**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2014-15**

**Department:** Automotive Technology (AUT)

**Date of Review:** April 10, 2015

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Dave Collins, Provost

Michelle Abreu, Instructor, Respiratory Care

Karen Blake, Senior Academic Advisor, Academic Advising

Rob Chambers, Professor and Chair, Fire Science Technology

Bruce Clayton, Research Analyst, Research Analytics & Reporting

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Jacqueline Housel, Associate Professor, Geography

Tim Jones, Training Center Coordinator, American Honda Motor Company, Inc.

Matt Massie, Manager, Student and Community Engagement

Sue Merrell-Daley, Dean, Business and Public Services

Charles Richardson, Assistant Professor, Marketing

**Department Members Present:**

Larraine Kapka, Assistant Dean, Science, Math, and Engineering

Justin Morgan, Associate Professor/Chair, Automotive Technology

Faculty and Staff:

Duane Clark Christopher Murphy

Tom Freels John Porter

Mark Jenkins Jim Robinson

Carrie Lair Troy Singleton

John Lukacs Kevin Smith

Dave McGuigan Charles Taylor

Bill Mervar James Truxal

Ralph Miller

COMMENDATIONS:

* The Review Team was extremely impressed with the self-study, and by extension the department that prepared it. There were so many positive elements of this department and its work that emerged in the self-study and during the discussion meeting. This award-winning department exhibits a sense of unity, cohesion, and mutual respect among its faculty. It is a department with a unique capacity for self-reflection - it knows itself well, knows its strengths and its opportunities for improvement, and has a clear vision of how those improvements can best be made. The faculty in the department are relentless in pursuit of these improvements, displaying a forward-looking orientation that enables them to meet their challenges constructively, proactively, and with a clear vision of where they are going in the future.
* The awards and accomplishments of both the department and the faculty deserve special mention, and attest to the high quality of the instruction that students receive in Automotive Technology at Sinclair. The recent Tomorrow's Tech magazine 2013 Technical School of the Year award is a source of great pride for the institution.
* The department produced a remarkable self-study that was well-supported by data. While many Automotive faculty were new to Sinclair and had limited bandwidth for involvement in self-study preparation, seasoned faculty stepped up and produced a self-study that not only covered all the bases, but covered them thoroughly and completely. The department's use of data was exemplary, and should serve as a model for other departments to follow. The faculty came well-prepared to discuss issues at the meeting with the Review Team, and several faculty were heavily engaged in the discussions that took place there. The department should be proud of its performance in all aspects of the Program Review process.
* Over the years the department has done a phenomenal job of developing mature, formalized local partnerships and industry connections. Relationships of this caliber are not built overnight - that kind of trust is slowly built through years of excellent service and responsiveness to community need. This department has earned its sterling reputation in the community, and has prioritized the maintenance - and enhancement - of these relationships it has so painstakingly built.
* The department recently experienced a significant transition in Ieadership - a chairperson who had lead the department for decades retired, a new leader stepped into the role, and the department didn't miss a beat as the new chair took the reins. With those kinds of significant changes there is always the potential for problems, but the department made the change smoothly and professionally. The new chair has taken the department in new directions without discarding the excellent foundation that was established over the years by the previous chair. This speaks to both the excellent leadership of the new chair and the unity and cohesion of the faculty that support him.

* All departments on campus engage in assessment, and several do it well. The Automotive department is one of the few who not only do it well, but also understand the purpose of assessment - to identify areas of strength, and areas where teaching and learning could be improved. This department understands that assessment is not just numbers that are submitted in a report - it is something that should improve student learning. Faculty in this department do an extraordinary job of collecting data on student outcomes achievement, and are able to analyze trends across years to determine areas where student outcomes could be strengthened. This department not only takes assessment seriously - it takes it to the next level.
* The care and concern that the department has for its students is visibly manifest in the way it prepares students for the time when they will be actively seeking jobs. It has developed strong relationships with campus organizations that help students find jobs, and takes the time to help students with resume preparation, interviewing skills, etc. Throughout the program professionalism is inculcated in students in ways that are of great benefit to both graduates and local employers. The concern that the department has for its students extends beyond graduation and into the years that follow.
* The department is keenly aware of its competition - it knows the environment it is operating in extremely well, knows the other players well, it has an in-depth knowledge of what it needs to do to remain competitive in the current environment. Unfortunately, at times there are institutional barriers that impact that ability to compete, and the department is persistent in its efforts to break down those barriers. An example is their awareness of the aggressive marketing work of for-profit institutions, and their desire to step up their marketing to counter it.
* Where the department lacks resources to accomplish its goals, as in the preceding example, the faculty go the extra mile in trying alternate approaches. Knowing that marketing dollars wouldn't be available for the department, faculty began recruiting at auto shows and other events, going above and beyond in their efforts to attract students to the program in the face of limited marketing resources. In cases where it is within their power to implement the changes they feel are necessary, the department never hesitates, taking decisive action to address any issues.
* Along those lines, the department has demonstrated a willingness to take risks in order to determine whether changes would be beneficial for students. The department will be implementing a new cohort program in Fall 2015 term. They are actively exploring options to develop a diesel program, and have begun initial discussion with the Dayton RTA for a partnership that would provide space and equipment for Sinclair to offer the program. The department appears to exhibit no hesitation in trying new things to improve their services for students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION:

* The Automotive Department has extremely impressive assessment practices in place - other departments on campus could benefit from learning about what they are doing. The department is strongly encouraged to share their approach to assessment with other departments through workshops and presentations at Fall Faculty Professional Development Day, through the CTL, and in other venues.
* There are a number of opportunities for new programs that this department is considering offering, and the Review Team strongly recommends that the department continue exploring these opportunities. The diesel program partnership with RTA is particularly promising, and the department should continue its current aggressive work laying the foundation for this partnership. Programs in collision repair and emergency vehicle repair are also possibilities, and the department should consider the potential demand, costs, and possible partnerships that would be associated with these new programs.
* The department should document the timing and demand for housing needs, and use that documentation to begin developing arrangements with local apartments or motels to house the students who come to the program from distant parts of the country. The department made a compelling case that housing is needed - a schedule should be developed that displays a timeline over the course of an academic year for when housing would be needed and when there would be transitions of students rotating in and out. The department may be able to arrange ongoing housing arrangements for its students based on this schedule. While it may be difficult for students to find rental agreements for only 8 weeks on their own, if Sinclair has a block of apartments/rooms set aside for these students that based on a schedule of transitions between students, Sinclair may be able to provide students with improved housing opportunities. Any arrangements that the department is able to work out will need to be coordinated with Business Services.
* While this was not discussed in the meeting with the department, the Review Team noted that a recommendation from the previous Program Review directed the department to increase the diversity of its faculty. This remains a challenge for the department, one that should continue to be addressed. The department may want to consider whether the Grow Our Own program provides an opportunity to increase the diversity of faculty in the department. This is an issue that will need to be addressed in coming years and cannot be ignored.
* The self-study noted the challenges that non-attendance and absenteeism present to student success, and the department should be commended for the steps it has already taken to address this. Additional steps may become possible with the transition to the new Learning Management System in Summer 2015, and as the Lift! Initiative begins implementation. While the Early Alert system is not currently available for the department, these other tools will allow for the early identification of students who are not attending, and will allow for targeted interventions with these students. Perhaps faculty in the department could serve in a "success coach" role, contacting students with attendance issues early in the term. The department may want to consider a collaborative, team-based approach where faculty in the department work together to identify and contact students whose attendance is problematic. Perhaps time could be set aside in some department meetings to discuss individual students and what has been done to reach out to them, helping to establish this as a formalized process in the department.
* The department noted the relatively low success rates of the Electrical course, and described some excellent strategies that have already been developed to address this. The department is encouraged to assess the impact of the videos that are being developed for the course, and is likewise encouraged to consider whether a prerequisite might be appropriate for this course.
* The department is encouraged to consider and explore online and hybrid offerings. While there are clearly some courses in Automotive that would be inappropriate as online offerings, there may be other courses where it may be a possibility. Hybrid courses may allow the department to shift some content to online, while still giving students the hands-on experience that the discipline relies on heavily. Hybrid courses may also help reduce problems with attendance - students may be more willing to attend class when there are fewer classes to attend and when they are able to receive some of the content online an a more flexible basis.
* Finally, Sinclair has recently begun offering 6000 level course non-credit offerings for students who are not seeking a degree, but still want to avail themselves of educational experiences. Could non-credit automotive courses be developed for individuals who are seeking basic non-professional level skills? How cost-prohibitive would this be?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF DEPARTMENT’S PROGRESS AND GOALS:

The excellence of Sinclair's Automotive Department is beyond question. It is well-respected in the community, enjoying a reputation for quality that has been carefully cultivated and maintained over decades. Sinclair is fortunate indeed to have this department, and the Review Team really can't adequately express how impressed they were with the superb work that is being done. The department benefits from a combination of strong leadership and faculty cohesion, unity, and support. It is a department that is dedicated to its students, and does all in its power to ensure that they are prepared to be the kind of skilled, knowledgeable, professional employees that area employers have come to expect.

The department is absolutely moving in the right direction - while recommendations were provided from the Review Team, really at the most basic level the Review Team is merely encouraging the department to continue to move forward as it currently is doing. Without question this department has accomplished great things, and the Review Team has every expectation that it will accomplish even greater things in the future.

INSTITUTIONAL OR RESOURCE BARRIERS TO THE DEPARTMENT’S ABILITY TO ACCOMPLISH ITS GOALS, IF ANY:

* The lack of program-specific Marketing dollars is often mentioned as an institutional barrier in Program Review documents. During the meeting with the Review Team, it was noted that the department generates revenue through providing repair services, and it was asked whether this additional revenue couldn't be used for marketing for the department. College policy currently prohibits this, but should policies and processes be re-examined to see if revenue generated by departments could be utilized by those departments for Marketing purposes? How difficult would it really be to make this happen?
* The department noted repeatedly in the self-study the need for housing for students who come from other parts of the country - there are other departments with similar housing needs, and our efforts to recruit international students result in a similar need. Can these departments work together to develop housing solutions for their students? Can the recommendations to the Automotive department inform the efforts of other units on campus?
* The department noted the desirability of reassigned time to accomplish work that at present they lack the resources to give full attention to. Currently an institution-wide review of reassigned time is beginning, and will hopefully result in some specific policies and criteria that will guide the distribution of reassigned time among different departments.
* This department is one of several that is physically housed some distance from the main body of the Dayton campus - how can faculty in these programs be better integrated with the rest of campus? Can the psychological distance that goes hand in hand with the physical distance be bridged somehow to help faculty in these departments feels more connected and included? What can we do to help them feel more "plugged in" to the rest of campus?
* The assessment work this department is doing is outstanding, and could serve as an example for other departments that struggle with assessing outcomes. The Provost's Office may want to consider keeping a list of programs who have been shown through the Program Review process to have excellent assessment structures and practices, such that departments who struggle might receive recommendations of departments they could emulate and that their faculty they could look to for suggestions in improving their assessment efforts.