EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Academic Program Review

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM
Psychology

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS
Robin M. Akert, Wellesley College
Janet R. Matthews, Loyola University New Orleans
Kristi S. Multhaup, Davidson College

CAMPUS VISIT:
April 6-8, 2011

The review team read the self-study written by the faculty in the Department; reviewed the curriculum, course syllabi and evaluations; conducted class visits; interviewed faculty, students and staff; and met with the Dean, Associate Deans and other relevant members of the campus community. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were provided with USF's Vision, Mission, Values Statement, the Department's self-study and other university materials.

1. **How did the external review committee rate the quality of the program: excellent, very good, good, adequate, or poor? How does the program compare with benchmark top-tier programs nationally? Please provide a brief rationale for the external review committee's rating.**

   The reviewers rate the program as adequate when compared to the top-tier national programs. They "respectfully suggest" that the program be compared to top-tier regional programs and in this case the program would be rated as GOOD to VERY GOOD.

   The reviewers recommend reframing the comparison because the "school and college mission may limit [the] program's possibilities" and that "challenges remain" that will "require institutional support to overcome them."

   Comments about the "dedicated and hard-working" and "forward-thinking" faculty, the "high regard" students have for the faculty, and a curriculum that is at the "forefront" in requiring Biological Psychology and a "vanguard nationally for teaching diversity" support their good to very good rating.

2. **What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process?**

   The reviewers state that the Department should focus on these two areas: redesign of the curriculum, and improving communication and decision-making processes. The reviewers offer suggestions in both of these areas.

   The reviewers also strongly recommend that the College devote more resources to the Department in order for the Department to reach its full potential.

3. **What specific recommendations for improving the program's quality has the external review committee made to the Dean?**

   - *Curriculum*
     - o Consider reducing the number of courses in the major

- o Consider reconceptualizing some aspects of the major, especially the research methods and advanced seminar/capstone classes
  - o Create opportunities through the curriculum to increase faculty-student collaboration (e.g., give course credit for working on faculty research, link honors theses to faculty research)
  - o Create a summer research program for undergraduate research assistants
  - o Develop a Department colloquium series
  - o Reconsider the academic advising process
- *Department Communication and Decision-Making Process*
  - o Engage in long-term planning and ensure that all Department members are involved
  - o Create a Curriculum subcommittee to assist the Chair in managing the curriculum
  - o Work on a process for course assignments that is "transparent" and where all members have a "'voice' in the decisions"
  - o Develop a process that embraces "change" and encourages "lively debate"
  - o Prioritize Department goals
  - o Consider ways to contact students more effectively about important information regarding the major and enforce major requirements
  - o Meet with the CIO about solving IT problems
  - o Revise Department by-laws to include processes around course assignments, Departmental positions and responsibilities, voting, and assigning of mentors.
- *Staffing & Resources*
  - o The following resources are needed if Psychology is to "take it to the next level":
    - Additional faculty positions: Reviewers suggest increasing the FTEs by two, especially if the Department will be assisting with a new graduate program
    - Additional support staff: The reviewers suggest adding a full-time assistant to the Program Assistant, additional work-study hours for office assistants, and a Research Coordinator. The staff can assist with advising and meeting the needs of their large number of majors and minors
  - o Provide funding for students to work with faculty in the summer
  - o Allow faculty to "stagger" sabbatical leaves without losing credit for years-of-service to increase "flexibility" and provide stability during years that multiple faculty could be on leave
  - o Do not allow new programs to "drain" the current psychology undergraduate program
- Other
  - o Streamline forms (e.g., ACP) and processes to reduce faculty paperwork
  - o Recommend that USF reconsider dependence on student evaluations for evaluating faculty teaching

4. **In the opinion of the external review committee is the program following the University's strategic initiative in that it is;**

Recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty of outstanding teachers and scholars.

The reviewers were "favorably impressed" with the faculty who have "overcome significant challenges," responded to previous recommendations, and engage in research with undergraduates. The reviewers praised the Department for their recruitment of "effective" adjunct professors.

They also noted that the full-time faculty are "thinly stretched" and need more resources to "take it to the next level," and encouraged them to integrate their research and teaching activities.

Enrolling, supporting and graduating a diverse student body that demonstrates high academic achievement, strong leadership capabilities, a concern for others, and a sense of responsibility for the weak and vulnerable.

The students who were interviewed "clearly hold the faculty in high regard" and find them "highly accessible". The faculty "demonstrated a passion for teaching" and a "sincere desire to consider alternative paths to their pedagogical goals."

Providing the environment necessary to promote student learning in the program.

The reviewers note in several places the faculty members' dedication to student learning and the curriculum. They mention the Department's leadership in diversity education. The diversity course requirement for the major, combined with the CORE diversity requirement, demonstrates "outstanding pedagogical leadership in the area of diversity education."

5. **In what way is the program contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit, Catholic urban university with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world?**

   The reviewers state that the "Department's mission appears to be well aligned with the USF's mission." They note, however, the Department is "crippled in its efforts to assess whether it is successfully preparing students for lives of leadership and service to their communities." According to the reviewers, the problem appears to be resistance on the part of the Office for University Advancement to partnerships that will help the Department with outcome assessment.

6. **What is the timetable for the response to the external review committee's recommendations for program improvement? What can the Office of the Provost do to appropriately respond to the review?**

   The Dean's Office will meet with the Department to discuss the reviewers' comments and suggestions and develop an action plan. Based on the reviewers' comments, there are four ways the Provost can assist the Psychology Department:
   - help the Department secure additional full-time positions
   - provide additional support staff, especially around advising and research activities
   - fund opportunities for summer research for undergraduates
   - assist in building bridges with the Office of University Advancement and ITS

7. **What general comments or issues, if any, are crucial to understanding the reviewers report?**

   As noted earlier in the summary, the reviewers believe that institutional support is crucial for the Department to be able to take their program to "the next level" and become a top-tier national program.