DATE: March 6, 2006

TO: Michael McDuffie, Interim Program Director, Social Sciences

FROM: Tom Bennett
      Associate Vice President for Strategic Planning and Assessment
      Gabriela Sonntag
      Chair, Program Assessment Committee

SUBJECT: Notification of Academic Program Review

According to the schedule for program review established by the Academic Senate’s Program Assessment Committee (PAC) in mid-2003, the degree program for the Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences is scheduled to begin the Program Evaluation and Planning (PEP) process this Spring. With the recent changes in the organizational structure related to the program review process, we ask that you please accept our apology for getting this notice out to you so late in the semester. This memo is accompanied by a range of materials that should prove useful as you and your colleagues begin to think about the kinds of discussions that should form the heart of your self-study. Although program review is a demanding and time-consuming task, we believe the process can give rise to program renewal and rewarding collegial discussions about important pedagogical issues.

In keeping with the recent changes in the procedures for WASC accreditation, CSUSM’s Program Review process has been adjusted to allow departments to strengthen their degree programs by focusing on student learning outcomes and putting in place an ongoing process that will allow them to systematically assess one or two of these outcomes in key areas.

Under the new WASC procedures, upcoming site visits will examine how departments are assessing and improving student learning in their degree programs as well as our capacity to accomplish this work. More specifically, WASC will focus their attention on whether

The institution’s expectations for learning and student attainment are developed and widely shared among its members (including faculty, students, staff, and where appropriate, external stakeholders). The institution’s faculty takes collective responsibility for establishing, reviewing, fostering, and demonstrating the attainment of these expectations (WASC Handbook of Accreditation, Standard 2 – Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions – Criterion for Review 2.4).
Thus, your upcoming program review should lay the groundwork for your program’s participation in the WASC site visits which are currently scheduled for March 2007 for the Institutional Capacity Review and Fall 2008 for the Educational Effectiveness Review. Because WASC will focus much of their attention on our processes, reviewers will want to see evidence that each individual member of the program played an active role in the program evaluation process. WASC will also expect to see evidence that your program has a well developed, thoughtful, and on-going assessment plan. Both of these expectations have become an integral part of the new program review process.

We anticipate that the Program Assessment Committee will have some funding available through the Office of Strategic Planning and Assessment to support the assessment of your program. Assessment options might include projects (e.g., an approach used by Psychology), standardized national exams (e.g., an approach used by Chemistry), or a holistic blind read of student papers (e.g., an approach used by Literature and Writing Studies). You might also consider support for sending members of your program to an assessment conference; the WASC annual conference, or a meeting of a disciplinary organization that might be more appropriate in helping to develop an assessment plan for your degree program. Additionally, the CSU Information Competency Initiative will again be making some funds available to academic programs for the purpose of integrating and assessing information competence into the learning outcomes of their programs. For more information please contact Gabriela Sonntag (x4356, gsg@csusm.edu).

Attached is the draft Program Review Guidelines that the Program Assessment Committee has been developing over the past year and a half. A second attachment outlines specific tasks for this first semester of the process. To ensure that all members of the program have an understanding of the upcoming review process, and to further support your efforts, the Program Assessment Committee would like to schedule a time in March to meet with members of the program. We ask that you please contact Gabriela Sonntag to arrange a meeting time and location.

Attachments: Spring Semester Process
Draft Program Review Guidelines
Student Learning Outcomes statement

Where relevant:
Program Strengths and Weaknesses from the previous PEP cycle
Program Planning Report from the previous PEP cycle
Program Assessment Committee report from the previous PEP cycle

cc: (w/ attachments): Program Assessment Committee (Tom Bennett, Al Schwartz, Camille Schuster, Gabriela Sonntag, Patricia Stall)

cc: (w/o attachments): Robert Sheath, Provost
Linda Holt, Chair, Academic Senate
Vicki Golich, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Michael McDuffie, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Guidelines and Resources for the Spring Semester of the Program Review process.

The Program Assessment Committee (PAC) has prepared this brief document to help make the Program Review process as meaningful and valuable an experience as possible for your program. With this goal in mind, we provide a few strategies that you might find useful as you prepare to begin the program review process.

The first Spring semester is focused on planning. A first step is to select a Program Review coordinator. This person will serve as the contact person for the program review process, meet with other PR coordinators and with the PAC committee when a representative of the program is needed. The next step is to review the Student Learning Outcomes the Program has developed for each of your degree programs. Since these may differ from the learning outcomes developed for specific courses, they are referred to as Program Student Learning Outcomes below (PSLOs). Attached to this memo, you will find the most recent outcome statements developed for your program. If you have not done so already, you may find it useful to set up a matrix that links specific PSLOs to courses required for the major. Such a matrix often provides an informative means of assessing whether majors are being exposed to learning outcomes in a balanced manner and whether some outcomes need to be reformulated. See Guidelines for an example.

The second activity for the Spring semester is to assemble an inventory of assessment instruments developed by faculty members in your program to evaluate student performance in specific courses or by your disciplinary association to evaluate student learning in the major. This inventory should lead to a programal conversation regarding which student learning outcomes (one or two) will be the focus of this program review. The assessment of these PSLOs, the analysis of the results of this assessment and any subsequent programal or curricular revisions or changes will form the backbone of the program review and are included in the report that the PAC sends on to the Chancellor’s Office for inclusion in the annual Board of Trustees agenda item on academic planning and program review.

The Program Assessment Committee understands that it is often easier and more effective to discuss various issues face-to-face than it is to exchange memos, and so we would like to invite you and all interested faculty in your program to meet with us to discuss the process and any special concerns that you might have. Contact Gabriela Sonntag (x4356, gsg@csusm.edu) to schedule an exact time for this meeting. Additionally a meeting of the PAC with the various PR coordinators will take place in the Spring 2006 semester.

We have assembled several resources we hope will be helpful as you work on your Program Review:

- The PEP document approved by the Academic Senate is available at: [http://www.csusm.edu/academic_programs/Program%20Review/PEP_guidelines_1-14-02.doc](http://www.csusm.edu/academic_programs/Program%20Review/PEP_guidelines_1-14-02.doc)

- There are many assessment websites. A handy jumping-off point for exploring these can be found at [http://www.calstate.edu/acadaff/sloa/index.shtml](http://www.calstate.edu/acadaff/sloa/index.shtml).

Where relevant, the memo notifying you of the PEP review will include several documents from your previous review (e.g., Statement of Program Strengths and Weaknesses, Program Planning Report). Please note that the process has changed quite significantly since your last review, which means that some features of these documents will be more useful than others.