**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2020-2021**

**Department: 0677 –** RET – Respiratory Care

**Date of Review:** April 15, 2021

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Kathleen Cleary, Interim Provost

Jennifer Kostic, Associate Provost

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Nadine Cichy, Professor, Communication

Karl Hess, Chairperson/Professor, Mathematics

Olivia Matthews, Academic Advisor, Academic Advising

Christopher Prokes, eLearning Strategist and Innovation Lab Manager, eLearning Division

**Department Members Present:**

Rena Sebor, Dean, Health Sciences

Sanja Keller, Chair, Respiratory Care (RET)

Faculty:

Michelle Abreu, Associate Professor, Respiratory Care

Nicholas Mullen, Faculty, Respiratory Care

Tracy Beard, Annually Contracted Faculty, Respiratory Care

Ann Davis, Adjunct Faculty, Respiratory Care

Staff:

Audrey Muslar, Administrative Assistant, Respiratory Care

**Commendations:**

* The Review Team was very impressed by the Respiratory Therapy Department’s outstanding achievements, awards, and accomplishments. The fact that the department has won the Distinguished Registered Respiratory Therapist Credentialing Success award six years in a row is extraordinary, and speaks to the high quality of the program compared to others in the field.
* But what is even more impressive is that with all the indicators of the high quality of the department’s offerings, the department personnel have never let up in their dedication to increasing completion and helping students become more successful. Even with the high course success and completion numbers that the department maintains, it never loses its focus on continuous improvement. It is challenging to maintain a growth mindset when you are already doing so well, and it illustrates how the department really believes in continuous improvement. It is easy for a department to be motivated when outcomes are not impressive - and when leadership is pointing that out to you. However, it is all the more impressive when a department displays such a high level of motivation at a time when things are going well, and no one is pressuring the department to improve. It shows a genuine concern for students and their success.
* When reading the self-study, it is apparent that there is a strong sense of teamwork in the department and an excellent climate for communication. It appears that faculty in the department lean on each other, work well together, and have an impressive ability to support each other, which is key to preventing burnout in a department.
* The Review Team also felt that much of the progress of the department is due to the strong leadership of the chairperson, who has been willing to make bold changes where appropriate in the few years she has been in the position.
* The Review Team was also impressed with how the department handled the direction to get within 65 credit hours. This state-imposed mandate was a real burden, and required the department to carefully balance accreditor-required courses in their curriculum with state rules requiring general education courses, all within the new constraints of a 65 credit hour limit. One strategy the department employed for meeting these competing demands was to take responsibility for assessing Oral Communication within the department, which placed an added assessment burden on the department in an area most departments look to the Communication department to provide. This speaks to the department’s willingness to invest extra effort in meeting the needs of its students and ensuring they are adequately prepared for the workplace.
* The Interprofessional Experience activities the department provides are so valuable for students in terms of developing skills in working with teammates with other roles and from other disciplines, something graduates will actually face when they join the workforce.
* The 100% employment rates for graduates and high credentialing pass rates are very impressive, and provide evidence regarding how well the department does preparing graduates for the workforce.
* The self-study was transparent and humble, but also showed confidence, demonstrating that the department could afford to be candid because it had the capital to spend. Sharing the example of the short-term certificate that was created to meet community need, but that didn’t end up being the solution to meet the need and eventually led to the partnership with Workforce Development that was more successful, was a bold move that was indicative of a department that isn’t afraid to acknowledge when something isn’t working and a new approach is needed. If you don’t have things not work once in a while, then you aren’t trying. When the short-term certificate wasn’t meeting the need, the department didn’t stop until they reached a solution that worked better for students. The willingness to work with Workforce Development as the ultimate solution is as an example of how other departments can move things to Workforce in some cases in ways that better meet the needs of our local employers. This is a department that has the confidence to keep trying until it finds solutions that are right for its students.
* The department’s efforts in educating the community – particularly around anti-smoking education – is highly commendable.
* This is a department that seems genuinely interested in working with other departments, not just in their division, and not just in Instruction, but across the college. Examples include collaborative work with the Math Department, utilizing the expertise of Academic Advising in reevaluating admissions requirements, and the collaborations with Workforce Development. When this department develops an initiative, it is never done in a silo. This department serves as an example to others in terms of interdepartmental collaborations and a cross-disciplinary approach across the institution.

**Recommendations for Action:**

* The Review Team strongly recommends that the department track the impact that the most recent revision to TEAS cut scores has in terms of equity and diversity in the program. The department will want to work with Research, Analytics, and Reporting to get disaggregated data on program enrollment and success.
* In the section of the self-study related to success milestones, there was only discussion of department efforts for two of them. The Review Team recommends that the department focus on all five completion milestones, and be prepared to discuss its progress on each in the next Program Review.
* The department has collaborated with the Math Department in the past, and the Review Team recommends additional future collaboration. In particular, the department should work with the Math Department to ensure that the required Math course in the program is still appropriate, and prepares students adequately for the TEAS admissions test.
* Several examples of collaboration with other departments across the entire college were provided in the self-study. The department should continue its collaboration with other peripheral departments, and keep moving in the direction it has been going in that respect. It is also recommended that the department ensure there is tracking and analyzing of data on any collaboration with peripheral departments to include as evidence in the next Program Review self-study.
* In the meeting with the Review Team, there was a considerable amount of discussion regarding the importance of recruiting students beginning at the high school level. While it may take some creative problem solving, the department is encouraged to increase its efforts to recruit students at the high school level, to make connections with students at that earlier stage. These efforts will be crucial considering the conversation around recruitment and building the enrollment pipeline in order to meet the burgeoning need in the community. Given that many students who enter the program report being inspired by their personal experiences with Respiratory Therapists treating themselves or family members, recruitment efforts may want to employ a focus on testimonials and real-life experiences.

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

This is a department that does an outstanding job of maintaining a growth mindset, along with an emphasis on continuous improvement, even with their exceptional quality and high levels of success currently. The Review Team hopes that the department will continue that mindset, and translate that into further continuous improvement over the next five years.

The self-study and the conversation with the Review Team provided abundant evidence that the department cares deeply about the success of its students, both while they are in the program and when they are out in the workforce after graduation. The department furthermore shows a strong commitment to meeting the needs of the community, and to keeping the program accessible.

It was mentioned in the self-study that the department feels it has a number of new faculty. The Review Team sees this as a benefit in terms of enthusiasm, energy, a willingness to make connections outside of the department, and a desire to keep improving in spite of current success, much of which can be credited to relatively new faculty. The relative youthfulness of the department is a strength.

The passion for their work and dedication of the faculty will be important in the years to come, as the Respiratory Care field will be in increasingly high demand. Fortunately, this is a department that has the skills, drive, and dedication to students and community that will be needed to meet the challenges of the coming years.

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

**Accomplish Its Goals, if any:**

* Many departments indicate a need for increased marketing resources in Program Review meetings. This department, however, instead noted that marketing needs a great deal of support from the institution to be able to support other departments. Sinclair will need to consider in future years how best to support Marketing so it can effectively support the many department that are reliant on its work.
* The Biology Department’s Anatomy and Physiology course is a gatekeeper for many Health Sciences programs, and plays a key role in determining which students are allowed into the those programs. In the interest of equity and accessibility, Sinclair may want to engage in a robust, thoughtful consideration of this course and how success or nonsuccess in the course impacts the future of students.
* The importance of professional conferences came up in the conversation with the Review Team. Sinclair may want to revisit ways conference attendance is supported, which impacts many departments besides Respiratory Technology. Given the benefits of having multiple attendees from a department at a conference, Sinclair may want to ensure that it provides means for more than one member of a department to attend a conference.
* This department’s 100% job placement is remarkable, but it was noted in the conversation with the Review Team that this may indicate there is unmet demand in the job market. Can enrollment be increased in some Health Sciences programs? Is this an opportunity to provide more qualified graduates where demand is so high? This may be a particular issue in Respiratory Technology, where there will be a large population living with lifelong problems due to COVID. This will make it especially important to support the department in increasing the student pipeline.
* The department mentioned the need for new respirators to remain current with the equipment it trains students on. Sinclair may need to increase institutional support for procurement of equipment that departments need to be able to turn interested students into qualified graduates.
* Other departments in Instruction will also need to continue to work with high schools via College Credit Plus and Tech Prep and seek other approaches to provide more access to high schools to help direct secondary students into Sinclair programs.