Psychology – Strategic Goals and Action Plans

Goal 1: Develop a 5-year hiring plan to meet programmatic needs. The department has developed a plan to rebuild the faculty to fully meet its programmatic needs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. First, we propose strengthening each of our four core research areas (Behavioral Neuroscience, Cognitive Neuroscience, Developmental, Social/Personality) by hiring tenure track faculty with interests that align with FAU's strategic plan and fill programmatic needs. We envision adding eight such positions over the next 5-10 years with equal distribution across the four core research areas and with attention to improving gender diversity. Candidates with statistical/quantitative expertise will be recruited when possible. These positions are critical for staffing the undergraduate program (see Goal 2, below) as well as for providing a critical mass of faculty for training graduate students. Second, we propose hiring three Instructors to teach foundational undergraduate courses, two at the Boca campus and one at Davie, to free up tenure track faculty to teach more advanced courses. The Davie position would replace four adjunct positions currently funded at that campus. In addition, a visiting Instructor position at Boca should be converted to a permanent position. Third, we anticipate 5-6 retirements over the next five years. We propose replacing these senior positions with a mix of junior and senior (advanced Associate, early Full) faculty in the core areas of the program. Finally, we propose that greater resources be allocated for retaining existing productive faculty who are offered positions at other universities.

Goal 2: Review and revise the undergraduate program to address enrollment growth. The unprecedented growth in undergraduate enrollment combined with steady faculty attrition over the last decade has severely compromised the quality of the undergraduate program. To remedy this situation, the department proposes a multi-pronged approach consisting of adding faculty (see Goal 1), improving access to courses, and streamlining completion of the program. We plan to revise "flight plans" and develop a specific sequence for foundational courses. We will add course prerequisites to give priority to majors, and add online courses to increase access and decrease class size in onsite sections. The department has also opted to retain its newly created multidisciplinary Certificate Program in Applied Mental Health Services to address the broad interest among undergraduate students in careers in clinical psychology, mental health counseling and allied human services. Finally, the department will remove courses from the catalog that have not been offered recently to assist students in planning their programs.

Goal 3: Improve graduate student recruitment. Decreasing graduate enrollments in Psychology over the past few years may be attributed to two primary factors: (1) loss of faculty and (2) inadequate financial support. Faculty attrition has been addressed under Goal 1. We propose that the university provide additional funding for graduate teaching assistantships to make them competitive with those of our inspirational peers. In addition to raising the stipend base, providing funds for professional development, such as travel to professional meetings, would make the university more attractive to prospective graduate students. Such funding might be allocated from extramural grant overhead. Finally, graduate students should be offered health insurance as part of their stipend. Inadequate funding is not just a problem for the recruitment of graduate students, but

impacts the hiring of tenure track faculty as well, because new faculty want assurance that they will have access to excellent graduate students if they accept a position at FAU.

In addition to graduate student funding, the department website is an important tool in recruiting prospective graduate students. Building an attractive website requires professional expertise and keeping the site current requires continuing oversight and updating, tasks that are not easily performed by active faculty members. Therefore, the department proposes that the college hire a staff member to assist all the departments in the College in designing and maintaining their websites.

Goal 4: Create a greater sense of community among faculty and graduate students. Because faculty and students are distributed across multiple campuses, there is a sense of fragmentation within the department, which adversely affects the quality of student life and limits opportunities for the mutual exchange of ideas and collaborative research. To address this issue, the department proposes to develop a Research Seminar at which both graduate students and faculty would present and discuss ongoing research. In addition, the department will create common workspace at the Boca campus equipped with computers, printers and copiers where students from partner campuses can work and interact with other students and faculty.

Goal 5: Create a graduate student handbook containing policies and benchmarks for successfully completing degree requirements. The Graduate Committee will review the graduate curriculum and develop expected deadlines for successful completion of degree requirements. This information, along with all policies pertaining to the graduate program, will be incorporated into a Graduate Handbook, which will be available to all students online. The benchmarks will provide objective criteria for providing feedback to students on their progress through the program.

Goal 6: Hire a Program Assistant to oversee various undergraduate and graduate issues. The department is seriously understaffed in regard to managing a host of undergraduate and graduate student issues, including discipline-related advising, tracking the placement of graduates, monitoring student progress, updating the department website, organizing colloquia, and advising student organizations such as Psi Chi and the Psychology Club. Hiring a Program Assistant to oversee these activities and to assist the department Chair and Graduate Coordinator would greatly improve the efficiency of departmental operations and provide better record keeping of departmental data.

Goal 7: Develop a strategy to coordinate the program across multiple campuses. In addition to creating a greater sense of community among faculty and students at different campuses (addressed in Goal 4), there is a need to coordinate course offerings and research opportunities across campuses. This is particularly important for students in the Neuroscience and Behavior program because research laboratories in Neuroscience are concentrated on the Jupiter campus where only a minority of majors currently attend classes. The department will survey undergraduate and graduate students to determine their willingness to travel to other campuses prior to developing a strategy but several proposals are under consideration. One is to schedule a subset of courses to meet once

per week on a particular campus to minimize the frequency of travel between campuses. Students conducting research at the Jupiter campus, for example, could then take all of their courses on one or two days per week at Boca and spend the rest of the week at the Jupiter campus. Another proposal is to offer hybrid online/onsite courses with less frequent meetings on site. This would allow students to log on to the course at any campus with only occasional onsite meetings at a particular campus. Finally, a proposal by the administration to provide shuttle bus transportation between Boca and Jupiter would facilitate coordination of the program across these campuses.