

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW
Fairmont State Board of Governors

Program without Special Accreditation

Degree Program BS in Psychology **Date Submitted** 1/15/26

INSTITUTIONAL RECOMMENDATION Approved by the Board of Governors (§5.2.8)

The institution is obligated to recommend continuance or discontinuance of a program and to provide a brief rationale for its recommendation:

- 1. Identification of the program for further development and/or expansion due to demand (e.g., providing additional institution commitment), with or without action.
- 2. Continuation of the program at the current level of activity; with or without action.
- 3. Continuation of program at a reduced level of activity (e.g., revise curriculum, reduce credit hours, merge programs, share courses, share faculty, develop a joint program with another institution) or other corrective actions.
- 4. Discontinuance of the Program (review for potential sunset)

Rationale for Recommendation:

Review and revise the assessment plan (the curriculum map is out of date). Explore options for elevating experiential learning opportunities. Consider developing an "experiential major map" for psychology. The behavioral science lab is a strength that can be further promoted. In collaboration with academic administration and the Enrollment Management Division, develop an enrollment plan that identifies student enrollment segments and market measures and targets for each segment. In collaboration with CMCS, develop a program marketing plan. Establish an Industry Advisory Council.

Michael Ransom

Signature of person preparing report:

4/28/26

Date

James Matthews

Signature of Dean

4/29/26

Date

Steve Brund

Signature of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs:

5/18/2026

Date

Signature of President:

Signature of Chair, Board of Governors:

6/23/26

Date

6/28/2026

Date



Fairmont State University
Board of Governors

Board Action Item Approval

Date: 6/25/2026

Action Item: Approval of the Program Review for BS in Psychology Without Special Accreditation

- 1. Approve above action item as presented.

- 2. Approve above action with the following stipulation:

- 3. Table the above action item until _____
(next Board of Governors' meeting)



FSU President

6/25/26

Date



FSU Board of Governors' Chair

6/25/2024

Date

Executive Summary for Program Review

(Provide a 2-3 page summary)

Degree Program:	Psychology, B.S.
College or School/Department:	College of Liberal Arts/Department of Behavioral Sciences
Chair/Program Coordinator:	Dr. Michael Ransom
Course Delivery:	We offer in-person, hybrid, and online courses
External Reviewer:	N/A

Synopses of significant findings, including major strengths and key challenges

The current 2025 psychology program review provides extensive evidence, data, and rationale supporting the status of the psychology program as a vital and stable part of Fairmont State University's slate of program offerings. The Psychology program maintains strong alignment with the University's mission to educate engaged citizens and support student success through transformational learning experiences. The program's goals also closely reflect the American Psychological Association's Undergraduate Guidelines and reinforce the University's strategic priorities, particularly those related to academic excellence, holistic student support, and career preparation.

The program's mission emphasizes the development of both applied and theoretical knowledge, preparing students for graduate study or immediate employment in human-service fields. While formal and consistent alumni tracking has been challenging, informal alumni surveys and reports from recent graduates provide many examples of acceptance into PsyD programs (Psychology Doctorate); and into Masters' programs in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Social Work, School Psychology, and Public Health (see Table 2 in the External Demand section). The informal tracking also provides many examples of our graduates being hired into degree-relevant positions, particularly in mental health, social services, education, and community agencies. While the data are already strong, we believe alumni tracking initiatives proposed in this review will reveal even greater rates of success both retrospectively and prospectively.

Much of the above alignment and success can be attributed to highly dedicated and qualified faculty who utilize a curriculum that integrates research training, applied coursework, and experiential learning. The applied focus of the program and variety of specialized courses makes it distinct within the state of West Virginia. Fairmont State is one of the few undergraduate psychology programs offering coursework in assessment and intervention, along with structured practicum experiences that place students in real-world clinical and human-service settings. These opportunities provide students with early exposure to professional roles and expectations, strengthening their readiness for graduate programs and employment. Faculty mentorship, community engagement, and commitment to student well-being further contribute to the program's mission and success. In the past 5 years faculty

have led and/or organized workshops on meditation and stress reduction, graduate school and professional panels, and career speaker series; each of which contributed to a vibrant and rigorous academic environment that supported student development both inside and outside the classroom. Furthermore, faculty provided extensive research opportunities throughout the 5-year period. While the pandemic temporarily reduced these opportunities, faculty continued to direct student research studies that led to publications and presentations at virtual conferences. In the most recent three years, upon returning to a semblance of normalcy, the program faculty mentored 60+ students in independent research projects which resulted in 20+ student co-authored presentations at regional, national, and international conferences.

External demand for the program remains strong and shows signs of continued growth. Psychology continues to be a high-demand field nationally and regionally, particularly in mental health, social services, education, and community agencies. Consistently high numbers of majors and minors in our psychology program align with this trend. The previously mentioned success of our alumni in entering graduate programs or gaining employment also reflects this demand. The demand is further exemplified by our practicum students being assigned increasingly advanced duties usually reserved for those with some graduate level training. Despite this accelerated introduction into the field, our students are doing their part to meet the demands. Community partners consistently report high satisfaction with Fairmont State students, noting their professionalism, preparedness, and ethical conduct. Practicum sites such as Genesis Youth Crisis Center, Brighter Pathways, Sharpe Hospital, and Mountaineer Psychological Services provide essential workforce support to the region, and the program's students contribute meaningfully to these agencies' missions. These partnerships reinforce the program's relevance and highlight its role in addressing behavioral-health workforce shortages in West Virginia.

Internal demand for psychology courses is equally strong. Psychology serves as a foundational discipline across campus, with PSYC 1101 fulfilling Core Curriculum requirements and other courses supporting majors in Nursing, Criminal Justice, National Security and Intelligence, Community Health, and Sociology. Enrollment patterns demonstrate sustained student interest and reliance on psychology coursework for interdisciplinary preparation. The program's applied electives, research opportunities, and practicum experiences attract students seeking hands-on, career-oriented learning, and faculty advising helps students navigate the major effectively. These factors contribute to the program's stability and its importance across multiple university programs.

The Psychology program also demonstrates high quality of outcomes through its capstone experiences, research engagement, and practicum placements. All students complete both a research capstone and a clinical capstone, integrating methodological training, theoretical knowledge, and applied practice. Many students also elect to participate in the COLA research lab or complete independent studies, where they gain experience with various research designs and methodologies, psychophysiological and other specialized equipment, data collection and analysis, and scholarly dissemination. Many students also take advantage of practicum opportunities to the extent that site positions are available. Students may complete one or more practicum in which they complete 120 hours of supervised fieldwork. Practicum students consistently receive strong evaluations from site supervisors, and the students report that these experiences deepen their understanding of professional roles,

enhance their clinical reasoning, and strengthen their graduate school applications. The previously described success of our program graduates in securing employment and graduate school admission further demonstrates the program's effectiveness in preparing students for post-baccalaureate pathways.

Despite these strengths, the program faces challenges related to assessment and long-term data tracking. Alumni information is inconsistent, making it difficult to systematically evaluate career outcomes and long-term program impact. Strengthening alumni engagement and developing more reliable mechanisms for collecting post-graduation data will be essential for future assessment cycles. Additionally, while practicum experiences are a major strength, they require significant coordination and rely on the capacity of external agencies. Ensuring stable placement availability and formalizing partnerships will help sustain this critical component of the curriculum. We have also identified some superficial problems with the curriculum map and will need to revise it to reflect the depth and richness of the course-level assessment we are already doing each semester.

Financially, the program operates efficiently and demonstrates strong enrollment in service courses. Faculty make strategic use of limited funds to support student travel, research equipment, and professional development; but availability of funding is increasingly limited. When time permits, faculty seek external support; however, the program is operating arguably at full capacity, but with 1 less faculty member (relative to 4 years ago). Sustaining and expanding high-impact practices will require additional institutional support. Practicum coordination, research supervision, and applied course development are labor-intensive, and faculty workload is substantial. Furthermore, a significant portion of what faculty do to make the program successful involves regular overloads and uncompensated independent studies or extracurricular engagement. Continued investment in faculty development, reassigned time, or additional staffing would strengthen the program's long-term viability and enhance its ability to deliver high-quality experiential learning.

In summary, the Psychology program is a mission-critical, high-quality academic unit that delivers transformative educational experiences and meets significant regional workforce needs. The dedicated faculty deliver a highly applied curriculum that aligns with the University and APA priorities and prepares students for graduate school and degree-relevant employment. Along with the applied curriculum; research opportunities and community partnerships distinguish the program within the state and contribute meaningfully to the University's strategic goals. With focused attention on alumni engagement, assessment infrastructure, practicum capacity, and faculty support, the program is well-positioned to strengthen its impact and sustainability in the years ahead.

Plan for improvement, including a timeline.

Looking ahead, the program has identified several priorities for the next one to three years. A more detailed timeline has not been included as planned improvements are largely contingent on ongoing administrative transitions and phased rollout of institutional software/technology. In any case, strengthening alumni tracking and engagement is a central goal. The program intends to explore options for maintaining student email access after

graduation, develop a psychology alumni newsletter, host regular alumni events, and collaborate with the Alumni Center and IESO to build a centralized alumni database. Expanding and formalizing community partnerships is another priority, particularly to ensure stable practicum placements and maintain strong relationships with regional agencies. Establishing formal agreements with practicum sites and creating structured feedback loops with supervisors will support this effort.

Enhancing assessment and data-driven decision making will also be essential. The program plans to implement more consistent alumni and employer surveys, track graduate school acceptance rates more systematically, and better integrate course-level assessment findings into the annual program review. These efforts will help refine applied electives, strengthen practicum preparation, and support continuous improvement. Annual assessment reporting will also need to be updated with a more detailed and up-to-date curriculum map. While the Psychology faculty engage in rigorous assessment and make data-driven curriculum decisions, these efforts are not explicitly reflected in the annual reports due to program improvements made since the creation of the curriculum map that was in TaskStream. The program plans to make necessary changes as the assessment features of CourseDog are rolled out.

Finally, supporting faculty capacity is critical to the program's long-term success. Faculty carry significant responsibilities related to courseload, research supervision, practicum oversight, advising, university committees, and community engagement. We plan to explore the potential for additional faculty lines, reassigned time, or expanded professional development support, each of which would help maintain program quality and ensure that students continue to benefit from the rich experiential opportunities that define the Psychology program at Fairmont State.

Identify weaknesses or deficiencies from the previous program review and the status of improvements implemented or accomplished.

The previous review did not identify any significant weaknesses or deficiencies in the program. Nevertheless, we have proposed and implemented several initiatives during the past 5-yr period to further strengthen our program and encourage student persistence. For instance, to help freshmen transition into college, we have incorporated additional introduction, engagement and inclusion activities in our PSYC 1101 courses. Dr. Ransom, for example, developed a syllabus annotation activity to familiarize students with the overall structure and help them navigate the relatively novel format. He then does weekly participation activities that encourage students to interact with the instructor and each other. As another instance, to help students persist through the difficult concepts and analyses in our research sequence (Statistics, Research Methods, and Research Capstone), Dr. Moore developed a LibGuide as a repository for freely available supplements, and Drs. Moore and Leary (CHEP) developed a series of instructional videos for conducting data entry and analysis using popular stats software. As a final example, to help students narrow down and prepare for their eventual careers, Drs. Williams and Machlev developed and taught a Careers in Psychology course. The continued success described throughout this self-study is at least

partially due to these types of real-time adjustments to improve the student experience. In a similar vein, staffing changes in 22-23 reduced the faculty's overall capacity, and more specifically reduced the capacity for clinical instruction. In response, Dr. Kato worked toward and earned a new clinical licensure. This trend of responsive intervention is set to continue as program faculty are currently developing a "Science of Learning" course to help combat the growing problem of unpreparedness of our freshmen.

In sum, despite no major weaknesses or deficiencies identified in the previous review, the program faculty has proactively identified potential issues and implemented improvements in real time to best serve each cohort of new students.

Five-year trend data on graduates and majors enrolled in the program.

The number of graduates and majors in Psychology has not changed significantly over the last five years with an average graduation rate of 43 students per year and an average of 249 majors per year. Our previous review indicated an average of 45 graduates per year with the average number of majors for the five-year period at 252 students. We noted that there were anomalous enrollment fluctuations early in the review period, likely due to the pandemic. However, the data for the most recent 3 years were consistent with the data from the 2020 review, suggesting regression to a relatively stable mean.

Summary of assessment model and how learning outcome assessment results were used for program improvement.

PLOs (program learning outcomes), and SLOs (student learning outcomes) are consistent with the mission and priorities of the University, and they align with the guidelines for undergraduate psychology programs published by the American Psychological Association (APA). PLOs are regularly assessed for Introduction, Reinforcement, and Mastery via SLOs. Program faculty meet at least one per semester to assess student performance against pre-established criteria - typically at least 70% of the class earning 70% or higher on the activities assessing each outcome. When a PLO or SLO falls below established benchmarks in any section, faculty discuss concerns, document action steps, implement changes promptly, and revisit outcomes at the next meeting. The need for such intervention has been rare and was only required at the level of single course sections. In most cases, the issues have been traced to anomalous factors such as low class size, compressed schedules, or trying a new assignment/activity - as evidenced by consistent resolution within one assessment cycle. Across the full five-year review period, all PLOs and assessed SLOs were met at satisfactory levels, including course-level outcomes not explicitly tied to PLOs.

One issue with the assessment model is that the curriculum map needs updated to reflect the degree to which critical outcomes are assessed. This issue stems from omissions in mapping rather than gaps in instruction or assessment. The program is effectively assessing student learning, but the curriculum map does not fully capture where PLOs and SLOs are being addressed. A comprehensive remapping effort is needed to ensure accurate alignment, resolve unreported SLOs, and reduce reliance on elective courses for reporting program-level

mastery. The program faculty plans to complete this remapping as the assessment portion of CourseDog is rolled out.

Overall, the program demonstrates strong assessment practices and satisfactory student performance, with the primary improvement need centered on updating and clarifying the curriculum map to better reflect existing assessment coverage.

Data on student placement, if available (e.g., number of students employed in positions related to the field of study or pursuing advanced degrees).

Due to aforementioned issues with reliable alumni tracking, we do not have accurate quantitative data on program graduates' rates of employment and admission to graduate school. However, informal surveys and anecdotal reports from graduates show that many of our recent students were accepted into their chosen graduate program or gained meaningful employment shortly after graduation. In the External Demand section, table 2 lists 35 graduates from the last 3 years along with the graduate programs into which they were accepted. The section also highlights 6 recent graduates who are currently employed at various behavioral health agencies across the region. With proposed initiatives in alumni tracking, we hope to show that these examples are representative of a significant portion of our program graduates.