CCVC Meeting with Sociology Department

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1. What are the strengths of your department? What you already do well? What do you want people outside your department to know about your successes and strengths?

* Relevance to students’ lives – welcoming and students of color and international students.
* Advising and working with students interests-shaping programs that meet their individual needs
* Mentoring students (summer research, I LPs, internships, service learning)-BUT becoming more and more difficult with reduced faculty in SOC I.
* Good balance between liberal learning and career preparation-helping students see how they can apply their knowledge in the real world, no matter what they end up doing.
* Great match between our courses and the mission/goals of the institutions-and Benedictine Values and Catholic Social Teaching.
* Global emphasis, especially with the Anthropology courses
* Contributions to interdisciplinary programs-environmental, gender, peace studies, pre-professional programs.
* The department is involved in campus communities, such as the students’ Climate Action Club, Extremity to LINK, PRISM, that involve students from all over the campuses.
* Doing well on productive scholarship, beyond teaching. Almost all faculty are involved in one or more projects. It is the model of liberal arts scholarship predating the research university. Students get drawn into this and come into the classroom.

2. What do you wish you could do better, or more of? What would it take (resources, support, etc.) for you to reach those goals?

* As part of program review, we developed a course rotation that meets the needs of our students and the ASA requirements for a quality SOCI program; it was part of our follow-up plan, discussed and signed off on by Administration and the Department, but we have been unable to implement it. We are carrying a heavier share of FYS and been restricted in the number of electives we can offer. Even when we fill/get solid enrollments in upper division courses, we are restricted from offering more the following year. As a result, we have courses that should be offered annually, being offered once every two years-or courses that would be fine in a two-year rotation, that we are able to offer only sporadically-once every three years-sometimes longer. This puts us in a Catch-22. Students leave or choose not to pursue the major because the courses they want aren't being offered regularly enough-and they can't plan or count on getting the courses of most interest to them-and then enrollments in upper division classes are low because students are leaving or avoiding the major.
* With a two-year rotation of courses it is a problem if any individual professor is absent for the semester. It is more difficult and everything has to be rearranged. Three preps are common.
* The FYS contributions place further pressure on our ability to offer rotating classes on an ongoing basis. We are stretched by this and we need to focus on their own majors.
* Anthropology has just added a minor and a concentration for majors. On the flipside there's a need to bolster Sociology itself beyond the bare bones.
* Inability to replace retiring faculty. Plan was to replace Janet Hope with an anthropologist and Richard Albares with a sociologist, but that second part hasn't materialized. And Chris Scheitle who was an adjunct for us for years had his course load reduced instead of increased over the years.
* We need an additional Sociology professor and more Anthropology professors. Anthropology and Sociology professors can't cover each other in courses because they are trained in two different disciplines.
* We are welcoming to students of color and international students. We are grateful for them. But international students sometimes have additional needs and we would like resources to help them succeed, such as objective tests and help writing. There are also cultural differences in teaching but we're small so we can meet international students’ needs and help them choose courses that are relevant.
* Transnational anthropology course
* The Somali and Hmong are over 50% of the minorities in the United States. Some are international or first-generation or multilingual and this shows up in writing. They do writing center referrals. They would like help on exams and to be able to offer more and needs for analysis of exams.

3. Leaving assigned discipline specific knowledge, in what ways does your department best contribute to providing our students with the liberal education for their lives beyond college, as informed and engaged citizens, productive employees, ethical beings, etc.?

* Opportunities like the UN Conference on Climate Change
* Teaching critical thinking-to be aware of the structural causes/social facts in a society dominated by the psychological perspective. We are awesome at this. We give students a complex understanding of society and culture that gives them way to analyze world events; to interact with different people to think critically about social circumstances, and to think about culture. Psychology blames all in the individual. But there are structural- social and cultural- causes that also influence events. Most of the students come to the department because they want to make a difference for a better world. The department supplies tools to the students for this.
* Valuable input into-and ability to integrate in the class discussions-current issues in society (e. g., Ferguson, ISIS recruitment of our youth, domestic violence among star athletes, etc.) And on-campus (LINK songs, Yik-Yak, class privilege, etc.).
* Our students for the most part want to make a difference, to build a better world-and we help supply the tools to make them more realistic.

4. Are there ways in which you would like to see your department contribute to liberal education that so far it has not been able to?

* Course designations. Reduce paperwork-e.g., having to fill out forms to DEMONSTRATE that a class in SOCIOLOGY OF SEX AND GENDER teaches students about gender issues. The department could contribute more if the intercultural designation was a little more focused. Some classes with IC designations do not strongly promote cultural competence. A two or three week summer course qualifies, it seems that just traveling for two weeks gets the intercultural designation. The requirement should be more substantive. Gender designations should also be given to courses that spend more than two days talking about gender. There appears to be difference between qualifications for designations.
* Equalize the budget for speakers. Departments with endowments have seemingly endless funds while if SOCI wants to bring in a speaker, we give them a loaf of Johnny Bread from our office budget. I don't think we've had any real input into departmental budgets in 20 years or more.
* Prioritize academics over athletics. We are told we need to offer classes in the first and last periods of the day, but can't offer required courses because of athletics-and if we offer electives and those first and last periods don't fill because they are him popular with students, then again we have the number of electives we can teach reduced.
* We would like more time to do research, the lost 1/6 reassigned time for research is missed. It is important for the students to know their professors as scholars.