

**Assessment of Student Learning  
Psychology Program  
Indiana University-Purdue University Columbus**

2011-2012 Progress Report  
Based on Six-Stage Assessment Strategy

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### **Introduction**

The IUPUC Psychology Assessment Committee worked on improvement in program evaluation during the 2011-2012 academic year. The goal is to create a process for continuous review and improvement of our undergraduate Psychology Program for our BA and BS programs, and two certificate programs in Case Management and Addictions Prevention and Counseling.

We are using the six-stage plan adopted by the School of Science Assessment Committee in 2005. During the process we used the IUPUI Department of Psychology as our model. IUPUC's Psychology Program is considered to be an extension of the IUPUI program and we use the same course numbers and graduation requirements. There are minor differences between the two programs based on resources, student needs, and community needs. Therefore, we are following the lead of our IUPUI colleagues and we are using the same measures for our undergraduate degree program.

### **School of Science Six-Stage Assessment**

Stage 1	Identify the program's student learning outcomes (SLOs)
Stage 2	Link these SLOs to specific components in the program's curriculum
Stage 3	Identify or create methods to measure these SLOs
Stage 4	Collect data to determine if the SLOs are being accomplished successfully
Stage 5	Use the data collected in Stage 4 to make curricular changes
Stage 6	Repeat Stage 4 to determine if the curricular changes were effective

IUPUC Psychology Program is working at stage 3 and 4 during this assessment year for the Learning Community, Introductory courses, and our Methods courses. We will begin stage 3 next academic year for our 2 certificate programs, intermediate and elective courses, and our support services including academic advising.

This plan is comparable to the recommended steps from the Planning for Learning and Assessment table that has been approved by IUPUI's Program Review and Assessment Committee.

### **Planning for Learning and Assessment Table**

1. What general outcome are you seeking
2. How would you know the outcome if you saw it? What will the student know or be able to do?
3. How will you help students learn it? (in class or out of class)
4. How could you measure each of the desired behaviors listed in #2?
5. What are the assessment findings?
6. What improvements have been made based on assessment findings?

The above guidelines provide a framework for our departmental efforts to assess student learning. IUPUC Psychology department began assessment last year with our upper level methods courses, Research Methods B311 and Capstone Courses. Our evaluation process began by evaluating the learning of our students in their advanced courses. The committee felt this was the most expedient method to measure current program quality and to evaluate students learning as they complete the degree requirements. This process helped us to lay the foundation for an assessment process. We developed a five year plan (see Appendix A) that will guide our process toward a more comprehensive learning evaluation.

### **Stage 1: Identify Student Learning Outcomes**

IUPUI Psychology Department developed a set of 15 core competencies consistent with IUPUI's *Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULs)* and the American Psychological Association's *Competencies for Undergraduate Psychology Majors*.

IUPUC is applying IUPUI's Psychology Department's SLOs to our BA and BS degrees and in the future to identify SLOs for our two certificate programs. Students graduating with the BA/BS in Psychology from IUPUC will demonstrate competence in the following areas:

1. Content of Psychology: to show familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology. Students should understand:
  - a. Psychology is a science aimed at describing, explaining, predicting, and changing behavior.

- b. Behavior is influenced by person variables, environment variables, and their interaction.
  - c. Psychology has evolved in a socio-historical context and it is characterized by a variety of theoretical perspectives.
  - d. Our experience of the world is highly subjective and influenced by our cultural heritage.
2. Research in Psychology: Understand and use basic research methods in psychology, including design, data analysis, and interpretation
  3. Application of Psychology: Understand and generate applications of psychology to individual, social, and organizational issues
  4. Ethics in Psychology: Understand and abide by the ethics of psychology, including those that encourage the recognition, understanding, and respect for the complexity of socio-cultural and international diversity
  5. Personal development, Relationship Building, and Career Planning: Understand themselves and others, acquire effective collaboration skills, and develop realistic ideas about how to pursue careers in psychology and related fields
  6. Communication Skills, Information Competence, and Technological Proficiency: to write and speak effectively, demonstrate information competence, and utilize technology for many purposes
  7. Critical and Creative Thinking and Problem Solving: to use critical and creative thinking in the scientific approach to problem solving

### **Stage 2: Link SLOs to Specific Components of Department Curriculum**

IUPUC follows the lead of IUPUI with regard to course numbers, and degree requirements. We consider our courses equivalent and IUPUC students may take courses at IUPUI and IUPUI students can take courses at IUPUC. While we have additional work to do, we are following the lead of our colleagues at IUPUI who completed a comprehensive assessment of syllabi for all courses and developed a system to link SLOs to department curriculum. The assessment of syllabi determined that SLOs were addressed about 28 times in the curriculum over the course of a degree program. To further manage these data, courses were placed in three categories; beginning, intermediate, and advanced. Since the SLOs are repeated throughout the curriculum, separating the courses by level yields better comparisons across the curriculum. For example proficiency in a SLO for an introductory course may be very different as the same SLO applied to a capstone course.

IUPUC Psychology has developed a 5 year plan that will lead to comprehensive assessment. For 2011-2012 we are evaluating our freshman learning community (LC), B104 Introduction to

Psychology as a Social Science, and our methods courses B305 Statistics, B311 Research Lab, and our 3 sections of Capstone

**Stage 3: Identify or create methods to measure these SLOs**

**Stage 4: Collect data to determine if the SLOs are being accomplished successfully**

**SLOs Linked to Freshmen LC (SLOs 3, 5, &7)**

IUPUC follows a learning community (LC) approach for freshmen intending to major in psychology. IUPUC's LC is a two semester program that begins in the fall for freshman and continues into the spring semester. The fall LC consists of B103 Orientation to a Major in Psychology, B104 Introduction to Psychology as a Social Science, B252 Critical Thinking in Psychology, W131 English Composition, and C180 Interpersonal Communication. The LC is designed to increase student success by providing peer mentoring at a ratio of 1 mentor to 10 students, increase use of campus supports, and to increase self-efficacy and sense of belonging. The W131 writing assignments coordinate with material from the B103 and B104 courses and provide writing expertise that is tangible and applicable to the student's major. Students are introduced to campus resources (writing center, psychology tutors, mentor meetings, IT) and assignments support active engagement with mentors and resources. Second semester freshmen are enrolled in B105 and a second English course.

**Measure:** Data is collected from the registrar, student work, student evaluations, Onestart, and Oncourse to measure the SLOs.

**Findings:** In the Spring 11 LC there were 37 students enrolled and at the end of the semester 73% had a GPA of 2.0 or higher and were enrolled in the next semester. In the Fall 11 LC there were 59 students and 76% had a GPA of 2.0 or higher and persisted to the next semester. Written assignments were evaluated by faculty. A matrix was developed to measure the identified SLOs on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being low and 5 being high; student's learning was assessed in the following areas and the modal scores are reported:

- SLO #3 Has a better understanding of self and others (4.5)
- SLO #3 Ability to apply psychology theory and concepts to contemporary society (3.5)
- SLO #3 Ability to apply psychological constructs to social and political issues (4.0)
- SLO #5 Identified personal strengths and weaknesses with a plan for development (4.5)
- SLO #5 Worked successfully in groups with diverse individuals (4.0)
- SLO #5 Learned about psychology careers and developed a personal career plan (5.0)
- SLO #7 Used scientific method for problem solving (4.0)
- SLO #7 Practiced using research and facts to develop a logical argument (3.5)
- SLO #7 Ability to collaboratively articulate and apply research in a debate (4.0)

**Action:** Continue to improve the evaluation of attainment of the SLOs with more accurate and more sophisticated measures. Re-evaluate the LC and stated goals within the framework of the SLOs

### **SLOs linked to Introductory Curriculum (SLO 1, 3, & 7)**

IUPUC's introductory psychology courses include B104 and B105. These courses primarily focus on **SLOs 1, 3, & 7** at beginning levels. The courses introduce psychology within a scientific context, the basics of human behavior, and the application of psychological theory in modern life. Student learning outcomes are measured by multiple choice tests, journals, essays, on-line and face-to-face discussion. Typically we have 6 or more sections of this course. We have not previously measured the SLOs in these courses. This year we did a pilot evaluation with one large section. Our faculty are meeting and developing a methodology to have a common assessment in all of the sections.

**Measure:** SLOs were identified for the pilot course and measured based on a rubric on a scale of 1 (low-skill attainment to) and 3 (moderate skill attainment) to 5 (ideal competency attainment). Students work was evaluated and rated and the modal scores are reported below.

SLO #1 Explain how psychology evolves in a sociohistorical context (3.5)

SLO #1 Understands the causes of behavior and the impact of the environment (4.0)

SLO #1 Embraces the impact of culture on human behavior (3.0)

SLO #3 Identifies psychological constructs in media and social issues (3.5)

SLO #3 Correctly applies foundation psychological theories to self and others (3.5)

SLO #3 Demonstrates ability to explain problems using the correct theoretical bases (3.0)

SLO #7 Ability to use data to inform critical thinking (3.0)

SLO #7 Ability to analyze a case study with appropriate solutions (3.5)

SLO #7 Considers foundation theories and adapts and reconstructs the theories to fit modern problems (3.5)

**Findings:** Based on the assignments evaluated students typically demonstrated moderate attainment of the designated SLOs.

**Action:** Continue to improve assessment methods that yield data that more clearly identifies curricula strengths and weaknesses. The assessment will be expanded to all sections in 2012-2013 academic year.

### **SLOs linked to intermediate & elective courses**

These courses will be evaluated next year which is year 2 of our 5 year assessment plan

### **SLOs linked to Methods & Capstone Courses (SLO #2, 4, & 6)**

IUPUC methods courses are Statistics (B305), Research Lab (B311), and the three capstone courses. These courses were previously offered one time per year, but now are offered every semester. Assignments, tests, written work, research projects, and poster presentations were reviewed and matched to SLOs. Students typically enroll in these classes in their final 3 or 4 semesters prior to graduation. Attainments of SLOs are considered to be at advanced levels.

**Measure:** Evaluation of assignments, tests, and research projects to assess student attainment of the selected SLOs. The SLOs were measured on a scale of 0-100 with 0 to 50 as insufficient or not proficient, 51 to 60 at low proficiency, 60 to 80 at moderate proficiency, 80-90 as proficient, and 90 to 100 being 70-80 highly proficient.

**Findings:**

**Action:**

### **SLOs Linked to IUPUC Certificate in Case Management**

These courses will be evaluated next year or year 2 of our 5 year assessment plan

### **SLOs Linked to IUPUC Certificate in Substance Abuse Counseling and Prevention**

These courses will be evaluated next year or year 2 of our 5 year assessment plan

### **SLOs Linked to Support Services**

These services will be evaluated next year or in year 2 of our 5 year assessment plan

## **Report on Year 1 Assessment Plan 2011-2012**

- Develop measures for SLOs for introductory, learning community, and methods courses
  - Adopted IUPUI's SLOs for introductory and core courses
  - Developed SLOs for IUPUC's freshman learning community
  - Measured B104 SLOs as a part of general education initiative
- Collect and analyze data
  - Began program strategic planning process
    - Working on identifying program measures for quality
    - Program has grown just over 300% in the last 10 years we need to evaluate if the program is meeting the needs of the students and maintaining quality
    - Discuss course sequence and schedules
    - Assess the need for increased lab and student work areas
    - Assess faculty resources
    - Identify scheduling and advising strengths and weaknesses
    - Identify threats and opportunities

- Conducted a student needs assessment for course offerings via Oncourse survey. The following items were identified and implemented.
  - Needed to add a summer statistics for a group of students to align with their target graduation goal date. **(offered Su11)**
  - Need to offer the series of research methods and capstone for evening students **(offered Sp12)**
  - Need for additional core classes for spring 12 and for summer 12 **(added core for sp12 & Su12)**
  - Need to rotate additional core courses for evening hours in non-traditional formats for evening students and nursing cohorts **(sp 2013)**
  
- Identified need for curricula changes based on student survey data and advising data
  - Need to add additional instruction for APA writing style component into the curricula **(planned in sp13)**
  - Some students are having difficulty with managing the final course sequence to achieve graduation on time. **(Increase student awareness through advising)**
  - Some students are finding ways to take Research Lab and Statistics during the same semester. This is not recommended and students have difficulty mastering the depth of the material when the two courses are taken together. Taking this into consideration, **the two classes are now scheduled to be offered the same days and times.** Therefore, students are not able to be in both classes.
  - A small group of dedicated students need the upper level sequence of B305, B311, and Capstone available for evening courses. **During spring 12, B305 was offered in the evening.**
  
- Identify faculty needs
  - Faculty are experiencing higher enrollment in courses which hinders time available for student/faculty meetings and increases the number of students who have questions and seek guidance.
  - Space for faculty and student research is too limited and puts students at risk of not graduating on time.
  - To manage the growth rate of the program, we need more faculty to teach. Tenured track faculty must focus on upper level courses while additional adjuncts may be needed to support the lower level courses.

- Psychology needs an administrative assistant to assist with non teaching requirements
- Faculty need T/A's to help manage assignments that require critical thinking, writing, collaboration, and research



### **IUPUC's Five Year Assessment Plan**

- **Year 1 (2010-2011)**
  - Develop measures for SLOs for introductory, core courses, learning community, and certificate programs
  - Collect and analyze data
  - Identify curriculum changes
  - Develop a timeline for changes
  - Identify student needs
  - Identify faculty needs
- **Year 2 (2011-2012)**
  - Develop measures for SLOs related to elective courses, certificate programs, support services( advising, mentoring, tutoring, Research facilities), faculty needs and student needs
  - Collect and analyze data
  - Identify curriculum and support services changes
  - Develop timeline for changes
- **Year 3 (2012-2013)**
  - Evaluate curriculum and support services changes
  - Evaluate student and program changes
  - Adjust and make additional changes as needed
- **Year 4 (2013=2014)**
  - Begin cycle with re-evaluating SLOs, measures, and assessment processes
  - Reassess introductory courses, research, capstone, learning community, student needs and faculty needs
  - Collect and interpret data
  - Identify changes and begin implementation
- **Year 5 (2015-2016)**
  - Reassess elective courses, support services, faculty needs, and student needs
  - Interpret data
  - Identify and begin changes

*Competencies for Undergraduate Psychology Majors (see Appendix X).*