UNIT RESPONSE TO PRC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

The Department of Human Services would like to thank the Program Review Committee for its efforts and insight on behalf of the Department. We are particularly pleased that both the External Review Committee and the PRC have found the Department to be an “outstanding department” and we will endeavor to maintain that level of commitment and effort. As such, the Department is committed to addressing the plan outlined in its Self-study and appropriate recommendations of the external reviewers and the PRC. The unit wishes to specifically address several recommendations from the PRC review.

1. Student Recruitment and Enrollment Management

The PRC finds that the Gerontology and Social Work Programs are undersubscribed. This is true in the Gerontology Program, but not in Social Work. Enrollment in Social Work is limited by accreditation standards to 25 majors per full-time faculty member. The Program has 4 faculty members with an enrollment of 105 majors, meaning that the Program has peaked in enrollment. Any growth in Social Work would require adding a faculty line, which is not being considered at this time.

The Department concurs with the need to focus on recruitment in Gerontology and is taking steps to address this issue. A plan will be developed and in place by Spring 2007.

In terms of Criminal Justice, the Department does not feel that reinstating a higher admission standard is in the best interests of either the Program or students. Criminal Justice currently requires a minimum 2.5 GPA for its majors (already significantly higher than University standards for graduation), and once admitted students are rarely dismissed for dropping below the 2.5 minimum (typically less than 1% of all students admitted to the major). Reinstatement of a higher minimum would serve mainly to limit enrollment and not just increase the quality the students. While the Program always looks to recruit high quality students, it is not prudent to simply cut off hard working students who can meet the 2.5 criteria in the hopes of admitting higher quality students. Instead, Criminal Justice will work to recruit high quality students and seek additional faculty (as outlined under the initial plan to change admissions in 1997) to accommodate student growth.

2. Revenue Streams

Operating revenue is always a concern for any department. It is important to note, however, that DHS has had an operational surplus for the past two academic years, not a shortfall as noted in the PRC report. This discrepancy is due mainly to the absence of the recent data in the Department Self-study. The Department is always open to alternative revenue streams and will work with the Dean to identify additional possibilities for revenue enhancement. A plan will be developed by Spring 2007 addressing this issue.
3. Scholarly Productivity and Faculty Loads

The issue of faculty productivity is a key concern for only one of the three programs in the Department. In the other two, the faculty are very active in research and publication. Across the Department, many steps have already been implemented to assist young scholars, including faculty mentoring, provision of travel funds, and the provision of start up funds for research. Faculty also receive course release time (when possible) to help in development of a research agenda, and are encouraged to participate in various activities with CTLT. In order to address this more formally, a written plan will be in developed, particularly in combination with the mandate to develop faculty success plans over the coming year.

The most important step in improving the level of scholarly activity is to take whatever steps possible to attract and hire new faculty with strong research training and skills. Plans to do so will be submitted to the appropriate offices over the coming academic year.

4. Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

While the Department Self-study does not present data or data analyses on its student outcome assessment, that information does exist and is routinely used in making curricular and other changes. It is important to note that the guidelines for developing the Self-study do not ask for Departments to include data on this topic. The external reviewers are incorrect in their assumption that the Department does not systematically analyze student outcome data. The Department has routinely submitted reports to Student Achievement Assessment Committee since the inception of the SAAC process on campus, and the feedback on those reports from SAAC has been uniformly positive. The Department will continue to examine this process.

5. Faculty Salaries

The Department concurs that every effort should be made to increase faculty salaries to make them competitive with salaries in similar programs at similar institutions. New-hire salaries and junior-faculty salaries should be the priority. This issue will be taken up with the Dean and the Provost during Fall 2007.

6. Physical Space Needs

The recommendation to address space needs for both graduate students and the research laboratory are already being addressed in the planning for expansion and renovation of the Health Center. This will remain a high priority for the Department.