced in their grade point averages, their likelihood of being parents, and their satisfaction with the classes in psychology. A majority believe that their attitudes toward other groups have changed, and in most cases, it has become more favorable. Many are able to identify experiences that they believe, were responsible for the change. Although there were many suggestions for improving the undergraduate major in psychology, no single suggestion or issue emerged as a predominant concern.

#### Summary and Future Directions

The Psychology Department faculty engage in a variety of activities that are designed to promote the objectives of our program. There are many indications that courses are being taught in ways that should enhance student knowledge of the field and the development of their intellectual skills. Senior students are pleased with their educational experiences, with a large proportion planning for additional education.

There are many limitations to the present assessment. Of course, we want empirical data to support students' beliefs about their skills, knowledge, and abilities. We had planned to use the information collected by Institutional Research in its alumni survey to see how graduates actually

fare after they leave the university. Did they find that they needed more mathematics, or computer skills, or knowledge in a specific area? Unfortunately, the response rate to the Alumni Survey was too low to allow generalizations. An alumni survey is clearly needed to provide the real follow-up to our major. The alumni survey should also be followed by a phone survey of those types of employment where our students are most likely to find employment after graduation. What skills and knowledge do prospective employers want in their entry-level employees (our graduates)?

This assessment does not include our master's programs. There are many important differences among them, so separate assessments of each, with an adequately large response from students, faculty, and alumni, are needed.

We also do not know about student perceptions for those students who leave the program prior to their senior year. These are very difficult data to obtain because majors often do not declare their intentions until their senior year; many begin college with little knowledge about the field of psychology; and many transfer to other institutions and, thus, are not true "losses" with regard to obtaining their educational goals.

Finally, more refined measures about the effectiveness of various educational practices would be very helpful. Are there demonstrable benefits to the large investment that the department makes in its laboratory classes? Do student patterns of course-taking make a difference in student outcomes? There is an endless list of educational questions that still need to be addressed in future educational assessments.

References

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McGovern, T. V. (Ed.), (1993). Handbook for Enhancing Undergraduate Education in Psychology (pp. 23-46). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

## A First-Year Plan For Assessing Outcomes in Psychology

We plan to start relatively small, use data that are already available and plan for systematic collection of data that can be used to inform decisions.

1. Use the departmental mission statement to identify goals.
2. Begin a data base consisting of
  - a. Data available from institutional research
  - b. Data from faculty about activities and assignments in various classes
  - c. Data from seniors concerning their beliefs about what they know, their career plans, and their experiences as students
  - d. Work samples from seniors that show their writing, ability to synthesize and comprehend complex material, and their knowledge of some area of psychology
3. Analyze relationships among these variables - - for example, is there a relationship between number of units taken in psychology, student perceptions, and their ability to explain difficult concepts? Do re-entry students have a higher (or lower) retention rate than traditional students?
4. Write and plan to mail an alumni survey. Include an invitation to an alumni dinner and department newsletter. If possible, link it to an event such as the retirement of a faculty member. Plan to mail survey and have dinner in Fall of next year.
5. Pretest an instrument to assess the thinking skills that students use such as recognizing the need for a control group, understanding the difference between

correlations and cause, and looking at the evidence that supports claims.

Instrument will include writing samples to assess thinking and writing.

6. Plan to collect data from entering students next year from all transfer and native juniors. These data will provide information about our current majors and provide baseline data that can be used to measure student gains.

## Request for Data from Institutional Research for Use in Outcomes

### Assessment

For the department:

- number of declared majors
  - by sex
  - by ethnicity
  - by sex and ethnicity
- retention data by sex and ethnicity (retention can be defined in several ways- - we can discuss this or use the operational definitions that Institutional Research has been using)
- term by term enrollments from 1993 to present
- graduation rates by sex and ethnicity
- GPA's by term for department, school, and university (separate for graduate and undergraduate courses)

For Psychology Majors listed by ID

- high school GPA
- overall GPA
- GPA in major
- SATs
- ACTs
- ELM
- EPT
- sex
- ethnicity
- identify re-entry students (over 25?)
- list of electives outside of major
- zip code

- number of units taken in psychology
- % credit units taken after 4pm

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT  
COURSE INFORMATION SURVEY

To: All Instructors in Psychology (full and part-time)

Please fill out a separate form for each different course you have taught within the last 2 years. If you have taught more than one section of a course, then complete this form for the most recent section that you have taught. Data will be aggregated so that information about individual instructors cannot be determined from results.

1. Title of Course:
2. Number of Course:
3. Number of hours course meet per week:
4. Number of students enrolled in the course:
5. Is there a laboratory component to this course?

In this course, are students required to

6. Write a paper outside of class      Y      N

If yes, do they need to use the library for the paper?

Y      N

If yes, how long are the papers (on average) - - typed and double space?

7. Write answers to essay questions in class?      Y      N

If yes, how long are the answers (on average) for the entire quarter?

8. Complete an assignment using the library that does not require writing a  
paper?      Y      N

If yes, do they need to use Psychlit or other computerized database?      Y      N

9. Read a textbook (or similar information source)?            Y        N  
    If yes, how many pages of text are they required to read?
10. Analyze data using a calculator?            Y        N  
    If yes, how many data-analytic problems are required?
11. Analyze data using a computer program?            Y        N  
    If yes, which programs are they required to use?
12. Read original journal articles?    Y        N  
    If yes, how many?
13. Summarize and explain complex material such as an original source (not a  
    text) or computer read-out?            Y        N
14. Make a formal (prepared) oral presentation?    Y        N  
    If yes, how long are they required to speak?
15. Make informal oral presentations?
16. Engage in cooperative group work?            Y        N
17. Answer multiple choice or fill-in exam questions?            Y        N
18. Use on-line computerized data bases (e.g., on-line newspapers, internet  
    information)?    Y        N
19. In this class, do you discuss or read about ethical issues?            Y        N  
    If yes, what ethical issues are raised?

20. What other activities, if any, are used in this class (e.g., interviews, case studies, simulations)?

21. Do you show films in this class?            Y        N

If yes, how many films?

21. Anything else that would be useful in understanding what students do and learn in this class?



Editorial section  
Advice columns (e.g., Dear Abbey)  
Other Sections: (fill in)

12. During an average week how many hours do you spend watching television?
13. Circle the types of television shows that you watch regularly:  
(Circle as many as apply)
- |            |                    |                   |
|------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| news       | situation comedies | tabloid news      |
| movies     | game shows         | prime-time dramas |
| cartoons   | music videos       | soap operas       |
| talk shows | educational shows  | news magazines    |
14. During an average week, how many hours do you spend on a computer?
15. Which of the following computer activities do you regularly use?  
Circle as many as apply and fill in names:
- Word processing (what program)
- Games (which ones)
- Analyze data (which programs)
- Use data service (e.g., Compserve)
- Draw or play music
- Other (please list)
16. During an average week, how many pages do you write (typed and double spaced equivalent)?
17. Are you employed outside of school?  
If yes, how many hours per week do you work during school term?  
What is your employment?
18. Do you have children for whom you are responsible?      Y      N  
If yes, how many?

If yes, what are their ages?

19. During an average month, how many times do you

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| visit a library?                             | play sports?             |
| see a movie?                                 | go out on a date?        |
| attend a concert or play?                    | attend a party?          |
| read a magazine?                             | attend a sporting event? |
| listen to music?                             | smoke?                   |
| talk about politics?                         | drink a beer?            |
| talk about school related topics?            |                          |
| drink an alcoholic beverage other than beer? |                          |

20. In an average psychology course or 11 weeks, how often do you speak up in class (either to ask or answer a question or express an opinion)?

Circle one:

Never    Very Rarely    Rarely    Often    Very Often    Every Class

In the following questions, we are interested in your beliefs about how well you can perform certain academic skills.

Please use the numbers from 1 to 7 to indicate your beliefs

1 = I am very poor at this task.

2 = I am poor at this task.

3 = I am below average at this task.

4 = I am about average at this task.

5 = I am above average at this task.

6 = I am good at this task.

7 = I am excellent at this task.

How well can you...

21. Write a coherent essay about a controversial topic

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

22. Speak effectively in front of an audience

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

23. Analyze data using a calculator

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

24. Analyze data on a computer

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

25. Read an original research article from a journal

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

26. Find information in the library using a computerized data base

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

27. Think effectively about research issues

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

28. Think effectively about political issues

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

29. Think effectively about interpersonal issues

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

30. With how many faculty at CSUSB do you feel comfortable chatting informally?  
(write in the number)

31. How would you rate the overall quality of the education that you receive at  
CSUSB? (Circle one)

Very Poor      Poor      Average      Good      Very Good      Excellent

32. How would you rate the overall quality of the teaching that you receive in your  
psychology classes? (Circle one)

Very Poor      Poor      Average      Good      Very Good      Excellent

33. What do you plan to do after graduation?

Attend graduate school

Get a full-time job

Get a part-time job

Care for children or dependent adults full-time

Don't Know

Take some time off to rest or vacation

Other: (fill in)

34. Do you believe that your experiences at CSUSB have changed your feelings or actions toward racial, ethnic, or other groups (e.g., older adults, the disabled, gays and lesbians)?            Y            N

If yes, please indicate whether you have become more or less tolerant of racial, ethnic, or other groups.

More tolerant            less tolerant            no change

If possible, explain how you have changed and what experiences caused the change.

35. Please let us know what you think about your education as a psychology major at CSUSB. Do you have any suggestions?