



**Memorandum of Understanding**

This MOU has been read and approved by:

Department Chair:  Date: 5/19/2026  
Sophia Pandya

Dean, College of Liberal Arts: *Daniel O'Connor* Date: 5/19/2026  
Daniel O'Connor

Vice Provost Academic Programs:  Date: 5/19/2026  
Pei-Fang Hung



**Program Review Summary**  
**Memorandum of Understanding**  
Department of Religious Studies  
College of Liberal Arts  
March 2026

This document serves as a summary of the Program Review findings and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the consensus reached by the Department of Religious Studies (R/ST) Program, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Division of Academic Affairs, following the program review conducted in September 2025 by Drs. Ibrahim and Schneider. The report and MOU describe the goals to be achieved and the actions to be undertaken by all parties during the next program review cycle. Progress toward goals is to be addressed in an annual report.

The Department of Religious Studies (R/ST) offers a Bachelor of Arts (36 units) and a Master of Arts (30 units) in Religious Studies. The MA is the only stand-alone master's program in Religious Studies within the CSU system. The department also offers a minor and a 24-unit certificate in Religious Studies; these programs are not included in the current review. Since the previous review cycle, R/ST has implemented several curricular changes, including the development of new courses and revisions to existing course titles.

The Program has made progress in some areas as recommended in the MOU from 2017. The MOU specified the following needs: 1) The department will implement a continuous program of assessment of programmatic outcomes and student learning outcomes across the curriculum, including General Education offerings, the Bachelor's program, and the Master's Program. Program assessment is crucial for determining the need for program revision. Therefore, no new curriculum will be considered for approval until assessment of the current program is completed; 2) The department will work with the college to establish a hiring plan; 3) The Department will investigate and develop methods (communication plan, articulation agreements with CCCs) to increase the number of student majors; and 4) The program will provide a biennial update on progress made towards the actions agreed to in this MOU, to be submitted in conjunction with its biennial assessment report to the CLA dean, the Vice Provost for Academic Programs, and the Director of Program Review and Assessment.

Resources reviewed for the report:

1. Self-study received August 2025
2. External review September 2025
3. Previous MOU 2017
4. Department website and catalog



**Strengths were identified in the reports.**

1. **Faculty.** The Department has maintained a stable instructional workforce, averaging 7 tenure/tenure-track (T/TT) faculty and 7 lecturer faculty over the review period. In terms of FTEF, this corresponds to an average of 5.8 T/TT and 2.6 lecturer faculty, for a total of 8.5 FTEF and a tenure density of 69.2%. Student-related faculty metrics (SRFs) have decreased modestly over the review period.  
Despite recent personnel changes, including one retirement (2023) and two faculty participating in the Faculty Early Retirement Program (FERP) in 2022 and 2023, the department's workload has remained stable. However, these transitions have resulted in the loss of disciplinary coverage in Christianity, and the department has identified this as a priority area for a future tenure-track hire.  
The department reflects a measure of gender and racial/ethnic diversity among its faculty. Among the 7 T/TT faculty (including two participating in FERP), there are 3 men, 3 women, and 1 non-binary faculty member. Racial/ethnic representation includes Latinx, Asian/White, Native American/Latinx, South Asian, and White faculty. The lecturer pool (5 faculty) also reflects diversity across gender and racial/ethnic backgrounds. T/TT faculty maintain strong records of scholarly publication and are actively engaged in service. The department's success in securing a \$1,000,000 gift in 2022 to establish the Bhagwan Suvindhinath Endowed Chair in Jain Studies represents a significant achievement in external support and program development.
2. **Graduation Rates and Time to Graduation.** The department currently enrolls 13 undergraduate majors (8 transfer and 5 first-time students). Time to degree for undergraduates has improved, decreasing from 5.0 years in 2017-18 to 4.5 years in 2023-24, with an overall average of 4.8 years. The department has awarded an average of 4 BA degrees annually during the review period, with peaks of 6 graduates in 2019-20 and 2022-23. At the graduate level, time to degree has improved from 3.7 years to 3.0 years, with an average of 3.1 years (compared to 2.7 years for the College). While the 2-year graduation rate (15%) is lower than the College average (45.6%), 1-year persistence and 3-year graduation rates are only slightly below college benchmarks.
3. **DFW Rates.** Over the review period, only 5 out of 62 courses (8%) had DFW rates of 15% or higher, indicating generally strong student success outcomes. The department has implemented multiple strategies to support student achievement, including faculty training in online pedagogy, adoption of culturally responsive teaching practices, and collaboration with BMAC. These efforts position the department well to further assess and refine interventions.
4. **High Impact Practices (HIPs).** The department incorporates a range of high-impact pedagogical practices, including small group work, role-playing, debates, and student-centered projects. A University Honors Program (UHP) course is offered annually. Additional



opportunities, such as study abroad and service learning, have recently been introduced. Graduate students benefit from research and teaching assistantships, as well as participation in academic journal clubs.

5. **Inclusion and Curriculum Development.** The department demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusive and equitable practices. It has taken concrete steps to broaden its curriculum beyond historically Eurocentric and androcentric frameworks toward a more global perspective. Diverse perspectives and ways of knowing are embedded in the program learning outcomes (PLOs).
6. **Facilities and Resources.** Classroom facilities have remained stable over the review period. While Graduate Assistant (GA) support has decreased from 40 to 30 hours, the department has partially offset resource constraints through external funding, including the \$1,000,000 endowed chair in Jain Studies. The department maintains productive collaborations with the Office of Interfaith and the BMAC.

### **Concerns were noted in the reports**

1. **Headcount and FTES.** Low enrollment, previously identified as a concern in the last program review, remains an issue.
  - a. **Undergraduate:** Most Religious Studies majors enter the program after initially declaring another major, resulting in very few first-time, first-year (FTFY) students. Only three students entered the program as FTFY over the review period. Undergraduate major headcount increased to 22-23 students during Fall 2020-21 but subsequently declined to 12 in Fall 2022 and further to 8-9 students in Fall 2023-24, indicating an overall downward trend. In addition, undergraduate major FTES typically accounts for less than 5% of total course enrollment, reflecting the program's limited contribution to overall instructional volume through its majors.
  - b. **Graduate:** Graduate enrollment peaked at 19 students in Fall 2018 and has since stabilized, with an annual headcount of 11-13 students from Fall 2019 to the present. While stable, this relatively small cohort size may limit program growth and visibility.
2. **Degree Conferral.** The BA program confers an average of 4 degrees annually (range: 1-7), which falls below the Chancellor's Office expectation of 10 undergraduate degrees per year. As a result, the BA program is classified as a low-conferring program. The MA program confers an average of 5 degrees annually (range: 1-11), meeting the minimum expectation for graduate programs. However, the program does not consistently produce at least 5 graduates each year, which raises concerns about sustainability and year-to-year variability.
3. **Curriculum.** Low enrollment in the major affects the department's ability to offer a full range of courses each semester. As a result, some courses are not offered regularly, which may limit students' ability to progress efficiently through the program. To maintain enrollment, many courses are offered as General Education (GE) and are cross-listed at the 400/500 level. While this approach supports course viability, it creates challenges in



maintaining a clear distinction between undergraduate and graduate instruction. A systematic review of course offerings would help ensure that:

- Sufficient courses are regularly available to support timely degree completion for both undergraduate and graduate students
- GE courses are not routinely serving as substitutes for graduate-level instruction
- At least 50% of graduate courses are offered in a graduate-only format, consistent with program expectations.

**Opportunities for Development were noted in the reports.**

1. **Curriculum.** The department has recently developed an online pathway for the Master's degree, with approximately 35% of courses offered in an online format. This expansion has the potential to increase access and flexibility, particularly for nontraditional students. Opportunities exist to further support student progression and reduce time to degree, particularly for nontraditional populations. These may include the development of a blended (EDGE) program model or the introduction of stackable micro-credentials. Continued faculty engagement in training on online pedagogy and course management will be important to ensure the quality and consistency of online offerings.
2. **Assessment.** The department has established clearly articulated mission and program learning outcomes (PLOs), which are publicly available on its website. The PLOs reflect an interdisciplinary approach and emphasize career readiness, with graduates pursuing pathways in fields, such as law, medicine, business, entrepreneurship, and journalism. The department has participated in institutional assessment efforts, including core competency assessment in critical thinking (2018) and assessment of one PLO each for the BA and MA programs (2023). A newly developed assessment plan is intended to be implemented across all courses. Moving forward, the program has the opportunity to conduct regular annual assessments and to systematically use assessment findings to inform curricular refinement and program improvement.
3. **Student Recruitment.** Expanding and formalizing recruitment efforts represents a key opportunity for program growth. Increased faculty participation in events, such as Day at the Beach, along with additional outreach initiatives, could strengthen visibility and student engagement. Collaboration between the department chair, academic advisors, and the university's outreach team will be important in developing a comprehensive recruitment strategy. Potential activities include hosting open houses and organizing alumni career panels to highlight the range of career pathways available to graduates.
4. **Strategic Planning.** The Department has the following priorities for the upcoming review period:
  - a. Build on its leadership role in the Beach Pluralism Project and the Conoley Fellows Program, including leveraging external funding from Interfaith America to establish an Institute of Pluralism Studies within the next two years.



- b. Submit a proposal under the Black Long Beach cluster hire initiative to recruit a faculty member specializing in African American Christianity.
- c. Launch a biannual departmental newsletter to highlight program achievements and enhance visibility.
- d. Continue developing new courses aligned with emerging student interests, such as technology and gaming.

### **Recommendations**

It is therefore agreed that the Department of Religious Studies will collaborate with the College of Liberal Arts and Academic Affairs to:

1. Implement the program's comprehensive assessment plan in order to complete annual assessments using direct and indirect methods and report on closing the loop activities to illustrate that continuous learning outcome data are used to inform decision making. Provide an annual update (due September 1) on progress made towards MOU actions to the CLA Dean, the Vice Provost for Academic Programs, and the Coordinator for Assessment. The review cycle will be from 2025-2032. A comprehensive self-study will be due September 2032 for a 2032-2033 Academic Year review process (*Opportunity 2*).
2. Curriculum
  - a. Conduct a systematic review of course offerings to ensure sufficient availability of courses to support both undergraduate and graduate students and to facilitate timely degree completion. (*Concern #3*)
  - b. Ensure appropriate distinction between undergraduate and graduate instruction, including maintaining at least 50% of graduate courses in a graduate-only format and reducing overreliance on double-numbered (400/500-level) courses for graduate instruction (*Concern #3*)
  - c. Evaluate student outcomes associated with the transition to online graduate instruction and assess the feasibility of implementing a blended (EDGE) program model (*Opportunity 1*)
3. Develop and implement a plan to address instructional needs in Christianity through strategic hiring aligned with program priorities (*Opportunity 4b*).
4. Develop and implement a comprehensive recruitment and outreach plan to increase undergraduate and graduate enrollment, including strategies to attract first-time, first-year and transfer students, improve program visibility, and highlight career pathways. (*Concern #1; Opportunity 3, 4c, 4d*).
5. Implement targeted strategies to increase degree conferral rates, with the goal of consistently graduating at least 10 undergraduate and 5 graduate students annually. (*Concern #2*).

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

**LONG BEACH**

Office of Vice Provost for Academic Programs



This MOU has been read and approved by:

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\*DocuSign signature page on file.