

Administrative Response

History March, 2018

We thank you for your hard work, dedication, and commitment to your discipline, profession, and students. This response contains 4 sections: 1) Commendations, 2) Suggestions/observations, 3) Response to recommendations/areas of SAC needs and 4) Closing comments.

1. Commendations

- *The Program Review discussion provided significant insight into instructional challenges in the teaching of History at PCC.
- *The Program Review discussion provided useful history and context of the instructional program at PCC, including issues regarding survey courses, specialty courses, and topics courses.
- *The History SAC has provided a model process for assessment of PCC's Core Outcomes, including Communication, Critical Thinking, Cultural Awareness, and Professional Competence
- *The SAC has engaged in thoughtful alignment of course outcomes to core outcomes, conducted regular and systematic assessment of student learning, and engaged in collaborative sharing of teaching and best practices for encouraging students to focus on improvement.
- *The History SAC's focus on evaluating sources and arguments based on source material supports the College's work on Critical Thinking and Information Literacy.

2. Suggestions and Observations

Cultural Competence:

The Program Review document asserts, and the Program Review Presentation reinforced, the concept that "History is a subject that is inherently diverse and requires cultural competence to teach" (pg. 17). The DOIs agree with this sentiment but did not see strong examples of cultural competence on display in the presentation, and it is not clear how the History faculty support or engage in culturally responsive teaching. First, the

presentation opened with an extremely problematic quote from George Santayana, equating lack of historical knowledge with infancy and savagery. The three main presentations of the Program Review presentation were essentially monologues which did not invite discussion or dialogue, and when questions were asked, on several occasions, regarding the diversity of students and views within classrooms, responses from the History faculty were superficial and limited. In general, the program review presentation seemed to be dominated by a few strong voices, with limited participation of others in the SAC.

How historical facts are selected and arranged into narratives and arguments is at the core of historical knowledge and of history as an academic discipline. Historical narratives and arguments are products of disciplinary knowledge, theory, and training. As college instructors with graduate degrees and years of experience, not to mention the power of the grade, History faculty will always have more authority, more evidence, more facts, and more power to assert their historical interpretations over the questions and potential resistance of students. Being self-aware about this power and careful and intentional about its use in framing issues, guiding classroom discussion, and promoting authentic learning is fundamental to cultural competence. Use of textbooks, materials, guest lecturers, and even online videos presenting alternate views, inviting argument and re-interpretation, and de-centering the classroom, would go a long way toward demonstrating that knowledge and interpretation, in fact history as an entire discipline, is a contested, embattled, and important field of study, rather than a body of agreed upon facts and pre-approved interpretations to be adopted and learned.

The DOIs would like to see evidence of this cultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, and openness to alternative ways of sharing historical inquiry and knowledge, in future Program Reviews, assessment reports, curriculum discussions, and other ongoing work of the college.

Dual Credit:

The Program Review identifies the HST courses for which there are current articulation agreements but did not address how these are supported by the SAC. It is an expectation of the college (and important for our adherence to the Oregon Dual Credit Standards) that the HS teachers are “part of a continuing collegial interaction through professional development, seminars, site visits and ongoing communication with the college’s faculty.” Given that there are only two HS teachers in our service district who currently offer HST courses, this would not seem to be especially problematic, so we need to see evidence that the SAC does indeed offer ongoing an collegial and timely support to faculty in the HS who are teaching PCC HST courses.

3. Recommendation: Curricular approval of a Topics in History course.

The DOIs acknowledge the valuable, collegial discussion about the structure of the History curriculum, including survey courses, specialty courses, and topics courses. We cannot help but notice, however, that the examples given on pages 23-24 of the Program Review are all permanent, approved courses at other Oregon community colleges, and not Topics course per se. Courses such as the ones listed--History of the Great Depression and the New Deal in America, History of US Labor Movement, America in the 1960s, and others—have the potential to be valuable learning experiences for PCC students, especially if competing narratives and interpretations are incorporated into the materials and discussions. Balancing these offerings with survey courses that also focus on complex and contested historical issues could bring new interest and more students to the history curriculum, in the form of permanent approved courses, rather than as rotating Topics courses. We encourage the History SAC to evaluate the entire structure of your curriculum, retiring some courses and developing new courses that could be offered first as experimental offerings and then as permanent additions to the college catalogue. We also encourage you to frame your arguments around student needs—to engage an important area of knowledge, as well as earn transferable credits—rather than around the more self-interested argument for the History faculty to generate SFTE or to teach topics of more personal professional interest.

4. Closing Comments

It is apparent that the History SAC is interested in developing new curriculum and growing its enrollment. However, approaching these issues in a more collaborative, student-centered, and culturally competent manner will strengthen your arguments and is more likely to garner support from the DOIs and other PCC administrators.

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Admin Response April 2018