

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Academic Program Review
Economics

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

Jack W. Aber, Professor of Finance and Chair, Department of Finance and Economics,
Boston University School of Management
David Colander, Christian A. Johnson Distinguished Professor, Department of Economics
Middlebury College
David Kennett, Professor, Department of Economics
Vassar College
Enrico Spolaore, Professor and Chair, Department of Economics
Tufts University

CAMPUS VISIT:

March 28-31, 2007.

The review team read the self-study written by the faculty in the department; reviewed the curriculum, course syllabi and evaluations; conducted class visits; interviewed faculty, students and staff; and met with the Dean, Associate Deans and other relevant members of the campus community. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were provided with USF's Vision, Mission, Values Statement, the department's self-study and other university materials.

1. How did the external review committee rate the quality of the program – excellent, very good, good, adequate, or poor? How does the program compare with benchmark top-tier programs nationally? Please provide a brief rationale for the external review committee's rating.

- The review team was "impressed with the Economics faculty...the program is working and we would characterize the department as successful." They rated the department and its programs as VERY GOOD.

2. What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process?

- The reviewers examined all the programs offered by the Department of Economics – undergraduate Economics and the graduate programs in Economics, International and Development Economics, and Financial Analysis.
- In general, many of the review team's recommendations focused on suggestions for strengthening the undergraduate program.
- The final report focused upon areas that could be improved rather than pointing out what was working well.

3. What specific recommendations for improving the program's quality has the external review committee made to the Dean?

a) Undergraduate Program

- Director of Undergraduate Economics: The reviewers argued that the success of the graduate programs has overshadowed the needs of the undergraduate program (though they were at pains to point out that no blame was to be attributed to the graduate programs for this). They recommended that the department hire a new professor who would become “director of undergraduate economics education and who would be an internal advocate for undergraduate education”.
- Senior Seminar: The reviewers strongly felt, as did the previous review, that there should be a “culminating experience” for seniors. They recommended establishing a senior seminar that built on lower-level courses and included “a substantial integrative writing component”.
- Advising: The review team recommended that the department “set up a careful and monitored advising system for undergraduate students”.
- Cohesion and Community: The reviewers noted that “a shared identity as Economics majors was important” and they therefore recommended that the department establish a set of events and institutions that are designed to create more cohesion among undergraduate students”.

b) Graduate Programs

- The reviewers noted that the graduate programs have enjoyed great success in recent years and they were “very impressed with the hard work, imagination and dedication that has gone into them”. These programs “have had a transformative role in the Economics Department”. Nonetheless, they had a few suggestions for improvement.
- Leadership: The reviewers noted that the programs were admirably led but were “concerned that this leadership is not deep and therefore may be brittle”. All of the Master’s programs should be tied to the “department rather than to a single individual”. Thus they recommended creating a department governance structure for the graduate programs.
- Program Goals: The reviewers felt that there was “some confusion about the goals of the various programs” and they felt that the programs should examine their objectives and consider whether those objectives are being met. Thus they recommended that the goals of the graduate programs be determined and communicated to students and that admissions and coursework be modified if necessary to meet those goals.

c) Faculty

- Graduate Thesis Advising: The review team felt that given rising research performance and expectation, attention should be given to workload. At present, the normal teaching load is 2/2/2/3 with no credit given for graduate thesis advising. This workload “is high in comparison with similar schools” and the reviewers suggested that credit be given for thesis advising. Although they made no definitive recommendations as to how this might be achieved, they suggested that graduate seminars could be established with thesis advisors nominally in charge. Alternatively, partial credit could be given for each thesis a faculty member advises.
- Two New Faculty Positions: Given the need for an undergraduate director, the demands of graduate thesis advising and the reliance on adjunct faculty, the review team recommended that the department be given at least two additional tenure track lines.

d) Additional Issues

- Facilities: The reviewers felt that “the facilities occupied by the Economics Department are very poor”. Windowless faculty offices, an absence of ‘social spaces’ for students and unsatisfactory common computer facilities meant, “the facilities do not meet the minimum criteria necessary for a program”.
- Intra-university relations: The review team recommended establishing “better lines of communication with the School of Business and Management”
- Students and Alumni: The reviewers recommended that the department try and improve communication with students, alumni and potential employers”.

4. In the opinion of the external review committee is the program following the University’s strategic initiative in that it is;

Recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty of outstanding teachers and scholars.

- The review team “was impressed by the faculty and their achievement in teaching and research” and it seemed clear that the department had positive collegiality and that faculty were “excited about their work”.

Enrolling, supporting and graduating a diverse student body that demonstrates high academic achievement, strong leadership capabilities, a concern for others, and a sense of responsibility for the weak and vulnerable.

- The reviewers made recommendations that would “enhance the students’ sense of belonging to the department and help foster a shared sense of community with each other”.

Providing the environment necessary to promote student learning in the program.

- Overall, the reviewers had a “very positive” view of the department and its programs. Their suggestions focused on “how to make a good program better”.

5. In what way is the program contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit, Catholic urban university with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world?

- The reviewers emphasized that both faculty and students in the department were well aware of the mission and priorities of the institution and they were comfortable with these goals.

6. What is the timetable for the response to the external review committee’s recommendations for program improvement? What can the AVP’s office do to appropriately respond to the review?

- Provide funding for two new hires in Economics.
- Provide assistance and support as the department makes a number of internal changes.
- Ensure that the department is given adequate space.

7. What general comments or issues, if any, are crucial to understanding the reviewers report?

- As the reviewers noted, “the program is working and we would characterize the department as successful given the resource constraints that it faces”. Their

comments concentrated on areas that could be improved since they felt that their “largest value added” could be there.