April 9, 2014

Beverly Nagel, The Dean of the College, and
Members of the Faculty Curricular Planning Committee

Dear Colleagues:

Two years ago, you approved a new line in the Psychology Department allowing us to hire in cognitive psychology. That has helped us, and we appreciate your support. However, we knew at that time this line would essentially leave us only slightly better than we had been for a number of years, given the end of Professor Seth Greenberg’s long-term contributions as a Benedict Distinguished Visiting Professor. We also knew then and noted in our 2012 letter that comparisons to other departments at Carleton and to psychology departments at peer institutions showed we were in need of at least two faculty lines. With the addition of the cognitive line, we now see ourselves as one faculty line below appropriate norms. We did not submit a request for that other line last year. That’s because we were about to undergo a departmental review, and we were eager to see what our reviewers had to say about our situation. What follows first elaborates background information relevant to our request and then presents a proposal we believe to be attractive to the Department and the College.

- **The 2014 Psychology Department External Review Assessment.** Our external review team (Enriquesta Canseco-Gonzalez, Reed College, Daniel Simons, University of Illinois, and Douglas Weldon, Hamilton College) highlighted course over-enrollments as a main problem the department still currently faces. They saw this in our enrollment and wait-list statistics and were especially concerned after meeting with a sample of our majors and learning that 40% of them could not gain access to the introductory psychology course until sophomore year. Moreover, enrollment pressures made it difficult for majors to take our required statistics/methods course until junior year even though we recommend majors complete the course sophomore year. The reviewers also suggested that changes in the College’s laboratory science requirement were putting enrollment pressure on psychology courses. (They did not note that the new MCAT’s emphasis on the psychological foundations of behavior is also contributing to this effect.) The reviewers were also concerned that many students potentially interested in psychology as a major at Carleton were unable to gain access to the introductory course and were possibly lost to the field as a result. (In fact, the reviewers suggested that the College allow us to reserve sections of Psychology 110 for first year students to address this problem.) The external reviewers recommended that the Department and Registrar survey majors and non-majors to learn more about how the inability to register for psychology courses may be affecting course and major decisions students make. We have not been able to do this in the short time since we received the external review report, and, frankly, it is unclear to us that such an undertaking would be sufficiently informative to justify the effort required. The reviewers did believe it important to address psychology’s enrollment pressures and suggested that “If the outcome of the investigation of enrollment patterns indicates that the problem will not be solved by adjusting the curriculum, then we recommend that the Administration add FTEs to the Psychology Department. As noted in the self-study, the Carleton Psychology Department has fewer FTEs than other schools with comparable numbers of majors.” We honestly don’t see
how we could adjust the curriculum given the reviewers' suggestions and others we have considered to fundamentally alter our enrollment conundrum. We believe we need an additional FTE to offer additional introductory psychology sections and mid-level courses to contribute to the College's educational program.

- **Carleton's psychology department is significantly understaffed in comparison to those at peer institutions.** For our department review document, we examined faculty sizes at schools selected because of similar student body size and academic standing. Here is what we found: Amherst (8-9), Davidson (10-12), Grinnell (9), Pomona (11), Reed (10), Swarthmore (9), and Williams (15-16). Carleton psychology currently has 8 full-time faculty. These current data are consistent with the results of a survey of psychology departments Seth Greenberg conducted in 2011 (using the U.S. News and World Report information) which found that their average number of full-time psychology faculty members was 9.93. More than half the departments employed 10 or more full-time faculty. (Those that employed less tended to come from smaller institutions than Carleton.) In sum, we are a department of 8 full time faculty in a world of psychology departments typically populated by 10 full time faculty.

- **Carleton's psychology department is significantly understaffed in comparison to the highest enrolled departments at Carleton.** In 2011 Seth also analyzed the relationship between the average number of majors in a Carleton department (over 4-year blocks to account for minor perturbations) and number of faculty. None of the ten departments with averages of 20+ majors per year except for psychology had fewer than 8 faculty; none of the top five departments except for psychology had fewer than 10 faculty. In sum, compared to departments in equivalent demand, we are 2+ full time faculty members below the Carleton norm.

- **Carleton's psychology courses are, consequently, significantly overenrolled and turning away keenly interested students.** This has remained true over the past 7 years. The introductory course and, in particular, our middle-level (200) psychology courses typically have long waitlists. The Registrar's data for every recent term show that. Again, students test their interest in psychology by trying to take the introductory course and then a 200-level course, but they are often closed out of those courses (which I hear about as department chair). Psychology faculty regularly add students over the caps for their courses. Courses with caps of 25 typically include 30+ students; courses with caps of 30 reach into the 40s. These numbers not only change the character of our courses; they impose significant burdens on already heavily stressed psychology faculty. This is the central enrollment issue our outside reviewers highlighted as well.

We seek approval to hire a tenure track faculty member in the area of Social Development or Social Psychology whose research and interests center on issues of diversity (of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender). We would be seeking someone with a sound research agenda and background who could involve our majors in an ongoing research program, something that is increasingly important in our departmental curriculum. We would be seeking someone who could contribute to our social development/social/personality area. Demand for mid-level courses in that area is high, and this would help us meet that need. We would assume such a person would also contribute sections of the introductory course. We would be seeking someone who could strengthen our curriculum by offering additional courses to those we currently offer that address diversity issues (e.g., the Psychology of Prejudice, Cross-Cultural Psychology). We believe one of the compelling reasons to conduct such a search is that the person we hire and the courses we envision have the potential to make a genuine contribution to the campus community. Consider, for example, a course on sexual orientation, on what psychological science has found about the roots of sexual orientation, about the development of family and social relationships, about identity development, about social psychological challenges and adjustments to them. We believe such a course would prove of significant personal and intellectual value to students at Carleton.
Thank you for your consideration of this request. We would, of course, be interested in discussing it further to make modifications and develop specifications to address the needs and interests of the College. We are also continuing to discuss the specifics of such a position in the department, so what we anticipate is a continuing dialogue internally and externally to see if we can define a position in the strongest possible way to meet a variety of needs. We hope you will concur with the justification and vision presented in this request and come to agree that such an ongoing conversation is worth having.

Sincerely,

Neil Lutsky
Chair, Department of Psychology