



# CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

College of Communications

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TO: Dr. Gary Ruud, Chair  
Department of Human Communication Studies

FROM: Dr. S. Irene Matz  
Interim Dean

SUBJECT: PROGRAM PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The Department of Human Communication Studies – department chair, faculty and staff – are to be congratulated for a successful program review. The comments from the external reviewers, Drs. Patricia Riley and Thomas Hollihan, from USC, provided a thorough review of the program, such as observations, concerns and improvements. The cooperation of all – staff, faculty and students – made it possible for the reviewers to complete their review through interviews, discussions and records. It is a tribute to all who participated in this program performance review that provided an environmental workplace for the evaluators making it conducive to gather information and to finalize their report.

The department celebrates many achievements and strengths of their program. Faculty ranks nationally in their research and have professors who are internationally respected in their fields, especially in intercultural communication. Faculty are engaged and students' evaluation and comments reflect their dedication and support to the students' educational journey as evidenced by opportunities for students to participate and co-author research gaining experience from this experience and encouraging scholarly endeavors.

The department is one of the few in the University that offers opportunities for graduate students in the discipline to teach 100-level communication courses – interpersonal and public speaking. The feedback from students underscores that these graduate students are outstanding, and it is reflective in their evaluations at semester's end. Teaching fellows receive high evaluations, and they hold students to high expectations and maintain department grade standards. Not only are teaching fellows helpful with filling part-time positions and budgetary restrictions, but it provides these graduate students an opportunity to experience teaching before launching a career into the profession.

The PPR reviewers had several comments about challenges, concerns and made some recommendations. Below are my responses and suggestions for the department.

- Course load – the standard course load for the University is 4/4, which is higher than most universities and colleges. Faculty can reduce the number of classes with reassignment time offered through grants and other opportunities. The PPR committee discussed the inequity of

class size and support. A K2 is determined by enrollment of 100 or more students. The inequity exists when class enrollment is under 100, yet no department policy for supporting large classes exists. I recommend that the department chair, along with coordinators, determine a class size that would benefit from a teaching assistant, then provide that support for the faculty. This should be affordable staying within the department budget.

- Student enrollment in the major area of Communication Studies, since the last program review, has made insignificant growth. The department offers new courses in social media and health communication. This is an opportunity to promote the major with options in these popular areas and prepare students for careers. It is recommended that the department create a recruitment plan and strategize its implementation. Reaching out to high schools and community colleges through campus visits and “Welcome to Fullerton Day” are opportunities to encourage prospects and increase majors. Faculty could be given reassignment time to dedicate to this effort.
- Another way to increase interest in the program is encouraging communication studies minors. Communication is an excellent complement to any major; this should be an easy “sell” and possibly lead to increased majors and advertise our program especially in the 100-level classes where many students are still undecided as to their major.
- Although the PPR committee criticized the college and department names as confusing students when choosing their major, this is a long-standing issue that has made some advancement – one department has submitted a department name and degree change to better reflect the industry and discipline – it is hopeful that this will encourage others to review their name and compromise for the sake of identification to avoid confusion for students seeking and declaring their majors. I highly recommend that this be conducted with respect and sensitivity for all – that it doesn’t divide departments, but rather encourages healthy discussions and options.
- The college website is currently being reconstructed with advice from a college committee led by the interim associate dean. The results should address the concerns raised by the PPR committee – more visibility, less text heavy, updated material and ease in navigation. The website has been a constant “work in progress” for several years attempting to make changes, yet comply with the University web standards.
- A newly hired development director is working with the college, department and special interest groups in the areas of sustainability of programs, funding sources, list of alums for contact, potential donors and grant support. The college has been without a director for almost two years, and it has greatly slowed our efforts in development. A 40-hour assistant is being hired to support the director, who is enthusiastic, and is meeting with key college faculty, department chairs and personnel. The first priority is funding for the forensic program that lost 50 percent of their annual funding support. The Provost, college and department have generously provided funds to sustain the program for the year, but it is imperative that the funding continues to be a priority for the forensic program.
- Lab space and technology – scheduling labs are concerning because of limited lab classrooms. To resolve this issue, a junior faculty member suggested a mobile computer cart – this has been ordered and will be available for the spring 2016 semester. Since the problematic classes do not need access to computers for each meeting, this cart will be scheduled as needed. This request was given to the dean and honored as part of the college strategic initiative budget for this purchase. This appears to have resolved the concern and the cart will be available to any faculty who needs computers on a “check-out” rotation.
- The College has one of the most robust internship programs with over 500 organizations to serve students’ disciplines. Two out of the three departments have mandatory internships for

their degrees. The department is encouraged to build their internships especially since we have a successful program that would require no additional funding or faculty efforts. We have an outstanding internship director who has a well-planned and developed program.

- As suggested by the PPR, it would be valuable to the graduate program to have data that provides student information, for example number of students accepted, those rejected and why, graduates, those who go on for a doctoral degree, career placement and additional data that will assess the program and could be used for recruitment and a benchmark for its progress.
- There are faculty with reassigned time who could easily take on some of the responsibilities above that would resolve the concerns. The department chair should use this opportunity to match compatible faculty with skills to dedicate to these issues.

In summary, the department faculty and staff, under the new chair leadership, have a few challenges, but overall they are strong, collaborative, hardworking, committed and know how to balance their careers with fun times such as celebrations for Halloween, St. Patrick's Day and other holidays. With the newly hired faculty and those who will come into the department in the fall 2016, I am confident that the issues brought out in the program review will be addressed and move the department forward.

I wish them well.