**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2019-2020**

**Department:** 0220-Design (Interior and Visual Communications)

**Date of Review:** October 30, 2020

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Kathleen Cleary, Interim Provost

Jennifer Kostic, Associate Provost

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Myla Cardona-Jones, Instructor, Paralegal Program

Heidi McGrew, Associate Professor, Communication

Karen Motley, Chairperson/Professor, Health Information Management

Dodie Munn, Senior Academic Advisor, Academic Advising

Dana Johnson, Associate Professor, Sociology

Kevin Harris, Professor, Art

Roxann Patrick, Founder and Creative Director, Little Dirty Birdy Feet, LLC

**Department Members Present:**

Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Dean, Liberal Arts, Communication & Social Sciences

Amanda Romero, Chair, Design (Interior and Visual Communications)

Faculty:

Cynthia Cully, Professor, Visual Communications

Kyle Fisk, Professor, Visual Communications

Renee Hopson, ACF, Design

Jeanine Kincheloe, Associate Professor, Visual Communications

Constance Ordeman, ACF, Visual Communications

Shari Rethman, Professor, Interior Design

Adam Thompson, Professor, Visual Communications

Staff:

Susan Barnes, Lab Technician

Katherine Trigg, Administrative Assistant

**Commendations:**

* What an extraordinary department! It is a department that benefits from the strong leadership of an experienced, talented chairperson who has created a climate of camaraderie, and one whose faculty are intensely dedicated to their students. The Review Team was deeply impressed with the level of commitment faculty have to their students. It is a department that prioritizes making sure students are prepared for the workplace, and goes to great lengths to further that end. This is also a department that is so mindful of student needs that faculty donated money for materials out of their pockets for student supply kits so that students who had difficulty finding money for these materials would not have to go without. This is one of many examples that illustrate the level of concern and commitment members of the department have for their students. Throughout the self-study it was clear that commitment to students is a core value that guides all of the operations of this department.
* As noted above, this is clearly a student-centered department, one that is in touch with what students need, where the shortfalls are, and one that does all it can to see that students get the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the program and in the workplace after graduation. This department does a great job of listening to its students. Continuous improvement appears to be part of the culture of this department, as the chair and the staff evidence a constant striving to improve, and to make sure they have done the best they can to prepare students for graduation and employment.
* As a key strategy in ensuring that students are prepared for the workplace upon graduation, the portfolios that the department has student develop are a valuable tool for demonstrating skills, knowledge, and learning. The Second Year Assessments/Portfolio Show is a remarkable practice that allows students to not only demonstrate their learning over the course of the program, but also to get feedback from - and make connections with - local industry professionals. It provides a valuable source of assessment data at a time when students are preparing to enter the workforce, and guides department decisions regarding how well students are being prepared for their post-graduation lives.
* The Review Team was also deeply impressed by the department’s Diversity Statement – is should as an example for other departments at Sinclair, and the Review Team feels that all departments at Sinclair should have something similar. Not only has the department developed the Diversity Statement, they use it widely in department materials, continuously reinforcing its importance to students. It is shared at mandatory orientation so that from the very beginning students understand the inclusive nature of the program. Sinclair needs to ensure that *all* of its students feel included and welcome, and the department has gone to great lengths to show how this can be done.
* The department has done a marvelous job in increasing the number of articulation agreements in recent years. The Review Team hopes that it will continue these efforts in the future.
* The department can be rightly proud of its National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) re-accreditation. Not only is this reaccreditation an affirmation of the quality of the program, it also represents a tremendous amount of work by the chairperson and faculty, and should be recognized for the achievement that it is. The department moved quickly to address the issues that were identified through this process, and should be commended for the speedy and comprehensive manner in which it made the necessary corrections.
* The department’s work utilizing grant money from the Pathways 2.0 grant was particularly impressive. The Student Mentoring Program, the Mandatory Student Orientation, the new student activities and events, and other initiatives associated with this grant represents substantive, perhaps even transformative change for support for student success in IND/VIS programs. The chairperson and faculty appear to have embraced the spirit of the grant, and maximized the return on the funds that had been invested to promote change. Well done!
* The department has also invested a great deal of time in developing external partnerships with several stakeholder groups, including area Tech Prep high schools, local technical centers, local employers, etc. The department demonstrates an appreciation of the importance of prioritizing external relationships, knowing the opportunities that this provides students and potential students. The department really does an outstanding job of leveraging community partnerships.
* Close relationships with Academic Advising can make all of the difference for a department’s students. This department has an exceptional working relationship with Academic Advising, working closely with Advisors to ensure that students receive the best guidance possible in navigating the curriculum. An Academic Advisor sometimes attends department meetings, and efforts are made to ensure that there is open communication and a shared understanding of what Advising needs to know to help students in the department’s programs succeed.
* New short-term certificates have been added to the department’s program offerings that have not only increased completion numbers, but have added new options that both allow students to gain a credential without completing an associate degree, and another that provides additional training for students who have completed an associated degree.
* The Review Team was deeply impressed by the Portfolio Show – what an excellent opportunity for students to display their work, receive feedback from local employers, and make connections that can lead to employment. While the Portfolio Show had to be held virtually this year due to COVID, it was so well executed, and enabled students to have the same experience in spite of the pandemic. It is a source of tremendous pride and validation for our students – not only are they given the opportunity to display their work, they have the opportunity to brand the event. It is a crucial learning experience for students in the department, one where important teamwork skills are developed. The branding process take the entire academic year and helps students understand all aspects of the process. It is such a rewarding experience for the students that they frequently come back after graduating to serve as judges in the show.
* In the self-study, the department noted that they had observed that IND and VIS students struggled in three of the foundation courses, and then developed a strategy to increase success in these courses. The Review Team was extremely impressed that the department not only identified the challenges to student success, but then also developed such a comprehensive, multi-pronged, strategic approach to increasing success in these courses. Not only does this evidence a deep concern for student success, but also demonstrates outstanding problem-solving skills and a commitment to continuous improvement.
* This was one of the most visually appealing Program Review self-studies that has ever been submitted, but given the expertise in the department that should not be surprising.
* The Review Team was also impressed with the approach the department has taken to internships – given the constraints of not being able to incorporate an internship requirement into the curriculum of the program, the department has done a marvelous job of figuring out ways for their students to find internships. The collaboration with the office of Work-Based Learning is highly commendable.

**Recommendations:**

* One promising, relatively new field the department may want to consider developing additional coursework for is more social media classes for students – more and more employers are looking for graduates with skills in design and deployment of social media marketing, which may provide employment opportunities for students who have both technical skills and marketing training. Often smaller companies hire graphic designers and expect them to do social media, having basic skills in marketing could be beneficial for students.
* In the meeting with the Review Team, some of the challenges surrounding the department’s work with Tech Prep were noted. The Review Team recommends that the department take steps to resolve some of these long-standing challenges. As part of this effort, the chair and other faculty should schedule a meeting with a representative from the Provost’s Office, the Chief School Partnership Officer, and the Program Director for Tech Prep to develop solutions. Some of the issues that need to be addressed are outside of the scope of Sinclair, and some issues will doubtless be identified that will need to be carry forward to the state in terms of cTAG and Tech Prep challenges.
* One of the department’s goals is to develop a new Interactive Media Program. The Theatre Department is interested in a new program based on audio and visual production and technology. Is there any overlap between the two programs? Are there any opportunities for shared resources? The department is strongly encouraged to reach out to the Theatre Department to discuss any synergies that might be realized between the two potential new programs.
* The Review Team understands the reasons why there has not been a close working relationship with the New Media Creative in the past. However, things have changed considerably since the New Media Creative was first developed, and the department is encouraged to initiate outreach to see how they can work together to benefit students involved in both the New Media Creative and the department’s programs.
* While not discussed at length in the meeting with the Review Team, it was noted that different faculty members have different areas of specialty in the department. However, given the budget situation Sinclair will be facing for the next several years, cross-training of faculty will be required to ensure that all necessary content areas are covered as natural transitions occur in the department in the coming years due to retirements. The Review Team recommends that faculty in the department proactively develop a strategy for cross-training personnel in the department that will ensure adequate coverage of curricular material.
* Students in both programs are required to have a Mac computer, which can pose a barrier to low income students. Is there any possibility of developing a Mac computer loan program for those students who might have difficulty with the cost of this essential equipment? What resources might Sinclair leverage such that students would not need to worry that procuring a key piece of equipment will be an obstacle for them? The department should attempt to generate approaches to remove technology roadblocks for students.
* There was some discussion with the Review Team regarding the need for additional lab space – it is imperative that the department work with the dean to incorporate this need into the backfill strategy. Our students need high quality equipment and resources in order to be competitive and prepared for the workplace, we need to provide the best facilities we can, as it is so essential to their success.

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

It was clearly evident in the self-study that this is a student-centered department that is heavily invested in providing the best learning and preparatory experiences possible to those it serves. Several members of the Review Team have seen the department’s work firsthand, and have been very impressed with the efforts the department makes on behalf of students. This is a department with a truly remarkable level of dedication to its students.

Faculty in the department seem to really work well together – the Review Team noted how in the discussion with the department there was a sense of unity, connectedness, and cohesiveness among the members of the department. The discussion flowed effortlessly, with faculty members piggybacking on each other’s comments and reinforcing what others had said. The Review Team enjoyed the discussion immensely, and was surprised at how quickly the time with the department passed. In the discussion with the Review Team, the members of the department seemed very open to sharing concerns, were candid about opportunities for improvement, and were very engaged in discussing how best to serve the needs of its students.

This is a department that has developed positive working relationships – with its students, with the community, with local employers, with local high schools, and with Academic Advising. It is a department that appears to understand the power of relationships, and the importance those relationships can have to the success of its students. It is a department that is keenly aware of what is on the horizon in their disciplines, and that works to get curriculum in place to prepare its students ahead of time.

This was an exceptional Program Review experience in terms of the quality of the self-study and the discussion with the Review Team.

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

* This department, like others, has a number of needs that need to be addressed through the Capital Request process and through Backfill. The department will want to work closely with its dean to make sure these needs are addressed. The dean’s support will be crucial in these areas.
* Many departments across the college have challenges with success rates in introductory level classes, it is a consistent barrier for many different departments. There is a danger that students who struggle to succeed in introductory courses will walk away from an area where they could excel once they acclimate to the discipline. Are there best strategies or best practices that could be shared in a number of introductory courses in departments across campus in ways that might best serve the student who can succeed in an area once they can get past the initial challenges they face early in a program of study?
* Given recent budget challenges across the college, there have been impacts in terms of faculty’s ability to participate in continuing education, in their opportunities to attend conferences, and in their chances to be involved in other professional development activities. However, COVID has led to an increase in the number of free online and streaming professional development opportunities, which are essential to keeping faculty motivated to learn, and continuously improve. How can Sinclair encourage more faculty to take advantage of these new opportunities? Some faculty report that Sinclair makes it more challenging than other institutions to get mini-sabbaticals, which helps refresh and bring back new teaching strategies, and that can allow faculty to make key connections with industry professionals through them. It may be that faculty at Sinclair are not aware of some of the avenues for professional development that are available to them – for example, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) can help faculty secure funding to participate in professional development. Faculty should be made aware of how they can leverage all resources for professional development that are offered at Sinclair.