

**MAJOR FIELD ASSESSMENT BI-ANNUAL REPORT  
B. A. PSYCHOLOGY  
FALL 2003 TO SPRING 2005**

**Goal 1**

To provide students with a broad body of knowledge representative of the current state of knowledge in Psychology

A. Expected Outcome

Students completing the baccalaureate program in Psychology will compare favorably in their knowledge of general psychology with those students graduating from a national sample of psychology programs in institutions comparable to SLU.

Assessment

SLU graduating psychology majors will have an average Total Test score on the ETS Major Field Achievement Test in Psychology which meets or exceeds the 50th percentile rank on a national sample of schools. ETS provides not only a Total Test scale score, but several Subscores and “Assessment Indicators” so that relative strengths and weaknesses of a program can be evaluated. It is expected that SLU graduating psychology majors will meet or exceed the 50th percentile in each of the following subscores: Learning & Cognition; Perception, Comparative, Sensation, Ethology & Physiological; Clinical, Abnormal & Personality; and Developmental & Social. In addition, it is expected that SLU graduating psychology majors meet or exceed the 50th percentile on each of the following “Assessment Indicators”: Learning, Cognition & Perception; Sensory & Physiological: Developmental; Clinical, Abnormal & Personality; Social: and Measurement & Methodology.

Results Obtained

(1) TABLE 1 -- ETS Exam Results for Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 are shown in Table 1 (Appendix I. Note: data for Fall 2003 and Spring 2004 were unavailable, percentile ranking data for spring 2005 are not yet available from ETS).

In summarizing the ETS data (Appendix I), all Subscores and Assessment Indicators scores are based on a table of distributions of Institutions' scores; the Total Test scale scores are presented in terms of both Institutions' and individual students' scores. Also, means scores falling between percentile intervals are reported in terms of the approximate percentile rank.

With respect to the Total Test scale scores and subscores, the Department did not meet its goals in either semester (50th percentile) whether measured by institutional or individual student data. As can be seen from Table 1, all mean scores fell below the 50th percentile.

## B. Expected Outcome

Students will have a positive opinion of the degree to which they have been exposed to a broad body of knowledge in Psychology.

### Assessment

All psychology majors are required to take either Psychology 335. During this time they will take the "Psych 335 Questionnaire" and will rate the Department positively (i.e. above "3.0") in terms of success in exposing them to a broad body of knowledge in Psychology and as this being more important now than when they took their first psychology course.

### Results

See Table 2 in Appendix II: Goal Attainment Framework. From row 8 of the table, it can be seen that every semester tested, nearly 90% or more of students rated the department 3 or better on a 5 point scale when it came to exposing them to a broad body of information relative to the current state of knowledge in Psychology.

## C. Changes in Program

In 2002 the Psychology Department implemented curriculum changes such that many formerly required courses became electives. While this has allowed us to decrease our total number of hours required for the major it has also reduced the overall exposure of certain subject areas across the student population. For example, we can no longer be assured that all students are gaining a background in topics such as Physiological Psychology, Learning and Conditioning, and Cognitive. Thus, it is not surprising that average scores on these measures have fallen recently. Additionally, from fall 2003 to Spring 2005 the Psychology Department experienced a 30% turnover in personnel and as of yet none of those losses have been replaced by tenure track faculty. Currently, large portions of our curriculum, especially lower division classes are being taught by adjunct, visiting, and part-time instructors, some of whom are recent graduates of our own program. In the future, the department hopes to achieve greater

stability in faculty leading to stronger academic results. Furthermore, a number of curriculum changes have been added to strengthen the program including: the addition of an honors track, additional prerequisites for some upper division class (e.g. Psyc102 being required for Cognitive Psychology), and allowing students to repeat the research class in order to gain a wider range of practical research experience.

#### D. Planned Changes

A number of curriculum changes are in progress or in the planning stages. The Abnormal Psychology class (Psyc422) is currently being moved to the 200 level to allow students to take it earlier in their academic careers. Furthermore, this class will be a required before students will be permitted into the Psyc350 (Clinical Psychology) class. A new class in Evolutionary Psychology (Psyc373) is being added which will strengthen the department's biological and comparative components. Additionally, a new class in developmental disabilities is in the proposal stage which would further strengthen our clinical and developmental offerings. Finally, while all these changes and new offerings are for the good, none of it is of great consequence unless students' academic performance improves. With this in mind, the department is currently considering changes in graduation requirements such that rather than allowing a Psychology major to graduate with an overall C average in his/her major courses, a minimum grade of C would be required across all major courses.

### Goal 2

Foster students' grasp and appreciation of the scientific method in Psychology.

#### A. Expected Outcome

Psychology majors will demonstrate the application of the scientific method to an actual research question.

#### Assessment

In a required upper level research class (Psyc335), psychology majors will produce a written manuscript of publishable quality from beginning to end that requires the student to be able to conceptualize the targeted phenomenon into scientific research terms, and generate one or more testable hypotheses.

#### Results Obtained

(1) The Department has continued and enforced this requirement throughout the

current evaluation period. Furthermore, the department has implemented a strict sequential ordering of research methodology courses beginning with Psyc220 (Research Methods), then Psyc221/222 (Statistics and Statistics Lab), and culminating with Psyc335 (Psychological Research), a class that requires students to do an actual research project and produce an APA style manuscript of publishable quality.

#### B. Expected Outcome

Students completing the baccalaureate program in Psychology will compare favorably in their knowledge of research methodology with those students graduating from a national sample of psychology programs in institutions comparable to SLU.

##### Assessment

SLU graduating psychology majors will take the ETS Major Field Achievement Test in Psychology and meet or exceed the 50th percentile on the Measurement and Methodology "assessment indicator".

##### Result Obtained

From Table 1, the mean Measurement & Methodology "Assessment Indicator" fell below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile and did not meet Departmental goal.

#### C. Expected Outcome

Psychology majors will feel confident in their abilities to conduct psychological research.

##### Assessment

Based on the "Psych 335 Questionnaire", at least 80% of those students taking Psychology 335 will rate themselves as being able to demonstrate the following skills with only minimal supervision--collect data, do background research, formulate a set of hypotheses, write up an Introduction section, write up a methods section, graph data, use statistics, write results section, and write discussion section.

##### Results Obtained

From Table 2 row 10, it can be seen that the Department achieved its goal in one of the four semesters tested (Fall 2003). In two other semesters the goal was nearly achieved as 78% and 76% (Spring 04 and Spring 05 respectively) rated themselves as confident. In

the Fall of 2004, however, only 67% rated themselves confident in their abilities falling short of the goal. A clear pattern is evident in the data as students rate themselves highly competent when it comes to such skills as running subjects and collecting data (100% in 3 of the 4 semesters), but are far less confident in their abilities to use advanced statistics and graphically represent results (ranging from 50-22%).

#### D. Changes in Program

The Department continues to require all students to take both Research Methods (Psyc 220) and Statistics and Statistics Lab (Psyc 221, 222). These are traditionally some of the most challenging classes for our students. These skills are once again tapped in the Psychological Research class (Psyc 335) which is also required and can only be taken after Methods and Stats.

#### E. Planned Changes

As mentioned earlier the Department may consider requiring a minimum of C in these required classes rather than allowing students to advance with an average of C across the classes. A new Honors Research (Psyc231H) class is being implemented. This class will encourage honors students to become active in a faculty member's lab as soon as the student has taken the introductory sequence (Psyc101 or Psy117 and Psyc102). This will allow honors students to become acclimated to the research environment early in their academic careers allowing them to hone their research skills well in advance of their required senior thesis project.

### Goal 3

Students graduating with a bachelor's degree in Psychology should desire to and be qualified for graduate study in Behavioral Sciences

#### A. Expected Outcome

Psychology majors will feel that they are prepared to attend graduate school.

#### Assessment

- a. SLU graduating psychology majors will have an average Total score on the ETS Major Field Achievement Test in Psychology which meets or exceeds the 50th percentile rank on a national sample of schools
- b. On the SLU Exit Survey, students will rate the Department positively. This will be reflected by the fact that the average score on item 39 which reads "How satisfied are you

with the degree to which the Psychology Department prepares qualified students for advanced studies” will be a 3.0 or better (1=very dissatisfied, 5=very satisfied).

- c. Students taking the “Psych 335 Questionnaire” will have positive scores (i.e. an average score of above 3.0) on those items in which they rate their current opinion of their degree preparedness, and will rate this goal as being more important now than when they first entered the program.

### Results Obtained

(1) From Table 1, the mean Total Test scale scores fell short of the Departmental goal (50th percentile); the mean institutional Total Test scale score fell at the 8th percentile, and the mean Individual student Total Test scale score fell at the 23rd percentile.

(2) Relevant data are available from the 2003-2004 the SLU Exit Survey. On that survey 91.5% of the respondents rated the Psychology Department a 3.0 or better on item 39 indicated that they were satisfied with their preparation for advanced studies. Furthermore, 76.6% rated their satisfaction at 4.0 or better.

(3) As can be seen from row 13 of Table 2 across all four semesters tested from 72%-92% of students rated the department at a 3.0 or better on a 5 point scale in terms of their satisfaction with their degree preparedness. Furthermore, from row 12 (just above) it can be seen that 92% of students rated the department at 3.0 or better in terms of their satisfaction in preparation for graduate school.

### B. Changes in Program

The Department continues to offer a strong array of traditional Psychology courses with special emphasis on the emerging fields of neuroscience and evolutionary psychology. Furthermore, the Department’s service learning programs and practicum experiences allow students to gain real world experience and apply their clinical training in practical settings.

### C. Planned Changes

The Department is increasing its links with local high school behavioral science programs by establishing a website that can be used to provide information and serve as an interactive resource between the Department and those local programs. In this way, it is expected that the quality of students attracted to the Department as majors will increase.

APPENDIX I

TABLE 1 -- ETS Exam Results, means and percentiles (Fall, 2004 to Spring, 2005):

				<b>Mean Percentile Rank</b>		
		Fall 2003	Spring 2004	Fall 2004	Spring 2005	
SLU	N	NA	NA	21	34	
SLU Means[National Percentile Rank for <b>Individual Students'</b> Test Scores]						
Total Test				144.6[23rd]	149.5[??st]	<b>??st</b>
SLU Means[ <b>Institutional</b> National Percentile Rank]						
Total Test				144.6[8th]	149.5[??nd]	<b>??th</b>
Subscores:						
(SLU Mean % Correct)[ <b>Institutional</b> National Percentile Rank]						
Learning & Cognition				49.1[10th]	51.9[??nd]	<b>??nd</b>
Percept/Comp/Sens/& Ethology/Physio.				50.3[ 7th]	52.1[??st]	<b>??nd</b>
Clin/Abn/ & Personality				47.5[ 4th]	49.4[??nd]	<b>??nd</b>
Developmental & Social				45.1[ 5th]	49.2[??nd]	<b>??nd</b>
Assessment Indicator:						
(SLU Mean % Correct)[ <b>Institutional</b> National Percentile Rank]						
Memory & Thinking				44.3[16th]	44.9[??th]	<b>th</b>
Sensory & Physiology				27.5[ 8th]	33.6[??th]	<b>th</b>
Developmental Clinical & Abnormal				29.9[ 5th]	38.6[??th]	<b>th</b>
Social Measurement & Methodology				33.4[ 5th]	61.0[??th]	<b>th</b>
Social Measurement & Methodology				44.0[ 7th]	56.2[??nd]	<b>th</b>
Social Measurement & Methodology				34.0[ 9th]	44.8[??th]	<b>rd</b>

Notes: Percentiles are in brackets.

Percentiles of decimal scale scores are approximate (e.g. tables provide the percentiles of Total scale scores of 162 and 163, but the percentile of a Total scale score of 162.5 had to be estimated).

Mean Percentile Rank is a simple (i.e. non-weighted) average of percentiles across the five semesters included.

Unless otherwise noted, percentile ranks are based upon the national norms provided by latest ETS Comparative Data Guide available for that year.

**TABLE 2: GOAL ATTAINMENT FRAMEWORK**

B.A. Psychology  
Department of Psychology

Academic Year 2004-05

December 30, 2005

Expected Outcome	Much Less than Expected	Less than Expected	Expected	More than Expected	Much More than Expected
Percentile rank of students on the Major Field Achievement Test in Psychology	x		50th		
Percentile rank of students on the Major Field Achievement Test in Psychology Learning, Cognition & Perception assessment indicator	x		50th		
Percentile rank of students on the Major Field Achievement Test in Psychology Sensory & Physiological assessment indicator	x		50th		
Percentile rank of students on the Major Field Achievement Test in Psychology Developmental assessment indicator	x		50th		
Percentile rank of students on the Major Field Achievement Test in Psychology Clinical, Abnormal & Personality assessment indicator	x		50th		
Percentile rank of students on the Major Field Achievement Test in Psychology Social assessment indicator	x		50th		
Percentile rank of students on the Major Field Achievement Test in Psychology Measurement & Methodology assessment indicator	x		50th		
Rate on the "Psych 335 Questionnaire" in terms of success in exposing them to a broad body of knowledge in Psychology and as this being more important now than	3.0<=96%F03 3.0<=94%S04 3.0<=100%F04 3.0>=89%S05		3.0		

when they took their first psychology course. (questions 12-14).					
In a required upper level research class (Psyc 335), psychology majors will produce a written manuscript of publishable quality from beginning to end that requires the student to be able to conceptualize the targeted phenomenon into scientific research terms, and generate one or more testable hypotheses					
% students rating themselves as being able to demonstrate the following skills with only minimal supervision--collect data, do background research, formulate a set of hypotheses, write up an Introduction section, write up a methods section, graph data, use statistics, write results section, and write discussion section, based on the "Psych 335 Questionnaire" (questions 21-31)	<b>F03</b> X=80% Hi=100% run subs.; Lo=50% graph data <b>S04</b> X=78% Hi=100% collect data; Lo=39% use advanced stats. <b>F04</b> X=67% Hi=100% run subs. & collect data; Lo=.22 graph data & use advanced stats. <b>S05</b> X=76% Hi=100% write intro; Lo=40% use advanced stats.		80%		
% of alumni who are currently pursuing an advanced degree in the Behavioral Sciences, according to the SLU Undergraduate Alumni Survey	NA		25%		
% of students who indicate they are satisfied with their preparation for graduate school on the SLU Exit Survey (preparedness question #39)	3.0<=92% 2003-04 Survey		3.0		
Average score on the "Psyc 335 Questionnaire" on those items in which they rate their current opinion of their degree preparedness (questions 15-17)	<b>F03</b> 73% 3.0< <b>S04</b> 72% 3.0< <b>F04</b> 92% 3.0< <b>S05</b> 76% 3.0<		3.0		
% of alumni who are attending graduate	NA		80%		

school, satisfied with the instruction they received at SLU, according to the SLU Undergraduate Alumni Survey					