Department/Program Review Summary

2013-14

Department: ENSS (Exercise, Nutrition & Sports Science)

Date of Review: March 21, 2014

Review Team Members and Titles:

Dave Collins, Provost

Chad Atkinson, Research Analyst, Research, Analytics & Reporting

Kimberly Borst, Assistant Professor, Theatre and Dance

Becky Cobb, President, Personally Fit

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Dona Fletcher, Chair, Sociology, Geography and Social Work

Heidi McGrew, Chair, Communications and Journalism

Laura Hinkebein, Academic Advising

Reece Newman, Assistant Professor, Computer Information Systems

Bob Sheehan, Program Manager, Tech Prep

Shari Rethman, Interim Dean, Liberal Arts, Communication and Social Sciences

Karen Wonders, Program Director, Sports Science, Wright State University

Department Members Present:

Rena Shuchat, Dean, Life & Health Sciences

Billie Sanders, Chair, Exercise, Nutrition & Sport Science

Faculty/Staff:

Travis Beetley

Carol Cole

Tywan Corbitt

Jack Giambrone

Nila Peavy

Kathleen Querner

Kyle Stone

Commendations:

* This is a department that benefits from strong, dynamic, energetic, indefatigable leadership. The chair has played a key role in the development of a close-knit departmental relationship. The word "family" was used by the department to describe itself during the meeting with the Review Team, and there is no question that there are close relationships within the department. There is a culture of positivity in this department that is refreshing to see.
* This is also a department that embraces change, that always looks for ways of improving, and that is at the forefront of new practices that are introduced at the college. As new initiatives come along that are designed to increase student success, this department is on board 100%. The fact that so many of the ENSS faculty enrolled in the Curriculum and Assessment track offered through the Center for Teaching and Learning speaks to the department's willingness to try new things and learn how to better serve its students. When the eSyllabus was first introduced, the ENSS department immediately required all of its faculty to use it. This is a department of forward-thinkers, pioneering trailblazers, and early adopters.
* The Review Team was particularly impressed with the department's grasp of the landscape of physical education at both the national and local level. The department appears to have strong connections to local businesses, and is very aware of trends that may impact its students. As different courses in Physical Education wax and wane in popularity, and as new movements arise in the field, the department has adapted its offerings accordingly. The department has been vigilant in monitoring the environment, anticipating changes in enrollment and discussing strategies to accommodate those changes. It is a department that is very aware, one that is paying attention to how the world around it changes.
* The ENSS department has a strong passion for health and wellness - it is not just what they teach, it is how they live. They are peerless in their immersion in their field.
* During the meeting with the Review Team, it was clear that the department took the suggestions that were offered very seriously, they listened carefully and appeared to take the feedback to heart. This no surprise, given the priority that was given to addressing recommendations in the last Program Review. The department appears to have embraced the true purpose of the Program Review process as an opportunity for improvement - it doesn't seem to be just a box they have to check, it seems that they value the opportunity for self-reflection and external feedback.
* The department did an outstanding job with the preparation of the self-study - giving faculty "homework" and having them work in small groups engendered the type of whole department involvement that the process is designed to foster. The approach that was used by the ENSS department could well serve as an example to other departments on how best to prepare a self-study for Program Review.

* Block scheduling is an excellent example of innovation in the ENSS Department - many conversations on block scheduling have recently begun around campus, and the department is already implementing what some other departments have yet to even begin discussing. The connections between students that will be developed as a result of the block schedule may well have a strong impact on completion.
* The department is doing more assessment work than it realizes. An example was given during the meeting with the Review Team - they realized that their students struggled with math calculations in one of their classes, and they worked with the Math Department to improve their instruction in this area, and subsequently saw improvement in their students. Perhaps without realizing it, the department had engaged in excellent assessment practice.
* This is one of the few departments that deal with both the body and the mind - but it also manages to fit the heart in between them. In addition to the focus on health and wellness, the department includes academics in many of its activities courses, ensuring that they are truly college level courses. As mentioned previously, the department displays a true passion and zeal for health and wellness, such that its teaching truly encompasses the mind, heart, and body.
* The level of community outreach this department engages in is superb. Moreover, staff at Sinclair have the opportunity to increase their health and wellness through SDIC, which makes an invaluable contribution to the productivity of Sinclair employees.

* The department renders valuable - and cost-saving - service to other departments at Sinclair, a noteworthy example being the laundry service that the ENSS department provides to many other departments on campus. The department's involvement with the Police Academy is another example. This willingness to meet the needs of other departments is highly commendable.
* Feedback from four-year institutions that the department's students transfer to is outstanding, as is feedback from area employers. Both see the ENSS Department as offering high quality programs and producing competent, skilled graduates.

Recommendations for Action:

* One of the biggest challenges the department will face in the coming years will be maintaining enrollment. There are a number of factors at play that will likely decrease enrollment in PED courses - Financial Aid will soon only be available for courses that are part of a student's program, pressure to reduce credit hour totals will make it less likely for programs to include PED courses in their program curricula, etc. The department is strongly encouraged to develop specific, achievable strategies to increase enrollment. These new strategies may involve financial or fund-raising aspects that will require collaboration with the fund-raising entities within the college and with other offices that ENSS has not worked with before. It seems imperative, however, for the department to begin figuring out ways to boost enrollment that will offset some of the losses that appear to be on the horizon. The department should explore new ways to incentivize enrollment in its courses.
* Along these lines, what outreach might be made to other departments to encourage them to include ENSS courses in the curricula of their programs? Could a case be made that the department's programs might support program outcomes for other departments? Since many of the department's courses are only one credit hour, can the case be made that they might be added to programs with little impact on credit hour totals in some cases while being of great benefit to students in their program? What other departments might be good candidates for these efforts?
* As noted previously, the department's work on block scheduling is nothing short of trailblazing. The Review Team strongly recommends that the department take the opportunity to gather data regarding the impact of block scheduling on the success of students - for example, do completion rates appear to increase as a result of block scheduling? Course success rates? Term to term retention? The department is encouraged to "close the loop" by assessing this change to see if it has had the impact on student success and completion we hope it has. Collaboration with Research, Analytics, and Reporting is highly recommended in this effort.

* It seems that the department is doing more assessment than it realizes - however it also seems that its assessment efforts require more structure, more intentionality. Assessment activities alone are worthwhile, but their potential remains unrealized when data is not collected, aggregated, analyzed, reported - and celebrated. In making the recommendation to take assessment to the next level, the review team is mindful of how daunting a task this may seem. Other departments undergoing Program Review have been advised to start small - in putting a structure around assessment in the ENSS Department, the advice applies here as well. The department is encouraged to focus on a small number of efforts, identifying assignments or activities that relate to general education or program outcomes and collecting data from multiple sections to determine how well students are meeting the outcome. Once limited initial pilot efforts have been made, the department can then begin expanding from these small efforts in a systematic, manageable fashion. Start small - go from there. Excellent resources are available to the department, particularly the Assessment Coordinator/Learning Liaison, whose expertise can help in developing the structure for the more formalized assessment efforts of the department.
* Does any research exist regarding the benefits of physical activity courses to student completion and well-being? Is there any evidence to support the idea that these courses may be beneficial to helping out students complete their educational goals? The department is encouraged to investigate whether there is an argument to be made in this regard that would incorporate the department's offerings in the College's completion efforts.

* The extraordinary level of teamwork among faculty in the department has been noted - is there an opportunity to show other departments how it is done? What could be done to take this strength of the ENSS Department and use it to strengthen other departments that are not as team-focused?
* Career Communities are currently being developed as part of our completion initiatives, and there is a desire to foster a sense of "community" within these communities. What activities might the ENSS Department offer to help build that sense of community? How can the department meet this need? The department is encouraged to reach out to the leaders of Completion by Design and Connect 4 Completion to see how their expertise might be used in these efforts.

Overall Assessment of Department’s Progress and Goals:

Positive. Passionate. Energetic. Immersed and engaged in their field. United. Informed. Team-focused. Forward-thinking. Open to change. Flexible. Finding the need and endeavoring to meet it. These are all traits of the ENSS Department that emerged during the conversation with the Program Review team. This is a department with a long list of impressive qualities, one that benefits from strong leadership and a ethic of teamwork unsurpassed by any other department at the college.

It is fortunate that the department possesses these unique qualities, because it also faces some unique challenges, particularly regarding enrollment. The programs that the department offers are important, but have not traditionally accounted for the bulk of enrollment in the department. It is very likely that non-program students will be less inclined to enroll in PED courses in the future when Financial Aid no longer covers courses that are not part of a student's degree program. The department heretofore has always embraced challenge and change, and there is little question that they have the capacity to develop innovative responses to this particular change.

Assessment is occurring in this department - perhaps not as structured as it could be, but the department is well positioned to transition to a higher level of assessment practice. Those assessments may not necessarily be numbers-based - they need not necessarily be quantitative in nature. The example shared during the meeting with the Review Team was a superb qualitative example of assessment - and one that could be strengthened with the addition of some quantitative numbers to indicate the magnitude of the improvement. While there is an opportunity to enhance its assessment with numbers-based approaches, the department need not abandon the story-based examples of Plan/Study/Do/Act like those that were shared.

Institutional or Resource Barriers to the Department’s Ability to accomplish its Goals, if any:

The meeting with the Review Team raised a couple of issues that are not unique to the ENSS Department, and that may need to be explored at an institutional level:

* The ENSS Department employs some best practices that could be shared with other departments, particularly in regards to the unique camaraderie that exists in the department. What mechanisms might be put in place for one department to share its best practices with another? Are there ways that the Center for Teaching and Learning might be leveraged in this regard?
* Most departments struggle with assessment of General Education outcomes. More resources need to be provided to assist departments in this regard. The Assessment Coordinators / Learning Liaisons are working to see how these might be developed, but the approach will be to some extent influenced by the features and functionality of the new Learning Management System that the college adopts. However that falls out, without question departments need better resources to take assessment of General Education to the next level.
* The Program Review self-study template is due for some continuous improvement. In recent years the Annual Update template has experienced some major revisions that have made it more focused, and in many ways it now asks more specific questions than the current Program Review self-study template. Thoughtful revision of the Program Review self-study template is needed, and there must be better alignment between the annual reporting template and the five-year reporting template.
* Several departments undergoing Program Review this year have shown evidence of assessment work that is happening but is not being captured, aggregated, analyzed, and reported. Many departments have "Plan/Do" down, but struggle with "Study/Act". How can we help departments capture and formalize some of the work they are already doing and tie it to their assessment efforts? How can the college make this happen? And how can it be done in ways that are not overwhelming for departments?