**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2021-2022**

**Department: 0240** – Communication

**Date of Review:** March 29, 2022

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Anthony Ponder, Provost

Jennifer Kostic, Associate Provost

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Charles Long, Advising Manager, Academic Advising

Chris Welch, Director, Student Enrichment

Clay Pittman, Chair/Professor, Aviation

Charles Freeland, Professor, English

Heather Parsons, Director of Advising for the Department of Communication, University of Dayton

Jeffrey Vance, Professor, Economics

Korrin Ziswiler, Director, Admissions

**Department Members Present:**

Phyllis Adams, Interim Dean, Liberal Arts, Communication and Social Sciences

David Bodary, Chair/Professor, Communication

Faculty:

Heidi Arnold, Professor, Communication

Myra Bozeman, Professor, Communication

Kara Burnett, Associate Professor, Communication

Nadine Cichy, Professor, Communication

Mia Hubbard, Assistant Professor, Communication

Rob Leonard, Professor, Communication

Heidi McGrew, Professor, Communication

Jessica McKinley, Professor, Communication

Kelly Smith, Associate Professor, Communication

John Ulrich, Annual Contracted Faculty, Communication

Staff:

Holly Cousino, Administrative Assistant, Communication

Jessica Graue, Clarion Advisor

**Commendations:**

* Without question, this is a remarkable department. This department has the good fortune to be led by a seasoned, experienced, and highly regarded chairperson. Faculty in the department are leaders in this college on many committees across campus, and have a reputation for a high level of engagement outside of their department. These cross-campus connections are impressive, and speak to the quality and commitment of the faculty in the department. But more importantly, it is a department with a commitment to the success and learning of Sinclair students, both the students in their programs and the students from other programs across the College that they serve. Their concern for the success, welfare, and mental health of Sinclair students is exemplary.
* It also appears to be a department that understands the value of teamwork and camaraderie. The Review Team was impressed with the level of engagement of faculty in the meeting –each faculty member was an active participant, most responded to questions multiple times and offered multiple insights. It was also revealing the way faculty spoke of other members of the department – there was clearly a strong level of respect for each other, and a willingness to share credit for successes. It was truly a pleasure to see a department with such a high level of collegiality in their interactions with each other.
* Among the many areas at Sinclair where this department demonstrates leadership, assessment is one of the most important. Faculty in the department have been heavily involved in assessment efforts at Sinclair for decades, serving in key roles on the Assessment Committee and as Division Assessment Coordinator. In many ways faculty in this department are titans of assessment at Sinclair, embedding good assessment methodology into their practices, and being pioneers that have helped lead the way for the rest of the College.
* Along these lines, the work the COM department has done with use of the Oral Communication rubric has been absolutely essential in the College’s efforts to gather and analyze data at an institutional level. While this has been a heavy lift for the department, Communication faculty have truly been collaborators in helping establish the rubric-based assessment approach at Sinclair, and in demonstrating the viability of the approach. This is a department that others look to for sound assessment practice, one that has blazed the trail for other departments to follow in the utilization of rubrics to collect assessment data.
* In the past two decades social media has changed in the landscape in the Communication field in ways no one could have predicted, and the department has done a masterful job of keeping up with this rapidly evolving field. The department was quick to recognize the impact social media would have on the occupations they are preparing their students to go into, and have responded quickly and comprehensively to incorporate new approaches into their curriculum.
* The New Media certificate and the emphasis on new social media trends is just one of many examples of how forward-thinking and student-centered this department is.
* The department has an impressive – and greatly needed - focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This emphasis extends beyond Sinclair campuses, and includes significant faculty outreach to Dayton communities of color, especially in local high schools. This outreach was especially impressive to the Review Team. The department provided evidence that they are closing the equity gap and took the time in the self-study to disaggregate data in ways that allowed for examination of how equity gaps are being addressed.
* The many awards and accolades that students in the department have received are a testament to the strong impact that faculty have in terms of student learning and achievement. The awards and accolades received by faculty further attest to the high quality of department personnel.
* The department also develops strong connections with the students in its programs, connections that appear to extend beyond the students’ time at Sinclair. The department is able to talk about what their students achieve during their time in the program, and what many of them achieve post-graduation.
* The Review Team also commends the department on their exceptional work around their capstone course – it is invaluable as a final preparation for students who are leaving Sinclair. The internships that are part of the Journalism program are also impressive.
* The department deserves recognition for the hard work done around moving courses to a remote format at the onset of the pandemic in Spring 2020. Considering the number of sections and number of students involved in this transition, it was a truly Herculean effort, and one that the department completed with remarkable efficiency and professionalism.
* The recommendations from the previous Program Review were clearly prioritized by the department, which speaks to their willingness to take external feedback they receive and use it for continuous improvement.
* Finally, the Review Team wishes to recognize the importance of the work this department does – as stated in the self-study, “given the current conditions relating to misinformation, disinformation, and fake news proliferation…additional educational attention is needed with respect to student understanding and use of mediated information, including the impact of social media use”. The department does an outstanding job of providing this “additional education”. Moreover, Sinclair graduates need communication skills more than ever in both personal and professional settings, and the department’s work in providing these skills is essential to the success of our students.

**Recommendations for Action:**

* The department expressed a need for more accessible information in the interests of identifying areas of improvement in student learning and developing approaches to make improvements. The department is encouraged to specifically document the data it seeks and its information needs, and work with RAR to develop reports that not only provide what data that the department needs, but reports that could also be used by other departments with similar needs.
* The Review Team wishes to again commend the department for its groundbreaking work with the Oral Communication General Education rubric, which has provided crucial institutional-level data regarding student mastery of this important skill. The department did an outstanding job of analyzing General Education rubric data for its students – looking at overall Oral Communication rubric data for the institution as a whole, what insights does the department have that could be shared with the Assessment Committee and the Provost’s Office? Would the department be willing to review Oral Communication rubric data trends annually for the College?
* The Review Team was impressed with the department’s work with the New Media certificate. Perhaps the time has come to evaluate whether an associate degree offering would be appropriate. The department is encouraged to use a data-driven approach in making this decision, and should move in the direction of embedding the certificate in the new program (and perhaps adapt the certificate program such that is embedded in other degree programs, if appropriate).
* Succession planning has always been a challenge for Sinclair. Given the transitions this department has experienced in the past and transitions that may occur in the coming years, the department is strongly encouraged to develop, maintain, and regularly update a brief, concise one-page document with a timeline for anticipated transitions, along with evidence supporting the need for replacement faculty, and plans surrounding succession in the coming years. Given the experience and expertise of this department, it is possible (although not part of this recommendation) that they may be able to develop a template that could be used across departments at Sinclair for the purposes of succession planning (although again, this is not an expectation of this recommendation, it is merely a suggestion).
* In the meeting with the Review Team, there were conversations around comparing rubric scores in COM 2206 and rubric scores in the capstone course to provide evidence of additional student learning throughout the program. The department is encouraged to explore this possibility and pursue it should this information be judged valuable and feasible to collect.

**Overall Assessment of Department’s Progress and Goals:**

In so many ways, the Communication department serves as a model and exemplar for other departments at Sinclair. The leadership, campus-wide engagement, collegiality, and unparalleled concern for students that this department consistently displays should be emulated by all others at Sinclair. It is clear that every faculty member is truly dedicated and committed to this department, and to the maintaining the spirit of cooperation that exists among faculty. The expertise this faculty provides to the students – and employees – of Sinclair is more needed than ever. This is an exceptional department, and the Review Team wishes to express its appreciation for all that the faculty in this department do.

Not only does the department inspire others at Sinclair, but it is also a model for accepting and acting on feedback, as evidenced by the exceptional work done on the recommendations from the most recent review. It is clearly a department that has taken the concept of continuous improvement to heart, and one that maintains a strong focus on seeking ways to better serve both its students and the College as a whole.

**Institutional or Resource Barriers to the Department’s Ability to**

**Accomplish Its Goals, if any:**

* The challenges that the department reported in terms of access to data go beyond just the Communication department – Sinclair needs to find a way to better align department needs with data resources. In many ways departments at Sinclair have an exceptional level of access to data. However, there are challenges in terms of making available reports user-friendly, and academic departments could provide some valuable feedback in this regard.
* As noted in the Recommendations, succession planning has always been a challenge at Sinclair at the faculty and department level. As an institution, Sinclair should explore approaches to improve succession planning at this level.
* Marketing remains a challenge for many departments at Sinclair. While there have been efforts to make marketing resources more available to departments, many departments feel that their needs are not being met.
* The Communication department has expressed concern about the COM requirement exception that has been approved for a limited number of programs at the College. The department makes some valid points regarding concerns about how Oral Communication is addressed in the programs that have received an exception, and it may be that increased oversight of these programs may be warranted in this area.