

Exercise and Sport Science Program's Response to the Review Team Report

By Saori Hanaki

Introduction and Commendations: The Exercise and Sport Science faculty and staff appreciate the time and efforts of the Review Team to evaluate the program. The Review Team identified several strengths of the program: 1) the program faculty and staff works closely with students to complete their degrees successfully, 2) assessments of student learning outcomes have been performed efficiently; 3) the program faculty are diverse in terms of sex, ethnicity, and areas of expertise; and 4) quality community-based experiences are offered through internships.

Identified Recommendations for Change: The Review Team indicated several areas of improvement, which are included and addressed below. Implementation of our response and action plans based on the Review Team's recommendations will further improve the effectiveness of our program.

STANDARD A - MISSION STATEMENT

- **Program Strengths:**
 - The program mission statement flows from the departmental mission statement.
- **Program Challenges:**
 - The restructuring which placed exercise science with the nutrition program is fairly recent. Adjustments will continue to be made as necessary to make the department and program more effective than it already is.
- **Program Weaknesses:**
 - The program mission statement is vague and does not clearly define the expected outcomes.
- **Recommendation for Change:**
 - The ENS statement has a section that says "enhances the mission of the university through . . .". A short statement like this in the program mission statement would make things a little clearer.
- **Program Response:**
 - The program faculty and staff will consider revising the program mission statement to include specific outcomes.
 - **Action Plan:** Revise the program mission statement to reflect new program learning outcomes identified through the curriculum updates planned in the next (2023 – 2024) academic year.

STANDARD B – CURRICULUM

- **Program Strengths:**
 - The exercise and sports science program is viewed very highly within the department. It is seen as a valuable area of growth. During the pandemic, professors put courses online and have continued to offer online courses which has increased the number of students completing the program.
 - Students stated they felt Weber State's ESS program was a better value than other universities. They cited the smaller class sizes which allows the students to get to

- know their instructors on a deeper level. Students feel the professors are readily available either before or after class, as well as during office hours.
- **Program Challenges:**
 - New faculty have been brought on board which has decreased the student to faculty ratio. This allows for more sections of bottleneck courses to be taught. Even with the increase in faculty, students stated they sometimes have difficulty getting into the courses they need and the sections they would like.
 - **Program Weaknesses:**
 - Students stated they did not hear about the opportunity to participate in research until senior year. They felt they would have wanted to, and benefited from participating earlier in their academic careers.
 - Having a part time lab coordinator limits the amount of time students have to practice skills. It is difficult to maintain equipment, and assist students with part time hours.
 - There is currently no formal method of tracking graduates. This information would be helpful in determining whether the program adequately prepares students for their futures.
 - While exercise testing and prescription are covered in several different courses, having a formal exercise testing and prescription course, as well as a special populations course would assist students in being prepared for certified exercise physiologist exam if they wish to work in the healthcare field.
 - **Recommendations for Change:**
 - Students have stated that having a more flexible curriculum would be advantageous. Adjusting the curriculum to have and/or options would help alleviate any bottlenecks in the curriculum.
 - Students have also requested the creation of a list of upper class complimentary courses. Several students noted they did not understand the curriculum as stated does not give them enough credits to graduate. Having a list of courses they could choose from would help guide them in the career choices.
 - **Program Response:**
 - Program curriculum updates are scheduled in the upcoming year (2023 – 2024) to better align with the accreditation requirements and to address curricular improvements suggested above. The Department Chair and the College Dean have identified resources to make the lab coordinator position full-time.
 - **Action Plan 1 - Curriculum:** We plan on changing ESS 4370 (Clinical Exercise Physiology) to offer two separate upper division courses – one formal testing and exercise prescription course emphasizing strength and conditioning and the other course concerning special (clinical) population.
 - **Action Plan 2 – Class List:** With the planned curricular updates, we plan on updating the Grad Map (a new, 3rd track emphasizing on clinical population will be added) and creating a list of upper division complementing courses.
 - **Action Plan 3 – Graduate Tracking:** We will explore methods of tracking graduates, which comply with the accreditation requirements, in the upcoming (2023 – 2024) year.
 - **Action Plan 4 – Student Research participation:** Additional program faculty lines have allowed us to expand the research activities in the recent semesters, and

we have been communicating with students about research opportunities more explicitly (particularly in ESS 2200). We also plan to have a space/bulletin board for research opportunities in the lab/classroom once the renovation is completed.

STANDARD C - STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

- **Program Strengths:**
 - Student learning outcomes are clearly stated. The alignment of the curriculum is clearly based on national standard of the American College of Sports Medicine and the National Strength and Conditioning Association.
 - Methods of assessment are clearly stated for each learning outcome. Each method of assessment has specifically stated evaluation criteria.
- **Program Weaknesses:**
 - The learning outcomes and assessments are the best I have seen. No weaknesses noted at this time.
- **Recommendations for Change:**
 - A slight adjustment of the learning outcomes to include examples of the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that students will achieve may be necessary. Example: LO 7: Perform duties related to fitness management, administration, and program supervision, “such as . . .” If someone does not understand fitness management, they would not know what this particular learning outcome was about.
- **Program’s Response:**
 - Since our last program review, we identified and implemented program learning outcomes that aligned with the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and competencies set by the Committee on Accreditation for the Exercise Sciences (CoAES) and the Council on Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning Education (CASCE).
 - **Action Plan 1:** As we update the program curriculum, we aim to ensure that program learning outcomes reflect the accreditation and industry standards and to provide clarifications to each learning outcome.
 - **Action Plan 2:** Additionally, we plan to revise our program outcomes to reflect the competencies expected from all program courses (ex. personal and career development, critical/creative thinking, diversity and inclusion, information literacy, etc., that may not be included in accreditation competencies).
 - **Action Plan 3:** By the end of the 2023 – 2024 academic year, the program will have a mechanism for systematic collection of artifacts and assessment of new learning outcomes.

STANDARD D - ACADEMIC ADVISING

- **Program Strengths:**
 - The ESS program has a dedicated advisor which completes customized course sequencing for those students who cannot follow the traditional plan. He uses a holistic approach to advising and keeps the students’ needs front and center.
 - The community partners are very pleased with the students’ performance and willingness to learn. Both sites stated they keep slots open specifically for Weber State Exercise Science students.

- **Program Challenges:**
 - While there is a list of internship sites, not all of the sites are routinely active. Keeping the list current is very time consuming.
 - When a student wishes to go to a new internship site, there is a legal form that is completed by Weber State and the site outlining responsibilities of the university and the internship site. There is no formal plan for updating these legal documents which may leave the university open to liability.
- **Program Weaknesses:**
 - Having a dedicated advisor is a major strength for the program. Having that advisor responsible for 450 students is over burdening that person. While the current advisor is doing a wonderful job (as voiced by students) the concern would be burning this person out.
- **Recommendations for Change:**
 - Recommend updating the legal agreements with the internship sites on a regular basis, such as every 3 years. This will keep the documents up to date and the university covered in case of the unlikely event any issues arise.
- **Program's Response:**
 - The program faculty and academic advisor have been working closely to provide effective guidance to our students.
 - **Action Plan 1:** We will establish a formal plan to assess and update our internship documents with each internship site routinely.
 - Each active site will be visited in-person at least once a year.
 - Legal documents will be reviewed and updated every 3 years.
 - **Action Plan 2:** We will strategize not to overburden the academic advisor. Ex. hosting a few group advising sessions prior to advance registration period to address general advising questions.

STANDARD E – FACULTY

- **Program Strengths:**
 - The ESS program consists of four tenure-track faculty members who are diversified and experts in the fields of biomechanics, exercise physiology, nutrition, and medicine. The faculty are diverse in terms of sex (3:1 female:male) and ethnicity (1:1 Caucasian:Asian).
- **Program Challenges:**
 - This is not the fault of the program or faculty, but the frequency of faculty turnover over the past few years can be seen as a potential weakness. The limited continuity and retention of faculty limits faculty collaboration (intra and interdepartmental) and stability for student learning.
- **Program Weaknesses:**
 - Although the ESS program has been able to add faculty since their last review, the growing student:faculty ratio (>21:1) poses a challenge to the faculty. Specifically, this ratio poses a challenge to mentoring of students and individualized teaching.
- **Recommendations for Change:**
 - The faculty mentioned that adjunct faculty were not needed to teach ESS course sections at this time, and that the main reason was that they prefer instructors to

be on-campus and regularly available to students. Although admirable, the growing student:faculty ratio and bottlenecks deserve attention. This problem could, in part, be solved by hiring adjunct faculty to teach additional course sections.

○ **Program's Response:**

- The program increased the number of full-time, tenure-track faculty during this program review period. This change has not only decreased the class size (most laboratory-based courses have less than 20 students per section), but it also helped to offer additional sections of the program courses throughout the academic year. As an effort to retain the program faculty, the College and Department have placed a strong emphasis on supporting non-tenured faculty to engage in scholarly activities by providing funding for laboratory equipment and offering a course release. Additionally, the Department has acquired funding to conduct a department-wide collaborative research project.

STANDARD F - PROGRAM SUPPORT

○ **Program Strengths:**

- Although the ENS department is relatively small, consisting of 9 full-time faculty members, they have adequate program support for advising and administration. The department has two academic advisors (one for ESS and one for Nutrition), and a full-time administrative specialist.

○ **Program Challenges:**

- The added role of internship coordinator to the academic advisor, Matthew Smith, places extra demand on his time and responsibilities. Matthew has expressed that he enjoys serving both roles, but he also admitted that he works an average of 50-60 hours per week. Continuing at this pace is unreasonable and an antagonist to proper life-work balance.

○ **Program Weaknesses:**

- The lab coordinator has moved from full-time to a part-time role. Although this change has contributed to the hiring of additional tenure-track faculty in the ESS program, it has limited the availability of the lab coordinator to both students and faculty outside of classes. Furthermore, with Dr. Butts leaving, the role of lab director seems to remain unfilled. This places extra demand on the faculty and lab coordinator to collectively fill this vacancy.

○ **Recommendations for Change:**

- It is highly recommended that either the lab coordinator be moved to a full-time position, or that an additional part-time position be created for a lab director.
- Boundaries/limits on hours and duties may need to be created by the department chair and program director to protect Matthew Smith from overworking and potential burnout. Marissela Lopez mentioned during her interview with us that she could take on more responsibilities within the department due to the comfortability and efficiency that she has reached in her role as administrative specialist.

○ **Program Response:**

- We are fortunate to have effective program support. We aim to maintain this by facilitating proper life-work balance of our staff members.

- **Action Plan 1:** We are planning on reinstating a full-time lab coordinator position in the Fall of 2023. Additionally, an hourly lab intern position will be created to support the lab functions and to provide students hands-on learning opportunities.
- **Action Plan 2:** We consider strategizing responsibilities of our academic advisor/internship coordinator. Responsibilities can be re-distributed among others, such as the administrative assistant, lab coordinator, and/or the program director, particularly once a course release for the program director becomes a requirement by an accreditation body.

STANDARD G - RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL COMMUNITIES

- **Program Strengths:**
 - Through the internship courses (ESS 2890/4890 – Cooperative Work Experience) offered to ESS majors, both the program has been able to build connections with 50 internship sites in the Wasatch area. This established relationship has allowed community partners to become more familiar with the ESS program and made it more accessible for students to find internship sites.
- **Program Challenges:**
 - As the list of internship sites continues to grow, it may place a greater burden on the internship coordinator to track and maintain these sites. It may be a matter of being selective about sites based on the quality of experience that they provide to students. This can be accomplished by review previous student evaluations of the internship site/supervisors.
- **Program Weaknesses:**
 - There is no formal or established external advisory committee for the ESS program. In the self-study, this component was listed as “not applicable”. However, using the internship courses to gather feedback from external community members is insufficient. It is our understanding that an external advisory board will be required for programs seeking external accreditation (i.e., CAAHEP, CASCE, etc.).
- **Recommendations for Change:**
 - Develop an external advisory committee for the ESS program that meets 1-2 times a year. This committee should consist of community members who work in career fields common for ESS graduates, and employers who typically hire ESS graduates.
 - Strategies should be developed to better track graduate success. This can be done by collecting contact information for current ESS majors and surveying them upon graduation (i.e., exit survey) and years afterward (i.e., alumni survey).
- **Program Response:** We intend to maintain an effective relationship with the external communities through the internship and other collaborations.
 - **Action Plan 1:** By the end of 2023– 2024 academic year, the program faculty and the Internship Coordinator will establish an external advisory committee to meet twice a year. In the effort to strengthen the program’s relationships with the external communities, we are already developing an annual ‘internship supervisor appreciation’ event.
 - **Action Plan 2:** An exit survey has been administered in the ESS Senior Seminar class (ESS 4990); however, it is not sufficient for accreditation reporting purposes

Commented [BD1]: Should we start brainstorming this? Perhaps the doctor we met with in the fall about collaborating with sports medicine residents could be one option. Local PTs, etc.

and longitudinal tracking of the program graduates. We plan to implement a new senior exit survey starting in December of 2023, followed by an alumni survey completed every 3 - 4 years.

STANDARD H – Results of Previous Program Reviews

○ **Program Strengths:**

- The addition of two full-time, tenure-track faculty to the ESS program was much needed and has allowed the program to handle the SCH growth over the last two years. The current number of full-time, ESS faculty is double the number of faculty from the previous program review. This increase in faculty has also allowed the workload to be more evenly distributed.
- The revision of learning outcomes, development of measures, and alignment to HIEEs have profoundly advanced student learning outcomes and assessment data. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness have commended the recent work done by the program director and faculty on the 2020 Biennial Report. The fruit of this labor has been apparent in the current self-study.

○ **Program Challenges:**

- Although the addition of two full-time faculty members has made it possible to offer additional sections of bottleneck courses in the ESS program, the SCH growth and high student:faculty ratio poses a challenge to both students and faculty. If unresolved, it may continue to create bottleneck courses and/or larger class sizes.

○ **Program Weaknesses:**

- An external advisory committee for the ESS program remains unfulfilled since the previous program review. As mentioned above, relying on feedback from internship courses is insufficient and limited to only students and the internships. Feedback from an external advisory committee is needed for quality assessment and improvement at the program level. Furthermore, an external advisory committee may also be required to satisfy external accreditation standards.

○ **Recommendations for Change:**

- Utilizing more adjunct faculty to accommodate for the growing student:faculty ratio, and to mitigate the incidence of bottleneck courses.
- Assemble an external advisor committee that consists of community members who work in career fields common for ESS graduates, and employers who typically hire ESS graduates. The administrative specialist can help contact potential members and coordinate meetings. These meetings should take place annually or biannually.
- Hire a full-time or part-time instructor to assist with teaching additional course sections. This person could also serve as the internship coordinator to relieve the academic advisor of this additional load.
- Increase the lab coordinator position to full-time to fulfill the duties of lab director that was left vacant by the departure of Dr. Butts. If not feasible, have the administrative specialist assist the part-time lab coordinator with managing the lab.

○ **Program Response:**

- Following the previous 5-year review, the program was recommended not to make any significant changes (specifically, major curricular updates and establishment of an external committee) due to the lack of personnel resources. Doubling the number of full-time, tenure-track faculty during this review period has allowed more reasonable service workload. Having more program faculty has also helped to offer more sections of courses to resolve many bottleneck course issues and to facilitate scholarly productivity. We are planning on making improvements based on the recommendations by the program reviewers in the upcoming years.
- **Action Plan 1:** The program recognizes that further growth of the program with a higher number of student enrollment will require additional sections of the program courses. We will continue assessing the students' demands and offer additional courses as needed.
- **Action Plan 2:** As discussed in the *G - RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL COMMUNITIES* section, we plan to establish an external advisory committee during the 2023 – 2024 year and to meet biannually in order to obtain objective feedback on the program's effectiveness.
- **Action Plan 3:** Current academic advisor wishes to continue taking the role of the internship coordinator. To relieve his workload, we will strategize to redistribute some administrative responsibilities to the administrative assistant, lab coordinator, and/or the program director.
- **Action Plan 4:** We plan to fire a full-time lab coordinator and a student intern in the fall of 2024 to provide better laboratory support to the faculty and the students.