

Response to Program Review Team Report  
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On Monday, October 28, 2019, Professor James Hussar from the CSUF Department of Modern Languages & Literatures, Professor Linda Bowen from CSU Northridge, and Professor Jessica Block Nerren from CSU San Bernardino reviewed the Department of Communications Graduate Program. The feedback provided by the Program Review Team is much appreciated, and it supports many of the points noted in our program self-study.

The Team spent a day on campus and had the opportunity to interview two groups of faculty members, staff, students, alumni, the Graduate Program Coordinator, Department Chair, and Dean. Two of the team members also sat in on the Comm. 525 Advanced Communications Management graduate class.

The Team's report identified many strengths of the program, "including the leadership of the department and the program, quality of instruction, meaningful interaction with faculty, high impact practices, and institutional knowledge." According to the Team's report, student comments indicate overall satisfaction with the graduate program. Students appear to be pleased with the extensive professional backgrounds of faculty who teach in the program; the flexibility to take courses while working at full-time jobs; and the opportunity to take 400-level courses as part of their curriculum. They also appreciate the "freedom to research topics of interest in communication," and the "personal touch" provided by the Graduate Program Coordinator when working with and advising students.

The Team offered a number of helpful comments and suggestions for the future. Many of these could be a springboard for change in the following ways to ensure the continued success of the program.

- 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.

Some of the challenges noted by the Team reflect some of our own concerns about the graduate program. Among these are the workload of the faculty who chair thesis committees on top of their regular assignments. This sometimes makes it difficult for students to find faculty members to serve as their thesis chairs.

The Team noted that occasionally graduate courses need to be cancelled because they are under-enrolled. This is sometimes a result of an imbalance in the number of students who are admitted in the Spring vs. Fall semesters. Stepping up our recruitment efforts during the Spring semester for the following Spring could provide greater consistency in the admission of students during both semesters. Currently, most of our hands-on recruitment activities take place during the Fall semester.

Another suggestion was to consider eliminating Spring admission altogether and focusing on Fall admission only. There is one caveat to this second suggestion, however. During our last program performance review in 2011, we were questioned by the Provost about an overall drop in enrollment for a few years prior to the review. This drop in enrollment was directly traced to the fact that we had eliminated Spring admission for a few years to try the once-a-year admission model. After we realized it had a negative impact on our overall program enrollment, we reinstated twice-a-year admission.

Based on the interviews with both students and faculty, the Team suggested adding online courses, as students expressed interest in taking them, and faculty expressed interest in teaching them. We have offered several online graduate courses since the last program performance review. Unfortunately, although the students loved the idea of online courses, they did not love the courses themselves.

The Graduate Program Coordinator received multiple complaints about the instructors teaching the online courses and about the asynchronous approaches used for the courses. The students felt their experiences with this type of instruction did not parallel the hands-on interaction and sense of collegiality they experienced from in-person instruction. This is the main reason we have not offered many online graduate classes in the last few years. However, this is certainly something to consider trying again for the future, perhaps by using a different approach to these courses.

Based on the observations and recommendations of the Program Review Team, we propose taking the following steps:

- 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.
- 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.

Overall, the recommendations provided by the Program Review Team are both reasonable and attainable. We anticipate successfully addressing them.