

Sonoma State University
Department of Kinesiology
External Review

Conducted by:

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There are constraints to a departmental analysis conducted in one day by one reviewer. Approximately 20 individual minutes were spent with each of the faculty members with time spent with the Chair of the department during an hour tour of the department facilities. About 45 minutes were spent with 5 students from one of the professor's classes and informal interaction was had with 6-8 students at their Symposium of Research poster presentations. In preparation for this write up, I was able to peruse the 2013 review of the department in a document provided by the Assistant to the AVP for Academic Programs for purposes of format questions in addition to updated curriculum documents.

I believe I received a reasonable perspective from each of the faculty. I did not feel the tension that was noted in the previous review and had a sense that the 6 faculty did want to work towards a common goal of improving the department's facilities and the mission of educating their students. There was recognition of the gap of "middle career faculty" and it was apparent that faculty were at different stages of involvement in research activities but still there was the sense of agreement that facilities needed a significant upgrade. Across the board was a great appreciation of the opportunity to work closely with their students.

Students had very positive reflections on the faculty but wished for greater opportunity to interact with faculty during office hours and they were cognizant that laboratory facilities were poor. Classroom teaching space was mentioned as less than optimal and it was my observation that the 3 lecture spaces were poorly configured for optimal teaching and certainly, lab facilities did not lend themselves to quality teaching even with smaller numbers. The biomechanics lab space should not be adjacent to the washer and dryer which must create an uncomfortable learning environment at times and I didn't see facilities for significant motion analyses and much of their lab activities were apparently conducted in an unsuitable outdoor space. More detailed reflection on laboratory space is provided later. Students are able to define what mentoring is but reflective comments suggest they naively accept advisement as mentoring and even then their number of visits for mentoring was minimal. An emphasis on undergraduate research involvement would without question create more opportunity for relationships to develop that would result in greater mentoring possibilities.

There are many suggestions and corrections from the prior evaluation that should still be addressed and I would recommend it be reviewed with the current review in hand as faculty take on important discussions of what is next. In my opinion, the opportunity at present is to focus on the directions the more recent hires are interested in pursuing with the recognition there will be anticipated retirements and the need to hire new faculty who will have a shared vision of the future with the "newer" faculty. For this to occur though, the discussions must occur of what all present faculty can collectively work on together to ensure there is a vision for the longer future that new potential faculty can hear and envision. But for the near future, faculty also must thoughtfully discuss what can be accomplished to enhance facilities that will attract the quality faculty desired and retain the current faculty who have significant talents; an actionable plan must be developed.

This review is divided up into several sections: Reviewer questions/responses and interpretation for faculty and students, Facilities, Curriculum, Summary and an Addendum with a hypothesized direction to stimulate thoughts for the discussion of directions and visions for the short and long term.

APPROACH for Faculty and Students Questions:

- Questions to the faculty to gain a sense of where faculty are relative to their perspectives of department, self, and a look to the future.
- Questions to the students to understand who they are, where they're going and whether the department is helping them get there.
- From this limited information, an integrated general/specific impression of the faculty, students, and department.

Faculty Questions (n=6)

1. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your satisfaction of where your department is?

Mean: 5.3, range 3-8, n=6

Positives:

- Student relations and advisement
- Excellent education
- Perspective on lifetime wellness

Negatives:

- Basic education with minimum facilities and no in-depth coursework
- Insufficient student learning outside of classroom, i.e., internships/research

2. On a scale of 1-10, where your career progress is?

Mean: 7.1, range 5-8, n=5

Faculty are at two ends of the spectrum, i.e., early stages of career (2 Assoc/1 Assistant within the first 10 years) and latter stages (3 Full Professors with <5-10 years until retirement).

Comment: I believe the year estimates of time within department are reasonably accurate. The university expectations of the two faculty groupings are different and the emphasis of the department has changed from what was a teaching/physical education emphasis to an elimination of the physical education option to a present-day greater research emphasis with a desire for undergraduate student involvement.

3. What will help the department be the most successful in the next 5 years?

- New facilities and new equipment; students at a disadvantage in post-bac work
- New faculty hires to reach more students
- Faculty on the same page, function as a group
- Need a vision; reflect on the 5 year action plan which has elements of what is required
- Re-think curriculum and coursework and focus

Chicken before the egg relative to new facilities/equipment/faculty versus faculty on the same page and functioning as a group. This comment is agreed upon and repeated at the faculty and administrative levels.

4. What is the department reputation on campus?
 - Known for campus leadership, service, presence on committees
 - Not known or respected for research/scholarship or what we do
 - Don't know
 - Low
 - Know little about the department related to the professions
 - Need better department promotion to inform campus

5. What would you like the department to be famous for or why should students want to come to SSU?
 - For personal care and attention to students, hands-on advising
 - Undergraduate research with faculty
 - Apply what is learned
 - Quality of education
 - Relationships with faculty
 - Don't know
 - Quality of education and the ability of students to think critically
 - Commitment to serve the community

Student questions (n=5)

1. What year are you (number of units)?
 - Junior (2) Senior (3, 2 graduating)
2. What your plan post-graduation?
 - Grad school, nursing, PT, OT, PT,
3. What's your GPA? 3.47, range 2.99-4.0
4. What is a mentor?
 - Someone who can advise you to the correct path and help you when needed
 - Someone who is there for you for every step and helps you with any questions or concerns you have
 - Someone you can go to with issues and ask for advice from regarding relevant issues
 - Someone who guides you to achieve a specific goal
 - Person who advises you in your career path
5. How many full-time faculty have you met for an in-depth mentoring conversation?
 - 1, 2, 1, 1, 1 were the 5 students responses

Comment: A follow up discussion reflected that their definition of mentor and the visits they have had for in-depth mentoring conversations are more reflective of the typical advisor role. Quality advising has occurred but not necessarily true mentoring.

6. What do you like best about your KIN dept?
 - Everyone is welcoming and helpful. Lot of information about graduate programs
 - The professors
 - Faculty are nice people and very knowledgeable
 - Faculty are willing to help you and try to know you on a personal level
 - Personable faculty and approachable
7. What would you like to see improved?
 - There is no overarching goal or guidance for the students. More direction for students rather than a figure it out for yourself approach. Need more classes.
 - Extend office hours, too many people waiting
 - Create more classes
 - Better classroom environment/space. Better lab equipment and internship opportunities.
 - More availability from faculty, more office hours, more classrooms, more sections of classes
8. What is your dept. best known for?
 - Being approachable but scatterbrained and advisors are inconsistent with goals
 - No answer
 - No answer
 - Research related to fitness sports and health
 - No answer

Integrated impression from faculty/student interviews.

Faculty

There is a general recognition of the “generation gap” in the faculty ranks which is not so much from an academic/professional perspective but from simply there are newer faculty who are going to be there for 20-30 years and faculty who may be within <10 years from retiring. There is full recognition that the hiring of the senior faculty occurred at a different time where the department focus and directions were different with more of a teaching/PE focus and less on research. Related to research, there is a greater university emphasis on undergraduate research as well as faculty research and acquisition of external funding than when the senior faculty were hired. I think this is reflective of the profession as a whole and the CSU in general.

Because of the gap in the faculty, it’s difficult to “see” if the emphasis on research at SSU is more recent than in other institutions. My experience suggests that the evolution to greater research demands in the CSU started about 20-25 years ago with the emphasis on undergraduate involvement about 15-20 years ago. Therefore, I believe the institutional expectation has been present but because of the gap of

the “middle-years” faculty, some of the gradual evolution or “demand” for evolution of facilities and equipment did not occur in the kinesiology department. The department stagnated during this middle years period.

There is a discrepancy in how faculty view the department and how they view their own career progress. Again, this is in part due to personal perspectives of what the department should be and stages of their career. **The department is at a cross roads; an important juncture relative to its future and the future of their students.** In my opinion, the next steps must be taken with the futures of the newer faculty in mind, to take advantage of their talents and what they view as their strengths going forward. A discussion of the entire faculty must occur to take the newer faculty into account in addition to the perspective of what students need to be successful following graduation and ensure the curriculum and experiences deliver. The decisions and directions of today can ensure the unique contributions SSU Kinesiology can deliver upon in this next decade or conversely it can put the department in jeopardy for future considerations. This is a critical 1-2 years.

To the question of what faculty would like the department to be famous for? I think the department must take significant time to think, reflect and discuss this in an open and realistic fashion. There may be value to having this discussion facilitated from an off-campus resource. This is related to the prior paragraph of how faculty view their own career, acquisition of facilities, and hiring of new faculty. Questions to be addressed are numerous though these are a few initial questions that they can use to begin the discussions. Why do you want faculty to be a part of SSU? Why do you want students to come to SSU? What do you want the community to know you for and to support you in facilities improvement, hiring of graduates, etc. Who are you and who do you want to be?

Students

The reflection on students comes from a limited sample size of students interviewed with questions above and the students encountered in a brief interaction at the on-campus poster presentations.

Poster Presentation students

These students were obviously enthusiastic in their presentation and willingness to answer questions regarding their research. It would have been nice to have these same students surface in the subsequent meeting. There were two distinct sub-groups of students. A number of the posters suffered from sample size and methodology but this is not unexpected in an arena of this type. Given the School you are in, it is easy to get lost in the STEM diversity. There is value in creating identity to what you accomplish and perhaps acquiring a unifying theme which will be addressed later. The students were not aware of the potential of taking their posters to SWACSM and with some additional data collection, it's very possible to create identity and further pride in what they have done. That said, they will also become aware of their facilities deficit discussed below (when comparing their presentations with others) so it's important for them to have a point of pride developed and a distinction from what others do so they don't get caught up in what they don't have but have value in what they do have.

Questions to 5 students

It was not unexpected that the future plans included PT/OT, etc. This is similar at most kinesiology institutions but as discussed in the curriculum session, those who graduate often don't continue that direction be it for grades or the discovery that their choice based on limited experiences is not what they really want to do.

Questions 4,5,6 reflect a relationship the faculty take pride in and that is, students and faculty get along and the relationships are positive. However, the role does seem to be one of general advisement and though the students thought they were getting "mentoring," the follow up discussion I had with them reflected more of a typical advisement capacity. Mentoring often takes place out of the office/classroom and shows up more in the external involvement, such as with those engaged in the poster presentations. Ironically, a few of the responses to what they want to see improved in #7 is their time with faculty meaning, they valued the relationship but didn't get much of it on a routine basis.

The response to #8 of what is the department known for is the most troublesome for an institution of your size. However, I think this question would give MANY departments pause for concern. Typically, it is more of an individual faculty excellence rather than a group/department consensus but that doesn't mean the question can't be asked/pursued by faculty and the message be part of your webpage, mission, presence on campus.

Facilities

I believe the hiring of Dr. Sollanek provides an appropriate case study of the department's travel through time of the last few decades. The use of the majority of Dr. Sollanek's funding was for a new metabolic cart which in other universities, would have already been present 20-25 years ago and it likely would have been serviceable and probably upgraded once or twice which would have meant a collection of 2-3 metabolic carts, one for teaching and one for research or a combination. Instead, his start-up funds went to the purchase of one metabolic cart when the funds could have gone to the purchase of new and different equipment thus enhancing the laboratories capacity both from a research and teaching perspective. This reflects the missing middle years hiring of faculty.

The department's self-study has reviews from 2013 and 2006 identifying the department's facilities and resources as, outdated, inadequate, "in dire need of upkeep and expansion." The year 2006 is 12 years ago which means my assessment is reasonably accurate with the benign neglect starting in the early 1990's. However, time flies and what was once benign neglect and not noticed because of the gap in faculty (lack of hires/departures) and the lack of growth and evolution which would normally occur during this intervening 20 years . . . the benign neglect becomes malignant. This hurts faculty and student recruitment as well as faculty and student morale.

I am not prone to hyperbole but this is my impression. From experience and awareness of the productivity of other similar departments, I would characterize the SSU laboratory facilities in exercise physiology, biomechanics, and motor behavior to be at least 40 years behind, minimum. Were it not for the computers located in the labs and the few pieces of basic equipment purchased, I would call it a case of arrested development from the mid-1970's to a period of time when I received my Bachelor's

Degree. This time around, something MUST be done as in today's time, the labs cannot compete or even dream of keeping up with what other universities are producing as basic fundamental research.

The cart before the horse comments. Do you build and purchase and hope for production or do you try and produce and hope for the build and purchase?

A first inexpensive fix could be the re-modeling of Chair/AOA and classroom space into a clean, fresh lab space designated as the department wishes. The walls are not load-bearing ... this idea was suggested by Steven Winter, current department chair. This would be a demonstration of good will from Administration but faculty need to concomitantly demonstrate concrete steps to identifying their future. There should be a 5 year succession plan for new faculty with anticipated retirements and that succession plan be tied into the gradual building re-modeling and space re-assignment ... locker rooms re-structuring, biomechanics, exercise physiology, motor behavior space, sport psychology lab space, because psychology is an integral part of kinesiology ... sociology ... not sure what space requirements are required but there should be a plan for this laid out in a 5 year window. Faculty, space, programmatic all in a synchronized plan. Of course within this should be a planned acquisition of equipment to match the lab space re-structuring.

In terms of faculty hires, it seems a first hire should be in motor behavior. The present class is taught by a lecturer who graduated from SSU. I don't recall there being a current motor behavior faculty nor was one mentioned in the previous reviews so I am unsure of the depth the current course is taught. Motor behavior is a core class in most kinesiology programs and the neurological information is valuable to those going into physical therapy and occupational therapy. This gap must be filled. Alas, a quality candidate will not be at all impressed with the current facility/equipment so this might be at least part of the new-repurposed lab facility described above. The equipment required should be part of the start-up funds for this faculty and if it's a new lab, there might be additional start-up equipment considered with the re-model, at least the basic equipment to teach a basic class and then the new faculty can add research-grade equipment required for his/her work.

Having visited the majority (I think I missed a couple looking at the published program) of the Kinesiology posters at the SSU Symposium of Research and Creativity on Wednesday, prior to my department visit, it was remarkable to have this level of representation given the facilities I subsequently viewed. This speaks to the talent, creativity, and drive of the faculty responsible for the majority of the work listed in the printed program (Sokmen, Sollanek, and Winter) as well as the student interest in gaining this type of experience. However, when asked about their desire to present their work at the Southwest Region of the American College of Sports Medicine, most were unaware of the opportunity for this next stage of development and what quality would be required to take the next step.

Interviewing these presenting students reflected an enthusiastic, motivated, and talented group but they were different in personality, perspective, and experience from those visited on the subsequent day. The faculty can reflect on what these differences might have been but there is a potential for having a more intentional and progressive integrated continuum of student exposure, experience,

purpose, and campus/community presence which will be elaborated on later in the Addendum hypothetical direction.

Curriculum

There are 3 concentrations in the department:

- Lifetime Physical Activity
- Exercise Science (Pre-PT, Pre-Chiro, Pre-PA)
- Interdisciplinary (Pre-OT)

As expressed to the faculty, it was surprising to see the career options in parentheses and initially I was under the impression this was a recent addition. I was informed that no, in fact it pre-dated most of the faculty so it's been present for a long time. This is an opinion of one reviewer but I think the career options in parentheses downgrades the value of the Kinesiology major itself and potentially creates jeopardy for the major if in fact 2/3 of the concentrations are built to prepare students for "other" careers and not one that relies on kinesiology related education as the primary knowledge required.

In particular, the other careers are graduate programs which require pre-requisites that are being filled by several classes in this KIN department but the fact is also that ANY major could be taken as long as the pre-reqs are completed. Therefore the kinesiology major is serving as a pre-requisite to allied health professions and not to the practice or application of its own knowledge base. I think this approach puts the department existence at risk. **Kinesiology is a major that can serve its own unique purpose in the world ... no one knows exercise and the effects of exercise better than Kinesiology.** On the webpage:

Kinesiology, as the study of human movement, utilizes a comprehensive and integrative approach to examine phenomena related to all aspects of physical activity. The curriculum offered by the Department of Kinesiology prepares graduates to **apply kinesiological principles to the acquisition, performance, and refinement of motor skills and to the use of physical activity as an educative tool and a medium for health promotion, personal well being, and participation in an active life style. The curriculum addresses human movement across the life span from biological/physical, behavioral, sociocultural, and humanistic perspectives, with attention given to the unique and common needs of all people in a wide variety of contexts and conditions.**

Recognizing the challenge of offering more in-depth offerings with a limited number of faculty, the curriculum has been structured in all three options to have numerous classes taught from other departments or as indicated to fulfill physical therapy pre-requisites. For example, in Exercise Science, it makes sense for students to have at least one semester of chemistry and physics to benefit them in their exercise physiology and biomechanics education but for those wanting a career in PT, they can be required to take the second semester classes on their own. The units taken for 2nd semester chemistry and physics can be applied to taking additional kinesiology classes. Perhaps some creative scheduling or larger class offerings can result in a new elective course or a 2nd semester ex physiology, biomechanics, motor behavior, or kinesiology humanities course to be taught at the 400 level.

The Interdisciplinary concentration is exactly that, i.e., *interdisciplinary*, with ~15 required units from other departments. What happened to the value of kinesiology? The Lifetime concentration offers the potential of 5 classes in other departments which could replace 2 of the Kinesiology classes which are coaching classes that may be a holdover of the prior PE option.

The main point is the SSU students are at an academic disadvantage in grad school or while job hunting by only having one basic core offering in their requirements while students at other institutions are having two plus numerous additional kin related electives giving them greater breadth and depth of knowledge and experience. This disadvantage is not only for those going on to grad schools in the aforementioned professions but for those who are not admitted or decide a different direction which will require kinesiology knowledge.

It's anticipated that the admission rate of students to grad schools, e.g., PT, and the other professions is about 15% on average from conversations with colleagues. If this is the case then the curriculum is actually focused on the minority of the students rather than the 85% of those who may choose to use their kinesiology education in kinesiology related professions or within a field, such as public health. Regardless, the 85% of the students are again at an academic disadvantage from students receiving more in depth undergraduate education in kinesiology and may not be as competitive in the job market.

A disadvantage of eliminating the graduate program is the loss of Graduate Teaching Assistants who might be called on to teach the laboratories associated with KIN 350, 360. Full-time faculty teaching the labs will tax the WTUs of that faculty member when they might be, again, teaching a second course or related elective. Of course, related to the laboratories is the state of the facilities and how much laboratory experience are the students in fact receiving given the condition of the labs and current inventory of equipment.

SUMMARY

The changes in department facilities and faculty direction in the next 5 years will dictate the faculty recruitment for the next generation of students

There is consensus among faculty regarding the desire to produce a quality student. I spoke to a few students who are clearly talented and successful. However, they will be successful no matter where they receive their education. The greater number of students need additional assistance that can be provided by faculty and up-to date facilities.

I discussed a tripod analogy with AVP Karen Moranski. We are a most stable foundation when we have up-to-date facilities and equipment, faculty with the talent and capacity to utilize those facilities, and faculty with the drive and vision to anticipate future trends and react proactively and positively to the changing world around us. If any one of those is weak, then you no longer have a stable tripod, and it can topple ... If the students being served are on top of an unstable foundation, then clearly the mission and vision of the department will not be accomplished. All three must be present.

Right now, facilities are the most visible need to be addressed. There is work being produced (Symposium of Research and Creativity) with the current facilities so there is the talent and capacity. That said, being in the School of Science and Technology, there is a need to stand out and this is eminently possible because of the unique knowledge base provided in Kinesiology. We are a field that can conduct basic and applied research and yet have it be very pragmatic and understandable to the university and external community. This is a distinction that can be capitalized upon. However, faculty must get on the same page regarding the intentions and directions of the department. The Addendum provides some thought to how the SSU Kinesiology Department can stand out because of its research and application.

Addendum

The Five Year Action Plan has as its first two steps, 1) Prioritize department goals and 2) Improve our laboratory space. As mentioned this is the **“chicken before the egg relative to new facilities/equipment/faculty versus faculty being on the same page and functioning as a group.”**

What is proposed below is a **hypothetical direction** based on existing faculty and resources with a focus on research, community engagement and support which may allow for a **simultaneous** build of laboratory infrastructure and achievement of faculty and department goals.

My impression at the symposium was there is a possibility of getting lost amidst the other departments and their research efforts within the School of Science and Technology. I suggest a Kinesiology type 416 Capstone Presentations (as Nursing had at the Symposium of Research and Creativity) which can create a differentiation from other departments and it can be framed (based on narrative below) as a section sponsored by the Sonoma County Department of Health Services and Kaiser Permanente entitled, *“Sonoma Healthy.”* Again, this is a hypothetical direction.

Sonoma Healthy

The Kinesiology 416 Capstone Presentations capture a unique model of a sophomore, junior, senior train the trainer research model building on the ONE project you all can get behind with your different sub-disciplines with the over-arching focus, ***Sonoma Healthy***. This could be the program that makes you famous and why students want to come to SSU.

Full disclosure I’ve made to all faculty and administrators regarding my bias to the 3 WINS Fitness program that Kurt Sollanek is building but since he’s using it, we can use it as an example for this hypothetical direction ... in fact it might be something else but since it’s on board already with a faculty interested in running it, I’ll use it as an example. The program can expand with the right strategy and marketing. Here is a brief video of our own 3 WINS Fitness Summit which was a collection of participants from all of our sites: <https://youtu.be/i8L4bGLhrQY>

Thoughts to consider:

- Identification of each faculty’s research piece within this model that should also require laboratory research efforts to provide evidence based data but also to expose your partners and the community to your outdated laboratory facilities which may result in matching funding offers but it provides Administration a demonstration of your efforts. All of these pieces also go into the Capstone Presentations demonstrating the breadth and depth of Kinesiology which is now educating the university and the community to what you do which will enhance your reputation and your students. The foundation for this opportunity is present and even greater numbers of students can be fully involved in out of class experiences and research engagement in their years at SSU which can also lead to job creation in the community.
- As you build up a robust participant base of seniors, adults etc. you look at what you have ... A TON of PE equipment, that you can continue to provide a service to the children by addressing

childhood obesity ... with a focus on your participant base as role models for the future ... address nutrition and physical activity for children. Tie into the health promotion goals of Sonoma County Department of Health Services <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Health/About-Us/> and make them your partners since there is no public health major on campus. You are the BEST thing!

- Future collaborative grants with your new Dept. of Health Services partner and their Nutrition and Physical Activity program with your 3 WINS Fitness diabetes prevention program (at CSUN we call it Healthy You because some view diabetes prevention as a negative because they don't want to acknowledge they're pre-diabetic http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/about/publichealth_nutrition.asp We can show you how to create this program to emanate free from your program.
- Featured projects on Dept. of Health Services website: <http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/meetings/heal.asp> and this website is active. This one entitled Community Activity and Nutrition Coalition <http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/meetings/canc.asp> is not which suggests they didn't build the drive to keep it moving yet it was a featured project or it got wrapped up into the HEAL program which is supported by Kaiser Permanente which annually has a community benefits grant that you can easily tap into ~\$20K to build your program infrastructure. Both of these look like they've lost a little steam and may be a good opportunity to explore ... filling in the gap for them ... Probably find out status easily by setting up a meeting with ...Anthony Taylor, Program Manager, (707) 565-6624 Anthony.Taylor@sonoma-county.org and Danielle Ronshausen, HEAL Zone Coordinator, (707) 565-6629, Danielle.Ronshausen@sonoma-county.org
- Their website postings seem to have faded which may be your opportunity.
- Seek collaborations that resonate with what you all do and create partnerships, funding opportunities and visibility.
- If Sonoma Healthy is what you become famous for, then that's where your students start to acquire jobs locally because of 3 WINS Fitness and Sonoma Healthy on their resume, particularly given the indication that most local students who attend SSU stay locally following graduation ... and if you can increase your student recruitment base; the middle 50% of your students populate the careers that are intent on improving community health, e.g., group fitness, worksite wellness, parks and recreation, public health, etc.

And so now are you serving both the 85% and the 15% of your student population with internship ops for Healthy Sonoma which can be a differentiator of the personal statements for grad school (the 15%) plus creating employment opportunities for the 85%. Both groups WIN, and you as faculty WIN and the community wins ... way more than 3 WINS.