

BASIC PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program Review is a self-study of your discipline. It is about documenting the plans you have for improving student success in your program and sharing that information with the college community. Through the review of and reflection on key program elements, program review and planning identifies program strengths as well as strategies necessary to improve the academic discipline, program, or service to support student success. With that in mind, please answer the following questions:

Discipline Name: Religious Studies

Department Name: Behavioral Sciences

Division Name: Social and Behavioral Sciences

Please list all participants in this Program Review :

Name	Position
Craig Forney	Associate Professor of Religious Studies

Number of Full Time Faculty: 1

Number of Part Time Faculty: 3

Please list the Classified positions (and their FTE) that support this discipline:

Rebecca Clements, ADA

What additional hourly staff support this discipline and/or department:

NA

Discipline mission statement: [Link to "How to Build a Mission Statement"](#)

The mission of Religious Studies at Palomar College is to provide religion literacy to students and the larger community in preparation for quality engagement with an increasingly religious, interdependent, and global world. Religious studies offers the preparation of learning core knowledge and language of the world's diverse religious traditions, studied in historical and contemporary forms. The academic study of religion also instills the skills of cultivating mutual respect, empathetic learning, appreciation for diversity, integrative thinking, and wholistic understanding to prepare students for engagement as global citizens. Ultimately, the Religious Studies discipline at Palomar College is directed to facilitation of Palomar as a center for interfaith learning, collaboration, and informed public discussion about religion.

List any new degrees and certificates offered within this discipline since your last comprehensive review:

We have pursued establishment of an ADT in Religious Studies for many years and continue to push for this, but the state has yet to support or approve an ADT for Religious Studies.

Discipline Level Data: <https://sharepoint2.palomar.edu/sites/IRPA/SitePages/PRP%20Summary%20Source.aspx>

SECTION 1: PROGRAM REFLECTION

1A. Program Analysis: Reflect upon and provide an analysis of your summary data.

Enrollments declined somewhat in 2015-2016, down from 308 in the fall of 2014 to 286 in the fall of 2015, though the decline there is simply due to the cutting of a class section. The fill rate increased almost 20% from 69.06% in the fall of 2014 to 87.8% in the fall of 2015. So our adjustments in course offerings and in promotion of the discipline have had significantly positive impact. The enrollment for the fall of 2016 was also quite strong, though not so strong in the spring of 2016 and the spring of 2017. Consequently, some further adjustments and proactive building of the discipline are needed especially related to spring semesters. However, the fall scheduling looks good. Relatedly, the WSCH and FTES numbers sharply increased from the fall of 2014 to the fall of 2015, bringing the rates back up close to the strong years before the 2013-2014 drop off.

The success rates for distance education remain steady at the school-wide level, though the rates for face to face classes fell somewhat below the school-side rates from the fall of 2013 to the fall of 2015. The rates for retention had the same dynamic, with distance education remaining at and somewhat above school rates. I am not aware of "hard" evidence for the decline in the success and retention rates, though there specifically the face to face classes have fallen somewhat the college rates and not the DE classes. My read on the situation is that the DE classes and culture are impacting the face to face classes, which is pretty clear related to enrollment. Ability to generate success and retain is significantly less in the DE environment. Seemingly the DE dynamics and culture are migrating into the face to face realm, I hypothesize first in the much less empowered programs like Religious Studies. I'm not seeing that the comparison of these numbers as an accurate comparison since the numbers are being generated in very different and quite unequal contexts. Students have less and less incentive to retain a class in Religious Studies, much less so than to retain a class from a discipline with strong structural support and promotion. Then after retention, facilitating the success of a student in a Religious Studies class is increasing more difficult due to lesser incentive to succeed than in a class from many other disciplines. Moreover, the more things are pushed in the current direction in education the less students arrive in a class prepared with the knowledge and skill base to succeed in a Religious Studies class. The playing field related to academic disciplines of study was not close to equal before and it is getting dramatically more unequal. So simple use of success and retention numbers was problematic before. Now, it is looking absurd when the larger context of things is taken into consideration.

Related to ethnicity, the success rates for Hispanics remain steady, on par with the success rates for the Religious Studies in general. For students of Asian ethnicity, the success rates remain steady, above the discipline and school rates. I'm not understanding the number 0 recorded for African Americans for 2-11-2016 since African Americans are regularly enrolled and active in the five classes I teach each semester. Overall, the success rates show very little variance by ethnicity, reflecting much equity in the teaching of Religious Studies classes. Related to gender, the success rate for females declined somewhat from 68.5% in the fall of 2014 to 62.6% in the fall of 2015, while the rate for males increased during the same time period from 61% to 64%, reflecting a very similar level of success for females and males over the larger three year period of 2013-2016. Also, the success rate for the economically disadvantaged of 63.3% was very close to the rate for other students, indicating ability to engage students regardless of economic situation.

1B. Standards: ACCJC requires that colleges establish institutional and program level standards in the area of course success rates. These standards represent the lowest success rate (% A, B, C, or Credit) deemed acceptable by the College. In other words, if you were to notice a drop below the rate, you would seek further information to examine why the drop occurred and strategies to address the rate.

Discipline Level Course Success Rate:

- A. The College's institutional standard for course success rate is **70%**.
- B. Review your discipline's course success rates over the past five years.
- C. Identify the minimum acceptable course success rate for your discipline. When setting this rate, consider the level of curriculum (e.g., basic skills, AA, Transfer) and other factors that influence success rates within your area. If you set your discipline standard below the College's standard, please explain why.

Standard for Discipline Course Success Rate: 65

Why?

Religious Studies now approaches having 50% of courses in Distance education. So a reasonable minimum rate would seem to be the average of face to face and distance education rates for success.

1C. Program Update: Describe your proudest moments or achievements related to student success and outcome.

I am especially proud of successful advancement by students in academic programs beyond Palomar after completing multiple classes in Religious Studies at Palomar. Currently, Gabby Perez is progressing in a Master's program at Harvard Divinity School, Daniel Garcia in the Religious Studies Master's program at CSU Long Beach, and Miranda Mattis in a Master's program in

Psychology at Azusa Pacific University. Gabby and Daniel were the first in their families to attend college when they enrolled at Palomar. So their graduate work success is quite exceptional. In addition, I am most proud when students demonstrate interest in and ability to engage in learning with people from the religious communities studied in class, particularly during visits each semester to local communities of faith. Beyond that, I am proud of every case and situation of success, especially in consideration that success and enrollment rates in Religious Studies are quite equitable related to ethnicity and gender. We are proud of each way in which student succeed by way of participation in religious Studies yet not so proud as to be unconcerned with improvement.

1D. Program Improvement: What areas or activities are you working on this year to improve your program? Please respond to new data as well as feedback from last year's program review.

The plan for improvement must always start with the giving of full engagement to prepare for and teach the next class, supplemented by ongoing review and revision of teaching related to use of diverse methods, academic technology, plus engagement with local, contemporary, and relatable case studies. Then, we continue to focus on strengthening and developing the articulation of classes in Religious Studies to enhance the discipline as pivotal to educational pathways for students, regularly based on feedback from the monitoring of four year institutions and especially CSU institutions. First, we are working on strengthening RS 101, World Religions, through designation as a "no textbook" course and by revising the class to meet the multicultural requirement. Second, we are recreating RS 103, Religion and American Institutions, to pair with RS 102 to meet all three points of the U.S. History and Institutions requirements. Third, we are working on local agreements with CSU Long Beach, Fullerton, and San Marcos. We have not finding much incentive at the CSU institutions to push for a statewide ADT but we have developed local agreements and started ongoing collaboration with other community college professors in southern California. Not having a statewide ADT remains an issue but we are currently focused intently on these above three points.

Finally, we are concentrating on in-reach on campus and outreach beyond campus to increase the breadth and depth of participation in the Religious Studies discipline at Palomar. The in-reach on campus concentrates on collaboration with counselors, student clubs, and students in classes outside the discipline. The outreach focuses on collaboration with interfaith groups, local faith communities, and high schools. We have received a couple of good contacts to pursue related to charter schools, which I'm thinking as possibly sites for a World Religions class or two. Also, we have started interaction with a group looking to create an interfaith seminary program and another group resulting from governmental push for increased chaplaincy programs. We envision World Religions and other Religious Studies classes at Palomar as potentially being a part of the curriculum for both of these groups. Last, we created an advisory board in the fall of 2016 to facilitate reception of concentrated and consistent feedback from representatives of core groups in the outreach effort.

1E. Unanticipated Factors: Have there been any unanticipated factors that have affected the progress of your previous plan?

The impact of structural exclusion of the discipline of Religious Studies statewide looks to be greater than previously thought. Here, California is not leading but following nationwide forces and trends. I have my theory of why. The impact of the structural push towards certain disciplines and away from others begins with enrollments, as a class in Religious Studies is increasingly the last to be added to a student's schedule and at the bottom of the list of classes to be recommended by counselors. Enrollment is only the beginning of the structural impact, since retention of students in Religious Studies classes is increasingly more difficult. Students have less and less incentive to retain a class in Religious Studies, much less so than to retain a class from a discipline with institutional support. Then after retention, facilitating the success of a student in a Religious Studies class is increasing more difficult due to lesser incentive to succeed than in a class from a discipline with institutional support. Moreover, the more things are pushed in the current direction in education the less students arrive in a class prepared with the knowledge and skill base to succeed in a Religious Studies class. Then, the impact on enrollment brings less students to a Religious Studies class to receive preparation with this knowledge and skill base. So the forces of spiraling downward grow stronger. The playing field related to academic disciplines of study was not close to equal before and it is getting dramatically more unequal. Using my trained abilities for objective thinking, education in California and in the United States is becoming much narrower and flatter rather than broader and deeper. I am not seeing how this is better preparing students for a future that will be more complex, diverse, and changing. Actually, the reverse looks to be the outcome of the current forces. Regardless of these larger dynamics, we are actively and intensively working to offset the negative impacts on Religious Studies on campus, in the local community, and statewide.

1F. SLOACs: Describe your course and program SLO activities this past year. How have you used the results of your assessments to improve your courses and programs? [Refer to the SLO/PRP report – https://outcomes.palomar.edu:8443/tracdat/](https://outcomes.palomar.edu:8443/tracdat/)

We completed the plan documented in the 2015-2016 PRP. Assessments of the ability to compare and contrast core subject content were completed in RS 101, RS 102, and RS 105. We also assessed the SLO of proficient knowledge in in core subject content in RS 108 and RS 110. However, we have recently come to understand that the process was inaccurately understood as involving assessment of an SLO per course every three years rather than the assessment of every SLO every three years. Why the misunderstanding? I am not clear on that. In any case, we are in the process of updating the SLO status of each SLO for every class in Religious Studies and will be current by the fall of 2017. The results of the assessments completed in the past year were quite positive and consistent throughout RS 101, 102, 105, 108, and 110. The compare and contrast essay format used in each of the

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classes revealed the strong majority of students with ability and knowledge levels at or above competency. The assessments disclosed certain areas of learning that are most in need of improvement, in general for the Religious Studies courses and not specific to any one course: writing skills, comprehension of the more abstract dimensions to religion (e.g., doctrine, ethics), and ability to evaluate core themes of similarity and difference in comparative study and particularly related to themes of similarity or connectedness. Consequently, we are focused on increased efforts and improved ways to aid students in the writing essays and papers, in the use of local and tangible examples for learning related the more abstract dimensions of religion, and in the use of increased rigor alongside creativity to enhance student ability to better understand implicit commonalities and the most pivotal themes of difference in the comparative approach to study of religions.

SECTION 2: PROGRAM GOALS

2A. Progress on Previous Year's Goals: Please list discipline goals from the previous year's reviews and provide an update by checking the appropriate status box .

Goal	Completed	Ongoing	No Longer a Goal
Excellence in teaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strengthen and develop the articulation for RS courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preparation of students to be global citizens	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2B. New Discipline Goals: Please list all discipline goals for this three-year planning cycle (including those continued from previous planning cycle):

GOAL #1	
Program or discipline goal	Excellence in teaching
Strategies for implementation	Continued focus on preparation for and more engaged teaching of each class, review and revision of teaching methods, improved use of field experience and active learning, review and revision of the use of academic technology, and improved use of local, contemporary, and tangible case studies.
Timeline for Implementation	Ongoing review and revision.
Outcome(s) expected (qualitative/quantitative)	Learning of core knowledge, religion literacy, and the skills associated with global citizenship.
GOAL #2	
Program or discipline goal	Strengthen and develop articulations of RS courses
Strategies for implementation	Collaboration with Articulation Officer Ben Mudgett, with CSU/UC programs and requirements.
Timeline for Implementation	Ongoing semester by semester review and revision of articulation.
Outcome(s) expected (qualitative/quantitative)	Improvement in the articulation of RS courses for CSU/UC requirements, improved preparation of students for transfer and for life in a global society.
GOAL #3	
Program or discipline goal	Outreach beyond the campus and in-reach on campus to foster greater breadth and depth of participation in the Religious Studies discipline.
Strategies for implementation	Development of collaboration beyond the campus with interfaith groups, local faith communities, and high schools; formal and consistent engagement with representatives of core outreach communities by way of a Religious Studies advisory board at Palomar; development of collaboration on campus with counselors, student clubs, and classes not in the Religious Studies discipline.
Timeline for Implementation	Ongoing, including an advisory board meeting each semester.
Outcome(s) expected (qualitative/quantitative)	Enhanced collaboration on and off campus, the offering of a course or courses in Religious Studies off campus, improved enrollments in Religious Studies classes, greater inclusion of local communities in the teachings of classes.

**Department Chair/
Designee Signature:** _____

Date: _____

Division Dean Signature: _____

Date: _____

Vice President Signature: _____

Date: _____