

## M.S. in International and Development Economics

### ASSESSMENT REPORT ACADEMIC YEAR 2021 – 2022

#### I. LOGISTICS & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

**1. Name of the program and degree type assessed:**

M.S. IDEC – Master of Science in International and Development Economics

**2. Name and contact of the faculty coordinating the assessment:**

Program Director: Prof. Alessandra Cassar, [acassar@usfca.edu](mailto:acassar@usfca.edu)

**3. Mission statement:**

There were no changes to our mission statement since the last assessment cycle. Currently it reads as follows: *“The mission of our Masters of Science program is to equip our graduate students within the context of a Jesuit educational framework with the research and analytical tools that allow them to effectively investigate a wide array of economic phenomena related to globalization and development. Our program aims to enable them to serve effectively as junior researchers, policy analysts, and research-oriented development practitioners in a global environment.”*

**4. Program learning outcomes (PLOs):**

There were no changes to the program learning outcomes (and we go over them pretty regularly during our annual IDEC retreat)

1. Understand the application of modern micro and macroeconomic theory to the key problems of economic development, trade and finance in the context of an increasingly globalized economy, where this includes an analysis of market failures, poverty traps, the structure of incentives, the use of game theory to model economic behavior, open economy models of trade, models of natural resource use, migration, foreign direct investment, financial markets, and exchange rate determination.
2. Design a master’s thesis research project based on summer fieldwork, including formation of an original research question, planning of an effective methodology, development of field protocols/survey instruments, and data collection in a developing or transition country. Students should develop a command of the relevant research tools needed to address a given poverty or globalization problem and test specific hypotheses.
3. Develop the capability of conducting an original quantitative empirical analysis of an international or development economics problem. Specifically, students should be able to understand the necessary empirical methods needed to identify causal relationships, especially related to international and development issues; determine the appropriate estimation method for an

empirical model; utilize statistical software to conduct such estimation; and meaningfully interpret the results.

4. Effectively communicate technical research both in writing and orally, including compilation of a professional literature review, clear presentation of theoretical and empirical models, econometric analysis, and the relevance of the study's principal findings and implications for international and/or economic development theory and policy.

**5. Assessment schedule and Learning Outcomes assessed for the academic year 2021-2022?**

Every academic year we assess all four of the PLOs through our thesis defenses, which give us pretty details information on each of them.

## 6. IDEC Program Learning Outcomes and Curricular Map

Key: C = Comprehensive Coverage, M = Moderate Coverage, I = Introduced with minimal coverage

Program Goals/Outcomes	Course Numbers															
	REQUIRED COURSES (7)							ELECTIVE COURSES								
	601	602	615	620	623	627	628	663	665	670	671	672	673	676	679	690
<b>Primary Program Goal:</b> To equip masters students with the quantitative and econometric skills necessary to rigorously evaluate policies and programs in the area of international and development economics.																
1. Understand the application of modern micro and macroeconomic theory to the key problems of economic development, trade and finance in the context of an increasingly globalized economy, where this includes an analysis of market failures, poverty traps, the structure of incentives, the use of game theory to model economic behavior, open economy models of trade, models of natural resource use, migration, foreign direct investment, financial markets, and exchange rate determination.	C	C	C	C	M	C	C	M	M	C	C	C	C	M	M	M
2. Design a master's thesis research project based on summer fieldwork, including formation of an original research question, planning of an effective methodology, development of field protocols / survey instruments, and data collection in a developing or transition country. Students should develop a command of the relevant research tools needed to address a given poverty or globalization problem and test specific hypotheses.	I	I	I	C	C	C	C	M	I	M	M	M	C	M	C	C
3. Develop the capability of conducting an original quantitative empirical analysis of an international or development economics problem. Specifically, students should be able to understand the necessary empirical methods needed to identify causal relationships, especially related to international and development issues; determine the appropriate estimation method for an empirical model; utilize statistical software to conduct such estimation; and meaningfully interpret the results.	M	M	I	C	C	C	C	M	I	M	M	M	M	M	C	C
4. Effectively communicate technical research both in writing and orally, including compilation of a professional literature review, clear presentation of theoretical and empirical models, econometric analysis, and the relevance of the study's principal findings and implications for international and/or economic development theory and policy.	I	I	I	M	C	C	C	M	I	M	M	M	M	M	C	C

## II. METHODOLOGY

### 7. Methodology used to assess our PLO(s):

At the end of every year, in May, graduating students defend their Master theses orally. Students present their research project: testable hypotheses, methodology and econometric results in a 20 minute presentation followed by faculty questioning. Our criteria for evaluating the students are based on the following nine questions that form the basis for whether a student is able to “pass” the oral defense, receive a “pass with honors”, “pass with revision” or “fail”. Each student is given a grade by IDEC faculty members in each of these areas subsequent to the defense and response to questions by the student.

#### Does the M.S. IDEC student:

- 1) State clearly the purposes, research question(s), and hypotheses appropriate to the topic and area of study?
- 2) Show appropriate preparation and knowledge through the review of literature?
- 3) Clearly and thoroughly explain the data collection methodology utilized, and present descriptive statistics in a useful way?
- 4) Explain, use and competently implement econometric methods appropriate to the area of study and to the purpose and question(s)?
- 5) Illustrate appropriate means for evaluating and interpreting the results?
- 6) Discuss and arrive at appropriate and logical conclusions from the results?
- 7) Demonstrate fluent verbal communication?
- 8) Respond well to questions?
- 9) Have a clearly understandable and visually useful PowerPoint presentation?

#### Note how these criteria are related to the PLOs for the program:

- 1) State clearly the purposes, research question(s), and hypotheses appropriate to the topic and area of study? and
- 2) Show appropriate preparation and knowledge through the review of literature?

relate to PLO #1: Understand the application of modern micro and macroeconomic theory to the key problems of economic development, trade and finance...

- 3) Clearly and thoroughly explain the data collection methodology utilized, and present descriptive statistics in a useful way?

- 4) Explain, use and competently implement econometric methods appropriate to the area of study and to the purpose and question(s)? and
- 5) Illustrate appropriate means for evaluating and interpreting the results?
- 6) Discuss and arrive at appropriate and logical conclusions from the results?

relate to PLO#3: Conduct original quantitative empirical analysis of an international or development economics problem...

- 7) Demonstrate fluent verbal communication?
- 8) Respond well to questions?
- 9) Have a clearly understandable and visually useful PowerPoint presentation?

relate to PLO#4: Effectively communicate research findings both in writing and orally...

We use our Master thesis requirement—and the thesis defense—to provide the definitive assessment of our PLOs. Writing an acceptable Master thesis is impossible in our program without realizing all the four PLOs. Throughout the program, students have midterms and final exams, a large number of problem sets and other projects, but the Master thesis and defense is where we conduct the final evaluation. (We also have an exit interview with the Administrative Program Director, for a more indirect evaluation of the program.)

### III. RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

#### 8. Description of the results:

<i>Evaluation Criteria: Did this student's Masters Project defense:</i>	Poor/ Unacceptable	Fair/ Acceptable	Good	Excellent	Total
1) State clearly the purposes, research question(s), and hypotheses appropriate to the topic and area of study?	0.0%	10.0%	90.0%	0.0%	100.0%
2) Show appropriate preparation and knowledge through the review of literature?	0.0%	36.4%	63.6%	0.0%	100.0%
3) Clearly and thoroughly explain the data collection methodology utilized, and present descriptive statistics in a useful way?	0.0%	7.7%	53.8%	38.5%	100.0%
4) Explain, use, and competently implement econometric methods appropriate to the area of study and to the purpose and question(s)?	0.0%	36.4%	27.3%	36.4%	100.0%
5) Illustrate appropriate means for evaluating and interpreting the results?	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%	0.0%	100.0%
6) Discuss and arrive at appropriate and logical conclusions from the results?	0.0%	30.0%	70.0%	0.0%	100.0%
7) Demonstrate fluent verbal communication?	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
8) Respond well to questions?	0.0%	28.6%	71.4%	0.0%	100.0%
9) Have a clearly understandable and visually useful powerpoint presentation?	0.0%	14.3%	85.7%	0.0%	100.0%
<b>Average</b>	0.0%	28.1%	63.5%	8.3%	100.0%
<b>***Number of Total Students:</b>	8				

#### 9. Assessment of Results:

Class of 2022 was a very small cohort with only 8 students graduating (usually it is at least twice that number). That cohort was a “pandemic” cohort, that had to pivot online for both teaching and research advising. Furthermore, the real problem was that all fieldwork was stopped. We had to come up with theses based on secondary data and not the usual fieldwork.

Yet, despite these difficulties our cohort did well, but not as well as the previous year, with 8.3% the class scoring “Excellent” and 63.5% scoring “Good” on those 9 evaluation criteria. Three students received “Pass with Honors”, five “Pass”. When the faculty discussed these results, we thought that this cohort had an overall good performance, but we all felt the effect of the pandemics resulted in fewer excellent theses.

We still expect that about 2 of these theses will get published in high-quality peer-review journals. This is the ultimate assessment of the quality of work we teach and expect from our students. This is also almost unheard of in our discipline, where only PhD students are given this opportunity.

Furthermore, many of our students found top research jobs even before graduation, a sign that our IDEC brand remains very strong.

Theses produced:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Title</b>
	Pass with Honors	Impact of Clubfoot Treatment on Adolescent Life Outcomes
	Pass with Honors	Impact of Skin Tone on Sociopolitical & Economic Outcomes in Nigeria
	Pass	Can Social Support Ameliorate Burnout?
	Pass with Honors	Impact of Climate Variability on Child Nutrition in Ethiopia
	Pass	Formal and Informal Styles of Clothing in the Assessment of Female Political Candidates
	Pass	Impacts of Livestock Insurance on Household Health
	Pass	Does Climate Index Insurance Protect Farmers Against Livestock Loss? Evidence from Kenya
	Pass	Burnout and Social Support among Healthcare Workers during Covid-19: Evidence from Italy.

#### **IV. CLOSING THE LOOP**

##### **10. Other changes and plans for future improvements:**

We recently completely restructured the IDEC program as requested by Dean Camperi: we used to have the curriculum based on 3 units courses, but now we transitioned to 2-4 unit courses. We maintain the same course numbers but thoroughly revised all courses to fit within the new number of units but maintain the stated PLO per each course. This was very challenging as, throughout the years, we created a program that worked really well, in terms of content and workload, with 3-unit courses. We are constantly monitoring within each course how well this transition is happening.

Every year we have a daylong IDEC retreat where we discuss all these topics with the other IDEC faculty and continue to improve on both the courses' structure and their content to make sure we are delivering on our stated PLOs.

The number of enrolled students has increased to 24, so we feel we are finally back in a strong position.

##### **11. Response to feedback received previous year:**

Last year we did not receive feedback that could be applied to this more detailed report.