

## Acknowledgements

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Future-Oriented • Learning-Focused • Distinctive • Connected



**TheChicagoSchool**  
of Professional Psychology

Self-Study 2007

# Welcome from the President

2000-2001 was the last time The Chicago School engaged in a comprehensive self-study evaluation. Since then we have grown from a one-program institution to become a thriving graduate school with six academic departments and a new division of Executive and Professional Education. We moved to a new state-of-the-art campus, which we own, reaffirmed our core commitments to diversity and community service, increased our commitment to partnerships, added many new faculty and staff, more than doubled our student population, began international education, installed robust infrastructures for technology, and developed many new areas of student services and academic support. We wove all of these efforts around our commitment to innovation and developed a new strategic plan committing ourselves to being the school of choice for the study of professional psychology.

This most recent two-year self-study endeavor—outlined in this summary and presented in great detail in the full report—afforded us an invaluable opportunity to step back and evaluate where we stand as an academic community. Engaging our community in this process was a central focus. Students, faculty, staff, trustees, and alumni all played an important part. They attended community forums, served on self-study committees, and offered feedback as part of the readers panel. I wish to thank the entire school community and in particular the members of the various self-study committees that galvanized our process and produced such a useful report.

I am pleased to say that the self-study helped us to examine our mission and identify opportunities for improvement and growth. It also provides trustees, faculty, and staff with rich information for future decision making. What follows is the product of this important process. I hope you will find it to be an enlightening look at The Chicago School and a touchstone for us to continue our development into the future. To read the complete report, visit [www.thechicagoschool.edu/content.cfm/hlcresearchroom](http://www.thechicagoschool.edu/content.cfm/hlcresearchroom).

Best Wishes,



Michael Horowitz, Ph.D.  
President, The Chicago School



# Mission

## Mission

Integrating theory, professional practice, and innovation, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology provides an excellent education for careers in psychology and related behavioral and health sciences. The school is committed to service and embraces the diverse communities of our society.

## Vision

The Chicago School strives to be the school of choice in professional psychology and to realize its mission through innovation and quality.

## Values

Reflecting the systemic integration of our mission, our logo symbolizes our values: Education; Innovation; Service; and Community.

## Philosophy

The Chicago School educates professionals whose practices exemplify a commitment to understand and respect individual and cultural differences. The application of humane professional judgment is achieved through the integration of psychological theory, scientific research, and professional practice. The curriculum and training opportunities prepare graduates to deliver outstanding professional services, emphasizing the need to understand diversity and the importance of working with underserved populations. From this statement of purpose, we derive our institutional goals, which are attained through individual programs of study. Our consistent focus on student learning ensures that the institution provides excellent career education. Each program regularly identifies the learning expectations, determines the outcomes of these student-learning expectations across academic programs, and uses assessment results to improve student learning. Our institutional learning goals for students completing our degree programs are:

**Scholarship.** Graduates will be able to use scientific research and theory to inform their practices and be able to prepare scholarly work broadly defined;

**Diversity.** Graduates will be able to apply theoretical and practical knowledge about ethnic, racial, gender, sexual, cultural and religious, age, and disability difference in their professional work;

**Professional Behavior.** Graduates will be able to function in a professional and ethical manner;

**Professional Practice.** Graduates will be able to conduct assessments, develop appropriate interventions, and implement interventions in their specialty area of professional psychology.

## Student Focused Learning

To insure an effective and high quality education experience, The Chicago School faculty systematically monitors student learning to inform future planning and to generate creative, responsive initiatives to improve the programs. Data are gathered, analyzed, and presented to the learning community for review. Based on these results, the program revises the student learning assessment plan, the curriculum, and the approach to learning in the classroom. Student learning assessment offers the school a critical opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs and to develop innovative, student-focused learning environments.

To optimize the learning environment offered by the programs, students are strongly encouraged to be active learners. Active student learners reflect on the conditions and activities that engage their learning style and work independently, with peers and with faculty, to enhance their learning in the classroom.

## Commitment to Diversity

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology is committed to being the school of choice by building an environment of mutual respect and inclusion where all individuals will be valued for who they are and what they can contribute, and in turn, are expected to be participatory members of an active learning community that promotes cultural awareness, competence, and understanding of diversity.

# What is HLC Accreditation?

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is a nongovernmental body empowered by the U.S. Department of Education to grant institutional accreditation to colleges and universities. It is part of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States.

As stated in the HLC *Handbook of Accreditation* (2003), voluntary accreditation has two purposes: quality assurance and institutional and program improvement.

At the heart of a successful HLC accreditation is an institution's internal self-study evaluation. The two-year process requires a communitywide endeavor to collect evidence supporting a case that the organization is meeting the five HLC Criteria for Accreditation:

- Criterion One: Mission and Integrity**
- Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future**
- Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching**
- Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge**
- Criterion Five: Engagement and Service**



# The Self-Study Process and Goals

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology received initial HLC accreditation in 1984. Since then, the school has conducted self-studies in coordination with HLC visits. Each of these visits has reaffirmed accreditation. Prior to 2007, the most recent comprehensive evaluation was conducted in April 2001.

The Chicago School began its self-study process in spring 2005. The broad goals established for the self-study were to examine the school's mission, identify opportunities for institutional improvement, and provide institutional leaders with information for future decision making. In addition, the school sought successful reaccreditation and a broadened scope of accreditation.

In an effort to engage its entire community while adding meaningful analysis to its self-study report, The Chicago School opted to organize its self-study around four HLC cross-cutting themes: Future-Oriented, Learning-Focused, Distinctive, and Connected.

The process was conducted in the following manner:

- A self-study coordinator and steering committee were appointed.
- Four self-study subcommittees, one for each of the four themes, with cross-departmental representation were formed. Each was led by a member of the steering committee.
- Subcommittees met frequently over the spring 2006 and summer 2006 terms to analyze The Chicago School's strengths, challenges, and opportunities as related to the criteria for accreditation and the cross-cutting themes.
- Subcommittees produced working papers structured around the four HLC themes.
- A reader's panel of representative community members—including a trustee, student, faculty member, advisory board member, staff member, department chair, and graduate—was assembled to review the self-study and offer feedback.
- Community-wide workshops were held to discuss the self-study results and solicit feedback.

# Major Findings: The Future-Oriented Organization

The HLC defines a future-oriented organization as one that:

**Engages in planning**

**Is driven by mission**

**Understands social and economic change**

**Focuses on the future of constituents**

**Integrates new technology**

Guided by the HLC themes and criteria, The Chicago School through its self-study examined its relationship to students, faculty, staff, and the greater community that it serves and finds three areas where the characteristic of being a future-oriented organization stand out. The school reveals itself as future-oriented:

- By reviewing and reflecting on its mission and seeking to ensure all developments are in accord with that mission
- In a process of strategic planning that permeates the institution
- With a willingness to integrate new technology into its administrative and learning environments



## Strengths

- The Chicago School reflects frequently on its mission, considers its mission documents as active sources of direction for institutional decision making, and has a deep commitment to that mission.
- The Chicago School has developed and implemented a planning process that results in ambitious yet achievable goals.
- The school has fostered a culture of innovation that allows it to identify, evaluate, and manage new initiatives that in turn allows the school to grow in size and complexity while diversifying revenue.
- The school has a demonstrated commitment to use data and input from a variety of sources to strengthen and guide its ability to prepare and plan for the future.
- The school has invested significantly in technology that allows it to support a modern learning environment and an efficient structure for administrative services.

## Opportunities

- The Chicago School must deliberately and clearly communicate the 2006-2011 strategic goals to maximize employee understanding and engagement in the process of its realization.
- The Chicago School must monitor and manage its space needs as it continues to add new programs and services.
- The Chicago School must monitor, assess, and carefully manage its technology needs as it continues to add new technologies and maximize the use of its existing technologies.

# Major Findings: The Learning-Focused Organization

The HLC defines a learning-focused organization as one that:

**Assesses student learning**

**Supports learning**

**Supports scholarship**

**Creates the capacity for lifelong learning**

**Strengthens organizational learning**

The Chicago School has examined its relationship to students, faculty, staff, and the greater community that it serves and finds four areas where the characteristic of being a learning-focused organization stand out. The school reveals itself as learning-focused:

- In an assessment process that delineates what the school intends to teach and whether the intended learning outcomes have been achieved
- Through support of faculty in both their teaching and research
- By creating and supporting an effective learning environment
- By understanding the role and purpose of scholarship to organize and transmit learning



## Strengths

- The Chicago School has used its *Plan for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes* to create a robust and reflective culture of assessment, and it continues to identify and implement additional ways to measure and improve effectiveness in student learning outcomes.
- The Chicago School has developed and organized its learning around the institution wide learning goals of Scholarship, Diversity, Professional Behavior, and Professional Practice.
- The Chicago School provides the resources necessary to support effective teaching and student learning.
- The Chicago School understands and lives by Boyer's theory of scholarship and the Vail practitioner/scholar model of professional psychology, providing clear and effective methods for students and faculty to pursue scholarship.
- The Chicago School has created effective learning environments that recognize the diversity of its learners.

## Opportunities

- The Chicago School should continue to evaluate and expand its culture of assessment.
- The Chicago School must carefully integrate its executive and professional education programming into its existing academic systems and structures.
- The Chicago School should zealously pursue the opportunities it has identified for improvements in faculty scholarship.

# Major Findings: The Distinctive Organization

The HLC defines a distinctive organization as one that:

**Has an unambiguous mission**

**Appreciates diversity**

**Is accountable**

**Is self-reflective**

**Is committed to improvement**

The school has examined its relationship to students, faculty, staff, and the greater community that it serves and finds three areas where the characteristic of being a distinctive organization stand out. The school reveals itself as distinctive:

- In a commitment to diversity at all levels of the school
- Through holding all members of the school community accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities
- By supporting innovative activities that bring the school to a higher level of achievement



## Strengths

- The Chicago School has a clearly stated and widely communicated commitment to diversity that is incorporated into all aspects of the community.
- The Chicago School's systems of accountability are well documented, robust, and widely understood. They allow individuals and the school to identify and pursue institutional improvements within defined but flexible structures.
- The Chicago School functions as an innovative institution, and involves its internal constituents in meaningful ways in the development and realization of opportunities to utilize innovative ideas for institutional improvement.

## Opportunities

- The school faces a challenge to continually strengthen and evaluate its commitment to diversity in an authentic and full manner. While we have a number of initiatives in this area, we must remain active in determining how to increase the diversity of our students, faculty, and staff in the school. This challenge is not contained to our school or to the world of higher education alone, but as a higher education institution committed to diversity we have a particular responsibility in this area.
- As we continue in our efforts to be accountable to all constituents, the school must reach out more deliberately to the communities that provide training opportunities and employment for our students.
- To maintain a culture of quality and innovation requires a balance between business as usual and reaching to the future. While every school calls itself innovative, The Chicago School boldly rests its reputation on being the school of choice that values education, innovation, service, and community. We must be certain to stay true to this identity.

# Major Findings: The Connected Organization

The HLC defines a connected organization as one that:

**Serves the common good**

**Serves constituents**

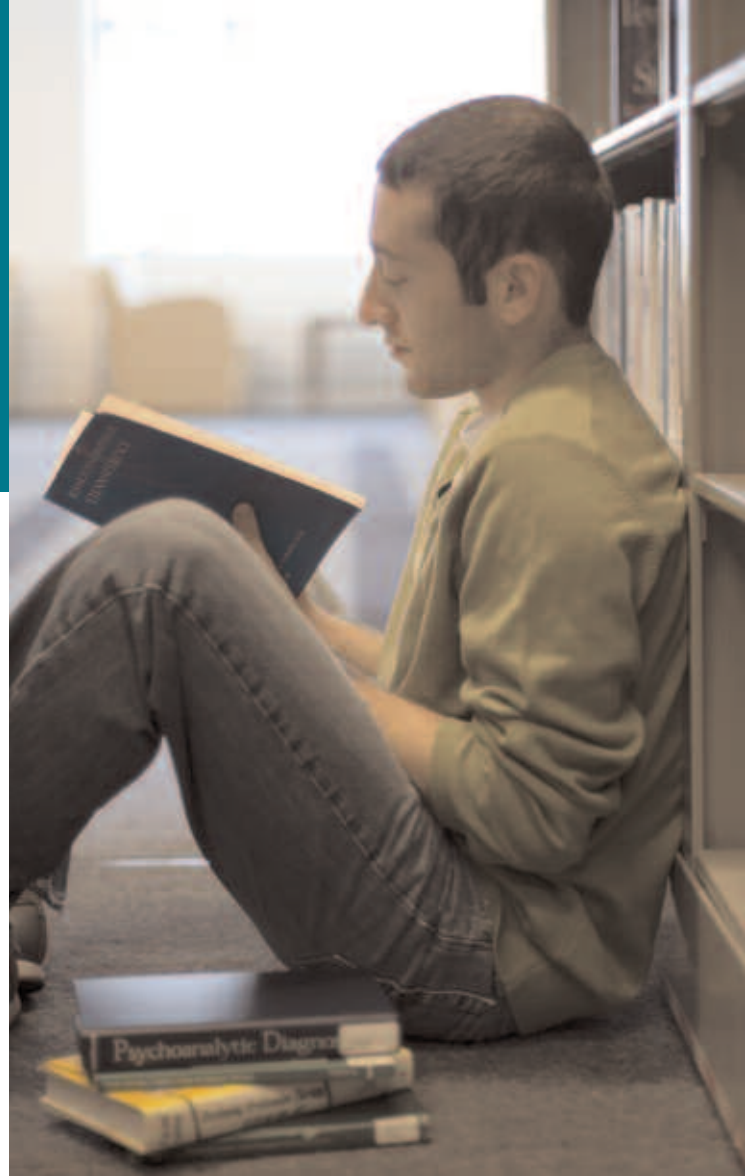
**Creates a culture of service**

**Collaborates**

**Engages in healthy internal communications**

The school has examined its relationship to students, faculty, staff, and the greater community that it serves and finds three areas where the characteristic of being a connected organization stand out. The school reveals itself as connected:

- With a practice of open, transparent internal communication
- By persistent effort at close collaboration with others
- In a pervasive culture of service



## Strengths

- The Chicago School is honest and deliberate in its internal communications and seeks opportunities for dialogue that can enhance individual and organizational learning.
- The school has a tradition of collaboration that takes many forms and occurs at all levels of the organization. Collaboration has allowed the school to connect in ways that provide powerful opportunities for organizational learning.
- The Chicago School demonstrates a deep commitment to service through its curricular and co-curricular models, through the activities of its faculty and staff, and through its allocation of resources.

## Opportunities

- The relationship with alumni needs additional strengthening to ensure the services and resources we develop meet their needs.
- We must carefully choose among the many and varied partnership opportunities available to us.
- We should develop competency in the area of grant development to provide additional sources of funding for co-curricula and academic projects.

# Major Findings: The Criteria for Accreditation

- We have meaningful and well-developed mission documents that guide our decision making. (Primarily Criterion 1)
- We seek to communicate freely and openly with one another, convinced that open patterns of communication lead to opportunities for individual and organizational learning. (Primarily Criteria 1)
- We define the responsibilities of all members of the school, and we engage in a process of evaluation that ensures that all faculty, students, administration, and staff have an opportunity to learn from experience. (Primarily Criteria 1 and 2)
- We remain deeply committed to utilizing the results of our evaluations in a continuing effort to improve the school. (Primarily Criteria 1 and 2)
- We aim at creating an organizational culture that is committed to diversity at all levels. (Primarily Criteria 1 and 5)
- We engage in planning, and we hold ourselves accountable to accomplish our plans in a way that furthers our mission, continuously strengthening the quality of our educational programs and providing lifelong learning opportunities for our faculty, staff, and students. (Primarily Criterion 2 and 4)
- We join together in frequent study and review of all our activities and reflect on the direction of the school and the innovation necessary for development and growth. (Primarily Criteria 2 and 4)
- We serve our students, faculty, staff, and administration by providing them the resources and opportunities necessary to be successful practitioners. (Primarily Criteria 2 and 5)
- We invest in technology that adds value to the learning environment and supports the growth and administration of the school. (Primarily Criterion 3)
- We actively support an environment that allows effective teaching by our faculty. (Primarily Criterion 3)
- We assess student learning according to a deliberate and organized plan that yields meaningful results. (Primarily Criteria 3 and 4)

- We support Boyer's expanded notion of scholarship and strive to create an environment in which multiple styles of teaching and learning are freely accepted and rewarded. (Primarily Criteria 3 and 4)
- We provide a rich variety of learning options that demonstrate the connection between the life of the mind and the life of work. (Primarily Criterion 4)
- We embrace service to the community by developing curricular and co-curricular programming that serves the common good. (Primarily Criterion 1 and 5)
- We recognize that we are part of a larger community and seek to collaborate with others in order to strengthen individual and organizational learning. (Primarily Criterion 4 and 5)
- We develop new programming based on an analysis of trends and developments in applied psychology in a way that will prepare our students to meet the mental health needs of our community and the greater global society. (Primarily Criterion 5)

## Conclusion

The Chicago School set out to design and implement a self-study process that was meaningful and would produce substantial material to inform the future decision making of The Chicago School. In addition, we attempted to clearly and concisely demonstrate that The Chicago School has met the criteria for accreditation in order to achieve reaccreditation and a broadened scope of accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. We are pleased with the results of this two-year examination of The Chicago School.