February 5, 2016

To the External Review Committee:

First, let us express our sincere appreciation for your service as external reviewers for the Georgia State University Department of Psychology. We understand the demand on your time and very much appreciate your willingness to help. Your expertise and insights into the state of the department and its future directions will be very critical to our effort in formulating a strategy to move forward.

We have enclosed the department’s self-study report, which provides a comprehensive summary of the state of the department consistent with the strategic directions specified in Georgia State’s current 10-year strategic plan. We appreciate the evident hard work of the self-study committee (Erin Tone, Kevin Swartout, Christopher Good, Christopher Conway, and Julia Perilla) and its chair (Rose Sevcik). We believe the report clearly demonstrates how the Psychology Department has made important contributions to the university’s strategic planning goals, and it helps shape a pathway for future sustainability and accomplishment.

The Department of Psychology has made significant progress since its previous self-study in several key areas. The quality of undergraduate majors has steadily improved as measured by increases in the average SAT score of admits and various learning outcomes. The quality of graduate students attracted to the program has increased, as well. Recently, the graduate program was ranked #101 by U.S. News and World Report. Further, the research productivity of the faculty has been impressive. Since 2012, the department has received almost $16 million in external grants, with an increase in external funding from $2.17 million in Fiscal Year 2012 to $4 million in Fiscal Year 2015. Similarly, there has been a steady increase in peer-reviewed publications culminating in a National Research Council research ranking of 71. In addition, faculty members have been actively participating in the university’s cities initiatives and engaging in various community outreach activities, as well as in efforts to globalize the university.

The Dean’s Office agrees with the goals outlined in the department’s self-study. We do, however, have further questions about how to proceed in the most effective way to achieve these laudable objectives. In the context of Georgia State University’s revenue-neutral budgetary climate, we essentially have three options for developing the strengths of our programs: (1) redirection of resources within existing departmental budgets to maximize programmatic impact, (2) lateral redirection of resources from other units within the college, where we are convinced that the value added in a particular unit is an effective way of achieving the goals of the university’s strategic plan, and (3) self-directed pursuit of opportunities for external funding. In
accordance with these contextual parameters, we would like the external review team members to consider the following items:

- **Goal 1** addresses the maintenance and enhancement of a top-tier faculty and proposes three new initiatives: (1) to re-engineer the department’s approach to investing in faculty scholarship and pedagogy; and (2) to create new, shared research space that extends beyond individual faculty labs. *Are these reasonable initiatives to achieve the faculty development goal? Are there other state-of-the-art strategies or approaches that the department should consider? Are there even more “disruptive innovations” that the department should consider?*

- **Goal 2** focuses on maintaining and enhancing the doctoral training program and proposes three initiatives: (1) increased efforts to recruit a diverse and competitive body of graduate students and maintain contact with them after graduation; (2) enhancing the training climate for students enrolled in the program; and (3) extending the breadth of post-baccalaureate training opportunities. *Are these reasonable initiatives to enhance the doctoral training goal? Are there other strategies or approaches that the department should consider? Are there other strategies that may be more novel or pose greater risk, but if successful would provide a greater return for the investment of time, space, and financial resources?*

- **Goal 3** targets efforts to gain national recognition for the undergraduate program and proposes three initiatives: (1) develop a national summer undergraduate research experience; 2) enhance resources available to current undergraduate majors; and (3) create a faculty development program for the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). *Are these reasonable initiatives to achieve the faculty development goal? Is one initiative more important and should it be given a higher priority than the other two? Are there other strategies or approaches that the department should consider?*

- **Of the first three goals and their initiatives, is one goal more important than the others and should be given a higher priority?**

- **Goal 4** addresses the university’s urban/cities and global strategic goals. These are the least fully developed in the GSU Strategic Plan and also the least developed in Goal 4. *Do you have more specific and concrete suggestions for departmental programs and initiatives to address these goals?*

We look forward to your analysis and insights on the state of the department and its future directions.

William J. Long, Dean  
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