

Peer Review Team Report

Social And Behavioral Sciences

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Introduction

The peer team would like to thank the participating Social and Behavioral Sciences Division faculty, staff, and administration for their hard work and diligence in completion of the self-study document. Upon reading the Social and Behavioral Sciences self-study document, the peer team determined specific areas for further investigation. The goal of the peer team review was to examine the self-study, interview faculty members, and to write an analytical report confirming what the program is and what the program could be.

Interviews with faculty and staff as well as apparent effort in the writing of the different document sections both indicated that participation in the program review appeared to be inconsistent across the division. This problem was also noted in the 2006 Program Review, "Some disciplines clearly care more about the self-study report and process than others given their responses to this area of investigation and their depth or lack of depth with their responses in the report itself."

The peer review team found the report, while somewhat inconsistent in level of effort, to be a fair evaluation of the program with a good assessment of future needs and direction. Interviews with division members also indicated that the report gave an accurate picture of the current state of the division and the direction that it should go.

Description

The eight areas within Social and Behavioral Sciences division that are included in this program review are:

Anthropology

The mission of the Anthropology program at Antelope Valley College is to provide students with an understanding of the study of the origins, development and contemporary variations of all humans who have existed anywhere on earth. This holistic, cross-cultural perspective draws knowledge from the social and biological sciences, as well as, the humanities and physical sciences to understand the full sweep and complexity of cultures across all of human history.

Education

The mission of the Education program at Antelope Valley College is to provide our students with an introduction to the teaching profession and prepare the student to function in a paraprofessional teaching situation.

Economics

The mission of the Economics Department at Antelope Valley College is to provide our students with excellent instruction via a highly qualified full-time instructor and three adjunct instructors in the discipline.

History

Our goal in History is provide quality education, offered by enthusiastic, well-trained instructors, using up-to-date methods, particularly given the constraints and limitations of the current budget situation.

Philosophy

The goal of the philosophy courses is to help students examine carefully and critically analyze a variety of philosophical theories in a way that will help them to identify, formulate, and evaluate impartially their own tacit philosophical ideas – especially the ones that affect the quality of their personal, social, and professional lives.

Political Science

The mission of the Political Science Department at Antelope Valley College is to provide our students with excellent instruction via highly qualified instructors who utilize innovative programs, maintain high educational standards, and are committed to serving our diverse community of learners.

Psychology

The Psychology department contributes and focuses on the AVC ILOs.

1. Analyze diverse perspectives from a variety of disciplines and experiences that contribute to the development of self-awareness.
2. Value and apply lifelong learning skills required for employment, basic skills, transfer education, and personal development.

The very nature of the field of Psychology focuses on developing the individual on a personal level and operating within a social context. Thus the academic information covered in class can be applied to the students in terms of their own self-concept, self-esteem, personal growth and maturity. These are all life-long skills they can use when continuing their education and in their personal lives.

3. Demonstrate a breadth of knowledge and experiences from the Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Arts, Natural Sciences, and Mathematics.
4. Solve problems using oral and written communication, critical thinking and listening skills, planning and decision-making skills, informational literacy, and a variety of technologies.

Psychology classes not only teach facts of the field (ILO #3) but also have them demonstrate this knowledge through critical thinking essay/exam questions, in class discussions that promote listening to one another and oral skills.

5. Demonstrate good citizenship and teamwork through respect, tolerance, cultural awareness, including the role of diversity in modern society.

Utilize – group discussion to promote the ability to work with others of different ages and background. There is an emphasis on multi-cultural psychology which promotes education and tolerance of other societies and views.

Recently we have developed a new course that has not been offered at the college before. Developmental Psychology (PSY 236) is now taught every fall. The course is needed by many students and is popular with those in the nursing program.

Sociology

At the present time no mission statement specific to Sociology has been adopted by faculty of the department. As a practical matter the mission of the Sociology department is to provide competency to college students wishing to fulfill general education requirements and to transfer in advance standing to four-year colleges and universities for additional study toward Bachelor's degrees in Sociology or related disciplines.

Curriculum

The peer team found that the general consensus is that the number of courses offered in the different disciplines is limited given the lack of full-time faculty in the division. As time goes by, more and more classes in the division are being offered online—this expands access for courses for students who may not be able to take certain classes otherwise. Expanded use of technology in the classroom will facilitate the effectiveness of the curriculum itself. There are plans in the disciplines for either initiating or expanding online course offerings. However, there is fear that attrition rates will actually escalate with the heightened use of online courses.

Student Outcomes

Nearly everyone noted that their courses met or satisfied most of the institutional learning outcomes (ILOs), and that their program and student learning outcomes were tied to the ILOs. Several respondents noted that their programs promoted cultural diversity within the college, and made positive contributions to the general education of AVC students. The identified contributions to the education of students included instilling a desire for lifelong learning, fulfilling course requirements for an AA or more advanced degrees, helping them understand human diversity and cultural relativism, providing a good foundation for furthering their education, and help prepare students for majoring in specific subjects and programs.

Personnel & Support Services

The topic that elicited the greatest discussion in interviews with the departmental participants was changes that could be made that would have the biggest positive effect on programs (peer team question 7). The most common response to this was to hire more full time faculty to teach in the specific programs. In several of the programs, there are only 1 or 2 full-time faculty members who are not able to teach all of the courses offered, at least not on a regular basis. New courses or an expansion of offerings for specific programs was the next most common item identified. Other responses included the lack of sequential prerequisites, development of inter-disciplinary programs, updating instructional technology and materials, and prerequisite classes geared specifically to certain career fields.

Issues identified that could improve student retention and recruitment included more on-line course offerings, more courses in a particular subject, more full time instructors (or more qualified adjuncts who follow the CORs), offering more courses on a more frequent basis, making it easier to gain admission to popular courses that fill quickly yet may also be required for transfer or continuation purposes, more tutor availability, more funding for instructional materials, and better ways to control excessive drops by students (such as penalizing students who habitually drop classes or only attend until they receive their financial aid money).

Facilities

The peer team found the report accurate in its description of current facilities and needed future facilities. Interviews with departmental faculty and staff confirmed this conclusion.

Fiscal Support

It appears that the Social and Behavioral Sciences division cannot grow and effectively perform their mission duties without adequate funding. Regarding the supply budget, some instructors use their own pens, markers, and pads due to limited funding. The changing budget situation, economic cutbacks, lack of bond money funds for this area, freeze on hiring, and other, mostly current, issues, make it very hard for any report to be up-to-the-minute in its timeliness. Overall, the self-study reflects the basic situation in 2009-2010.

Social and Behavioral Sciences Recommendations

Anthropology

1. In the coming years, there will be support for an Inter-disciplinary Gender Studies [Women's Study] Program. This initiative requires a change to the Educational Master Plan. With these changes, it will better allow students to meet the standards of the UC and CSU system.
2. Restore travel money and sabbatical funding to pre-recession levels to allow faculty to learn more about changes in their disciplines, as well as, new educational methodology, and technology.

Education

1. Keep the program up-to-date and comply with transfer opportunities.

Economics

1. In the coming years, support an Interdisciplinary Women's Study Program and establish an A.A. degree in Economics. These are both initiatives that require a change to the Educational Master Plan. With these changes, it will allow students to meet the standards of the UC and CSU system.

History

1. For History, the goals include getting the three courses mentioned above and others, potentially, passed and incorporated into the schedule.
2. At such time as funding may permit, course offerings should be restored to what they were in 2007-2008. The number of courses taught by professional, dedicated long-serving adjuncts should be restored.
3. Classroom technology should be maintained, repaired, and augmented when the budget allows. The construction of new classrooms and offices should be given top priority when funding is available. Climate control, cleanliness, and the appearance of the classrooms, buildings, and the campus as a whole should be given attention, as well as, the security situation.
4. Faculty have written SLOs and are now implementing them in their classrooms. This should be continued.
5. Restore travel money and sabbatical funding to pre-recession levels to allow faculty to learn more about changes in their disciplines, as well as, new educational methodology, and technology. Visitors to the Division meetings are often limited to a few minutes and such contact is insufficient to fully understand all the new directions education is going in.

Philosophy

1. Hire more new philosophy faculty.

Political Science

1. In the coming years, create an Interdisciplinary Women's Study Program, as well as, an A.A. degree in Political Science. These are both initiatives that require a change to the Educational Master Plan. With these changes, the needs of students will be better met.

Psychology

1. Priority One: Hire the two replacement full-time faculty positions to replace faculty who have transferred or left the department. Hire additional new Psychology faculty to offer all Psychology classes often in order to assess all SLOs. Provide necessary requested equipment and resources requested after assessment to meet SLO standards.

Sociology

1. Meet student needs.
2. Respond to PLOs and SLOs.
3. Reflect changes in the disciplines, educational methodology, and technology.
4. Address external mandates, such as, state requirements, industry and professional standards, etc.
5. A long-term goal of establishing an Associate's Degree in Sociology would require changes to the Educational Master Plan.

Peer Review Team Recommendations

1. Increase use of data, both quantitative and qualitative, in the development of the next program review.
2. Tracking data on student transfers within a major or program were both identified as being lacking within the report and should be requested for future program reviews.
3. Some participants indicated that they would like more time to work on the next program review.
4. Seek to hire more full-time instructors in most disciplines as requested as ongoing funding permits in order to bring the full-time to part-time ratio more into compliance.
5. Continue the expansion of online course offerings.
6. The Education program should continue to meet with the advisory committee on at least an annual basis.
7. Given the inconsistent level of responses in the self-study report among the various departments, team building efforts might help to ensure that the entire division acts as a more cohesive unit.