

Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo American Studies, BA & MA

The 2021-2022 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for the American Studies, BA and MA programs in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) concluded with a culmination meeting on December 15, 2022.

The following people attended the meeting: Carolyn Thomas (Provost), Ed Fink (AVP for Undergraduate Academic Programs, AVPUAP), Elaine Frey (AVP for Graduate Studies, AVPGS), Sheryl Fontaine (Dean, HSS), Jessica Stern (Associate Dean, HSS), Terri Snyder (Department Chair), Adam Golub (Graduate Advisor), Dustin Abnet (Faculty), Jesse Battan (Faculty), Sara Fingal (Faculty), Eric Gonzaba (Faculty), Alison Kanosky (Faculty), Carrie Lane (Faculty), Elaine Lewinnek (Faculty), Susie Woo (Faculty), and Su Swarat (Senior AVP for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, SAVPIEP).

The Provost congratulated the program for successfully completing the PPR process, and thanked the faculty for participating in thoughtful reflection. The full presence of the faculty at the PPR meeting is a sign of collegiality and an indication of the faculty's commitment to department success. The following specific accomplishments were highlighted during the PPR process:

- The program is a model of excellence in offering an innovative and interdisciplinary curriculum and for its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and student success. The Provost commended the department for cultivating faculty expertise to meet students' ever-changing needs.
- The program has successfully fostered students' critical thinking and writing skills.
- Students from General Education courses have been successfully recruited to major or minor in American Studies. Students feel connected to the program and the faculty.
- Faculty promote a respectful culture of collegiality, communication and collaboration that contribute to a shared sense of mission and service. Their commitment to service and teaching is evident in their innovativeness, rigor, and creativity as educators and scholars who have received significant grants and publications. The Provost commented that faculty in the department, including part-time faculty, feel supported.

Major recommendations and issues raised through the PPR process were discussed as follows:

1. Program enrollment

- The external reviewers recommended greater visibility of the department in order to increase student engagement (e.g., updating website, maintaining an active social media presence, communicating with surrounding high schools and community colleges).
- The AVPGS pointed out that for the MA program, enrollment in fall 2022 experienced a decrease. While the program's strong yield is promising, more applications are needed. As such, the AVPGS agreed with the external reviewers, and encouraged the department to make its high-quality teaching and research activities more visible in the outreach space to attract more applicants. For example, 14 students went into PhD programs during this PPR review period, an impressive achievement that should be highlighted to potential students.
- The AVPUAP suggested the use of graduate students to help with marketing efforts such as social media and website design/maintenance.

Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo American Studies, BA & MA

2. Curriculum

- The external reviewers recommended careful considerations when integrating new courses into existing curriculum to ensure that curricular changes are interdisciplinary and holistic, and reflect the changes of the field. Additionally, they recommended the program to consider creative approaches in final required projects (e.g., podcast), rather than a traditional research paper, in order to better demonstrate students' knowledge and skills and thus facilitate their employment upon graduation.
- The AVPGS pointed out that the MA program electives are all undergraduate (400-) level courses. She encouraged the faculty to consider adding graduate level electives.
- The AVPUAP encouraged the department to balance adding new courses with avoiding course cancellation due to low enrollment, as courses not offered for five years are subject to course retirement. The AVPUAP encouraged the department Chair to reach out when course retirements are pending but scheduling issues arise, and emphasized that there is flexibility in these retirements.
- The Chair acknowledge the concern, and responded the it is difficult to balance offering new courses to meet student needs with maintaining the traditional (though still relevant) curriculum. With a small department, there are not enough faculty to teach both new and traditional courses. The department strives to add to the GE and upper-division curriculum, but it stretches the faculty thin.
- The faculty echoed that the electives are often only taught by certain faculty with specific expertise. The university course retirement policy in a way drives course offerings as faculty try to schedule courses to avoid course retirement.
- The Provost urged the department to have conversations about course offerings, and recommended against the approach of "only one person can teach a particular course". She encouraged that faculty to address the close tie between faculty expertise and course offerings as a constraint.
- The Chair noted that the department's spring retreat will focus on curricular issues.

3. Curriculum roadmaps

- The AVPUAP inquired about the roadmaps for the BA program, particularly for possible double majors.
- The Chair acknowledged that the program is a popular double-major destination. She reported that some progress has been made, such as the roadmap for elementary education and American Studies double majors. The department also seeks to guide student along the roadmap through advising.
- The Provost stated that the campus new advising model will help guide students explore majors and help them understand the breath of majors offered. This may help students discover majors like American Studies.
- The Associate Dean added that designated advisors within the college have also been effective in increasing majors and minors in the BA program.

4. Budget

- The faculty voiced the concern of high SFR for the department (in a college with the highest SFR among the colleges), where part-time faculty teach a heavy load of 4-5 GE classes. They asked the SFRs to be distributed more equitably across colleges.

**Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo
American Studies, BA & MA**

- The Provost stated that NACUBO consultants will be brought in to examine the true cost of instruction, which could help address this issue. While she will advocate for equalizing resources for the division outside the colleges, she recommended the department to work with the Dean's office to examine how college resources are distributed within.

The Dean commended the faculty for being present and engaged on campus, and being committed to each other as a supportive community. The Provost concluded the meeting by thanking the faculty for their excellent contribution to the university, and the department and college leadership for their hard work.