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AER Accreditation Program

Decision Summary

Name of University: Stephen F. Austin State University

Program: Orientation and Mobility (O&M)

Degree level: Master’s

Name of Program Director: Heather Munro, Ph.D.

Name of University Dean/University Representative: Dr. Jannah Nerren, Ph.D.

Date Application Submitted: July 20, 2020

Date Recommendation Completed: November 8, 2023

**Panel’s Narrative:**

The Visual Impairment Preparation Program at Stephen F. Austin State University has gone through a series of re-organizations over the past four years. The program was “approved” through 2016 under the previous AER review process. They attempted to submit an application for accreditation in 2018 and 2019 but encountered difficulties in preparing their materials.

In August of 2019, Shannon Darst was appointed coordinator and a little over 12 months later they did submit their application and the fee. Another 9 months passed and in June 2021, she reported that the faculty was reduced from 7 to 2.5 individuals, new faculty came on board and courses/syllabi were revamped. The supporting documentation was uploaded in January 2022 and a review panel was formed. The panel reviewed both Core and Curricular standards by June and sent requests for additional information. In July, Shannon Darst reported she had left SFASU for a new position elsewhere and to get in touch with Heather Munro.

Heather Munro was appointed to the coordinator position in August, 2022 and reported that the university dropped a course due to low enrollment. The faculty substituted a related course and HEAC approved the substitution. She began working on the panel’s requests for both Core and Curricular standards that Shannon had not completed. In February 2023, SFASU completed another restructuring and Dr. Lindsey Kennon became the Assistant Chair over VI and O&M. She took the lead role in the process at this point and Beverly Jackson continued as “point person” for the O&M program.

Summary of Findings:

The program scored 100% on the CORE standards.

In the review panel’s judgment, the program appears to meet all of the Core Standards required for accreditation.

This evaluation has been made on the review panel’s review of the Self-Study and associated evidence, and interviews with the programmatic and institutional stakeholders.

In the review panel’s judgment, the program appears to meet all the O&M Curricular Standards required for accreditation.

This evaluation has been made on the review panel’s review of the Self-Study and associated evidence, and virtual interviews with the programmatic and institutional stakeholders.

*Commendations or Recognition of Exemplary Practices:*

The panel commended the university for well-organized materials in Core Standards.

The panel commended the university for having a wide variety of internship opportunities available. They appear to have a complete range of ages, and a variety of settings including some summer camps. These varied opportunities are valuable for helping students decide what population they may be most comfortable and interested in working with.

**Summary of AERAC’s Conclusions:**

AER Accreditation Council received the recommendation for Full Accreditation from the Higher Education Accreditation Commission on December 12, 2023, along with all supporting documents from the university and working consensus reports from the review panel. The members of the panel had been previously approved, at the start of the review process.

In due consideration of the materials, AER Accreditation Council concurred with the recommendation.

**AERAC Decision:**

* Full Accreditation

**Stephen F. Austin State University’s Orientation and Mobility Program is Fully Accredited through December 11, 2028.**

**Summary of Accreditation Actions:**

12-12-2023 HEAC Recommendation:  Full Accreditation

12-12-2023 AERAC Decision:

* Full Accreditation of the Orientation and Mobility Program through December 11, 2028.

**History of AERAC Accreditations:**

* Re-accreditation of Orientation and Mobility program, December 11, 2023.
* Application for review July 20, 2020; review process began but slowed for SFASU staff changes.
* Application for review resumed 2016; review process interrupted.
* Approval expired 2015; review process initiated but interrupted.
* Approval (previous AER review process) of Orientation and Mobility program, 2010