**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2019-2020**

**Department:** 0387-Sociology/0387-Social Work/0383-Geography

**Date of Review:** September 3, 2020

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Kathleen Cleary, Interim Provost

Jennifer Kostic, Associate Provost

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Derek Allen, Chair/Professor, Hospitality Management/Culinary Arts

Dair Arnold, Associate Professor, English

Carita Bass, Academic Coach/Academic Advising, Academic Advising

Bill Kamil, Professor, Humanities, Government & Modern Language, Political Science, Religion,

Philosophy and History

Heidi McGrew, Professor, Communication

**Department Members Present:**

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

Jacqueline Housel, Chair, Sociology/Social Work/Geography

Faculty:

Sean Frost, Professor, Sociology

Kathleen Gish, Instructor, Sociology

Dana Johnson, Associate Professor, Sociology

Jennifer McDermott, Associate Professor, Social Work

Scott Reinemann, Assistant Professor, Geography

Katherine Rowell, Professor, Sociology

Amaha Sellassie, Assistant Professor, Sociology

Staff:

Danielle Lainhart, Administrative Assistant

**Commendations:**

* This is a department that is composed of extremely hard working faculty – faculty who serve on multiple committees at Sinclair, faculty who are seen throughout Instruction as leaders, faculty who have strong connections and engagement with both the local community and national organizations in their disciplines. In this time when the need for racial reform is more visible than it has been in decades, the expertise and activism of this department is more important than ever. This is a department that lives and breathes equity, and one that is poised to be an important part of Sinclair’s anti-racism initiatives. In so many ways, this department is modeling important work for everyone else.
* The department chairperson has demonstrated a great deal of leadership in her first year, and did an outstanding job of overseeing the development of the Program Review self-study. The chairperson is a strong advocate and champion for the Sociology, Social Work and Geography components of the department equally, and does an outstanding job of overseeing faculty from different areas.
* No Program Review self-study has ever used as much data as this one. The use of data in this self-study was absolutely exemplary. This self-study can serve as an example that other departments undergoing Program Review in the future can use as a model, particularly in the intelligent use of data to support the narrative.
* While not discussed in the meeting with the Review Team, the Team was impressed with the number of grants the department has received that has supported much of their work.
* Over the years the department has offered a number of study abroad trips – these have provided opportunities many of our students would never get in any other way, and each of these trips represents a tremendous amount of time and effort on the part of faculty in the department.
* This is an innovative, forward thinking department – among many examples are the way the department has explored making Physical Geography a natural science OTM elective, the way it has expanded the use of OERs in multiple classrooms, and the way it has pioneered the use of the flipped classroom at Sinclair.
* The department is heavily involved in doing presentations and workshops for the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and should be particularly be commended for their work developing the Diversity and Inclusion CTL track.
* The faculty in this department are highly engaged at the national level in their fields, in addition to their outstanding service to the local community.
* Few departments at Sinclair are as active in collection and analysis of data to drive department decision making. The use of pre- and post-assessment as a data collection design is particularly impressive. The department’s use of data is exceptional. The department has also cultivated a strong relationship with RAR in obtaining that data. The Review Team encourages the department to continue to work with RAR in getting data to inform department decisions.
* While not discussed in the meeting, the Review Team feels the department deserves to be commended for its extensive use of service learning in several of its courses.
* This Program Review self-study has the most thorough and complete discussion of the completion milestones of any self-study that has been submitted through this process. The department appears to have a strong commitment to student completion, as indicated by the emphasis that is placed on the completion milestones with their students.
* This department has fundamentally excellent teachers, as indicated by their commitment to active learning, project based learning, and other proven pedagogical approaches. It was clear to the Review Team that faculty in the department work hard to explore new ways of engaging students and thereby increase their chances of success. The teaching that is done in this department is culturally responsive and culturally relevant in a way that all teaching at Sinclair should be.
* The department deserves a great deal of credit for helping to manage the exponential growth in its AJT offerings, and has done a tremendous job serving the important and underserved AJT population while maintaining quality of educational offerings.
* The department’s use of OERs deserves repeated mention. Few things departments can do are as effective at helping to drive down student costs. This has had a tremendous impact on our students.

**Recommendations for Action:**

* The Review Team strongly recommends that the department develop a strategic plan, and then prioritize its activities with this plan. The Review Team recognized that the department is approaching the point where faculty are becoming overcommitted. The Review Team recommends using a strategic plan to determine which activities it will pursue, and which are not essential to the strategic plan and need not be pursued. It is not reasonable to expect faculty to say yes to every opportunity that comes along, and there needs to be a mechanism that provides guidance on which activities are priorities.
* The department is encouraged to develop an Advisory Committee – an Advisory Committee can help provide fresh perspectives, be a sounding board for new ideas, and can serve as a resource to helping the department develop a strategic plan and prioritize its activities. The department should thoughtfully determine which constituencies should be represented on this committee.
* The department is encouraged to seek help from the Dean and the Provost’s Office to ensure AJT courses are part of the pre- and post-assessments and other department data collection efforts.
* The department mentioned challenges of students who enroll in introductory courses and are unprepared for the rigor and amount of writing. How can the annual orientation events in the department be used to communicate the expectations in these courses so students know what will be required? Can materials be created that would inform students ahead of time of the rigors of introductory courses in the department’s programs? What can be done to make requirements in these courses more clear before students begin them?
* Can “chair chats” be scheduled a couple of times a term that would allow students an opportunity to come ask questions of the chair and department faculty, to help build relationships with department majors, in addition to helping students get information they need to succeed? The Team would recommend that faculty take turns participating in this activity so no one faculty member becomes overburdened.
* Some concerns were raised in the discussion with the Review Team regarding the information students receive in Academic Advising regarding Sociology, Social Work, and Geography. The department is encouraged to make outreach to Advising, and to develop stronger connections with Advising. The team encouraged the chairperson to meet with the Director of Advising, and work on plans for professional development between department and advising team. There seems to be some misunderstandings regarding the information students receive regarding the department’s programs from Advising. Faculty in the department are encouraged to do some shadowing with advisors so they can hear first-hand what the advisors are telling students.

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

This was an exceptional Program Review self-study – data-rich, thoughtful, introspective, and self-reflective. This self-study embodied the very best of what the Program Review process seeks to accomplish. In addition to highlighting the many things the department is doing well, the department was also very candid about opportunities and challenges. The Review Team wishes to commend the department for submitting such a well-written, thorough, comprehensive, detailed self-study that is so imbued with the spirit of continuous improvement.

It was clear that the department has taken the recommendations for action from the previous self-study very seriously, and has invested a great deal of effort in addressing them. Recommendations had been made regarding the department’s work with flipped classrooms, the development of OERs, continuing the pre/post assessment approach, and working with representatives from RAR, to name a few. Each received extensive work by the department. In addition, the department’s assessment work is superb. In so many ways, this department has exemplified what the Program Review process should be about. The department is clearly committed to assessment and continuous improvement, allowing assessment data and other data to drive changes.

The Review Team wants to express its appreciation for everything the department is doing, particularly in terms of equity, community service, and Anti-racism – the exceptional work of this department is more visible and more appreciated than members of the department may realize. The Review Team wishes on behalf of Sinclair to thank the chair and faculty in the department for their widely recognized leadership in issues surrounding equity and structural racism for the college. Your work is greatly appreciated! And greatly needed, now more than ever.

Finally, it was clear to the Review Team that faculty in this department truly cares about its students, truly cares about the community that it serves, and is full of faculty who are dedicated to their fields of study. You are truly a department of activists and scholars.

**Institutional or Resource Barriers to the Department’s Ability to**

**Accomplish Its Goals, if any:**

* Like many departments at Sinclair, this department struggles with the number of full-time, tenure-track faculty in the department. In the current budget climate, it is not clear when there will be an opportunity to address this. Instruction will need to carefully consider how to address hiring issues in departments in the coming years as the current budget issues are resolved.
* There are legitimate concerns that the use of program pathways and maps, and the way that electives are promoted, have impacts on which courses students enroll, and which fields they have the opportunity to be exposed to as potential career paths. This is an issue that needs to be explored, and now that our completion efforts are more mature, there may be ways to communicate to students they still have choices in selecting electives without impacting their success negatively. Program pathways have been a successful strategy in increasing rates of credential completion at Sinclair, but perhaps we can now explore ways to mitigate some of the impacts they have had in terms of enrollment in elective courses.
* Faculty in this department have valuable expertise in the areas of equity, racial inequality, structures that support white supremacy, and other issues relevant to Sinclair’s Anti-racist initiative. Sinclair needs to take advantage of the expertise of faculty in this department, but without overburdening them.
* Like this department, many departments have identified student preparation for extensive writing in introductory courses as a problem. Institutionally, is there some way to remedy this? Do we need to better communicate to our students that they will need to write in many courses across their curriculum, and that some disciplines are writing-intensive across the entire program? How can the Provost Office and Student Development better support this work?
* Marketing has been a perennial challenge for departments at Sinclair. However, the Marketing Department is developing new tools – such as the new template for creating flyers - that will allow departments greater access to marketing resources. Hopefully this will alleviate some of the marketing challenges departments experience.