The Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Studies (SMF) program was reviewed in May 2011, the External Reviewers report was received on June 29, 2011, and the Departmental Response to the report was completed July 26, 2011. The review team consisted of three tenured faculty members from diverse backgrounds: Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology at the University of Windsor; Family Studies and Gerontology at Mount Saint Vincent University; and the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo.

The SMF Department offers seven plans of study. As of November 2013, 123 students were enrolled in an SMF academic plan:

- SMF Honours: 16
- SMF Joint Honours: 14
- SMF 4-year General: 33
- SMF 3-year General: 6
- SMF ARBUS: 2
- SMF Minor: 49
- SMF Diploma: 3

SMF courses are very popular among students across disciplines at the University of Waterloo, St. Jerome’s, and the affiliated colleges. A total of 427 students were enrolled in SMF courses in the fall 2013 term. To provide a comparison, a total of 117 students were enrolled in Religious Studies courses at St. Jerome’s this same term.

The External Review Team recognized a number of important strengths associated with the SMF Department and its programs: it is a small but unique program in Canada; faculty and students have a great deal of enthusiasm, excitement, and commitment to growing and strengthening the program; the Department clearly meets its goal of interdisciplinarity; the Department has set clear goals and met them since the 2003 program review; and the Department generally meets the goals of the St. Jerome’s University mission and the University of Waterloo Sixth Decade Plan.

The Review Team also spoke of some challenges that can be addressed through its recommendations: continuing to work through the ‘growing pains’ associated with developing an Honours academic plan; being a young Department that is dealing with limited administrative and structural resources; and needing to strengthen research programs and partnerships in order to meet this component of UW’s mission and priorities.

The final review report contained seven recommendations to the SMF faculty, and five recommendations to the Dean. Each recommendation for faculty is presented below,
followed by the 2011 Departmental response and the 2013 two-year progress report. Recommendations to the Dean follow, with a 2013 progress report on each item.

**Recommendations for Faculty**

**Recommendation (1)**  
*Program Focus and Curriculum:* We recommend that faculty and “allies” engage in a visioning and strategic planning exercise. This would include identifying a vision for the future; a specific focus/distinctiveness of the program; articulation of how the three streams work within this focus; greater commonality between 4-year and honours programs; and a strategic plan for achieving the vision (including targets for enrollment, faculty complement, research, new courses, potential accreditation for various counseling programs).

**Departmental Response (2011):**  
The SMF Department agrees with the reviewers’ recommendation regarding program focus and curriculum. The Department is very familiar with what it means to engage in a visioning and strategic planning exercise because it undertook such a process in the development of the Honours academic plans. At that time, SMF recognized that there would be a need to engage in such a process again after students had been in the Honours plans for a few years. This External Review Team recommendation is clearly in line with the Department’s own understanding of what is needed. SMF is aware of the value of identifying its vision for the long-term focus and distinctiveness of the program; clarifying what form specialization might take; reviewing the overall learning outcomes for SMF graduates; and developing a strategic plan for achieving its vision. In engaging in such a visioning and strategic planning process, SMF is committed to upholding the important and unique interdisciplinarity of the program, both in its faculty members and in the courses that are made available.

The SMF Department is also familiar with working with various ‘allies’ in such a process. For example, in preparing the Honours plans, the Department utilized the resources of the Center for Teaching Excellence; we would turn to them again in this next visioning process.

**Two-Year Progress Report:**
In its response to the program review, the Department articulated its commitment to engaging in a visioning and strategic planning process within the next three years, recognizing potential constraints when the two full-time members of the department take sabbatical leaves. The Department has intentionally held off on engaging in this process until the new faculty position was filled (the position was approved December 2012; the successful candidate began November 1, 2013). The full Department met for a Department Meeting on November 4, 2013 and committed to a two-part visioning and strategic planning process; the first part of the process took place on 2 December 2013. The Acting Chair of the Department contacted the Centre for Teaching Excellence and arranged for Trevor Holmes to facilitate the visioning exercise, with a clear focus on program goals and curricular items. In particular, a review of the curriculum was a significant proportion of that exercise. We
expect to continue this process in early 2014 with the view to having a strategic plan for the next five years in place by Fall 2014.

Recommendation (2)
As part of the visioning and planning exercise we encourage consideration of the following:

a. Increased course content related to gerontology and disability.

b. Revision of the practicum course and/or program structure to decrease the workload for the instructor. This could include setting a maximum enrollment in the honours program and/or revision of requirements of the practicum and thesis options in order to keep the practicum to a more manageable number. Also consider having the placement of students in their practicum sites handled by a non-faculty member.

c. Development of capacity within the Department to offer core courses without reliance on other Departments.

d. Development of a 100-level course to cover foundational work, facilitate recruitment of SMF students in first year, and increase visibility of the program across UW.

Departmental Response (2011):
SMF agrees with the reviewers’ recommendation about things that should be considered in the visioning and strategic planning process recommended above.

a) The Department will consider increased course content in a number of topic areas, including the recommended areas of gerontology and disability.

b) SMF appreciates that the External Review Team recognized the practicum course to be a strong addition to the program and that we provide a variety of practicum opportunities for our students. We recognize the value of reviewing the management and coordination involved in administering the practicum course. We also understand the importance of reviewing the structure and requirements of the practicum course in order to determine the best way to deal with high (and increasing) numbers of Honours students for the long-term. We will also explore the possibility of having a non-faculty person handle the placement of students in practicum sites.

c) SMF is aware of the importance of core or required SMF courses being taught by full-time members of the SMF Department. Over the past number of years, the Department has been mindful of the value of consistency in the delivery of its courses. Consequently, we have offset the small number of full-time members in the Department by hiring regular sessionals to teach courses.

d) SMF is committed to dealing with this particular recommendation over the next seven years. We acknowledge that this recommendation is related to one of the recommendations for the Academic Dean regarding the need for additional hiring in SMF. It is also related to the hiring commitment identified in the St. Jerome’s University Academic Priorities document.
e) We are mindful of the value of developing 100-level courses for the purposes of recruitment to the program and for establishing foundational courses for the program. We recognize that the development of such a course(s) would help to increase the visibility of SMF at UW. We are committed to considering such a course(s) that, as the reviewers suggest, “covers both family and sexuality within the context of the relational focus of the program.” We also want to indicate that we have already been moving in this direction: in Fall 2011, one section of Human Sciences 101 will be geared toward entry into SMF. We consider this to be a pilot course for the development of SMF 100-level course(s).

Two-Year Progress Report:

a) Course content related to disability and gerontology continues to be woven into several existing courses (e.g., SMF 207: Parents, Children, and Family Relations, which takes a lifespan approach to examining family relationships from infancy and childhood to later life and incorporates material on families with children who have a disability; SMF 208: Introduction to Sexuality, Couples, and Family Therapy, which is grounded in a social justice paradigm and includes attention to the various ‘isms’ that permeate interactions, including ableism; SMF 304: Human Sexuality in Relationships, which also takes a lifespan approach to sexuality; and will be included in SMF 310: Sexual Ethics in Fall 2014). To date, limited faculty resources and different areas of specialization have made it impossible to offer specialization or seminar courses devoted specifically to disability and/or gerontology, or any other domain for that matter.

The external reviewers’ focus on gerontology and disability came from the student cohorts that were interviewed at the time of the review. It would be interesting to examine whether these areas hold the same prominence for present or future students. One current student recently completed an in-course project that examined disabilities and the SMF curriculum and plans to present that report to the Department in the new year. That said, the reviewers’ suggestions may privilege these two domains over other equally important ones that would enhance the SMF program, such as: legal aspects of families and/or sexuality, race and sexuality and/or family, immigration and acculturation, sexuality, and family health; transgender and same-sex relationships and parenting; violence in relationships, etcetera. The aging component fits well with the UW strategic plan, so we are mindful of contributing to this area and building capacity to address this focus.

b) The Practicum course continues to be one of SMF’s defining features, despite its resource-heavy nature. The administration has committed to supporting the Practicum-Capstone course as it is currently structured, and discussions about offloading some of the administrative responsibilities around student placements to a qualified staff person continue. We hope that some significant gains in this area will be made by the time of the next review.

c) The SMF Department received approval for an additional faculty hire in December 2012. A new faculty member, Dr. Caitlin Mulcahy, joined the Department November
1, 2013. Dr. Mulcahy lends the Department a background in sociology, anthropology, and recreation and leisure studies, further strengthening our commitment to interdisciplinary teaching and research. Her research program centres on experiences and constructions of motherhood within dominant gender discourses, which adds balance to the relationship stream of the program, complements existing faculty members’ expertise, and corresponds with the Department’s dedication to feminist pedagogy, critical thinking, and social justice. Having an additional faculty member will be very helpful as we move towards decreasing the number of courses taught by contract faculty. Unfortunately, one hire will not suffice to meet the Departmental teaching needs. One of our contract faculty has been carrying a full-time teaching load for the last several years; at minimum, this needs to become a permanent position if the SMF Department is to be successful in having its core courses consistently taught by permanent faculty members.

d) We discussed the development of a 100-level introductory course at our Department meeting in November. We examined this further at the first visioning and strategic planning workshop, which took in December 2013, and are moving forward with curricular modifications that will repurpose one of our “introductory” courses (currently at the 200-level) as a first-year offering.

Recommendation (3)
Develop promotional material based on the revised program.

Departmental Response (2011):
*We agree that it is critically important that we develop adequate promotional materials. We will explore this in collaboration with the Registrar’s office at St. Jerome’s University and, indeed, have already begun conversations about this need.*

SMF is committed to developing promotional materials for the current program within one year. Subsequently, we will insure that new materials are developed to reflect the results of the visioning and strategic planning process discussed above.

Two-Year Progress Report:
Following the external review, the then Acting Chair worked with the Registrar’s office at St. Jerome’s around branding and developing a logo (an advertising company was hired to work on developing an appropriate logo for the branding exercise, but a suitable one was not found). The current Acting Chair has worked with the University of Waterloo’s Recruitment Office to update promotional student recruitment materials pertaining to SMF (e.g. discipline pages, etc.). We have also updated program and departmental information on the St. Jerome’s website, so as to provide a deeper and richer description of the SMF program and to accurately reflect the research programs of SMF’s core faculty and instructors. The SMF program has also been highlighted in this year’s recruitment efforts. The student liaisons have been asked to feature SMF in their recruitment presentations in high schools.
The bulk of the work around branding and promotional material will take place when the visioning/strategic planning work is complete.

**Recommendation (4)**

*Consider developing a link with a UW Department that has faculty who are more senior and do research in similar areas. Applied Health Studies was mentioned, as well as “human services” professions (e.g., nursing and social work).*

**Departmental Response (2011):**

*We acknowledge the concerns raised by the External Review Team related to the fact that the SMF Department has only two full-time faculty members, both of whom are “relatively new PhDs and are still establishing their research programs,” and that it might benefit the current full-time faculty members to have relationships with more senior faculty members who can support and mentor them with regard to their research programs and career trajectories. SMF will look into the possibility of inviting someone from another department(s) to have Adjunct status in the SMF Department.*

*SMF has already developed a number of important links and relationships with faculty members, programs and faculties at UW. For example, Dr. Tracy Penny Light, Dr. Toni Serafini, Dr. B.J. Rye and Dr. Maureen Drysdale all have Adjunct status with the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences. As well, relationships have been developed with the Departments of History and Women’s Studies, and are being explored with a variety of other programs and departments such as Peace and Conflict Studies, Sociology and Legal Studies, the new Knowledge and Integration program the School of Pharmacy, and the Department of Psychology. We are committed to continuing to develop such links over the course of the next review period.*

**Two-Year Progress Report:**

*The established partnerships with other departments have continued. In addition, the SMF Department’s newly tenured faculty member has accepted a position as Director of the Women’s Studies Department. This has opened up additional opportunities for partnerships and collaborations. Since the time of the review, several SMF faculty have also been asked to sit on Doctoral Comprehensive Examination, Dissertation, and Master’s thesis committees in a number of University of Waterloo Departments, including Recreation and Leisure Studies, School of Pharmacy, and History. Faculty in SMF also supervise undergraduate student theses across a number of programs at the University of Waterloo and its federated colleges, including: History, Psychology, Knowledge-Integration, Independent Studies, and Social Development Studies.*
Recommendation (5)

In response to heightened difficulties that SMF students have with statistics, we recommend that an appropriate high school math course be made a requirement for admission, that arrangements be made for students to have regular access to computers with SPSS both during and between classes, and consideration be given to the best scheduling of this course to maximize learning.

Departmental Response (2011):

We recognize the difficulties that SMF students have been having with the required statistics course. Within the coming year, we will investigate a partnership with the St. Jerome's University library that will make SPSS available to SMF students in the SJU library.

We agree that students seeking an SMF degree should be required to demonstrate that they have completed an appropriate high school math course in order to be successful in our required statistics course. Within the coming year, we will investigate how to insure that students seeking an SMF degree demonstrate that they have completed such a course.

Two-Year Progress Report:

The Department has included a high school math course as one of the requirements for admission to SMF programs. In addition, we have tested several solutions to the SPSS-access issue that students identified. The first year following the review (winter 2012), the SPSS program was installed on two laptop computers in St. Jerome's library for use by students in the SMF statistics course. Records of usage indicated that these laptops were used less than one dozen times throughout the term, so we investigated an alternative option for the next offering of the course (winter 2013). The Dean and Acting Chair of SMF worked together to investigate possible partnerships with other departments across the University of Waterloo for shared computer lab space. A partnership with the Psychology Department was established and a lab component was added to the SMF statistics course. All University of Waterloo students have access to a computer lab with SPSS throughout the term, so our students were informed of this and invited to use this resource as needed. All students also had the option of purchasing a student copy of SPSS for their personal use (as one would a textbook). We found that this worked quite well for our students and we will continue this partnership with the Psychology computer lab for future offerings of the course. St. Jerome’s is also in the process of building a new academic building. The SMF Department will ask that a lab space for students be considered in the design and implementation of the new build.

Recommendation (6)

In response to student concerns about adequacy of their preparation and clarity of expectations, we recommend:

a) Faculty and student work together to complete the handbook begun by students to guide students through the various programs, options and years.

b) Faculty continue the workshops clarifying fourth year options, but gradually turn more responsibility for running them over to either honours students or the administrative staff who counsel students.

c) Encourage more independence and responsibility on the part of students.
Departmental Response (2011):
We agree with the three specific recommendations regarding student concerns about the adequacy of their preparation and the clarity of expectations for upper-level courses. We appreciate that the reviewers acknowledge that their review of SMF course outlines “did not cause any concerns… and [they] felt that second and third year courses appropriately progressed to more demanding, extensive and intensive readings and assignments.”

We recognize that all three specific recommendations are part of an overall communications plan for SMF. The student handbook is being completed at present, and will be available to students in the coming year. We intend to train SMF student ambassadors to mentor incoming SMF students. An administrative staff member, John Arnou, has been designated as an advisor to SMF students. We will invite John to take more responsibility for clarifying expectations for upper-year students.

We also recognize that the particular situation regarding the needs of SMF students sits within the larger context of the needs of all incoming students at the University of Waterloo. St. Jerome’s University is participating in the new transition programs being developed by UW that are meant to help incoming students navigate their move into university studies and life, to be successful and to take responsibility in their academic programs.

We are committed to ongoing work on this recommendation during the course of the next review period.

Two-Year Progress Report:
We have made permanent the offering of three annual “SMF Student Support Workshops”:

1. An “Introduction to SMF” session for students considering or entering an SMF plan. This workshop covers general expectations, course requirements, and progression through the plans (with a focus on the timing of courses so as to best scaffold student learning and success).

2. A “What to expect in upper year courses” session is geared towards students who are registered in SMF plans and approaching or enrolled in 300-level courses. The focus of this session is to prepare students for changing expectations (e.g., greater focus on critical analysis of theory and research, writing research papers, etc.).

3. A session focused on the process of applying to graduate school is also offered annually. It provides general information about the process, as well as information and strategies specific to graduate studies in a clinical field, which many of our students pursue (e.g., MSW in Social Work, M.Sc. in Couple and Family Therapy, and MA in Counselling Psychology).

These workshops or information sessions are advertised via posters, announcements on Desire 2 Learn, and student ambassadors.

We also in the process of updating the SMF page on the St. Jerome’s website to include additional information and links to the slides from each of the aforementioned workshops for students who were unable to attend, or are in need of support throughout the year.
faculty has also discussed ways to use video technology to further (or better) communicate this support material to students. We are exploring the possibility of digitizing these workshops and making them available on the SMF page of the website; these videos would complement the written resources posted.

The Handbook for SMF Students underwent several revisions, but did not take off with students. We have since turned our attention to formalizing the annual support workshops and using the website as a way to communicate information to current and incoming students.

**Recommendation (7)**

*Although we recognize the enthusiasm for moving forward with a graduate program, we recommend that SMF refrain from exploring the development of a graduate program until research productivity and administrative support for the program is sufficiently strong to do so.*

**Departmental Response (2011):**

*We agree with the External Review Team that, while we are enthusiastic about the possibility of a graduate program, this is something for a future review period, not for the next seven years. We will be mindful of a possible graduate program as we engage in the visioning and strategic planning process. We will monitor the possibilities for moving forward toward a graduate program in an appropriate manner.*

**Two-Year Progress Report:**

At the first visioning and strategic planning meeting in December, the department has decided to focus on strengthening the undergraduate program first, and continue to think about graduate possibilities as we move forward with our strategic planning.

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**Recommendations for the Dean**

(Responses provided by Dr. Jim Frank, Vice-President and Academic Dean)

1. **Lack of senior faculty places excess work (including administrative work) on the shoulders of the two new faculty who should be focusing on developing research agendas and teaching.** We recommend that the Dean and faculty discuss the possibility and advisability of hiring a senior faculty member with expertise in sexuality, marriage, or family who would Chair the department. This Chair’s responsibilities would include mentoring faculty in establishing research agendas and obtaining grants as well as negotiating formal agreements with other departments for resources that might be shared (e.g. statistics lab space, regular teaching of certain courses), administrative support, etc.).

We discussed the benefits and risks of hiring a senior faculty to chair this small department. The current junior faculty and contract faculty work well together and have built a successful program; there is a risk of disrupting this synergy with the hiring of an
outside chair. Dr. Penny Light was awarded tenure and promotion to Associate Professor in 2012 and Dr. Serafini is under review for tenure and promotion this year; they are well positioned to provide leadership. In balance, we decided that the program would benefit from the hiring of a junior faculty member. Dr. Caitlin Mulcahy joined the SMF department November 1, 2013.

2. **Ensure the software program “SPSS” is available in at least one lab that is accessible to SMF students.**

Lab space for the teaching of statistics will be available in the new building, which I expect will be completed by summer 2016. Until that time, Dr. Serafini has made arrangements for access to the computer lab in Psychology; this is working well (see response to Recommendation 5, above).

3. **Continue the staff position for counseling students.**

The counseling support provided by Mr. John Arnou is ongoing.

4. **Strongly consider assigning a staff person to support the practicum course along the lines previously recommended in 2b.**

In 2012, SJU established an Office of Student Experience (OSE), which works closely with the Office of the Registrar. The OSE is responsible for oversight of local and international outreach programs. We will consult with the OSE to determine whether the OSE staff can assist with the practicum course.

5. **Provide support and assistance for the SMF faculty to engage in a visioning and strategic planning exercise.**

My office is prepared to provide the administrative and funding support for this important exercise.