

# Eastern Wyoming College

## **Instructional Program Review 2015-2016**

### **Program:**

**Social Sciences Cluster**

### **Including:**

**Degrees - Social Sciences with emphases in History, Political Science, Psychology or Sociology.**

**Courses including American Studies, Anthropology, Geography, Social Work, and Women's Studies**

### **Prepared by:**

**Ellen Creagar, J.D., Heidi Edmunds, M.A.E., Debbie Ochsner, M.S.W.**

### **Date of Report:**

**Spring 2016**



### **Activities in Support of Student Recruitment and Retention**

The Social Science program faculty has seen an increase in graduates from the independent degrees that existed prior to 2012. It is an attractive program with its flexibility and transferability.

Our students have access to a variety of scholarships including the Division Scholarship and the Hathaway Scholarship. These scholarships aid in recruitment of students.

**Assessment of Student Learning:** Analysis of Student Learning—The program assessment for SOSC is a capstone project. Students complete an online portfolio containing their transcript, a resume, a goals statement, samples of completed coursework, and a reflection on their educational experience in the program at EWC.

Statistical Data Results: Since the capstone course is required for graduation, the graduation rates in each program reflect capstone completion.

What has been learned?

The majority of students completing the Social Science program at EWC transfer to four-year institutions to pursue degrees in those respective fields. There are few job opportunities available to graduates who possess only Associates Degrees. The Social Science program is vital to the institution because it provides not only courses for majors but also multiple courses that fulfill general education requirements.

Students who transfer to the University of Wyoming are fully accepted at junior standing and have had no problems completing degrees in social science areas.

EWC faculty have worked in conjunction with their counterparts at the University of Wyoming to develop 2+2 transfer agreements in the areas of Political Science, Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology (in progress), History (in progress), and Social Sciences Secondary Education (in progress). These agreements provide students a pathway to complete a bachelor's degree in four years.

**Strengths of the Program and Faculty:** The Social Science program maintains consistently high enrollment in core courses as well as providing courses satisfying a General Education requirement for many educational programs at EWC. For several years, faculty have been devoted to developing program courses for distance delivery, increasing enrollment and course offerings.

The Social Science degree at EWC provides a high quality transfer education for an affordable price in a non-threatening and supportive environment; this is a place where students *want* to come to get a good education and good college experience. When they leave EWC, students are prepared to meet academic, technological, social, and cultural demands. EWC keeps our community young and vibrant by producing quality graduates and by offering quality programs.

The full-time faculty in the social sciences is well-qualified and well-respected. They have the requisite graduate training and stay current in their fields with graduate course work and conferences.

### **Part III Recommendations**

**Faculty Recommendations:** *Faculty need to stay current with technology in the classroom. Classrooms need to continue to be standardized and updated so that each room has the same capabilities. Faculty need to have updated laptops and access to those for students for work with distance courses and access to budgets for conferences and teaching tools such as DVDs, I-Pads and professional development.*

*The faculty are also concerned with the loss of a full-time person in the departments of history and political science. These departments used to have 1.5 faculty dedicated to them; currently there are two faculty teaching these courses part-time with other vital and core courses being taught by adjuncts. The loss of either one of those two faculty positions would lead to the inability to teach the range of courses needed to keep students at EWC for a full two years, thereby weakening the program. It would also lead to the overuse of adjuncts who, while qualified, do not take ownership in these areas nor in the growth or advising of students. While it is an asset to have faculty who can teach in many social science and humanities areas, it is a problem to have faculty spread so thin that there is no one taking ownership of these areas.*

*Finally, the faculty is concerned about the situation that exists with respect to upper level courses. In psychology and sociology in particular, upper level face to face classes are not successful because of the lack of student enrollment (these courses do not meet the “minimum” number – for this division - of students for a class to be offered: 8). The faculty has successfully put these courses on-line, but student comments reflect that they are frustrated with the number of classes that are ONLY offered on-line without an in class equivalent.*

**Advisory Committee Recommendations:** N/A

### **Division Chair Recommendations:**

I have read the Instructional Program Review for the Social Sciences Cluster authored by instructors Ellen Creagar, Heidi Edmunds and Debbie Ochsner and I agree with their view of the current status of the program and their assessment of the future. The Social Science Program represents a cluster of disciplines allowing a student to select a variety of coursework to satisfy Program requirements and, for many other students, General Education requirements. This allows for flexibility and higher level of personal preference in scheduling. Maintaining that flexibility in schedules, course work and modality of learning through campus classes, online, outreach and concurrent education and special topics classes will keep the Program vibrant rather than in a maintenance mode. This issue, along with others, and how to accomplish them are touched on in the Faculty Recommendations section. It goes without saying our fulltime and adjunct faculty are highly qualified and committed to student success in the classroom, the workplace and through transfer to a four year institution. To accomplish this they must routinely demonstrate knowledge of their program and its students, the academic content and pedagogy. They have clearly established a culture of learning reflective of professional teaching. Couple my observations with

the instructor's priorities and it would be fair to say the EWC Social Sciences Program offers a path to success which should be supported.

**Vice President's Recommendations:**

The division chair makes valid points with respect to the faculty and I concur. While the faculty recommendations are accurate, the recommendations are beyond the control of faculty. With directives from the Board of Trustees and the President, the college needs to be focused on retention and completion.

That being said, the FTE generated in the Social Sciences area has declined by an average of 15% compared to the last program review. This statement of fact is not meant to be a criticism of the faculty, more an observation of the ebb and flow of the economy. Even so, faculty have a responsibility to recruiting as do all of us. Interestingly, there has been a 27% increase averaged over the past three years of students declaring a Social Science major compared to the previous three-year period. While this statistic is noteworthy, the student completion rate only increased by an average of 1% over the previous period. Therefore, it is my opinion that the Social Science faculty:

- consider developing strategies to retain students in major and those taking courses to fulfill general education requirements.
- consider developing strategies to increase the number of majors completing each program

In addition, Social Science faculty are taking an active role in the redesign of Academic Advising. As faculty take on a greater role in advising students, and increased responsibility for student retention will follow. In the meantime, it is important to collect data to determine the effectiveness of implemented strategies, so I recommend the following:

- collaborate and develop strategies together so that there is feedback for emerging trends or opportunities for improvement
- work with the Assessment Committee to develop Student Learning Outcomes to measure the effectiveness of each course objective

As we evolve program reviews into meaningful documents, some of these recommendations will naturally occur.