

Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo Sociology BA & MA

The 2021-2022 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for the Sociology, BA and MA programs in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) concluded with a culmination meeting on December 9, 2022.

The following people attended the meeting: Carolyn Thomas (Provost), Edward Fink (AVP for Undergraduate Academic Programs, AVPUAP), Elaine Frey (AVP for Graduate Studies, AVPGS), Sheryl Fontaine (Dean, HSS), Jessica Stern (Associate Dean, HSS), Berna Torr (Department Chair), Devon Thacker Thomas (faculty), and Su Swarat (Senior AVP for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, SAVPIEP).

The Provost congratulated the programs for successfully completing the PPR process and achieved an excellent review from the external reviewers. The Provost commended the department as a great destination for students where students find a strong sense of belonging. The following specific accomplishments were highlighted during the PPR process:

- The undergraduate program has grown in the number and diversity of students, both with respect to majors and GE students. The Provost commended the remarkable growth since the last PPR, which serves as an indicator of the department's efforts in supporting students
- The program leads the college in terms of first-year and transfer student retention and degree completion.
- The program serves as an exemplary model of advising and implementing student support programs such as Transfer Learning Community, tutoring and peer mentorship.
- Improved curriculum enables students to participate in high-impact practices such as student research and service-learning.
- Despite the slight decline in graduate enrollment, there has been a considerable increase in graduation rates. The decrease in cohort size reflects a targeted effort toward a strong faculty-student mentorship. The graduate program creates pipelines for careers in community colleges, doctoral sociology programs and other professional graduate degrees (i.e. Education, Law, etc). The provost commends the department for paying specific attention to connecting the graduate curriculum to student needs.
- The program has improved in faculty retention and successfully hired new faculty to fill curricular gaps through their expanded expertise. Part-time faculty are well integrated within the department by partaking in various leadership roles.
- The program has in place a rigorous and systematic assessment plan that is implemented and utilized effectively to guide decisions, revisions, and improvement.

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

1. Enrollment

- The AVPGS pointed out that while the MA program enrollment and degree awarded over the last few years have been stable, the program is not meeting the goal of having a cohort of 15.
- The Chair concurred with the observation, and stated that outreach efforts are currently limited primarily to CSUF's own students. The program is starting to attract more students from other CSUs and non-CSU institutions, which requires different outreach

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strategies. As such, the program will need support from the university to outreach to students outside of CSUF.

- The Chair also reported that the MA program is observing a shift from teaching- to PhD-bound among the students. With more students choose to pursue the thesis option, the level of mentorship needed has increased. One issue the program faces is the uneven mentorship distribution between faculty, which contributes to the limited cohort size. The department is working to add mentorship expectations to the DPS.
- The Provost stated that the university wants to grow graduate programs in the upcoming years, and recommended the program to work with the AVPGS to develop specific strategies to do so.
- The SAVPIEP recommended the program to examine historical admission data to project admission yield, and use that information to set outreach goals.

2. Graduate student support:

- The external reviewers recommended additional resources to support graduate program recruitment and retention. The AVPGS suggested the possibility of partnering with community colleges to provide graduate students with teaching internships.
- The Chair stated that such partnership is in place with local community colleges (e.g. Mt. Sac), but the challenge is the current declining enrollment at the community colleges. The community colleges need to prioritize fulfilling teaching assignments for their full-time faculty first before offering teaching internships to graduate students. She is concerned about the availability of internships at community colleges moving forward.
- The Chair also voiced the challenges associated with providing financial support to undocumented students, a common problem across departments. The Provost stated that she would bring the problem to relevant campus partners to seek solutions.

3. Possible undergraduate concentrations:

- The AVPUAP inquired whether the BA program should add more concentrations given its popularity.
- The Chair stated that the department is hesitant to promote concentrations because of the following reasons: 1) Currently only 10% of the students are in the concentrations; 2) More resources are required to manage students in the concentrations; 3) The curricular requirements for concentrations could be more limiting and hence affecting timely graduation.
- The Provost commended the department's focus on a streamlined curriculum, and agreed that too many concentrations could be too complicated for the students.

4. Advising:

- a. The department pointed out that its enrollment growth resulted in growing demand for advising and thus more funding to support advisors (faculty, staff, or GAs).
- b. The Provost reported that the university is revamping the advising model, particularly for 1st and 2nd year students. The department should work with the university model to address advising needs.
- c. The Associate Dean commented that the department has a plan to support a staff advisor at upper-division level to be in sync with the university model.

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5. Classroom needs:

- The PPR process highlighted the department's need for more dedicated classrooms, including a computer lab, in response to the increased enrollment (for the BA program).
- The Chair stated that the department has four classrooms, which are not enough to accommodate the enrollment growth. This is particularly challenging now since students are reluctant to return due to crowded classroom arrangement. The biggest challenge is with the statistics course where computer labs are needed to teach SPSS.
- The SAVPIEP recommended the department to work with IT on this issue, and is happy to assist if needed.

The Dean commended the Sociology department for being “a citizen of the college” that often serves as a role model and is always willing to partner with other departments. The BA and MA programs both help students develop a “habit of mind” upon graduation, allowing them to have a positive impact in their communities. The Provost concluded the meeting by thanking the college and department leadership, as well as the faculty and staff, for their dedication and hard work.