**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2011-12**

**Department:** Academic Foundations (ACA)

**Date of Review:** April 12, 2012

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Helen Grove, Sr. Vice President and Provost

Dennis Brode, Chair, Management and Marketing

Teresa Carroll-Parker, Manager, Student Success Planning Services

Jared Cutler, Director, Curriculum and Assessment

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Laura Mercer, Director, Research Analytics & Reporting

Sue Merrell-Daley, Dean, Business and Public Services

Derek Petrey, Associate Professor, Modern Languages

Tony Ponder, Chair, Mathematics

Charlie Setterfield, Associate Professor, Architectural Technology

Stephen Skiles, Chair/Assistant Professor, Theatre and Dance

**Department Members Present:**

Lori Zakel, Dean, Liberal Arts, Communication and Social Sciences

Sally Struthers, Interim Chair, Academic Foundations

Faculty:

Dair Arnold Kjirsten Goeller

Denise Aselage Lindsay Gold

Joyce Barnes Amanda Hartman

Dottie Bely Sharyn Hunter

John Boucuvalas Amity Jetton

Bernice Brown Eric Kraus

Brian Cafarella Benjamin McKeever

Patty Clark Linda Pastore-Gaal

Valerie Cope Aaron Primm

Juanita Darden-Jones Kim Rickard

Teresa DeMonico Katy Riehle

Crystal Echols Lucinda Schweller

Marlyce Erickson Viet Tran

Jennifer Evans Beth Withrow

Patti Fernandez

Karen Fleming

Gail Gibson

Barbara Gilbert

**Commendations**:

* Throughout the Program Review self-study there was a continuous emphasis on the level of commitment that faculty feel toward the students. It is clear that those who teach in the department feel a great deal of passion about the importance of developmental education and helping students succeed, not only in their developmental courses but also when they move into college level courses.
* The department has made excellent progress on the standardization of course materials. This step was taken in response to recommendations in the previous Program Review and is evidence of a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Having common assignments and exams across all sections of a course is a crucial component for course and program outcomes assessment, and having this building block in place moves the department forward significantly. This level of coordination across courses also allows the department to give adjunct instructors structure in fulfilling their teaching duties and helps ensure that they are “on the same page” as full-time instructors in the department. It is hard to overstate what an important step this initiative has been toward increasing the department’s ability to assess learning outcomes and ensure consistency in learning experiences across sections of a course.
* The department has been involved in a number of initiatives aimed at increasing student success, with several faculty quite engaged in exploring new and innovative approaches to student learning. There is often a considerable amount of data collected in connection with these initiatives, which provides a helpful basis for decision making regarding these initiatives.
* The department is commended for its work with Wright State and Clark State to align developmental courses. Once completed, this work not only will provide benefits to students who transfer between the institutions, but also allow area high schools to better align their course content with college entrance proficiency expectations.
* The department is to be particularly commended for the Math Modules, Accelerated English, and Boot Camp initiatives, which appear to hold great promise in helping students accelerate their completion of required developmental education courses.
* The department has continued its attention to aligning course content with college-level English and math courses, something that requires on-going attention.

**Recommendations for Action**:

* The mission statement for the department that was provided in the Self-Study does not mention preparation for college-level math and English courses as the department’s central purpose and should be revised accordingly. The mission statement overall would benefit from being more concise and focused.
* The current program outcomes for the department mirror the college’s General Education outcomes. It is recommended that the department develop program outcomes that support the General Education outcomes, but that are clearly tailored to developmental education.
* While the department has collected a tremendous amount of data, it appears that to a large extent this data has not been interpreted, synthesized, and then used to inform changes. The department is encouraged to work with RAR to develop a plan for its use of data, including delineation regarding what routine data collection, analysis and interpretation the department will handle versus what RAR can best manage.
* Similarly, while the department’s efforts in developing common assignments and exams have been good, it does not appear from the Self-Study and review meeting that data on student outcomes at the course and section level is currently being collected and used to improve teaching and learning. The review team recommends that the department capture and mine this rich source of assessment data, analyze results and document findings. Assessment results collected in this manner should be reported in Annual Updates beginning next year and in the next Program Review self-study. Few departments at Sinclair are as well positioned to document student learning so completely and comprehensively, and it is recommended that the department take the next step to make this a reality.
* Building on the foundation for assessment that has been laid with common assignments and exams, it is recommended that the department work with its divisional Learning Liaison to develop a formal assessment plan to work through the issues related to collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of assessment data. RAR can also be a valuable resource in this regard.
* There is some indication that pilot studies in the department may have been compromised in some instances by having the practices being studied used in sections other than those assigned to use them, confounding the research results. The department is encouraged to maintain the integrity of any pilot studies, and utilize the services RAR offers in designing and implementing any future pilot studies.
* The department is encouraged to forecast enrollment on a yearly basis. The higher education environment related to developmental education is changing significantly, and the institution will want to stay on top of any trends that emerge that may either increase or decrease DEV enrollments. The department would be well served by paying close attention to changes in high schools and colleges that could impact developmental education enrollment and plan accordingly.
* Similarly, changes at the state and national level in developmental education practice and policy are occurring quickly, and the department’s work will be well served by understanding these changes and their implications for developmental education at Sinclair. It is recommended that the department maintain an openness to substantially new and innovative approaches and structures, and a willingness to adapt as new best practices emerge in the field. Changes in the area of developmental education will be inevitable in the future, and the department will need to be prepared to take these changes in stride and, hopefully, help shape these changes. Without question, an important challenge for the department and Sinclair is identifying sound approaches to helping students accelerate their completion of basic skills so they can perform successfully in their college-level courses.
* Many of the issues raised in the self-study and in the discussion in the review meeting suggest that span of control may be an issue for the department. With such a large department, and with a number of initiatives ongoing simultaneously, it may be a challenge for the chair and faculty leaders to stay on top of everything. It may be in the department’s best interest to determine which activities are most valuable and focus resources in those areas.
* While it is clear that all faculty in the department have strong feelings of commitment to their students, it is likely that some faculty have successfully developed approaches that are particularly effective and beneficial to students. It is recommended that the department identify best practices among its faculty based on clear evidence of student success in courses over time, communicate these practices and widely adopt those best practices that are supported by evidence.
* On a related note, the department should identify those practices currently being piloted that provide the best evidence of enhancing student learning, and find ways to scale those practices to reach a larger number of students. Much work has been done investigating new approaches, and the department has reached a point where the most promising approaches need to be expanded to serve a greater number of students.
* There are a number of support mechanisms in place that are available from Student Services – Early Alert, for example. The department should ensure that it is taking full advantage of these support mechanisms and that it maintains a strong collaborative relationship with Student Services. The department is asked to set goals for increasing use of these services, such as setting a goal that 100% of developmental sections will utilize Early Alert when appropriate for students in the section.

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

This department has taken some significant steps since the previous Program Review. The establishment of common exams and assignments alone is a quantum leap forward. Moreover, the department can be justifiably proud of the successful work of its members who have worked so hard on the Developmental Education Initiative projects.

In many ways what emerged in this Program Review process was a picture of a department that has made some important progress, but is now at a juncture where it needs to take the additional necessary steps to get to the next level. Promising practices have been piloted and tested. Scaling those practices that have proven most effective now needs to be pursued in a thoughtful and strategic manner. Additionally, there is a considerable body of work underway across the country to improve student learning and progress in basic skills, and based on the self-study and the discussion in the review team meeting there wasn’t an indication that the department is closely connected to this work and the best practices that are emerging from it.

In some respects, the department is data-rich. There is a considerable amount of data available regarding initiatives the department has participated in, including success rates, success in subsequent courses, etc. However, it isn’t clear that this data is reviewed, analyzed and used by the faculty to make changes. As indicated earlier, the department has a significant opportunity with the collection of assessment data from common assignments and exams.

The department needs to monitor the overall success rates of its students, for this is the overarching metric that must be improved. Attached is a table reflecting the success rates by year and course for developmental education courses since 2006-07. As is evident from reviewing these overall success rates, there has been some good progress in DEV 108 but despite the department’s years of work on student success initiatives there hasn’t been a similar increase in success rates in other courses. Additional data are available from RAR on the success of minority and low income students, and it would be useful for the department to review those data as well.

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

The department’s involvement in initiatives to improve student success is to be applauded. In order for the department to make substantive strides in increasing student success, flexibility and adaptability will be of paramount importance. While the department covers disparate content areas, a sense of unity, cohesion, and department-wide collaboration in the cause of advancing student learning will also be crucial to the success of future endeavors. The college should assist in addressing the span of control issue that appears to adversely affect department operations.

