

Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo Geography BA & MA

The 2022-2023 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for the Geography, BA and MA programs in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) concluded with a culmination meeting on September 22, 2023.

The following people attended the meeting: Amir Dabirian (Provost), Merri Lynn Casem (AVP for Undergraduate Academic Programs, AVPUAP), Elaine Frey (AVP for Graduate Studies, AVPGS), Jessica Stern (Associate Dean, HSS), Trevis Matheus (Department Chair), Mark Drayse (Faculty and previous department chair), John Carroll (faculty), Jonathan Taylor (faculty), Zia Salim (faculty), and Su Swarat (Senior AVP for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, SAVPIEP).

The Provost commended the department for successfully completing the PPR process (including a very informative SWAT analysis) and achieved an excellent review from the external reviewers. The following specific accomplishments were highlighted during the PPR process:

- The department has had excellent department leadership, which contributed to high faculty morale and a positive work environment that values comradery and collaboration.
- The department is critical in providing general education courses in the physical, natural, and social sciences.
- The faculty have done an excellent job growing the major by leveraging community college relationships and conducting outreach to potential students in GE courses. This serves as a model for other programs on campus, especially those with small number of majors.
- The department faculty and staff hold various practices that foster a sense of belonging and encourage retention, particularly for undergraduate students, such as open-door policies, the Geography club, and the student lounge.

Major recommendations and issues raised through the PPR process were discussed as follows:

1. Enrollment growth:

- The external reviewers recommended the department to increase the number of undergraduate and graduate majors, particularly from underrepresented and first-generation populations. The AVPUAP emphasized the importance of faculty-led outreach to recruit majors and commended the department's existing efforts.
- The faculty leading the outreach efforts shared that he visits local high schools and connects with students through AP courses, and would like to re-strengthen the department relationship with the community colleges. The department aggressively markets the majors to admitted students who have not accepted our admission offers, and uses the annual geography symposium as another venue to introduce the major to potential students.
- The Associate Dean concurred that this is an excellent outreach model for other departments, acknowledged the tremendous efforts by the faculty, and encouraged the department to coordinate with the Office of Outreach.
 - The faculty specified the support needed for outreach and recruitment efforts include release time, student assistants, travel costs, and materials (e.g. t-shirts, stickers).

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- The Provost recommended the department to work with the marketing teams in the Provost's office, and asked the faculty to send in their needs via the Dean's office.
 - The external reviewers recommended the department to develop and promote a pathway between the undergraduate and graduate programs. The faculty commented that the department would ideally like to have 100 majors in the BA program, which is significantly more than the current enrollment. The MA program enrollment has a lot of room to grow as well. The Chair stated that since undergraduate majors feed into the graduate program, growing at the BA level would also help support the MA enrollment growth.
2. Graduate program curriculum and student success:
- The AVPGS suggested the MA program to examine its curriculum, which currently has many electives at 400 level. This could result in a predominantly undergraduate experience for the graduate students. She recommended the program to consider reducing the number of electives, and determine a "core graduate experience" for the MA students.
 - The AVPGS encouraged the MA program to refine its student learning outcomes (SLOs) and continue improve assessment of student learning. This recommendation complements the external reviewers' suggestion that the courses need to ensure the integration of diverse perspectives and equitable and inclusive pedagogy. Assessment of how the courses are addressing these suggestions would be useful.
 - The external reviewers and the Dean recommended the MA program to conduct a study of graduate student retention and graduation to identify appropriate steps towards increasing their success. The AVPGS suggested that the program could prioritize projects instead of thesis to help accelerate time to graduation. The Chair commented that some students are unable to return to finish the thesis due to their employment, and the department is considering changing course or project modality to offer more flexibility for these students to finish.
 - The Dean recommended the department to consider a TA program for graduate students to teach GEOG 110L labs. The AVPUAP pointed out that TA training is critical to ensure that they are effective in the classroom. The faculty concurred.
3. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) hub:
- The external reviewers recommended the department to expand GIS education to serve as the GIS hub for CSUF. The faculty added that many majors (e.g. Arts, NSM majors, Public Health, Civil Engineering) can benefit from receiving a GIS certificate. The Provost supported this idea and encouraged the faculty to promote the GIS certificate to all applicable students.
 - The Associate Dean also pointed out that enrollment in the 12-unit GIS certificate program is higher than the 15-unit Geospatial certificate program. The Provost suggested the department to consider converting the certificate programs into a minor to help boost enrollment.

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- The faculty reported that the department just proposed a new course to focus on GIS issues relevant to HSS students, and similar courses could be developed for different majors. This would be a great way to promote GIS to other majors.
 - The AVPGS recommended the department to consider a GIS postbac certificate (9 units) that feeds into the MA program. Such certificate program can help grow graduate enrollment and attract working professionals.
4. Experiential learning opportunities:
- The external reviewers recommended the department to continue promoting and incorporating out-of-classroom experiences and non-traditional pedagogical practices such as field trips, high-impact practices, joint graduate classes with other CSUs, study abroad, and study away.
 - The AVPUAP commended the department's effort, and stated that given faculty's interest in cross-discipline collaborations, the department could consider to build out community-based experiential learning opportunities. She also recommended the department to collaborate with CICE to grow enrollment in internship courses.
5. Faculty hiring:
- The self study and the external reviewers both recommended the department to hire a new faculty member specializing in physical/environmental geography.
 - The Chair stated that the department only has one full-time and one FERP faculty members in this area, thus the need to hire. This hire would help sustain relevant course offering.
 - The Provost asked the department to work with the Dean's office to pursue this need.
6. New physical spaces needed:
- The PPR process identified the need for a new physical space for the Cal-Dendro Lab, which will allow for more in-person lab classes and dendrochronology classes, as well as the need for a separate dedicated space for the physical geography lab classes.
 - The Chair reported that the Cal-Dendro lab requires woodwork, thus creating noise and dust concerns. A dedicated space would be ideal.
 - The faculty reported that the GEOG 110L Lab (a GE B3 class) current shares space with the GIS lab. There is high demand for the class, and a dedicated space (e.g. similar to the MH Geology lab) would help meet the instructional needs.
 - The Provost asked the department to send in the space requests to the Dean's office. As the Provost looks at space priorities and possible moves in the upcoming semester, new spaces may become available to support the department's needs.

The former Chair who led the PPR process commented that the PPR process offered a valuable opportunity for reflection and improvement. The Provost thanked the current and previous department leadership, and commended the faculty again for their contribution to the university.