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To: Su Swarat, Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness

From: Sheryl Fontaine, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Date: April 15, 2019

Subject: Dean's Summary and Evaluation, Department of Liberal Studies Program Performance Review for the B.A.

The Department of Liberal Studies is comprised of eight full-time faculty members. They serve 518 majors, 9 declared Liberal Studies and Food Studies minors, and an FTES target of 200. The department exposes undergraduate students to a liberal arts curriculum that emphasizes interdisciplinary thinking, particularly between the natural sciences and the humanities and social sciences. The Department is the College's powerhouse for training future elementary school teachers. It is also the department that is best poised to work "across the quad" with departments from STEM fields.

The Liberal Studies Department is able to think strategically about their future because of their collegiality. As the External Review team noted, faculty, staff, and students feel respected, valued, and heard. I applaud the Department for maintaining this productive environment.

#### Areas of Achievement

The Department of Liberal Studies has created a thoughtful Self Study that represents how carefully they approach their curriculum and students. Using assessment-based processes, they have developed an upper-division, four-semester core, which is mapped onto their learning goals, and they are regularly using their assessment processes to develop further innovations. It is no surprise, then, that their four-year freshman graduation rate exceeds the university average by 17% (37% versus 20%) and their two-year transfer graduation rate exceeds the university average by 9 percent (38% versus 29%). This curriculum, and the superior teaching of that curriculum, has prepared their students to successfully complete the CSET with an 85% pass rate. Once approved, their application for the CSET waiver will provide their students with another avenue to become effective teachers.

As will be discussed more below, their challenge lies in retaining majors within their department. They are beginning to think about how to build stronger ties with their incoming freshmen, and how to use their curricular strengths to draw more students by developing minors. First, leveraging their faculty's interdisciplinary expertise (highlighted in their highly successful



interdisciplinary conferences), they will create a minor in Science, Medicine, and Society. Beyond servicing the students in Humanities and Social Sciences, this minor will provide students in Health and Human Development and the Natural Sciences and Mathematics with an avenue to reflect on the broader social implications of their career paths. Second, they are developing a minor in Liberal Studies for Elementary Education (expected to be offered first in Fall 20), that will offer Child and Adolescent Studies majors a way to supplement their studies with the traditional liberal arts training that will help them in their future elementary school classrooms.

### Areas of Opportunity

The students who the External Review Team spoke to (many of whom congregate in the Department's center lounge) have found a place to call their "home." Yet, the Department loses a significant number of their freshmen to other majors in the University. I am encouraged to hear that the Department is conceiving of ways to bring more freshman and sophomore students into the fold so they feel more connected to the Department. I encourage the Department to continue working with Interim Associate Dean of Student Relations, Jessica Stern, and the H&SS Student Success Team to implement some of the Dean's Fellow for Student Success, Devon Thacker Thomas's, suggestions (use of registration holds, peer mentoring programs, and other community-building activities).

Ninety-five percent of Liberal Studies students are pursuing a K-12 teaching career. As the department thoughtfully elucidates in their self-study, their reliance on future teachers leaves them vulnerable to fluctuations in the job trends in the Orange County school system. It also leaves them open to competition from the other major teaching-preparation department on the campus, Child and Adolescent Studies, which, the Dean's Office's research reveals, siphons off roughly 25 percent of students who enter as Liberal Studies majors. I am hopeful that the CSET waiver, once approved, will draw students reliably into Liberal Studies classrooms. As the department requested, I have reached out to the Dean of the College of Education about the College's plans for the Integrated Teacher Education Program (ITEP). COE is piloting a program now and, if successful, will expand the program to Elementary Education.

In addition to anticipating enrollment growth that might result to these possible changes, the department should look internally to clarify their uniqueness from CAS, giving students not just an additional way to complete teacher prep but an optional way.

For example, the Department's future goal to hire a position in Diversity in the Arts and Humanities suggests their interest in highlighting diversity and access in their curriculum. In anticipation of such a faculty position and as a way to distinguish the program, the Department could start building a curriculum that would prepare future teachers to enter our incredibly diverse



Orange County school system. This curriculum would give the Department an opportunity to work with other departments, such as those in Ethnic Studies, to revise the Liberal Studies Education Emphasis to include more course requirements that highlight diverse perspectives on traditional topics. Or it may require creating a parallel emphasis designed specifically for students who aspire to teach in programs dedicated to embracing diversity, such as one of the many dual-immersion elementary schools taking root in Southern California. Such an emphasis would be unique at CSUF, and give Liberal Studies some control over enrollments by creating identity in contrast to Child and Adolescent Studies. It may create a pathway from the Liberal Studies major to a post-secondary degree offered by the department of Elementary and Bilingual Education. Successfully implementing this new curriculum would require that the Department craft a five-year plan.

I agree with the External Review team that more of the Liberal Studies courses should be offered by tenure and tenure-track faculty as one way to retain (or grow) the number of majors. It is important that before tenure and tenure-track faculty are encouraged to teach for other units in the university all lower- and upper-division LBST courses are staffed with full-time faculty. The increased demand for courses in B5: Explorations in the Sciences spurred by EO 1100r presents an excellent opportunity for those faculty who are trained as historians of science to develop and teach more courses in their specialty for the department. With regards to online teaching, it is true that offering LBST 100 and 101 online may offer students more options and would also make these courses available for CourseMatch, thus generating more income that faculty could use for research and conference travel. But CourseMatch revenue cannot be the impetus for developing an online presence. I suggest that your department have a serious discussion about its goals for online instruction within the curriculum and that tenure track faculty explore developments in online teaching make that mode of teaching appealing. The Faculty Development Center is a great resource. Associate Deans Jessica Stern and Paul Levesque would also be happy to put you into contact with faculty in H&SS who are using online teaching in productive ways.