

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR A DEPARTMENT NAME CHANGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA:  
FROM DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY TO  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BRAIN SCIENCES**

**Action Requested:** Consider recommending approval of the request by the University of Iowa to change the name of the Department of Psychology to the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

**Executive Summary:** The proposed department name change will align and communicate the teaching and research missions of the department with a more appropriate title. This request has been reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. This request addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to pursue “educational excellence and impact” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and effective.”

**Background:**

- ◇ **Description of department.** The Department of Psychology has two connected missions – (1) providing learning opportunities for students in the classroom and the laboratory; and (2) producing leading-edge research that enhances understanding of both normal and disordered behavioral and brain functioning. The department offers a Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology at the undergraduate level and a Ph.D. at the graduate level.

The department offers the largest undergraduate major at the University with approximately 1,300 students and teaches more than 23,000 student credit hours each year. There are approximately 75 Ph.D. students and six graduate training areas – Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience; Clinical Psychology; Cognition and Perception; Developmental Science; Health Psychology; and Social Psychology. The psychology faculty have an outstanding record of research activity that contributes to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and University goals of enhancing leading-edge research and scholarship. In the most recent National Research (NRC) review of graduate programs, the department was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> among all public institutions in research activity which is the core measure of research productivity, and 20<sup>th</sup> among all institutions.

- ◇ **Reason for proposed name change.** (1) The field of psychology has undergone massive changes during the last 30 years with the advent of noninvasive technology to measure human brain functioning, such as scalp-recorded EEG, functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging, and functional Near-Infrared Spectroscopy. These new techniques, in combination with more invasive animal neurophysiological techniques, have created new opportunities for understanding how normal and disordered behavior are related to brain functioning. The Department of Psychology has kept abreast of these changes in the field in teaching and research by requiring all psychology majors to take Biological Psychology as part of the introductory sequence and engaging in human or neuroscience research by many faculty and students. Therefore, the department believes that “psychology” does not accurately represent the current state or future direction of the department. Adding “Brain Sciences” to the department name will provide a more accurate umbrella to describe the teaching and research activities of the department and communicate the commitment to unlocking the links between brain and behavior inside and outside of the university.

(2) Although the field of psychology is a science, the perception outside of the university is that psychology is exclusively about clinical analysis and therapy. In fact, the department spans research and teaching from mapping neural circuits involved in learning and memory to understanding how social support impacts ovarian cancer progression to identifying risk factors for unintentional childhood injuries. The department uses a variety of techniques, including single cell recording, behavioral neuroimaging, virtual environment technology, eye tracking, behavioral observation, gene sequencing, neuropsychological testing, and immunological assays. By including “Psychological Sciences” in the department name, it will provide a more accurate representation of the department and its activities.

- ◇ Comparable name at other institutions. A number of other psychology departments have changed their name to “psychological and brain sciences.” The following universities have departments named “Psychological and Brain Sciences” – Indiana University at Bloomington, Johns Hopkins University, Dartmouth University, University of California, Santa Barbara, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, University of Delaware. Massachusetts Institute of Technology has a Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences and Purdue University has a Department of Psychological Sciences.
- ◇ Consistency with accreditation requirements. The department is not accredited. However, the Ph.D. Program in Clinical Psychology is accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) and by the Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS). The proposed name change is consistent with program accreditation requirements.
- ◇ Effect on program configuration. There will be no modifications in the configuration of the undergraduate or graduate programs.
- ◇ Effect on students. The department does not anticipate any negative effect on students. The degree name for both the undergraduate and graduate programs will remain “psychology.”
- ◇ Effect on resources. No new resources are anticipated as a result of the proposed department name change.
- ◇ Proposed name consistent with College mission. The Department of Psychology is a part of the natural sciences in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS). Adding "Sciences" to the name clarifies the department’s place within the natural sciences. The addition of "Brain" to the name also underscores involvement in the neurosciences, a major focus of interdisciplinary teaching and research within both CLAS and the larger University. For example, Psychology faculty are a part of the Graduate Program in Neuroscience, a T32 graduate student training grant funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and administered by the Graduate College. Many Ph.D. students in the program are supervised (and financially supported) by department faculty; department faculty sit on many committees in the program.

The Department is also engaged in strengthening the connections between CLAS and the Carver College of Medicine (CCOM) through joint faculty positions in Psychology (CLAS) and Neurology (CCOM). One faculty member has a joint appointment between the two departments; the department is currently conducting a joint faculty search between Psychology and Neurology in the area of human neuroscience and cognitive decline. The Department of Psychology is also strengthening connections between CLAS and CCOM through an NIH T32 graduate student training grant titled "Mechanisms of Health and Disease at the Behavioral-Biomedical Interface" that was recently awarded to Psychology.

Graduate students from Psychology do lab rotations in CCOM to learn about biomedical methodologies and conceptual frameworks that will enable them to make transformative breakthroughs in understanding both health and behavior. Psychology is also involved in the Aging Mind and Brain Initiative (AMBI), a cluster initiative designed to bring together researchers across departments and colleges to study normal and disease-related cognitive decline. One assistant professor was hired as part of AMBI, and the joint Psychology/Neurology faculty search described above is also an AMBI position. Psychology faculty are also involved in a wide variety of interdisciplinary research projects with faculty in CCOM.

These range from collaborations with Psychiatry to study acid-sensing ion channels in the brain that are involved in cocaine addiction to collaborations with Otolaryngology to study language development in children with cochlear implants. Psychology is committed to strengthening connections with CCOM with the goal of leveraging the unique strengths and resources across CLAS and CCOM.

- ◆ Date of implementation. The proposed name change will become effective upon approval by the Board of Regents and will be included in the University's General Catalog. The anticipated implementation date is June 2015.