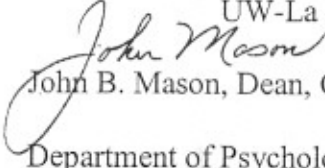


UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
LA CROSSE

March 3, 2005

TO: Professor Richard Pein, Chair, Academic Program Review Committee,
UW-La Crosse

FROM:  John B. Mason, Dean, College of Liberal Studies, UW-La Crosse

RE: Department of Psychology Review

Dear Professor Pein:

I have received from the Department of Psychology a copy of its self-study document for its external review, a copy of the external review performed by Professor William Addison of Eastern Illinois University, and a copy of the Department's response to the external review. The purpose of this letter is to acknowledge that the review process has been completed and to advise the Academic Program Committee of the response to the review by the College of Liberal Studies.

First, I want to apologize for the tardiness in my response. The College is now in the process of getting all its departmental and program reviews on schedule.

My foremost response to the review process of the Department of Psychology is that it has underscored my initial perceptions of the department. Like Professor Addison, I believe the Department of Psychology to be a strong and vibrant department. It has an excellent curriculum, a dedicated and talented faculty, and outstanding leadership. Professor Betsy Morgan, the Chair, is to be commended for her effective oversight of both the department and its self study.

I offer the following specific responses to issues raised by the Department and Professor Addison:

1. Additional faculty position: The College agrees with the conclusion that the Department of Psychology is hardworking. Moreover, shrewd decisions have been reached for maximum utilization of human resources in the Department; the Department carries more than its share of the student credit hour generation in the College. The College will consider the addition of one or more faculty positions as soon as possible and in the context of an examination of the personnel needs in the College overall. Meanwhile, the Department has made a judicious decision to "carve out" of existing resources some reassigned time for faculty for purposes of research and departmental projects. I believe the level of scholarly activity in the Department needs, on the whole, to increase, but it is unrealistic to expect far more scholarly activity with the

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workload now faced by our faculty in this department. More needs to be offered to the Department, I understand, but I applaud the Department on its proactive approach to utilizing its resources in difficult budgetary times.

Related to the issue of workload is the current discussion within the Department about possible additional measures to limit the number of majors. The Department has already received permission from the University Curriculum Committee to limit admission to students with a grade of 'C' or better in statistics and Psych 100. Additional limitations may prove to be necessary, but I caution the Department to keep in mind that any declaration of impaction has effects on other units within the College and University and that ample and wide discussion needs to take place before a decision is reached.

2. Reduction of overall number of credit hours in the major: Professor Addison suggests a reduction of units (perhaps to as few as 34). He suggests the combining of courses and the combining of categories within the major. He points to several instances in which current options can lead students to highly specialized studies, and he seems to be recommending a more mainstreamed set of requirements. I encourage the Department to consider Professor Addison's recommendations whether or not the goal is to reduce the total number of hours in the major, for the recommendations could lead to an improved program even if it were to remain the same size.

3. Enhancing intra-departmental communication: Although improved communications is a worthy goal for any department, it is not my impression that the Department of Psychology is especially hampered by a lack of communications. In fact, the Department of Psychology appears to have some of the best internal communications within the College. Nonetheless, Professor Addison's suggestions about more frequent meetings and Email updates will probably not harm the Department.

4. Assessing student learning: The Department of Psychology has been a leader in the College's efforts to create a culture of evidence in which all of our units have systematic means for gathering and using information about student academic achievement. Thus, it is not surprising that Professor Addison commends the Department for linking its goals for student learning to APA's goals and outcomes for undergraduate learning. However, Professor Addison offers suggestions that will enable the Department to be even more effective in its assessment efforts. He suggests the creation of an assessment plan that is more directly tied to mission and one that is more systematic and institutionalized. For example, he recommends that the capstone be used on a more frequent basis for administering the Major Field Test in order that assessment information can be available to assist in regularized curriculum review. I believe he is recommending that the department institutionalize the means by which important data can routinely enter into decision making, and I concur with this recommendation—for the benefit of the Department but also so the Department will continue to serve as a model for the College's assessment efforts.

5. Departmental retreat: Since assuming the deanship, I have asked each department to conclude its external review process with an extended meeting or (preferably) retreat to build on the outcomes of the review. Thus, I concur with Professor Addison in his suggestion and offer assistance from the College for this worthwhile activity.

Conclusion: The Department of Psychology offers excellent instruction at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Its undergraduate major goes well beyond the typical textbook-centered program. Its School Psychology Program is a model for other institutions—in almost every way except for its funding. The Department offers outstanding advising. The Department has made ample strides to meet the increased demand for its services to students, even as the College and University have been unable to provide the resources warranted by the Department's numerous successes. Although progress can still be made in the area of assessment, the Department is to be commended on its effective decision making and deployment of resources. The College of Liberal Studies is highly proud of the department and looks forward to its continued success.

cc: Provost Elizabeth Hitch
✓ Professor Betsy Morgan
Associate Dean Charles Martin-Stanley