**Mission:** The mission of the PhD program of the Department of Psychology is to produce professional scholars whose preparation will enable them to contribute significantly to the advancement of scientific psychological knowledge as well as effectively teach undergraduate and graduate students about the science of psychology. Some of these scholars may, in addition, be prepared to deliver psychological services.

**Program Characteristics and Structure:** The Psychology graduate program is a PhD program. Although students sometimes leave with a terminal MA, only students whose intended goal is the PhD are admitted. There are six separate training areas: Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience, Clinical, Cognition and Perception, Developmental Science, Health Psychology, and Personality and Social Psychology. Students are identified and recommended for admission by each area separately. The Committee on Graduate Studies (CGS), which is comprised of the six area coordinators and chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies, approves final admissions. Every student has a primary faculty mentor within their home training area, but most students conduct projects with multiple faculty members, often across multiple training areas. The department holds several weekly multi-area “brown-bag” meetings in which students and faculty present their research. There are cross-area topical reading groups, as well as a Departmental colloquium series that brings in outside speakers. These elements of the department all serve to integrate the graduate program across training areas. In addition, many of our faculty are principle members of multidisciplinary research centers that provide excellent training opportunities for graduate students beyond the department. Finally, a training clinic that is housed in the department (The Seashore Psychology Training Clinic) provides in-house clinical training.

In terms of national visibility, one can look to two sources of comparisons for Psychology graduate programs. One is the US News and World report poll, which indicates how programs are viewed by peer programs. Iowa was ranked 29th in the 2009 poll (up sharply from 47th in 2005), and 16th among public universities. The clinical program, which is ranked separately in this poll, was ranked 9th among all clinical psychology graduate programs. The other source is the National Research Council report. The most recent data from that source, however, are from 1993. Iowa was ranked 36th in that report. Given the changes in the graduate program since then and the sharp increases we have observed on other metrics of our national standing, we expect that our ranking will have changed when the new data are released.

It is important to note that the size of our graduate program is small relative to peer institutions. The ideal size of our graduate program results from the combination of the number of independent faculty researchers and the number of graduate students who can effectively be involved in each respective lab at a given time. Too few students means that the progress of the work is hindered and the opportunities for students in the lab to learn from each other is diminished. Too many students means that the major professor is unable to provide each student with the attention and direction needed. The optimal number varies from lab to lab depending on the particulars of the research conducted. Taking all of this into consideration, the ideal size of the graduate program given our current faculty size and our programmatic structure would be on the order of 100-110 students. (It currently stands at only 83). The Clinical Psychology area is particularly in need of growth in order to sustain critical mass and maintain its ranking as a top 10 program.

**Admission Process and Criteria:**

*Demand and recruitment*—We receive approximately 250 applications to our program each year. We require GREs, letters of recommendation, transcripts, statements of purpose, and writing samples. The training areas review relevant subsets of the applications, and make recommendations for approval by CGS to invite approximately 40-45 students for interviews. Following interviews, approximately 20-25 students are offered admission. About 50% of those admitted each year, enroll in the program.

*Criteria for selection and success in enrolling the highest quality students*—The average combined Verbal and Quantitative GRE scores for those students entering the program from 2002-07 was 1239, which is 224 points higher than the national average for Psychology programs, and 62 points higher than UI’s Social Science program average. GPAs were similarly strong. Scores are not, however, the primary focus of our admission criteria. Research experience, evidence of strong written and oral communication skills, high quality undergraduate environment, and evidence of an earnest understanding of the goals of our training program are all considered, together with scores in a holistic assessment of candidates.

According to recent American Psychological Association (APA) statistics, the national acceptance rate for US Psychology programs is 20% and the enrollment rate is 60%. Our acceptance rate is markedly more competitive at about 10% and our enrollment rate is slightly lower at about 50%. We tend to lose a substantial portion of our
highest-quality applicants despite being able to offer them Presidential Fellowships. Our Presidential “hit rate” is relatively low. From 2004-08, we were able to offer 30 students Presidential Fellowships, but enrolled only 8 (27%) of those students. This reflects the fact that truly outstanding individuals apply and are admitted to our program but eventually enroll in programs like those at Harvard, Stanford, and Yale. In addition to having name-brand appeal, those programs tend to offer financial packages that exceed those that we can offer even with the Presidential Fellowship program.

**Diversity of students**—Ethnic diversity is an important component of the training environment. Of the 83 graduate students currently enrolled in the program, 64% are women and 25% are non-Caucasian (10% of Hispanic descent, 10% Asian-Pacific, 4% African-American, and 1% Native American). Taking advantage of programs like the Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP) and the Dean’s Fellowship program has been successful in the past. Between 2004-2008, we enrolled 5 out of 7 (71%) students who were admitted with the offer of a Dean’s Fellowship. We seek to increase diversity further as we strive to increase recruitment success and program size more generally.

**Financial support**—Offers of admission always include financial support. Specifically, we commit to providing a living stipend (currently $16,575), fringe benefits, and tuition support for at least five years to every graduate student who remains in good standing in the program. This support comes in the form of research assistantships (RAs), individual Fellowships, and teaching assistantships (TAs). 34% of our current 83 students are supported on grant-funded RAs. 10% have National Fellowships from NSF, NIH, or APA. 9% are supported by University Presidential or Dean’s Fellowships, and 27% are supported on TAs. The remaining students are supported on departmental RAs, are on funded internships, or are otherwise off campus.

**Program Outcomes:**

**Degree Completion and time-to-degree (TTD)**—The median time to PhD for students entering the program between 1996-2000 was 6.2 years. 32% of the students from that cohort left the program without a PhD. TTD varies across training areas. The Clinical area, for example, requires a year-long internship, which tends to increase time-to-degree relative to other areas. Our attrition rate is lower than the average across the Social Sciences, but it is high enough that strategies for reducing it will be included as a focus in strategic discussions regarding recruiting that are planned for the coming year.

**Fellowships, awards, honors, and publications**—Our students excel in this area. We currently have 16 students holding National (e.g., from NIH and NSF) or University Fellowships. One student even received an NIH R03 grant, which is a mechanism designed for faculty PIs. Each year, our students receive awards from national and international organizations recognizing their research. Our students also do very well in garnering University level awards. Over the period of 2004-2008, 17 of our students were awarded Graduate College summer Fellowships and 9 received Ballard Seashore Fellowships. In addition, last year our students received the Spriesterbach Dissertation Prize, 3 Council on Teaching Outstanding TA awards, multiple Jakobson Conference awards, and the Barkan Outstanding Graduate Student Mentor Award. The student who won the Spriesterbach Prize went on to receive the National Council of Graduate Schools Distinguished Dissertation Award. As the fifth University of Iowa student to win that singular national award, she helped Iowa surpass Yale as the institution to have received this award most often. Almost all of our students give presentations at national meetings at least once a year. Collectively they published 98 1st authored peer-reviewed papers and were authors on 114 additional papers over the past two academic years.

**Placement**—Our primary goals for student placement are tenure-track academic positions and research institute positions. These goals often require that students initially complete a 1-3 year post-doc. Of the 46 students who received their PhDs between 2003-2008, 52% secured post-docs (52%) and 28% secured tenure-track positions immediately upon leaving the program. Thus 80% of these students went to positions that fall within our primary goals for placement. Another 14% were placed in non tenure-track teaching positions. None reported being unemployed. For that same cohort, 50% currently hold tenure-track positions, and 20% are still post-docs (these are primarily the students who graduated most recently). Thus, an additional 22% of our students obtained a tenure-track placement following their post-docs. Improved placement, both in the percentage of those students who ultimately secure tenure-track positions and in the quality of the institutions in which they receive those position is a focus for improvement, as we discuss below.

**Other Program Characteristics:**

**Strengths**—To a significant degree the strengths of our graduate program derive from the strength and reputations of the research programs of our individual faculty and their commitment to training the next generation of scholars. Iowa Psychology faculty edit eleven of the field’s main journals. We have multiple chartered members of NIH review panels. We brought in almost $5 million in extramural funding, which is second only to Physics in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. A sizable portion of that grant money is used
to support graduate students. As a training philosophy, we believe that our program’s consistent and systematic focus on the attainment of professional research skills and on the development of each student’s individualized program of research within the context of an intellectually stimulating environment is central to our program outcomes.

There are also many specific strengths to our program. The structure of distinct training areas with permeable boundaries is attractive to prospective students and works well for those who enroll. Students have many opportunities to work with multiple faculty members both within the department and across the University, and they take advantage of those opportunities. Our Clinical and Health students, for example, regularly conduct multidisciplinary research with faculty in the Carver College of Medicine and the College of Public Health. Our commitment to 5 years of financial support is a clear draw for prospective students. Students are provided with opportunities for developing teaching skills through TA-ships and summer teaching. They gain administrative experience by serving on the Graduate Student Advisory Committee, a standing committee that represents the graduate students within the department, or by serving on various ad hoc departmental committees, including faculty searches.

The outcomes of the program are the surest indicators of the collective effectiveness of our strengths. The publication rate of our students is extremely high, the awards that they receive are outstanding, and most of them secure positions as post-docs or tenure-track faculty upon leaving the program.

Weakness and Opportunities—As noted above, the size of our graduate program is small relative to peer institutions and given our programmatic objectives. We would like to increase the size of the program by 20%-25% over the next few years. Doing so will allow us to better insure a rich and diverse training curriculum and to maintain the “critical mass” of trainees within faculty laboratories and the program as a whole to promote professional socialization and peer learning. It is important to note that there is currently a great deal of dependence on high levels of continuing external support to fund graduate students. While as a faculty we have been remarkably successful in this regard in recent years, given the vulnerability of research funding to the vagaries of economics and politics, establishing and growing other modes of support (e.g., increased fellowship funding, increased TA lines) will be central to incrementally growing our graduate program.

A second opportunity for enhancement of our program in coming years will be to improve the placements of our recent PhD graduates. Although most of our students are being placed well initially, we would like to see more move from their post-docs to tenure-track positions. In addition, although several of our recent tenure-track placements are excellent (e.g., Vanderbilt University, University of Wisconsin, Madison, University of Oregon), many are at satellite campuses of state Universities and smaller schools where the teaching load is high and the time and resources for research are relatively low. We would like to increase the number of our students who are ultimately placed in Research I institutions.

Finally, we strive to increase the recruitment success of our graduate program with the goal of increasing our enrollment rate from 50% to 75%. In the coming year the department will be convening a series of discussions on ways to enhance our recruitment of the top graduate applicants in our discipline. Likely keys to meeting this goal that will be discussed will include further augmentation of the financial support packages we are able to offer prospective students through an even more aggressive pursuit of internal and extramural graduate funding opportunities. Strategies for more proactive recruitment of the most highly qualified prospective students and for the targeted recruitment of ethnically diverse graduate applicants including efforts to better market and publicize the unique and compelling qualities of our training environment and department will also be discussed. An enhanced internet presence, increased use of direct peer contacts to help identify prospective students, and further interfacing with “opportunity programs” such as SROP can all play a vital role.

Conclusions: The Psychology Graduate Program at the University of Iowa has a long and prominent history, and it is currently ranked among the best in the country. The training of the next generation of psychology scholars has been, and with the support of our institution will continue to be, an important part of our Departmental legacy. Our students are highly productive, highly successful in national competitions for awards, both adulatory and financial, and they secure excellent positions upon finishing their degrees. The department is known for multiple strong specific areas of expertise, while being supportive of multidisciplinary research. We aspire to galvanize these existing strengths and realize even more of their potential by jump-starting the cycle of visibility begets greater visibility in the context of graduate training. We have identified several specific goals and strategies including increasing the size of the graduate program, increasing our success at enrolling a greater proportion of the most qualified and diverse segment of the applicant pool, and moving toward the even more successful placement of our recent graduates.