

Dean's Response to Department of Business Administration Program Review

May 28, 2014

The Department of Business Administration (BA) in the Goddard School of Business & Economics underwent an in-depth program review during 2013-14. This review included a self-study; an external review consisting of a team of two non-WSU faculty and two non-BA Goddard faculty; and the departmental faculty response to the external review. The review commended the department on multiple initiatives. I agree with those assessments and congratulate the department on its successes. Of particular note are the SCM program's evolution, the department chair's leadership in hiring outstanding faculty, the mentorship provided by the chair and the senior BA faculty in helping new faculty integrate into the department, and IST's recent curriculum revisions.

The remainder of this response focuses on areas for improvement. The first two items are overarching points. The following set of recommendations addresses specifics in the departmental faculty response report. The final section addresses ideas in the review team's report that are not addressed explicitly in the department faculty response. My comments address areas where the departmental response, in my view, needs additional guidance or suggestions. For responses that are not addressed here, the department response is already appropriate.

Program Review's Scope

The external review team focused its comments mainly on two degree programs—the Bachelor of Business Administration with an Emphasis on Supply Chain Management (SCM) and the Bachelor of Information Systems and Technology (IST). The SCM focus was likely due to its status as the Goddard School's flagship program and the work the SCM faculty has done in response to that designation. The IST focus was a deliberate attempt to look at the college's lowest-enrollment program, particularly given that a faculty retirement in summer 2014 offers the opportunity to hire in support of the future direction of the program.

Although this focus is understandable, I am concerned that the department's other programs (Business Administration, Entrepreneurship, Human Resources, and Marketing) did not undergo the in-depth required review from which SCM and IST are benefitting. I encourage the department to seek external review of these program areas in the near future.

Recommendation: Each discipline is encouraged to form an external advisory board that meets periodically to discuss issues relevant to the discipline and its curriculum. Boards can provide early notice of changing job market requirements. They can also be instrumental in developing internships and in placing students in jobs. In many cases, boards also help to generate external financial resources for faculty and students. Each discipline is encouraged to form a board by April 2015 (SCM and Entrepreneurship have already begun board formation, and IST plans to reconstitute its board during summer 2014). The Office of the Dean can help to identify prospective board members.

Issues Addressed in the Department Faculty Response

The departmental responses are appropriate in most instances. However, rarely are timelines for starting and finishing the associated activities stipulated. Moreover, few recommendations identify the responsible party for accomplishing them. **Recommendation:** Feasible timelines and responsible people should be identified explicitly.

Mission

The college's revised mission statement, though unofficial, is not markedly different from the current version. Final approval of the new version should occur in fall 2014. **Recommendation:** The department can begin work on the new department mission when fall term begins. Faculty should ensure that the mission also aligns with AACSB expectations.

Spreadsheet Skills

The gap between graduating students' Excel skills and employers' expectation of Excel skills seems to have widened recently. Although these skills are taught within BA courses, the problem was initially identified by the college's strategic planning committee, rather than by the department or the faculty group teaching Excel. College curricula have not been analyzed systematically for too long.

Recommendations: The department should put in place timelines for regular curriculum review and should ensure that appropriate changes are made in a timely fashion. The department should also take the lead in fostering a college discussion both of the IST 2010 threshold for Excel skills and how upper-division courses will build upon that foundation, so that our students are among the best-prepared on the job market.

Social Media for Marketing Majors

This issue is one in which I disagree with the departmental response, which appears to me to state that the faculty believe that the current coverage of social media is adequate. Unfortunately, from an employment-after-graduation perspective, it is not. Since arriving here three years ago, I have routinely been told by business people that our marketing students graduate with insufficient internet marketing skills. More recently, that complaint has begun to include deficiencies in social media knowledge and skills, too. During the past year, three recently-graduated (i.e., within two months after their graduation) marketing majors have come to see me to state that their knowledge and skill levels in these areas (especially social media) are well below entry-level position expectations with regional firms.

Recommendation: It might be helpful to bring in a couple of outside marketing faculty to do a more in-depth review of the marketing curriculum as it currently exists, with a particular emphasis on whether it meets market needs with respect to internet marketing and social media. The faculty should also talk with employers who have hired our graduates (and recent graduates themselves) to hear first-hand what deficiencies are perceived. Appropriate curriculum changes should then be made. When a new marketing position becomes available (which could be as early as a fall 2014 search), the faculty should consider whether someone with social media expertise should be sought.

Meaningful Improvement in Student Learning Outcomes

The department response focuses on college-level learning outcomes. **Recommendation:** Program level outcomes should also be addressed.

Business Communications

The plan to assess the business communication component of the curriculum is sound. The following recommendation is based upon the fact that the business communications faculty position has been reallocated already. **Recommendation:** Any recommendation from the department must include a clear statement of budgetary implications.

Student Advisement and Progress Toward Graduation

The review team recommended that earlier advising could have led to fewer problems with students expecting courses to be offered at different times than they actually were offered. My perception is that this was never an advising problem, but rather was a result of faculty making “unofficial” curriculum changes that were never processed through the WSU curriculum process. Students thus did not know what to take, because the courses required in their programs were no longer offered. While advising could have (and did) help, if the faculty had followed the curriculum process and identified clear substitutions for students studying under earlier catalogs, most of the problems could have been eliminated. On a positive note, the department chair and faculty have worked closely with the advisors to create “degree maps,” which are now available both on the website and in hard copy. Degree maps show students which courses to take in which order, and also identifies important milestones, to help students stay on track toward graduation. **Recommendations:** The BA chair should remind faculty annually that curriculum changes must be processed officially and in a timely manner. The BA chair should ensure that the on-line catalog accurately reflects planned course offerings, and that he notifies the Advising Center whenever one-time exceptions or long-term changes to the normal offerings are expected. The dean will work with advising on getting students to see advisors earlier.

Supporting Career Center Activities

The IST faculty are to be commended in particular both for getting their students to attend and for attending themselves to meet employers. However, few other faculty are attending, and student attendance has been low. The faculty response directs the dean to provide information about the event dates. However, that (and more) is already being done, although it is clearly not working well. In particular, at the request of the Career Center Director, the dean, at least for the past three years, has included a slide that showed the Business in Industry (BIN) date and time in the opening meeting presentation. He has also encouraged faculty to be proactive in getting students to participate. Moreover, the dean has sent emails out two weeks prior to BIN each of the last three falls with the same message. The faculty response therefore won't solve the problem. **Recommendation:** BA should determine whether BIN is a priority. If it is, the fall event date is typically known before spring graduation and is available from the Career Center. If assistance is needed from the dean's office, then faculty should suggest new actions that would help.

Senior Seminar

This problem has also been identified in a recent analysis of Career Services. **Recommendation:** The dean will work with the Career Center to identify ways of reaching students earlier with career-services support. It is likely that a junior seminar might deliver different content than the senior seminar.

Issues in the Review Team Report that are not Addressed in the Department Faculty Response

There are also a few issues cited in the review team's report that are not addressed explicitly in the department faculty response. The department is encouraged to consider and respond to the following **recommendations:**

- Leverage the IST minor within the college. Accounting and SCM are two likely candidates for partnership.
- Add data analytics to the curriculum following the 2014-15 IST faculty hire.
- Educate faculty about tools, such as Google Chat and Google Drive, that can help students to collaborate.

The review team also noted that classroom technology is unreliable and that response times are very long. This is a college-level problem, and one that BA cannot solve on its own. **Action Taken:** Therefore, the dean has charged the associate dean with developing a technology strategic plan that includes regular maintenance, a clear replacement timetable, and whether additional technology support personnel are needed.