

Program Review – Annual Program/Discipline Update

Administrative Response and Follow Up

2020-2021

Program/Discipline: Fire Protection

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This section is for Administration to provide feedback.

To be prepared by Division Dean(s) and reviewed by DOI(s).

Strengths and successes of the program as evidenced by the data, analysis & reflection

First of all, it's important to acknowledge the time, energy and hard work that the FP team has put in over this past year. It's impressive and the FP SAC is an amazing group of dedicated people.

This is a program with one fairly new full-time faculty member, who is still learning the ins and outs of both the program and PCC (*all while pivoting to remote operations before the end of year one*) and one full-time academic professional, who is the glue of this operation and is simply the best and of course, it is noted, does way more than any one person should be expected to do. Together, they are making a difference and making great things happen in the Fire Protection Technology program.

Among the variety of strengths and successes highlighted in the FP APU, the following stood out:

- The FP program has been quite successful at maintaining good pass rates across the program, regardless of modality and even considering the hard pivot in 2020 to remote operations during this global pandemic.
- Overall FP is a solid hybrid program. Not surprising, some courses simply require hands-on, face-to-face skills training and competencies. However, FP has learned over time that some of the didactic courses do work well in the online environment.
- It's great to see how FP has taken a deep dive into the core competencies, curricula, student surveys and advisory feedback to come up with an intentional planning and scheduling process.
- For all courses that do not need a full, face-to-face skills lab component, those courses have either been developed for fully online learning or are going through the development process for complete online learning in the upcoming terms.
- The FP program's plan is to continue to offer courses on an annual basis that rotate between synchronous (on-campus or maybe remote) and asynchronous (fully online), i.e., classes offered synchronous/remote during 2020-2021 will be offered asynchronous/online during the 2021-2022 academic year. This method is well thought out and student centered. It gives students choice in how they best like to learn by ensuring all courses can be taken within a two-year sequence either in-person or online. This also gives students the opportunity to

choose and plan around their work and/or family responsibilities. This way of scheduling offers consistency for students and increases access, retention and the ability of students to complete their AAS degree and do so in less time. Kudos.

- FP has taken a data informed approach to make significant changes to the curriculum. Such changes at the course level have allowed for fresh thinking, removing redundancy and actually combining course content.
- Courses, the Certificate and the AAS degree were revised, but still meet the Fire Officer I & II National Professional Qualifications.
- FP changes at both the Certificate & AAS level were all in efforts to increase completion, reduce the time to completion and of course, the overall costs to students.
- The FP degree was reduced from 98 credits to 90 credits allowing students to complete sooner and with less expense. Again, course revisions contributed to these reductions in credits and helped streamline instruction to reduce duplication of content & outcomes.
- FP program continually works with industry partners in developing new opportunities, updating curriculum and planning/implementing new and creative projects.
- One of the findings from reviewing the data was the discovery that a number of students who earned certificates were not awarded these certificates. This has led to a change in processes, as auto-awarding the Certificate is not as easy or straightforward as the SAC was hoping it would be.
- The FP program has acquired two new pieces of equipment through Perkins funding that will allow the pathway Certificate courses to conduct instruction of Firefighter National Professional Qualifications outcomes on the CA campus, that were previously required to be conducted at off-campus locations. This should result in a reduction of rental costs, travel, personnel, intergovernmental agreement contracts and other logistics that were real challenges, especially if a student was unable to attend class on that particular day.
- FP continues to support part-time faculty training and professional development in D2L (FOOT/OIO), Accessibility, Facilitating Live Sessions and Hybrid course development and delivery.
- FP was able to offer the first ever remote offering of FP 111 & FP 112 (Fire Academy) courses in conjunction with a career fire academy and a partnership with the agencies in the recently established NW Regional Academy.
- The FP and EMS programs are in the initial steps of creating cooperative pathways for students to achieve their educational goals without duplicating instruction. Discussions around considering the possibility of creating a firefighter/paramedic degree to meet the needs of fire departments that hire firefighter/paramedics.

Areas of challenge or concern, if any

In the coming academic year, the FP program should spend some time continuing to look more closely at the advisory committee membership, student access, as well as outreach, apprenticeships and diversity within the student and faculty/staff and advisory populations.

In Oregon, there is not a statewide requirement of a college certificate or degree, in order to become a firefighter. Sure, it helps and PCC's FP students are more competitive applicants for sought after positions. At this point, the AAS is needed for promotion within the fire service, but to become employed as a new recruit, a degree is not typically required. The FP program should continue to be engaged with Oregon fire agencies, especially the training center and training directors. Influencing the future of educational requirements within the industry is a worthwhile pursuit.

The FP program is not alone in the struggle to obtain information about recent graduate job placements or even if students leave prior to completion for an industry position. FP is encouraged to continue exploring a better way to track and/or follow up with students and employment placement as it is important for demonstrating the ability to respond to community and workforce needs, while maintaining a long-term, sustainable college program.

There are more costs associated with operating any CTE program, however those for the FP program are substantial, especially when we take into consideration the number of students that are educated in our FP courses and the number who actually complete the Certificate or Degree.

Related to this, one area that might be contributing to reporting inaccuracies when it comes to completion, is the ability to auto-award. It's not as automatic as it would seem. Please continue to look into this more with the student records staff & the FP advisor.

Finally, it is understandable that FP might not have been able to assess outcomes for the Certificate in the summer of 2020, due to the pandemic (*outcome assessment is determined through IFSAC certification testing and was not available*). It is anticipated that IFSAC testing will be available at the end of Spring term 2021, so outcomes for the Certificate should be able to be assessed. Was there discussion around simply moving forward with assessing the AAS outcomes? Most of the coursework for the AAS is developed for remote and/or fully online delivery already. Will the SAC submit a learning assessment report and update on both the Certificate & AAS for the upcoming academic year?

Reflection on goals and resources

- *Establish an annual replacement/upgrade program for self-contained breathing apparatus and firefighter protective clothing (turnouts). **This has support from the division dean.*** By establishing an annual budget (at least biennial budget) for replacing/upgrading some SCBA (\$17k annually) & some turnouts (\$8k annually), the costs can be minimized. **Next Steps** should include FP hosting a meeting for full discussion with the division dean (or program dean & pathway dean) to lay out the plan for continual required equipment replacement. The estimated costs do seem reasonable, but have never been fully represented in the program budget. Some of these costs could fall within a strategic Perkins funding request, so that should be noted and discussed as well.
- *Develop an annual budget that reflects staffing costs to deliver classes that require hands-on instruction to meet outcomes. Including true costs of casual employees (lab skills professionals) to meet safety requirements. **This has support from the division dean.*** **Next steps** should include FP hosting a discussion with the division dean/program dean of exactly what the program/SAC needs from a safe practices perspective to run each lab-skills course. This will better explain the true costs of the personnel it takes to run the program and can assist in determining how many courses and sections need to be run each academic year to serve the industry/employment need, student need and of course, stay within budget.
- *Attain FESHE recognition. **This has support from the division dean*** and seems like a worthwhile request to explore. **Next steps** should include the FP faculty/staff (or a small workgroup) investigating exactly what the program needs to do to pursue FESHE recognition and move this request forward. From there, a meeting with the division dean (or program dean) is recommended to determine what is feasible and to set a timeline. In the APU, the SAC made it clear that the advisory committee recommends the program attain United States Fire Administration, National Fire Academy (NFA), Fire & Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE) recognition. Although the NFA is not an accrediting body, FESHE recognition is highly valued by the fire service, i.e., it is an industry standard. Additionally, it does seem reasonable that attaining FESHE recognition of the AAS degree would help with student recruitment, add to the program status, and be looked on positively by IFSAC in future re-accreditation visits.

Recommended next steps

- Proceed as planned on program review schedule
- Follow up conversation needed with SAC, Dept Chair(s) and Dean

Additional comments/questions

It is evident that the FP SAC has spent many hours collectively invested in addressing opportunities to help students be more successful. The amount of time, energy and hard work you have demonstrated during these unprecedented times is truly impressive and FP students are and will continue to benefit from your efforts. Please know that your commitment to the students, the program, the many faculty and staff and of course the FP industry partners is truly appreciated and valued.