**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2015-16**

**Department:** Psychology/African Studies (PSY/AFR)

**Date of Review:** March 17, 2016

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Dave Collins, Provost

Hope Arthur, Director, Workforce Development and Corporate Services

Dennis Brode, Chair/Professor, Marketing and Management

Mary Brown, Assistant Professor, Allied Health Instruction

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Angela Fernandez, Instructor, Criminal Justice

Martin P. Gooden, Undergraduate Program Director, Psychology, Wright State University

Patrick Greco, Professor, Chemistry

Heidi McGrew, Division Assessment Coordinator, Liberal Arts, Communication and

Social Sciences

Dodie Munn, Senior Academic Advisor, Academic Advising

Tony Ponder, Dean, Science, Math and Engineering

Derek Reed, Predictive Analytics Researcher, Research, Analytics and Reporting

Chad Sloss, Sociology Instructor, Sinclair Community College

**Department Members Present:**

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

Boikai Twe, Professor/Chair, Psychology and African Studies

Faculty and Staff:

Taylor Curtis

Jennifer King-Cooper

Lea Ann Lucas

Valerie Mayfield

Mary Wells

Anne Soltysiak

Elaine Isbell

**Commendations**:

* In so many ways, this is an impressive, impressive department. There are a number of positive accomplishments that the department was able to point to in the self-study and during the meeting with the Review Team. Rather than being content to only discuss their accomplishments in the self-study, the department also displayed a keen awareness of its opportunities for improvement. Many of those opportunities were being pursued well before work began on the department's Program Review self-study, which is indicative of a culture of continuous improvement that complements - but is not wholly reliant on - the Program Review process. The team got the impression that the department would choose to work to improve its support of students even if there was no external Program Review process to encourage work of that nature. This is a forward-looking department, one which has a great capacity for identifying opportunities for improvement and proactively pursuing them, without the need for external pressure or encouragement to do so.
* This was an excellent Program Review experience, both in terms of the superb self-study that the department prepared, and in terms of the discussion with the Review Team. The Program Review process is designed to involve the entire faculty of a department in a close examination of what is going well, and what opportunities there are for improvement. The approach the department used in preparing for the self-study can serve as an example for other departments. The use of a faculty coordinator other than the chairperson and the pairing of faculty to write drafts of sections of the report both demonstrate the kind of full departmental engagement the Program Review process is designed to foster. During the meeting with the Review Team the department faculty were all engaged and participating in the discussion, and were very receptive to the comments, questions, and suggestions shared by the Review Team in the meeting – there was no hint of defensiveness, which allowed for an in-depth, full discussion of the challenges that the department faces and how they might be addressed. Overall, the Program Review for this department can serve as a model of how the process has been designed to work.
* This department recently experienced a substantial change in its program of study – once merely an emphasis area within the Liberal Arts and Sciences Associate of Arts degree program, the Psychology Associate degree is now a bona fide, stand-alone degree. The department appears to have embraced the new status of the degree program and has moved forward full-force, developing an articulation agreement with Wright State University and revising program outcomes to better align with the changed status of the degree program.
* The department goes to impressive lengths to support its students, often in innovative ways. The Orientation that welcomes students to the program and the Next Steps program that assists students in transitioning to a four-year institution represent highly commendable actions on the part of the department to support students and increase completion and success. Not only does this help guide students at both ends of their experience in the program, but it fosters student-faculty connections that inspires students and provides crucial support as they move toward their educational goals.
* Following the lead of Completion by Design efforts, the department has fully and whole-heartedly embraced the concept of Pathways, making extra efforts to inform their program students of the Pathways, and encouraging faculty to become Pathway experts to better assist their students. Pathways appear to have become embedded in the culture of the department to a greater extent than any other department on campus. The department attributes their extra efforts to inform students of the Pathways – and the faculty’s familiarity with Pathways that allows them to be advisors to their students – with more than doubling the number of program graduates in recent years. The department can point to intentional, well-thought out strategies that have produced measurable results in terms of student completion.
* The department benefits from the steady leadership of the chair and a very knowledgeable administrative assistant. The chair is extremely experienced, and has served Sinclair long and well. Administrative assistants are often the first point of contact between a student and a department, and in this department the administrative assistant is a knowledgeable resource that can educate students regarding department procedures and practices. It was her suggestion to take the African-American Studies course into Dayton Public Schools, and during the meeting with the Review Team she articulated the value of the course in a very tangible, relatable way. She is truly an asset to the program.
* This is a department that handles a high volume of students, who benefit from experienced, engaged full-time faculty. Many of its faculty are highly involved in completion efforts at the college, and many are active in Center for Teaching and Learning offerings sharing their expertise with others at the College. It is also a department that supports its adjuncts, providing in-service training and inviting them to faculty meetings.
* The use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) in lieu of textbooks is one of the most promising cost-saving measures in higher education today, and could potentially have a strong impact on students who struggle financially in pursuing their educational goals. This department has made some truly significant strides in the direction of lowering educational costs for its students, with OERs replacing textbooks in its online offerings in Fall 2016. This is highly commendable, and it is hoped that other departments will follow suit.
* The department appears to have a good grasp of principles of outcome assessment. While program outcome assessment results were not provided due to the ongoing revision of the program outcomes, it is to the department’s credit that they recognized the need for revised outcomes. It is likewise to the department’s credit that in developing new program outcomes, faculty are being thoughtful and intentional in devising modules that connect those new program outcomes directly to course assignments and activities that will allow them to be measured.

**Recommendations for Action**:

* As noted in the Commendations, the Review Team was deeply impressed by the Orientation and Next Steps programs that the department has implemented. Other departments should be encouraged to follow the example the department has set with these programs, and to do so they must be made aware of them. The department is strongly encouraged to find various ways of communicating these best practices to other departments, including through Center for Teaching and Learning workshops and through Fall Conference. Also, one suggestion would be to have graduates of the program involved in Orientation and Next Steps if possible, to serve as a model for students who are either just beginning the program or who are preparing to transfer to another institution.
* The department is encouraged to continue its ongoing work developing modules that will align with the new program outcomes. It is excellent assessment practice to develop methods for assessing outcomes in tandem with the development of those outcomes, and the department should continue in this direction. It is hoped that this will result in standardized measures that are used by all faculty. The department noted that “common assessment/evaluation of exams, assignments, and activities will be built into course learning outcomes”, and this should be prioritized within the department. Not only will having some common exams/assignments/activities allow for aggregation of assessment results across sections of a course, it can also serve as a great benefit for adjunct faculty, who may have difficulty developing appropriate measures of course and program outcomes without guidance from the department.
* Upon PSYE.S.AA becoming a stand-along degree, the department initiated an articulation agreement with Wright State University. This was an important step, and the department is encouraged to develop additional articulation agreements with select other four-year institutions in a thoughtful, strategic manner. Articulation agreements should also be developed for the African American Studies short-term certificate through the Liberal Arts and Sciences – Associate of Arts degree. The department should identify appropriate four-year programs, and then develop articulation agreements that provide a pathway for students interested in African American studies.
* Students generally enter a Psychology program with the intention of doing psychological counseling, psychological research, or obtaining a position at a college or university, all of which require education beyond the baccalaureate level. However, the Review Team pointed out that there are courses in the program that can provide Psychology students with skills that may be marketable even for someone who only holds an Associate Degree. The department should help students identify marketable skills they obtain in their two-year program of study, and discuss with them jobs where those skills (data management and analysis, etc.) might allow them to obtain employment. One suggestion would be to prepare a Fact Sheet that helps educate students on the marketability of the skills they develop in the program.
* In the self-study the department suggested attempting to market the African-American Studies course to other departments as a means of fulfilling the Cultural Diversity and Global Citizenship General Education outcome. The department is encouraged to move forward with these efforts.
* During the discussion with the Review Team, the possibility of completing the African Studies certificate and receiving financial aid through the LA.S.AA - Associate of Arts degree was discussed. It was noted, however, that Registration would not know to award the certificate unless someone alerted them that these students completed the certificate in the process of completing the requirements for LA.S.AA. There exists the possibility that students are completing the requirements for the certificate, but are not being awarded the certificate. The department is strongly encouraged to identify those students who have completed the requirements for the certificate and work with Registration to ensure that it is awarded. RAR can serve as a key resource in this effort.
* The Review Team was impressed with the work the department has done eliminating textbooks through the use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) for all online PSY 1100 sections beginning in Fall 2016. The department is strongly encouraged to explore expanding use of OERs to all sections of PSY 1100 in the near future. ENG 1101 and SCC 1101 have used OERs, and the departments that offer these courses may be able to provide insights on making hard copies available in the bookstore at a low cost to students.
* The department should consider re-organizing the Advisory Board, with careful attention to what worked well and what did not in its previous Advisory Board experience. It may be that the Advisory Board could be engaged in the Orientation and/or Next Steps efforts the department has initiated.
* The department should continue its exploration and discussion of the possibility of developing an AS degree, ensuring that the development of such a degree would be constructed in such a way as to align to the greatest extent possible with area baccalaureate programs.

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

This was an excellent Program Review experience. The department is involved in so many innovative and exciting efforts, many of which would not be known outside of the department were it not for the opportunity to share them in Program Review. Many of these efforts should be adopted by other departments, and in that sense the Psychology Department is a leader in efforts to help more students succeed. Of particular note are the Orientation and Next Steps initiatives that the department has undertaken - it is hoped that these activities can be widely shared across campus, and that other departments will follow Psychology's example and adopt similar practices. Similarly, the way that the department has embraced Pathways and thereby improved completion rates should be followed by other departments.

Psychology Department faculty are engaged throughout campus - engaged in Completion by Design, engaged in (and even leading) AQIP Action Projects, engaged for Center for Teaching and Learning workshops, etc.. The subject matter expertise of the faculty in this department is such that they are a valuable, valuable source, and helps them bring a unique perspective and understanding to institutional issues.

Within the past few years the department went from offering an emphasis area within Liberal Arts and Sciences to offering a stand-alone degree, and as part of this transition has begun the development of articulation agreements, the revision of program outcomes, and other activities that indicate the department has recognized the significance of the change and has worked to respond appropriately. While much of this work is ongoing, the Review Team noted that the perspective of the department appears to have shifted in accordance with this relatively recent development.

The department is in the vanguard at Sinclair in terms of fostering understanding of and appreciation for diversity. The African Studies program is a strong example of this, although the department's efforts are by no means restricted to this single course. The department is commitment to fostering an appreciation for diversity in its students, and provides avenues for other departments to accomplish the same with their students.

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

* The use of OERs holds great promise in terms of reducing the cost of higher education for Sinclair students, and this department has the opportunity to become a trailblazer on campus in this regard. This is particularly important in our College Credit Plus efforts, where school districts must bear the burden of textbook costs, and where having OERs could give Sinclair a real competitive advantage. The institution may want to carefully consider how it might encourage, guide, and support departments in initiatives to eliminate textbooks and adopt OERs. There are common barriers and challenges that all departments face in adopting OERs that the institution should seek to address.
* During the discussion with the Review Team, the department discussed the benefits of taking ENG 1101 prior to taking PSY 1100. This benefits of taking ENG 1101 in a student's first term at Sinclair have been discussed at length in the past, but no real progress on this issue has ever been made. The College should collect and analyze the data that would inform whether this would have an impact on student success, and decide whether it is willing to invest the time and resources to make the substantial changes to policy, process, and practice that would be necessary, and to resolve the thorny logistical issues that would be needed to bring this to pass.
* The use of predictive data to inform course scheduling was discussed - will the new Civitas Course Scheduling Tool allow for this kind of forecasting?
* It is not uncommon for a department to deactivate a course in CMT that has an impact on the curriculum for programs in other departments, yet these changes are often made without the impacted departments being informed. What kinds of automatic communications could be set up in CMT that would allow departments to know instantly when curricular changes are made by other departments that affect their programs of study?