The Undergraduate Council (UGC) met on April 20, 2012 with the Chair of Psychology, Dr. Marcel Yoder, and Dr. James Ermatinger, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to discuss the Psychology Program Review. This memo is regrettably late and as the chair of UGC, I would like to extend my sincere apologies.

Since the last Program Review, the Psychology Department has made changes to the curriculum for the major that offer more flexibility and increase student choice. Changes include decreasing the number of required core courses and increasing the number of choices students can make within each concentration. The department has done a commendable job of making the necessary changes to ensure the availability of courses for students and to promote successful completion rates. The program needs to continue monitoring the number of students enrolling in each concentration to measure the viability of all the concentrations in the major.

The assessment process for the major is an ambitious plan that is in line with the recommendations of the American Psychological Association. The department uses entrance and exit testing to measure the curriculum’s impact on student learning. The department has an established process for analyzing assessment data from their capstone course, PSY 471, and the department has made changes as a result of that analysis and can document improved comprehension between the pre- and post tests. The department is using assessment best practices in making students aware of the departmental learning outcomes through course syllabi. The Undergraduate Council commends the faculty collaboration and communication around assessment and analysis of student learning.

The Undergraduate Council makes the following recommendations:

- The department should make a concerted effort to enhance their online offerings, which could lead to the development of an online major, as noted in the CLAS Dean’s memo. Data in the self-study indicated that students may not be as satisfied with online courses as they are with on-ground and that Psychology students may be less satisfied in some areas with their online courses than students in other CLAS online offerings. The department indicated they will pursue questions about student satisfaction in online
coursework, particularly in terms of student participation, but the Undergraduate Council suggests exploring ways to increase tenure-system faculty participation in online courses and comparing student satisfaction in courses taught by adjuncts and those taught by tenure system faculty.

- The PSY department should strategically evaluate the current curriculum to avoid overstretching its faculty and resources in the multitude of concentrations and other service to the university. This could help achieve a better balance for the department’s curricular needs, its service to UIS, and the professional and academic goals of faculty.

- While the UGC commends the department on its assessment practices, the department should consider adding measures of student learning at additional points in the curriculum for goals such as critical thinking skills, communication skills, and social and cultural awareness. This could ease the reliance on data collected mostly on the assessment tools deployed in the capstone course.

CC: DR. MARCEL YODER, CHAIR, PSYCHOLOGY
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