

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 Geography Program Performance Review

The Department of Geography 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 Geography 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 Jackiewicz, Professor of Geography, California State University, Northridge; Dr. Glen Macdonald, Distinguished Professor and John Muir Memorial Chair, Geography Department, UCLA; and Dr. Rebecca Dolhinow, Associate Professor, Women and Gender Studies Program, CSUF.

The CSUF Geography Department is known among students and faculty for its warmth and collegiality. Its energetic and engaged faculty are active researchers and committed teachers. The Geography Department appears poised to take decisive steps to increase the number of majors and minors, as well as to increase its visibility on campus. In that context, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences is pleased to offer the following commendations and recommendations:

Commendations

The Department is to be commended for its warm, collegial, and supportive atmosphere that sustains both students and faculty. The loyalty of Geography students to the department is particularly noteworthy. A strong sense of professional and scholarly community supports both student and faculty success.

Faculty members display openness toward curricular and pedagogical innovations and are collaborative in their pursuit of the Department's identified goals and priorities.

The curriculum is generally well-structured and up-to-date. GE courses have the potential to serve as a recruiting base for new majors and minors. Students have multiple opportunities to participate in High Impact Practices within the major curriculum.

The Department is highly supportive of student, student-faculty, and faculty research. Its annual “All Points of the Compass” conference provides an important venue for students to present the results of their research to their colleagues and the campus community.

The Department has revised and updated its Assessment plan, including its Student Learning Outcomes, in accordance with CSUF best practices and the six-step assessment process.

Recommendations

Explore the process for a departmental name change from Geography to Geography and Environmental Studies, which will be governed by UPS 100.601. Develop a timeline that includes consultation with other departments and colleges likely to have an interest in the name change proposal. Further changes, such as the development of a concentration in Environmental Studies, should be deferred while the Department continues to build its outreach and recruitment efforts at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Create a GIS cluster/focus in the curriculum and open a discussion with UEE regarding the current GIS certificate and the possibility of creating a “state-side” pre-professional and/or professional certificate for matriculated students (UPS 410.115).

Partner with the H&SS Student Success Team (particularly the Assistant Dean) to develop strategies to reach out to potential majors and minors from undeclared students and local community colleges. Develop a departmental strategy to leverage GEOG 100, Global Geography as a means to introduce students to the major, minor, and proposed GIS certificate.

Develop a strategy to leverage 300-level GEOG courses that are already part of the GE curriculum to encourage minors and double majors.

Continue to participate in Study Abroad and Away opportunities to raise the profile of Geography courses and faculty on campus.

Partner with the H&SS Career Specialist, Marisa Perez, and the H&SS Marketing Specialist, Chris Salomone, to develop materials identifying GIS and Geography as in-demand skills. Consider participating in phase two of the H&SS Career Integration Pilot.

Use the opportunity of upgrades to Omni Update to rebuild the Department website as both a marketing and an advising tool for prospective and current undergraduate and graduate students in Geography.

Develop a departmental strategy/set of priorities for the next three to five years in curriculum development (esp. the GIS cluster), advising and outreach, and faculty and departmental development (including hiring). Include clear benchmarks for success and a well-defined but realistic timeline for achieving goals.

Develop a course rotation plan for the graduate program as a precursor to pursuing the renumbering of GEOG 530T to ensure that the department will be able to offer an appropriate number of graduate courses that will achieve sufficient enrollment.