

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
***Academic Program Review***  
**Media Studies**

**EXTERNAL REVIEWERS**

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**CAMPUS VISIT:**

March 26-28, 2008.

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 felt the Department of Media Studies is an “extremely impressive group of scholars crafting a pioneering program in a relatively new discipline”.
- The department offers both academic and ‘hands-on’ experience and has “developed into a strong and varied program” that “covers the most important areas of the discipline”.
- In general, the reviewers rated the program as VERY GOOD, meaning that the program is at the level one would expect to find at a top-tier liberal arts college or university and that it has the potential to become an outstanding or excellent program.

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

- The review team noted that the department had grown during two waves of hiring, the earlier one “characterized by a critical Media Studies and social justice perspective” and the later one “by a more practice-based social learning focus”.

- The reviewers were concerned that the department resist the temptation to see themselves as bifurcated in this way and that they come see these two perspectives as complimentary.
- The department should be given at least two new faculty lines with “areas of expertise designed to balance current areas of academic strength, curricular demands and emerging areas of research and scholarship in the field of Media Studies”.
- The reviewers believed that the faculty could benefit from a two-day retreat with an independent moderator with an agenda agreed upon in advance.

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

#### a) Departmental Procedures

The review team argued that the Department of Media Studies could benefit from greater attention to more formal procedures in two particular areas – faculty workload and faculty searches.

#### Faculty Workload

- The review team noted that there was “nothing uncommon or unique in the perception (and the fact)” that some faculty carry more of the workload than others even though it may be impossible to achieve a perfect balance across the faculty. Nonetheless, this was an area of growing tension in the department.
- The reviewers believed the faculty would benefit from a broad, independently moderated review of work in and for the department focusing on “what it consists of and how it should be organized, allocated and carried out”.
- This conversation should cover teaching loads, advising, department management (scheduling, adjunct hiring and curricular development), chair’s duties, committee assignments and additional student contact (e.g. service-learning).
- The goal would be to “arrive at consensus regarding what constitutes ‘work’ for the department” and, more importantly, “a general understanding of how to allocate workload in a more even handed way”.
- The reviewers noted that balance and equity “may be achieved over a number of years rather than annually” and senior faculty should shoulder more of the service expectations.
- The review team stressed that “faculty should be expected to do the bulk of their work in for the department” and should exercise real caution about taking time-consuming tasks elsewhere in the university.
- In addition, the faculty should pay more attention to rotating core courses and adopt a “multi-semester framework for curriculum planning and course scheduling”.

#### Faculty Searches

- The review team was concerned that a recent faculty search had adversely

affected the mood of the department but they stressed that no one should “draw long-term conclusions from one failed search”.

- They recommended that each faculty member “participate in the on-site review of candidates” and in the internal processes and conversations leading to a final faculty recommendation.
- They also recommended that “faculty recuse themselves from discussions concerning candidates with whom they have or have had a close-working relationship”. This would include dissertation supervisors, mentors, previous students, or co-researchers.

#### b) Relationship with the Dean’s Office

- While the department has a very positive relationship with the Dean’s Office, the review team were concerned that the Dean’s tended to work with individual faculty rather than through the department chair.
- The reviewers felt that the Dean’s Office should continue to support faculty efforts but “with the full knowledge and support” of the department chair. This would allow the chair to feel more involved in decisions that can affect the department.
- In addition, faculty in the department should “generally consult with department chair...before raising departmental matters with the deans”.

#### c) Student Participation in the Life of the Department

- Relationships with students center on the student-teacher model with faculty sharing their knowledge with students who need to complete their education. However, the reviewers noted that, in the contemporary era, many changes in media are first experienced by the younger generation.
- They believe that greater positive community building can take place with greater student-faculty interaction.
- The review team recommended that faculty encourage and support “the creation of a variety of mechanisms to seek the advice of students on departmental matters.”

#### d) USF Media Projects

- While the review team recognized that campus media were not necessarily a part of formal instruction and may be beyond the department’s formal structure, they did feel that they may “provide important venues for students to further develop the media skills they have learned”.
- The reviewers recommended that the department build closer ties to existing campus media (KUSF, USFTV, *Foghorn*, etc.) while “exploring ways for students to further develop their skills with newer media forms”. These ties could also be integrated into the department’s vision and mission.

#### e) Administrative Support

- The review team was deeply impressed with the work of Lydia Fedulow, the current program assistant in the department. Nonetheless, they believed that

given the size of the faculty and student body there was a real need for a second full-time administrator.

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

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

- The review team noted that the department had built “an impressive group of scholars crafting a pioneering program in a relatively new discipline.”
- The department had developed a “strong and varied program” that covered most areas of the discipline and spanned the theoretical, artistic and applied approaches to Media Studies.

*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.*

- Students were impressed with the “teaching strength of the full-time faculty, the faculty commitment to students and student driven projects in which faculty had been involved.”

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

- The reviewers observed that faculty and students “demonstrated mutual respect of each other's role in the department and an interest in strengthening interactions with each other beyond the classroom”.

**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 reviewers noted that the “faculty are invested in interrogating the contribution of Media Studies scholarship can make to social justice. Teaching and scholarship in Media Studies at USF are infused with this commitment and by the common purpose of communicating to the Media Studies students the importance of a commitment to social justice in their own lives and future Media Studies activities”.

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

- Provide resources to enable the program to hire at least one and preferably two positions.

- Provide resources for the recommended retreat.
- Review the way the relationship between the Dean's Office and the department has been working.

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

- While the department has experienced some tensions, it is important to note that the review team saw the faculty as a “quite compatible group of colleagues holding a series of diverse yet complimentary intellectual perspectives” and their recommendations were intended to help bring the department closer together.