

Annual Assessment Report

2020-2021

As a department, we generated a number of key questions in our six-year report from 2018. The key questions are listed below, as well as the data-guided recommendations we generated at the time. Our department has made significant progress on these recommendations since that time, as outlined below.

Key Questions Addressed

Key Question #1: What changes are necessary for the psychology curriculum and co-curricular activities?

To inquire and evaluate this key question, the department collectively compared data from the prior six-year report from 2012. We, as a department, also collected student feedback, held several faculty discussions, and compared our curriculum to the American Psychological Association's best practices or recommended curriculum. After this process, we generated the following recommendation.

Data-guided recommendation: Seek appropriate adjustments in our current courses and training opportunities for our psychology majors. Make selective additions as departmental resources allowed.

Since our six-year report was completed in 2018, we have taken the following steps to address this recommendation:

- 1) Added two new elective courses to our curriculum, including Marriage 101 (PSY-118) and Topics in Contemporary Psychology (PSY-150)
- 2) Re-designed and refined our Experimental Psychology course (PSY-013) in the following ways:

- a. Streamlined the number of assignments in order to focus on key goals, including training students to write well in the discipline of psychology.
- b. Refined assignments so that students would be better equipped to present research in a variety of formats (e.g., in manuscript form as well as in scientific poster form)
- c. Bolstered students' understanding of critical skills in the field of psychology by requiring them to pass an exam on basic Excel skills at the beginning of the semester
- d. Included a new hands-on activity to help students more thoroughly understand the process, implications, and consequences of violating academic integrity via plagiarism
- e. Incorporated more frequent assessment of laboratory content so that students could better retain their capacity to conduct statistical analyses of data generated across different types of psychological experiments
- f. Developed more opportunities for students to go above and beyond the expected coursework by offering extra credit tasks to enhance their understanding of professional writing in psychology
- g. Introduced more information that reflects the current status of the field, particularly the importance of open science, transparency in research, ethical practices in the field, and an emphasis on replication and reproducibility of research findings
- h. Renamed the course "Research Methods" to better align with similar courses at other institutions and within the field of psychology

Key Question #2: How can we make better use of our existing resources and expand our resources?

To inquire and evaluate this key question, the department collectively assessed our needs in conjunction with broader campus goals and plans for resources. After this process, we generated the following recommendation.

Data-Guided Recommendation: Hire new faculty member and seek to develop an alumni and donor base.

Since our six-year report was completed in 2018, we have taken the following steps to address this recommendation:

- 1) Hired a new full-time, tenure-track faculty member, Dr. Gwen Park. Dr. Park completed her Ph.D. at the Ohio State University, and she completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Ohio State University and Injae Medical School in South Korea. Dr. Park's research interests include psychophysiological mechanisms of cognition-emotion interaction, self-regulation, and cognitive models of psychopathology. She also has more social psychological research interests, including the effects of group identity and moral judgment on cognitive processes, such as perception and attention. Dr. Park is now teaching courses in Psychology of Learning, Cognitive Psychology, General Psychology, and the Senior Capstone Research course. Prior to coming to Westmont in 2021, she served as a faculty member at Azusa Pacific University and Hope College. Dr. Park brings a much-needed scholarly approach in the field of cognitive psychology and a commitment to engaging our students in undergraduate research.

- 2) As a department, we decided that beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year, we will combine the two, identical Research Methods laboratory sections into a single one in order to save time and resources for both the instructor and the laboratory coordinator. We were unable to do this in previous years due to the limited number of computers in our psychology computer laboratory (WH 218). Each of the 40 students needs a computer during the laboratory sessions in order to use the specialized software to conduct the statistical analyses. However, we, as a department, decided that it would be a better use of time, money, and resources for the instructor, the laboratory coordinator, and the College to purchase the licenses for each student's laptop every semester (a total of \$1,400) and combine the two lab sections into one. We would move the lab to a bigger room that can accommodate all 40 students. That way, the instructor can use those extra units saved toward a different course, and the lab coordinator can have some extra time to focus on grading in this laboratory as well as on other laboratory courses within the major. Moreover, the College would benefit from having the instructor be able to teach a different course without losing any students in the original Research Methods course. In sum, this assessment-driven change provides a notable savings of both time and resources.
- 3) We have developed a multi-pronged approach to enhancing our alumni base.
- a. We have created an annual psychology alumni newsletter, informing alumni of updates, new developments, and professional accomplishments in the department.
 - b. We have started highlighting selected psychology alumni and their accomplishments on the department website.

- c. We have begun working with a previous department chair and long-time donor to the College, Dr. Carl Dodrill, to organize a more complete list of psychology alumni. This list will provide a basis for future development of increased support and resources for the department.