

California State University, Stanislaus

2007/2008

SUPPORT UNIT REVIEW - PHASE 3
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the Fall 2007 semester the Dean, Department Chairs, Faculty, Staff and Students engaged in a self-study evaluation process. Three surveys were developed for faculty and staff employed by the college. The department chair survey, consisting of 16 questions, was distributed to 17 chairs, coordinators and directors. Six of the surveys were completed. The faculty survey of 16 questions was distributed to all faculty members and 4 surveys were returned. The staff survey, with 14 questions, was distributed to 16 staff members and 13 were returned complete.

The survey data and completed self-study evaluation was provided to an external review team consisting of a college faculty member, a graduate student and a colleague from the College of Education. They reviewed the information and provided an executive summary in Summer 2008. The prevailing orientation in this endeavor is to ensure that, as College staff, faculty, and administrators work to fulfill their respective functions, fidelity to the values of the College will be maintained and advanced. Staying true to the principles and ideals that are at the foundation of the College's mission helps guide us as we take the next steps in this process.

This process identified seven areas needing improvement: communications, support of faculty, staff training, the role and insight of staff, student advising, service to students, and course offerings.

While the cost of providing students an excellent education has increased, the College's operational budget (supplies and services) has not changed in more than a decade. These funds have been further stretched by the decentralization of the colleges with more and more items being handled by department and dean's office support staff. Additional resources and funding are observed to be necessary to help ensure appropriate levels of office operations support for faculty in the fulfillment of their various responsibilities. Improving the web presence of departments is an important component to this as well as requests for additional help for staff. Most immediately there is need for a full-time position to provide staff support to the Department of Ethnic and Gender Studies and the Social Sciences Program, for a part-time position to support the Centers located in the College, and for a development/public affairs staff person in the College.

Both staff and department chairs identified the necessity of having consistent training opportunities made available for staff in terms of course scheduling, budgeting, and data-based systems. Chairs draw heavily upon their administrative assistants and these indispensable staffers need to stay as informed as possible on technical issues to help ensure effective and efficient delivery of department operations. Funding for staff reclassification would provide an incentive for staff members to increase their skills and assume new, higher-level responsibilities.

Staff and the functions they fulfill, along with the institutional memory and insight they bring to bear, are recognized as absolutely fundamental to the successful operations of the College in the fulfillment of its mission. Setting up communication structures and ready conduits of back-and-forth exchanges between administrators, faculty, and staff are essential to help ensure that those decision makers are consistently exposed to the often prescient perspectives of staff. In addition, the need for enhanced communications

between academic departments is duly recognized as well as improvements in informational exchanges between departments and other administrative units on campus. Such improved communications would strengthen coordination inside and beyond the College as well as increase efficiency by helping fill in information gaps.

Staff, faculty, and department chairs call for improvements in student advising. The orienting goal in such endeavors is to assist students in their successful and timely graduation. In addition, faculty believe that some changes would prove beneficial in improving service to students. On the basis of the current Self-Study Surveys, it is impossible to determine precisely what faculty had in mind in terms of such alterations—further research is warranted here.

Faculty expressed concern that curricular offerings are currently insufficient to meet student needs. This is of serious concern in that this directly hinders the learning-centered mission of the University. The College recognizes that some faculty do not believe that course offerings are currently meeting the educational and intellectual needs of their students. Identification of exactly what professors believe are the problems in curriculum delivery is essential and further discussion on this is in order. This constitutes a compelling concern for such a learning-centered entity as the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Three areas were identified in which the College is excelling. These areas were identified as positive interactions between the Dean's office and departments, within department offices, and despite the need for additional personnel and resources, the heroic ability of department office staff to meet the needs of students and faculty. Staff, faculty, and department chairs believe that department offices are successfully meeting the needs of both students and faculty. This is clearly an area of achievement that resides at the core of the mission of the Support Unit and the College properly takes pride in this finding, with the obvious caveat that complacency should not be allowed to creep in.

Faculty very strongly view their interactions with department offices positively and this same view is echoed by both staff and department chairs. Staff and chairs are demonstrating very effective performance in building and maintaining a welcoming work environment for faculty and a supportive structure for students.

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences will continue the assessment measures currently in use which include: annual reports, accountability goals review, curriculum and resource reviews, Graduating Senior Survey, Graduate Exit Survey, and national accreditation (Public Administration). In addition, the surveys used during the self-study will be administered at least bi-annually. Resulting data will be reviewed by the Dean, Department Chairs and College Committees and appropriate actions initiated.