

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**College of Arts and Sciences**

**DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM**  
**Rhetoric and Language**  
**(Includes Composition, ESL, and Public Speaking)**

**EXTERNAL REVIEWERS**  
Prof. Christa Hansen, Georgetown  
Dr. Cindy Moore, Loyola University of Maryland  
Dr. Carol Severino, University of Iowa  
Dr. Kathleen J. Turner, Davidson College

**CAMPUS VISIT:**  
February 20-22, 2013

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 praised the Rhetoric and Language faculty for their commitment to the USF mission, to their students, and to each other as colleagues. The faculty have worked hard since their last review to create a single department out of three distinct units. The reviewers rated the program as GOOD with "every potential to become an *excellent* department in the near future". They commented that the department "constitutes a unique triad of disciplinary offerings" but "this uniqueness is not being taken advantage of in a way that would make the Department and its faculty stand out among peer institutions." The reviewers provided suggestions for how the department could build on its strengths and address current challenges.

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

- The department is central to the success of the institution as a whole. They educate all undergraduate students. They also have a central role in assessing students' written and oral communication skills that will expand as accreditation requirements change. The department will need more full-time faculty to meet these responsibilities.
- Limiting the department to "service work" interferes with their ability "to contribute their many talents to moving the University forward", including enriching the upper-level curriculum in their areas and increasing the research profile of the university.
- Other departments on campus should share responsibility for students' reading, writing, and speaking skills. This would be good for the students and inline with the University's mission.
- Full-time and part-time faculty members are clearly dedicated teachers, but could use more support through cross-training and paid workshops.

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

Faculty:

- Need to address imbalances of full-time to part-time faculty.
- Consider converting term faculty lines into tenure-track lines and consider current part-time faculty for new positions.
- Need more faculty members with expertise in ESL and Public Speaking areas.
- Clarify procedures for program directors regarding evaluation of part-time faculty.
- Bring faculty together physically for enhanced collaboration, including part-time.
- Promote faculty research productivity, especially on the department website.

Advising:

- Have other department share responsibility for advising undeclared majors.
- Clarify CASA's advising responsibilities.

Curriculum:

- Expand the curricular interconnections among the three areas.
- Streamline the core curriculum, including re-numbering ESL courses to correspond with proficiency levels.
- Create courses for peer tutors in Speaking and Writing Centers.
- Refine learning outcomes and the curriculum maps in all three areas to better measure outcomes and locate redundancies and gaps.
- Facilitate greater curricular coherence through paid workshops, course releases, and development leaves.
- Assist the ESL program with their yearly assessment activities, including their new online training program.
- Develop major(s) and minors, with the concurrent creation of appropriate upper-level courses.
- Have all departments in Arts and Sciences take more responsibility for students' written and oral communication skills.

Resources:

- Dedicate more resources to the Writing Center and the Speaking Center, especially in training for tutoring ESL students.
- Improve the department website so that the department can use it as a tool for self-definition.
- Consider creating a Learning Commons that includes the Learning, Writing, and Speaking Centers.
- Find better coverage for reception area in Gleeson 4<sup>th</sup> floor and meet supply needs in part-time faculty space.
- Provide paid workshops for part-time faculty.
- Provide more support for full-time faculty scholarship in the form of course reductions and leaves.

**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 reviewers commented on the disciplinary diversity of the scholars, which they consider a departmental strength. The dedication to teaching and collegiality of the full-time and part-time faculty were mentioned throughout the report. The reviewers praised faculty research,

pointing out that most of the full-time faculty published regularly in respected journals and presented regularly at premier disciplinary conferences. The faculty are also engaged in an impressive range of service activities. The reviewers did not discuss the ethnic or gender composition of the faculty.

- 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 department educates the entire undergraduate population, which includes domestic students with a wide range of standardized scores, transfer students, conditionally and fully admitted international students. The department is dedicated to meeting the needs of every student and is engaging in assessment activities to ensure that students are developing the knowledge and skills they need. The faculty are also enthusiastic about finding ways to improve their curriculum and the student experience.

- c. *Providing the environment necessary to promote student learning in the program.*  
Faculty were continually praised for their dedication to student learning. Reviewers provided suggestions for increasing educational effectiveness, including assessment activities, streamlining courses, providing workshops and cross-training, and supporting the department's exploration of new tools.

**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?**

As the reviewers pointed out, the department's work is central to the success of the university as a whole. Every undergraduate student takes courses in the program and many students take several courses. The department recognizes "that *eloquentia perfecta* constitutes a means by which to achieve" the academic rigor and social justice goals in the USF mission and "focuses on developing rhetorical abilities in action, in writing or speaking, whether in English as a native or a second language."

**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 to meet with the Department to create an action plan. The Office of the Provost could assist the department by: 1) providing resources for new hires, especially in the areas of ESL and Public Speaking; 2) encouraging all departments to take responsibility for the development of reading, writing, and speaking skills in their majors; 3) providing support for the Writing and Speaking Center and considering the creation of a Learning Commons.

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

The faculty have worked hard to create a single, dedicated, collegial department from three distinct units to serve a wide range of students. This is an important achievement. They will continue to be very important to the success of the university, especially with accreditors asking all institutions to increase their assessment efforts in written and oral communication.