

Statement from the Department of Psychology to Accompany the Vote to Approve the Program Change Plan for the School of Psychological and Behavioral Sciences

A strong majority of faculty affiliated with the Department of Psychology favor the plan to form a School of Psychological and Behavioral Sciences with faculty from the Behavior Analysis and Therapy (BAT) program (11 voted yes, 2 no, and 2 abstained). There is a long history of collaboration and cross-appointments of faculty affiliated with the two programs since the 1950's. Thus, the merger, in principal, seems to offer much of benefit to both parties and the university as a whole. Psychology faculty recognized potential benefits to housing the undergraduate and graduate programs of Psychology and BAT within the same academic unit, including, but not limited to: (1) facilitating double majors in Behavior Analysis and Psychology, (2) promoting minors in Psychology among Behavior Analysis Majors, (3) transitioning graduates in Psychology to the Masters program in BAT, and (4) potentially cross-training students in the Child Clinical Psychology program in Behavior Analysis. Strengthening the Psychology and BAT programs in this manner is likely to draw more students to the undergraduate and graduate programs. In addition, the merger should strengthen and facilitate existing research collaboration among faculty in the affected units, including those conducted under the auspices of the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Although most faculty in Psychology see benefits of the reorganization, a number of reservations were also raised by Psychology faculty during our initial discussion of the reorganization plan. Most of the reservations stemmed from an overall lack of detail in the plan. Chief among these concerns was that the proposed structure of the new school failed to recognize independent graduate training programs within Psychology. Each of Psychology's four training programs—Applied Psychology, Brain & Cognitive Sciences, Clinical Psychology, and Counseling Psychology—prepares students for distinctly different career paths and requires unique and specific oversight. A query regarding this limitation of the plan was forwarded to upper administration and Psychology faculty were assured that a structure that was functionally equivalent to the existing structure would be retained. Additional concerns were forwarded to administration regarding the, as yet, unspecified undergraduate requirements of the proposed College of Health Services and Human Science. Psychology faculty were concerned that the curriculum would be sufficient to ensure that students were prepared to succeed in our majors. Again, upper administration assured psychology faculty that they would have sufficient input in the development of the curriculum to prepare our students for success. Several Psychology faculty questioned why the plan could not be revised to address these reservations before voting to approve the plan, but they supported the plan in good faith that upper administration would respect these assurances and would involve affected faculty in the development of the operating papers so that a functional organizational structure could be achieved.

During discussion prior to voting, some psychology faculty raised additional reservations about the transition to the new college, including concerns that: (1) the school would not receive adequate resources to deliver and maintain oversight of our graduate programs and our popular and complex undergraduate programs, (2) changing colleges might complicate existing course cross-listings and research collaborations that exist between Psychology and other units in COLA, and (3) the transition plan is lacking in key details, such as, a general timeline for the transition and who would have oversight and responsibility for drafting the operating papers necessary to achieve the transition. Finally, some psychology faculty continue to advocate that the school have oversight of the concentration in Neuroscience. There is presently an existing Neuroscience Minor developed by the Department of

Psychology. We are archiving these concerns in this statement so that they may be addressed as the plan moves forward.

In closing, some Psychology faculty recognized that the reorganizational plan may benefit Psychology and the Behavior Analysis and Therapy program, but the general reorganization plan may not be in the best interest to other academic units or for the University as a whole. These faculty encourage Administration to work in transparent collaboration with affected faculty to assure success of the reorganization. Finally, some Psychology faculty questioned if reorganization alone would be sufficient to address the problem of declining enrollment. These faculty encourage administration to effectively communicate to the University community what other initiatives are being implemented to address the problem and the evidence-based rationale for those initiatives. Doing so would permit the full intellectual resources of the University to be brought to bear in refining those initiatives. Moreover, knowing that we are implementing well-conceived actions to stem the decline would ease uncertainty and improve morale.