**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2019-2020**

**Department: Automotive Technology** (AUT) – 0568-Automotive Technology

**Date of Review:** February 20, 2020

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Kathleen Cleary, Interim Provost

Jennifer Kostic, Associate Provost

Jared Cutler, Assistant Provost of Accreditation and Assessment

David Bodary, Chair/Professor, Communication

Trish Burke-Williams, Coordinator, Academic Advising

Dana Johnson, Associate Professor, Sociology

Aaron Moyer, Associate Professor, English

Lindsay Pitstick, Assistant Director/Tech Prep, Tech Prep Department

**Department Members Present:**

Anthony Ponder, Dean, Science, Mathematics, and Engineering

Justin Morgan, Chair, Automotive Technology

Faculty:

Thomas Freels, Professor, Automotive Technology

David McGuigan, ACF, Automotive Technology

Ralph Miller, Associate Professor, Automotive Technology

Christopher Murphy, Associate Professor, Automotive Technology

Jeremy Ovenshire, ACF, Automotive Technology

John Porter, Professor, Automotive Technology

James Robinson, ACF, Automotive Technology

Troy Singleton, Associate Professor, Automotive Technology

Kevin Smith, Lab Tech, Automotive Technology

Charles Taylor, Professor, Automotive Technology

Staff:

Carrie Lair, Administrative Assistant, Automotive Technology (AUT)

Kevin Smith, Lab Tech, Automotive Technology

Hanna Weaver-Treon, Teaching Lab Tech, Automotive Technology

**Commendations:**

* The review team was deeply impressed by the list of awards in the first section of the Program Review self-study. These awards were in a broad range of areas and covered a number of different categories, and are a testament to the quality of the faculty and staff in the program, and to the wide external recognition that the department has earned. This a department that represents Sinclair well, and one the campus is justifiably proud of.
* This is a department composed of exceptional faculty that benefits from the strong, visionary leadership of an exceptional department chairperson. The time and effort that this department expends serving students is remarkable, consistently going above and beyond.
* The review team was particularly impressed by the excellent balance between high-level theory and down-to-earth technical knowledge in this department – it is a department full of faculty who have an exceptional capacity for grasping high-level concepts and a strong understanding of educational theory and pedagogy, but are able to bring that down to a practical level. This is a department of scholar practitioners, and it is encouraging to see a department with one foot so firmly in the theoretical, with the other so firmly in the hands-on, practical world in which their students work.
* The Comprehensive Automotive Service Technology (CAST) program is very impressive. This is a case where the department was aware of a need, developed a well-thought out strategy for addressing it, implemented that strategy, and has tracked the success of that strategy. The department’s approach to addressing the needs of students who were not affiliated with a specific dealership and were “falling through the cracks” is an excellent example of a thoughtful intervention to address student needs.
* This is a department that exudes a spirit of innovation. The four goals that the department has selected for itself for the next five years are all entirely new initiatives, any of which alone would be a heavy lift requiring focused resources. This department is in the forefront of its field – whether it is the groundbreaking program with autonomous vehicles, or its selection for exclusive partnership opportunities with Tesla, or any one of a number of other initiatives it is involved in – this department is found squarely on the cutting edge. It was abundantly clear to the review team that this department identifies needs, puts careful thought into developing strategies to address them, and is extraordinarily planful and aware of issues that must be addressed to implement those strategies. This department is always thinking of better ways to serve its students.
* The department’s work with internships for its students is nothing short of extraordinary. This year the department is overseeing 84 interns on its own, leveraging long-term and hard-earned relationships with local employers to provide unparalleled opportunities for students in its programs. The internship work the department does is so successful that it is common for students to receive job offers prior to completion of their internship. The department has developed an outstanding model that has benefited its students tremendously in terms of finding employment.
* The department’s program outcome assessment work is first rate. For years it has maintained trend data on program outcomes based on direct, authentic assessments of student skills and capabilities. Few departments on campus have such readily available and comprehensive program outcome assessment trend data stretching back a full decade.
* The department made excellent progress on goals and recommendations from last Program Review – and where necessary made thoughtful, carefully considered adjustments to those goals and recommendations. It is clear that the goals and recommendations were prioritized, and the department took them very seriously. One of many examples is the work the department has done procuring housing for out-of-state students at Wright State University.
* The department’s efforts to recruit young people to the field deserves special mention, particularly its work developing the Summer Camp offering. In a time of a decreasing pool of graduating high school seniors, efforts like these will be critical in terms of recruiting students and maintaining enrollment in academic programs.
* The department’s work with its Advisory Boards also deserves special mention. The department maintains four Advisory Boards that meet twice a year, and the department puts extra effort into encouraging attendance and increasing engagement of Advisory Board members. The strong relationship with Advisory Board members is indicative of the respect local employers hold for the program and its sterling reputation in the region.
* The employment rate for graduates of the department’s programs is remarkable, generally in the 95% range, and speaks to the high quality of the program and the excellent preparation it provides to its students. Additionally, the exceptional course success rates seen in the program are another indication of how well it is preparing its students for the workforce.

**Recommendations:**

* There are so many things the department is doing well, and so many examples of challenges that were addressed in creative and innovative ways. The first recommendation that the review team makes is that the department select one or two of these innovative approaches that the department feels would be most beneficial to share with other departments, and develop a presentation for Fall Faculty Professional Development Day, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and/or other venues where best practices are shared. The department’s approach to program outcome assessment is one strong possibility for sharing with other departments, but is just one of many best practices the department could select to share with others on campus.
* The internship program that the department oversees is exceptional – but there may be opportunities for improvement through collaboration with Workbased Learning. What practices could the department share with Workbased Learning that might improve the work they are doing, and vice versa? Are there tools that each party could share with the other? In many ways the Automotive Department can serve as a model for other departments to help demonstrate how internship can be done really well. The department is encouraged to reach out to the Office of Workbased Learning to begin a dialogue of what best practices can be shared between them.
* The review team strongly encourages the department to pursue all of the goals it selected for itself in the Program Review self-study. These goals are ambitious but thoughtful, and the review team wants to highlight them as an important focus of the work of the department over the next five years. Specifically, these four goals included:
  + Applied baccalaureate degree in automotive technology
  + Electric vehicle curriculum
  + Medium/heavy duty diesel program
  + Increase student persistence to completion
* The department discussed the need for additional space at length with the review team, and there is a compelling rationale for developing solutions to the space challenges the department experiences. The department is encouraged to benchmark other high quality institutions – how much square footage is devoted to their programs? What resources do they have that we don’t? Are there practices they employ to maximize the number of students who can be adequately served in a limited space? Do we need a consultant to look at possibilities for better utilization of existing space? Are there opportunities to see if local business partners have available space that could be used for course offerings, which would provide educational experiences in an occupational setting? The department can use the results of its benchmarking activities to develop plans for effective and efficient space utilization.
* Challenges related to the diversity of faculty, staff, and students were also discussed at length, and the review team wishes to express its understanding of the scope of the issue. However, this is a challenge that must be a priority, and the department is encouraged to be sure this is the case. The review team suggests outreach to some of the offices on campus that provide services to underserved populations, particularly UUAMP and the African-American Male Initiative. Relationships might also be cultivated with the Young Scholars program. The department is strongly encouraged to reach out to the Director of Student Enrichment to discuss how development of relationships with groups on campus might increase diversity in the department.
* Like many skilled trades at Sinclair, the department struggles with attracting students who may not be aware of the opportunities the programs it offers provide in terms of successful, high-paid employment. Can identifying and spotlighting successful graduates be a means of educating potential students of the promising potential of careers in the Automotive Technology industry? Do we have graduates we can highlight in marketing efforts that illustrate these opportunities?
* The department has done some work on the development of evening offerings, and is encouraged to prioritize those efforts. Some work has already been done that has laid the groundwork for these efforts. Can we use evening offerings to attract students who have stopped out? Could Prior Learning Assessment, and perhaps even Competency Based Learning, be leveraged to smooth their pathway to degree completion? How can we incentivize stop out students to return to complete their degrees, are there scholarship opportunities, etc.?
* Regarding stop outs, the department is encouraged to look at sequencing of courses to ensure students complete stackable certificates as soon as possible in the program. The review team recognizes course sequencing may already have been designed with this in mind, but the department is encouraged to take a fresh look. Also, is there an opportunity for outreach to stop out students, perhaps a year after they have left the program? Would it be possible to track those students and contact them a year or two later to inform them of the potential for finishing their degree program and the benefits that would come if they did?
* It was announced in the meeting with the review team that permission has been given for the department to use the Early Alert system in AUT 1114. The department is encouraged to move forward with this effort.

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

It cannot be overstated how impressed the review team was with this department. Faculty and staff in this department are exceptional in their commitment to their students, in their knowledge in the field, in their use of effective pedagogy, in their knowledge of cutting edge technologies in Automotive Technology – this appear to be a department that is fulfilling the potential of its talented faculty and outstanding leader. The recommendations provided above should not be taken as a sign that the review team feels there the department needs to make a number of improvements – the department is already high-functioning, innovative, and dedicated to its students, and the majority of recommendations listed above merely reflect suggestions the department itself made in the self-study regarding possibilities for improvement. The review team wishes to express its deep respect for the faculty and staff in the Automotive Technology Department, and its gratitude for all it does for the students it serves.

While the department identified a number of places where improvements can be made, it should not lose sight of the outstanding education it is providing its students, the exceptional foresight, vision, and innovation that is characteristic of how faculty in this department operate, and for the overall sense of dedication to student preparation and learning exhibited by its faculty and staff. The self-study the department developed for the Program Review was a model other departments would do well to emulate. The discussion between the department and the review team was outstanding, and covered a broad range of topics thoughtfully and comprehensively. While so much has been accomplished in the past few years, the review team is excited to see what the next five years holds in store for this department.

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

* Many departments at Sinclair struggle with challenges in helping students see the value and opportunities in the skilled trades. Does the institution need a focused marketing effort to educate potential students on the high-paying jobs and satisfying careers that are available in these fields? How can we better leverage Sinclair marketing resources to address this?
* This is one of many departments that struggle with space issues. While some of these issues will be addressed as part of the ongoing backfill work, many will require additional efforts if there is to be progress. Many departments will need to examine the extent to which reconfiguration of existing space is an option.
* This department is one of many in fast changing fields, where advances in technology and industry practices threaten to outpace our ability to keep up with them. Across the institution, what does Sinclair need to do to ensure departments in areas experiencing a high rate of change can be ahead of the changes as they come?