**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2015-16**

**Department:** Respiratory Therapy Technology (RET)

**Date of Review:** March 3, 2015

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Dave Collins, Provost

Craig Birkemeier, Assistant Professor, Mathematics

Bruce Clayton, Research Analyst, Research, Analytics and Reporting

Amy Cline, Director, Respiratory Care, Miami Valley Hospital

Angela Currier, Professor/Chair, Biology

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Jennifer Day, Professor, Business Information Systems

Angela Griffin, Academic Advisor, Academic Advising

Candice Moody, Report Analyst, Registration & Student Records

Keri Nunn-Ellison, Division Assessment Coordinator, Health Sciences

Tony Ponder, Dean, Science, Math and Engineering

Swapna Purandare, Assistant Professor, Child and Family Education

Brenda Smith, Counselor, Center for Student Success

**Department Members Present:**

Rena Shuchat, Dean, Health Sciences

Beth Zickefoose, Professor/Chair, Respiratory Therapy Technology

Faculty and Staff:

Michelle Abreu

Sanja Keller

Audrey Muslar

Karen Woodard

**Commendations**:

* The Review Team was very, very impressed with this department - even though it is a department composed mostly of faculty who are relatively new to the college, it functions as a cohesive unit with a common focus that unites its members as a well-functioning team. It was abundantly clear that the faculty in the department love the RET program and are willing to do all that they can to support student success. The department benefits greatly from the strong leadership and extensive experience of an excellent chairperson, who has done much to establish this climate of cohesiveness, and who has remained as fresh and motivated as she was on the day that she was hired more than 30 years ago. The steady performance of the department during and after the retirement of several experienced faculty several years ago is remarkable - a step backwards during such a transition would have been understandable, but instead this department has pushed forward to ever higher standards of quality. It is hoped that this forward movement in the face of similar significant personnel transitions will continue with the looming retirement of the current chairperson.
* The engagement of the faculty in the preparation of the self-study was perfectly aligned with the design and intent of the self-study process. It should be a collaborative department effort, and this self-study was a superb example of that, although with the relationships among faculty in the department this is not surprising.
* The Review Team was very impressed with the candid and open approach that the department took in preparation of the self-study. To paraphrase one statement made during the meeting with Review Team, members of the department truly did "bare their souls", providing an unflinching look at both what the department is doing well, and where improvements could be made. The Program Review process is intended to engender honest self-reflection, and it truly appears to have been employed in this manner by the department.
* Strong connections to the community were evident in the self-study and the discussion with the Review Team. One manifestation of this was the involvement of the Advisory Committee in gathering much of the data that was shared in the self-study. The department is very agile and accommodating in meeting the needs of the community, as evidenced by the development of the Respiratory Care of the Newborn short-term certificate in response to community needs. The RET department is adaptable, flexible, and on top of things when it comes to being aware of and responding to community needs.
* The Review Team was impressed with the way the department does an excellent job of using data to stay informed of the changing needs of the students and the community. The assessment data provided in the self-study was first rate, both for General Education outcomes and the program outcomes, and the department was able to describe steps it had taken in response to assessment data results . Assessment appears to underlie the department's approach to any new strategy or process - for example, when the RET Mentoring program was implemented, the department included an opportunity for mentees to provide feedback on their mentors at the end of the year, and this feedback lead to many revisions and tweaks to the program. This is the very essence of assessment - gather information, then utilize that information to make improvements. Another example of this is the way the department has monitored Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS) scores to determine whether there is a correlation between TEAS scores and success in the program. Other seemingly little things, such as surveys implemented after program changes, indicated that assessment and the use of data to make improvements appears to be embedded in the culture of the department.
* The RET Mentorship program referred to above deserves special mention as a highly commendable activity that seems to be beneficial to first year students. Other departments could benefit greatly - and likely increase the success of their first year students - by adopting a similar mentoring program.
* The department took an extremely bold step a number of years ago in implementing selective admissions. While the department was straightforward in admitting that it has had its pros and cons, it appears that there has been a substantial increase in program retention subsequent to selective admissions. The department has developed a relatively sophisticated process for selective admissions, evaluating several data points in a rubric for each student individually, a time-consuming but comparatively equitable approach to determining which students should be selectively admitted.
* Outcomes for students who leave this program are excellent - the passing rates in the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) exam are excellent, at or near 100% for each graduating cohort each year. Placement rates for graduates are near 100%, which not only indicates that graduates are prepared for the workplace, but also indicates that the department has been careful not to flood the market with more graduates than can find employment.
* Faced with the state mandate to reduce credit hours in all programs to 65 credit hours, which represented a significant drop in hours from the 73 credit hours that the department had previously had, it appears that the department was able to find a way to accomplish this without losing much in the way of RET content, reporting that the RET content that was cut was not essential for graduates. One course that was cut from the curriculum was the COM requirement - but the department appears to have taken seriously the charge to ensure that mastery of the COM General Education is achieved by its students nonetheless, and has worked with the COM department toward this end.
* Of course, the Review Team must mention the department being awarded the CoARC Distinguished RRT Credentialing Success Award as a great accomplishment - the department deserves high praise for this award, which is a strong endorsement of the quality of the department and its faculty.

**Recommendations for Action**:

* As mentioned in the commendations, the RET Mentorship program is a very impressive program that other departments would do well to emulate. The Review Team strongly recommends that the department work with the CTL to provide workshops in forums such as Fall Conference to allow other departments to learn about these exciting techniques the department is using.
* The department should monitor the impact of the reduction in credit hours - it is thought the impact will be minimal, but the department should carefully monitor assessment data and exam scores to determine whether the curricular changes have had any negative impact. Similarly, the department should closely monitor Oral Communication assessment results to ensure there has been no negative impact from dropping the COM requirement.
* The department does an outstanding job of collecting and using data, but it sounds as though much of its data collection and entry are done manually. Could the department work with RAR to determine whether more efficient methods of data collection, entry, and storage could be developed?
* It doesn't appear that currently any work is done with students whose selective admissions rubric scores are so low that they are unlikely to ever get into the program. Perhaps the department could work with other departments in the division, or with the appropriate Career Community, to direct these students into other programs. There is a great potential for loss of enrollments of these students, since many of them will never gain entry to the program - could we save those enrollments through outreach and counseling to move these students into other fields of study? This would require the efforts of many outside the RET department.
* The department has done well with tracking TEAS data - would it be appropriate to include TEAS as part of the selective admissions rubric? Currently it is listed on the rubric with the statement "no points designated at this time". Could the data the department is collecting inform the incorporation of TEAS data into the rubric?
* The new Health Sciences strategy should provide ample opportunity for team building and interdisciplinary education involving the simulation software the department is in the process of purchasing - by the next Program Review the department should be able to describe how this is occurring.
* With the emerging requirement in the Respiratory Therapy field for a bachelor's for practitioners, the department may need to strengthen its existing articulation agreements and develop new ones with baccalaureate institutions where appropriate. How can we ensure that the pathways will be available that the students will need to gain so that they can find employment once they leave our two-year program?
* It was noted that once the chairperson retires, there will be no one among the remaining faculty who have ever participated in a CoARC site visit or served as a site visitor conducting a peer review. It is strongly recommended that the new program director become a site visitor for CoARC. The other faculty will also need training - what opportunities are there to lower the cost of that training by bringing consultants and experts to Sinclair to do training, rather than have the cost of sending several faculty elsewhere for training?

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

There are certain departments at Sinclair that are well known and respected in the community; that have a reputation for producing the highest quality graduates in the region; that the institution can point to with a great measure of pride. Without question the Respiratory Therapy Technology program ranks among the foremost of these programs at Sinclair. There are so many positives of this program - the strong community connections, the job placement and CoARC exam pass rates of its graduates, the strong sense of unity and teamwork among the faculty, the experience and leadership of the current chairperson, the quick response to industry needs, the innovative approaches such as the mentoring program to improve student success - to name just a few examples among many.

With the exception of the chairperson, the faculty in this department are relatively new to the college, although they perform at a level comparable to faculty with far more experience. They display the energy and enthusiasm characteristic of those in their first few years at the college, and if they follow the example of their experienced chairperson they will retain that positive energy throughout their years of service to Sinclair. While the faculty may lack the years of experience of their immediate predecessors in the department, the department has not appeared to suffer any loss of quality, and in fact has continued to move onward and upward without skipping a beat. While the departing chairperson has been a strong leader and served long and well over more than three decades, the department appears to be in good hands even with her upcoming retirement, and there is no reason to think there will be any interruption in forward progress or any decline in program quality with that transition.

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

* Succession planning is a challenge for all departments, although it is a more immediate challenge for this department compared to most. How can the institution facilitate mentoring and transfer of knowledge in cases like this where we know a transition in leadership is coming?
* Funding has become a greater issue for departments at Sinclair, and it appears will remain an issue for the foreseeable future with the anticipated continued decline in enrollment. The institution may increasingly need to re-allocate resources both within and between divisions. In the self-study, the department noted the challenges of travel restrictions associated with recent budgetary constraints - how can training, continuing education, and remaining connected in the field be accomplished with lower cost alternatives to having several faculty in a department travel somewhere?
* The department noted increasing challenges in finding clinical sites in the self-study - other departments have reported this also. How can the institution come up with new approaches to providing clinical experiences for its students that will benefit many departments?
* The number of students who wish to enter the program far exceeds the number who will actually make it into the program, and this is true of many other Health Sciences programs. What resources could be brought to bear to redirect many of these students to other programs at the college? To what extent are we losing enrollments as we fail to do this? Could Career Communities somehow be leveraged to redirect students who are unlikely to ever enter their chosen field of study? What role could rubrics such as the one employed for selective admissions in the RET program be used in other programs to accomplish this goal?