

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**Academic Program Review**  
**Master of Sports Management**

**EXTERNAL REVIEWERS**

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**CAMPUS VISIT:**

February 25-27, 2008.

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 reviewers felt that the program had many strengths and they specifically mentioned the high-quality of its full-time faculty; the professionalism and enthusiasm of its staff; the generally high morale within the program; the strong brand-awareness and reputation of the program within the local market; and; the strong alumni network of the program.
- The reviewers nonetheless believed that the program was in a "transition phase.
- While the reviewers rated the program as VERY GOOD, meaning that the program is at the level one would expect to find at a top-tier liberal arts college or university, they believe it has the potential to improve.

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

- The reviewers noted that the program a "transition phase" as it shifted from being an "adjunct-driven program to one where full-time faculty are the focal point".
- As part of this transition, the reviewers believed that there was an opportunity to introduce greater rigor into the program (something many students had demanded). This, in part, involved establishing a balance between preparing students for the job market and providing them with a deep, analytical understanding of sport management issues.
- Other measures to increase program rigor included "drastically reducing the reliance on adjunct faculty" and increasing the "average student quality".

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

a) Faculty

- The review team pointed to the many strengths that exist among the faculty. Their research was strong, they were connected to the sports industry in the Bay Area and the teaching evaluations of the full-time faculty were very high. In addition, the full-time faculty were enthusiastic about the program and they get along well with each other. However, there are some weaknesses.
- A major weakness is the low number of full-time faculty given the size of the program (three cohorts). The program was originally designed to have been delivered by adjuncts but there have been problems with this model. There is a high turnover of adjunct faculty, their teaching is less than satisfactory (sometimes significantly so), there are concerns about their professional development and their academic qualifications are less than the full-time faculty (a particular problem in a graduate program).
- Furthermore, the review team argued that recruiting full-time faculty for this program will be a challenge. Nationally, there are too few doctoral students for the growing number of positions. But the large amount of travel to Southern California is unlikely to be appealing to young faculty with families, especially women. In addition, the program's 'requirement' that new faculty have industry experience will be difficult to meet for many doctoral graduates especially women.
- The existence of the Southern California program creates unique problems. Traveling to Southern California 10-20 times per year is difficult for full-time faculty since it makes it difficult for them to develop a consistent routine, collaborate or focus on developing their research. Furthermore, the quality of the adjunct faculty in Southern California seems to be very problematic given the reviewers' discussion with students.
- The reviewers' specific recommendations included:
  - a. Hire at least one and preferably two full-time faculty.
  - b. Actively attempt to recruit at least one female into a full-time faculty position.
  - c. In recruiting faculty consider more than just teaching expectations and courses – look at the potential for research collaboration.
  - d. Adjunct faculty should only teach electives with only few exceptions for teaching core courses.
  - e. The program needs to establish some minimum qualifications for adjunct faculty – the reviewers recommended at least a masters degree as the minimum educational level (in order to prepare for upcoming accreditation standards).
  - f. The adjunct faculty need better guidance and support such that not all this work falls on the program director.
  - g. If the Southern California program is continued, the review team recommended hiring a term faculty member to work primarily in Southern California.
  - h. The program should also consider some "blended course delivery methods" in order to reduce the travel time and financial costs of sending full-time faculty to Southern California.

b) Students

- The reviewers looked at students in terms of four sequential steps in the education process – recruitment, selection, active students and alumni.
- The reviewers noted some real strengths in the program with regard to students, namely the large pool of applicants to the program, the dedicated and committed staff who make selection decisions, the increasing GPA of incoming students, evidence that student quality is increasing, the diversity of the students and the impressive list of alumni achievements.
- There were also some weaknesses. These included the possibility that the program was generating too many applications (particularly the number who have no chance of being accepted), the lack of significant faculty involvement in student selection, the low minimum GPA requirements and the decision not to use the GRE.
- The reviewers were particularly concerned with the “considerable disparity” in the academic quality of admitted students (many graduate students commented on the lack of academic rigor in their classes). In the opinion of the reviewers it was “vital for the program to reduce these differences across students”.
- The reviewers specific recommendations included;
  - a. *Increasing the minimum GPA to 3.00 from 2.75 or introducing the GRE as an admission requirement. The introduction of the GRE would help in comparing applicants and decrease the “heavy reliance on GPA as a predictor”. It would also send a “stronger signal to the marketplace about the increased academic expectations of the program”.*
  - b. *The reviewers also urged the program to consider reducing the cohort size to 25. At the present time, the program had a “mass production” element as it graduated 100 graduates per year. The reviewers recognized the revenue effects of such a proposal but they argued that reducing cohort size would*
    - i. *Increase student quality in the program (since it would reduce intake by the lowest qualified 1/3)*
    - ii. *Reduce the performance gap amongst students, allowing greater course rigor and higher expectations of students.*

### c) Curriculum and Instruction

- The reviewers saw a number of strengths in the Sports Management curriculum including the breadth of courses offered, the emphasis on the internship, the program’s relationship with sports industry professionals and favorable graduation and retention rates.
- There were also some weaknesses. The reviewers were concerned about the delivery and rigor of courses. There was “too much variability in the length of courses absent a pedagogical rationale” with courses being delivered over six, seven and eight weeks.
- The reviewers also observed a “lack of consistent credit hour allocation of the core courses” with some being 2 and others 3 credit hours. Rather than a pedagogical or curricular rationale for this, the reviewers felt that the calendar was driving the curriculum rather than academic best practice.
- In addition, the review team was concerned that the “academic qualifications of the adjunct faculty are generally not equivalent to the full time faculty” but they were still teaching four core classes and all electives in the program.
- Furthermore, in the opinion of the reviewers, “ the current structure and scheduling of the graduate program does not meet the needs and interests of the students in regard to diverse intellectual discourse”. Peer interactions (which enhance listening,

analytical and critical thinking skills) do “not occur under the current curriculum delivery model”.

- A related concern was the annual admission of three cohorts of students that necessitates full time faculty teaching three sections of assigned courses annually. A core faculty of two tenure-track and one term faculty is insufficient for a graduate program admitting 90-105 students in three cohorts of 30-35 students.
- Another weakness relates to the internship. While it is valued, there is evidence that students select the program primarily for the internship at the expense of the academic standards of the program.
- Finally, the reviewers stated that “some of the [course] content is not at what we would expect at the graduate level”, noting the use of an undergraduate introductory textbook in a graduate class.
- The reviewers specific recommendations included;
  - a. *Consider an alternative scheduling of the program’s courses. They suggested the following;*
  - b. *Offer classes twice a week and offer the courses on a full or half semester schedule that mirrors the USF semester allowing 16-week courses or two 8-week courses.*
  - c. *Offer two classes, once per week during the 16-week semester. They would still be in class only once but would spend 2 to 2.5 hours in one class and half the time in another class. This reduces the boredom of a four-hour class.*
  - d. *Offer two 8-week classes during 16-week semester and 6 week courses during the summer.*
  - e. *Deliver ‘Sports Business Research’ course earlier in the calendar.*
  - f. *Limit student involvement in the masters’ project even further targeting the experience towards students interested in a pursuing a doctoral degree.*
  - g. *Determine the credit hour equivalent of courses by the course content and enforce consistency across core courses.*
  - h. *Schedule elective courses at the midpoint of the program as well as the end.*
  - i. *Consider reducing the number of cohorts to two and the cohort size to 25 students. This would reduce the academic gap among students, allow greater academic rigor, and create higher performance expectations among students. The reduction could be achieved by admitting only one cohort in Northern and Southern California or eliminating the Southern California option altogether.*
  - j. *If the Southern California option is maintained, the university could hire a full-time term faculty member to be located there.*
  - k. *Consider offering an introductory course for students with no work or academic experience of Sports Management.*
  - l. *Hire at least one and preferably two full-time faculty.*
  - m. *The role of adjunct faculty should be limited to teaching only elective courses.*
  - n. *The program needs to improve its assessment of student learning outcomes.*

#### d) Resources, Support Services and Facilities

- a. *The program needs a modern MFD for scanning and photocopying.*
- b. *Computer hardware and software needs to be updated.*
- c. *There should be a student resource area in the new building.*
- d. *All new faculty hires should be housed in new building.*
- e. *The Library should be strongly encouraged to expand its program-related holdings especially as these are so crucial to research productivity.*

- f. *Southern California classrooms need to be updated to make them 'smart' classrooms.*

e) Program Administration

- The reviewers noted that there were four staff members in the program. This was a somewhat unusual situation in the field and there were more staff than tenure-track faculty. However, given the nature of the program, staffing levels seemed to be justified.
- The review team also noted that the staff was a real strength of the program and their "commitment to and enthusiasm for the program is infectious".
- Nonetheless, the reviewers were concerned that faculty were not involved in the admissions process to the extent they should be in a graduate program.
- In addition, the unique schedule of the program creates difficulties for staff and faculty in terms of student registration, advising, finding classrooms, scheduling classrooms and finding adjunct instructors.
- The reviewers also noted the program needed to have a departmental home and needed to better exploit its alumni base.
- The reviewers specific recommendations included;
  - a. *Increase the involvement of full-time faculty in the admissions process.*
  - b. *The program should examine curriculum and scheduling to reduce inconsistencies with the rest of the University.*
  - c. *Scheduling should be shifted to a staff member.*
  - d. *The program should become a department.*
  - e. *The program should develop an advisory board to increase the involvement of the alumni and local sports industry executives in the program.*

**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 noted that "the research reputation of the faculty is strong" and "USF offers some professional development options that are good for the faculty".
- The faculty members were clearly enthusiastic about the program and want it to be a "well-respected, quality program".

*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.*

- Faculty and staff felt that the quality of the students was "significantly higher" in recent years

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

- The reviewers noted that "faculty seemed to genuinely enjoy working with students" and were "energized and motivated by the students".

**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 indicated that both faculty and students in the department were well aware of the mission and priorities of the institution and 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 resources to enable the program to hire at least one and preferably two positions.
- Review the role of adjunct faculty in the program.
- Help increase the academic expectations for the program and have higher performance expectations for the students.
- Facilitate discussions on the number and size of cohorts as well as course scheduling.

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

- It is important to recognize that nearly one-third of the reviewers report was taken up with issues concerning curriculum and instruction.
- As part of the transition from an adjunct driven program to one where full-time faculty are the focus, there is an opportunity to introduce greater academic rigor into the program.
- A thorough review of the curriculum is necessary to ensure a balance between making students 'job-ready' and providing them with a deeper analytical understanding of sport management issues.