

# **Business Administration Review Evaluation Team Report**

On March 29 and 30, four review team members (Dr. James Francis, Dr. Doris Geide-Stevenson, Dr. Frank Guliuzza, Dr. Mary Anne Raymond) spent two days meeting with faculty, students and support staff of the Weber State University business administration program of the Goddard School of Business and Economics. Team members met with faculty in small groups of 2 - 3 faculty members with similar background in terms of either expertise or years at WSU. Team members toured the Weber and Davis county campuses and visited an Advanced Organizational Behavior class with roughly 30 senior business administration students in attendance. Team members were also able to interact with students during a luncheon.

## **I. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

Team members are impressed with the broad support of the program by both faculty and students and observe an overall positive feeling by both groups. Students seem to be proud to be affiliated with the business administration program and seem to unanimously regard their experience as very positive. Both students and faculty display a high degree of loyalty to the program. This loyalty seems to flow from a faculty that works hard and is student-oriented and a faculty that represents a harmonious group, even with the many sub-disciplines combined within the business administration department. The collegiality among faculty seems to carry through to the students. Faculty are pleased to serve students who are mature, motivated, and disciplined.

## **II. SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS BY STANDARD**

### **B. Curriculum**

Structurally, the Department arranges its schedule, class sizes, and range of course offerings to facilitate student success in terms of being able to graduate in a timely manner. The department relies on partial online delivery to achieve this objective. Students indicated that the blend of traditional courses taught both during the day and at night, and online courses worked for them in terms of planning their schedules. Nonetheless, students understand the need to plan ahead in terms of a targeted graduating date. Students also indicate that the necessary help with this planning process is available in the form of advising (the nature of this process will be commented on in D.).

The most recent change in the curriculum focuses on the area of Supply Chain Management and seems to align the curriculum more closely with changes observed in government procurement. Students indicated that WSU was the only Utah university offering a Human Resources emphasis on the undergraduate level. This emphasis area seems to draw students to the business program. The team observes that the curriculum is dominated by core courses (44 credit hours) that limit students' options and their ability to take more courses outside of the College.

### **C. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment**

The department has identified five student learning objectives and has identified which courses provide a low, medium or high level of contribution in meeting each of the five objectives. Student performance on the National Standardized Outcomes Assessment Exam is high and data

from 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 indicates that students are improving. No data for more recent years seems to be available. Students who are well prepared with respect to the theoretical knowledge in the areas of management, marketing, finance and logistics, as evidenced by the national exam, have a demonstrated relationship with the business community. A majority of the students that the review team interacted with indicated that they availed themselves of the various opportunities to interact with the business community (e.g. via internships and student clubs). Based on student comments, the review team feels that the objective of providing graduates with ongoing, interactive relationships with the business community is successfully achieved. This learning objective comes directly out of the mission statement of the department, is implemented through various avenues, and students clearly take advantage and appreciate the opportunities presented to them. The review team feels that this is a fine example of where objectives and outcomes are very well aligned. This alignment is less clear with respect to other learning objectives. For example, it may be helpful to add information to the curriculum grid that fleshes out in more detail how each course contributes to each learning objective. The overall success of students is demonstrated by high rates of job placement at rates that are close to or exceed national average.

#### D. Academic Advising

While academic advisement at WSU is available at the university level, at the college level and at the departmental level, the review team only collected information on the college and departmental advising activities. The college has hired an in-house advisor who splits her time at both the Weber and the Davis campuses and is not able to allow for drop-in appointments. Rather, students are required to make appointments with the college advisor a long time in advance. Students indicated that the actual advising was competently given and was a good experience. Students also indicated dissatisfaction with the accessibility of the college advisor. It turned out that most students prefer to rely on the departmental secretary and individual faculty for advice (this being more appropriate when students had decided on an emphasis area and needed to interact with faculty in that area). As indicated in the departmental self-study, the review team finds that the departmental secretary functions more in a capacity of assistant to the chair and as the de facto assistant to the college advisor. A vast majority of the students indicate that they regularly communicate with the departmental secretary and that they are very satisfied with this experience. On the departmental level, the department chair relies both on the secretary and faculty with specific area expertise for academic advising. It is clear that the secretary follows a template for advising that has been provided by the faculty and that the secretary channels students to appropriate faculty with questions specific to an emphasis area. The advising on the department level is one specific example of how the Chair has decentralized tasks along the line of emphasis areas (management, marketing, supply chain management, finance) in order to harness faculty expertise in a department with many disjoint sub-disciplines.

#### E. Faculty

Full-time faculty, with expertise in all sub-disciplines, are heavily engaged in teaching with an average course load of 7.66 courses each year. This heavy course load translates into 76% terminal coverage of all teaching done within the business program. As mentioned above, the review team finds faculty who are very dedicated to the students and loyal to the program. Full-

time faculty have an average tenure of almost 14 years at WSU. The heavy teaching load is partly explained by the heavy engagement of the departmental faculty in teaching in the MBA program. The MBA program seems almost certainly to have had an impact on the quality of undergraduate teaching although there does not seem to be a measurement of any such an impact. And even if there has not been such an impact on the undergraduate teaching, it seems impossible to sustain the MBA program as it currently exists, based largely upon overload classes provided by the existing faculty. It seems that faculty are stretched thin and are very much subject to burnout.

Faculty seem to be very accepting of the leadership model employed by the department chair. This model relies on decentralization of tasks and fosters faculty autonomy. On top of the heavy teaching load, faculty shoulder advising and hiring (adjunct faculty) functions for their emphasis area. Faculty note that they enjoy this autonomy within their emphasis areas.

The review team notes an uneven record of scholarship among the more senior faculty. This uneven record has an impact on junior faculty who do not seem aware of or prepared to take advantage of the many opportunities available within the College (e.g. the in-house grant program). Junior faculty seem to have uneven ideas about the level of scholarship required in order to successfully navigate the tenure process. Junior faculty would benefit from a more formal mentoring program and a more deliberate communication strategy from the department chair and possibly also the dean of the college with respect to college-wide initiatives and expectations.

#### F. Support Staff, Administration, Facilities, Equipment and Library

The business administration program seems well supported by the college and university leadership. The college has hired an in-house advisor, technological assistant, and career services advisor. On the departmental level, the chair relies heavily on the secretary who functions more as an assistant. The review team is particularly impressed with the performance of the career services advisor. Students highly rate her competency and services and see her as a crucial link to the business community. (Processes should be put in place to make sure that the college can sustain this obvious strength through changes in personnel.)

#### G. Relationships with External Communities

The departmental faculty supports and encourages a number of successful student clubs which provide a connection to businesses and other external agents in the community. Students indicate that they are very aware of opportunities to participate in these clubs and that they have widely availed themselves of these opportunities. In some instances students regard their participation in these clubs as the most beneficial aspect of their education from WSU. The review team finds that the department has fostered many close relationships between students, faculty and external professionals that students regard as very rewarding.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

## Departmental Issues

- Additional faculty should be hired within the various emphasis areas to ensure the quality of undergraduate teaching and to enhance the MBA program.
- Faculty hires need to be conducted with a mind toward a more diverse faculty, and accordingly, a more diverse student population. To this end, hiring processes should be carefully monitored and external involvement in the hiring process should be implemented.
- Recruitment of a more diverse student population should be undertaken in order to achieve diversity levels that are more reflective of the state's population. Programs such as "sponsoring" urban high schools in Salt Lake City and/or working directly with faculty of those schools in order to inform minority students of the opportunities in Business Administration at Weber State should be investigated. Similarly a faculty/student based minority mentoring program would also encourage matriculation and help maintain current enrollment levels of minorities.
- Increased support for junior faculty in form of financial resources (essential databases for finance research, for example) and mentoring that fosters a clearer understanding of available resources and tenure requirements should be made available.
- Assessment efforts could be strengthened by elaborating on the curriculum grid with bulleted explanations of how courses contribute to the learning outcomes. While assessment is generally strong the outcome/learning objectives should be updated to ensure that they are measurable.
- Investigate whether the writing objective could be achieved through a curriculum change that emphasizes business communication across the curriculum. This is one of the sub-disciplines of Business Administration that could be fortified with an additional faculty member to strengthen a needed emphasis upon communication.
- Clarification of faculty evaluation for reviews and merit with respect to scholarship, teaching, and outside responsibilities. A workload policy which clearly outlines definitions of a "full" teaching load and designates ranges of percentages of time and effort allocated to teaching, research and service needs to be created and implemented as soon as possible. This is especially critical in light of the sharing of resources between the undergraduate and graduate programs and "overload" policies.
- The team discussed the model of decentralized leadership within the college and found that based on the available input from faculty any changes should be thought through very carefully. In particular, the review team did not get the impression that the current leadership model is unsustainable. Formalizing the leadership roles of faculty in the various emphasis areas by instituting area coordinators, for example, may lead to unnecessary fragmentation.

## College Level Issues

- The model for advisement on the college level needs to be reviewed. In particular, the college should strive for easier access to the college advisor. In light of student's preference of dealing with the department secretaries to obtain advice on courses and scheduling it would be prudent, and strongly encouraged, to consider upgrading the departmental secretaries to a position title that more closely reflects their actual duties. In the case of Business Administration it is clear that the current "Secretary" functions more as an administrative assistant. Given the amount of interface she has with students a formal change in title, duties, responsibilities, and authority is needed.
- College-wide initiatives (e.g. in-house grants) should be communicated more effectively.
- Recruit students across campus. The percentage of students in the program seems low and could increase to reflect the quality of the program.
- Interact more with other schools and programs to acquire potential resources (e.g. databases) to enhance research opportunities.

## IV. Issues related to future Accreditation Review

- Cultivation of external resources
- Executive education (credit or no-credit workshops for business leaders in the community).
- Encourage faculty to pursue and become active in contracts and grants. Grantsmanship is viewed favorably by AACSB and can contribute to the visibility, reputation, and revenue generation for the department and the College.
- The need to examine the possibilities of a new "model" of how the College does business should be part of the next "round" of planning. The College has experienced an increase in enrollment in an absolute sense, while the student credit hours generated have actually decreased. This seems to be a trend that is not likely to change in the immediate future. It may require more summer classes (as requested by students interviewed in this process), more evening courses, or perhaps both, done in combination with the continued effort to offer on-line and hybrid classes.

- Class coverage by academically qualified faculty exceeds 75%. This will be viewed favorably by the AACSB accrediting team, however, the workloads of the academically qualified faculty are very heavy and they thus appear to be stretched quite thin. Although it is recognized that budget limitations are always an issue, a high priority should be placed upon the funding for new faculty lines that will help cover present needs and assist in managing future growth in enrollment.