The report of the Department of Psychology and the Chair’s response to it provide an excellent foundation for the academic review process. We thank the Chair, Dr. Mary Morris, and the department for their efforts, and we especially commend the self study committee and its chair, Dr. Roger Bakeman, for the considerable thought and time they devoted to this important process.

Academic program review provides us with an opportunity to highlight a department’s major accomplishments, set goals, and focus attention on current concerns and challenges. The department’s experience during its first program review augurs well for the current cycle. When the department compiled its first self-study in 1994, Psychology had already distinguished itself as one of the university’s leading departments. It was also unfortunately well-known for its grossly inadequate space. Moreover, the data in the self-study revealed that its instructional programs were expanding precariously and that a relatively few faculty members were responsible for the department’s growing scholarly reputation. Many of the goals in the action plan that sought to address these concerns have been met. With significant investment from the University, most of the department’s space needs were addressed through a move to three renovated floors of the Urban Life Building and the expansion of laboratories in Kell Hall. The faculty also has made major strides in developing its national and international reputation. A majority now secures substantial external funding and provides extensive professional service including membership on grant review panels and on editorial boards. The department has also effectively restructured its graduate programs (focusing on five areas, increasing stipends, and decreasing time to degree) and strengthening its undergraduate major and advisement.

It short, as the current self-study documents well, Psychology continues to be one of Georgia State University’s exemplary departments. There are many indications that it works well as an academic unit. Two recent examples convey its success. Last spring, its clinical psychology training program was re-accredited by the American Psychological Association with a very positive review. And this fall, the Provost awarded the first Departmental Instructional Effectiveness Award to the department in recognition of its outstanding work in promoting and documenting student learning outcomes at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Furthermore, the department is central to many of the College’s and University’s initiatives. It is the primary department for four centers, the Language Research Center, the Center for Research in Atypical Development and Learning, the Regent’s Center for Learning Disorders, and the National Latino Research Center on Domestic Violence and a key partner in others including the Center for Behavioral Neuroscience. It contributes to several of the university’s new interdisciplinary areas of focus including the Brains and Behavioral Program and the Partnership for Urban Health Research, both which received substantial new funding to promote faculty and graduate student research. It is also becoming increasingly involved in the college’s international strategic initiatives, especially in South Africa, and in its
multicultural initiatives, including the university’s efforts to recruit and retain students and faculty from underrepresented minority groups.

We think that the self-study provides a very good analysis of the department’s current strengths and weaknesses which in turn inform the presentation of its future goals and objectives. The upcoming visit by the external review team provides us with an excellent opportunity to sharpen this analysis. To this end, we will focus here primarily on two areas where we think guidance would be especially helpful when the action plan is formulated at the conclusion of the program review process.

1. The composition and support of the faculty. Since its last program review, new faculty recruitment has consumed enormous time and resources. Even so, the growth of the department’s faculty has not kept pace with the growth of its programs. Currently, there are 39 full time regular faculty members (35 tenured or tenure-track and 4 non-tenure-track, 2 lecturers, 1 senior lecturer, and 1 clinical professor), up from 33 (all tenured or tenured-track) in 1994. Several visiting lecturers (totaling 6 EFT which translates roughly into 12 tenure-track positions) as well as approximately 20 Graduate Teaching Assistants and several times more Graduate Laboratory Assistants help staff the undergraduate program. We are currently recruiting for two new tenure-track faculty (one a replacement, the other a new line through the Partnership in Urban Health Research) and one lecturer (a replacement).

We agree fully with the department’s suggestion that more faculty be hired over the next several years. We expect that the department will replace all lines vacated by retirements and resignations, and that the department may gain some new faculty positions through university initiatives, including currently funded programs such as Brains & Behavior, Urban Health Research, and the Center for Behavioral Neuroscience and emerging areas of focus such as the program for research in language and literacy. Moreover, we expect that other positions will be specified in the action plan that derives from this program review. The College is committed to decreasing the department’s dependence on visiting faculty. Although we are pleased that we have greatly curtailed the employment of part-time instructors, we have not yet hired a sufficient number of regular faculty to adequately staff our undergraduate program. We envision that each department will have a mix of tenure-track faculty (who would likely teach on average two undergraduate courses and devote the rest of their workload to graduate teaching, research, and service) and lecturers (who teach 6 to 8 undergraduate sections a year).

We would welcome guidance on how to balance tenure-track and non-tenure-track positions in the department, on how to be more successful recruiting faculty members from underrepresented groups, and on how to balance hires across the range of areas within the department. To address these issues, we need to consider how large we should grow each of the department’s program areas and how we might best prioritize new faculty hires around key research themes and instructional program needs. Here issues related to resources such as the availability of laboratory space must be taken into account. Fortunately, some limitations are being addressed. For several years now the lack of wet lab research laboratories has shaped recruitment in the behavioral neurosciences. Three years from now, this limitation will lessen significantly when two
new buildings, a Science Teaching Laboratory Building and a Science Research Building, come on line. The addition of an Economic Development Incubator and other facilities to the new Science Park in the not so distant future will also likely provide new research spaces. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that even these significant additional resources may not fully address the department’s space needs as it plans to expand its tenure-track ranks and increase its national reputation.

In addition to hiring more faculty, we are committed to providing faculty with appropriate workloads, competitive compensation, and adequate staff support. The concerns expressed in the self study and chair’s response about the competing demands facing our most accomplished faculty are certainly valid. The college does have various policies that have been developed in concert with faculty that can provide a framework for continued discussions about how to relieve some of the strain. The annual workload policy seeks “to provide guidelines for the equitable distribution of faculty work” which includes “a rich blend of research, non-course instruction, and service in addition to typical course-related effort” and provides for considerable departmental level discretion in its application. In addition, the Professional Leave Policy, which has yet to be used systematically in Psychology, may be a helpful tool in addressing workload concerns.

Adjusting specific faculty workloads, as important as this may be, is only one strategy for addressing concerns related to growing pressures on accomplished faculty to direct their energies to multiple projects. Another important strategy is to contain or withdraw effort from some current activities. Here the department’s consideration of limiting the number of undergraduate majors deserves further consideration. A second strategy is to shift some work from faculty to staff. Thus we find particularly compelling the department’s well reasoned requests to hire more support staff to assist in functions associated with research administration including grants production and management and compliance with federal regulations in safety and animal care. A third strategy is to develop new ways to provide increased compensation for accomplished faculty at a time when the state has appropriated far too little for raises and benefits. We look forward to working with the department as it considers new models, such as salary incentives using foundation funds, which should help address some of the current concerns. We are also committed to continuing to formulate ideas about how to provide partner benefits within the state public education system.

2. **Program development.** We encourage further discussion of the department’s vision of its programmatic strengths. In particular, we applaud the suggestions in the self study about the department’s plans to examine both its undergraduate and graduate curriculum. These discussions are especially timely. The department is well positioned to be a leader in the university’s current efforts to address difficult issues related to retention and graduation and the college’s efforts to develop its Honors Program. Furthermore, new teaching spaces in the Science Teaching Laboratory will finally allow the department to have breakout sections in its large lecture classes and to offer instructional laboratories in upper division and graduate courses. We also agree that it is critical that the department continue to stabilize adequate support for doctoral students. There has been some movement toward gaining additional support. For example, Psychology has gained graduate stipend support both from the area of focus initiatives and from the recent shift
of graduate funding from the Research Office to departments with long-term externally funded research programs. Moreover, after years of effort, our push for health insurance for all graduate student assistants will likely be implemented by the Board of Regents this coming Fall. Nevertheless, more will need to be done to recruit the best graduate students. We would welcome advice from the external review team about how best to inform prospective graduate students about our programs and how we might build on existing collaborations, including those embodied in research centers, to generate external funding, including training grants.

The Dean’s Office again congratulates the Department on its development since the last academic program review, and thanks the Department of Psychology for this report. Its progress bodes well for the future. The Dean’s Office looks forward to the external reviewers’ visit and to working with the Department on an action plan that will make their goals achievable in the next five years.