MEMORANDUM

TO: Denise Konan, Dean, College of Social Sciences
FROM: Michael Bruno, Provost
Laura Lyons, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Response to the CSS Program Review Progress Report

Thank you for your memo dated June 30, 2020. The College of Social Sciences is indeed a leading force in educating our students, and we are very pleased to hear about the successes taking place across many of your programs, and the well-deserved awards and recognition received by your committed faculty. The departmental responses demonstrate the seriousness of the programs in addressing the recommendations of the program review, and we truly appreciate the time and dedication of the College’s faculty, staff, students, and administration in participating in this process of continuous review and improvement.

We are pleased to see the commitment to improving program assessment and developing measurable outcomes, as well as the increased strategic use of the Course Evaluation System by several departments. Many programs have created new courses in alignment with the recommendations of the review team to better-serve the needs of our students; and several departments are leading the way in bringing their courses and programs online, which is especially crucial in the current environment. The development of bachelors-masters pathways (BAMS) is very encouraging, as they provide an excellent way to stimulate recruitment and interest in advanced degree programs, while saving students valuable time and money. There also appears to be considerable effort put forth by faculty toward improving the funding opportunities for graduate students in several programs, though there is certainly a need for continued focus in this area at the department, college, and campus levels. Finally, the ACCESS advising unit is an excellent model for the campus, and we look forward to seeing how your ongoing efforts and initiatives serve to increase recruitment, retention, and success within the College.

We understand your concerns regarding the ability to hire new faculty, and appreciate the historical data on attrition and current faculty counts demonstrating an overall reduction to your faculty numbers. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to see that several departments have made excellent, highly competitive hires since the last review, including those who benefited from the Sustainability cluster hire. We would like to have seen greater efforts to address cost-neutral solutions to this problem, such as increasing teaching loads for low research productive faculty, as was noted in the response on November 16, 2017. One department disagreed with this
suggestion stating that low research productivity is often correlated to poor teaching performance, but we continue to believe this is a valid approach, and would have appreciated seeing it addressed more fully in your report. Another area you were asked to focus on was addressing climate issues in the College. There are pockets of promising activity by individual faculty and departments, but this recommendation should be integrated systematically across the College under the leadership of the Dean’s Office.

The College’s response to the program review report was submitted over a year after the report was shared, and this progress report was also submitted unusually late. As a result, you will have completed only one of the two required progress reports before your next review team visit. Though we do understand that extenuating circumstances and unforeseen events can make timely completion of progress reports a challenge, we must stress the importance of following the review timeline to help ensure the efficacy of the process. We trust that for future responses and progress reports, we can expect the College to submit them on, or close to, the posted deadline.

Overall, we are very impressed with the excellent work underway in the College, and look forward to seeing the ongoing progress in the areas discussed above between now and your next comprehensive review. We appreciate the seriousness with which you, your faculty, and your staff have approached these discussions. Per your earlier communication with Director Goodwin, your next program review will be in 2021-22.

In closing, it should be noted that as the University addresses the budget crisis stemming from the global COVID-19 pandemic, we are engaging each of our academic units about the strength and sustainability of their majors, more effective use of faculty and staff resources, and responsiveness to our educational and research missions.

c: Krystyna Aune, Dean, Graduate Division
April Goodwin, Director of Program Development and Review