**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2020-2021**

**Department:** 0666-Emergency Medical Services

**Date of Review:** October 14, 2021

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Kathleen Cleary, Interim Provost

Jennifer Kostic, Associate Provost

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Justin Morgan, Chair/Professor, Automotive Technology

Dawn Allen, Assistant Dean, Professor of Hospitality

Jenny Bagwell, Academic Advising

Michelle Abreu, Associate Professor, Respiratory Therapy

**Department Members Present:**

Rena Sebor, Dean, Health Sciences

Charles Sowerbrower, Chair, Emergency Medical Services

Faculty:

Laura Walker, Associate Professor

Michael Oaster, Professor

James Simonson, Professor

Robert Kidd, Associate Professor

John Deal, Adjunct Instructor

Staff:

Rhonda Harvey, Administrative Assistant

**Commendations:**

* First and foremost, the Review Team would like to acknowledge the spirit of teamwork, unity, and camaraderie that is evidenced by this department. Led by an experienced, seasoned chairperson, faculty step up to take responsibility for department functions, providing crucial support to the chairperson. This is a department where everyone is on the same page and moving in the same direction, with a sense of shared responsibility, efficiency, and above all concern for students.
* The EMS department has experienced a period of phenomenal growth, in spite of the fact that new competitors have recently emerged. While managing this growth has its challenges, the department has done an exemplary job of meeting those challenges, doing its very best to accommodate increased enrollment, and seeking additional space on campus as needed. There is so much demand in the community right now that we can’t supply enough graduates, even with the explosive growth in enrollment. Under these challenging circumstances the department has done a highly commendable job of doing their best to meet the need in the community.
* The Review Team was so very impressed with the department’s work tracking its students’ exposure to diverse individuals in clinical settings. Recent years have highlighted the importance of cultural competence, and the department’s work in this area is exemplary. Other health related fields would do well to follow the model set by this department in working to ensure students have the opportunity to work with diverse individuals.
* This is a department that is required by accreditors to collect an astonishing amount of data, and the chair and faculty manage to do so in a very organized, efficient manner. This has enabled the department to collect and report data to accreditors that many other departments across the nation have struggled to provide.
* One of the strongest indicators of the quality of the program are the pass rates for EMR, EMT, and Paramedic, which are higher than both the state and national averages for these programs.
* The Review Team was also impressed by the decision to move orientation to an online format, allowing for greater flexibility and giving students more opportunity to complete the orientation.
* Maintaining one program accreditation is a challenge for any department – this department maintains two external programmatic accreditations, and does so smoothly and efficiently, maintaining an exceptional record for compliance and avoiding any findings or warnings from accreditors.
* This was an exceptional self-study, and illustrated a highly commendable sense of self-reflection. It was clear that the department knows its students well, knows the needs of the community well, and knows their own strengths and weaknesses well. The Review Team felt that the department was open, clear, and candid about opportunities for improvement, and had really taken the time to take a good, hard look at itself, rigorously reviewing its operations and policies. The department provided a clear and comprehensive analysis of each of its programs, demonstrating a remarkable awareness of the role each currently serves in providing the community with practitioners of emergency medical services. In addition, the department demonstrated a willingness to change, an openness to innovation, and a persistent commitment to improving quality.
* One example of the candor with which the department approached the self-study was the willingness to identify and discuss possible grade inflation, and the inclusion of exploring this issue as one of the goals for the next five years. The Review Team appreciates what a difficult topic of discussion this can be for faculty, and commends the department on its willingness to engage this topic and explore possible actions to address it.
* The Review Team was deeply impressed with the department’s connection to the community. With a large number of adjuncts currently employed in the field, along with a chairperson and some faculty who still work in the field, the department clearly has its finger on the pulse of community needs, college needs and student needs. Its reliance on its Advisory Board provides further input to the department on how the needs of the community can be best met.

**Recommendations for Action:**

* Given the heavy time commitment required to collect data that is reported for accreditation, the department is encouraged to take a look at data collection and determine whether there is anything that is extraneous and could be eliminated. Much of the data collected is in response to accreditation requirements, but its sounds as though there is a possibility those requirements may be relaxed in the near future. The department is data-rich, and has created an exemplary culture of data collection, but it wouldn’t hurt to examine data collection processes to ensure they are not unnecessarily burdensome.
* The department has exceptional data for program outcomes gleaned from surveys administered after graduation, and makes a strong case for post-graduation being the best time to assess mastery of these outcomes. However, important data on mastery can also be provided through assessment prior to graduation, and the department has no shortage of data it has collected on its students that might address program outcomes. In the future, the Review Team recommends the department continue its post-graduation surveys, but that it also buttress that data with other data collected prior to graduation to help demonstrate mastery of program outcomes. The department should supplement its excellent post-graduate survey data with data collected throughout the program.
* The Review Team was very impressed with the department’s work with General Education outcomes, particularly with efforts to integrate Information Literacy assessment into its programs. The Review team strongly recommends that the department continue its efforts with General Education outcomes.
* With the growth the department has experienced and the resulting physical space requirements, and considering this growth is anticipated to extend into the foreseeable future, the Review Team strongly recommends that the department document its space needs in relation to the Backfill process. The Backfill Committee will begin its work in earnest again the coming months, and the department will want to ensure its needs are properly considered. The Review Team recommends that the department begin building its case for Backfill needs now, and enlist the support of the dean as a champion for its space needs during this process.
* Finally, the Review Team is aware of the challenges that were discussed surrounding increasing CCP opportunities in the department – but while there is an awareness of the challenges, there is a strong potential for growth that would allow the department to better meet the continuing burgeoning demand in the community. As this demand persists, secondary educational institutions are increasingly asking how they can help meet this need, and the department is encouraged to find ways to assist them. Career centers may have facilities that are better suited for CCP partnerships than high schools, and agreements with them may be an option. The department is also encouraged to explore Tech Prep opportunities. It is possible that grant funding might cover some of the costs associated with these endeavors, and the department is encouraged to explore this possibility.

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

This is a department with a remarkable sense of self-awareness, one that knows its field, knows its faculty and staff, and knows its students. The chairperson and faculty take time to reflect on the needs of the community, and the directions it can take to better meet those needs. It is a department that is undaunted by change, and unafraid to engage in rigorous self-reflection to determine how best to meet the challenges that change entails.

This is not a large department, but the five full-time faculty do an outstanding job of distributing workload together work as a team, which allows the chair more opportunities to explore strategies for improvement. Responsibilities more evenly distributed throughout the department than perhaps has been the case in the past. Certainly this is a data-rich department, but one that not only collects large amounts of data, but analyzes that data in order to drive change.

This department has a strong relationship with its Advisory Board, employs a large number of adjuncts who are currently working in the field, and has personnel who also continue to work in the field on occasion. In addition, the chairperson and faculty maintain relationships with professional organizations. The knowledge these connections bring about the industry and environment are critical to program’s success, allowing it to gauge trends in the field and then shift curriculum accordingly.

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

**Accomplish Its Goals, if any:**

* For many departments, the decrease in in-person offerings associated with COVID has mitigated the need for physical space. However, this is not the case for this department, and in fact the need for space has grown substantially. Sinclair will need to be sure that its physical space planning processes properly account for needs of departments such as this one, and address them sufficiently.
* The department’s goal to hire more adjunct faculty is critical – and without question, after the advent of COVID this has become more challenging. In order for the department to continue to offer as many courses as it does to as many students as it does, it must increase its adjunct pool. At a time when there is an increased cohort size, the department experiences challenges in finding adjunct faculty. With the current need in the field, it is hard to compete with opportunities potential adjuncts have making additional income through overtime at their existing jobs. Because there is such a demand currently in the field, burnout is also a factor, making it hard to convince those working already working long hours to pick up adjunct teaching in addition to their full-time work.
* As is the case for many departments at Sinclair, succession planning may be an issue in the future. There will be an increasing need to look ahead as faculty transition into retirement in coming years.
* There is a strong need for a lab tech in this department. This is often a challenge for departments who need additional personnel resources for lab work.