

To: Su Swarat, Director of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness

From: Sheryl Fontaine, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Subject: Dean's Evaluation: Department of American Studies Program Performance Review

The Department of American Studies completed a comprehensive Program Performance Review in AY 2014-15. The department's self-study, the report of the External Review Committee, and the Chair's Response are attached to this report.

The Program Performance Review process included a detailed self-analysis that examined the department's short and long-term goals, its staffing and operations, curricular structure and assessment program, support for student success and advising, and the resources and facilities available to support its key functions as a center for student and faculty scholarship. A thoughtful review by a team of highly qualified specialists with expertise in American Studies and closely related fields provided valuable insight into the current state of the department as well as suggestions for future development. Review team members included Dr. Edward J. Blum, Professor of History at San Diego State University and Vice President of the California American Studies Association; Dr. Eric Sandeen, Professor of American Studies at the University of Wyoming; and Dr. Lana Dalley, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of English, Comparative Literature, and Linguistics at CSUF.

The CSUF American Studies Department is a "national leader" in an "interdisciplinary field." As the external reviewers noted, the department represents what many other American Studies departments aspire to become: "mature...with its own faculty lines, hiring schedules, academic curricula, and firmly established community practices." The College of Humanities and Social Sciences is proud of the intellectual leadership and dynamism of the Department and wishes to offer the following commendations and recommendations.

Commendations

The Department has a clear sense of its mission and purpose. Its goals are clearly articulated, substantive, and aligned to both the CSUF Strategic Plan and its own intellectual and curricular priorities. In particular, the Department maintains a clear commitment to both teaching excellence and to high quality interdisciplinary scholarship. The Department provides significant leadership to the College and the campus.

The Department has made significant progress in implementing program-level assessment since its previous PPR. Its Learning Goals and Outcomes are focused and aligned to departmental goals. Assessment efforts are well-developed, ongoing, and sustainable. The Department has completed several cycles of assessment and has used the result of those efforts to refine its assessment process. The Department's degree structure is well-developed and appropriately mapped to Student Learning Outcomes at both the B.A. and M.A. levels.

The Department's faculty are active and enthusiastic teacher-scholars who have responded nimbly to disciplinary trends. The Department has effectively managed the "transnational turn" in the field. Not only do faculty have significant expertise and strong publishing records in this area, but students and faculty have both participated in international programs and initiatives that respond to this disciplinary priority. As a result, the Department regularly attracts Fulbright scholars and other international visitors. By opening a dialogue with International Programs and Global Engagement, the Department should be able to develop a sound infrastructure to support continuing international exchanges.

Recommendations

The Department has significantly enriched and expanded its curriculum during the review period. This, however, may create challenges for the future in terms of the regularity of course offerings. The Department should consider developing a formal 3-year curriculum rotation plan at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Although the Department has established and refined a thoughtful assessment process, it should now look for further opportunities to "close the loop" and make strategic changes to its curriculum and course content based on the results of assessments of student learning.

Although the Department has revised its M.A. comprehensive exam, it should continue to refine the exam to address the currency of the reading list, as well as explore the possibility of a project or field experience option for its M.A. program. In addition, the Department should explore ways to increase the visibility of its M.A. program to offset the variability in graduate enrollment due to outside factors (e.g., economic issues).

The Department faces some challenges with regard to enrollment and student success. Because many American Studies students do not immediately declare as majors or minors, standard data regarding student success (retention and graduation rates) is not a fully reliable indicator for the Department. In partnership with the H&SS Student Success Team, the Department should identify its specific data needs and develop a working plan to ameliorate those obstacles to student success that are within its control. Similarly, the Department should partner with the H&SS Success Team to develop strategies and timelines for effective outreach to undeclared students at CSUF as well as to local community colleges.

The Department is to be commended for its renewed focus on assisting students' exploration of career and graduate school opportunities. The Department should consult with the Department of Psychology, the Center for Internships and Community Engagement, and the H&SS Student Success Team to develop the infrastructure, curriculum, and goals for its proposed internship program. The Department should also consider ways to leverage its existing strengths as a center for student research as a recognized High Impact Practice. In order to provide students with sufficient mentoring for research projects and internships, the Department should explore ways

to support an internship/HIPs coordinator as part of a faculty member's regular teaching load (e.g. Departments of Psychology and History).

The Department has made effective use of alumni surveys and other data regarding the medium and long-term success of its graduates. However, the Department may need assistance in developing a sustainable infrastructure to track systematically the professional careers of its alumni. It would be well advised to seek assistance from the Office of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness .

The Department should consider whether continuing to have all faculty members serve as advisors is an effective strategy given the increasing emphasis on advising as a factor in student success. The Department may be challenged to ensure that all faculty have the knowledge base they need to advise students effectively at all stages in their academic careers. The Department should consider either dedicating 1-2 faculty members as advising coordinators (with assigned time for this role) OR creating a formal training schedule that will ensure that all faculty members have the technical knowledge they need to accurately advise students.

The Department should work to align its departmental hiring priorities with the criteria established by the Provost in order to make a strong case for its need for new faculty members.

The Department must ensure that its usage of teaching assistants remains in alignment with campus policies that distinguish between work that may be done by students in a pedagogy course and work that should be done by a Unit 11 Academic Student Employee. In addition, the department must ensure that students who serve as graders must complete FERPA training. Please see the attached guidelines.

Although the Department's requests for additional space for lecturer offices and student meetings are reasonable, they cannot be easily fulfilled due to the extremely limited availability of unoccupied spaces on campus.