DATE: April 15, 2009

TO: Staci Beavers, Department Chair, Political Science

FROM: David Barsky, Associate Vice President, Academic Programs
       Gabriela Sonntag, Chair Program Assessment Committee

SUBJECT: Notification of Academic Program Review

According to the schedule for program review as outlined in the University Academic Master Plan (http://www2.csusm.edu/academic_programs/Academic_Master_Plans/2008-09_AMP.htm) the degree program for the Bachelor of Arts in Political Science is scheduled to begin the program review process. Although program review can be a demanding and time-consuming task, we believe it can give rise to program renewal and rewarding collegial discussions about important pedagogical issues.

The campus has been modifying the program review process, and you may be aware that recent reviews have dealt almost entirely with student learning outcomes (SLOs) and their assessment. A proposal for a ‘permanent’ revision of the program review process based on the pilot guidelines was voted down by the Academic Senate last May, and so we have reverted to the most recent set of ‘permanent’ guidelines: http://www.csusm.edu/assessment/data/other/PEPguidelines11402.doc (attached). That said, this older document is now out-of-date with respect to a few aspects of the program review. A new revision of the guidelines is currently in process and will follow the timeline/instructions listed in this letter. The revised document will be distributed to you shortly. The next three sections of this letter provide term-by-term recaps/updates of what needs to be done this Spring, next Fall and next Spring:

The following changes apply to the activities to be conducted in the first Spring semester. The due dates for items that need to be submitted is October 1, but programs are strongly encouraged to prepare and submit many if not all of these items by the end of the Spring semester.

- The Data Notebook, which used to be a physical binder, is now an on-line Program Portfolio. See http://www.csusm.edu/assessment/portfolios/index.html. Please review the on-line Program Portfolio carefully and report any errors and items that need to be updated to Karen Irwin (kirwin@csusm.edu) by the end of the Spring semester. (Item III.2. on page 3/25 in the guidelines.)
- We no longer conduct surveys of alumnae/i. (Item III.3. on page 4/25 in the guidelines.)
- As we are approaching the end of the second year of Annual Assessment Planning and Reporting, the department should have two years of data to review as it embarks upon the Program Review study. In past years, programs would often begin or expand assessment efforts in connection with the beginning of program review. It may very well be the case that no
further assessment work is necessary for the purpose of this review, and instead the program may be able to use the review as an opportunity to reflect on what the assessments indicate and determine next steps for program improvement. (Item III.4. on page 4/25 in the guidelines.)

- Since every program now has statements of SLOs, these should be reviewed and a matrix showing how these are addressed in the coursework should be constructed (or updated, if one already exists). See http://www.csusm.edu/assessment/data/other/slo_matrix.xls for a standard format; if you use this format, it is useful to indicate by use of an I, R or A whether the SLO is introduced, reinforced or applied in the course. Please send this matrix to Karen Irwin (kirwin@csusm.edu) by October 1. (Item III.4. on page 4/25 in the guidelines.)

- Please check the department mission statement found in the on-line program portfolio http://www.csusm.edu/assessment/portfolios/index.html.

- If the mission statement is not in the portfolio, or if the statement found there is out of date, please send the current mission statement to Karen Irwin (kirwin@csusm.edu) by October 1. (Item III.5. on page 4/25 in the guidelines.)

Most of the work on the program review report takes place in the Fall semester:

- By October 1, please send Karen Irwin the information on Program Faculty and Program Resources listed in Appendix C, Parts IIA and B. Your annual assessment reports will automatically be included in Part III (List of Assessment Instruments), so you only need to send information on this if there are assessments administered in the program other than those captured in the annual assessment reports. Additionally, please submit the matrix showing the connection between SLOs and the courses in the program. (Item III.7. on page 4/25 in the guidelines.)

- The major work associated with the Program Review is the completion of the “Self-Assessment” (to be guided by the prompts found in Appendix D) and the “Planning Report” (for which you may either use the template in Appendix E or a narrative similar to what is needed for other planning reports, e.g., the department’s annual report to the dean or plans that need to be developed in connection with recruitment requests). Please note that the $2000 mentioned in Appendix E for implementing Improvement Plans no longer exists. (Items III.8. and III.9. on page 5/25 in the guidelines.)

- For the past several years, the practice has been to use two external reviewers. Generally, in order to get different perspectives, we look for one from within the CSU and one from outside. Reviewers should not have connections with program faculty. Final selections are made by the AVP for Academic Programs and (for graduate programs) the Dean of Graduate Studies, so invitations to potential reviewers should not be extended by the program; these are made by Karen Irwin on behalf of David Barsky and/or Gerardo Gonzalez. Suggestions for external reviewers should be forwarded to Karen Irwin (kirwin@csusm.edu) by October 15; as our experience has been that coordinating the schedules of two reviewers is often difficult, the program should nominate six potential reviewers. (Item III.10. on page 6/25 in the guidelines.)

The self-study and planning report are submitted in the second Spring semester, and the external review is conducted:

- Submit the “Self-Assessment” and the “Planning Report” to Karen Irwin (kirwin@csusm.edu) by February 1. Supporting materials (as described in the PEP Guidelines) should only be included if these two reports cannot be read without them; supporting materials of modest length may be submitted simultaneously with the reports (instead of on January 10). (Item III.11. on page 6/25 in the guidelines.)
The remainder of the process ("External Review" and the "Consultation with PAC, Additional Reviewers and Other Relevant Parties") takes place as in Items III.12. and III.13. on pages 6/25-8/25 with the exception that there are two external reviewers, not one.

As was the case with the pilot procedures used over the past several years, student learning outcomes and their assessment play prominent roles in the "Self-Analysis" (see, e.g., Design of the Degree Program, Student Learning Outcomes, and Graduates in Appendix D). Programs that are completing their second year (or more) of assessment projects this Spring, may find that they are able to suspend assessment activities in 2009-10 while they are conducting the program review. Programs that feel that they do not yet have sufficient assessment data are encouraged to contact Marie Thomas, Learning Outcomes Assessment Fellow (mthomas@csusm.edu) for assistance in developing and implementing an assessment plan.

Please note that the program is also being asked to look at other issues besides SLOs and assessment (called "Support Issues" in the pilot process, and what WASC might term "issues of capacity"). A careful treatment of these issues (e.g., Enrollments and Resources) will help the program in crafting a realistic plan for the future.

To ensure that all members of the department have an understanding of the upcoming review process, and to further support the efforts of your department, the Program Assessment Committee would like to schedule a time to meet with members of the department. We ask that you contact Karen Irwin (ext. 4050 or kirwin@csusm.edu) to arrange a meeting time and location.

cc: Emily Cutrer, Provost
Program Assessment Committee
Vicki Golich, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Marie Thomas, Learning Outcomes Assessment Faculty Fellow