PRAC Minutes
March 17, 2016

Present: M. Bay, C. Dellinger-Pate, J. Gleason, K. Gorniak, T. Lin, R. Silady, J. Webb, L. Vitale (chair)

Absent: C. Calin, M. Fede, R. Zipoli

PRAC met with Cindy Simoneau, chair of the Journalism Department.

Upon discussion of Journalism’s self-study and the meeting with the department chair, the committee recommends that the self-study be revised to edit the language and organization of the document. No revision of its substance is requested. Said revision is due Wednesday, March 30.

Journalism is a department in transition, reflecting the currently changing profession. Their “pedagogical goal is to push students toward sound critical thinking and the hands-on skills necessary for our graduates to secure jobs.” (Self-study, 3). The department is comprised of 5 FT tenure or tenure-track faculty, with a sixth line to be potentially filled in fall 2016; and 7 PT faculty. All faculty are appropriately engaged in their field, and serve their students by working with the four media clubs on campus (Southern News, Folio, WSIN radio, SCSU-TV). The department has approximately 100 majors (138 in 2011, 90 in 2015).

Journalism’s plans for assessment are likewise emerging. Currently, the department elicits feedback from students and their employers about the students’ internships. Recently developed entrance and exit tests are being administered in the core curriculum (JRN 200, 201, 300).

Impressive is the ability of Journalism faculty to help prepare students for a career in Journalism. All SCSU students (100%) who graduated with a Journalism major in Spring 2015, and who were on the job market and desired to stay in Connecticut, secured a job in journalism (excludes those who moved out of state, and those who pursued graduate study). This indirect measure speaks highly of the faculty, and of Southern.

In order to continue strengthening the program, PRAC strongly suggests that Journalism accomplish the following before their next review:
- pare down of department learning objectives (from 12 to 4-6)
- incorporate more direct measures of student work
- a FT faculty member (not the chair) become departmental assessment coordinator and perhaps attend a conference on assessment
- develop an assessment of the minor (exit interview?)

Other suggestions include:
- begin by assessing the capstone (JRN 490) to see deficiencies in student work, and work backwards to address any problems
- use a tool like rubrics to measure students’ work
- use alumni to rate student’s work/portfolios
The administration could help the department in preparing students for their future careers by providing more appropriate resources in the form of space. The current conditions under which Journalism works are substandard. At a minimum, the department needs a small working studio where students could also perform editing tasks. This will help students prepare and train under more realistic conditions for jobs that are evolving from just writing to becoming a reporter: a videographer/photographer/writer/newscaster all in one.

Also of note is the lack of appropriate office space for faculty. PRAC encourages administration to find adequate solutions to these most pressing space problems.

PRAC recommends continuing approval of Journalism (8 for - 0 against - 3 absent)