



To: Humanities Department faculty

From: APR response team

Re: Academic Program Review

As one of the first disciplines to undertake Academic Program Review, the Humanities Department set a high standard for other departments to follow. The document is clearly written, the Appendices are comprehensive, and the presentation comprised a concise summary of the important points. It is obvious from both the presentation and the written report that the Humanities Department has a very collaborative faculty with a deeply entrenched culture of planning, assessment and self-examination.

As one of the largest disciplines at COCC, the Humanities Department serves students in all areas of the college and the faculty members strive to meet the needs of these disparate groups of students. Having a well-defined Mission, Values and Departmental Strategic plan are indicators of the faculty's high level of organization and commitment to doing the best job possible in educating our students. Nothing is left to chance; the challenges of engaging both developmental students and aspiring writers are systematically analyzed and carefully addressed. Members of the department work together to regularly review and update the Mission, Values, and Plan, modeling the conscientious, reflective behavior that should be pervasive at the institution.

One clear example of the thorough and systematic way that the Humanities faculty approach their work is the comprehensive nature of their assessment efforts. 100% of the courses have SLOs and a schedule for updating the SLOS has been established. The writing courses incorporate a normed, multi-instructor approach to using the rubric, minimizing the risk of individual bias while also creating a setting where productive conversations about teaching techniques can take place. Several years ago, the writing faculty performed an experiment with portfolios in WR121 as a way to assess students' writing skills without using a high-pressure exam. Even though it was not successful, the pilot was innovative and addressed a clearly identified problem. After this portfolio experiment, the faculty adopted the Oregon Writing and English advisory Council's proposed SLOs for WR 121 and 122, creating a more clear distinction between the desired outcomes of the two courses.

The writing faculty are heavily invested in the basic composition courses required of most COCC students. They have updated the courses to "focus more on training students to become flexible writers who are aware of shifts that must be made to meet the needs of readers in different writing situations, including print, online, and other media. This approach enables instructors to incorporate genres beyond the traditional academic ones." They have also redesigned the developmental literacy sequence, contracting it from five courses to two, a major step in helping students attain college level skills in a much shorter time. This contraction of the developmental sequence has been accompanied by efforts to improve the placement process, and creation of a co-requisite support course to accompany WR 121 for some students (funded by Title III). In addition to the work on composition classes on the

COCC campuses, writing faculty members also have built a strong partnership with area high schools through College Now and Cascade Commitment. They have created a dual credit program that is recognized as exemplary in the state, and several faculty members gave a national presentation on this collaboration.

Despite the dedicated full-time faculty members, a stable pool of highly qualified part-time faculty, and collaboration with Library faculty, there are still some areas where student success rates can be improved. Classes offered on the Bend campus have higher success rates than those offered in Redmond, Madras, or Prineville. Online and hybrid sections also have lower success rates, as well as a higher number of students who drop the course.

Other challenges were described in the written report that related to the current classroom environment. Some composition classes are relatively large, making it difficult for the faculty member to give high quality and timely feedback. Writing classes sometimes struggle to get time scheduled in a computer lab where students can practice writing while receiving assistance from their instructor, and the SynchronEyes software that some faculty members used was discontinued. Progress has been made in all of these areas since the report was written, however. In 2017-18 maximum class sizes will be reduced in WR 60, 65, and 95 for a one-year trial to see if there is a measurable change in student success. 24 laptop computers and a laptop cart have been purchased and will be dedicated to composition courses. Although the SynchronEyes software has been discontinued, the eLearning Department worked with the IT department and found an alternative program that should meet instructor needs.

As part of the Academic Program Review process, program goals for the next five years are determined, areas are identified where additional support could help reach these goals. Please see below for a response to each of these goals and requests:

Goals

Improved placement – This is a top priority and is already underway. A work group is investigating ways to update COCC's placement process incorporating more types of measurement, and depending less heavily on Accuplacer scores. Any changes will be complex, involving both faculty and advisors, as well as changes to the Banner system and GradTracks. Preliminary data from a pilot project suggests that many students who were successful in high school can be successful in WR 121 rather than taking WR 95 as indicated by Accuplacer scores.

Accelerated learning – Three sections of a co-requisite for the WR 121 course will be offered in Fall of 2017. All three sections are filled with students whom Accuplacer placed into WR 95. The results of this pilot project will determine whether further exploration of this approach is worthwhile.

Increased FT faculty - A request for a Developmental Literacy Specialist was submitted to the Vice President of Instruction in Spring 2017. This position, along with other requested faculty positions, will be presented to FIAT and the President in early 2018.

Revised course outcomes – This important project has already begun with the adoption of new course outcomes for WR 121 and WR 122. It might be time to revise the General Education/Foundation Requirements outcomes, as well.

Requests

More FT faculty – A request for a Developmental Literacy Specialist was submitted to the Vice President of Instruction in Spring 2017. This position, along with other requested faculty positions, will be presented to FIAT and the President in early 2018.

Computer classrooms and/or flexible classrooms – A cart of laptop computers was purchased in spring 2017 using Title III funds to increase access to computers for developmental writing students. Several classrooms in Cascades Hall are currently being remodeled to be flexible learning spaces, having moveable tables and laptop carts. They are scheduled to be available in January 2018.


Professional development funding for adjunct and PT faculty - \$500 per year is available to adjunct faculty members for professional development. Unused funds will accrue up to \$1000 (14.2 (b) of the collective bargaining agreement). At this time, there is no regularly established system in place for PT faculty members to receive professional development funding; all requests are made individually to the Vice President of Instruction. Two PT faculty members in Humanities recently received funds to take an online reading course. A more systematic approach is needed, however, and the Vice President of Instruction is investigating mechanisms for funding PT faculty professional development.


Increase funding for Writing Center - Requests for ongoing funding increases should go through the FIAT general fund request process. Work with your Department Chair in Fall 2017 to submit a request. Make sure that you refer to this document in support of your request.

Outside reviewer of developmental literacy and composition programs – Work with your Instructional Dean to request funds from the Vice President for Instruction. Some funds are available for this type of project.

With the many proposed changes related to Developmental Literacy, placement, and course outcomes, the Humanities faculty have a busy few years ahead. This ambitious and visionary approach seems typical of the Humanities Department and is to be commended.


Respectfully yours,


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