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TO: Dr. Pamela Oliver, Provost  
FROM: Dr. Jason Shepard, Chair, Department of Communications  
RE: Chair's Response to Dean  
Program Performance Review, M.A., Communications  
DATE: January 22, 2020

I have read the Dean's Summary Report and Recommendations memo dated January 21, 2020 and prepare this response pursuant to Academic Affairs' PPR Guidelines and Procedures document.

The M.A. in Communications completed a Self-Study in Fall 2019 and underwent a site visit by three external reviewers on October 28, 2019. The site visit summarized their findings:

In sum, the Department of Communications Graduate Program at California State University, Fullerton is doing an exceptional job in fulfilling its mission to provide quality instruction in theory, research, and practice in the field. It has articulated learning goals that are aligned with those of the department and university. The faculty and staff in the department are committed to the program and to the success of their students, as evidenced by the culture of service that characterizes COMM. The department greatly benefits from strong leadership and advocacy from the graduate program coordinator as well as from the department chair. Moreover, the dean appreciates and supports the program. With these assets in place, the program has a solid foundation from which to explore initiatives and implement changes such as those mentioned in this document. The review team hopes that the comments herein provide starting points for COMM to strengthen successful practices as well as to cultivate new ones.

The external review team summarized and provided evidence of the following program strengths:

1. Leadership of the department and program
2. Quality of instruction
3. High impact practices
4. Advising

5. Quality of faculty
6. Diversity, equity and inclusion
7. Institutional knowledge
8. Reputation
9. Including working students
10. Student input opportunities

The external site review team made recommendations in three general areas, including increasing enrollment, increasing program partnerships, and seeking additional resources.

I believe the site visit report is an accurate representation of the program and presents helpful general recommendations.

In her written response to the site visit report required as part of this process, the graduate program coordinator noted that the site team report included a “number of helpful comments and suggestions for the future” that “could be a springboard for changes,” including:

- Provide additional funding to expand recruiting efforts beyond the current practices. This could include allocating money for advertising and marketing materials to promote the program.
- Pursue external funding opportunities to help support recruitment efforts.
- Explore ways to partner with the CSUF Latino Communications Institute to benefit graduate students as well as undergraduates.
- Encourage students to take advantage of opportunities for joint research with faculty.
- Offer incentives (e.g., release time) to faculty to conduct joint research with students and chair thesis committees.
- Add more online courses into the graduate curriculum.
- Investigate the possibility of adding an online concentration for the future.
- Continue to recruit faculty to teach in the graduate program to expand the diversity of the instructor pool.

The graduate program coordinator proposed specific action steps for the graduate faculty as follows:

- Investigating the possibility of getting a dedicated budget allocated for advertising and marketing materials, which can be used for student recruitment.
- Working with the College of Communications development officer to investigate funding possibilities for graduate student recruitment efforts.
- Initiating a conversation with the director of the Latino Communications Institute to determine what future options exist for including graduate students in the activities of the Institute.

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- Continuing to solicit feedback from students to find out what courses they would like to take in order to provide a well-rounded curriculum.
- Expanding our current curriculum to include new courses addressing changes in technology as well as more online courses.
- Exploring the possibilities of developing an incentive program for faculty who serve as thesis advisers to encourage more faculty to supervise students in the research/theory track.

The dean provided a three-page Dean's Comments and Recommendations. As commentary is intertwined with suggestions, I distill major recommendations as follows:

- The faculty develop a mission statement and “reflect on the program’s competitive advantage so as to bolster student recruitment and enrollment.”
- The faculty “discuss ways in which” recruitment “can be a shared responsibility, to diffuse institutional knowledge, and, in doing so, enhance program sustainability” given assertion there is “no budget” and “no evidence” of success of recruitment/outreach efforts. (The site visit report contradicts this, by noting that many students “reported attending the program because of meeting Dr. Stein at college fairs across the region.”)
- The program consider using lecturer-allocation funds to use graduate assistant positions as a recruitment tool.
- Hope that additional acquisition of space by the College will be allocated for graduate students.
- Review of curriculum and offerings to enhance long-term sustainability.

In sum, I note through this experience universal recognition of an M.A. program with a reputation of providing opportunity and flexibility for students and producing capable, well-rounded communications professionals. The program’s opportunities for strengthening lie in remaining competitive through curricular and programmatic tweaks and in growing enrollments. There appears unanimous consensus that additional resources are needed for recruitment, program partnerships, facilities, and faculty workload.