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COLLEGE OF
COMMUNICATIONS

Program Performance Review Report
Department of Human Communication Studies
Internal Reviewer: Heather Battaly, Philosophy Department, CSUF
June 15, 2007 (site visit: April 30, 2007)

Overview:

The Department of Human Communication Studies is doing a spectacular job in teaching, research, and service. Under the leadership of Kurt Kitselman, the department prepared a superb PPR document. During the site visit on April 30, 2007, interviews with undergraduate and graduate students in HCOM confirmed that they strongly and enthusiastically value both their education in Human Communication and the HCOM faculty. Interviews with staff confirmed that the department is a "great place to be", and that it has a reputation for helping students. Interviews with faculty confirmed that the department is collegial, supportive, and a "great place to work". Interviews with administrators confirmed that the department does excellent research, teaching, and community and university service. In section I below, I identify five strengths of the department: (1) faculty; (2) Forensics Program, SCUDL, and Town Hall; (3) Innovative Courses; (4) Collegiality; and (5) Strong M.A. program. In section II, I mention four concerns that were raised during the visit and make suggestions for resolving those concerns. The concerns are: (1) hiring new faculty; (2) heavy teaching load; (3) offering enough sections of required courses for the Major; (4) attracting more Majors. I take these concerns to be common to many smaller departments at CSUF, and perhaps smaller departments at Universities in the region, generally. My suggestions include: (1) reducing course loads and providing more assigned time for faculty; (2) scheduling more sections of required classes; and (3) considering scheduling full-time faculty to teach introductory GE K-2 classes.

I. Strengths:

1. Faculty

Everyone we interviewed enthusiastically agreed that the HCOM faculty are a terrific asset. Students described faculty as: "amazing"; "[they] care about the students"; "diverse"; "ready to help"; "accessible"; "passionate about what they teach"; "prepared us for careers in the field"; and "[having] a remarkable level of knowledge". Students also indicated that: "faculty set the example. Students want to be like their teachers. Many students want to get a Master's."; "[I am] learning a lot"; "[we are] learning life skills that we need"; and what we learn "applies to lots of different careers". This is indisputably high praise. These comments indicate that HCOM faculty are clearly effective in teaching and mentoring their students. HCOM faculty were also described as the "stars" of research. Together, the HCOM faculty

excel at research, teaching, and (see 2) service. This department has the whole package.

2. The Forensics Program, Southern California Urban Debate League (SCUDL), and Town Hall Series

The Forensics Program was described by many as “amazing”. That is because it is amazing. Simply put, CSUF has one of the best debate teams in the country! They have even defeated Harvard (and held the only slightly less prestigious honor of being on VH-1). The debate team has been ranked in the top 16 in the country every year for the last six years; and individual debaters have been recognized as “Debater of the Year”. This is a fantastic accomplishment, on a par with winning the College World Series. It should be part of CSUF’s marketing campaign; and should be part of our 50th anniversary celebrations. If it were up to me, I would have a parade.

SCUDL is an outreach program which teams CSUF debaters with public high school students (many of whom are at risk of dropping out). CSUF’s current top debater (and one of the top debaters in the whole country) was a high school student in the SCUDL program. The SCUDL program is a paradigm of successful community service.

The Town Hall series is another superb example of community and university service. I suggest that marketing for the Town Hall series emphasize the role of HCOM. Before doing this performance review, I did not know that faculty in HCOM organized the Town Hall Meetings. To attract Majors and Minors, HCOM might even consider doing a follow-up workshop or discussion (on a smaller scale) on the topic of the town hall meeting.

3. Innovative Courses

The department has recently developed three new courses to attract students to the Major. One of these courses focuses on Leadership, and functions as an interdisciplinary course with the College of Business; the second focuses on the “Dark Side” of communication; and the third on Health communication, a “hot” area in the discipline. The department is also in the process of developing a minor in conflict resolution, mediation, and arbitration, and is thinking about creating a center for conflict resolution on campus. This is a wonderful idea; and one that might attract more majors who plan to go on to law school or MPA programs; and provide opportunities for (even more) outreach to the community.

4. Collegiality

It was obvious from conversations with faculty, staff, and students that this is a collegial and thriving department. Students described the department as “open-minded. You feel comfortable to do what you want.” The collegiality of HCOM should be a model for us all.

5. Strong M.A. Program

Administrators, faculty, and graduate students agreed that the M.A. program in HCOM is strong. Graduate students reported that they are prepared to enter careers in their fields. Several graduates of the M.A. program have gone on to doctoral

programs. Hiring new faculty is essential for maintaining the high caliber of the M.A. program. HCOM recently lost two faculty members. It is vital that they hire several new faculty in a variety of fields in order to serve the needs of their M.A. students.

II. Concerns and Possible Solutions:

The following concerns were raised in the PPR document, or during the site visit.

1. Hiring New Faculty

In order to maintain the caliber of the M.A. program, the Forensics Team, and the undergraduate program, the department must hire new faculty. The department plans to hire three new faculty during the '07-'08 academic year: one in Health Communication; another in Rhetoric; and a third in Intercultural Communication. Each of these hires is essential to the program. Health Communication is a "hot" area in the discipline. The department has already developed a new course in Health Communication, and plans to hire in this area in part to attract new majors who are interested in careers in health communication and to make connections with other departments and Colleges. The skills of argument and rhetoric are an essential component of Human Communication, of every HCOM Major's degree, and of every career in Human Communication. The Debate Team's training in argument and rhetoric is directly linked to their success. In order to maintain the superb quality of Fullerton's debate team, hiring in Rhetoric is necessary. The department has recently lost two faculty in the area of Intercultural Communication. In order to maintain the strength of the M.A. program, the department must hire in this area.

The department has recently had some difficulty hiring because of low salaries and a heavy teaching load (4-4).

Possible Solution: To make competitive hires, I strongly suggest that the department receive additional assigned time, and salary equity. A 4-4 teaching load is prohibitive for attracting and retaining superb researchers and teachers. This assigned time should take two forms: (1) reducing the teaching load to an unofficial 3-3 for every junior faculty member, or for all non-FERPing tenured and tenure-track faculty; (2) faculty should be able to earn a course off for advising some agreed-upon number of M.A. theses; e.g., one course off for every 5 M.A. theses advised.

One cannot unofficially reduce the load to a 3-3 without meeting the department's target enrollment. To meet enrollment, the department might consider increasing class size; and asking tenured and tenure-track faculty to teach large K-2 sections of introductory-level GE courses. Of course, this suggestion is controversial, and would increase the department's SFR. On the other hand, it would make the department more attractive to candidates, and it might also attract new Majors.

If faculty were given an added incentive to advise M.A. theses, this would further strengthen the M.A. program, recognize the value of faculty work, and occasionally allow faculty a course-off so that they can do more research. The benefits of an added incentive far outweigh any disadvantages.

2. Heavy Teaching Load

The 4-4 teaching load of the department has impaired its ability to hire, and, even in a wonderfully collegial department like HCOM, cannot help but affect faculty morale.

Possible Solution: (1) reduce the teaching load to an unofficial 3-3 as described above; (2) ensure that faculty receive salary equity; (3) increase the faculty travel budget and other budgets for incidentals. Reducing the teaching load to an unofficial 3-3 will improve the quality of life for faculty. Some faculty are spending their own money for incidentals. The department should cover these expenses. I suggest that the travel budget for each faculty member increase to \$2000.00/year.

3. **Offering Enough Sections of Required Courses for the Major**
Undergraduates indicated that they have difficulty getting into HCOM 420 and HCOM 300, and that this may be delaying their graduations. They also indicated that many courses are offered at the same time.

Possible solution: Schedule more sections of required courses for the Major, including HCOM 420 and HCOM 300. If multiple required sections for the Major are offered at the same times, offer them at a variety of times.

4. **Attracting Majors**

Several faculty indicated a desire to increase the number of undergraduate Majors (there are currently 137); and undergraduate students expressed the wish that “more people know about the Major”. Most of the undergraduate students in the class we visited were Majors, and most of those Majors were transfer students. The department is already developing ways to attract new Majors; including developing new innovative courses, and a minor in conflict resolution.

Possible solutions: Some further possible strategies are: (1) increased marketing of the Major; (2) asking tenured and tenure-track faculty to teach large K-2 sections of introductory-level GE courses; (3) encouraging undergraduate students to start an HCOM club; (4) changing the name of the undergraduate degree to “Communication Studies”.

The HCOM department is doing fantastic work, and more people on campus should know about it. Perhaps, the department can host a “Debate Day”, during which CSUF debaters talk with prospective Majors and interested students about the department, Major, and the Debate Team. The department (faculty and students) might also consider hosting a follow up discussion/workshop on the topic of the Town Hall meeting. This could simply be a lunch-time discussion which is well advertised on campus; or even an on-line discussion, which is likewise well advertised.

If tenured and tenure-track faculty taught intro-level K2 GE classes, two goals might be simultaneously accomplished: lowering the teaching load to an unofficial 3-3; and attracting more Majors from the first-year class. The former option is discussed above. With regard to the latter, most of the students we interviewed were transfer students. By putting full-time faculty in large intro-level GE courses, one is more likely to attract Majors from those courses. It is my understanding that the M.A. students teach many of the intro-level courses. This may be helping the M.A. program, but impeding the department’s ability to attract Majors from CSUF’s first-

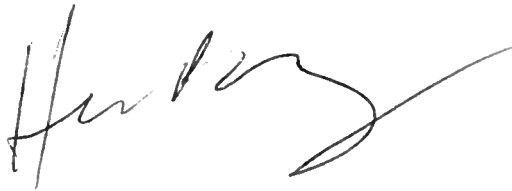
year class. I have no doubt that this would be a successful way to attract undergraduate Majors.

Apparently, undergraduates in HCOM do not have a club. The Major will likely grow if they do. In my own department, the Philosophy Club does a lot on its own that is effective in attracting new Majors. Additionally, a Club provides Majors and Minors an opportunity to talk with other students about advising, to plan events, and to create a smaller community within a large state university.

Finally, changing the name of the degree that Majors earn to "Communication Studies" will likely make marketing for the Major straightforward. Prospective Majors will be able to identify HCOM courses and the department with the name of the degree earned.

It has been a pleasure to evaluate the HCOM department. They are doing a wonderful job. I hope that this report is useful. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me via email, at hbattaly@fullerton.edu; or via phone at ext. 7180.

Heather Battaly
Associate Professor of Philosophy
California State University Fullerton

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heather Battaly", written in a cursive style.

Program Proposal Review
Department of Philosophy, California State University, Fullerton

Submitted by:
K. Jeanine Congalton, Internal Reviewer
Department of Human Communication Studies
California State University, Fullerton

Introduction

Dr. Judy Miles, the external reviewer and I, were provided with copies of the department's self-study. During the "review," Dr. Miles and I met with Dr. Klammer, department faculty members, and undergraduate majors. Dr. Miles and I agreed to submit separate reports. This report is divided into two major sections: a response to the department's self study and a report (perceptions of departmental culture) based on my interviews with faculty and students. Several issues in section two are linked to the department's self-study. Page numbers refer to the PPR/Self Study.

Response to the Self-Study

The self-study is thorough. The "Missions and Goals" and "Learning Goals" are clearly stated. I applaud the department for the detailed consideration of "Mission and Goals" and "Learning Goals."

I noted that there was much attention devoted to programmatic assessment. That information will be valuable as the department continues to direct attention to alumni. The department can use the assessment data to further relationships with alumni. Perhaps the "web presence" (p. 12) could be used to survey alumni as to how "the major" influenced career paths and/or taught skills that are critical in the "real world." The survey data could be useful in responding to concerns that "[t]he strongest negative feelings were expressed by students regarding their future plans after graduation" (p. 21). The department home page could link faculty, majors, and alumni.

Given increasing attention to "learning outcomes," priority could be directed to highlighting the connection between the learning goals and knowledge outcomes. The explanation of learning goals as listed in course syllabi is explicit. The answer to whether students "achieve" mastery of these goals (for example, the goals for the philosophy major) needs to be clarified.

As I read the self-study, I noted that the perceived "weaknesses" appeared to be external attributions. That perception of weaknesses tied primarily to "external constraints" was confirmed in the conclusions section of the self-study (p. 23). Several threats are also directly tied to the external environment. Interviews with individual faculty members reinforced concerns with these external constraints. For example, faculty members are frustrated with limited funds for professional travel, the "lag" time for reimbursement for travel, and understanding how to "survive" the institutional bureaucracy. There is also a concern with a perceived lack of response to sabbatical proposals. The obvious suggestion is for the department to seek means to manage the institutional bureaucracy and to move some energy into internal attempts to address these weaknesses and threats. The performance review, for example, indicates that potential funding from intramural travel grants is "inadequate" (p. 10). The report, however, does not specify whether faculty members have achieved any level of success in securing such grants. The pursuit of internal grants will not solve the problem, but could reduce personal costs associated with conference travel. Although not in place, as the department continues to engage in alumni fund raising efforts (p. 12), there is the possibility that some funding might be designated for faculty development and travel.

Perceptions of Departmental Culture

Overview

The Department of Philosophy can be described as a “family.” Rarely have I witnessed such camaraderie among faculty members. Faculty members, for example, consistently emphasized the professional support given to them. There appeared to be no perception of a “junior-senior” hierarchy, a perception that can negatively influence working environments. This sense of family is also reflected in the interactions between faculty members and students. Faculty members are invested in each other and in the students. The students are committed to individual faculty members and to the department as a whole. Given this strong connection between the department and students, I have included a “separate section” related to students. The atmosphere is one of mutual respect and support.

Commitment to maintaining an open environment

The Department of Philosophy is made up of a core of excellent faculty members. With the addition of new faculty and with two additional searches under way, the department continues to grow. Although departmental members have a respect for the history and tradition of the department, there is the realization that the process of department decision making can or is likely to change. The department, however, is receptive to discussing such “change.” The potential for the greatest changes appear to be in instruction, research, and departmental procedures.

The department has utilized creative strategies for providing opportunities for faculty members to teach in specialty areas. These same strategies have allowed the department to serve an increasing number of students, to recruit majors, and to recruit minors (p. 4). Faculty members have taught courses in other departments, have taught courses that are cross listed, and have participated in University sponsored programs (see, for example, pp. 5, 7, 8, & 25). These exchanges with the external environment have served to introduce a variety of students to the department.

During the review, I observed Dr. Amy Coplan’s Introduction to Philosophy course. Dr. Coplan’s enthusiasm and sense of immediacy fosters a positive learning environment. For example, although the course is a “large lecture” (K2) course, the majority of class members participated in class discussion. Students demonstrated an interest in and an understanding of both “classical” and “contemporary” philosophical principles. I commend Dr. Coplan for her ability to clearly link these principles. After observing this class session, I understand why students are increasingly interested in enrolling in philosophy courses.

A unique instructional opportunity is found in the annual Philosophy Symposium. This event brings scholars of varied backgrounds and research interests to campus. The symposium provides the opportunity for philosophy students to interact with leading scholars. As the self-study indicates, the symposium does make philosophy “accessible to a broader audience” (p. 9). Given that a number of departments should have interest in the symposium topic/speakers, I urge the department, the college, and the university to continue to publicize and support this noteworthy event.

Issues for discussion (instruction): 1. In order to reach a range of students, the department should discuss the possibility of increasing on-line instruction. 2. The department should consider the effects of faculty teaching in other departments and/or teaching cross listed courses. For example, consideration can focus on whether these outreach strategies affect tenured and tenure track faculty members' ability to teach the core curriculum. 3. If such outreach increases the need for part-time faculty (which might increase the time necessary for evaluations – see, for example, pp. 10 & 14), what criteria should be developed to weigh the advantages/disadvantages of these outreach strategies?

Faculty members recognize the importance of establishing a research agenda. From discussions with individuals, the recognition that faculty members, especially those new to the department, can engage in rigorous programs of research and not sacrifice efforts in the classroom was apparent. Several “newer” faculty members acknowledged the tremendous support provided by departmental colleagues. The issue is how to find “time” for faculty members to conduct research. This issue becomes increasingly important in a department where faculty members invest much of their time working with individual students. The department has begun to address this issue by developing “large lecture” (K2) courses (see, for example, pp. 4 & 11). These course offerings, although constrained by a limited availability of “large lecture” classrooms, have provided some relief to the faculty teaching load.

Issue for discussion (research): There is a need for faculty members, teachers who are committed to spending time with individual students, to find blocks of time to pursue programmatic research endeavors.

Suggestions: 1. Use the success of recent “large lecture” (K2) classes as means to pursue greater access to classrooms. 2. Consider providing opportunities to teach “large lecture” classes on a rotating basis. Individual faculty members would then have the option to either accept or reject a “large lecture” teaching assignment. 3. Determine whether a number of “independent studies” could function as a “special topics” course.

The department is composed of people who understand and appreciate the traditions of departmental processes and procedures. As the department grows, faculty members might explore new ways to manage departmental affairs. For example, my understanding is that here has been an implicit agreement that the role of department chair will rotate every 3 years. Although such implicit agreements are an important part of the current decision making, there is no guarantee that such agreements will continue.

Issue for discussion (department procedures): Faculty members, especially newer faculty members, need to be familiar with the processes by which department “work” is accomplished.

Suggestion: 1. The department could explore developing a policy and procedures manual. That manual could include descriptions of the everyday operations of the department. Those operations could include, for example, how classes are scheduled. Such a process is already in progress, for example, with the document addressing the evaluation of part-time instructors.

Interview with students

Conversations with the philosophy students (all were majoring in philosophy) reveal an overwhelmingly positive perception of the department. Students expressed appreciation for the investment faculty members make in them. Virtually every student cited an example of how a faculty member has “gone above and beyond the call of duty” to help students. One student, for example, noted that during the summer, a faculty member contacted him. The faculty member wanted to inform the student about an upcoming conference so that the student might submit a paper to that conference. Faculty members work to prepare students for attending and for presenting papers at conferences. Students offered high praise for the quality of academic advising provided to them. Whether preparing to attend law school or preparing to pursue an advanced degree in philosophy, students complimented the faculty advisers for directing them to classes, conferences, and/or internship opportunities.

Students perceived the department curriculum to be fair. Students noted a balance between Analytic and Continental philosophy. Moreover, students explained that they do not perceive being “pushed” toward one perspective. Instead, students are free to pursue their own specialized interests.

Students also indicated that the “department” listens to their suggestions and/or concerns related to the times and dates that courses are offered. Students, for example, believe that the department responded to concerns about how often the Kant seminar was offered. Students indicated that the course is now taught every semester (see pp. 11-12).

Students noted a number of opportunities provided for them. Those students who have worked as undergraduate teaching assistants/tutorial assistants expressed their appreciation for this opportunity. One student noted, for example, that this teaching/tutorial experience furthered his desire to attend graduate school and to ultimately enter the teaching profession.

The students offered only a few suggestions for improvements. Generally, the students suggested that the introductory philosophy courses should include an agreed upon, common core of information. Students noted that from time to time, course instruction can be interrupted, as students in upper division courses do not always have similar levels of background understanding of basic philosophical ideas. Students also suggested that one solution to this lack of basic level of understanding in upper division courses might be solved by requiring all philosophy majors, even those who have met the critical thinking requirement, to enroll in an introduction to logic course.

Issue for discussion: Course instruction in advanced courses can be interrupted by the varied levels of student understanding of basic philosophy.

Suggestions: 1. Faculty can develop a list of basic principles that must be included in all introductory courses. 2. Require all majors to enroll in an introductory logic course.

Conclusion

This review focused on the department's self study and on observations from interactions with faculty and students. The issues for discussion and suggestions are not meant to suggest that the department should consider re-structuring its curriculum or its procedures. Rather, I hope that the "issues" and "suggestions" provide starting points for conversations related to the department's continued growth. If requested, I would be willing to provide a more comprehensive discussion of any of these major points.

I was struck by the sense of community in the department. Faculty members appreciate the support of their colleagues. The culture is such that traditions are respected and change is welcomed. These exceptional faculty members are devoted to instruction and to research. Without a doubt, the department is committed to the "university." I hope that the college and the university appreciate and recognize the contributions of the Department of Philosophy.