**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2019-2020**

**Department:** 0690-Veterinary Technology

**Date of Review:** September 17, 2020

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Kathleen Cleary, Interim Provost

Jennifer Kostic, Associate Provost

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Michelle Abreu, Assistant Professor, Respiratory Care

Crystal Echols, Professor, English

Emily Garber, Chairperson/Associate Professor, Physical Therapist Assistant

Jenny Bagwell, Advising Manager for Health Sciences

Carlina Figueroa, Work-Based Learning, Assistant Director

Rob Cowles, Pre-Professional Coordinator, LSAMP Program Coordinator, College of Science and Mathematics at Wright State University

**Department Members Present:**

Rena Shuchat, Dean, Health Sciences

Carolyn Reno, Chair, Veterinary Technology

Faculty:

Natalie Fleck, Associate Professor and Clinical Coordinator

Staff:

Sandra Lee, Administrative Assistant

**Commendations:**

* This is a relatively young program, first developed in 2012 as part of the Surgical Technology department, and eventually evolving into a standalone department. The current chairperson has been with this program since its inception, and has done an outstanding job of establishing and growing the program. It has been so impressive watching this program grow over the years, due to the efforts of both the chairperson and the department faculty member. Their hard work and devotion is what has made this program such a resounding success, and the Review Team really can’t say enough about how impressed they are by everything that has been accomplished in a few short years.
* Part of what has made this department such a success is its commitment to students – the Review Team noted that the self-study revealed a department that does an incredible job of supporting its students. When you see faculty committed to helping graduates who are no longer in the program who don’t pass the licensure exam the first time, it is emblematic of the concern the department has with helping its students succeed, even after they have left the program.
* The department’s effort to accommodate scheduling in clinics for students who have work schedules is particularly commendable, and indicative of their support for helping students succeed regardless of the other commitments they have in their lives.
* The department’s commitment to supporting its students is further illustrated the many visits made to clinical sites to help with student skill performance evaluations. This requires a tremendous amount of time and travel, but is so crucial to helping students demonstrate skill attainment, and to helping the program maintain accreditation.
* The Review Team was incredibly impressed with the department’s expansion into hybrid and online instruction – the department has added five hybrid/online courses and will be adding two more, all with only two full-time employees. It is surprising that the department has had the capacity to accomplish this with everything else it is doing.
* The Review Team wishes to commend the department on a well-written, organized, thoughtful self-study document. The self-study definitely highlighted all of the department’s accomplishments, while at the same time taking an unflinching look at opportunities for improvement and possible barriers to its success.
* The Review Team was also impressed with the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of the data points provided in the self-study. The department took a “deep dive” into analyzing its data.
* Along those lines, the department’s use of data reveals a commitment to the spirit of continuous improvement. The department gave several example of ways it had analyzed data, made changes based on the data, and then made plans to reassess the data subsequently. One example of this is the way the department used data to make changes to its curriculum, sunsetting the VET 1101 course and replacing it with a more rigorous VET 1102 course that would do a much better job of educating students about the expectations required of a veterinary technician.
* The department isn’t only committed to its students, it is also committed to supporting the other departments in the division, and Sinclair as a whole. As just one example of many, the “At a Glance” charts really inspired other departments. In addition, this department has been very active with career communities. Recently, the chairperson was key in the development of a proposal of a new Health Sciences pre-professional degree at Sinclair. The collegiality and professionalism demonstrated by the department in supporting other departments at Sinclair is greatly appreciated.
* This department should be commended for its exceptional relationship with Academic Advising. The department has been wonderful in communicating curriculum changes to Advising, and partnering to identify and resolve student challenges to success.
* The department does a truly amazing job of maintain connections with graduates. Few departments are as skilled at tracking graduates as they move into the workforce. The placement rates for this department’s graduates are unsurpassed – recently it was found that of 60 graduates, 58 were employed and the other two had moved out of state.
* The department chairperson, faculty member, and administrative assistant should be commended for the strong relationships they maintain with veterinary practices in the area. These relationships are crucial to their student’s opportunities for clinical experiences and eventual employment. Developing and maintaining these relationships are time and resource intensive, but pay strong dividends in terms of outcomes for students.
* This department is very forward thinking, always looking ahead, always anticipating what might happen in the future. The department is also flexible and nimble in responding to challenges.
* The Review Team wishes to commend the department for its work with community education, providing preventive care for pet education for the general public through vaccine clinics and community events as well as open-enrollment introductory-level courses.

**Recommendations:**

* While the Review Team was impressed with the amount of work that is done by a department of only two people, there are concerns whether the work of the department is sustainable given current personnel. Are there things that can be done to reduce the load on the department? The department is encouraged to brainstorm and identify ways of reducing workload where possible – are there processes that can be streamlined? Are there low-priority activities that can be reduced or even discontinued? How can we ensure the excellent work of the department continues without burnout? The department should also analyze the additional staffing considerations if additional cohorts are added (particularly part-time cohorts).
* The department is strongly encouraged to continue efforts to increase diversity in its cohorts. How can the department implement strategies that have a measurable impact and actually increase diversity in its programs? Can we populations be targeted for increasing diversity? While an on-campus clinic may help, it has not always increased diversity in other departments. The department is encouraged to reach out to Diversity Office personnel for help in developing recruitment efforts aimed at increasing diversity in the program.
* There was some discussion regarding the gap in time between graduation and when students take licensure exams – can the department examine the gap, and explore development of a strategy to address this that the institution can support?
* Consider offering a part-time program based on a cost-benefit analysis. Would a part-time program offer opportunities to increase diversity in the program? The department is encouraged to do a formal cost-benefit analysis in the near future to inform its decisions in this area.
* The Review Team recommends that the department revisit the five completion milestones (Students solidify their choice of major within the first or second term, students receive a MAP to completion within the first or second term, students complete a college-level Math and English class within the first year, students take 30 credits within the first year, including summer, students take 9 credits in their major area of interest within the first year, including summer). While completion is high, are there key data points that would help increase or maintain completion rates?
* The department should continue to advocate for an on-campus clinic. Given current constraints that may delay the development of an on-campus clinic, are there interim approaches that would temporarily mitigate the barriers the department currently faces until the clinic becomes a reality?
* The department should look at the long-term effects of the pandemic on veterinary care in the Dayton region. What will the impact be on jobs and clinical placements? Are there strategies that should be developed now to address this?

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

This department is remarkably mature in its development given that it is less than ten years old, and given that it consists of only two full-time personnel. In less than a decade, the department has cultivated a reputation for quality with veterinary clinics in the region, and has established and maintained strong relationships with these clinics. That so much has been accomplished in so little time with so few employees speaks to the hard work and dedication of the department. Sinclair is truly fortunate to have such a strong leader in the chairperson, and such a dedicated faculty member. In less than ten years this department has been built from scratch into a unit that is well-positioned to respond to the needs in the community and needs of students.

This department has a laser-focus on student retention and completion. It collects data on its students, uses that data to make changes to improve student learning, and then follows up to ensure that those changes are having their intended effect. This department is highly motivated for improvement, always looking at different angles, new ideas, and does a great job of using student data to drive change, reassessing those changes to make sure the impact they wanted to make were in fact made.

Few departments forge such strong connections with their students, connections that endure well after graduation. The department does an exceptional job of monitoring the success of its graduates in ways few other departments are able to accomplish. Without question, this is a department where students come first.

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

* Many departments across campus experience challenges with diversity in their programs. This is a problem that Sinclair must address at both the department and the institutional level? With Sinclair’s renewed emphasis on diversity and anti-racism, how do we translate our efforts into actually increasing diversity in our programs? What strategies do we need to implement at the institution level to move the needle on all of our programs?
* Sinclair’s current pandemic-related financial challenges mean that it will be a challenge to find funding across the college for important initiatives. Sinclair will need to find ways to ensure that these initiatives remain priorities, even if we are not currently in a position to initiate implementation of them in the near future.
* The department mentioned challenges with wages for its graduates, expressing frustration for the lower pay its graduates receive relative to other disciplines although using the same skills. Could outreach to the accreditation body result in advocacy on this issue? The department mentioned a factor that may already be helping to mitigate this – as its graduates show more skill and capacity for taking on more responsibilities in the facilities where they work, they become more valuable, and this helps push higher wages in the discipline.
* The department mentioned potential challenges in clinical sites if other programs expand – the department noted that it will watch this possibility closely. This is challenge other departments must also be mindful of in areas where competition with other institutions for clinical placements is increasing.