

Psychological Sciences Ph.D. Program

Minutes of "Closing the Loop" meeting
February 14, 2007, 12:30 pm, GR 4.208

In Attendance: TGR Bower, Candice Mills, Shayla Holub, Deb Wiebe, Jim Bartlett, Susan Jerger, Melanie Spence

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the assessment findings in conjunction with the Program Assessment plan and to discuss and arrive at an action plan for the program. For evaluation and discussion, faculty were provided copies of the following:

- a) Program Assessment plan, which outlines assessment methods and criterion of success for each Program Learning goal
- b) Summary Table of Psychological Sciences Ph.D. Core courses with data regarding student performance on Program Learning goals assessed within Core courses.
- c) Outline of data from Research Activity Evaluation rubrics and Teaching Assistant Rubrics.

The compiled data relevant for each Program Learning goal was discussed, with focus on the following questions:

1. Are our Program Learning Goals Appropriate?
2. Are our measures appropriate and sufficient? Do we have several means to evaluate student attainment of each learning goal?
3. Are our criteria for determining program effectiveness appropriate? Do they need to be raised or lowered?
4. Are there modifications needed in the curriculum or other aspects of the program which will improve student learning?

After review of the assessment results and discussions regarding program strengths, weaknesses, and future challenges, the faculty agreed on the following actions indicated by program.

1. Clarify and reassess expectations for core courses.

Students' performance on written exams and essays requiring critical thinking and writing skills did not meet criteria in one initial core course. This core course is offered during students' first semester of study in the program, suggesting that expectations may have been set too high and/or students require more scaffolding and feedback for development of these skills. Criterion for successful performance was set at a level of B+ on a series of written exercises. Actions will include establishing more realistic expectations; 70% of students will earn a B (rather than B+) on these written exercises and exams, and the instructors of this course will reevaluate the assignments and the feedback and guidance provided students for completion of these assignments. During spring and summer semester 2007, faculty will discuss teaching strategies to implement in the core courses that may facilitate

new students' acquisition of these skills. However, it should be noted that the data for these measures are based on only three courses offered during one semester. Given the small sample of data used for this analysis, major changes in program evaluation measures will not be made until additional data is available.

2. Reschedule timing of Teaching Assistant evaluations

Students' Teaching Assistant performance is evaluated by the supervising faculty member of the course to which each student is assigned. The due dates for the evaluation rubrics of student performance are currently submitted 6 weeks following the end of the semester. Consequently, the data needed to evaluate Teaching Assistant performance was not available for this assessment cycle. The deadline for submitting these evaluations will be shifted earlier so that they are submitted shortly after the end of each semester and the data will be available for the assessments of each semester.

3. Encourage and support students' conference presentations

Educate students on the practical aspects as well as the importance of presenting their work at professional conferences. Presentation of research at professional conferences demonstrates accomplishment of multiple program goals and is an essential activity for professional development. Although the data presented are based on only one calendar year rather than two years as stated by the program objectives, steps will be taken to enhance students' participation in such activities. To improve on this goal, practical aspects of professional presentations will be discussed among faculty and students within both career development brown bag sessions as well as between students and their faculty mentors. Students will be encouraged to submit papers to conferences, and to attend conferences whenever possible. The School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences provides partial financial support for attendance of one conference per year for students who present a paper; this support will need to continue and perhaps increase.