



Date: January 20, 2016

To: Su Swarat, Ph.D.  
Director of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness

From: Gary Ruud, Ph.D.   
Chair, Department of Human Communication Studies

Subj: Chair Response to Recommendations from Dean Matz (Interim)

The Department of Human Communication Studies appreciates the comments and recommendations provided by Dean Matz (Interim) in her report of January 14, 2016. Her response to the Program Performance Review by external reviewers Professor Tom Hollihan and Professor Patricia Riley from USC was fair, accurate, and informative and offers useful suggestions for our department. I would also like to concur with the external reviewers that Interim Associate Dean Ed Fink and Interim Dean Irene Matz have been extremely supportive of our department and have made every effort to address some of the shortcomings mentioned in the PPR report.

Regarding the issues noted in the PPR report, Dean Matz has responded quickly and comprehensively to all inquiries and requests made by the department. Of course, the Dean's Office is constrained by CSU and CSUF practices and policies that directly affect some of the items described in the report. Some of those practices and policies are as follows:

1. **Course Load.** Historically, faculty members within the CSU including CSUF have been burdened with "punishingly heavy" teaching loads (as described by the external reviewers). As Dean Matz notes, our 4/4 course load is "higher than most universities and colleges." She states that assigned time is available through grants and other options but the reality is that the overwhelmingly majority of our faculty consistently teach a 4/4 load. With support from the Provost and incoming Dean, I hope it will be possible to engage in a discussion regarding the teaching loads. Additionally, I support the recommendation by Dean Matz that the department determine which classes (e.g., K2 classes) would be suitable for a teaching assistant.
2. **Salaries.** Generally, salaries are outside the control of departments. Dean Matz has been extraordinarily generous in offering new faculty salaries that are in line with CSUF policy and within budget limits. Nevertheless, the department would be more "attractive" to new applicants if salaries were higher and more favorable given the high cost of living in Southern California. Higher salaries would entice quality applicants and also would go far in elevating morale among current faculty.
3. **Forensics.** As Dean Matz notes, IRA cut our forensics budget by 50%. The Provost, the Dean's Office, and the Department contributed \$10,000.00 each to offset the cuts but each entity realizes this is just a short-term remedy. Ultimately, the university will need to make a commitment to maintain the forensics program at the level needed to remain competitive at the national level. As mentioned in my response to the external reviewer's report, our forensics program reflects a High Impact Practice and is mentioned specifically in the Chancellor's statement as an Instructionally Related Activity.

Other issues that Dean Matz refers to in her response to the PPR report will be addressed by the department in upcoming faculty meetings and in collaboration with the Dean's Office. For example:

1. HCOM Majors. This is an area that the department will be working on diligently in the upcoming year. As Dean Matz notes, the department has offered new courses in social media and in health communication; both areas have strong appeal to our students. With approval from the incoming dean and Provost, the department will be seeking additional faculty in these two areas and will promote both in a way that is linked to career opportunities. Further, the department will strategize ways in which we can make our department more visible (e.g., campus visits to local high schools and community colleges). The department welcomes the recommendation from Dean Matz to give assigned time to a faculty member to initiate this outreach process. This overall effort should yield positive results in terms of generating more majors and minors.
2. Lab Space. There is limited lab space for all of the departments within the College of Communications. Although arrangements between the Department of Communications and HCOM have worked reasonably well in the past, securing adequate lab space has been a challenge. The Dean's Office has ordered a mobile computer cart that will, at least in part, alleviate some of the problems created by the shortage of classrooms with computers. It should be noted, however, that the computer cart was never intended as a substitution for an actual lab classroom.
3. College Website. Dean Matz indicated that the college website is being reconstructed which will result in a much improved source of information for our students. The new website, in part, will address some of the confusion that occurs as a result of the similar and overlapping names of the Department of Communications with a degree in Communications (same name as the College) and the Department of Human Communication Studies with a degree in Communication Studies. Given the history of the College, name changes are unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future but I do agree with the recommendation from Dean Matz asking departments to review their names and for each department to discuss the issue with "respect and sensitivity." Additionally, advisement within the college and information on the website should allow students to investigate a potential major with more clarity and certainty regarding their academic and career path.
4. Internships. As Dean Matz notes, internships are required in two of the three departments but not HCOM. Per the recommendation by Dean Matz we are in the process of working with Pamela Caldwell (Director of the Internship Program) to increase internship enrollment. Specifically, Ms. Caldwell has visited our classes to inform students of the benefits of internships and faculty advisors have also promoted internships as a valuable experience. Internships have increased over the past several years but the department will discuss ways (including making internships a requirement) in which this part of our curriculum can be enhanced for the benefit of our students.
5. Graduate Program. Although our graduate program has remained healthy and steady in terms of enrollment, we have not systematically collected or analyzed data to benchmark its success. Dean Matz recommended that we give assigned time to one of our faculty members to develop a strategy for benchmarking and assessing its progress. This effort will begin in spring 2016.

In summary, Dean Matz has offered reasonable and useful recommendations for the department in several critical areas. Her recommendations will be shared with the HCOM faculty and I am confident that the department will move forward with these recommendations beginning spring 2016. The department would like to express its sincere thanks to Dr. Matz for her tireless support of HCOM throughout her tenure as Interim Dean. Her leadership and guidance has made HCOM a stronger department now and in the future.