**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2016-17**

**Department:** Business Information Systems (BIS)

**Date of Review:** March 24, 2017

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Dave Collins, Provost

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Angie Didier, HR Analyst, Research, Analytics & Reporting

Sharyn Hunter, Professor, Developmental Language Arts

Candi Jones, Academic Advisor, Academic Advising

Evan Kloth, Manager, Learning Centers

Melissa Lewis, Bursar

Chris Murphy, Assistant Professor, Automotive Technology

Jackie Myers, Division Assessment Coordinator, Business Services

Tony Ponder, Dean, Science, Math and Engineering

Amanda Romero, Chair/Professor, Design

Nora Schaefer, Professor, Dietetics and Nutrition

Patrick Seymour, Manager, Application Delivery IT

Remika Smith, Academic Advisor, Academic Advising

**Department Members Present:**

Elizabeth Orlando, Interim Dean, Business Services

Barb Tollinger, Chair/Professor, Business Information Systems

Faculty and Staff:

De Lena Aungst

Kelly Cooley

Jenn Day

Ryan Murphy

Cheryl Reindl-Johnson

Jennifer Romero

Brad West

**COMMENDATIONS:**

* The level of faculty collaboration in this department is incredible – this is a department where faculty are all on the same page. During the meeting with the Review Team, the level of camaraderie was easily discernible, it was evident that this is a department that works very well together, which allows them to be much more effective in meeting students’ needs and implementing strategies for improvement. The department benefits from strong leadership, and many of the innovations discussed in the self-study and in the discussion with the Review Team would not have been possible without the collegial climate that exists in the department. This spirit of teamwork appears to extend to adjunct faculty in the department, providing a measure of continuity and consistency between full-time and part-time faculty in hiring, scheduling, and implementation of curriculum.
* The dedication of the faculty to their students is exemplified by their willingness to staff the BIS lab. Initially offered only on Friday, they have expanded availability to other days, and arranged to have a different faculty member staff it at different times. It is impressive to view a schedule with so many BIS faculty on it, and realize the level of access to help from their professors that is being offered to BIS students. Not only do they make themselves available in the lab, but they have located the lab in the center of an office suite with many of their offices around the perimeter, giving their students maximum access to their instructors outside of class.
* The faculty in the department are very active across the campus, and are involved at the forefront of many groundbreaking initiatives. Four faculty from BIS are participating in the RESPECT grant, working to improve success rates for African American students in ways that are being adapted to benefit all students in the department. This has led several faculty to increase team-based learning in all sections that they teach. Along those lines, the department has always been well represented among the Change Agents on campus. The level of teamwork and collegiality in the department allows them to deploy new strategies and approaches more seamlessly and with less turbulence than is the case in many other departments.
* The department’s efforts to improve student success are highly commendable. Noting low success rates in BIS 1120 – Introduction to Software Applications, the department managed an increase from 57.1% in FY 2014-15 to 67.9% in FY 2015-16. Increasing success rates had been a recommendation from the previous Program Review, and the department took this recommendation to heart and focused on improving student success in the course. One strategy that appears to have made a difference is incorporating collaborative learning into the course, such that students are in teams, and are able to rely on other team members in parts of the course where they struggle. The department’s ability to develop and implement strategies that were effective in raising success is highly commendable.
* Related to success in BIS 1120, the use of pre- and post-test data with every assignment is an excellent idea. Students are only post-tested on those things that they didn’t demonstrate knowledge of in the pre-test, resulting in a customized learning approach in BIS 1120 that is aligned with current movements in higher education for competency-based education. The department has embraced new approaches for increasing learning for students in the course, and it appears to be a factor that has resulted in higher levels of student learning.
* The development of the BIT 0010 – Computer Fundamentals developmental computer skills course for students who are not ready for BIS 1120 is also commendable. Furthermore, starting the course four weeks into the term so that students who struggle in BIS 1120 can move into BIT 0010 instead is a superb idea, and the department has gone to great lengths to find a way for students to move seamlessly from the BIS 1120 course they are struggling in to the BIT 0010 course that provides learning at the level they need.
* The department received a Pathways 2.0 Grant to develop a mandatory orientation for students in the BIS degree programs, and reached out to several hundred students with an active BIS program code to invite them to participate in the experience. Daytime and evening meeting times were provided, and the department took the innovative step of having BIS practicum students who were near completion of the program come and talk about things they wish they had known as they were starting the program. This is just another example of the department’s commitment and willingness to go the second mile with their students, and is one of multiple grants that the department has sought and received to help them improve student learning.
* The Review Team was especially impressed with the Employer Survey – the department goes to great lengths to get feedback from a wide array of local employers to ensure that their students are prepared with the skills that local employers are seeking. The extent to which the department seeks to have feedback from local employers guide which skills they develop in their students is highly commendable.
* The department has been highly responsive to local employer needs. An example of this is the Software Testing course that one faculty member developed for Lighthouse Technologies. Students are prepared to take the International Software Testing Qualifications Board Foundational Certification Test, and students who pass the certification exam are guaranteed an interview with Lighthouse Technologies. More collaborations with local business are in development, and the department deserves a great deal of praise for their extra work meeting the needs of industry in the region.
* The department has been very active in training for other departments on campus, particularly through the Center for Teaching and Learning and workshop opportunities like Fall Faculty Professional Development Day. Faculty in the department possess expertise that can help all faculty on campus, and they have been selfless and generous in sharing that expertise to the benefit of their colleagues across campus.
* The work improving success in BIS 1120 – Introduction to Software Applications due to recommendations in the last Program Review have already been mentioned – but this was indicative of how seriously the department took all of the goals and recommendations from the last Program Review. Review of reported progress on these goals and recommendations makes clear that the department prioritized them. Another example of this is the revised mission statement – based on a recommendation from the last Program Review, the department has crafted a crisp, clear, powerful mission statement that concisely communicates the focus on the department and its vision for what it expects its student to achieve.
* The department has been a true pioneer in the use of common assignments and assessments, and deserves a great deal of recognition for this.
* Finally, the Review Team would like to give high commendations to the BIS department’s support of the Advanced Job Training initiative, providing marketable skills to inmates that will allow them a second chance for a better life upon release. Their support has great potential in terms of the opportunity to change lives and positively impact society.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

* A great deal of data was provided for program outcomes in the self-study, but the department is encouraged to tighten the alignment between expected program outcomes and the measures that are used. For some outcomes the Review Team was unsure whether exam scores or assignment scores were directly aligned with the outcome they were being used to measure. It may be that more fine-grained assessments for program outcomes are needed. Also, student self-report is a valuable source of data, but since people are not always good judges of their own skill level, probably should not be the only source of assessment data for any of the program outcomes.
* The department has implemented strategies that have resulted in impressive gains in course success in BIS 1120 – the department is strongly encouraged to continue these efforts and develop additional strategies for further improvements in success rates. In making this recommendation, the Review Team wants to emphasize that this should not diminish the already impressive work that has been done in this area.
* The Employer Survey represented impressive work by the department in getting and using feedback from local employers to guide skill development in students. The department is encouraged to find ways to increase the response rate, and thus the depth of the feedback they are receiving. For example, could the Better Business Bureau or Chamber of Commerce be organizations that the department could work with in getting an increased response rate from local employers? The department’s work on the survey has been very impressive, and the Review Team feels they should work to maximize the quality of the information they are receiving through these efforts.
* In the past, the department has worked well with Workforce Development. However, the contact they previously had is no longer with Sinclair – should new connections with Workforce Development be fostered?
* The Lighthouse Technologies collaboration should serve as a model for other collaborations – without exceeding its available bandwidth, the department is encouraged to continue their efforts to develop other, similar arrangements with local companies.
* Mandatory orientation is a superb idea – can an online version be developed? There was concern in the discussion with the Review Team that there would be a loss of connection, that it would be difficult to replicate the sense of connection with an online version of the orientation – are there ways that this could be accomplished? Given that so many of the department’s course offerings are online, it would seem that students who take courses predominantly online could benefit if the department could come up with a version of orientation that allows the flexibility of online learning without the loss of establishing connections with students at this important activity at the outset of their time in the BIS programs. The department is also urged to consider the timing of orientation – while there is a good rationale for offering it several weeks into the term, many departments have their orientation prior to the start of the term. The department is invited to consider the pros and cons of changing the timing of mandatory orientation, or perhaps offerings orientation both before and several weeks after the beginning of the term. As part of mandatory orientation, could cohorts be developed that might benefit completion? Is a cohort approach feasible for BIS students? Perhaps not, but the department is encouraged to discuss this and other issues surrounding orientation activities as students enter BIS programs.
* With backfill associated with the Health Sciences strategy looming, the department is strongly encouraged to petition for dedicated classroom space appropriate to its course offerings. Many of the rooms that the department has been teaching have provided extensive challenges, and the department will need to advocate for itself in seeking to secure dedicated rooms more suited to the content it is providing to students. They may need to find way to demonstrate that student learning would be increased in more appropriate classrooms.
* The department is encouraged to develop a ten year plan – based on what they know about the demand for their programs, the needs of local industry, and trends in computer skills development at the high school level – where does the department see itself in ten years? The department should develop a statement of some kind – it needs not be lengthy, complex, or overly detailed, but some concise statement of what the department believes the future holds and strategies it may want to consider in response.

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT’S PROGRESS AND GOALS:**

This is a collegial, cohesive department that has demonstrated a great willingness of put extra time, effort, and work into helping its students succeed. Locating the BIS lab in the center of many of the faculty offices is representative of how the department puts students at the center of everything it does. The faculty-staffed BIS lab is just one of many indicators of this dedication to students. It is an innovative department, one that takes new approaches such as the work with the respect grants and the collaborative learning that was developed for BIS 1120. Faculty in the department have shown a great capacity for adapting to change – they move with shifting trends in a constantly evolving environment regardless of what is thrown at them, and they find a way make it work for their students. The Review Team found a tremendous number of things to be impressed about with this department.

There may be additional changes that the department may need to adapt to in the future. There may always be a need for the skills they are providing for students, even if increasingly those skills are being offered at the high school level. The department is strongly encouraged to be thoughtful, watchful, and adaptable, and anticipate looming changes in this regard to the greatest extent possible.

It is hoped that in reviewing this document that the department is aware of how deeply impressed the Review Team was with their spirit of teamwork and commitment of students, and it is hoped that the department maintains these strengths well into the future.

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

* As noted in the Recommendations, the classrooms that BIS sections have been assigned to have not always been conducive to the learning environment required by the content being delivered. This has been an impediment to effective teaching and learning, and it is hoped that this will be addressed in the backfill process.
* While IT has been responsive to the needs of the department, it may be the case that there is an opportunity for better coordination between the department and the various areas within IT. Would identification of a liaison for the department within IT help to mitigate some of the difficulties that have been experienced in the past?
* For years Sinclair has debated the need for a computer placement test. This has been discussed multiple times in different venues, but the problem remains that we have a portion of our students who arrive at campus unprepared for use of computers, which can be a completion issue for courses that utilize the Learning Management System.
* Scarce marketing resources are a perennial problem for many departments at Sinclair. What direction and guidance can the College give departments for self-reliance in marketing? How can we help departments learn to market themselves via social media and other low-cost approaches?