Department/Program Review Summary

2013-14

Department: HGML (Humanities, Government, & Modern Languages)

Date of Review: March 20, 2014

Review Team Members and Titles:

Dave Collins, Provost

Arian Adducchio, Academic Advisor, Academic Advising

Caitlin Bauer, Alumna, Sinclair Community College

Bruce Clayton, Research Analyst, Research, Analytics & Reporting

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Gwen Jones, Diversity Officer, Vice President for Organizational Development

Justin Morgan, Chair, Automotive

Jackie Myers, Professor, Accounting Instruction

Tony Ponder, Dean, Science, Math and Engineering

Claudia Potts, Assistant Professor, Health Information Management

Bill Russo, Assistant Professor, Electronics Engineering Technology

Donna Schlagheck, Professor & Chair, Political Science, Wright State University

Department Members Present:

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

John Weaver, Chair, Modern Languages, Political Science, History/Humanities/Philosophy

Faculty/Staff:

Lora Bowling Bill Kamil

Yolanda Burgos-Olinger Vonya Lewis

Charles Curran Sandor Marai

Jonathan Curtis Varalaxmi Mitzka

Jamie Fries Derek Petrey

Bahar Hartmann Samuel Sawaya

Julie Hatton Jennifer Sooy

Amanda Hayden Kathleen Sooy

Aaron James Yufeng Wang

Commendations:

* This is a diverse department that offers courses in a variety of disciplines, all of which are crucial to Sinclair’s ability to provide a well-rounded education. Not only does the department offer a number of degree programs, but it provides important options for students needing to meet Ohio Transfer Module requirements for degrees offered by other departments. This is a department that plays a key role in the institution’s general education efforts with students, and is crucial to allowing students options for completing their Ohio Transfer Module electives, in addition to providing excellent transfer programs of study.
* Although this is a large department containing several diverse disciplines, the Review Team felt there was a sense of unity and a culture of community among the different areas within the department. Factions could easily form in such an arrangement, but the Review Team saw no evidence of divisions - it appears to be a large, diverse department that has excellent intradepartmental relationships and a very collegial atmosphere. There appeared to be a level of cohesion that sometimes isn’t seen even in departments with only one discipline.
* It would appear that this cohesion in the department facilitated the involvement of all areas in the preparation of the self-study. While the chair of the department no doubt played a key role in its development, he was quick to give credit to a number of different individuals who also played important roles. It appears that the production of the self-study was the collaborative departmental effort it is designed to be.
* The department’s self-study appears to have been the reflective, self-evaluative experience it was intended to be. There didn’t appear to be any white-washing or avoidance of areas where improvements could be made – the self-study seemed to be a frank, candid appraisal of where the department is strong and where it has opportunities for improvement. The Review Team appreciated the department’s forthrightness, and feels that it reflected the true spirit of continuous improvement.
* The department’s commitment to students was abundantly clear throughout the self-study and the meeting with the Review Team, is it obviously a department that cares a great deal about the students it serves. It is a department that feels strongly about providing students with options, allowing students to explore the alternatives that exist for their career paths, and providing students with the opportunity to find a field that would allow them to reach their full potential.
* During the discussion with the Review Team regarding assessment, it appeared that the department was willing – and even eager – to take its use of assessment of general education and program outcomes to the next level. It emerged during the discussion that there appears to be a great deal of assessment work already occurring that may not be formalized or reported, but that is occurring nonetheless. It appeared that the department was open to taking on the challenge of leveraging the work that is already happening and augmenting it with additional efforts.
* The Modern Language component of the department has taken a strong leadership role in the development of common statewide Learning Outcomes across Ohio for language courses. Their work in this regard has been highly commendable, and a real credit to Sinclair. Prior to this, the department was extremely proactive about working with other institutions to make sure language credits would transfer. This is a department that works hard to ensure that students who transfer get the credits they have earned when they enroll at four-year institutions.
* Articulation agreements are crucial to the success of our transfer students, and the department has done a stellar job of updating its articulation agreements with Wright State, the institution that receives by far the greatest number of our transfer students. This has involved a considerable amount of effort on the part of the department, and speaks volumes about their commitment to helping student succeed.
* The department has been very proactive about getting its courses approved as Transfer Assurance Guide (TAG) courses, which makes a substantial difference in our students’ ability to move credits to other institutions after leaving Sinclair. For at least one area in the department, the self-study indicates that “all classes for which the Ohio Board of Regents Transfer Assurance Guide exists in our program have been approved for transfer credit”. This is highly commendable.
* It was clear from the section on cost-effectiveness that this department has historically had an excellent contribution margin, and rather than resting on its laurels actively seeks to keep costs low, for example through analysis of data on cost effectiveness of course offerings.
* The department’s work with the Language Lab provides invaluable hands-on experience for its students.

Recommendations for Action:

* While there is no doubt that effective work is done in the Language Lab that improves student learning, the department is encouraged to find ways to track student use of the Language Lab and document its impact on student learning, perhaps through comparative research in collaboration with Research, Analytics, and Reporting.
* The department’s work developing articulation agreements with Wright State University has been truly outstanding – this work should be extended to include articulation agreements with other four-year institutions that a substantial number of students transfer to.
* Assessment of general education and program outcomes was discussed at length in the meeting with the Review Team. While not readily apparent from the self-study, it seems that a great deal of assessment work is already occurring where student performance against outcomes is being measured. It may be that to some extent the department can step up its assessment work by formalizing the collection, aggregation, analysis, and reporting of work that is already being done that measures student performance. In stepping up its assessment efforts, the department is encouraged to start small at first – rather than feeling overwhelmed, perhaps the department can focus on one program outcome in each area and identify an assignment in a high enrollment course in each area with assignments that align well with the chosen program outcome, and then include that assignment in all sections of that specific course. While assessment is a top priority, the Review Team wants to emphasize that it doesn’t need to be overwhelming, starting small and then growing is recommended. The department is encouraged to work with the division Assessment Coordinator/Learning Liaison and the Provost’s Office as needed in increasing its assessment efforts. Encouraging key faculty to enroll in the Curriculum and Assessment track offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning may also be extremely beneficial in this regard.
* Related to the recommendation regarding assessment, the Review Team also recommends that the department explore using common assignments or common exam items across all sections of some of its courses. Some level of standardization is required for a complete picture of student learning, else data cannot be gathered across different sections of the same course to provide a comprehensive picture of how students are performing and whether adjustments are needed. Again, it is recommended that the department start small - is there an assignment already in use by some faculty that relates to a program outcome that could be used by all sections of that course? For example, is there an assignment in HIS 1111 that relates to a program outcome that all sections of HIS 1111 could use such that scores could be aggregated, analyzed, and reported to determine how well students are meeting that outcome? It is recommended that this only be done in a couple of courses initially to avoid overwhelming the department, and that what the department wants to know about student learning be used to guide the selection course and assignment used in this way - which program outcomes would you prioritize to study first, based on what you want to know most about your students?
* The department has done an excellent job of updating articulation agreements with Wright State University - the department should consider whether there are other institutions where a considerable number of its students transfer to where articulation agreements might be appropriate.
* During the meeting with the Review Team it was noted that in some cases other departments have dropped the courses that the HGML Department offers - Paralegal and Criminal Justice were provided as examples. The department may need to explore reaching out to other departments to "market" courses. It is recommended that the department identify courses that it offers that might meet specific needs of programs in other departments, and reach out to those departments to discuss how their needs might be met by HGML courses. It may be the case that other departments could use HGML courses in their programs, and they just aren't aware of the benefits.
* Given the current budgetary climate, becoming more efficient must be a priority for all departments. It is recommended that the department take a hard look at scheduling - are several OTM courses that would all meet the same Arts and Humanities elective being scheduled at the same time in ways that decrease enrollment in each of them? Can we perhaps be more strategic in how we schedule our courses such that electives are not "competing" with each other? The Review Team recommends that the department be able to demonstrate on its next Annual Update that it has a process in place to accomplish strategic scheduling, and be able to demonstrate that progress has been made in its scheduling practices.

Overall Assessment of Department’s Progress and Goals:

This department has been remarkably successful in taking a number of diverse fields and carving out a collegial, unified identity for the department. The different areas appear to function very well together, the diverse parts appear to fit together in a coherent way. Given the variety of offerings in the HGML department this is no small accomplishment.

Throughout the meeting with the Review Team the department several times expressed concern that Sinclair students be enabled to explore different fields, that students might be shortchanged if the courses they take become streamlined to the point where they have no chance of experiencing courses that may inspire them to change their educational direction. It is to their credit that they seek to find a good balance between giving students direction and limiting their options, and is indicative of a genuine commitment to a well-rounded education. These are issues that must be wrestled with as we move forward with the completion agenda, and the department’s input on them is a valuable part of the discussion.

Much of the discussion with the Review Team centered around assessment - it emerged that much work is being done, and it would seem that in some cases the department may just need to better capture, document, analyze and report activity that is already occurring rather than creating entirely new assignments and exams. Assessment is already happening to some extent - but it does need to be formalized. As was mentioned previously, it is not the expectation of the Review Team that the department would invest an excessive, unreasonable amount of effort in stepping up its assessment practices - in the five years between now and the next Program Review self-study there is ample time to start small, select a limited number of assignments that address general education and program outcomes, and grow its efforts from there each year. There are a number of resources available in these efforts, particularly the divisional Assessment Coordinator/Learning Liaison, and these resources should be utilized. It is anticipated that in five years the department will be able to report a considerable amount of progress after a small start and reasonable gains from year to year.

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 HGML Department, and that may need to be explored at an institutional level:

* It would appear that there is a need for transfer data to be more readily available for departments. RAR has National Student Clearinghouse data on where our students transfer, we may need to explore the he development of reports through the DAWN Portal that would make this data more readily available to departments.
* The issue was raised regarding misaligned academic calendars between Sinclair and Wright State - it may be difficult for students to enroll in both institutions simultaneously when their terms begin and end on different dates.
* Given the number of students who transfer from Sinclair to four-year institutions prior to finishing their associate degrees, we need to find ways of encouraging students to "reverse transfer" their credits to Sinclair to allow for awarding of the associate degree. Currently it is up to the student to make this happen - we may need to explore other approaches to reverse transferring credits that will allow students to complete their associate degrees.