

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

### Fairmont State Board of Governors

Program with Special Accreditation     Program without Special Accreditation

Date Submitted 12/15/2020

Degree Program: Psychology, B. S.

#### 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:

- X   1. Continuation of the program at the current level of activity;
- 2. Continuation of program with corrective action (for example, reducing the range of optional tracks or merging programs);
- 3. Identification of the program for further development (for example, providing additional institutional commitment);
- 4. Development of a cooperative program with another institution, or sharing courses, facilities, faculty, and the like;
- 5. Discontinuation of the Program

#### Rationale for Recommendation:

Mike Ransom  
Signature of person preparing report:

12-15-2020  
Date

Chris Kasel  
Signature of Dean

1/06/2021  
Date

[Signature]  
Signature of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs:

01/06/2021  
Date

[Signature]  
Signature of President:

5/20/2021  
Date

[Signature]  
Signature of Chair, Board of Governors:

5/18/21  
Date

## Executive Summary for Program Review

(not to be more than 2-3 pages)

Degree Program:	Psychology, B.S.
College or School/Department:	College of Liberal Arts/Department of Behavioral Sciences
Chair/Program Coordinator	Dr. Michael Ransom
External Reviewer:	Richard Bowyer
Reviewer Email:	rorbow@aol.com

**Synopses of significant findings, including findings of external review (include the external reviewer(s) information).**

The current 2020 psychology program review as well as the external reviewer’s assessment provides evidence and data that the psychology program maintains its status as a vital part of the Fairmont State University’s slate of program offerings. The psychology program continues to grow and develop both in its own right and alongside the University. Two of the greatest strengths of the program, which will be discussed at various points within this review, are its faculty and course offerings. This review also details how the psychology program makes use of assessment data and feedback to develop and improve the for the future.

The number of graduates and majors in Psychology has not changed significantly over the last five years with an average graduation rate of 45 students per year and an average of 252 majors per year. Our previous review indicated an average of 51 graduates per year with the average number of majors for the five-year period at 250 students. In that previous review, there were 1,593 applicants to the program with 554 students registering for classes over the five-year period and a marked decline in the most recent year of that review (2014-2015 academic year). Unfortunately, that trend continued to the current review, where there were 1,400 applicants for admission, yielding 385 registrants over the five-year period from 2015-2016 to 2019-2020. The trend is present in course enrollments. The previous reporting period contained over 16,000 students enrolled in Psychology courses and an average of 1,543 students during Fall and Spring semesters and 162 during summer semesters. The current reporting period contains close to 10,000 students enrolled in Psychology courses through the end of term and an average of 998 students during the Fall and Spring terms and 103 during the summer sessions.

In response to these troubling trends, we will detail strategies in this program review we have employed since the last program review to boost recruitment and retention as well as tactics we will employ in the future to enhance our recruitment and retention efforts.

On a positive note, our students have continued in graduate programs in clinical and counseling psychology and social work. A good portion of our graduates have found degree-related employment within mental health agencies along with other state agencies. Our annual assessment reviews show that the program is meeting its established goals and targets with an ongoing effort to improve the program.

**External Review Synopsis**

The external review provided by Dick Bowyer highlights a variety of strengths of the program that echo those emphasized above. For instance, the reviewer commends the program faculty (both full time and adjuncts) in terms of their training and background. Dick was also impressed by our course offerings and how Fairmont State's psychology program stacks up to other psychology programs at institutions throughout West Virginia. Finally, the external reviewer notes that the program, its faculty and students make invaluable contributions to the region. We will talk more about these services and graduate placements later in this review. The full external review is presented in Appendix D.

### **Plans for program improvement, including timeline**

The 2015 program review was approved with "continuation of the program at current level of activity". No deficiencies were identified.

Despite this feedback, we think two overarching areas where academic programs can constantly improve are recruitment and retention endeavors and employment and post-graduate opportunities for graduates and the psychology program at Fairmont State is no exception. In the following paragraphs we will detail plans we have to increase recruitment and retention along with strategies we will implement to make our graduates even more attractive to employers and graduate schools. We will also provide a timeline (both short-term and long-term) for these initiatives.

One theme that feeds into both recruitment and retention is social connection. Indeed, people are social animals and strive for strong, secure relationships. Thus, anything that creates a faculty-prospect or student-prospect, or prospect-prospect connection is key to recruitment events and retention initiatives. Basic marketing strategies (e.g., branded brain stress-balls and other free merchandise) have helped us to break the ice, and interactions at event tables have helped us form connections with the more outgoing prospective students; but we could do more to engage the less outgoing prospects and to maintain/strengthen connections after events. Starting next academic year (Fall 2021), we will put together information packets that include FAQs (e.g., What can I do with this major? Will this major help me become a \_\_\_?). If the budget cannot accommodate the extra printouts, we will pursue mobile-friendly digital options.

Another endeavor involves recruitment, retention and employment. Recently, a sister program within the Department of Behavioral Sciences created a recruitment YouTube video that provides the viewer with an overview of the program, highlights accomplishments by Community Health majors and features career options within the major and where graduates typically look for employment. The psychology program aims to produce a similar video with the help of the University Relations and Marketing department by the end of the next academic year (Spring 2022).

Open-source education materials also contribute to recruitment and retention efforts. As detailed later in this review, the psychology program faculty are constantly trying to provide our students with quality and affordable educational materials. To this end, the psychology faculty adopted open-source textbooks for two highly enrolled courses (Introduction to Psychology, PSYC 1101, and Behavioral Statistics, PSYC 2240). We plan on continuing this trend for additional courses in the future. Luckily, Dr. Ransom is a member on Fairmont State's Textbook Committee so we can keep our finger on the pulse of textbook advancements. We plan on finding additional viable open source options by the end of the next academic year (Spring 2022).

Along similar lines, Dr. Moore has compiled a fantastic set of free resources for our Behavioral Statistics and Research Methods courses. Traditionally, these courses are quite challenging to students so any resources we can provide to them can help with retention within the

major. The free resources help faculty enforce principles taught within the courses by providing students with APA writing guides and sample papers and free statistical videos. We plan on integrating these free resources within our Behavioral Statistics and Research Methods courses by the beginning of the next academic term (Fall 2021).

One potential reason students drop out after one semester is an incongruence between what they expect college to be and what it actually is. We will survey faculty across campus about what they regard as “college-readiness” for their intro level courses. The survey will target not only academic readiness, but also developmental, social and practical readiness, etc. We will then convert this into a college-readiness questionnaire that could be given to prospects, incoming students, or HS dual-enrollees. The questionnaire will then be used as a screener for incongruencies, and as a tool to direct students to resources that will help reduce the incongruencies before or at the start of their college enrolment. For example, if a student has never built a personal schedule for time management, they could be directed to relevant resources to train time basic management skills. This could perhaps be used in conjunction with the 1st-year seminar SOAR courses or added to the repertoire of advising tools. We plan on launching this questionnaire at the beginning of the next academic term (Fall 2021).

In a similar vein, we will develop first-week-first-semester student surveys that will help identify what incoming students expect from teachers and what they think will be expected from them as college students. We sometimes get this information from course evaluations at the end-of-the semester, but it might be too late for retention purposes. If we could identify and correct student misconceptions and find a way to scaffold students into appropriate expectations during the first semester, it might go a long way toward retention. These endeavors are planned to begin in Fall 2022.

Lastly, along similar lines to the above activities, the psychology program plans to insert a module in its Introduction to Psychology course to promote both recruitment and retention. Understanding psychological principles and concepts such as learning, memory, stress and belonging can assist students in achieving academic success within college and beyond. Furthermore, the psychology program at Fairmont State offers courses in cognitive, health and social psychology where we go into more detail on these crucial topics. We plan on implementing a module within our Introduction to Psychology courses by the beginning of the next academic term (Fall 2021) that highlights how students can use their newfound psychological knowledge to succeed in college and life after Fairmont. We also hope to work with the College of Liberal Arts Advising Center and select SOAR courses to reach an even larger student base.

We also aim to continuously improve the psychology program in the areas of post-graduate preparation in terms of employment and graduate school preparation. We have several initiatives planned on this front. This past semester (Fall 2020), Dr. Ransom and Dr. Kato met with representatives from West Virginia University’s Human Resource Management Master of Science Program about graduate school opportunities for our psychology majors. The representatives of the program were impressed by our research methods sequence along with applicable content courses such as Social Psychology and Industrial and Personnel Psychology. We plan on speaking with our juniors and seniors psychology majors about this Master’s Program next semester (Spring 2021) and help those interested in pursuing a career in human resources.

Another recruitment/retention as well as employment/post-graduate initiative will take place next Spring semester (2021). This initiative is part of a HEPC grant the Department of Behavioral Sciences was awarded in 2019. The grant is targeted toward connecting undergraduate

students with professionals such as licensed independent social workers, counselors and psychologist resulting in a college pipeline program.

The piece of the grant that will take place this upcoming spring semester is a “clinical showcase”. Initially, this showcase was going to take place face to face, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be held virtually. In this virtual showcase, the Department of Behavioral Sciences will invite licensed social workers, counselors, and psychologists who are alumni from Fairmont State’s Department of Behavioral Sciences to return to campus to “showcase” their institution or agency’s work and to discuss with students the nature of the social service work to which they provide. A total of 20-25 social service agencies and graduate academic affiliates will participate in this activity. Additionally, we anticipate 25-35 alumni will participate. All Fairmont State students as well as local high school seniors will be invited to virtually visit with each agency where they will have an opportunity to ask career and job-related questions and inquire about the possibility of internship experiences. These virtual meetings will also allow faculty, students, and agency professionals the opportunity to network. Finally, a virtual Social Service Forum will be held. After collecting a number of relevant student questions, Dr. Ann Shaver, Professor of Psychology at Fairmont State University, will ask participating agency and graduate school representatives to respond to questions of interest.

This grant has been well-received by our majors.

According to one major: *“I enjoyed attending and picked up a volunteer position at On Eagles’ Wings which has been a huge blessing. I am excited for life to go back to normal so I can continue on and become an Equine Specialist in Mental Health. I also decided to go on for my Masters in counseling at WVU. Thank you for providing these opportunities and making my last semester at FSU one to remember.”*

**Identify weaknesses or deficiencies from the previous review and describe how these have been addressed.**

We received minimal feedback from our last program review, but one area in need of improvement highlighted by the previous chair was the relatively small number of full-time faculty despite large major numbers and high levels of productivity. In particular, the previous review noted that large enrollment in our upper-level courses made it difficult for the professor to provide an optimum learning environment through group discussions and practice experiences. Particularly, these large classes were detrimental to those courses that attempt to teach therapeutic intervention techniques, psychological assessment and theoretical processing. Furthermore, the previous review noted that courses which involved a good deal of writing are negatively impacted by such large class sizes.

We have addressed these concerns in a multitude of ways. To help free up full-time faculty and offer more sections of upper-level classes, we are continuously creating a healthy stable of adjuncts who can teach more of the lower-level courses. To help spur on group discussions we have begun to utilize online discussion boards in our LMS (Blackboard) and moving forward we can implement the breakout rooms in Webex. Utilizing Webex also allows us to broadcast and record our lectures so upper level majors can review the difficult material involved in intervention techniques and theoretical processing. We have also used the Behavioral Science Lab (which will be discussed later in more detail) as extra instructional space to teach intervention techniques. Furthermore, a colleague within the department is hoping to obtain grant funding to turn some of our classrooms into Hyflex setups which can lead to smaller class sizes and spur group discussions.

We have also attempted to address the writing concerns from the previous review. Notably, we have coordinated with the faculty in Humanities to offer ENG 1102 sections that specialize in APA style and we encourage our majors to take those sections.

As previously mentioned, programs should always be concerned about recruitment and retention and continuously examine ways to boost both endeavors. We have engaged in several initiatives since the last program review on the recruitment/retention front.

We have attempted to boost recruitment into the psychology major in a variety of ways. Along with attending internal recruitment events such as Maroon and White Days, the psychology program has routinely sent representation to external recruitment events held at other regional institutions. The program has also created new program sheets that highlight not only course offerings and a model schedule, but also possible employment opportunities where one can hope to find a job with a B.S. in psychology from Fairmont State University. A copy of the program sheets is available in Appendix E. Another avenue we have utilized to increase recruitment is offering dual enrollment in the local high schools. In recent years, the psychology program has endeavored to widen its footprint in the local high schools and we have offered a dual enrollment psychology course in high schools in the region. In this dual enrollment psychology course, our faculty work one-on-one with high school teachers and offer college-level instruction on a variety of topics within psychology. When the Abnormal chapter is discussed we not only talk with the students about how to pick a therapist, but also how to become a therapist. Our faculty also discuss career opportunities beyond therapy with the students.

Another recent recruitment strategy we have implemented is the program champions. The Department of Behavioral Sciences program champion initiative was introduced in Summer 2020 and shows promise. In this initiative, a faculty member contacts prospective majors during the summer break months and assists them with a variety of needs. This past summer, although prospects provided limited feedback or responses, the psychology champion was able to help a few individuals with registration issues; to ease some worries about delayed responses from the overwhelmed student services offices; and to direct some students to appropriate resources when the aforementioned delays had them teetering on withdrawing. In line with the faculty-student connection theme discussed earlier, the psychology program champion still receives questions about future course registration, student service issues, psychology careers, etc. from some of the people who were on the list – even from those who are not his advisees or students.

Finally, we have offered an honors section of Introduction to Psychology for several years. In these honors sections, we engage in more in-depth discussions about interesting psychological topics such as hypnosis, phobias and drugs. Moreover, these honors sections allow the program to recruit the best and brightest Fairmont students to the major.

We have also attempted to address retention rates since the last program review. Being such a popular and large major is fantastic, but also comes with inherent retention issues. Traditionally, the Introduction to Psychology, PSYC 1101, classes in the program enroll close to 90 students. Recently, we have essentially halved those enrollments and capped the introduction courses at 50 students. By doing so, we can give first-year psychology majors and other majors in the class more individualized attention and engage in more class discussions and presentations. Along similar lines, we have attempted to give our first semester majors more attention by having some upper-level psychology majors in the Psychology and Sociology club act as mentors. As previously mentioned, we have also recently adopted an OER (open educational resources) textbooks for our Introduction to Psychology and Behavioral Statistics courses. By having an OER textbook, we can minimize the cost of class materials for students while not sacrificing quality.

Finally, the program has implemented a variety of changes to make our majors attractive to employers and graduate schools since the last program review, most involving research and data analysis.

The main addition to the program after the last program review to help our majors appeal to graduate schools and employers is a concentration in Behavioral Analytics. This specialization offers students who major in psychology (and sociology) the opportunity to expand their skills in manipulating and analyzing data on a larger scale to become competitive in a job market that is increasingly focused on the use of “Big Data”. This specialization is an add-on to the psychology degree and is to be completed in addition to all psychology major requirements in place of free electives.

We have also redesigned the Experimental course in the major to give our psychology students even more training with data analysis and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In a similar vein, we created a Behavioral Science research lab since the last program review where students can get firsthand research experiences. We will talk more about the Behavioral Science research lab later in this program review.

Five-year trend data on graduates and majors enrolled (Data will be provided by the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness).

				HEPC Series 10		
AY	Enrollment* (unduplicated)	Enrollment* (duplicated)	**Degree Awarded	Productivity Standards Programs are required to meet at least one of the indicators listed below.		
2020-21	N/A	N/A	N/A			
2019-20	236	446	40			
2018-19	238	444	50	<b>Average of Five Most Recent Years</b>		
2017-18	247	446	43	<b>Degree Level</b>	<b>*Enrollment (duplicated)</b>	<b>**Degree Awarded</b>
2016-17	268	491	41	Baccalaureate	467	45
2015-16	269	508	50	Masters	N/A	N/A
<b>5-YR AVG</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>45</b>			

\* HEPC end of term headcount (Fall, Spring, Summer)

\*\* IPEDS Graduation data (Fall, Spring, Summer)

**Summary of assessment model and how results are used for program improvement (A full Assessment Report is in TaskStream and can be downloaded or viewed by academic year for summation).**

The Department of Behavioral Sciences engages in the collection of assessment data each semester in the program courses. This information is discussed during department meetings at the end of each semester. An overall report is currently being drafted based upon last year’s assessment data (academic year 2019-2020). The report will be used to highlight progress toward program goals by identifying areas in student learning outcomes that are failing to reach the target threshold. This information will then be used to generate improvements in measures or realignment of student learning outcomes in preparation for the next cycle.

For instance, one area our majors struggled last spring in PSYC 2240, Behavioral Statistics was our Program Outcome 2.1 (Use relationships and formulas to set up and test a null hypothesis. Synthesize mathematical knowledge to reason logically to a conclusion and explain the legitimacy of that conclusion). Consequently, this semester we spent extra time on null hypothesis testing and made our recorded Webex lectures available for students so students can review the difficult concepts involved in null hypothesis significance testing. During the final step of the process the expertise of outside stakeholders is also be obtained in order to maintain close coordination of both goals and outcomes with employer expectations.

The Psychology Program has developed a comprehensive assessment program in which all psychology majors are routinely evaluated to determine a minimum level of theoretical and applied competence in the following areas: (1) Psychological Foundations, (2) Statistics and Research Design, (3) Testing Theory and Psychological Assessment, and (4) Intervention Strategies. These core areas were chosen because of their direct applicability toward graduate study as well as success within the work environment. All student assessment and outcomes are kept current and tracked in the Task-Stream Program. These tracking and assessments systems are used by all Psychology faculty. A copy of the most recent Taskstream report will be provided in addition to this program review.

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

We will talk more about student placement in the Necessity section but can expound upon it here as well. A good portion of graduates from the psychology program at Fairmont State have found employment in fields related to psychology and are also working on graduate degrees. Our recent graduates work at such establishments as WVU Medicine, Genesis Foster Care and Adoption Services and Valley Healthcare System. A rundown of our recent graduates' data (graduate school and employment) will be detailed in Appendix G.