

**PROGRAM REVIEW  
PSYCHOLOGY DISCIPLINE  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2003-04**

**Topic I: Where are we now?**

**A. Purpose & Goals and relation to RCCD**

The discipline of psychology at the Riverside Community College District (RCCD) is dedicated primarily to the study of the scientific investigation of behavior and mental processes. It is the goal of the discipline to prepare learners to evaluate, explain, and predict these behaviors and mental processes not only within the context of the academic realm, but also within the context of self discovery, within the student's immediate social milieu, and/or within the larger global society.

The RCCD has a stated mission to serve the academic, occupational, and transfer needs of the members of Riverside County. Some of the specific mission-related matters which RCCD seeks to accomplish, and which the Psychology discipline addresses, are as follows:

1. "Riverside Community College District is an accessible comprehensive community college..."

The Psychology discipline at the RCCD offers many courses during mornings, throughout the day, and evenings; we also offer weekend courses. For those students unable to attend any of the district's three campuses (and would otherwise be unable to complete their college education), the discipline also offers many courses via the hybrid, online, and television mediums. Courses offered by the Psychology discipline are geared toward those students who may wish to transfer to a four-year college or university, and/or to those who plan on pursuing a career in the health sciences.

2. "The District provides transfer programs paralleling the first two years of university offerings..."

The Psychology discipline offers both 4-year college and university-level lower division courses which articulate to both the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) academic systems. These courses include Abnormal Psychology, Developmental Psychology, General Psychology, Physiological Psychology and Theories of Personality. Below is a list of specific courses offered by the Psychology discipline which articulate to CSU and UC campuses in southern California:

Psychology 1 (General Psych):	CSU Fullerton (Psych 101) CSU Long Beach (Psych 100) CSU Northridge (Psych 150) CSU Los Angeles (Psych 150) CSU Pomona (Psych 202) CSU San Bernardino (Psych 100) CSU San Marcos (Psych 100) UC Los Angeles (Psych 10) UC Riverside (Psych 2)
Psychology 2 (Physiological Psych)	CSU Long Beach (Psych 141) CSU Northridge (Psych 250) CSU Los Angeles (Psych 150) CSU Pomona (Psych 210)
Psychology 9 (Developmental Psych)	CSU San Bernardino (Psych 201)

## **B. History**

Presently, all Psychology faculty are members of academic departments specific to their own campuses. At the Riverside campus, Psychology faculty are members of the Behavioral Sciences department; at both the Moreno Valley and Norco campuses, Psychology faculty are members of distinct Communications, Humanities, and Social Sciences departments.

Throughout most of the 1990's, Psychology faculty at all three RCCD campuses were members of the Psychology and ASL (American Sign Language) department. However, during the Fall 1999 academic term Psychology faculty at the Moreno Valley and Norco campuses became members of departments at their respective campuses; this resulted in the Psychology and ASL department being comprised of Psychology faculty from the Riverside campus only. During the 2000-01 academic year, the ASL program left the Psychology/ASL department to become part of the Foreign Languages/ASL department, leaving the Psychology faculty to form the Psychology department. In order to facilitate communication between Psychology faculty across the three campuses, the practice of selecting a Psychology discipline coordinator began in the Fall 2000 term. The discipline coordinator's duty was (and still is) to organize discipline meetings (or to send messages via email or campus mail) to alert fellow members of important discipline and/or district matters for discussion.

The Psychology department at the Riverside campus was short-lived, and commencing with the 2001-02 academic year, the Psychology faculty at the Riverside campus became members of the Behavioral Sciences department, which is also comprised of the Administration of Justice, Anthropology, and Sociology disciplines.

The Psychology department/discipline has always been actively involved in distance education. Since the 1980's the Psychology department has offered Psychology 1 television (TV) courses virtually every semester. Recognizing the ever-changing needs of our student population, we also began offering both hybrid (Psychology 1) and online (Psychology 2) courses during the 2001-02 academic year. We have since expanded our "open campus" (online-related courses) offerings to include another online course (Psychology 1), and there are currently plans to offer both Psychology 2 and 9 hybrid courses during the 2003-04 academic year.

The Norco and Moreno Valley campuses both opened in 1991. The Psychology discipline became part of distinct departments of Communications, Humanities, and Social Sciences where they remain to this day. At both campuses, initial course offerings were General Psychology (PSY-1) and Developmental Psychology (PSY-9).

The first full time faculty members in the Psychology discipline at both the Norco and Moreno Valley campuses were hired in the Fall of 1997. Since then, course offerings at both campuses have expanded to include sections of Theories of Personality (PSY-33), Abnormal Psychology (PSY-35), and Physiological Psychology (PSY-2).

Distance education has expanded at the Norco and Moreno Valley campuses. At Norco, the hybrid version of PSY-1 was developed and is now routinely serving 30 to 40 students per semester. The PSY-1 telecourse was successfully offered for the first time at the Norco campus during the Fall of 2003 and will continue to be offered in the future during each Fall semester. The PSY-1 telecourse will be offered every summer session at the Moreno Valley campus, as well.

The Norco Campus offers a "Weekend College" program, in which students may complete general education requirements for graduation. The Norco Psychology discipline offers one section of PSY-1 and one section of PSY-9 on Saturdays during both the Fall and Spring semesters of each year as part of this program.

Finally, the Psychology discipline has extended its course offerings since the last program review during the 1999-2000 academic year. Both the Moreno Valley and Norco Campuses now schedule all the approved psychology classes offered by the District, which was one of the stated intentions in the last program review.

### **C. Programs and Curriculum**

The Psychology discipline curriculum is as follows:

- Psychology 1 (General Psychology)
- Psychology 2 (Physiological Psychology)
- Psychology 9 (Developmental Psychology)
- Psychology 33 (Theories of Personality)
- Psychology 35 (Abnormal Psychology)

At present, discussion is underway regarding the development of two new courses (Introduction to Statistics in Psychology and Research Methods in Psychology). We strongly feel that these two courses should be created and offered at RCC because: (1) many community colleges in southern California (including in the Riverside/San Bernardino area) already offer one or both courses, and hence we need to stay “competitive” with neighboring colleges, and (2) many California State University (CSU) campuses in southern California (including CSU Dominguez Hills, CSU Fullerton, CSU Long Beach, and Cal Poly Pomona) will allow these courses to articulate to their respective Psychology department requirements toward the bachelor’s degree. Also, the University of California, Riverside would probably allow these courses to articulate as well since they currently offer both courses as lower division courses. Further investigation into articulation agreements is warranted before these courses come to fruition.

All Psychology course outlines were revised for approval by the Curriculum Committee near the end of the Fall 2003 semester. In regards to learning objectives for the Psychology discipline, we agree that teaching students the relevance of Psychology to their everyday lives is an important criteria for us because it allows students to develop a great appreciation for the discipline, and may bear relevance to their success in academia in general.

#### **D. Student Outcomes Assessment**

A thorough review of the psychology course outlines, including course description, learning objectives, course content, methods of instruction, methods of evaluation, and course materials (see Appendix A, which is also part of the contents of Section C of this review, Programs and Curriculum) was undergone by the discipline prior to the last program review during the 1999-2000 academic year. That work was submitted to and approved by the curriculum committee. In the Fall of 2003, the discipline again reviewed all five of the District’s offerings in psychology, including learning objectives and methods of evaluation, and the materials were sent to curriculum committee for review and approval, which was granted.

As part of the ongoing assessment discussion, members of the department, in establishing the various components of a course outline (e.g., learning objectives, methods of instruction, methods of evaluation, etc.), discussed various and preferred individual steps in arriving at an evaluation of teaching methodology and student learning. Steps included, but were not limited to, test-item analysis (e.g., breaking down a multiple-choice test item by item to see how students answered individual questions), overall exam reliability coefficients (e.g., generally, was the test too easy or too difficult), as well as attending to how well students and classes did in answering fill-in or essay questions. Furthermore, discussion also included the steps in creating and assessing an instructor’s requirements and a student’s outcome for completing research and/or project papers (e.g.,

grammar, number of research items, level of research effort, clarity, logic, demonstration of skeptical and creative skills, depth of application, thesis building, etc.

While members of the discipline recognize the need for assessing student success as well as an evaluation of our individual and discipline teaching methodologies, the discussion brought us face-to-face with what we perceive as an 800-pound gorilla—the apparent movement towards standardizing measurements of student learning outcomes (MSLOs) within a discipline. In fact, two of our members returned from an assessment training module convinced that such was the case. Furthermore, in discussions with other disciplines such as math and English, we have heard the case for some use of a uniform rubric by all instructors in assessing student outcomes. Even in the area of psychology, there has been some movement towards the establishment of a standardized (uniform) final examination given by all psychology instructors (Presentation #15: Does Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes Make a Difference? One Department's Experience. Dr. Jerry Rudmann, Supervisor of Research at Coastline College & Psychology Instructor at Irvine Valley College, March 29, 2004).

Certainly MSLOs have been around for a long time (students get grades based on various learning measurements such as tests and essays). The 2001 report of a division of the American Psychological Association (APA), borrowing from the 2000, California State University Task Force on Outcomes, lists the reasons for adopting measurable outcomes as well as the goals and specific outcomes necessary in such an implementation.

The 2001 report of the APA's 10 goals under the heading of “knowledge, skills, and values consistent with the science and application of psychology,” as well as the same skills “consistent with a liberal arts education that are further developed in psychology” (pg. 8-9; pg. 10-17), are excellent and studied suggestions, worthy of consideration. To this specific point, as well as the larger point of program review and accreditation, the APA and CSU reports are an important part of the psychology discipline's deliberations about assessing learning outcomes at RCCD.

However, any emphasis on standardized exams and approaches to the issue of MSLOs is a concern. Goal 3 of the 2001, APA document specifically mentions the importance of “critical, creative, and skeptical inquiry” (pg. 8). And, likewise, Goal 7 endorses the ability to “communicate effectively in a variety of formats (pg. 9). Even the specific examples of these points elaborated upon later in the document do not endorse standardize exams or teaching approaches. It might even be interpreted that part of MSLOs within psychology is the *variable* ability to approach human mental and behavioral processes. This variation is not in keeping with the potential lock-step approach of standardized MSLOs.

In fact, in *Thought & Action* (Volume XIX, Number 2-Winter 2004) of the NEA Higher Education Journal, Frank H.W. Edler builds the argument that the corporate model of education he sees arising in the creation and measurement of student outcomes “...leads toward standardization and the reduction of variation” (pg. 98). Edler goes on to quote Mike Parker and Jane Slaughter from a previous *Thought & Action* article in 1994, that the “the no-variation concept is biased against those who believe that creating a learning

atmosphere requires a climate where variation thrives and, in particular, where seemingly unproductive, unpopular ideas are protected” (pg. 98).

We might deduce from this issue that one major idea inherent in critical, creative, and skeptical acquisitions, *is* variability. When we steer towards this kind of variability in what is important, we may land on a landscape of innumerable probabilities as an outcome. Teaching students to use psychology as a learning tool enabling probability thinking might render an MSLO an exercise in perspectives—which is the land of interpretations and not facts.

Psychology is not the same discipline as math, English, or foreign languages, discipline areas that clearly require a laddering effect as students move from simple to complex learning. That psychology could come up with a set of learning outcomes is not the same as those outcomes being necessary and sufficient to ensure appropriate student learning, much less complex thinking. The variances of human behavior are exactly the point in psychology—even if we could agree (which we can’t) that human personality and development could fit into certain relatively static categories at the present time, we also have to acknowledge that learning may change the quantity and quality of those categories. In fact, this is a major reason for studying behavior and mental processes. *Learning math does not change the mechanics of math, but learning psychology can change the mechanics of psychology.*

Besides the potential movement and political pressure towards standardized testing and teaching, there are other issues about MSLOs that concern the RCCD psychology faculty. During the Fall 2002 Plenary Session of the State Academic Senate, objections were voiced concerning the learning outcome standards adopted by the Accrediting Commission for Community Colleges. In fact, resolution 2.10 F 02 recommends that faculty resist MSLOs, especially when used to evaluate faculty.

Nonetheless, despite the variations in human behavior and thinking and in teaching those two tenets, despite the many problems of MSLOs in general, and despite some college discipline’s (including psychology itself) adoption of standardized or uniform tests, the psychology discipline at RCCD is engaged in dialogue both within the discipline and between other disciplines in an attempt to thoroughly root out and apply the important points about MSLOs.

The facet of assessment that promotes effective teaching and learning is paramount. While we may not be jumping on any political or educational bandwagons at the moment, we are committed to learning and teaching. In that regard, nothing in this section which raises questions about MSLOs should be read as obstinate resistance. We recognize the need for assessing learning outcomes and evaluating teaching methodologies. In that light, this section and this review is about our continued, studied concern for both of those aspects.

### **E. Collaboration with Other Units**

The Psychology discipline offers courses which have a direct influence on other academic programs at RCC. For instance, the Psychology 9 (Developmental Psychology) course is a requirement for: (1) the A.S. degree in Nursing, and (2) the certificate of the Vocational Nursing program. Also, the Psych 33 (Abnormal Psychology) course is a “high” recommendation for acceptance into the Physician’s Assistant program. Furthermore, we are currently working with members of the Mathematics department to develop a statistics course geared specifically toward Psychology students.

### **F. Outreach**

Members of the psychology discipline continue to dialogue with other colleges and universities. Between the last program review and this one, members of the discipline met with representatives from other California academic institutions to talk about seamless transfers in an attempt to ensure that classes taken at one institution would be accepted by others. This discussion included the addition of new courses being added by the community college system.

We continue to reach out to the community as well. RCCD is striving to serve three distinct communities by moving to three separate colleges. Psychology is part of that process.

Furthermore, Dr. Clarence Romero has received national accolades in reaching out to the student population at RCCD, and the Hispanic community in particular. All of us are discussing proposals to broaden our course offerings to facilitate the academic and business community in improving the quality of the Inland Empire workforce.

### **G. Resources**

The Riverside campus currently has four full-time faculty and twelve adjunct faculty. Of the four full-time faculty, one was hired in June 2002 and is still a tenure-track faculty member. The Moreno Valley campus has one full-time faculty member and 9 adjunct faculty and the Norco campus has one full-time faculty member and 9 adjunct faculty. Many adjunct faculty teach at more than one district campus per academic term as well. With the present student growth that RCCD is experiencing, we find it increasingly necessary to hire new adjunct faculty to fill course sections and meet student demand for Psychology courses.

Psychology courses at the Riverside campus almost uniformly fill to capacity on a term-by-term basis. All Psychology courses taught at the Riverside campus are held in the Quadrangle, which is scheduled for remodeling during 2004. This is a concern for us because we have not received notification from the RCC administration that after

remodeling is completed, our courses will still be taught in classrooms comparable enough to hold our current student enrollments. In addition, none of our current classrooms in which we teach have computers to make use of existing projector systems or internet connections (The Psychology discipline at the Riverside campus has only one laptop for use for powerpoint lecture presentations, and it is a dated model). All classrooms do have a chalkboard, VCR, and monitor. In the future, if indeed we create an Introduction to Statistics in Psychology course and/or a Research Methods course, we will need access to a computer lab to adequately teach the use of statistical software to our students.

The Moreno Valley campus is in need of Phase III building to accommodate a growing student population. Due to the efforts of the Dean of Instruction and the Provost, that campus has recently set aside 2 offices for part-time faculty which will help tremendously. How long they will remain available is uncertain. Additionally, that campus is in dire need of a faculty workroom that is bigger than the “closet” we presently have. We are fortunate that some “smart” classrooms are available for those using technology. Growth continues, indeed the Moreno Valley campus now offers all psychology courses available in the District, and we continue to fill those classes, but as we continue to grow, we will need to add another full-time psychology position.

Norco?

## **H. Other Comments**

### **I. Overall Assessment of Discipline Performance**

Psychology continues to be a popular choice for students in the District. Available statistics indicate good retention and success rates. Overall, more students are taking psychology courses than four years ago. All three campuses now offer all available psychology courses, which was a stated goal in the last program review. Those new additions have proven to be popular among students. Developmental psychology is a required course for entrance into the District’s nursing program and the Emergency Medical Technician program, which is gearing up, is considering requiring abnormal psychology. There do not appear to be any major discrepancies in retention or success rates between the three campuses, which indicates that psychology is strong in all three communities the District is serving.

## **Topic II. Where do we want to be?**

### **A. Environmental Scan**

It is clear that the District is growing. With the current economic troubles, the short-term outlook is that more and more students will be attending RCC. We are likely to have students from the university attempting to reduce educational costs by picking up required courses from the less expensive community college. Additionally, we are also likely to pick up students seeking training to improve their employment position. We will, of course, continue to receive students from the local high schools, all of which, along with the recent population growth in the 3 communities that the District serves, will stress available resources. On top of that, RCCD is committed to accepting students from the Passport to College program begun a number of years ago for 5<sup>th</sup> graders, promising to pay for their college, if they desire, by the time they reach college age. That commitment is nearly upon us.

### **B. Internal Review**

A review of the available statistics suggests that the discipline of psychology will continue to grow and to be successful. Members of the discipline meet regularly throughout the year to discuss how we are doing and where we are going. It is the current consensus that we need to add additional courses to meet the needs of the academic and business community. We continue to discuss appropriate ways in which to do this. It is also the consensus that we need additional faculty in the discipline. Currently there is only one full-time faculty serving the Moreno Valley Campus and one serving the Norco Campus. The growth at those two campuses alone, even keeping current course offerings static, indicates the need for additional faculty.

### **C. Revised Vision/Summary**

The District and the members of the psychology discipline need to work together to improve faculty representation for psychology and to offer additional courses. Psychology has proven itself a valuable part of the community and the district. It is clear that we are in a growth cycle and the demands for psychology courses will only grow, especially as the District offers more and more certificate programs.

### **Topic III: What do we need to do to get there?**

#### **A. Initiatives, Strategies, Goals, and Activities**

One thing that will help develop the discipline and predict need is increased data. This might take the form of asking students to rate the discipline at the end of a term on how they perceive their thinking, their employment, their academic aspirations, their personal relationships, and/or their own behavior to be impacted by taking psychology. Just how useful is psychology? Retention, persistence, and success records are one thing, but perspective from the “trenches” would certainly offer another view. Additionally, what if we gathered data from all the students that dropped courses? A simple survey on the back of the drop card might give some indication as to whether the drop was due to personal circumstances or whether it was due to some problem within the discipline itself (e.g., were the students bored by psychology, were they bored by the teacher?).

It would also be nice to see how the community is impacted by psychology. For a time, one of our faculty members was asked to present psychological perspectives for the Norco and Moreno Valley Chambers of Commerce. How could the discipline help businesses?

Additionally, the practice of dialoguing with other colleges and universities as previously mentioned can help to keep the discipline up-to-date.

Furthermore, increased communication between the discipline and the administration regarding the efficacy and the affinity for psychological perspectives within the District is important as the District attempts to navigate expanding human resources.

#### **B. Resources Needed to Support Initiatives, Strategies, Goals, and Activities**

The recent construction of the digital library at the Riverside Campus has been an enormous boast to the available resources in the District. Improvements in the quality of service at the Moreno Valley and Norco Campuses must be considered if we are to remain competitive.

A glaring problem is the lack of staff development funds. Psychology especially is a dynamic field. It is impossible to keep up with all of the information even in the best of circumstances. Making funds available for attending seminars and for professional growth is imperative.

#### **Topic IV: What evidence do we need to track our progress?**

##### **A. Documentation/Evidence Needed to Demonstrate Success**

As previously stated, additional data is important. However, success in psychology is not as easily measured as in areas like math. It is suspected that increasing the visibility of psychology within the District will lead to more and more interest in the efficacy of knowing something about the field of human behavior. Whatever that knowledge is, the sheer thinking about the vagaries of human behavior can prove to be successful in ways not always easily measured. For instance, the District is experiencing low morale at the present time. It is sorely underrepresented by the discipline of psychology in its administrative ranks and in its perspective. If psychology is an important component of so many discipline areas, why wouldn't it be important in an administrative setting?

In any case, follow-up assessments would be important. Can we get permission from students to send out follow-up assessments after they leave the college? How did psychology work for them? This data would be an addendum to the collection of student input previously suggested.

Additionally, we would need to track the success of new course offerings in psychology to see if they are indeed a viable component in student and community needs.

##### **B. Assessment Plan Status**

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#### **Topic V: Suggestions for Improving the Resource Guide and Self-Study Process**

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#### **Topic VI: Summary of Goals, Activities, Findings, and Insights Gained**

The discipline of psychology continues to grow and to be successful throughout the District. The contribution of the psychological perspective to the District may need to be given more consideration, especially as an organizational tool.

Members of the discipline have been challenged by the MSLO directives and consider this a positive outcome. The dialogue continues and has forced some deeper thinking about the contribution that psychology makes. We have not, as of this moment, resolved the issue. But the learning involved, solution or not, is important. This may just be another way of stating that learning outcomes cannot always be successfully assessed, but that the challenge itself helps to "clean the closet" a bit. In any case, we are not dismissive or contemptuous of the challenge and will continue to explore possibilities.

We also are aware that we have to consider additional course offerings, despite the fact that we are stretched thin trying to manage what we presently offer. The discipline will need support in making new course offerings and the new faculty that will necessarily go along with those offerings.

So, as usually goes along with such reports, we need more financial support. But we also need to increase our visibility in the community and in the District. It may sound like a case of tooting our own horn, but we have a knowledgeable staff in psychology, varied in our areas of expertise, but collectively expansive in our view of how both humans and organizations behave.

Department Chair Initial: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

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**Review and Consultation:**

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Department Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Vice-President, Academic Affairs \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Vice-President, Planning and Development \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Further consultation needed: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

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**Distributed to:**

Department Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cabinet \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Senate \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

President \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Board of Trustees \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_