Pedagogical Inquiry Grant Final Report:
Psychology Curriculum Evaluation and Development

1) **What was the outcome of your project and how did it align with your original goals as stated in your application?**

We generally stuck closely to our original plan, with an additional group meeting mid-summer to touch base on findings from individual work. See the following table for the status of our project outcomes, and additional notes.

Proposed outcome	**Status**	**Additional Notes**
Review and potentially revise department learning goals	Completed.	We will introduce new learning goals to the catalog this year.
Curricular Mapping through evaluation of syllabi in order to ID opportunities for better integration of goals	Completed.	We have an existing mapping based on categories of classes, and instructors indicated whether, and if so how, their courses met departmental learning goals. but did not dig into the details for each individual class as planned. We quickly came to the conclusion that 100- and 200-level courses were most important to address with regard to goals of scientific reasoning, given their role in preparing students for Research Methods and Thesis.
Comparative Program Analysis (peer institution evaluation; consultations with faculty in Div 3; review of literature on psyc curricular best practices + AB)	Completed.	The peer institution evaluation was quite detailed. Familiarity with science labs was helpful in thinking through how to structure our statistics lab. This also provided us with helpful information related to policies not covered in the PIG. Individual report summaries at the end of this document also highlight some of the outcomes from the literature review.
Survey of Alumni	In progress.	We ended up going through Institutional Research to use a survey that generally goes out with 10-year external reviews. This improved the survey and sampling process, but resulted in delays compared to our plans. We do not yet have data from this source, but once it is in we will return to it in at least one department meeting to consider what it means for our current plans.

Curriculum Revision and Development	Completed and in progress.	We made some changes on smaller scales. For instance, we came to an agreement about certain assignments that we will require for PSYC 110 and encourage for 200-level courses. We compiled resources to support this. Individual faculty also made other minor changes in individual courses based on the PIG work. We also came to an agreement on a plan for a change in our curriculum. Over the next year, we will create a full (3-hour) Statistics lab course to replace the current 50-minute course that only focuses on using statistical software. This lab will better prepare students for Research Methods and Thesis, and will be designed to be staffing-neutral compared to our current staffing.
Unplanned outcomes: Plans to provide better resources and support for students outside of classes	In progress.	We are developing a well-organized set of physical (Wall of Resources in Maxey) and electronic (Majors Canvas page) resources for students. Some of this work is simply bringing resources we already have to places where students can more easily engage with it. We will also be creating new resources (e.g., short videos of alumni). We will also change one of our normal majors socials during the year to provide better support for sophomores and juniors thinking about Thesis.

2) **What sense do you have at this point that your project has enhanced student learning and what will you be looking at in the future to know whether the project was successful?**

We're very optimistic that the project outcomes will enhance student learning, though the full impact–particularly in the Statistics lab–will take time to emerge. To assess its effectiveness, we will look at preparation for and performance in Research Methods and Thesis, which will help us understand how well this PIG supported the development of scientific inquiry skills. We will also examine Senior Narrative Assessments of the Major, where students reflect on their experience as a psychology major, for additional evidence of success. We made some changes to strengthen support for students' professional skills and their understanding of careers pathways in psychology. This support for future pathways is something that has come up (with mixed feedback) in past narrative assessments. Given the alignment of the PIG with our learning goals, yearly departmental assessments will provide good opportunities to ensure that we reflect on this question.

3) **What were the limitations or failings of this project, and how, in retrospect, might they have been better addressed or remedied?**

The largest limitation we encountered centered around staffing constraints. We quickly identified the ways in which a required lab for Intro and/or Research Methods would be beneficial for student learning. But, in order to offer those lab courses, we would need an additional FTE each year, which isn't feasible right now. So, we are not coming out of the PIG with as many changes to the curriculum as some of us had hoped. (On a positive note, though, we identified a lot of resources that could be used in non-lab classes to provide lab-like experiences. Those resources are now on our shared department drive and should be useful across a range of our 100- and 200-level classes.)

The second limitation centered around timing. Going into the PIG, we were excited to survey our alumni about their experiences at Whitman and their post-Whitman paths. We learned early on that because we are due for a 10-year external review soon, it made sense to fold our PIG survey in with the "standard" alumni review done by the Institutional Review staff. The folks in Institutional Review were great, but going back and forth about questions and design took slightly longer than we'd anticipated, and so although the survey has gone out, we haven't gotten the results yet. We'll spend time in department meetings analyzing that information once it comes in, but we unfortunately haven't been able to do that yet.

We don't have clear answers to whether limitations could have been better addressed or remedied in the future. The first limitation reflects a known constraint that was unlikely to change. For the second, we could have chosen to send out our own survey rather than going through Institutional Research. However, we felt it was worthwhile to use their resources and avoid the redundancy of a second survey to alumni within a short time.

4) **How do you envision sharing the results of your work with other colleagues at Whitman (or elsewhere)?**

We will share revised learning outcomes across the college through the catalog, in our syllabi, and on our department website. Students will also experience the outcomes of this work in various ways. They will take classes where we have changed assignments based on this work. We hope that within a year's time, they will see the results of this work in a more complete Statistics lab course. They'll have improved and more accessible resources on Canvas and in departmental spaces. While they will not know the *source* of curricular changes, the results of our work, in the form of assignments and instruction integrated in many classes across the major.

Individual Brief Reports
After our first meeting, we each took on individual tasks that would allow us to come together and meet the goals of the PIG. Here are brief descriptions of that work.

Melissa Clearfield: I researched the literature on Community Engaged Learning (CEL), including APA documents on undergrad curricula, peer-reviewed publications on the effectiveness of specific CEL experiences within and outside psychology, and reviewed multiple books on High Impact Practices and other institutional initiatives. Overall, CEL experiences in individual classes can be powerful and transformative, but they take a lot of effort from the professor, and are best done at schools with much more institutional support. Few undergrad schools require this experience, and if they do, it is at the level of the institution, not specific to psychology. Within psychology, these experiences are enjoyable but do not help students get into graduate school. Given this, individual faculty may include CEL in individual classes but the department will not adopt a CEL requirement for the major.

Pavel Blagov: I researched and compiled comparative data on the psychology curricula of 27 selective liberal arts colleges, including Whitman's peer institutions, to inform faculty discussion of how our program aligns with or diverges from those at other institutions. This work involved supervising a student research assistant funded by the grant, who contributed to data collection, coding, and analysis. I developed, drafted, and revised proposals for curricular modifications, including credit-hour and staffing models, sequencing requirements, and laboratory integration into introductory, statistics, and methods courses, when such integration becomes feasible. I estimated instructional resource needs and encouraged discussion of implementation pathways to support faculty adoption. As part of this effort, I compiled and refined a set of laboratory-style activities with corresponding assignments for faculty use, ensuring they are pedagogically rigorous and adaptable across course levels. I also produced a list of disciplinary skills aligned with professional standards in psychological science to inform the coordination of the departmental curriculum and the assessment of professional skills acquisition by students.

Erin Pahlke: I researched literature on scientific literacy. Through that search, I found several teaching resources, including things like plug-and-play modules, exercises to improve core skills like hypothesis writing, and activities well suited for specific sub-areas of psychology, like social and cognitive. I've made those resources available on our department drive. One big lesson from the literature is that scientific literacy topics need to be broken down into their core components; in effect, faculty need to work hard to slow down and emphasize the basics. Consistent with that approach, we as a department have recommitted to incorporating key scientific literacy skill building activities in our 100- and 200-level classes. I also worked on the alumni survey. Neal Christopherson was great about identifying what we needed to include and helping with the wording of questions. The survey went out in mid-August.

Matthew Prull: I compiled data from all psychology courses from 2015-2025. The data consisted of enrollments as a function of course cap, arrangement of fall/spring sections where appropriate (e.g., introduction to psychology, research methods), assignments of faculty members to various sections and foundation areas. Psychology courses have enjoyed high

levels of enrollment with most courses meeting or exceeding the course cap several times over the past 10 years. Enrollments have also maintained a high level of consistency across courses and across years, with small but noticeable enrollment declines in some courses around the time of the COVID lockdown. Faculty members reviewed and discussed these data in summer 2025 PIG meetings.

Steve Michael: I examined publications regarding our and APA's 5th learning goal–professional and career development for students. This research also included information on potential ways to assess Goal 5. This compiled information was part of the motivation for the unplanned outcome discussed in the last row of our table above (e.g., creation of a wall of resources, hopefully alumni videos).

Wally Herbranson: I researched material pertaining to current and recommended practices in Statistics education within psychology departments. Stats is an integral part of virtually all undergraduate programs, though the nature of stats education is evolving, with technology taking a larger role, and an emerging emphasis on skills like data management and coding. I then surveyed current practices in a collection of our peer institutions. All offered stats, and three clusters emerged, with Whitman aligning with the more rigorous schools having a two-course stats/methods sequence including a lab.

I also looked into the role of laboratory courses in psychology departments, again looking into recommended practices and surveying peer colleges. I found that lab courses are less common at smaller schools, but can play an important role at the undergraduate level, with labs most frequent in cognitive psychology and neuroscience classes. Among peer schools, not all offered labs, and some that offered them also required labs for the major. Again Whitman fit into the modal cluster that offered some lab courses, but did not require any for the major.

Nancy Day: My individual contributions consisted of providing perspective on how labs and lab spaces work–in the Natural Sciences and BB&C. Considering how labs function in relation to courses, was helpful in considering how our Statistics lab be structured in order to accomplish our goals.