The Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee (CEPC) reviewed the American Studies Program on November 11, 2010. Dr. Deirdre Egan was present on October 20, 2010 to provide an overview of the Program and answer questions from the members of the Committee. This report provides a summary of the strengths, observations, concerns and recommendations of the Program Review as identified by the CEPC.

Strengths

- The program’s mission is clear and aligned with the College’s mission and vision.
- The service learning and community based components of the program are closely tied to the mission of the College.
- The program has established a distinctive role on campus through support of curricular and co-curricular activities.
- The program appears to be in alignment with current best practices as recommended by the American Studies Association.
- The American Studies program has considered expanding the curriculum to include global perspectives; the CEPC is supportive of this enhancement to the minor.
- The program has addressed concerns from the previous review (May 2004) regarding the tracking of senior projects within an upper-division, interdisciplinary course.
- The program has made modifications based on assessment that include expanded and modernized course offerings as well as refinement of the capstone project.
- The program contributes to General Education via course offerings in Area 6.

Observations

- The review does not contain a clear and distinct statement of the program’s vision; however, elements of the program’s vision do appear in various sections of the review.
- While elements of diversity are inherent virtues of the program, the program would benefit from a clear articulation of those features.
- While program criteria appear to be in alignment with recommendations of the American Studies Association, a comparison of the curriculum to that offered by peer and aspirant institutions is lacking.
- The program appears to be making good headway with the development of guidelines for the interdisciplinary capstone projects; the program appears to have a plan for assessment of the capstone.
- The program has small but steady enrollment.
Concerns

- The cross-listing of American Studies courses with Discipline-specific course designations has made it difficult for the program to target assessment of learning outcomes to students enrolled in the minor program.
- Outside of advising, the program does not have a means to regulate the selection of the four elective courses to insure that each student has an interdisciplinary background.
- The program has not established a regular time-line for rotation of the director.

Recommendations

- The American Studies Committee should seek advice from Bob Rutter in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness in an effort to unravel the problem associated with course cross-listing and related difficulties in acquiring useful assessment data.
- The program should consider opportunities to stimulate and maintain enrollment through advising.
- The American Studies Committee should establish a regular time-line for rotation of the Program’s Director.
- The program should consider the possible benefits of developing a strategic plan.