

## 2. Strategic Vision (from 2017-18 APR)

### 2.1 Overview

#### GOALS

**Goal 1:** Strategic Hiring to Build Research Visibility & Competitiveness

**Goal 2:** Continuing to Improve Undergraduate Education

**Goal 3:** Further Focus on Diversity and Inclusion

**Goal 4:** Graduate Opportunities & Enhancing Research Excellence

Psychology is a hub discipline that is characterized by a high degree of interdisciplinarity and influence on other fields. Our Department epitomizes this notion with its valuable connections spanning the natural and social sciences, neural and biomedical sciences, engineering, business, law and policy, and humanities (e.g., history, language). As a hub discipline, Psychology will continue to be critical for addressing complex problems that face the citizens of Nebraska and the world. That is, an integrative understanding of human behavior is crucial for addressing complex world problems, such as identifying sources of disparity and discrimination and protecting the environment to addressing individual concerns such as health and wellbeing. Psychology embraces the Core Values adopted by UNL in 2006. These values inform our decisions as we strive to excel in our missions of teaching, research, and engagement. Sustained efforts to meet this vision of excellence will provide our students with the education and experiences required to prepare them to enter the work force and meet the challenges of a competitive and global economy. The following goals reflect our continuing efforts to meet these entwined missions of teaching, research, and engagement to the best of our ability given the resources that have been entrusted to our care. As with our missions, these goals are interrelated; investing in one will strengthen others. Progress towards these goals will build on our current successes, as well as allow us to more effectively leverage our strengths and resources to help our Dean and Chancellor meet their goals in research, recruitment, retention, and diversity.

### 2.2 Strategic Hiring to Build Research Visibility & Competitiveness (Goal 1)

**Rationale:** The current program areas – Clinical, Developmental, Law-Psychology, Social and Cognitive, and Neuroscience and Behavior – are sub-disciplines of psychology that form the backbone of our undergraduate and graduate education and research programs. Graduate recruitment and training occur in all program areas. A critical mass of faculty in each of these areas is needed if we are to be more visible, competitive, and interdisciplinary in our research, both within the Department and across units within the College and University. Currently, gaps in faculty expertise mean that faculty members must find expertise outside of UNL that should be present in house. Although such collaborations are encouraged and supported, they also mean external support for some research ideas are never pursued and, when they are, resources are leaving the University. The foundational nature of developmental, cognitive, social, neuroscience and behavior, and clinical psychology is demonstrated by the structure of psychology departments across the Big10. All departments have designated programs or a strong faculty presence in each of these areas. Furthermore, APA accreditation for clinical psychology graduate programs requires coursework in “discipline-specific areas” including social, cognitive, physiological, and developmental psychology. Recent faculty departures have resulted in critical losses to three foundational areas: Developmental, Social, and Cognitive, leaving three or fewer core faculty members in each area, which is not enough to support undergraduate and graduate education or maintain thriving research programs and collaborations within and across these areas. Law-Psychology has also suffered losses through these faculty departures, as well as reassignment of faculty to administrative roles. The situation is most critical in developmental, which has experienced four unanswered faculty losses in the past ten years. The Social and Cognitive program has also suffered key losses. We recognize and agree that loss of a faculty member should not necessarily prompt rehiring in that area. Indeed, we are not proposing to hire in these core area in a manner that parallels the losses. Rather, we propose to hire in the core areas in a manner that fills gaps in research expertise, builds on existing strengths, and leverages recent investments from the Department, College, and University. In doing so, we will also successfully shore-up the foundational areas in the Department so that our nearly 1,000 majors receive a high quality education without delays or bottlenecks and we can meet our commitments and goals in graduate education. On this latter point, the survey of current graduate students support this need. The perceived frequency (Mean=2.32) and variety (Mean=2.62) of course offerings is down from the 2010 and 2003

APR. Although part of this may be the product of our steps to ensure temporal efficiencies in offering courses, some of the decrease reflects the gaps in expertise to teach key graduate classes with regularity.

**Approach:** To fill critical gaps in expertise and build research competitiveness, we envision a cluster hire that would roll out over 2 to 3 years (see inset image). In a series of stakeholder and department meetings, we identified specific gaps in expertise that are currently holding us back, as well as specific lines to fill these gaps. These hires would bring crucial expertise that connects existing programs of research, forming research nodes that would expand UNL’s research competitiveness and visibility. The cluster hire would support core areas in psychology, as well as create linkages both within the department and across campus boosting research capacity and supporting successful competitive graduate training programs. Five positions are proposed in the cluster hire of Assistant Professors: funding all of these positions will create synergy among the people we hire and with existing labs and initiatives inside and outside the Department. The following descriptions provide additional rationale and context for the proposed hires.



### Cluster Hiring Plan

**Development of Executive Function (Assistant Professor).** Executive function comprises a set of cognitive processes that allow individuals to regulate their attention, emotions, and behavior in line with their goals; these processes are fundamental to goal-directed behavior and self-control. In recent years, research on executive function has expanded rapidly and demonstrated pivotal connections to a broad array of cognitive and learning processes, social behaviors, and clinical conditions. Furthermore, developmental processes make critical contributions to human behavior across the life-span, and developmental research fosters an understanding of malleable factors that can inform early interventions to improve future health and well-being. For this reason, all of the Big 10 universities have a visible developmental psychology program and a strong developmental presence. Faculty departures and retirements (4 unanswered losses over the past 10 years) have depleted departmental resources in this vital area and created gaps in expertise that need to be addressed to maintain research competitiveness and strong graduate and undergraduate training. Although we currently have expertise in spatial cognition, brain functioning, and risk behavior, a hire in executive function would boost these research programs and fill a critical gap in developmental expertise in basic processes that underlie many areas of human functioning across the life-span. This individual could also contribute to multiple programs within our department (clinical psychology, cognitive psychology, behavioral neuroscience, law and psychology, and social psychology) as well as other UNL units (e.g., Center for Brain, Biology, and Behavior; Substance Abuse and Violence Initiative; Nebraska Athletic Performance Lab; Minority Health Disparities Initiative; College of Education and Human Sciences; Center for Children, Youth, Families and Schools). Currently, there is exciting work in developmental psychology on cognition, self-regulation, and risk behavior, and complementary research in other programs including cognitive psychology (attention, long-term memory), neuroscience (emotion), social psychology (emotion and decision making), law and psychology (decision making, long-term memory), and clinical psychology (emotion regulation, executive function and substance use). Expertise in executive function would create research synergies among multiple researchers within the department and across the university, increasing our visibility and competitiveness for external funding.

**Working Memory (Assistant Professor).** Working memory is one of the most important influences on goal-directed behavior in addition to interacting with a variety of other critical cognitive processes such as attention/perception, long-term memory, spatial memory, decision making and language processing/development. Moreover, working memory research has blossomed across a variety of areas given the importance of working memory function to both normal and abnormal development. As a result, all of the Big 10 universities have a visible cognitive psychology program and a strong cognitive presence, often with numerous faculty who investigate working memory in some form. Faculty retirements and departures have depleted the

department's cognitive core (in addition to not having hired in this area over the last 10 years) and though we currently have faculty experts in attention/perception and long-term memory, a hire in working memory would help to strengthen the connections between our existing research programs in addition to filling in a critical gap in our expertise. Strengthening our cognitive core is necessary to maintain research visibility and competitiveness as well as to provide strong graduate and undergraduate training in this foundational area of psychology. Moreover, this individual could intersect with a variety of units both within our department (working memory function is highly relevant to clinical psychology and assessment, behavioral neuroscience, law and psychology, social psychology, and developmental psychology) and more broadly to other University units and initiatives (e.g. Center for Brain, Biology, and Behavior; Substance Abuse and Violence Initiative; Nebraska Athletic Performance Lab; College of Education and Human Sciences). Currently, some of the most exciting new work in cognitive psychology involves the combination of both behavioral and neuroscience approaches to determine how working memory ability develops and subsequently impacts other processes. Through our recent hiring efforts, we have begun to enhance our neuroscience expertise but additional expertise in working memory (particularly an individual adopting a behavioral approach), would boost existing research programs and funding in the department and provide a point of convergence for multiple researchers and research programs within and across departments.

**Social Psychology of Aggression (Assistant Professor).** Social processes make critical contributions to human behavior and social psychological research fosters an understanding of situational and individual factors that can inform outcomes related to health, education, law, and conflict. For this reason, all of the Big 10 universities have a visible social psychology program. There are critical gaps in social psychological expertise (e.g., due to lack of hiring in this area in the past 10 years) that are necessary to maintain research visibility and competitiveness as well as provide strong graduate and undergraduate training in this foundational area of psychology. Currently, there is much exciting work in psychology involving aggression, including two recent psychology hires (one jointly appointed with Women and Gender Studies who examines sexual assault and another jointly appointed with Ethnic Studies who examines health disparities and trauma). Furthermore, this position is being conceptualized as part of a cluster hire that would connect to psychology and behavior from cognitive, developmental, law-psych, and quantitative perspectives. Additional expertise in social psychology of aggression would enhance existing research programs and provide synergy to multiple researchers within the department and across the university for ground-breaking discoveries, increasing the prominence of the department and pursuit of external funding. The candidate could examine (a) when, why, or how people perpetrate aggression, (b) cognitive, affective, and/or behavioral consequences of aggression, and/or (c) social perception, cognition, and decision-making processes regarding aggression. Possible research topics include, but are not limited to harassment, physical or sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, bullying, child or elder maltreatment, hate or bias crimes, micro-aggressions, social justice and violence, terrorism, juvenile delinquency, alcohol and aggression, or violence-related trauma (e.g., PTSD, concussions). The ideal candidate would bring expertise in social psychological theories, methodologies, and/or analyses that complements current faculty expertise. The successful candidate will connect to one or more department strengths, including substance use and trauma; health and behavior; child/adolescent behavior; and psychology and the law, and would be a valuable contributor to multidisciplinary research efforts involving multiple units on campus such as the Minority Health Disparities Initiative; Social and Behavioral Sciences Research Consortium, Center for Brain, Biology, and Behavior; Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools; Center for Children, Families, and the Law; Public Policy Center, or Substance Abuse and Violence Initiative.

**Legal Aspects of Child or Adolescent Psychology (Assistant Professor).** The position is for a research psychologist specializing in child or adolescent legal issues, from either a forensic or experimental perspective. Possible areas of interest include, but are not limited to: youth violence, with an emphasis on either perpetrators or victims; bullying; juvenile justice; community psychology; children in the legal system, as victims of or witnesses to violence; and health issues among offenders or victims. Qualifications for this position include a Ph.D. in psychology or equivalent and a record of achievement in scholarship and teaching. Responsibilities include maintaining an active research program, including pursuit of external funding; supervision of graduate students; and teaching graduate and undergraduate courses. The successful candidate will be affiliated with multiple departmental programs (e.g., law-psychology and developmental, social and cognitive, clinical, or neuroscience and behavior) and also connect to one or more of a variety of department strengths that cut across individual programs, including trauma and violence, health and behavior, child/adolescent development, neuroscience, and psychology and law. This person would also likely be a valuable contributor to multidisciplinary research efforts involving multiple units on campus, such as the College of Education and Human Sciences; College of Law; Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools; Center on Children, Families and the Law; the Buffett Early Childhood Institute; the Substance Abuse and Violence Initiative; and the Public Policy Center.

**Quantitative Methods (Assistant Professor).** Building a team of faculty with advanced quantitative expertise is necessary for maintaining our status as a competitive and highly visible psychology department. Specifically, this allows for (a) recruitment of the best and brightest graduate students, (b) ensuring that graduate students are competitive for positions in top academic and private sectors following graduation, and (c) maintaining the department's high level of research productivity and excellent record of obtaining external funding. Further, as funding agencies continue to increase their expectations for more rigorous data analytic approaches, there is a growing need for faculty with expertise in quantitative methods to serve as a statistical co-PI on federal grants. Without a comprehensive team of faculty with proficiencies in a range of analytic methods, PIs will be forced to search outside of the College and University to fill gaps in methodological expertise. The ideal candidate will contribute to existing initiatives (e.g., CB3, SBSRC, SAVI, MHDI, Research Data Center) and complement the Department's current areas of expertise in quantitative methods (e.g., structural equation modeling, multilevel modeling). Preference will be given to candidates who also have expertise in cutting edge methodologies (e.g., network analysis, Bayesian methods, big data analytics) and fit with the goals of the cluster hire.

## 2.3 Continuing to Improve Undergraduate Education (Goal 2)

Our department values undergraduate teaching and research, and it shows in the numerous teaching awards that have been won by our faculty. In addition, we won the 2010 University-wide Department Teaching Award, which is a prestigious system-wide award, given to one department across all four University of Nebraska campuses (i.e., Lincoln, Omaha, Kearney, Medical Center). Of course, we recognize that there is always room for improvement, and we have made significant efforts since our last APR to enhance the undergraduate education that we provide, some of which are discussed next.

**Recent Efforts:** As discussed earlier, one of the issues raised in the 2010 self-study was that our advising resources were inadequate given the large number of majors. Since 2010, our advising staff has grown from one to three master's level advisors and the advising office has been expanded and renovated to accommodate the increase. Another significant change has been to revamp and update the requirements for the Major. These requirements had not been substantively altered for decades and had evolved an unwieldy complexity with notable gaps in educating our students. In brief, we simplified the Major requirements, required all majors to take 200-level courses in the basic content domains of psychology (biological, cognitive, developmental, social, and methods), and enhanced student choice by increasing the number of upper division electives required. Other recent efforts include: (i) establishing the Psyched Up! Learning Community, in which first year psychology students (often high-risk for retention) enroll in some shared courses, have access to a knowledgeable upper-class student mentor, and work with a faculty sponsor; (ii) creating a Department Twitter account (@UNLPsych) to facilitate communication of topics relevant to students and others interested in psychology; (iii) switching from Blackboard to Canvas to provide a more user-friendly interface for course content, and to enhance assessment and communication with students; (iv) Finally, we have experienced some growth in faculty (32 vs. 28; see earlier) since the last APR site visit. This growth in faculty that includes three Assistant Professors of Practice, whose primary duty is undergraduate teaching, has allowed us to keep up with the increase in Majors, Minors, and SCHs. Without such growth and hiring priorities, an already stretched-too-thin-faculty would not have been able to offer the rotation of course offerings needed by our students for a timely graduation. Of course, to make further progress, we cannot slide backward and, if we are to achieve the goals outlined herein for teaching, research, and diversity, we must continue to hire strategically.

**Strategies moving forward:** Going forward, we have identified three main strategies to further improve an already outstanding undergraduate educational experience in Psychology.

**1)** To ensure that we have the capacity to teach the basic content domains in psychology, we need to hire faculty with specialties in developmental, social, and cognitive psychology (see Section 2.2). New hires in these areas will provide us with much needed depth for teaching our 200-level core courses, help to meet the demands of our upper-level elective course offerings, and provide additional undergraduate research opportunities. Further, despite the budgetary issues of the State, the University has aggressive plans to continue to grow enrollment. Although a goal of 35,000 was set by the new Chancellor, the actual target

is being reconsidered in the ongoing University strategic planning process. Regardless, the cluster hire described in Section 2.1 will allow us to meet the inevitable growth that will follow in Psychology, as well as to engage more proactively to help meet University and College goals.

**2)** To better prepare our students for the workforce, we have identified specific priorities to increase career/post-graduate school readiness of our undergraduates. We would like to increase internship opportunities for students. The existence of a more formalized internship program would help drive recruitment of new undergraduates and contribute to the University's goal of increased enrollment. Such pre-professional experiences can also be crucial in choosing a career. One part of this plan would be to better organize our internship offerings, as well to develop a course to help integrate students' internship and academic experiences. We have also discussed the possibility of creating a 400-level career course to help students to identify employment options and develop career materials such as resumes, cover letters, as well as job search and interview skills. Finally, as detailed earlier, a significant portion of our undergraduates are involved in research. We are considering plans to further enhance undergraduate research experience by creating a better sense of community in this cohort. This could take the form of providing a venue to share stories about faculty research and undergraduate research involvement and success. The Undergraduate Psychology Organization (UPO) and Psi Chi do some of this task and may provide a starting point for enhancing this aspect of the undergraduate educational experience. The extent of progress here will depend on our ability to identify faculty and advisor time, either reallocated or new, to focus efforts on this goal. \*\*

**3)** We discussed approaches to increasing student engagement, which has been shown to increase retention. Such approaches include: (i) increase utilization of MyPlan, which is a system that faculty can use to send "flags" or "kudos" for academic performance and to make referrals for students who need additional resources; (ii) try not to further increase the size of our 300-400 upper-level courses (average=56.2; median=39; range=15 to 185; data from Fall 2016); (iii) increase opportunities for community involvement; (iv) develop faculty led student abroad opportunities; (v) enhance departmental social media engagement; (vi) provide department activities for undergraduate students (e.g., pizza party for honors students and mentors; events for under-represented students interested in graduate school) to foster a sense of community.

\*\*In the development of this Vision and the recognition of the goal to attract new students to the UNL, we discuss the possibility of developing a Neuroscience major. In the end, we developed a potential plan for adding three "tracks" (called Options) in the Psychology Major that will allow students to concentrate on a specific area to enhance their readiness for the workforce and/or further education/training. These Options are Psychological Sciences, Clinical & Human Services, and Neuroscience. This possibility is discussed in the Opportunities and Challenges section.

## 2.4 Further Focus on Diversity and Inclusion (Goal 3)

**Recent efforts:** The University of Nebraska core beliefs on diversity and inclusion state, "true excellence requires that each individual be able to work and learn in an atmosphere of respect, dignity, and acceptance. Our commitment requires each of us to continuously ensure our interactions be respectful, protect free speech and inspire academic freedom." The Department unequivocally supports and advances each of these core values. As evidence, we have met or exceeded all of the prior goals for enhancing diversity and inclusion during the previous APR. We have maintained regular instruction of six courses that focus almost exclusively on diversity-related issues at the graduate and undergraduate level [Psyc 310 (Psychology of Immigration), 330 (Psychology of Diversity), 421 (Psychology of Gender), 425 (Psychology of Racism), 976 (Psychology of Race & Ethnicity), 979 (Cultural Diversity in Psychology)]. We have completed joint hires with the Institute for Ethnic Studies and with Women's and Gender Studies. These hires have expanded the diversity of our faculty and the already substantial diversity-related research conducted by the Department. As of the 2017 Fall Semester, our department of 32 faculty will include five faculty members whose research focuses primarily on diversity issues and an additional eight faculty whose research also addresses such issues. Spanning more than 250 peer-reviewed publications, this research covers an impressive range of diversity-related topics including,



race, ethnicity, culture, LGBTQ populations, gender, and age. This expertise is reflected in our success with the McNair Scholars Program, as we have provided a home for approximately 17% of all McNair Scholars at UNL. Finally, through applied foci of this research and partnerships with local non-profits, we continue to improve the lives of underserved populations in Lincoln and across the State. Thus, our commitment to diversity and inclusion is seen across teaching, research, and service domains.

**Strategies moving forward:** As the Department has made measurable strides to enhance diversity and inclusion, several additional areas have been identified as key targets for continued improvement over the next several years. Working toward these targets is key to keeping pace with other Big10 institutions and making ourselves distinctive as a program that promotes diversity in all domains.

**1)** We will continue to improve instruction on diversity-related teaching methods. We recently received a Dean's Instructional Improvement grant to promote pedagogical strategies that directly address improving multicultural competency in our graduate instruction in classroom teaching and facilitate faculty members' efforts to increase multicultural material in their own classes. First, the graduate course in teaching methods (Psyc 974) will be reworked to better prepare students for teaching in a multicultural environment, including incorporating that perspective in their syllabi and teaching philosophy statements. Second, through teaching circles (small group discussions about teaching we have used successfully in the past), we will assist individual faculty to integrate multicultural material into their course and to create a positive learning environment for the diverse student body in our classes. The grant has an assessment of outcomes built in the procedure that includes student climate surveys. Indeed, this was identified as an area of need by current graduate students. To this end, we will consult with other departments who have enacted similar measures to ensure best practices in implementing assessment strategies. Through this assessment, we aim to continue improving our departmental culture regarding diversity and inclusion in the classroom. As a result, we anticipate that both inter-departmental dialogue and student climate assessments will continue beyond the award period. Looking forward, we hope these combined efforts become resourced for continually refining our ability to welcome students from all backgrounds.

**2)** We want to enhance recruitment and retention of graduate students from underrepresented backgrounds in academia. As highlighted elsewhere, we recruit and train highly competent and competitive researchers, clinicians, and instructors through our graduate program. Ensuring adequate representation of students from underrepresented groups throughout the training pipeline (application, recruitment, retention, and graduation) remains a challenge. One of our first efforts to bolster recruitment will be to enhance our web presence for diversity issues (e.g., diversity enhancement committee website or student profiles). Additionally, we will seek to increase recruitment and retention efforts with campus offices and groups that serve underrepresented students. Further, we acknowledge that financial barriers in graduate school application, interviewing, and education disproportionately impact students from underrepresented backgrounds. As a first step, we will examine options and develop partnerships to defray the cost of applying for underrepresented students. A second step will explore the feasibility of a diversity recruitment weekend, modeled after the University of North Carolina's Diversifying Clinical Psychology Weekend. Such efforts would likely help to diversify our recruitment pool and ultimately the graduate student body in our Department; this may have a broader impact across the University. In addition to these efforts, we recognize that the Department's climate of inclusivity may have a large influence on an individual's decision to both attend and remain in our training program. As stated in the previous target, we propose conducting repeated self-assessment of the department's climate among graduate students in order to identify additional support and retention strategies for students from marginalized and underrepresented backgrounds. At the undergraduate level, we propose regular communication and presentation at events held by the Jackie Gaughan Multicultural Center and OASIS. We will also continue our faculty participation and leadership in Husker Dialogues, a University level event to promote inclusion among new students.

**3)** Consistent with earlier Goal 2, we will work to promote graduate and undergraduate research on diversity topics. We have already established research recognition awards for graduate and

undergraduate students who complete studies on diversity-related topics. We propose to expand on this approach by creating ongoing public recognition of diversity research accomplishments. This will occur through posting student publications on bulletin boards, as well as through increasing visibility of accomplishments on various media outlets (e.g., Department website, Twitter, etc.). We are also seeking to acknowledge outstanding efforts of graduate students who publish diversity-related research as a senior author in peer-reviewed journals. Ideally, we could identify funds (e.g., donations, partnerships with community agencies) to provide additional research funds for such successes. These funds would serve the dual purposes of recognizing the student who achieves this goal and furthering their research. This strategy may encourage further student driven diversity-related research. Finally, we will work with program area coordinators and directors to add a diversity components to a milestone project (e.g., Masters, comprehensive exams) in which students must evidence an understanding of how human diversity may impact the scientific assumptions and outcomes within their studies. In sum, these activities bolster the Department's reputation as distinctive in training high-quality, diversity-aware researchers.

4) We will build on recent successes and continue to expand on opportunities for our diversity-focused researchers to receive recognition for their work and further secure external research funds. Internally, we will create a diversity-research group that can work with ORED and other entities (e.g., SBSRC, MHDI) to identify funding opportunities, on-campus collaborations, community partnerships, and internal and external awards. This working group will have a standing member on the Awards and Recognition Committee that we propose to create as part of our overall strategy to enhance Department visibility (see Goal 4). This group can also provide news-worthy items to the College and beyond for publicity. One area of immediate impact for funding would be to emphasize the importance of diversity supplements for those who have NIH funding. Developing a culture and a streamlined process for actively pursuing such supplements will ensure continued impact and will further enhance our efforts to recruit and train students from underrepresented backgrounds. Of course, continuing our mentoring practices as well as supporting professional development opportunities that include participation in grant writing workshops and meeting with program officers at funding agencies will be important.

5) Finally, we propose to maintain our significant efforts toward enhancing diversity over the previous review period. To that end, we propose continuing to: (i) identify potential joint hires with other departments with diversity foci, (ii) link faculty with programs at UNL that promote diversity-focused research (e.g., MHDI), and (3) solidifying community partnerships through which department members have directly improved the lives of those in Lincoln and surrounding communities.

## 2.5 Graduate Opportunities & Enhancing Research Excellence (Goal 4)

**Recent efforts:** As detailed in other sections of this self-study, we have made a number of recent changes that will begin to translate in the coming years to enhanced research productivity and visibility. For example, starting in the Fall Semester of 2017 (at the time of this site visit), research active faculty will have for the first year a base teaching load (3 courses per year) on par with many psychology departments at Research I universities, especially our Big10 colleagues to which we are often compared. Of course, we are well-below the average size psychology department in the Big10 (48.7 faculty; MD=47), still leaving us at a competitive disadvantage given that our smaller numbers mean we have significant gaps in expertise and greater difficulty developing depth in various content areas (see Disciplinary Comparison information in Section 4). Other changes include efficiencies in teaching assignments, recent hiring of exceptionally talented faculty members, significant investments in start-up and bridge funds, and an increase in professional development funds available to faculty that was also extended to include advanced trainees such as post-docs and research professors in the Department.

**Strategies moving forward:** Our graduate programs are critical to our success and productivity as a Department. Strong graduate programs are also essential for advancing our research mission, including our goal to enhance research excellence through increased productivity and visibility at the national and

international level. As described below, we have identified several ways in which graduate education and research excellence can be fostered in the Department in a manner that takes advantage of the recent investments and efforts.

**1)** Increasing paper and grant submissions is among the most tangible ways to enhance our research productivity and boost national visibility. We plan to achieve this through a variety of strategies. For example, we have discussed holding grant workshops for faculty and graduate students. In contrast to more generic grant writing workshops, these trainings would be presented by senior faculty in the Department or outside psychologists, and tailored toward specific funding mechanisms within agencies such as NSF, NIH, etc. Other strategies for boosting research productivity include forming journal clubs to build collaborations, initiating friendly writing competitions between labs, and establishing a common workspace where faculty and students can exchange ideas and engage in joint writing. The overarching goal of these strategies will be to further build and strengthen the culture of research productivity that currently exists in the Department.

**2)** In addition to strategies that directly increase research productivity, we have also identified ways to enhance graduate training opportunities. These will not only benefit graduate students, but also contribute to the Department's overall research goals. Addressing the need for additional funded TA positions and increased stipends for graduate students is a key to achieving this goal. Securing more TA positions from upper administration would allow programs to admit more students, which would in turn boost overall research productivity. Moreover, we know from applicants that our stipend levels are below that of many institutions we compete with for graduate students (N.b. These are not necessary Big10 institutions and they vary by program area). Increasingly, we are losing our top choice students to these competitors. Also, as noted earlier, the current graduate student survey identified this as a significant issue. Larger stipends would help us attract and retain more top-tier applicants. Finally, hiring more faculty and advanced trainees (postdocs and research assistant professors) would boost overall research productivity and spark synergies in the Department as described in Section 2.2 (Goal 1).

**3)** One specific initiative we recently discussed is pursuing a grant from the Graduate Psychology Education (GPE) program. As the only federally funded program for the training of psychologists, GPE is geared toward the education and training of doctoral-level psychologists to work with underserved populations. We believe we could compete well for these awards, which would increase training resources, visibility, and productivity, as well as bolster our success in achieving our diversity and inclusion goals outlined in Section 2.4 (Goal 3).

**4)** Finally, although our faculty and graduate students have competed successfully for a variety of awards over the years, we will enhance efforts to nominate Department members for a variety of honors and awards. The Executive Committee has traditionally overseen the nomination of faculty for internal UNL awards. However, due to the many demands placed on the Executive Committee, we will establish a separate Awards Committee composed of members from a broad cross section of the Department. This committee will be tasked with identifying faculty and graduate students to nominate for a variety of awards, not only at UNL but at a national and international level. This committee will work with the College and ORED to identify and, when appropriate, facilitate the nomination process. A successful awards committee will boost visibility and help ensure that our faculty and students are duly recognized for their many successes.

## 2.6 Synergy of the Vision Goals

Clearly, the goal to strategically hire to build research visibility and competitiveness is not independent of the other three goal that focus on undergraduate education, diversity and inclusion, and graduate program opportunities. These goals are interrelated with progress and investment in one strengthening others. The Department is committed to examining our internal resources and assessing how we can reallocate current resources to facilitate progress toward our goals. For example, a small reallocation of service time for 4 to 5 faculty members would allow us to create a dedicated Department Awards Committee. However, fully realizing our vision will require external investments and partnerships. An



obvious example is that we cannot fill critical gaps in our faculty expertise to increase our research competitiveness and to meet the instructional needs of our nearly 1,000 majors with internal resources. This success will require upper administration support of the cluster hiring plan. From our perspective, this hiring plan is our top priority as it will impact all the other goals. Similarly, we can make some progress in remediating challenges and leveraging opportunities with careful and strategic reallocation of resources (see Section 3). The creation of Options in the Psychology major is an example. Conversely, fixing the competitiveness of faculty and staff salaries will require a deliberate decision and effort by the Chancellor and/or by the NU system.