

Response to MSEM AY 21-22 Assessment

As we all began emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic in AY 21-22, USF MSEM paused its regular academic assessment and instead undertook an **internal** year of reflection on the past 5 years of the program. The internal audience of the report was the ENVIS Department, the CAS Deans, and the Provost's Office. The goal of the report was to identify staffing and curriculum needs, in response to the Deans' and Provost's strategic planning requests for graduate programs. To meet that goal, the report included individual reflections, and it utilized confidential and sensitive data on enrollment, scholarships, admissions, competitor programs, and faculty. The confidential and sensitive data are redacted in the public version of the report.

Since that report, MSEM has successfully implemented the plans for improvement.

- ❖ *Rebuild Faculty and Staff:* MSEM hired a new full-time Program Manager to replace staff who took on other duties at USF, and the College made this a permanent position in AY24-25. With the ENVIS Department, MSEM hired or brought in five practitioner instructors, one full-time term faculty, one full-time tenure-track faculty, and two adjunct faculty in other USF Departments.
- ❖ *Update Curriculum:* MSEM conducted strategic planning workshops with full-time, adjunct faculty, and alumni to highlight skills and content in MSEM courses. With that insight, and the expanded faculty noted above, MSEM was able to offer a rich mix of elective courses – including expanded GIS offerings – and research supervision. We also increased collaboration with other USF graduate programs (Energy, Management, Public Health, and more) to share elective courses.
- ❖ *Highlight our Features:* MSEM launched new communication and outreach initiatives, with a blog, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook. We hired a part-time team of two student workers devoted to program communications, one devoted to writing, the other to video and graphics. MSEM worked with OMC to prepare a new program video, and we updated our website and brochure to better reflect the valuable offerings of the program.
- ❖ *Recruit Working Professionals:* MSEM revamped our Information Sessions and Orientation, to better address the interests of working professionals. Our outreach via LinkedIn and alumni helped us to find more prospective students who would benefit from our applied focus and flexible schedule. MSEM tabled or held mixers at professional conferences (Cal CUPA, State of the Estuary, AGU), connecting alumni, current students, and prospective students.
- ❖ *Enhance Professional Engagement:* MSEM provides weekly 'round-ups' of opportunities for our students, including professional conferences, internships, scholarships, and jobs. We more actively supported students to attend conferences, by covering fees or facilitating volunteer opportunities or arranging transportation. We enhanced MSEM tabling and faculty engagement with students at conferences to support their

professional development, receiving positive feedback from students. MSEM also organizes hybrid workshops, panels of speakers, and guest speakers in courses.

- ❖ *Enhance Community Experience*: MSEM utilized surveys and direct conversations with students to understand their evolving needs post-pandemic. Meet-ups at local restaurants and pubs after Saturday classes are popular, along with local hikes and nights at the nearby California Academy of Science. To create an on-campus meeting space for our students, MSEM reserved rooms for weekly study sessions and meet-ups. To engage and value all members of our community, MSEM developed internal and external communication plans, which include a rotation of interviews for our blog. With these efforts, we learn more about each other and spark collaborations across the community.

In conclusion, the internal reflection conducted in AY 21-22, and the hard work based on those insights, has yielded many positive outcomes for the MSEM program and community.