**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2015-16**

**Department:** Developmental Language Arts (DLA)

**Date of Review:** April 8, 2016

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Dave Collins, Provost

Chad Atkinson, Manager, Research, Analytics and Reporting

Dair Arnold, Assistant Professor, English

Rocky Belcher, Professor, Management

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

Sheryl Gould, Assistant Professor, Human Services and Behavioral Health

Amy Hartman, Ombudsman

Tina Hummons, Registrar, Registration and Student Records

Heidi McGrew, Division Assessment Coordinator, Liberal Arts, Communication and

Social Sciences

Tim McKinney, Senior Academic Advisor, Academic Advising

Sue Merrell Daley, Dean, Business and Public Services

John Porter, Professor, Automotive Technology

Bob Sherman, Associate Professor/Chair, Computer Information Systems

**Department Members Present:**

Shari Rethman, Dean, Liberal Arts, Communication and Social Sciences

Crystal Echols, Professor/Chair, Developmental Language Arts

Faculty and Staff:

Denise Aselage

Joyce Barnes

Dottie Bely

Bernice Brown

Barb Gilbert

Kjirsten Goeller

Sharyn Hunter

Allante’ Johnson

Felicia Monroe

Heather Neal

Kim Rickard

Debbie Strehle

Linda Pastore

**Commendations**:

* Reading and writing are essential skills for success in college – unfortunately, many students arrive at college with reading skills that are not adequate to successfully complete coursework at that level. The Developmental Language Arts Department provides foundational skills that are absolutely essential for any student to succeed at Sinclair. In order to help ensure that foundation is as strong as possible, Sinclair has deployed some of its best and brightest in this department. It is not easy to engage students who are learning basic reading skills, and it takes a special faculty member to generate enthusiasm for learning at that level – fortunately, the DLA department is full of instructors like this, who persist even when the work becomes demanding and difficult. Their commitment and caring to students who need the most help is truly commendable, and the Review Team wishes to express its appreciation for the department’s hard work with some of Sinclair’s most underprepared students, and to salute this outstanding department’s accomplishments.
* This is a department that volunteers to go above and beyond in helping students succeed, spending many hours with students outside of the classroom. This willingness to go above and beyond even extends beyond the work of their department – for example, not only did the department help pilot the computer literacy tool for the TAACCCT grant, the chairperson also volunteered and several faculty from the department became involved. This willingness to step up and help out with student success, even for efforts outside of the department, is a testament to the faculty’s concern for all students, and willingness to go the extra mile to help them succeed.
* The faculty in this department are willing to investigate new approaches, to research new strategies, and to embrace emerging best practices. As a result, the department’s pedagogical approaches are well-informed by advances in the field, and are constantly evolving as new best practices come to light. An example of this is the use of common master shells for courses offered by the department – faculty have committed to using the common shell, but at the same time there is opportunity for dialogue, and a recognition that everyone is open to changing the content of that master shell should the data indicate it is appropriate. Faculty in the department indicated that they all contributed to this standardization, everyone contributed ideas, and the level of engagement was such that it didn’t feel to them that it was imposed on them. This was not work that was quickly or easily done, but was worth the effort, and the collaborative approach that was taken is highly commendable. The department indicated that keeping the students in mind was what allowed them to collaborate so effectively in this effort, and this speaks volumes about the priorities of the department and its focus on students.
* As exemplified above, this is a department that operates in a spirit of collaboration – there is a real sense that faculty in the department work together, and that sense of unity and camaraderie help the department transition through times of change. It is also a department that plays a crucial role in supporting other departments, both in cultivating college-level reading and writing skills in students in all of the college’s academic programs, but also with specific partnerships with other departments, such as the longstanding work with the Criminal Justice Police Training Academy.
* The department has done a great job of developing program outcomes that are appropriate for its students. While the program outcomes were developed in Fall 2015, leaving no time to collect data prior to the meeting with the Review Team, there is every indication that the department is laying groundwork that will allow for reporting of assessment data on these program outcomes in Annual Updates in the years to come.
* Information provided in the self-study indicates that success rates in DEV 0015 and DEV 0035 have improved considerably, and the department deserves a great deal of credit for these improvements.
* Several of the faculty work outside the department in the ENG department, which has the potential to develop strong connections between not only DLA and ENG faculty, but can also help ensure that the curriculum is aligned.
* Faculty in the department were heavily engaged in the preparation of the self-study. In addition, faculty also participated heavily in the discussions in the meeting with the Review Team. It was encouraging to see the department so fully engaged in Program Review process, and this is the kind of intra-departmental collaboration Program Review is designed to foster.
* In this era of Performance Based Funding, Sinclair needs every competitive advantage it can get for scarce state resources. Completion of DEV education and attempting college level courses are two Performance Based Funding milestones where Sinclair is ahead of other institutions in the state, and this can largely be ascribed to the excellent work of the DLA department.
* Sinclair can be justifiably proud of this department – it is a department that does what is right for both its own students, and Sinclair students overall. The Review Team would like to express its deep appreciation and gratitude for the fine work this department does serving some of the students who need it most at Sinclair.

**Recommendations for Action**:

* The department is strongly encouraged to continue its assessment work, aggregating results across sections and tying them to program outcomes. With the level of standardization in DLA courses, the department should be well-positioned to collect data in most sections of the courses it offers, and use that data to determine the extent to which its students are achieving the program outcomes. Starting with next year’s Annual Update, the department should be able to report results on assessment of its program outcomes.
* The self-study mentioned that in the past the department has “stacked” sections, having more than one course meet in the same place at the same time taught by the same instructor. In the current budget climate, we need to find as many efficiencies in course scheduling as possible, and avoid running low enrollment sections. The department is encouraged to explore the use of “stacked” sections of DEV 0015 and DEV 0035 where possible to reduce instructional costs.
* With the relatively recent transition from a 16 week schedule to an 8 week schedule for courses in the department, can RAR help provide data to determine whether there has been an impact on course success as a result of this change? The high success rates in recent terms would seem to support this, but the department is encouraged to work with RAR to determine this impact to the extent possible.
* During the discussion with the Review Team, there was the discussion of development of an alternative to ENG 1101 that could be used as a solution to the problem of COLLEAGUE not being able to accommodate a co-requisite in the Accelerated English model. This alternative version of ENG 1101 may not be the answer, but the department is strongly, strongly encouraged to find a way to continue to offer the Accelerated English option, and explore how to get more students to take it. It may be that these efforts will need to involve the division dean or the Provost’s Office, both of whom would be supportive and willing to do anything needed to help this effort succeed.
* There was a great deal of discussion with the Review Team surrounding whether a score of 4 or 5 on the Writeplacer exam should place students into DLA courses. The department is strongly encouraged to work with RAR to gather data relevant to this question. Do students who go into ENG 1101 with a Writeplacer score of 5 have significantly higher success rates than students who go in with a score of 4? Are there demographic or other factors that influence whether students with a score of 4 on Writeplacer are successful in ENG 1101? The department should work with RAR to explore these and other issues surrounding Writeplacer scores.
* The department is also encouraged to work with RAR on tracking students from DLA courses into college-level English courses. Do DLA students have lower success than other students when they reach college-level English? What about Accelerated English students, how do they compare? What percent of DLA students eventually transfer for a four-year institution?
* In addition to tracking successful students, the department is also strongly encouraged to gather data regarding students who do not successfully matriculate to college-level English. Surveys should be developed and administered to students who stop attending or fail the course. Results from these surveys should be used to help identify possible strategies for increasing retention of students.
* The department is strongly encouraged to work closely with the English department to ensure philosophical and curricular alignment between DLA course content and ENG 1101. It is recommended that the department invite the chair of the English department to a department meeting at least once each semester to follow-up on this recommendation.
* In the discussion with the Review Team, the subject of the Writing Center came up. The department is encouraged to strengthen its connections with the Writing Center, and help students understand that it is a resource that can support them not only in DLA and ENG courses, but also in their subsequent coursework at Sinclair.
* Regarding the Intensive ESL lab – how can we find space for this lab? Is this a need that could be met during the backfill phase of the Health Sciences strategy?
* The self-study indicated that the DLA Boot Camps have been shelved for the time being – the department is encouraged to re-examine whether they might be appropriate with the new Integrated Reading and Writing curriculum. Boot Camps are a promising approach to helping students complete their Developmental coursework more quickly, and exploration of whether they could again be implemented would be appropriate.

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

Without question, this is a department that puts students first. This appears to be what gives this department its cohesion and collaborative environment – faculty are united by a commitment to prioritize the needs of Sinclair students above all else. It makes decisions that are beneficial to its students, even when those decisions aren’t necessarily beneficial to the department. It is a department that is flexible and accommodating in a dynamically changing environment, one that is able to adapt as circumstances require, and that seeks and is quick to adopt new best practices.

It is also a department that can be justifiably proud of the increase in course success rates in recent terms, an increase that can be legitimately tied to many of the efforts that faculty have made. Success in DLA courses have far reaching effects – students who do not succeed cannot move to ENG 1101 and eventually complete degree programs. For many of Sinclair’s students, their ability to complete their educational goals depend to a great extent on our ability to help them through their DLA coursework, and our students are fortunate to have such dedicated and caring faculty to assist them in this regard.

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

* Placement test cut scores are an issue that impacts the entire campus, not just this department. How frequently should the cut scores be reviewed? Are there other entities on campus that should have input into where the scores are set? Is the process of setting scores as data driven as it could be?
* When faculty in a department have a difficult time making load, how can we as an institution assist them? Could the institution do more in helping faculty identify other departments where they would be qualified to teach? Is there an opportunity to help faculty make load by having them spend time working in Academic Advising?
* At Sinclair, we often struggle to bring piloted programs up to scale so that they can be offered across campus. How can we as an institution help ensure that new initiatives do not stay in the pilot phase too long, and how can we help transition them to broader deployment?