

## PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT SUMMARY

1. **Reporting Institution** Eastern Illinois University
2. **Program Reviewed** BA in Psychology (CIP: 42.0101)
3. **Date** December 1, 2020
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### 5. **Overview**

The Department of Psychology emphasizes the scientific study of behavioral, affective, and cognitive processes and their application to real-world issues by engaging students in integrative learning experiences such as undergraduate and graduate research, internships, and enhanced classroom experiences.

Faculty excellence in areas of teaching, research, and service provides the context for collaborative student-centered learning experiences that promote inclusion and diverse perspectives. The department's curriculum furthers the development of students' critical thinking, communication skills, research skills, quantitative reasoning, and ethical behavior in preparation for responsible citizenship, careers, graduate study, and lifelong learning.

Unlike many other Psychology Departments in Illinois and elsewhere who administer a curriculum to their students, the professors responsible for the BA in Psychology at Eastern offer a complete and immersive programmatic experience that blends classroom and laboratory knowledge with practical know-how including communication and critical thinking skills. Our success is evident in many ways, from our superior placement rate in quality graduate programs across the US (over 25% of our students go to graduate school—a percentage that is twice as high as the institution as a whole), to our student satisfaction—in which nearly all of our graduating seniors who completed an exit survey graded the psychology department with an "A" or "B."

The B.A. psychology program continues to be a vital program staffed by highly competent and recognized faculty. For example, since 2012 inclusive, 7 different Psychology Unit A faculty members have earned a total of 18 Achievement and Contribution Awards (ACAs), an enviable record.

### 6. **Major Findings and Recommendations**

#### a. **Description and assessment of major changes in the program/disciplinary context**

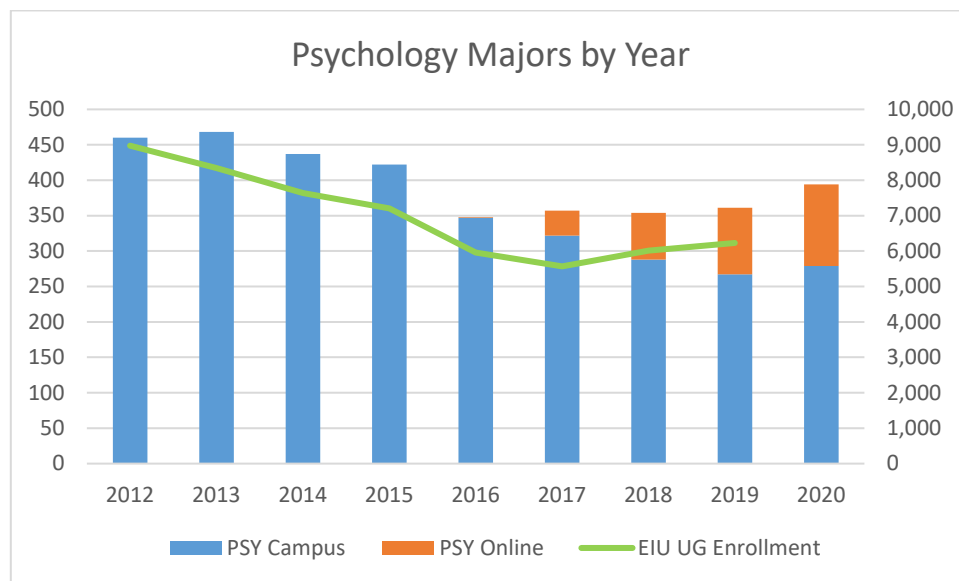
In 2013, the American Psychological Association (APA) introduced a revision to their learning goals for the undergraduate psychology major. Accordingly, in 2014 we integrated some of the new language into our department learning goals that were also aligned broadly with the EIU's university learning goals. After a recent change in EIU's assessment of the university learning goals, our department voted to adopt the exact language of the APA learning goals in the fall of 2020 and have revised our assessment instruments accordingly.

Our department continues to fine-tune our curriculum according to changes in the discipline, faculty qualifications, interests, and program need. Below is a list of curricular changes since the last IBHE report.

- 2/6/14

- Removed PSY 4100 as a default option for the PSY capstone course
- Added Cognitive Neuroscience to Group B in the major and minor
- 4/23/15
  - Simplified requirements for PSY department honors curriculum
- 10/1/15
  - Added PSY 3518 Psychology of Language course as an elective
- 1/21/16
  - Revised PSY 2610, 4274, 4590 (online approval)
- 3/3/16
  - Revised PSY 2999, 3310, 3805 (online approval)
- 9/1/16
  - Added PSY 3760 Psychology of Judgment & Decision Making as elective
  - Added PSY 4810 Neuropsychopharmacology as elective
- 11/10/16
  - Added PSY 4755 Cross Cultural Psychology as elective
- 1/19/17
  - Added PSY 3710 Human Memory to Group C
  - Approval of PSY 3820 Cognitive Neuroscience for online delivery
- 2/9/17
  - Added PSY 3450 Neuropsychology to Group B courses

*Student Demand:* As shown by the green line in the figure below (note the secondary axis on the right), there was an overall decline in undergraduate enrollment at EIU over the past decade, which has started to rebound in the past few years. During this time, the percentage of undergraduate (UG) students who were psychology majors remained stable at around 5.5%. In the fall of 2020, there were 394 psychology majors and 116 psychology minors at EIU.



*Online Degree Completion Program:* The department began a discussion in the 2014-15 academic year (AY); and, on May 12, 2015, held an all-day faculty retreat to lay out the path for the online degree completion program. Discussions and development of the Online Psych BA Program continued throughout the 2015-16 AY. The Online Psychology BA Committee was formed and the committee met for the first time on September 23, 2016. The committee

developed procedures and processes for the program, assisted with recruitment and training of adjunct faculty, and coordinated with other offices and departments across EIU throughout the 2016-17 AY. The first group of online psychology majors enrolled in the Spring 2017 semester. The first two students graduated from the program the following Spring 2018 semester. Enrollment in our online program continues to increase, see Figure 1 (orange-colored bars).

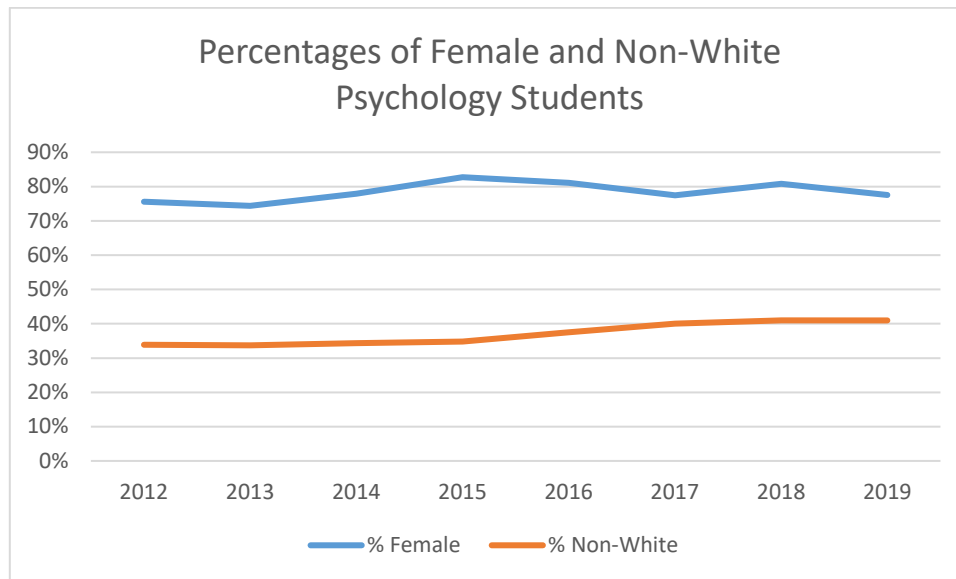
*Job Outlook:* Psychology-related careers have a bright outlook. The Psychology B.A. continues to be major gateway degree to several rewarding, and in-demand professions requiring further education, as well as being a valuable degree in its own right. Below is a chart showing careers in which psychology majors are employed nationally.



According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, psychology-related careers such as mental health counselor have a bright outlook, meaning they are expected to grow much faster than average (e.g., mental health counselor will have a projected 8% increase, adding 39,400 jobs over the next decade, earning a median income of \$46,240 in 2019).

*Cost:* Using figures from the 2017-2018 Academic Discipline Cost Study prepared by the IBHE, the total cost per credit hour produced for lower division courses in Psychology at EIU is \$213, which is virtually at the mean (M = \$208) for such figures for the 12 public campuses offering lower division courses. For upper division courses, the comparable figure is \$304, which is .91 times the state average cost (M = \$334).

*Diversity:* The percentage of women who are psychology majors remains high (currently 78%) and the number of students who identify as non-white has grown from 34% in 2012 to 41% in 2019. A similar percentage of faculty (41%; 7 out of 17 faculty) also identify as non-white.



**b. Description of major findings and recommendations for program improvement**

The B.A. program in Psychology is firmly committed to the assessment of student outcomes. The Departmental Assessment Committee tracks many separate performance indicators on a yearly basis, including 8 direct measures of student learning, and several other indirect measures of student performance. Our assessment program includes a variety of measures that track all five of the department’s student learning outcomes, and we have been doing so across the entire time period since the last review.

Our data show that students are achieving at high levels in the areas central to our mission in the B.A. program. For example, in our most recent assessment report (AY 2019-2020), 96% of our seniors in their psychology capstone courses received ratings by their instructors of “some” or “a lot” on students’ ability to engage with original primary literature in psychology, 88% on their ability to write effectively about psychology, and 92% on their ability to communicate information about psychology effectively in an oral format.

Our undergraduate program features a required course in Research Methods and Experimental Design (PSY 3805). At the conclusion of the course, students present the results of their research project on a poster, which is then evaluated directly by an independent faculty member. Our assessment data show that students are learning the appropriate content of a research report. Poster evaluators in the last cycle of assessment noted that 100% of the time, students were rated as “some” or “a lot” on the appropriateness of their experimental design, with high ratings on other dimensions such as oral expression, content knowledge, and critical thinking. Our indirect measures (e.g., Student Researcher Survey) also suggest that students in the research and independent study courses are progressing toward meeting our department learning outcomes.

**c. Description of actions taken since the last review**

The last IBHE report identified several challenges that the B.A. program would face including the replacement of senior faculty with qualified junior faculty members, persistent physical space challenges, the rejuvenation of research and teaching equipment, and the production and monitoring of quality online offerings.

Among the ranks of tenure/tenure-track faculty, since 2012 we have had 4 faculty leave EIU, 5 retire, and 1 die. In their place, we currently have 5 tenure-track faculty, which is a significant overall reduction in the number of faculty, but it has also resulted in an increased proportion of junior faculty in the department.

Since the last report, our department was able to remodel and add significant research space with some new equipment including an eye tracking machine. Considerable amounts of money to support research equipment and lab space came from a tuition recovery model that is no longer supported.

As noted above, our online offerings have grown significantly to now offer a full degree completion program that parallels our on-campus delivery. Our online psychology major continues to see enrollment increases and has been an attractive option for online learners throughout the state who would otherwise be unable to complete their psychology degree at EIU.

**d. Description of actions to be taken as a result of this review**

It is anticipated that we will continue to see growth in our online degree completion program, which require additional resources despite a tight fiscal environment. We are also likely to have a significant number of faculty retire in the coming years and it will be essential for the health of the program to be able to replace them with tenure-track faculty. It is also important that we focus on retaining and supporting our new faculty to successfully meet the requirements for tenure.

**7. Responses to Institution-Assigned Issues – N/A**

**8. Outcome**

Dean's Comment:

This is a highly successful program and student enrollment numbers have largely remained ahead of EIU enrollment trends (see chart in 6 a.). Demand for this major is likely to continue through the next review cycle. Since the last review, an online completion program has been launched and is growing to the extent that it has become necessary to cap enrollment prior to the start of each semester. We concur that additional resources will allow the program to continue to meet the needs of the traditional B.A. students while enhancing the department's ability to grow the online completion program. The department has engaged in an appropriate level of course and program revision to maintain the quality of the curriculum.

We recommend a decision of **Program in Good Standing**.

**8.1 Academic Affairs Decision:**

Program in Good Standing

Program flagged for Priority Review

Program Enrollment Suspended

**8.2 Explanation**

The program has a long and established history at EIU and has consistently been one of the University's most visible undergraduate majors. As such, this report demonstrates the program's commitment to academic excellence, our students, and serving diverse learners. I note the department and faculty have designed, implemented, and embraced a highly enrolled degree completion program to complement the traditional residential experience. Additionally, the department and program faculty are to be commended for their sustained efforts to review, revise, and renew the curriculum based on well-defined assessment processes. Based on the report, the program is determined to be in "good standing" and no concerns are noted.

Jay Gatrell

Provost & VPAA