Date: November 2, 2009

To: Jolene Koester and Stella Theodoulou, Dean
    President College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

From: Cynthia Rawitch, Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Studies

Subject: Final Memorandum of Understanding – Pan African Studies

On April 28, 2009, a meeting was held to discuss the commendations and recommendations made by the external reviewers of the Pan African Studies Department. Present at the meeting were: Cynthia Rawitch, Associate V.P., Undergraduate Studies; Stella Theodoulou, Dean, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences; Christina Von Mayrhauser, Associate Dean, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences; Tom Spencer-Walters, Chair Pan African Studies Department; Professor Johnie Scott; Alyce Akers, EPC Rep.

Dr. Rawitch congratulated the program on its many strengths and for the commendations in the external reviewers’ report. A discussion of the reviewers’ commendations and recommendations followed.

The recommendations were reviewed and the understandings on the following pages were reached.

CZR:ta
Attachment

cc: Harry Hellenbrand, Provost and V.P., Academic Affairs
    Spero Bowman, Associate V.P., Academic Resources
    Penelope Jennings, Associate V.P., Faculty Affairs
    Christina von Mayrhauser, Associate Dean, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
    Tom Spencer-Walters, Chair, Pan African Studies Department
    Alyce Akers, EPC Rep
Department of Pan African Studies  
Program Review 2009-2010  
Memorandum of Understanding

Summary of Reviewers’ Commendations

1. The PAS department has a proud 40-year history on this campus and represents one of the largest departments of its kind in the nation.

2. The PAS faculty is commended for being independent, strong and self-confident while simultaneously creating a strong sense of family. The department is highly progressive and reflects the diversity of its faculty members, students and community.

3. The PAS department is commended for its inclusive and effective educational strategies. The dedication to students by faculty members is likewise commendable.

4. The self study was an outstanding model which provided a thorough examination of the strengths and opportunities for change in the department, faculty and provision of services to students.

5. The department has developed strong and supportive services for students. The Writing Center has a long and storied place in the department, one that is of paramount importance to the success of the students. The addition of a Resource Library promises to enhance the department’s tradition of innovation and excellence in educating students.

6. The reviewers noted the healthy interpersonal debates and interactions among faculty during the site visit. This modeling of professional behavior shows the commitment of faculty to students and to the mission of the department.
7. Creating and publicizing the student learning outcomes (SLOs) is commendable. These have made the connection between the major and minor understandable, clear and logical.

8. This is an active, impressive and engaged faculty. The faculty is commended for seeking and securing internal and external funding for research projects. The scholarly output of the faculty is notable given the high demands of teaching at CSUN. Faculty members also have commendable participation in professional organizations and civic engagement activities.

9. The department’s plans for academic support, including advisement, assessment, recruitment, mentoring and faculty collaboration, is highly desirable. The department is commended for this planning and should now seek to implement these advisement goals, strategies and program expansion mechanisms.

10. PAS is commended for creating a program that leads to a broad, well-integrated knowledge of the discipline.

Summary of Reviewers’ Recommendations

1. The department should maintain its clear set of goals and overall program direction. Maintaining departmental focus will help with assessment and the positive direction the department is currently experiencing.

    Understanding: The department recently established a strategic planning task force to look at the department and evaluate how the last strategic plan worked.

2. The department is recognized as having a strong, calm and patient chair. This is the right time for the department to create a succession plan for the future.
3. Levels of administrative staffing are reduced, leaving a sole support person to deal with the duties of a large faculty. This issue needs to be revisited by the chair and dean at the earliest opportunity.

Understanding: This need is noted. The College is undertaking a reorganization of its administrative support structure across departments. A new structure is to be in place in July 2010.

4. The core curriculum does not reflect a required literature course and we believe it should. This change in core curriculum is worthy of consideration since the department has done a good job of crafting a broad, well-integrated literature course that could act as a platform for such core curricular change.

Understanding: At present time, the department is not likely to alter the core in order to put the literature course in the core since this would mean eliminating something else from the core. The strategic planning task force is looking at the overall curriculum as part of its charge.

5. The use of multiple options offers the department the opportunity to market itself but poses challenges to maintaining focus. For example, the addition of the education option is needed by the community but may challenge department resources in such a negative budgetary climate. Plans to expand some options should be accomplished carefully in recognition of the budget crisis and available department resources.

Understanding: The strategic planning task force is looking at the overall curriculum as part of its charge.

6. The on-going search for a methodological faculty member should continue until successful.
7. The need for assessment continues. Of special importance is the need to revisit the gateway course – PAS 100. The execution of the planned assessment of this course may help the department further tighten and refine the curriculum.

*Understanding: Assessment of PAS 100 is planned for Spring 2010.*

8. The College is urged to continue funding support for the department’s activities like journals and community cultural events. The budget crisis in California makes it hard to keep such resources but the department should continue to make the case that these resources provide an array of benefits to faculty, students and community.

9. One on-going concern is the disconnection between the name of the department (Pan African Studies) and what shows on the degree (African American Studies). The department should continue to work towards a resolution of this disconnect.

*Understanding: One of the top priorities of the strategic planning task force is doing a survey of other department’s decisions and usages in regard to department and degree names.*

10. The isolation of the department from other ethnic studies programs in the Humanities College is of concern.

*Understanding: The department does not agree that it is isolated by not being in the College of Humanities. Interdisciplinary course selections, requirements and focuses are one way to assist students to develop a broader cross-cultural competency. The department seeks such cross cultural connections and understands they should be pursued.*

11. Given the current budget crisis, the College is urged to help the department fund technology to keep students and curriculum current and progressive.