

March 31, 2023 Psychology Advisory Board Meeting

The mission of the Advisory Board is to support and advocate on behalf of the Department of Psychology and to support the Department's achievement of its goals through Engagement, Leadership, and Philanthropy.

Meeting Location: UF Psychology Building

In Attendance: Antonio E. Puente (Board Chair), Chris Pitisci, Amanda Balkhi (Board Secretary), Martha Zlokovich (Via Zoom), Meredith Wikstrom, Steve Evans (Advancement), Julia Graber (Department Chair), Janette Berne (Zoom), Lacie Klann (Advancement), Sunnie Pearson (Advancement)

Future Meetings: June 21, 2023 (Zoom) TBD; Fall 2023 (In-Person) TBD

Engagement:

- *MentorConnect Work Group:* The board participated in a reception on March 30 that was planned jointly by the Department of Psychology and Beyond120. Twenty-five highly engaged students having the opportunity to interact with Board Members and representatives from Psychology Advising. The Board recommended that Advising follow up with more information regarding Mentor Connect for students who were unsure about using the platform.

In order to facilitate connection with all Psychology students and share MentorConnect, the Board will draft a letter to be shared with current undergraduates via advancement.

- *Alumni Outreach Work Group:* Chris Pitisci and Lacie Klann updated the Board regarding the Tampa Alumni in-person event. Both described the event as positive with 30-40 alumni and 3-4 students attending and indicated that the Board would be informed of other opportunities to attend similar events when appropriate.

The work group also provided an update regarding the Alumni Outreach Lists. Dr. Zlokovich requested an additional list of graduate alumni in the five years around her graduation year. Chris Pitisci will liaison with Steve Evans and Lacie Klann to review the currently submitted alumni lists with a goal of sending a welcome email by the end of April.

- *Alumni Video Stories Work Group:* Dr. Balkhi requested that members share potential contacts for the Alumni Stories Video project. Dr. Balkhi will follow up to recruit the named alumni to complete an Alumni Video Story.

Leadership:

- Dr. Graber provided a department update. The Department of Psychology remains a vital component of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), accounting for 17% of all undergraduate CLAS majors, boasting a 80% on time graduation rate for graduate students, and increasing in both the number and amount of faculty research awards.

- *Undergraduate Update:* Over the last five years, the Department has seen growth in total students across all study tracks (General Psychology, Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience (637 students), and Behavior Analysis(302 students)) as well as in its online course offerings.

To meet undergraduate demand, the department has hired a full time Academic Advisor (Dominic Purcell) and is exploring limiting early enrollment registration to students within the psychology major to ensure students are able to be placed in needed courses. The Advising space is also set to receive an architect review for potential future improvements.

The Department is also in the process of hiring for two instructional faculty positions for the Fall 2023 academic year. Under Dr. Graber's leadership, the Department also recently changed its Faculty bylaws to ensure that all instructional faculty are able to fully participate in matters of the Department.

- *Graduate Updates:* The Department has had a historically strong graduate class of 20 students a cohort for a total average census of 100 graduate students within the Department.

For the 2023-2024 incoming graduate class however, the Department has received an uncharacteristically high amount of graduate admissions rejections. At the time of the meeting, 12 offers of admission had been accepted with 8 offers rejected and 7 offers under consideration. The local political climate and financial limitations were cited as potential factors impacting student acceptance rates.

The graduate students within the Department have a strong history of funding on 9 month university contracts and have additional supplemental funding available through targeted grants within the department. Department stipends are increasing beginning in the 2023-2024 academic year from \$19,100 to \$22,000 for 9 month contracts, however financial concerns remain for students.

The board discussed the functional differences of 9 and 12 month contracts for students, including the student need to supplement income with outside employment to pay for mandatory summer credits. Barriers to 12 month contracts, including limited teaching positions, unpredictable research budgets, and reduced available benefits at the college level were discussed.

- *Faculty Updates:* The tenure track and instructional faculty within the Department continue to excel as compared to their peers. The Department's online undergraduate psychology program was recognized as fourth in the

nation and faculty received 27 new research awards across 15 faculty members. Eight of the 15 awarded faculty members were early career or pretenure faculty.

In the Fall of 2022, the Department began a search for three additional faculty members as part of a diversity cluster hire. Despite numerous qualified applicants and offers extended, only one faculty position has been filled to date. When asked, faculty candidates overwhelmingly cited the local political climate as the primary reason for not accepting the Department's offer. Specifically, faculty candidates were concerned that recent policy goals of the state of Florida regarding DEI may make it impossible for them to conduct their research in accordance with federal funding mandates.

Current faculty have also expressed concern regarding the difficulty recruiting colleagues to the state of Florida. Additionally, pending DEI legislation has led to faculty concerns regarding the ability to accept federal funding and maintain program accreditation in the future.

The board discussed at length strategies for recruitment for the remaining two positions, including approaching alumni and other Florida faculty who may be a good fit for the open positions. In response to concerns about pending legislation, the Board was directed to follow the university's Gator Advocates for ongoing updates.

- In response to growing concerns among faculty and challenges with hiring, the Board agreed to draft another letter of support for current faculty. The Board will also attempt to promote the open positions to members of its personal network when appropriate.
- As part of its ongoing efforts to maintain contact with Departmental faculty, the Board had lunch with Dr. Brian Odegaard, Dr. Peter Kvam, and Dr. Andreas Keil who are all actively participating in AI informed research in psychology. Faculty emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary opportunities for research and scholarship and discussed the potential feasibility of joint classes with students in other departments such as computer science. The Board and faculty discussed potential IP protection resources on campus that may be of help to the faculty. The Board also encouraged faculty to work alongside the department to disseminate and celebrate the accomplishments of their individual labs and students.

Philanthropy:

- The Board wrote Thank You notes to those participating in Gator Giving Day. While the Board exceeded the level of participation seen in the previous year, with 52 total donors, 55 total gifts, and \$3,446 in unplanned contributions, the goal of 100 donors was not met.

Board challenges with the Giving Day technology, including the inability to donate on the Department's page early, challenges with repeated donations, and asynchronous updates of the leaderboard were noted on Giving Day and were communicated via Advancement to the Giving Day Team.

Improvements for 2024 Giving Day were then discussed. Lacie Klann announced that the college will move to Sales Force shortly and can provide research time in the late Fall to fine tune alumni lists for the pre-Giving Day email. The Board also discussed asking the advising office to send an email prior to graduation to collect non-UF email addresses from graduating students and ask them to join the Department's social media pages.

Points of focus for next Giving Day were briefly discussed. Dr. Graber suggested that "Why I Give" videos from herself and current faculty who contributed may be helpful. Dr. Puente suggested inviting retired or emeritus faculty back to the Department for an event around the Board meeting to build relationships prior to Giving Day 2024. The Board also suggested that Dr. Graber publicly acknowledge any program funded by Giving Day funds to increase awareness of the impact of Giving Day.

- The Board then discussed current initiatives for Philanthropy, including the potential of having smaller, targeted funding anchors on the Departmental website to provide a way for donors who want to give for a specific purpose a means to do so. The impact of small donors and the pros and cons of different funding anchors on the website (such as targeted mini grants, low/mid/high tier projects, etc) were discussed. The board also briefly discussed in kind donations and the potential to send a small, targeted email to Gainesville alumni for office donations for graduate students.
- Advancement reviewed the current funding needs of the Department and recommended the Department create an ongoing dialogue with donors about the impact of their donations. Advancement also recommended that monthly recurrent giving options may be helpful for the Department to promote.

Board Governance:

- The Board reviewed membership targets of 15-20 alumni on the Board at a time. The importance of a diversity of experience, including diversity in Demographics, Graduation Year, Experiences, and Profession were discussed. The Board discussed common career fields of Psychology Alumni (Law, Recruitment/HR, Health Care, Psychological Care, Sales) and recommended that we strive to add new Board members.

In the event of Board Member access or accessibility concerns, the Board stated its commitment to being flexible and nonexclusionary in its participation. Functionally, this includes continued offering of a remote attendance option and ongoing discussions with members about potential accommodations needed.

The Board reviewed the Advancement current individuals that may be interested in Board participation. The Board formally approved Janette Berne as a new member. This brings the current Board Census to eight members.

Fall 2021 - Fall 2024 Term: Antonio E. Puente, Chris Pitisci, Amanda Balkhi, Martha Zlokovich, Patricia Thomas Shutt, Frederick L. Coolidge

Fall 2022 - Fall 2025 Term: Meredith Wikstrom

Spring 2023 - Spring 2026 Term: Janette Berne

- The Board codified the process of adding a new member. Steps are described as follows:
 - Stage 1: Recommendation from Board or Advancement
 - Stage 2: Vetting From Advancement Including Sharing Board Mission and Responsibilities
 - Stage 3: Intro to Department Chair
 - Stage 4: Intro to Board Member - Steps 3 & 4 May Happen Concurrently
 - Stage 5: Board Meeting Attendance
 - Stage 6: Vote and Discussion by Board about Potential Member
 - Stage 7: Follow Up Email Invitation to Join the Board by Department Chair and Board Member Representative
- The Board began to set the agenda for the upcoming two meetings.
 - June 21, 2023 Zoom Meeting - The board will review its progress on engagement, leadership, and philanthropy goals and receive a brief update from Dr. Graber. The Board will then complete its strategic planning workshop led by Meredith Wikstrom.
 - Fall 2023 - In Person Meeting - The board will review progress within Engagement, Leadership, and Philanthropy and receive a Departmental update. Immediately prior to the Board Meeting, the Board suggests an event that invites retired UF faculty back on campus to interact with the Department. The Board will revisit plans for Giving Day 2024 and participate in a working lunch with selected faculty. If feasible, advancement will coordinate a listening session with a prolific past donor within Psychology.