Summary of the Psychology Department's Recent
Assessment of Knowledge Base

PLO - Knowledge Base: Students will demonstrate the ability to identify, recognize, or otherwise articulate key elements of content (e.g., core concepts, theories, and individuals) within a wide variety of areas in psychology.

- Assessment: A 101-item multiple-choice test (KAPT) covering 18 traditional subdisciplines of psychology, along with a scoring rubric with benchmarks based on a combined measure of overall score and breadth of proficiency across subdiscipline scales, was developed to aid in assessing student learning outcome for senior undergraduate psychology majors at Westmont College. The test was administered to 31 students completing an introductory General Psychology course and 21 graduating senior psychology majors at the end of spring 2011.

  The scoring rubric, criteria and departmental benchmarks for assessing the level of mastery in psychology-related knowledge are described in Table 1 below. Our concern in developing the rubric was for both **overall performance** (raw % correct) and **breadth** (based on number of subdiscipline scales with high scores). Table 2 describes the algorithm for a combined overall-performance/breadth score derived from these criteria, and the benchmarks in the bottom row of Table 1 refer to performance according to this combined score. We would like to see at least 75% of our graduating seniors scoring at or above the Effective level.

Table 1. *Knowledge-base rubric and benchmarks based on Knowledge-Base Assessment of Psychology Test.*

	(Baseline) 0	**Underdeveloped 1**	**Developing 2**	**Effective 3**	**Distinguished 4**
Description	Chance recognition of key elements of content across all major traditional subdisciplines	Poor recognition of key elements of content across all major traditional subdisciplines	Good recognition of key elements in a small number of major traditional subdisciplines	Good recognition of key elements across a wide variety of major traditional subdisciplines	Excellent recognition of key elements across a wide variety of major traditional subdisciplines
Criteria for overall performance score	<30% on KAPT	30-50% on KAPT	50-75%% on KAPT	75-85% on KAPT	≥85%% on KAPT
Criteria for breadth score	>80% on fewer than 2 KAPT subscales[2]	>80% 2-3 KAPT subscales[2]	>80% on 4-5 KAPT subscales[2]	>80% on 6-7 KAPT subscales[2]	>80% on 8 or more KAPT subscales[2]
Benchmarks for combined score[1]	0%	0%	35%	50%	25%

Notes: [1]Benchmarks are for second-semester seniors; see Table 2 for description of combined score algorithm
[2]For which Westmont courses are offered

Table 2. *Knowledge-Base results combining overall score and breadth.*

Student Group	Overall Score	Breadth				
		0-1	**2-3**	**4-5**	**6-7**	**>=8**
Gen Psych	**<30%**	2	8	6	0	0
	30-50%	0	2	7	0	0
	50-75%	0	0	4	0	0
	75-85%	0	0	1	1	0
	>85%	0	0	0	0	0

Psy Senior		(Baseline)	Underdev'd	Developing	Effective	Disting'ed
	<30%	0	1	0	0	0
	30-50%	0	0	1	0	0
	50-75%	0	0	5	0	0
	75-85%	0	0	3	3	0
	>85%	0	0	3	3	2

Legend: (Baseline) | Underdev'd | Developing | Effective | Disting'ed

Note: Numbers in the table represent number of students falling in each Score-Breadth intersection. Colored regions represent Score-Breadth intersections corresponding to common Knowledge-Base rubric categories.

- What We Learned: Psychology seniors perform better than General Psychology students, both overall and across a breadth of subdisciplines; 67% of seniors perform at Effective or Distinguished levels compared to only 6% of General Psychology students. Psychology seniors perform better on overall KAPT score. Psychology seniors perform better on 17 of the 18 subscales. The scoring rubric combining overall performance and breadth was correlated with psychology GPA more highly than overall performance alone, suggesting that the development of a disciplinary knowledge-base involves not only depth but breadth as well.

  For Psychology seniors, no student scored in the Baseline category; however, we would like to see no graduating seniors at the Underdeveloped level, we would like to see more students in the Distinguished category, and fewer in the Developing category. In particular, we would like to see more of our graduating seniors doing better on multiple subscales, and we would like to see the overall KAPT score distribution for Psychology seniors shifted to the right.

- Changes We Have Made and Plan to Make: The psychology department will be working to implement the following changes:

  1. Continued attention to strong foundational, introductory experience for our students. Important components of such an experience include:

     o *PSY-001General Psychology*. Continued departmental discussion of curriculum and goals for this course; also, more intentional mentoring and curricular supervision of adjunct and new instructors.

     o *PSY-013 Experimental Psychology*. Broader and more explicit attention to a variety of subdsciplines in the laboratory component of this required course.

  2. More, more explicit, and broader integration of knowledge-base material in our capstone courses:

     o *PSY-111 History and Systems of Psychology*. PSY-111 has been explicitly added as a component of the psychology capstone experience, complementing the more targeted, practical, and skill-based approaches of other components of our capstone experience (*PSY-196 Senior Practicum* and *PSY-197/8 Senior Research*). *PSY-111* naturally emphasizes the breadth and depth of a psychology knowledge base, and serves as natural bookend in the senior year to complement, integrate, and re-emphasize concepts covered during the first year in *PSY-001 General Psychology*.

  3. In addition, we plan to administer the KAPT again in a future assessment cycle to evaluate the curricular changes that were implemented on the basis of this year's results. Although the multiple-choice KAPT is a valid instrument, in the future we would like to also use **convergent methods** (e.g., essay, oral presentation, inclusion of material in senior-level capstone papers) to assess our students' mastery of a psychology knowledge-base. Such methods do not replace the KAPT, but complement it and provide convergent validity, providing a richer and more personal assessment of student knowledge base.