

Psychology Strategic Plan, September 4, 2014

PREPARED BY: Strategic Plan Committee
(In consultation with the department members).

DEPARTMENT: Department of Psychology
Memorial University of Newfoundland

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FORWARDED: September 10, 2014 – Dean Mark Abrahams

Introductory Statement

This Strategic Plan was developed by the Psychology Department in September 2014. It was created to guide the future research and teaching objectives of the department in light of an Academic Programme review that was completed in December 2013.

Background Statement/History

The Psychology Department at Memorial is an important component of a comprehensive university that aspires to bring internationally successful researchers to Newfoundland and Labrador. In the Psychology Department these research-active faculty provide world class education to undergraduate and graduate students. These researchers in combination with regular term, teaching term and per course instructors teach over 7% of registrations (majors, non-majors, and graduate) on campus and successfully obtain tri-council and contract research funding.

Psychology is a rapidly evolving field that is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary. Psychology's topics span a range of knowledge from neuronal activity to interactions between organisms, its research includes both basic and applied approaches, and its studies include both humans and other animals. While the research is interdisciplinary, research areas are described separately as a convenient way of organizing information about ongoing research activities. The Psychology Department currently has strong representation in six areas of research: (1) animal behaviour and behavioural ecology, (2) behavioural neuroscience, (3) clinical psychology, (4) cognitive psychology, (5) developmental psychology, and (6) social psychology.

Organizational Vision

The Psychology Department strives to improve its position as a research-intensive unit with recognized strengths in both basic and applied research that is also renowned for the quality of its graduates at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Mission Statement

The Psychology Department exists in order to:

- Carry out internationally recognized research in areas that are fundamental to the discipline.
- Provide undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to learn about the fundamental areas in psychology and to obtain transferable knowledge and research skills.
- Provide the people of Newfoundland and Labrador with expertise in and benefits from the application of psychological science.

Guiding Principles/Mandate

The science of Psychology aims to understand the factors that determine behaviour and to apply that knowledge in the service of society. Research in our department is directed at three broad interdisciplinary theses: cognition and behaviour, mental health and wellness, and applied psychological science.

Current Strengths and Weakness

The report of the Academic Program Review panel was received in December 2013, and both that report and the Department's self study identified a number of current strengths and weaknesses.

Department Strengths

- 1) Areas of Animal Behaviour, Behavioural Neuroscience, Cognition, and Developmental Psychology have many faculty who have obtained and maintained NSERC grant funding
- 2) Areas of Social and Clinical Psychology have graduate programs that attract large numbers of students to their applied programs
- 3) Areas of Animal Behaviour, Clinical Psychology, and Social Psychology are involved extensively in public engagement and provincial service
- 4) The undergraduate programme, in addition to having many registrations, supports many majors who have successful careers.

Department Weaknesses and Threats

- 1) The department has not yet completed the demographic change that many other units have experienced, and as a consequence will lose at least nine of its faculty due to retirement in the next five years.
- 2) The department does not have the research space necessary to replace retiring faculty. Six of the individuals that are leaving do not have any research space and two of them do not have space that would be suitable for new researchers in their respective areas.
- 3) Without new faculty, the Department will not be in a position to capitalize on the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of Psychology and will not be able to increase integration between existing strengths within the department and other disciplines within the university.
- 4) Relative to peer institutions, the Department is competitive in terms of NSERC funding, but could improve in other forms of Tri-Council and other funding sources if new scholars with expertise in growth areas are recruited.
- 5) The department does not have sufficient faculty to offer all necessary graduate courses.
- 6) The department has not as yet been successful in recruiting a sufficient number of clinical psychologists which threatens the viability of the Psy.D. Program in clinical psychology.
- 7) The department has not created formal links between itself and other units within and outside the university although those links currently exist informally.

Goals and Objectives

Given the large number of projected retirements over the next five years, the Department of Psychology has the opportunity to significantly change and enhance the department.

- 1) Significantly enhance and expand research in *Applied Psychological Science*.
 - a. Expand our successful Masters of Applied Social Psychology (MASP) programme to a Masters of Applied Psychological Science (MAPS) programme by including a broader range of research areas such as cognitive, developmental, or other areas of psychology.
 - b. Increase the number of graduate students admitted to the MAPS programme

- c. Hire new faculty who can concurrently contribute to the new MAPS programme and improve the funding profile of the department. Examples of potential positions include:
 - i. New faculty in industrial/organizational psychology and with expertise in evaluation science. These strengths are especially important for building interdisciplinary connections with Business, Social Science and Medicine programs engaged in applied research, as well as with industry, government, and non-government organizations agencies.
 - ii. Developmental psychologists with research interests associated with child-related policy (e.g., in education or child welfare).
 - iii. Faculty with research expertise in applied cognitive areas, such as human factors, ergonomics, computational modeling, decision making, or psycholinguistics.
 - iv. Interdisciplinary psychologists with applied research expertise in practical areas such as human aging, sports psychology, or environmental psychology.
- 2) Significantly enhance and expand basic and applied research in *Mental Health and Wellness*.
- a. In order to make the Psy.D. programme in clinical psychology viable
 - i. Hire clinical psychologists with active research programs.
 - ii. Continue to involve non-clinical faculty in the supervision of graduate student research.
 - iii. Continue to expand clinical practicum training opportunities.
 - iv. Obtain Canadian Psychological Association accreditation.
 - b. Build on current strengths in animal modelling of stress and memory by hiring interdisciplinary researchers who will span both basic and applied approaches.
 - c. Increase the formal connections between the neuroscientists in both psychology and medicine.
- 3) Significantly enhance and expand foundational research in *Cognition and Behaviour* that underlies the discipline of psychology.
- a. Ensure the department maintains a minimum number of active, funded researchers in fundamental areas of psychology to maintain core competencies.
 - b. Hire new faculty whose research enhances interdisciplinary research both within and outside the department.
 - i. Increasing collaboration with researchers in other units should expand funding opportunities and improve the funding profile of the department.
 - ii. Where appropriate, opportunities to create or enhance collaborations with researchers from external governmental agencies, such as Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Newfoundland & Labrador Department of Environment and Conservation, should be encouraged.
 - iii. New faculty with expertise in behavioural genetics or behavioural endocrinology would be particularly valuable for increasing collaborations within and outside our department. In particular, researchers who address fundamental behavioural questions using a combined field and laboratory approach would have the capacity to collaborate with a wide range of faculty both within and outside the department. Such faculty would enhance our current research strengths in both *Mental Health and Wellness* and *Cognition and Behaviour*.

4) Determine the necessary revisions to align the undergraduate and graduate programmes with the Department's Goals and Objectives and ensure continued student success.

- a. Re-examine graduate course offerings (M.Sc. and Ph.D.) to ensure a sufficient number of graduate level courses can be regularly offered
- b. Re-examine graduate student enrolment in light of the anticipated increase in research active faculty in the areas outlined above
- c. Re-examine the undergraduate curriculum in light of the Academic Program Review
- d. Provide undergraduates with more exposure to research active faculty