

Detailed Assessment Report
2010-2011 Psychology BA/BS*

Mission/Purpose

Psychology is the study of human behavior, and application of that knowledge for the betterment of humankind. Accordingly, students learn to think like scientists within a broad-based liberal arts tradition. Throughout the program, students develop effective communication skills and demonstrate technological competence. Graduates are prepared for a wide range of career opportunities, as well as advanced degrees in psychology, law, and business

Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Achievement Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

O 1: Knowledge Base of Psychology

Students will demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, and empirical findings in psychology.

Related Measures:

M 1: Capstone Research Paper - PSY 418

Capstone students (PSY 418) will write an integrative research paper highlighting their knowledge of major psychological theories and critical research within a historical context.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of students will score 3 and above (out of 5) on a holistic rubric.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 86.1% of Capstone students (87 of 101) scored 3 and higher on a standard holistic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 75.0% of Capstone students (12 of 16) scored 3 and higher on a standard holistic rubric.

M 2: Competency Exit Exam

As part of the senior sequence, students will take a locally developed competency test designed to assess all pertinent domains in the program. Questions consist of varying difficulty levels- average, above average, and excellent.

Achievement Target:

70% of students taking the test will score 70% and above on the exit exam.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 63.4% of Capstone students (64 of 101) scored 70% and higher on a standard exit exam. Gulf Coast Campus: 100.0% of Capstone students (16 of 16) scored 70% and higher on a standard exit exam.

M 11: Senior Survey - Courses and Content

Capstone students respond to a Senior Survey that measures degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of students responding will indicate that they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that there is adequate emphasis in each of the required content areas. 70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that there is adequate quality of instruction in each of the required content areas.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

95.0% of Capstone students(N=40 reporting) agreed that there was adequate emphasis on the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology in their courses. 85.0% of Capstone students(N=40 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of the course offerings and the comprehensive coverage of the field of psychology. (Cannot split data by campus, data were not identified by campus when collected.)

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Action Plan Details* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

M 23: Alumni Survey - Quality of Courses

Alumni respond to an Alumni Survey to measure degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Alumni survey or tracking of alumni achievements

Achievement Target:

70% will indicate they "strongly" or "somewhat strongly" endorse the quality of courses on a 7-point scale. 70% of alumni responding will indicate that they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that there was adequate emphasis in each of the required content areas.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 92.3% of alumni (12 of 13 reporting) from campuses, reported being satisfied with the quality of the course offerings and the comprehensive coverage of the field of psychology when they attended USM. Gulf Coast Campus: 100.0% of alumni (3 of 3 reporting) from campuses, reported being satisfied with the quality of the course offerings and the comprehensive coverage of the field of psychology when they attended USM. Hattiesburg Campus: 92.3% of alumni (12 of 13 reporting) from both campuses, agreed that there had been adequate emphasis on the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology in their courses when they attended USM. Gulf Coast Campus: 100.0% of alumni (3 of 3 reporting) from both campuses, agreed that there had been adequate emphasis on the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology in their courses when they attended USM.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Action Plan Details* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

O 2: Research Methods in Psychology

Students will understand and apply basic research methods, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation

Related Measures:

M 3: Course Tests - Research Methods (PSY 361)

Course instructors construct tests that measure knowledge of research concepts and ability to apply that knowledge.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of students in PSY 361 will receive a 70% or higher on course tests which measure their understanding of research methods in psychology.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 82.1% of students (101 of 122) scored 70% and higher on course tests on research methods. Gulf Coast Campus: 81.8% of students (18 of 22) scored 70% and higher on course tests on research methods.

M 4: Research Project - PSY 361

Students in the department's Writing Intensive class (PSY 361) will write an empirical research paper. Some course sections may write multiple papers; other sections write a longer paper with multiple drafts. Papers will be evaluated for structure, content, and attention to APA style using a five stage holistic rubric.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of students will receive a 3 and above (out of 5) on a standard holistic rubric.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 85.4% of students (105 of 123) scored 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 95.5% of students (21 of 22) scored 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric.

M 12: Senior Survey - Research Methods

Capstone students respond to a Senior Survey that measures degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that there was adequate emphasis on research methods. 70% of students will "strongly" or "somewhat strongly" endorse the quality of coverage with regard to research methods.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

87.5% of Capstone students(N=40 reporting) agreed that there was adequate emphasis on research methods, including research design, statistics, data analysis, results interpretation, and scientific reporting. 82.5% of Capstone students(N=40 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of instruction in research methods in psychology. (Cannot split data by campus, data were not identified by campus when collected.)

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Action Plan Details* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

M 21: Alumni Survey - Research Methods

Alumni respond to an Alumni Survey to measure degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Alumni survey or tracking of alumni achievements

Achievement Target:

70% of the respondents will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that there was adequate emphasis on research methods. 70% of alumni will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the quality of coverage of research methods is adequate.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 61.5% of alumni (8 of 13 reporting) agreed that there had been adequate emphasis on research methods, including research design, statistics, data analysis, results interpretation, and scientific reporting. Gulf Coast Campus: 100.0% of alumni (3 of 3 reporting) agreed that there had been adequate emphasis on research methods, including research design, statistics, data analysis, results interpretation, and scientific reporting. Hattiesburg Campus: 69.2% of alumni (9 of 16 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of instruction in research methods in psychology. Gulf Coast Campus: 100.0% of alumni (3 of 3 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of instruction in research methods in psychology.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Action Plan Details* section of this report.

Response to alumni rating of research emphasis as deficient.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our numbers for Research Methods quality and emphasis have improved since last academic year. The remaining deficient finding is...

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

O 3: Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology

Students will use critical thinking, and, when possible, the scientific approach to solve problems.

Related Measures:

M 5: Critical Thinking Assignment - PSY 361

Given a research article or scenario, students will be able to identify flaws in research and suggest changes in design.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of students in PSY 361 will competently identify flaws in research and propose alternatives as demonstrated by earning satisfactory or better on a standard holistic rubric.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 82.1% of students (101 of 123) competently identified flaws in research by earning 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 90.9% of students (20 of 22) competently identified flaws in research by earning 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric.

M 6: Critical Thinking Assignment - PSY 418

Capstone students are presented with assignments requiring them to apply their knowledge to new situations.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of students will successfully apply their knowledge to new situations as demonstrated by earning satisfactory or better on a standard holistic rubric.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 76.2% of students (77 of 101) successfully applied their knowledge to new situations by earning 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 81.3% of students (13 of 16) successfully applied their knowledge to new situations by earning 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric.

M 14: Senior Survey - Critical Thinking Coverage

Capstone students respond to a Senior Survey that measures degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the current level of emphasis, with regard to critical thinking skills, is adequate. 70% of students will indicate

they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the current level of quality of training, with regard to critical thinking skills, is adequate.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

75.0% of Capstone students (N=40 reporting) agreed that there was adequate emphasis on training in critical thinking skills. 82.5% of Capstone students (N=40 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of training in critical thinking skills in psychology. (Cannot split data by campus, data were not identified by campus when collected.)

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Action Plan Details* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

M 28: Alumni Survey - Critical Thinking Coverage

Alumni respond to an Alumni Survey to measure degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Alumni survey or tracking of alumni achievements

Achievement Target:

70% of the respondents will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the level of emphasis, with regard to critical thinking skills, was adequate. 70% of alumni will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the quality of courses, with regard to critical thinking skills, was adequate.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 76.9% of alumni (10 of 13 reporting) agreed that there had been adequate emphasis on training in critical thinking skills. Gulf Coast Campus: 100.0% of alumni (3 of 3 reporting) agreed that there had been adequate emphasis on training in critical thinking skills. Hattiesburg Campus: 76.9% of alumni (10 of 13 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of training in critical thinking skills in psychology. Gulf Coast Campus: 100.0% of alumni (3 of 3 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of training in critical thinking skills in psychology.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Action Plan Details* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

O 4: Career Planning and Development

Students will emerge from the major with well-developed plans for career or postgraduate education after graduation.

Related Measures:

M 7: Career Assignments - PSY 418

Career assignments in PSY 418 will be evaluated for knowledge of options, specific plans, realistic self assessment.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of students in PSY 418 will receive satisfactory or higher on a standard holistic rubric with regard to the student's demonstration of their career plans. Career assignments will be evaluated for knowledge of options, specific plans, realistic self assessment .

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 91.1% of students (92 of 101) received a score of 3 and above on the standard rubric for career plans. Gulf Coast Campus: Data were not collected at Gulf Coast for this indicator this academic year.

M 18: Senior Survey - Career Plans

Capstone students respond to a Senior Survey that measures degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the current level of emphasis, with regard to career planning and development, is adequate. 70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the current level of quality of training, with regard to career planning and development, is adequate.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Not Met

60.0% of Capstone students (N=40 reporting) agreed that there was adequate emphasis with regard to career planning and development. 62.5% of Capstone students (N=40 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of training in career development in psychology. (Cannot split data by campus, data were not identified by campus when collected.)

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Action Plan Details* section of this report.

Student & Alumni ratings of career development emphasis & quality below target.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010

The trend regarding career planning is undeniably clear. We continue to have students and alumni report that career planning and...

Response to alumni and senior student ratings of career training as deficient

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our Career Development numbers on the student and alumni surveys continue to be low for emphasis and quality. The plans for reme...

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

M 27: Alumni Survey-Career Plans

Alumni respond to an Alumni Survey to measure degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Alumni survey or tracking of alumni achievements

Achievement Target:

70% of the respondents will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the level of emphasis, with regard to career planning, was adequate. 70% of alumni will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the quality of training, with regard to career planning, was adequate.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 46.2% of alumni (6 of 13 reporting) agreed that there had been adequate emphasis with regard to career planning and development. Gulf Coast Campus: 100.0% of alumni (3 of 3 reporting) agreed that there had been adequate emphasis with regard to career planning and development. Hattiesburg Campus: 46.2% of alumni (6 of 13 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of training with regard to career development in psychology. Gulf Coast Campus: 66.7% of alumni (2 of 3 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of training with regard to career development in psychology.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Action Plan Details* section of this report.

Student & Alumni ratings of career development emphasis & quality below target.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010

The trend regarding career planning is undeniably clear. We continue to have students and alumni report that career planning and...

Response to alumni and senior student ratings of career training as deficient

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our Career Development numbers on the student and alumni surveys continue to be low for emphasis and quality. The plans for reme...

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

O 5: Communication Skills

Students will be able to communicate effectively in a variety of formats.

Associations:

This outcome is consistent with the guidelines of the American Psychological Association and will replace "Historical Trends".

Related Measures:

M 8: PSY 361 Writing Assignment: Composition

Students in the department's Writing Intensive class (PSY 361) will write an empirical research paper. Some course sections may write multiple papers; other sections write a longer paper with multiple drafts.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of students will write a research report in an organized, logical, and coherent manner as demonstrated by earning a 3 and above(out of 5) on a holistic rubric.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 82.9% of students (102 of 123) wrote a research report in an organized, logical, and coherent manner demonstrated by earning 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 90.9% of students (20 of 22) wrote a research report in an organized, logical, and coherent manner demonstrated by earning 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric.

M 9: Capstone Writing Assignment: Composition

Students in the department Capstone class (PSY 418) write 5000 words outside of class. Some sections write multiple papers while other sections write a longer paper with multiple drafts.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of Capstone students will demonstrate the ability to write in an organized, logical, and coherent manner as measured by earning satisfactory or better on a standard holistic rubric.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 84.2% of Capstone students (85 of 101) wrote a research paper in an organized, logical, and coherent manner measured by earning a score of 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 75.0% of Capstone students (12 of 16) wrote a research paper in an organized, logical, and coherent manner measured by earning a score of 3 and above on a standard holistic rubric.

M 10: Capstone Oral Presentation

Capstone students will focus and develop an idea in their final oral presentation.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of Capstone students will successfully focus and develop an idea in their final oral presentation as demonstrated by earning 14/20 points or better on a standard analytic rubric.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 90.1% of Capstone students (91 of 101) successfully developed an idea in the final oral presentation by earning 14/20 and higher on a standard analytic rubric. Gulf Coast Campus: 93.8% of Capstone students (15 of 16) successfully developed an idea in the final oral presentation by earning 14/20 and higher on a standard analytic rubric.

M 16: Senior Survey- Communication Coverage

Capstone students respond to a Senior Survey that measures degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Achievement Target:

70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the current level of emphasis, with regard to communication skills, is adequate. 70% of students will indicate they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the current quality of instruction, with regard to communication skills, is adequate.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

85.0% of Capstone students (N=40 reporting) agreed that there was adequate emphasis on coverage of development of communication skills, including description and explanation of procedures, results, and interpretations. 85.0% of Capstone students (N=40 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of training in communication skills in psychology. (Cannot split data by campus, data were not identified by campus when collected.)

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Action Plan Details* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

M 25: Alumni Survey-Communication Coverage

Alumni respond to an Alumni Survey to measure degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's objectives.

Source of Evidence: Alumni survey or tracking of alumni achievements

Achievement Target:

70% of the respondents will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the level of emphasis, with regard to communication skills, was adequate. 70% of alumni will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the quality of instruction, with regard to communication skills, was adequate.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met

Hattiesburg Campus: 69.2% of alumni (9 of 13 reporting) agreed that there had been adequate emphasis on coverage of development of communication skills, including description and explanation of procedures, results, and interpretations. Gulf Coast Campus: 100.0% of alumni (3 of 3 reporting) agreed that there had been adequate emphasis on coverage of development of communication skills, including description and explanation of procedures, results, and interpretations. Hattiesburg Campus: 69.2% of alumni (9 of 13 reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of training in communication skills in psychology. Gulf Coast Campus: 100.0% of alumni (3 of 3

reporting) reported being satisfied with the quality of training in communication skills in psychology.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Action Plan Details* section of this report.

Response to low survey numbers

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-a...

Action Plan Details for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Alumni Survey Participation

Alumni participation in the survey process has been inadequate. We have not received enough surveys from alumni to have great faith in our data. Gathering alumni data is a valuable method for estimating program effectiveness, but it requires a significant commitment of time and resources to do it well. If we wish to continue to use the alumni survey method we need to commit more time and resources to it. The survey collection should start no later than January 31 of each year. alumni address updating will be necessary to increase hit rate for delivering surveys. Multiple follow up mailers will be necessary to increase response rate. Release time will be required to allow the committee chair to adequately manage this process. At the current rate of response these data are almost worthless. If we wish to continue using the method we need to commit the resources. Otherwise we should abandon the method. Alternatively we could go to a method using emails to solicit responses and a website for hosting the survey. This would eliminate the costs of stationary and postage. In addition, email addresses may be accurate longer than physical addresses, thereby increasing our survey delivery hit rate. We could also dedicate staff time to handling to management of the data gathering, reducing the time needed for the chair of the committee.

Established in Cycle: 2007-2008

Implementation Status: Terminated

Priority: High

Implementation Description: 01/15/2009

Responsible Person/Group: BA/BS Committee Chair

Additional Resources Requested: More secretary time, stationary, and postage. Release time for person handling the survey development, data gathering, and reporting. Alternatively, we could go the email/website route, which would require web space, developer time, and staff time to manage email notification, reminders, and to maintain the data base of responses.

Implementation Notes:

9/29/2011 Attention to survey participation issues will continue, but action plans have been updated considerably in subsequent academic year reports. Therefore, this action plan will now be terminated, but kept active for reference, as the issues remain pertinent.

Career Planning

Despite the inadequacy of our datasets due to low response rate, one trend is undeniably clear. We continue to have students and alumni report that career planning and guidance are lacking. Although Psychology is a very popular undergraduate major, many undergraduates pursue a BA or BS in psychology without a clear idea of how the degree will translate to a career choice, short of pursuing graduate education. There are several ways to address this problem. We can develop and maintain a "Careers in Psychology" website and feature it prominently as a link on the Psychology Department

home page. We can formalize some transmission of career guidance information within the advisement process. For example, the SOAR page the student uses to register for courses can feature a link to a career information page and checklist survey, that each student must visit at least once before registering. Advisors can also check each student's familiarity with career options during advisement. We can also create a physical presence for career information within the psychology department spaces at each campus, such as a small information kiosk or prominent bulletin board space.

Established in Cycle: 2007-2008

Implementation Status: Terminated

Priority: High

Implementation Description: 01/31/2009

Additional Resources Requested: Website space and developer time. Printed career information materials and developer time.

Implementation Notes:

9/29/2011 Attention to career preparation issues will continue, but action plans have been updated considerably in subsequent academic year reports. Therefore, this action plan will now be terminated, but kept active for reference, as some of the issues addressed here are still pertinent.

Career Development

Our Career Development numbers on the student and alumni surveys continue to be low for emphasis and quality. The plans for remediation from last year (adding a careers website; formalizing career guidance content in the advising process; dedicating highly visible department space to career information materials) were not implemented. Those plans should be implemented. In addition, we are developing an Applied Psychology course that will focus on the career paths in psychology, and the education requirements to follow each path.

Established in Cycle: 2008-2009

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Implementation Description: January 31, 2010

Responsible Person/Group: Faculty to be announced

Additional Resources Requested: More faculty lines and better summer pay. The resources necessary for course development are instructor time for development, and instructors with schedule space to add courses. A new lower-level course, such as an applied psychology course, will likely get taught only in summer. Summer courses pose another problem. The pay for summer is weak, so the incentive to develop and deliver new summer courses is also weak. The fact that most full-time faculty are required to continue to deliver university services during the summer, if they teach, though paid much less because they are only paid to teach, further hampers what motivation there is to develop new courses for summer. Some instructors are seeking summer employment alternatives to be able to drop summer teaching at USM altogether. Those able to find summer consulting work are unlikely to pass up better money to deliver courses.

Research Methods

Our numbers for Research Methods quality and emphasis slipped a bit this year for both campuses on the senior exit survey. This could be due to dissatisfaction with one or two instructors, and some comments in the surveys suggest as much. Students also commented that there were not enough opportunities for "hands-on" research experience. Alumni satisfaction with quality and emphasis of Research Methods instruction also dropped, but only for the Gulf Coast campus. The methods course

instructors will meet to address perceived weaknesses and develop a plan to include a "hands-on" course project.

Established in Cycle: 2008-2009

Implementation Status: Finished

Priority: High

Implementation Description: August 19, 2009

Responsible Person/Group: Research Methods Instructors

Implementation Notes:

9/29/2011 The actions have been completed and the numbers seem to be improving. This action plan is being moved to "finished" status, but kept active for reference, in case this problem arises again in the near future.

Survey Response: Alumni Survey

Alumni survey response increased from 13 to 22 responses for the Hattiesburg campus, and increased from 4 to 10 for the Gulf Coast campus. These increases occurred without any implementation of previous year plans for increasing response rate. Although better, the response rate is still low. Rather than invest more in the traditional mail-out process, we will shift to an email process. We miss many potential alumni in the mail-out because the postal addresses are no longer valid. We hope to have a better hit rate with email. In addition, putting more effort and resources into the mail-out would have been rather costly in time, postage costs and materials. With an email process we can reduce labor, eliminate postage costs, and the proposed follow-up reminder process can be made quite efficient. We plan to pilot the email process in the spring of 2010, while still conducting the mail-out, so our response rates can be compared across survey collection methods.

Established in Cycle: 2008-2009

Implementation Status: Finished

Priority: High

Implementation Description: January 18, 2010

Responsible Person/Group: Dr. Bradley Green

Additional Resources Requested: Postal materials and fees. Printing materials and costs. Secretarial staff time.

Implementation Notes:

9/29/2011 The elimination of mail-out surveys, and reliance on emailed surveys only, has been our process for 2 years now. Our numbers are not any better, but not really any worse either, so going forward we will stick to the email-only process as it saves time and money, with no apparent loss of function.

Survey Response: Senior Student Survey

Our senior student survey participation is adequate, but unfortunately more than 20 surveys had to be excluded because they were copied wrong, and missing half of the questions. The data from these surveys could not be added without invalidating the data set. In the future the surveys will be spot checked before administration to ensure that such a mistake is not committed in the future.

Established in Cycle: 2008-2009

Implementation Status: Finished

Priority: High

Implementation Description: November 1, 2009

Responsible Person/Group: Dr. Bradley Green

Additional Resources Requested: Secretarial staff time. Printing materials and costs. Capstone instructor effort in delivery.

Implementation Notes:

9/29/2011 This specific problem has been addressed, and is being moved to "finished" status, although the same sort of problem could arise in the future. Essentially one instructor received surveys that were copied wrong, or copied them wrong his or herself. By centralizing the copying to support staff this problem might be avoided in the future.

Alumni ratings of research emphasis below target.

Department administration and PSY 361 instructors will meet to determine possible reasons alumni tend to rate research emphasis below our performance target. Although alumni survey responses continue to be low in numbers, the low rating for research emphasis is a frequent finding, and therefore likely valid.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010

Implementation Status: Finished

Priority: High

Implementation Description: Meeting of department administration and PSY 361 instructors in beginning of fall 2010.

Responsible Person/Group: Department administration and PSY 361 instructors.

Implementation Notes:

9/29/2011 The Alumni Survey Research Emphasis numbers have improved at both campuses and exceed target performance thresholds on both campuses. The consistent deficiency for this rating may finally be correcting. Tracking of this indicator will continue, as there is a 2-year lag in alumni numbers in relation to actions taken, but this specific action is now finished, but kept active for reference.

Below target performance on PSY 361 course tests

Some of the objectives related to the course in Research Methods from target were unmet. In this case the performance on course tests was below target. Department administration and course instructors will meet to determine potential causes for the drop in performance for 2009-2010. It should be noted that this is an unusual deficient finding, and may be idiosyncratic rather than persistent. Data from next cycle will suggest whether this finding is an aberration or a trend. The class instructors will meet the target in the future.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010

Implementation Status: Terminated

Priority: High

Implementation Description: Meeting with instructors in Fall of 2010.

Responsible Person/Group: Department administration and Research Methods instructors.

Implementation Notes:

9/29/2011 The PSY 361 Critical Thinking numbers have improved at both campuses and exceed target performance thresholds. The deficiency of this cycle may have been an aberration. Tracking of this indicator will continue, but this specific action is now terminated.

PSY 361 critical thinking assignment performance below target.

Department administration and PSY 361 instructors will meet to determine potential reasons for the drop in performance on the critical thinking assignment. This deficient finding may be idiosyncratic

rather than persistent. Findings from the 2010-2011 cycle will suggest whether this deficiency is an aberration or a trend.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010

Implementation Status: Terminated

Priority: High

Implementation Description: Department administration and PSY 361 instructors will meet in beginning of fall 2010.

Responsible Person/Group: Department administration and PSY 361 instructors.

Implementation Notes:

9/29/2011 The PSY 361 Critical Thinking numbers have improved at both campuses and exceed target performance thresholds. The deficiency of this cycle may have been an aberration. Tracking of this indicator will continue, but this specific action is now terminated.

Student & Alumni ratings of career development emphasis & quality below target.

The trend regarding career planning is undeniably clear. We continue to have students and alumni report that career planning and guidance are lacking. Although Psychology is a very popular undergraduate major, many undergraduates pursue a BA or BS in psychology without a clear idea of how the degree will translate to a career choice, short of pursuing graduate education. There are several ways to address this problem. We can develop and maintain a "Careers in Psychology" website and feature it prominently as a link on the Psychology Department home page. We can formalize some transmission of career guidance information within the advisement process. For example, the SOAR page the student uses to register for courses can feature a link to a career information page and checklist survey, that each student must visit at least once before registering. Advisors can also check each students familiarity with career options during advisement. We can also create a physical presence for career information within the psychology department spaces at each campus, such as a small information kiosk or prominent bulletin board space. These approaches were recommended last cycle, and are being developed for implementation. We also continue to represent the psychology department at the multiple Black and Gold career day events each year. One significant action, which has been taken, was the creation of a Careers in Psychology course (PSY 251). The course has been delivered once so far (summer of 2009). It will be a year or two before we know if the course, or other actions, will improve student ratings, and at least two years to see effects for alumni ratings of career development.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Alumni Survey-Career Plans | **Outcome/Objective:** Career Planning and Development

Measure: Senior Survey - Career Plans | **Outcome/Objective:** Career Planning and Development

Implementation Description: Department staff, advising faculty, and PSY 251 instructors will implement the actions proposed.

Responsible Person/Group: Department staff and faculty.

Implementation Notes:

9/29/2011 Going forward we plan to make PSY 251 a required course in the Psychology BA/BS curriculum, ensuring that all students in the program complete at least one course that will specifically attend to career preparation in some depth.

9/29/2011 PSY 251 has been implemented and appears to be successful. A careers website has also been planned. Tracking of pertinent survey ratings and comments will continue to see if our numbers reflect effects for these actions.

Response to alumni and senior student ratings of career training as deficient

Our Career Development numbers on the student and alumni surveys continue to be low for emphasis and quality. The plans for remediation implemented thus far have been to: instruct advisors to offer more career information; add a career development project to the capstone course; and create a new "Careers in Psychology" course (PSY 251). Our rating from both senior students and alumni, for both quality and emphasis of career preparation, have increased from last year, but remain deficient. We believe there will be a lag in improvement in these numbers as most seniors, and all alumni did not benefit from some, or all of our actions to improve performance in career planning and development. We believe the addition of the PSY 251 class will be particularly effective in improving performance, but we will not see that improvement in our number for another year or two. We also plan to make PSY 251 a required course in our BA/BS degree plan. Other steps that could be taken include: adding a careers website; formalizing career guidance content in the advising process; and dedicating highly visible department space to career information materials.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Alumni Survey-Career Plans | **Outcome/Objective:** Career Planning and Development

Measure: Senior Survey - Career Plans | **Outcome/Objective:** Career Planning and Development

Response to alumni rating of research emphasis as deficient.

Our numbers for Research Methods quality and emphasis have improved since last academic year. The remaining deficient finding is from the alumni survey rating of research emphasis. The alumni numbers are from graduates from the academic year two years prior to the current year, so there will always be a lag in change in alumni numbers in response to program changes. Previously the methods course instructors developed a plan to include a "hands-on" course project in response to deficient student and alumni rating regarding research methods, as well as specific comments requesting more "hands-on" research experience. Previous actions have been taken to address perceived dissatisfaction with specific research methods instructors in previous years. Those actions, and the addition of hands-on course content appear to be having the intended effect.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Alumni Survey - Research Methods | **Outcome/Objective:** Research Methods in Psychology

Response to low survey numbers

Our survey response rates remain low for senior capstone students and alumni. The surveys are a critical component of our self-assessment process, as evidenced by the number of domain associations, and arguably provide our most objective data. Managing the survey process requires a significant investment of time and labor. For the survey process to have any chance of achieving its potential as an information source the process needs to be properly resourced by assignment to staff

with time and facilities to manage it, or by provision of release time to faculty to manage it. The consistency of our numbers across years, even with low response rates, demonstrates the reliability of the instruments. The congruence of survey response with frequent student and alumni comments, as well as informal observations, suggests validity of the instruments. In addition, the changes in ratings in response to actions taken supports validity of the instruments. The process seems to be of value. Maybe it is time to resource it.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Senior Survey- Communication Coverage | **Outcome/Objective:** Communication Skills

Measure: Alumni Survey - Critical Thinking Coverage | **Outcome/Objective:** Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology

Measure: Alumni Survey - Quality of Courses | **Outcome/Objective:** Knowledge Base of Psychology

Measure: Alumni Survey - Research Methods | **Outcome/Objective:** Research Methods in Psychology

Measure: Alumni Survey-Career Plans | **Outcome/Objective:** Career Planning and Development

Measure: Alumni Survey-Communication Coverage | **Outcome/Objective:** Communication Skills

Measure: Senior Survey - Career Plans | **Outcome/Objective:** Career Planning and Development

Measure: Senior Survey - Courses and Content | **Outcome/Objective:** Knowledge Base of Psychology

Measure: Senior Survey - Critical Thinking Coverage | **Outcome/Objective:** Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology

Measure: Senior Survey - Research Methods | **Outcome/Objective:** Research Methods in Psychology

Analysis Answers

What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives?

With regard to Research Methods (PSY 361) students on both the Hattiesburg and Coast campuses met the achievement targets for performance on course tests (Objective 1, Measure 3), on the research project (Objective 2, Measure 4), on the critical thinking assignment (Objective 3, Measure 5), and on the composition writing assignment (Objective 5, Measure 8). The same was the case for History and Systems of Psychology (PSY 418) with regard to performance on the Capstone research paper (Objective 1, Measure 1), on the critical thinking assignment (Objective 3, Measure 6), on the composition writing assignment (Objective 5, Measures 5), and on the Capstone oral presentation (Objective 5, Measure 10). There were some differences in performance between the Hattiesburg and Coast undergraduates that could be the result of student differences (more nontraditional students on the Coast as compared to the Hattiesburg campus), instructor differences, or responding sample differences. For the most part, students are adequately meeting achievement targets. Based on responses to the Senior Survey, undergraduate senior psychology majors reported adequate or more than adequate coverage of the content areas of psychology and research methods in psychology. Additionally, respondents also reported agreement with the Department's emphasis on developing critical thinking and professional/technical communication skills. Of those seniors responding to the survey, 85% indicated that they were satisfied with the quality of training and the quality of courses taught through the Department. Based on responses to the Alumni Survey, respondents noted that they were pleased with the quality of course offerings, that there was adequate emphasis on the

theoretical/historical foundations and research preparation provided in the Department. Additionally, respondents indicated that training in critical thinking processes was more than adequate.

What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?

While there were noted strengths as indicated previously, there were mixed results or "partially met" objectives that could be explained based on the differences between Hattiesburg and Coast undergraduate students. For example, a smaller percentage of students met the achievement target of 70% of students taking the Competency Exit Exam scoring 70% or above on the exam. One hundred percent of Gulf Coast students met the target while 63.4% of Hattiesburg students met the target. Greater emphasis will be paid to insuring that knowledge-based objectives are fully covered adequately in all departmental courses. The survey of alumni also revealed differences in perceptions of our graduates relative to adequate emphasis on research methods (including conducting and evaluating) and developing professional/technical communication skills. In all cases, the achievement target was nearly met for Hattiesburg students and met for Gulf Coast campus students, keeping in mind that the response rate was low for both groups (13-16 respondents for Hattiesburg and 3 for the Gulf Coast). There will be continued emphases paid to these objectives for both Hattiesburg and the Gulf Coast. Based on our Senior Survey, there needs to be continued and targeted emphasis paid to all objectives associated with career development in the field.

Annual Reports

Program Summary

Multiple efforts were undertaken by the Department during 2010-11 to improve the undergraduate program. This list is not meant to be exhaustive and includes the following: Moved to an email format to gather information from our alumni in an effort to increase responses. Consistent offering of PSY 251 (Careers in Psychology) on the Hattiesburg and Gulf Coast campuses to bolster our efforts to address career development objectives in program planning for our undergraduate students. Increased emphasis on career planning in the Psychology Club and in the local chapter of Psi Chi. Inclusion of careers information in our undergraduate Preview packets (early registration packets) for incoming first year and transfer students new to the Department of Psychology. The opening of the Undergraduate Advisement Center to assist current undergraduate students with course selection and scheduling decisions. The Center is open a minimum of 30-35 hours per week. This allows faculty advisers/mentors additional time to engage in the career and research mentoring process for our undergraduates. These efforts and others that will be mentioned in subsequent portions of this section have resulted in improved performance of our current undergraduates with respect to program objectives. While some program objectives have been met, others are still in process and require our continued attention.

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

The Department has undertaken several activities to address program improvement issues based on this year's data. The following illustrates some of these efforts: The addition of two new undergraduate courses during the school year in response to a request by our undergraduates to offer more psychology electives. The Psychology of Humor (PSY 453) and the Psychology of Music (PSY 469) are now offered in the fall and spring each year. Both courses have been well received by our undergraduate students. The Undergraduate Advisement Center came on line fall 2010 to more fully address the advisement needs of our undergraduate students. The Center is available to undergraduates approximately 30-35 hours per week on a walk-in basis or for scheduled appointments. Having the Undergraduate Advisement Center frees up faculty to spend more time in the mentoring aspect of support to our undergraduate majors. Mentoring takes the form of career guidance and support in the research process. To facilitate the career development process for our

undergraduates, PSY 251 (Careers in Psychology) is being consistently offered on an elective basis not only in regular and summer semesters, but also during mini-sessions. In addition to offering information pertinent to careers in the field, information related to the graduate school process is also covered during the class. The Department is currently assessing whether to make the course a required course in the major. That decision will be made during the 2011-12 year. Career development information is also routinely offered to our undergraduate through participation in the Psychology Club and Psi Chi. Such information is also contained in the Preview packets distributed to incoming students during early registration sessions conducted during the summer. Based on information gathered during the assessment process pertinent to PSY 361 (Research Evaluation), an ad hoc committee assessing not only the impact of this course on our undergraduates, but also PSY 360 (Behavioral Statistics) to determine how to redesign this sequence to better serve psychology majors. This initiative will be completed during 2011-12. It is anticipated that these activities will continue to strengthen the undergraduate BA and BS programs.

Closing the Loop

Action plans that were completed specific to PSY 361 (Research Methods) during 2010-11 included more "hands on" research experiences through course assignments. Also, PSY 361 instructors met to determine why alumni tended to rate our research emphasis below our performance target. Regarding increasing responses to the Alumni Survey, the piloting of survey data collected through the email was completed in lieu of traditional mail out processes that were more costly and time inefficient. Additionally, given the unreliability of physical addresses of our graduates, this data gathering process proved more efficient and resulted in a slightly higher response rate. Continued attention will be paid to increasing response rates to our Alumni Survey. The Department of Psychology looks forward to reporting on the Continuous Improvement Initiatives undertaken, yet not completed during 2010-11. We anticipate continued improvement in supporting our undergraduates.