



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Religious Studies Department

P.O. Box 6868, Fullerton, CA 92834-6868 / T 657-278-2442 / F 657-278-5820

April 29, 2019

To: Sheryl Fontaine, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

From: Zakyi Ibrahim, Chair, Religious Studies Department

RE: Chair's Response to Dean's Summary and Evaluation of Religious Studies Department's Program Performance Review for the B.A.

On behalf of my colleagues here at Religious Studies Department, I would like to register our heartfelt appreciation to you, firstly, for your leadership, and secondly, for your support, insight and guidance as reflected in the Dean's summary and response. We are particularly grateful to you for acknowledging our efforts in offering curriculum that not only addresses religion in a global context, but also that meets the needs of our first generation and under-represented minority students. It is gratifying that you agree with the External Review Team highlighting our success in online instruction. We, too, are as proud of such a success as we are cautiously optimistic about its impact on our department. Below, I will address some of the key challenges and opportunities you raised in your summary.

1. Retreat and Strategize

We are glad that we had already planned, and that you have agreed with us and the Review Team, to have a retreat to deliberate carefully on the mission, vision, objectives and goals of the Department. Not only do we believe they should match with those of the university, but also they should reflect the current and future aspirations of the department. We however submit to your wisdom on having a facilitator, especially, since other small departments have already benefited from similar arrangements. We greatly welcome your generous offer to provide funds for a facilitator's services. We will reach out to the Dean's office after we gather information on a potential facilitator.

2. Tenure Density and Possibility of Hiring

Officially, the current tenure density of the Department is pegged at 96.2 percent. That is very high for a department with only three full time faculty. Officially, 96.2 percent would translate into four full time and two FERPers. However, the actual numbers of faculty serving the department currently are three full time and two FERPers. Dr. Paul Levesque (Associate Dean for Faculty and Staff Relations) is a member of the department and still has a retreat right (and we would be glad to have him back). He does not currently teach, and yet he is being counted and calculated as part of the tenure density; thus bringing it up to 96.2 percent. Dropping him from the calculation, the percentage will fall to about 77 percent. If the latter percentage was considered, the department stands a chance (perhaps, slim) of requesting a new hire without having to wait for the two FERPers to finally retire in 2021 and 2022 respectively (2-3 years away). I hope the Dean's office would consider revising this calculation.

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3. Curricular Structure and Graduation

We raised the issue of our graduation requirements in the Department's Self Study. We had hoped that the Review Team could help us ponder if and how we need to reduce them from the current eight to a less than that. Even though they did not offer much in that regard, we hope we could come to a solution on our own, especially, as we intend to deeply deliberate that matter during our upcoming retreat. We intend to seek the assistance of the Interim Associate Dean, Jessica Stern and the college data analyst in identifying courses that are appealing to students or feeder-courses.

4. Minor in Asian Religions

We share your wisdom in hesitating to encourage the department to consider adding a minor in Asian religions. Our initial impulse on this matter was inspired by our growing cooperation with members of the Asian religious communities such as Jains and Sikhs. However, in retrospect, we agree with you that given the paucity of students in our existing majors and minors, it would be imprudent to be considering any minor at this time. And we would be consulting with Lisa Tran, as the coordinator of Asian Studies, to see how to serve the community better. Coincidentally, our new hire, Dr. Mugdha Yeolekar is already a working with Lisa Tran as a member of the committee.

5. Effects of EO1100r

Since no one knows exactly the impact of EO1100r and the double counting, we are ready to work with Jessica Stern and the data analyst as they provide us with information as regards the emerging picture of the impact of EO1100r. In the meantime, we plan to make several lists of our courses that would be tailored to individual departments, so their students can avail themselves to such as collateral courses. In return, we would ask other departments to provide us with list of courses that we would suggest to our students to take as collateral. This way, whatever the impact of the EO1100r would be, we the small department would be able to absorb it.

6. Admission Process and Admitted Students

Raising this issue in the Department Self Study was, to us, to bring attention to it than to hope for a realistic solution. Since we knew well that these admission decisions and policies are adopted system-wide rather than university level. However, we are glad that efforts are being made to offer us information of potential students early enough for us to embark on convincing them to accept and join us. The Dean's office was proactive and kind enough to share with us the information for admitted students for the Fall 2019 cohort. We were able to reach out to convince them to join Cal State Fullerton. We hope that our efforts would yield some positive results. Time will tell.

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