

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
*Academic Program Review*

**DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM**  
**Exercise and Sport Science**

**EXTERNAL REVIEWERS**

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**CAMPUS VISIT:**  
April 25-27, 2012

The review team read the self-study written by the faculty in the department; reviewed the curriculum, course syllabi and evaluations; conducted class visits; interviewed faculty, students and staff; and met with the Dean, Associate Deans and other relevant members of the campus community. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were provided with USF's Vision, Mission, Values Statement, the department's self-study and other university materials.

**1. How did the external review committee rate the quality of the program – excellent, very good, good, adequate, or poor? How does the program compare with benchmark top-tier programs nationally? Please provide a brief rationale for the external review committee's rating.**

The reviewers rated the program as GOOD, while also stating that it was difficult to provide a rating because the mission and goals of USF and the Department are unique and that "it is not appropriate to compare the research productivity of this small, unique department to benchmark top-tier programs nationally". The faculty is high quality and committed to the University, their students and their profession. The curriculum appears to educate students in the values, knowledge, and skills appropriate to the discipline. The researchers in the department are to be commended for including undergraduates in their research activities and developing research programs that include interventions conducted within the community.

**2. What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process?**

The reviewers believe that the following limitations are preventing the Department from achieving a higher level of excellence:

- There is currently inadequate coverage of one of the core areas of kinesiology: biomechanics. The addition of new faculty is the department's most pressing need.
- The maintenance and operation budget is inadequate, given the number of majors and curricular and research needs.
- More teaching and laboratory space is needed to create the highest quality learning environment.
- The faculty needs to work together to develop a five-year strategic plan and a clear mission

- Morale in the department needs to be improved so that faculty can work together to build a stronger program. The department is not fragmented and overcoming differences are within reach.

The reviewers also noted:

- Developing a masters program would move the department closer to the highest category of the rankings.
- The department is substantially understaffed with some workload issues.
- The faculty has also been demoralized by not being able to fill the biomechanics position and not being included in discussions regarding the use of laboratory space in the new CSI building.
- Faculty indicated that the rotating chair model that they have been using is ineffective.
- The choice to be tenured and/or promoted through the Science Committee or the Arts Committee has the strong potential to create confusion for faculty.
- No formal assessment is currently in place to determine whether the Department is meeting its instructional goals and objectives.

**3. What specific recommendations for improving the program's quality has the external review committee made to the Dean?**

*Curriculum:*

- Schedule a retreat and consider inviting a trained facilitator to help guide the faculty in their discussion.
- Develop creative ways to articulate their mission and goals and develop ways to assess their fulfillment.
- Engage in curricular discussions that focus on determining which core and advanced study courses should be included in the undergraduate curriculum and how they should be sequenced.
- Consider developing focus areas or concentrations to better prepare students to enter graduate programs.
- Explore the development of a graduate program that may be stand-alone or, in collaboration with other disciplines (e.g., Nursing and Health Professions).
- Implement a simple process to track students following graduation.
- Use a statistics course from another department. Students voiced frustration regarding several "gatekeeper" or "bottleneck" courses like statistics and foundations.
- Increase the number of classes that exceed the course cap.
- Provide more course offerings, particularly upper division courses.
- Develop a recurring schedule for upper division courses so that students can better plan.

*Advising/Mentoring:*

- Possible internship opportunities and the requirements for applying could be added to the departmental website.
- Provide accurate information regarding admission requirement and specific course requirement for programs in medicine, physical therapy, and other allied health programs.
- Invite the Health Professions Advisor to conduct a short workshop and advising session for faculty during the academic year.

*Faculty and Staff:*

- Immediately hold scheduled faculty meetings that bring all faculty together on a regular basis.
- Increased collaboration, partnership, and even the consideration of reorganization with the ever-expanding Nursing and Health Professions Unit.
- Seek similar partnerships with area institutions to use, borrow, or collaborate in ways that will allow learning and research opportunities for both students and faculty.
- Consider reallocating some of the part time positions that are in the University's physical activity budget.
- Reallocate faculty resources to teach required core courses while eliminating courses that are currently being taught but that have little relevance to the overall curriculum.
- There is ample evidence and work to support a full time program assistant.
- The effective use of student aid workers can significantly assist the departmental coordinator.

*Space and Equipment:*

- Need to add laboratory space and space for the physical activity program.
- Exercise science laboratory currently is being used effectively and is quite acceptable. The addition of more workstations would greatly enhance the learning experience of students.
- Partner with other departments across campus that may have the equipment necessary for research and teaching.

**4. In the opinion of the external review committee is the program following the University's strategic initiative in that it is;**

a. *Recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty of outstanding teachers and scholars.*

The faculty is extremely proud of the University of San Francisco, and the College of Arts and Sciences and the members feel it is a perfect fit for their professional careers. The reviewers praised the faculty members' teaching, service, and research. The self-study indicates a commitment to increasing diversity of the faculty. At the present time, four faculty members within the Department are women and four are men. All faculty members are Caucasian.

b. *Enrolling, supporting and graduating a diverse student body that demonstrates high academic achievement, strong leadership capabilities, a concern for others, and a sense of responsibility for the weak and vulnerable.*

The students indicated overwhelming support for the faculty and their commitment to its majors. No information was provided as to the racial/ethnic diversity of the student body. The self-study indicates a commitment to increasing diversity of the majors. Students are required to complete one major course that is focused on addressing issues of diversity.

c. *Providing the environment necessary to promote student learning in the program.*

The Department as a whole has been doing an excellent job of delivering quality classes, in spite of the extreme workload that a substantial number of them endure. The program provides a stimulating and challenging learning environment for the students. The curriculum appears to be in line with other similar programs around the country, with new courses that clearly reflect contemporary trends in kinesiology. There are opportunities to engage with faculty in research projects.

**5. In what way is the program contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit, Catholic urban university with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world?**

The faculty is committed to the mission and core values of the University. The reviewers discussed the intervention research many of the faculty conduct in the community and with the students. The reviewers, however, also suggested that the department discuss the program mission and goals and their link to the University mission as part of creating a 5-year strategic plan.

**6. What is the timetable for the response to the external review committee's recommendations for program improvement? What can the Office of the Provost do to appropriately respond to the review?**

The next step is for the Dean and Associate Deans to meet with the department to discuss the Action Plan based on the self-study and the reviewers' report. Based on the reviewers' suggestions, there are several ways the Office of the Provost can assist the program: 1) support hiring a two faculty members, including one in biomechanics; 2) provide support for a facilitator for the retreat, if the department requests it; 3) facilitate connections between the program and other similar departments and programs on campus (e.g., School of Nursing and Health Professionals); 4) explore the possibility of developing a masters program; and 5) increase laboratory space.

**7. What general comments or issues, if any, are crucial to understanding the reviewers report?**

**According to the reviewers,** the core objectives and priorities of the ESS department as it moves forward should be:

- Take advantage of the growth in health and health care related trends that are area wide.
- Maintain and further develop relationships with colleagues.
- Explore the possibility of developing a Masters degree program.
- Explore closer ties to the emerging Nursing and Health Professions College.
- Identify other similar programs in institutions of comparable type, size, and quality for comparison purposes.