

Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo Communication Studies, B.A., M.A. Programs

The 2014-2015 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for the B.A. and M.A. Programs in Communication Studies concluded with a culmination meeting on February 26, 2016.

During the meeting, the program was commended for its significant accomplishments, which include:

1. Program has a number of senior faculty members who are world class in their areas, and all are very highly respected. Faculty research productivity ranks near the top in national rankings for research.
2. Program has impressive collegiality and enthusiasm expressed by faculty.
3. Program has a top-ranked debate and forensics program that offers students a creative and intense laboratory for studying and competing in argumentation and oral deliberation—a program that is superior to the ones at many of the best US universities.
4. Communication Studies TAs are truly outstanding—praised by students and faculty alike with very impressive teaching evaluations.

The major recommendations and concerns raised through the PPR process were discussed. Suggestions on how to address them were provided:

1. College structure:
 - The faculty voiced the frustration over the naming and labeling issues within the college, i.e. college, department, and degree program share the same name. The naming similarities cause significant confusions for students, faculty applicants, and external parties. This is a long standing issue, but has not been resolved so far.
 - The solution to this problem involves other departments in the college. The college leadership is asked to work on this issue in order to create a more coherent college structure. It is also anticipated that reducing the naming confusion would help attract more undergraduate majors into the B.A. degree program.
2. Number of undergraduate majors:
 - The department is recommended to increase the number of undergraduate majors through increased visibility in feeder high schools and community colleges. The former chair acknowledged the need, and stated that he has made efforts to visit community colleges and is starting to see “rewards”.
 - The B.A. program has also revamped its curriculum, and the newer courses seem to attract more students to become majors. The faculty acknowledged the need to continue to renew the curriculum to address trends in the field (e.g. social media, health communication).
 - The faculty stated that the recent update to the department website is also effective in attracting students.

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- The former chair stated that an increased number of majors would help create a “critical mass” that allows faculty to have a lighter teaching load. The current chair has provided reassigned time to one faculty member to develop an outreach plan.
 - The department is recommended to speak to colleagues at CSUN to see how alumni data are collected and used for recruitment purposes. The department is also recommended to work with IRAS to gather relevant information from the National Clearinghouse.
 - The dean advised the department to consider how much the B.A. program can grow, and to carefully set the goal for growth.
3. The possibility of creating a minor:
- The department is recommended to consider new and innovative minors as a strategy to boost enrollment. The faculty acknowledged the recommendation, and stated that the department is working with the Health Science faculty to establish minor(s) that are more tailored.
 - The department is advised to work with the new college leadership on this issue.
4. Course scheduling, curriculum rotation and classroom needs:
- The department indicated that course scheduling is a major concern. Since the department has no control of classroom scheduling, the courses are often placed in inappropriate classrooms or on unpopular days (e.g. Friday, Saturday). The department also needs to cancel course sections due to lack of classroom space.
 - The Deputy Provost acknowledged the need to reform the scheduling process. In the mean time, the department is recommended to consider alternative modalities to reduce face-to-face instruction needs, but the faculty stated that this may not be possible for some of the large GE courses that teach the very issue of face-to-face communication.
 - The department is recommended to closely examine its enrollment pattern, and update its road map and course rotation plan. The chair agreed with the recommendation, and stated that increased number of majors would help with more predictable course rotations.
 - The department is recommended to dedicate a faculty retreat to these issues, while the university works on resolving classroom shortage and faculty workload issues from the institutional perspective. The faculty, however, expressed the concern that a retreat would not be very useful in addressing these issues, as classroom shortage and faculty workload are largely determined by factors beyond the department.
5. Large undergraduate courses:
- The faculty voiced the concern of having to teach large undergraduate courses (90 or more) without TAs. Even courses that do not qualify as K-2 (e.g. 60-70 students) need instructional support.
 - The department chair is recommended to work with the new college leadership to address this issue.
 - Predictable funding for forensics and debate team:
 - The department and the college expressed disappointment in the unavailability of IRA funds last year to support the travel cost of the forensics and debate team, a “crown

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- jewel” of CSUF. They emphasized that this program is an interdisciplinary endeavor, and not just a program within HCOM.
- The college also acknowledged the past accomplishment of the program, as well as its potential to grow. All it needs is committed funding from the university administration.
 - The Provost’s office and the dean will collaborate to resolve the funding issue. In the mean time, the department is recommended to work with the college’s Director of Development to seek additional funds.
6. Student internship opportunities:
- The department is recommended to develop more internship opportunities for students. The faculty expressed the same desire. The department is recommended to work with CICE on campus to identify more internship opportunities.
 - The department is also encouraged to discuss a mandatory internship requirement for their degree programs, as the other two departments in the college require internships for their majors.
 - The college now has a full-time internship director working with all three departments. The department should work closely with the director to develop internship programs, and to encourage students to take advantage of internship opportunities.
7. Faculty hiring and support:
- The department has submitted faculty hiring requests to the dean. The department is happy with the recent new hires.
 - The faculty expressed the desire to reduce SFR. The Deputy Provost commented that a SFR of 23:1 is average for the campus, and the university is currently looking at different funding models that hopefully will resolve the SFR issue in due time. The faculty also expressed concerns over FTEF funding allocation, as there is the perception that different formulas are used for different departments. Transparency in funding allocation is desired.
 - The dean also suggested an examination of SFR reporting to ensure accuracy.
 - The department is recommended to work out faculty hiring and support issues with the new college leadership.
8. Budget:
- The faculty expressed the desire for more funding equity across colleges, and more OE&E budget support. With heavy teaching load, mandates such as assessment and advisement need to come with additional funding.
 - The university provides central support on assessment (i.e. Assessment Liaison for each college) and advisement to the college, which was acknowledged by the faculty as helpful (though not enough). The faculty expressed the concern that the funds provided by the college for assessment are not “above and beyond” the department budget; Instead, a portion of the department budget is “set aside” for assessment. The department is encouraged to have a college level discussion on funding transparency and distribution.