SPECIAL REPORT

OF THE

ACADEMIC MATTERS, ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND
PROGRAM AND BUDGET COUNCILS

concerning a

REVISION OF THE B.A. DEGREE PROGRAM
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BRAIN SCIENCES

Presented at the
754th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
January 28, 2016

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL


ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL

Faune Albert, Richard Bogartz (Chair), Nicholas Bromell, Elizabeth Chilton, Suzanne Daly, Kathleen Debevec, Piper Gaubatz, Bryan Harvey, Deborah Henson, Masoud Hashemi, A Yemisi Jimoh, Ernest May, Katherine Newman, MJ Peterson, Monroe Rabin, James Rinderle, Barbara Stanley, Peter Stern, Jack Wileden, Donna Zucker

PROGRAM AND BUDGET COUNCIL

ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL

The proposed revision would require all Psychology B.A. majors to complete the Junior Year Writing requirement and end an exemption that is currently given to students who complete two Psychology honors courses. The revision would bring the program requirements in line with the general University Writing Requirement.

At its meeting on October 7, 2015, the Academic Matters Council voted unanimously to recommend Faculty Senate approval of the proposed revision to the Psychology B.A. Degree Program. It was submitted as proposal #1909 in the Course and Curriculum Management System.

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL

Proposal #1909 proposes a minor revision in the Psychological and Brain Sciences Psychology B.A. program. Currently, psychology majors who take two psychology honors courses do not have to complete the Junior Writing requirement. Although the honors courses do have writing requirements, these courses are not designed to actually teach writing skills. As a result, many psychology honors students have not had any instruction in scientific writing before they attempt an honors thesis; Commonwealth Honors College has provided the feedback for years that psychology honors students have below average writing skills among honors students. Further, admission to some professional training programs (specifically, medical and dental schools) require college-level writing. It is proposed to eliminate the two-honors-courses exemption from Junior Writing for psychology majors. The APC, at its meeting on November 19, 2015, recommended approval of this program revision.

PROGRAM AND BUDGET COUNCIL

The Program Subcommittee of the Program and Budget Council met on October 14, 2015, reviewed the proposal for a Revision of the B.A. Degree Program in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences and recommended it for approval.

At its meeting on Wednesday, October 21, 2015, the Program and Budget Council voted to unanimously approve the Revision of the B.A. Degree Program in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences. It was submitted as proposal #1909 in the Course and Curriculum Management System.

MOVED: That the Faculty Senate approve the Revision to the B.A. Degree Program in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 16-029.
Please describe your proposal.

Currently, psychology majors who take two psychology honors courses do not have to complete the Junior Writing requirement. Although our honors courses do have writing requirements, these courses are not designed to actually teach writing skills. As a result, many psychology honors students have not had any instruction in scientific writing before they attempt an honors thesis; Commonwealth Honors College has provided the feedback for years that psychology honors students have below average writing skills among honors students. Further, admission to some professional training programs (specifically medical and dental schools) require college-level writing. We propose to eliminate the two-honors-courses exemption from Junior Writing for psychology majors.

Please describe the existing program requirements, listing all required courses and available electives, as well as any additional requirements, and continuation or admissions policies.

Students are required to take Junior Writing or two psychology honors courses. Any psychology courses that are allowed to count towards CHC honors requirements, including courses taken abroad or within the 5-college system, also count towards the Junior Writing exemption.

Please describe the requirements that you are proposing, listing course requirements, elective options, as well as any additional requirements, and continuation or admissions policies.

All psychology majors will be required to take junior writing.

Please provide the rationale for these revisions.

Currently, psychology majors who take two psychology honors courses do not have to complete the Junior Writing requirement. Although our honors courses do have writing requirements, these courses are not designed to actually teach writing skills. As a result, many psychology honors students have not had any instruction in scientific writing before they attempt an honors thesis; Commonwealth Honors College has provided the feedback for years that psychology honors students have below average writing skills among honors students. Faculty who supervise psychology honors students have repeatedly requested that they have more writing instruction before starting their honors thesis. Further, admission to some professional training programs (specifically medical and dental schools) require college-level writing.

Academic Requirements Review - Requirements Not Available At This Time.

Resources:

If this proposal requires no additional resources, say so and briefly explain why. If this proposal requires additional resources, explain how they will be paid for. For proposals involving instruction, indicate how many new enrollments are expected and whether the courses have room to accommodate them.

Currently, 10-20 students graduate with a psychology major having taken two psychology honors courses and not having taken junior writing. Therefore, we anticipate a small increase in the demand for psychology junior writing. If a proposal to institute admissions requirements to the psychology major is approved, the resulting decrease in demand for psychology junior writing will be greater than the increase caused by removing the two-honors-course exemption and no additional resources will be needed. If the proposal for admitting students to the major is not approved, we will need to add one 20-hour graduate teaching assistant to those currently teaching junior writing each year. We anticipate small increases in the number of graduate teaching assistants in the coming years; if that does not happen we will have to decrease the number of graduate teaching assistants assigned to large (350+ students) lecture courses to accommodate the increased demand for junior writing.