

Leading a Psychology Department through uncharted waters

Lee Ryan, Ph.D

Professor and Head, Psychology Department

University of Arizona

ryant@arizona.edu

May 17, 2023



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION



SOCIETY for[®]
INDUSTRIAL and
ORGANIZATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY

SCIENCE FOR A SMARTER WORKPLACE

My story



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

Psychology

Ph.D. from UBC in clinical psychology, Postdoctoral fellow at UCSD

Joined UArizona in 1996

Director, Cognition & Neuroimaging Laboratory

Associate Director, Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute

Funding: NIH, NINDS, NIA, NHLBI, DOD, DHS, State of Arizona, McKnight Foundation, etc

Associate Head 2008 to 2014

Department Head 2015 to... (not forever)

Graduate training in neuropsychology, neuroanatomy, cognitive neuroscience, statistics,
MRI physics, MR image analysis



Challenges facing higher education

- Decreasing state financial support
- Decreasing enrollments on the horizon
- Changing expectations of students and society – career-focused, non-academic
- Diversity, equity and inclusion
- Push-back on diversity, equity and inclusion
- Increasing cost of research – infrastructure/equipment, start-up costs, salary expectations
- Unexpected *stuff* – a pandemic, faculty losses, staff turnover, on-campus shooting

My Department, 2015



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE
Psychology

Years of state budget cuts due to Arizona financial losses

Research faculty $n=28$ (down from 40 in 1996), six retirements pending, 1 teaching faculty

60% of faculty with extramural grant funding

Teaching load increased to 2,000 majors (BA in Psychology), 35,000 student credit hours yearly

A \$400,000 debt due to transition from Social and Behavioral Science to College of Science

July 2015 (first month on the job): Another \$70,000 base budget cut to Psychology

My Department, 2023



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

Psychology

Faculty n=32, plus 8 teaching faculty

98% of faculty extramurally funded, grant portfolio \$46.5M in Psychology,
total collaborative grants \$182M

Administrative staff and advising positions doubled, new positions in development,
career and professional development, clinic director

Teaching load still at 2,000 majors with 35,000 student credit hours yearly,
added BS in Psychological Science to BA in Psychology.

Plus, fully-online BA in Psychology, certificate program in healthy aging,
dual degrees in Peru, Indonesia

Yearly revenues above cost: Approximately 1.5 million with a 2.5 million carry-over

Why did I take this job?



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

Psychology

Years of state budget cuts due to Arizona financial losses

Research faculty $n=28$ (down from 40 in 1996), six retirements pending, 1 teaching faculty

60% of faculty with extramural grant funding

Teaching load increased to 2,000 majors (BA in Psychology), 35,000 student credit hours yearly

A \$400,000 debt due to transition from Social and Behavioral Science to College of Science

July 2015 (first month on the job): Another \$70,000 base budget cut to Psychology

How did I create change?



Before I started:

Ask experts, read, read, read, think, think, think

The first three months:

Learn, listen, take action, make some gains

5 Year Planning:

Strategic Planning (2015, 2021), business planning

Business Planning:

‘Redistribute’ resources, investments to build excellence that is sustainable

Implementation:

Building an engaged, trusted team

How did I create change?



New initiatives:

- Created BS in Psychology with intensive research focus
- Online BA in Psychology, profitable Yr2, top 10 in USA Yr4, currently \$2.5M revenue yearly
- Faculty Kick-Start pilot program, support for grant writing, diversifying portfolio
- Faculty retention: Renovations, refurbishing research equipment, bridge funding, mentoring
- Hired outstanding teaching faculty with expertise in online education
- Increased staff to support pre-award, post-award support
- Expanded undergrad support through advising, career development, success programs
- Hired Development Director, created Advisory Board, connected with alumni, establishing a yearly capital campaign

Qualities of a Head/Chair



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

Psychology

Have a vision – strategic planning, business planning, giving planning

Informed – understand challenges facing academy, think ahead

Entrepreneurial and innovative – the old academy does not exist

Flexible – plan on nothing staying the same for long

Credible, authentic, self-aware – building trust, being honest, understanding your shortcomings

Focused on relationship-building – within the department, across campus, university administration, across the field, with community leaders, with alumni

Empowering others – mentoring, delegating

Lee Ryan
ryant@arizona.edu



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION



SOCIETY for
INDUSTRIAL and
ORGANIZATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY[®]

SCIENCE FOR A SMARTER WORKPLACE

