April 5, 2010

TO: Rick Pointer, Provost
FROM: Tom Fikes Brenda Smith, Co-chairs, Department of Psychology
RE: Request to continue the social psychology position vacated by Christena Cleveland

With the loss of Christena Cleveland, the psychology department is requesting that we be able to conduct a national search similar to the search from which Christena was hired: we are seeking a full-time, tenure-track faculty member with specialization in either social or developmental psychology. Courses to be taught would include social psychology, experimental psychology (lecture and 2 laboratory sections), general psychology, and (depending on area of specialization) developmental psychology and special topics seminars in social and/or developmental psychology (topics might include psychology of women; cultural or cross-cultural psychology; prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination; industrial-organizational psychology). Other responsibilities would include supervising student research and maintaining an active social/developmental laboratory in addition to advising 15-20 majors.

You have asked that we submit a rationale, for consideration by the Executive Committee of the Senate, to continue this position and opening a search this coming year. Our rationale for continuing the position includes the following:

1. **We need a 5th member of the department.**
   - Numbers support it; our number of majors and minors have not declined over the past 20 years. We typically have 25-30 students in our PSY-013 sophomore-level course, and our graduating class is typically 20-25. These are good indicators of the number of psychology majors.
   - Going back to adjunct staffing of 4-6 courses would seriously impact the academic program, and require undoing changes implemented under the previous administration (e.g., return to large sections of PSY-001 and/or adjuncts to teach our GE courses).
   - There is no "fluff" in the loads and schedules of the other psychology faculty; the social psychology, experimental psychology, and general psychology sections that Christena was teaching are core courses for our majors and for the GE, and having one of the other faculty to pick up one or more of these courses would mean those faculty dropping one or more of their own core courses.
   - We have more advisees than can be legitimately serviced by 3 2/3 faculty, especially when a faculty member is on leave, sabbatical, or on an off campus program.

2. **We need tenure-track faculty expertise in social and/or developmental psychology.**
   - Social and developmental psychology are standard course offerings at programs our size or larger; there simply are not programs without specialty in these core subdisciplines, and lacking both would compromise our status as a "top tier" liberal arts college.
   - Social psychology is an important area of psychology for topics that matter to Westmont and to the church: issues of diversity, cultural awareness, and theological anthropology, to name a few.
   - Social psychology is an important bridge between psychology and sociology, anthropology, communication studies, and other departments in the social sciences.
• Similar arguments can be made for a developmentalist (and our preference would be for a social-developmentalist, with training in both areas). Our rationale for searching on both positions (which we also did 3 years ago during the previous search) is to cast the net widely enough to find a candidate who is also a good fit to Westmont in other ways (most notably, strong promise for success in and undergraduate liberal arts environment and theological depth.
• Our other areas of expertise include clinical and counseling psychology (SR and AG), behavioral neuroscience and sensation and perception (TF), and cognitive psychology (BS)

3. We need additional faculty to supervise student research.
• Independent student research is a hallmark of our program (the Natural and Behavioral Sciences in general, and Psychology in particular), and distinguishes Westmont from many peer institutions. Losing a tenure track member of the department would mean reducing student research opportunities.
• A large number of our students have interest in social and developmental psychology; it was not unusual for Christena to have 6 or more independent research students.
• Several of our students will be doing research in social psychology at UCSB this summer because the opportunity is not available here.

4. We need a full-time faculty member teaching experimental psychology.
• This is the gateway course for majors in our department (offered each Spring; lecture of 25-30 students, and two laboratory sections of 12-15 each), teaching them the basics of scientific writing, experimental design and analysis, and essential methodology and statistics. It also introduces them to the various areas of research expertise in the department, preparing them for their own senior research projects.
• It is essential to have a full-time member of the Westmont psychology department in this role, and it is essential that this person be excited about our program and recruiting students into a research mentality. This course shapes the identity of our major.

I would be happy to provide more data and additional supporting documents for the Committee to consider should you or they require it. I will have some of those materials with me tomorrow during the Executive Senate meeting.

Thanks to you and the Committee for considering our request.