Mission/Purpose
The Department of Behavioral Sciences advances the University of West Alabama's mission to improve key student qualities of independent thinking, respect, and integrity by educating individuals to better understand themselves, others, and their community.

I. Goals and Student Learning Outcomes, With Any Associations and Related Measures, Achievement Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

A. Goal: Address the major educational issues of the area
Address the major educational, social, cultural, and economic issues of the region and in doing so promote a positive image of the institution and the area

1. Outcome: Theory and Content
Students in psychology and sociology will be able to sufficiently synthesize theoretical knowledge in Psychology or Sociology.

a. Measure: Theory and Content
Students will gain the ability to understand and demonstrate the development of a psychological or sociological research idea, collection and integration of theory to address the idea, and theoretical interpretation of research results in one or more of the following courses: PY 480, Psychology Seminar (70% on the theoretical portion of the grading rubric); PY 490, Psychology Research Project (70% on the theoretical portion of the grading rubric); SY 450, Modern Sociological Theory (70% on the comprehensive final exam); or SY 460, Methods of Social Research (70% on the theoretical portion of the grading rubric). (See the document repository for grading rubrics).

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

1. Achievement Target:
PY 480, Psychology Seminar: 70% on the theoretical portion of the grading rubric
PY 490, Psychology Research Project: 70% on the comprehensive final exam
SY 450, Modern Sociological Theory: 70% on the final exam
SY 460, Methods of Social Research: 70% on the theoretical portion of the grading rubric

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met
PY 480 Psychology Seminar: 100% received a 70% or better on the theoretical portion of the paper project rubric.
PY 490 Psychology Research Project: 100% received a 70% or better on the theoretical portion of the grading rubric.
SY 450 Modern Sociological Theory: 70% received a 70% or better on the comprehensive final exam in Modern Sociological Theory.
SY 460 Methods of Social Research: 57% received a 70% or better on the theoretical portion of the paper project rubric.
3. **Action Plans:**

**Hire full-time Ph.D. in Sociology**
Hire full-time Ph.D. in Sociology to increase the course offerings and reduce the advising load for one of the largest majors on campus.

- **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
- **Implementation Status:** In Progress
- **Priority:** High
- **Implementation Description:** Submit faculty staffing plan
- **Responsible Person/Group:** Department Head
- **Additional Resources Requested:** Salary = $59,579 Equipment = $2,000
- **Budget Amount Requested:** $61,579.00
- **Implementation Notes:** 7/15/2011 The Sociology program is the largest in the College of Liberal Arts, but only contains two dedicated Sociology faculty.

**Improve theoretical scores in capstone courses**
The Department of Behavioral Sciences will seek ways to improve psychological and sociological theoretical knowledge scores in PY and SY capstone courses (PY 480, PY 490, SY 450, and SY 460) by exploring ways to reinforce skills/knowledge and improve retention of theoretical material throughout the program.

- **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
- **Implementation Status:** In Progress
- **Priority:** High
- **Implementation Description:** The faculty will explore ways to reinforce theoretical knowledge through the program. Sociology faculty will develop a 200/300 level course to serve as the training course that reinforces the skills and knowledge gained in the introduction classes (SY 100 and SY 110). Psychology faculty will develop ways to increase theoretical knowledge retention throughout the program.
- **Completion Date:** 10/01/2012
- **Responsible Person/Group:** Chair and faculty
- **Implementation Notes:** 7/22/2011 Beginning Fall 2011, the department will address ways to improve the summative program scores in Sociology by investigating ways to increase reading, writing, and retention skills of its majors.

2. **Outcome: Research Methods**

Students in Psychology and Sociology will be able to sufficiently synthesize research knowledge.

**a. Measure: Research Methods**

Students will gain the ability to understand and demonstrate the application of psychological or sociological research methods to address a research topic in one or more of the following courses: PY 480, Psychology Seminar (70% on the research portion of the PY 480 grading rubric); PY 490, Psychology Research Project (70% on the research methods section of the PY 490 grading rubric); or SY 460, Methods of Social Research (70% on the research portion of the SY 460 grading rubric). (See the document repository for grading rubrics.)

**Source of Evidence:** Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

**1. Achievement Target:**

PY 480, Psychology Seminar: (70% on the research portion of the PY 480 grading rubric)
PY 490, Psychology Research Project: 70% on the research methods section of the PY 490 grading rubric
SY 460, Methods of Social Research: 70% on the research portion of the SY 460 grading rubric

2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met**
   PY 480, Psychology Seminar: 40% of the students reviewed a 70% or better on the research methods portion of the PY 480 paper project.
   PY 490, Psychology Research Project: 100% of the students received a 70% or better on the research methods portion of the paper project.
   SY 460, Methods of Social Research: 57% received a 70% or better on the research portion of the SY 460 paper project.

3. **Action Plan:**
   **Improve research methods knowledge and skills**
   The Department of Behavioral Sciences will address ways to improve the unsatisfactory research methods knowledge and skills.
   **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
   **Implementation Status:** In Progress
   **Priority:** High
   **Implementation Description:** The Psychology and Sociology faculty will develop strategies to improve research methods skills, increase research methods knowledge, and increase retention of both skills and knowledge. The Sociology faculty will develop a new 200-level or 300-level course that specifically reinforces methods learned from SY 100 and improves necessary research methods skills. The Psychology faculty will investigate ways to include and reinforce research methods skills in all 300-level and 400-level courses beyond PY 300.
   **Completion Date:** 09/30/2011
   **Responsible Person/Group:** Chair and department faculty
   **Implementation Notes:**
   8/18/2011 Chair and faculty met to work on ways to incorporate research methods into all courses in the department. 200-level or 300-level courses will be developed for implementation in the Fall 2012 term.

3. **Outcome: Critical Thinking Skills**
   Students in Psychology and Sociology will be able to think critically about complex major-related concepts knowledge.

   a. **Measure: Critical Thinking Skills**
   Students will gain the ability to understand and demonstrate the generation of psychological or sociological research idea and interpretation of research results in one or more of the following courses: PY 480, Psychology Seminar (70% on the research idea generation portion and interpretation portion of the grading rubric); PY 490, Psychology Research Project (70% on the research idea generation portion and interpretation/discussion portion of the grading rubric); SY 450, Modern Sociological Theory (70% on the final exam); or SY 460, Methods of Social Research (70% on the research idea generation portion and interpretation portion of the grading rubric). (See the document repository for grading rubrics.)

   Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery
1. **Achievement Target:**
   PY 480 Psychology Seminar: 70% on the research idea generation portion and interpretation portion of the grading rubric
   PY 490, Psychology Research Project: 70% on the research idea generation portion and interpretation/discussion portion of the grading rubric
   SY 450, Modern Sociological Theory: 70% on the final exam
   SY 460, Methods of Social Research: 70% on the research idea generation portion and interpretation portion of the grading rubric

2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met**
   PY 480 Psychology Seminar: 100% of the students received a 70% or better on the idea generation and interpretation portions of the project paper.
   PY 490 Psychology Research Project: 100% of the students received a 70% or better on the idea generation and interpretation portions of the project paper.
   SY 450 Modern Sociological Theory: 70% received a 70 or better on their comprehensive final exam.
   SY 460 Methods of Social Research: 57% received a 70% or better on the idea generation and interpretation portions of the project paper.

3. **Action Plan:**
   **Improve critical thinking skills**
   The Department of Behavioral Sciences will improve critical thinking, idea development, and interpretation skills.
   **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
   **Implementation Status:** In Progress
   **Priority:** High
   **Implementation Description:** The faculty will develop critical thinking tasks (interpretation, abstraction, application) in all department classes to improve critical thinking skills in psychology and sociology students.
   **Completion Date:** 10/31/2011
   **Responsible Person/Group:** Chair and faculty
   **Implementation Notes:**
   8/18/2011 Chair and faculty are working on strategies to improve critical thinking.

4. **Outcome: Communication Skills**
   Students in psychology and sociology will be able to communicate, express, and discuss complex major related concepts sufficiently.
   **Measure: Communication Skills**
   Completion of a final research manuscript and oral/poster presentations of their research projects in PY 480, Psychology Seminar, PY 490, Psychology Research Project, or SY 460, Methods of Social Research will demonstrate students’ ability to communicate complex major related concepts. (See the document repository for grading rubrics.)
   **Source of Evidence:** Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

1. **Achievement Target:**
   PY 480, Psychology Seminar: 70% on the overall score of the manuscript and presentation portion of the grading rubric
   PY 490, Psychology Research Project: 70% on the overall score of the manuscript and presentation portion of the grading rubric
   SY 460, Methods of Social Research: 70% on the overall score of the manuscript and presentation portion of the grading rubric
2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met

PY 480, Psychology Seminar: 100% of the students received an 80% or better on the presentation of the paper project.

PY 490, Psychology Research Project: 100% of the students received a 70% or better on the overall score of the manuscript and presentation portions of the grading rubric.

SY 460, Methods of Social Research: 57% received a 70% or better on the written presentation portion of their paper project.

3. Action Plan:

Improve written communication skills

The Department of Behavioral Sciences will improve written communication skills in Psychology and Sociology students.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

Implementation Status: In Progress

Priority: High

Implementation Description: The faculty in Psychology and Sociology will develop a department writing standard/expectations description to formalize expectations across all classes in Behavioral Sciences. In addition, the faculty will develop ways to place more emphasis on written work in all 300 and 400 level courses.

Completion Date: 01/08/2012

Responsible Person/Group: Chair and faculty

Implementation Notes:

8/18/2011 The department has created a draft of the writing standards and expectations. The chair will meet with the faculty to produce a final version by Spring 2012.

5. Outcome: Sociocultural and International Awareness

Students in Psychology and Sociology will show sufficient understanding of responsible citizenship, political issues, and ethnic relations.

a. Measure: Sociocultural and International Awareness

Generation of written assignments and projects addressing issues of responsible citizenship, political issues, and ethnic relations in PY 330, Social Psychology, and SY 312, Minority Relations will demonstrate an understanding of responsible citizenship, political issues, and ethnic relations. (See the document repository for grading rubrics.)

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

1. Achievement Target:

PY 330, Social Psychology: 70% on the social psychological theory application term paper grading rubric

SY 312, Minority Relations: 70% on the Minority Relations term paper grading rubric

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met

PY 330 Social Psychology: 95% of the students scored a 70% or better on the social psychological application term paper project.

SY 312 Minority Relations: 70% of the students scored a 70% or better on the Minority Relations term paper project.
3. **Action Plan:**

   **Improve sociocultural awareness**
   The instructors of PY 330, Social Psychology, and SY 312, Minority Relations, will develop strategies to increase sociocultural awareness.

   **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
   **Implementation Status:** In Progress
   **Priority:** High
   **Implementation Description:** The instructors of PY 330, Social Psychology, and SY 312, Minority Relations, will develop strategies to improve sociocultural awareness through additional projects, service learning, and research.
   **Completion Date:** 09/30/2011
   **Responsible Person/Group:** Chair and the instructors of PY 330, Social Psychology, and SY 312, Minority Relations.

   **Implementation Notes:** 8/18/2011 Chair met with Dr. Russ Davis to discuss ways to incorporate service learning, applied projects, and exercises that improve sociocultural awareness in Psychology and Sociology.

III. **Other Plans for Improvement**

   A. **Hire a Director of Internships to coordinate the growing MSCE-CP practicums and internships**
   Hire a Director of Internships to coordinate the growing MSCE-CP (online and on campus) program's counseling practicums, internships, curriculum, and licensure requirements.
   **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
   **Implementation Status:** In Progress
   **Priority:** Medium
   **Implementation Description:** Submit faculty staffing plan
   **Responsible Person/Group:** Dr. Mark Davis
   **Additional Resources Requested:** Salary = $65,000 (benefits include) and equipment $2000
   **Budget Amount Requested:** $67,000.00
   **Implementation Notes:** 7/15/2011 The Department of Behavioral Sciences continues to develop a request for a Director of Internships. Other options are also being discussed.

   B. **Hire an administrative assistant for Department**
   Hire an administrative assistant for the growing Department of Behavioral Sciences
   **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
   **Implementation Status:** On Hold
   **Priority:** High
   **Implementation Description:** Submit staffing plan
   **Responsible Person/Group:** Chair
   **Additional Resources Requested:** Salary = $28,250
   **Budget Amount Requested:** $28,250.00
   **Implementation Notes:** 7/15/2011 As the Department of Behavioral Sciences grows, the need for an administrative assistant will also grow. With the potential move to Spieth after the renovation of the dorms, the desire for an administrative assistant at the new location will be strong.
C. **Hire full-time Ph.D. in Social Work**
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: On Hold
   Priority: Low
   Implementation Description: Submit faculty staffing plan
   Responsible Person/Group: Chairperson
   Additional Resources Requested: Salary = $59,579 Equipment = $2,000
   Budget Amount Requested: $61,579.00
   Implementation Notes:
   7/15/2011 With the dual-degree program, the number of Social Work classes will be relatively low. The department will assess again after a year of the dual-degree program.

D. **Implementation of BSW program for Fall 2010**
   Implementation of BSW program for Fall 2010
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: Terminated
   Priority: High
   Implementation Description: New course offerings
   Completion Date: 08/16/2010
   Budget Amount Requested: $0.00
   Implementation Notes:
   7/15/2011 With the dual degree program with UA, the BSW program plan was dropped.

E. **Investigate new undergraduate and graduate programs in psychology**
   Investigate a possible undergraduate Counseling/Clinical track and an MSCE Psychology.
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: Planned
   Priority: Medium
   Implementation Description: Contact graduate school and set up committee to address needs and requirements
   Responsible Person/Group: Chair
   Budget Amount Requested: $0.00
   Implementation Notes:
   7/15/2011 The department chair met with his Dean and the incoming Dean of the Graduate School to discuss the possibility of a new MSCE in Psychology.

F. **Upgrade department technology**
   Upgrade department technology
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: In Progress
   Priority: Medium
   Implementation Description: Meet with faculty to assess major technology needs/upgrades.
   Responsible Person/Group: Chair and faculty
   Additional Resources Requested: Enough funds to purchase possible needs: classroom projectors (and supplies), classroom software, research equipment
   Budget Amount Requested: $2,500.00
   Implementation Notes:
   7/15/2011 Continue to meet with the faculty to assess the technological needs of the department.
IV. Analysis Answers

A. What specific strengths did your assessments show? (Strengths)
The assessments showed that the majority (50%+) of Psychology and Sociology students met department goals for theoretical knowledge, research methods, critical thinking, communication, and sociocultural awareness. Verbal communication skills are strong. Theoretical knowledge and critical thinking skills in Psychology seem to be strong.

B. What specific weaknesses or challenges did your assessments show? (Weaknesses)
The assessment shows that there are major weaknesses in research methods and written communication skills. Students' sociocultural awareness also needs to be improved.

C. What plans were implemented?
To improve writing skills, the department has a draft of a writing standard that contains the writing expectations for Psychology and Sociology students, along with resources to assist students. In addition, the Sociology faculty are developing a new 200 or 300 level course that will be used to develop and reinforce technical writing skills and research methods within Sociology. The Psychology and Sociology faculty are working to adjust the current program requirements to increase the exposure to and retention of research methods and theoretical material. Finally, the faculty are working to find ways to increase critical thinking skills. Each of these plans is ongoing, but the writing standard is closest to completion.

D. What plans were not implemented?
The plans not implemented were associated with the development of a BSW program. The school has abandoned the proposed BSW program in lieu of a dual-degree program with a nearby institution.

E. How will assessment results be used for continuous improvement?
The assessment data will be used to improve theoretical knowledge, research methods knowledge and skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills, and sociocultural awareness by having the faculty review the overall curriculum in each major and place added emphasis on areas of weakness. Ultimately, the department faculty will work to provide a solid introduction to the necessary material, provide reinforcement and enhancement of the key knowledge and skills gained in that introduction, and examine mastery of those skills in the capstone courses. If the achievement targets from the capstone courses are not met, the department will reassess the introduction, reinforcement, or examinations of mastery in the Psychology and Sociology programs.