

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
WSU Department of Economics
Self-Study Document, Fall 2017

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The following is a summary of the self-study document, highlighting important points. For complete information, please refer to the full, self-study document itself.

Mission Statement

Mission: The Department of Economics promotes an academic community where students and faculty are partners in learning and research. Through high-impact teaching, we provide our students with economic knowledge and skills to solve social, business, and financial challenges and be contributing members of society.

Background: The department is engaged in a thorough reexamination of the mission, vision, and strategic plan for the department. With many new faculty members, it is a good time to collectively review the purpose and future of the department. During Fall Semester 2017, the department revised its mission and created for the first time a department vision. The strategic plan is on track to be completed Fall Semester 2017. The mission appears above with the vision statement appearing in the self-study document.

Curriculum

The department offers the Bachelor of Science degree in six areas of economics. Four of these are social science degrees and two are business degrees. The social science emphasis areas are (1) General Social Science, (2) International Economics, (3) Legal Studies, and (4) Quantitative Economics. The fifth and sixth areas, Business Economics and International Business Economics, are structured identically to other business degrees except for upper-level major classes. In addition to offering these degree programs, the economics department is instrumental in supporting business foundations courses, general education courses in the core area of American Institutions and the breadth area of Social Science. The economics department also supports the MBA program within the Goddard School of Business and Economics.

Since the last program review the department has undergone many curricular changes. It has, created an associate degree, created a new International Business Economics degree, revised the Legal Studies Emphasis, revised the Economics Minor, revised the Economic Teaching Minor, created an internship option for the Business Economics major, and expanded the teaching of on-the-book electives.

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

The economics department currently assesses university wide learning outcomes for the general education courses (Social Science and American Institutions) taught, college-wide learning outcomes, and departmental learning outcomes formulated for economics majors. The economics department contributes in data gathering and analysis for the college-wide learning outcomes. General education assessment occurs each year and forms part of the annual assessment report in the department. With the department assessing learning outcomes for the department, college, and general education programs, assessment efforts feel laborious. This is expected to continue with the expansion at the university level of learning outcomes in general education courses. Streamlining of assessment activities on all levels of the university would be helpful.

Assessment at the department level focuses on the senior capstone project in ECON 4980 – Research Methods along with the use of the national normed TUCE (test of Understanding of College Economics) to directly measure achievement in the areas of micro- and macroeconomics and international economics. Informally, the department views a high proportion of student publications in the university's undergraduate research journal, *ERGO*, as additional evidence of student learning.

The department has also implemented an exit survey for all graduates from the department. Overall students are satisfied with our program. A theme arising from survey data is that the department needs more career support. We have addressed this in two ways. One, at the college level, we have a new director of career services who is examining ways to increase the services provided through his office. Second, the department created a service position for a faculty member to focus on career and internship opportunities for students in the department.

Academic Advising

In 2012, the department switched to a professional advising model in which three professional advisors serve all students in the Goddard School of Business and Economics. These advisors hold twenty orientation sessions per year, host "Meet the Advisor" events, and coordinate with local high schools and community colleges for recruiting. In addition the advisors hold separate orientation sessions for incoming international students to the 2 + 2 International Economics Program. The advising office has also recently held meetings with all departments in order to better understand the content of departmental offerings. The role of faculty under a professional advising model is to be mentors. In general, faculty have open door policies with students and are happy to mentor students with respect to which degree would best suit their interests as well as the best preparation for their future interests.

Faculty

The department of economics has an active and engaged faculty in teaching, research and service. The faculty is mostly junior right now with seven tenure-track faculty and six tenured faculty. The department also employs around 9 adjuncts to teach classes in calculus, statistics, introductory economics, and economic history of the United States courses. Teaching productivity is high. Two faculty members from economics have won the college teaching award in the last five years. More faculty members have been nominated for that award and for the university's teaching award. Scholarly productivity is high. All full-time faculty members currently meet the qualification requirements for AACSB accreditation purposes. Many articles produced in the department are published in quality journals as defined by external journal ranking lists. The commitment to service is high. The department is actively engaged in service on the college-level, university-level, and with external constituencies. For their efforts, several faculty have been recognized with university-wide awards and appointments as fellows to prestigious organizations.

Program Support

The department staff includes one administrative specialist and an international economics liaison. The department also hires several tutors to staff an economics tutoring lab and quantitative methods tutoring lab.

The department finds itself in a challenging position with respect to the strategic plan of the college. The current, though somewhat dated, strategic plan for the college emphasizes Supply Chain Management, Master of Taxation, Study Abroad, Entrepreneurship, and Sustainability over other programs. The Department of Economics is not one of the emphasized areas. While choices and

tradeoffs between good options is inherent in strategic planning, it is challenging on many levels when there is an opportunity for the department to excel, but resources are directed elsewhere. The department recommends a college strategic plan that offers each department an opportunity to excel at its strengths.

Relations with External Community

Faculty in the department are involved with numerous external groups at the local, national, and international level. The department's new action items to meet vision and mission objectives contains a call to further engage external communities.

Student, Faculty, Contract/Adjunct Faculty and Staff Statistics

Economics	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Student Credit Hours Total ¹	9,226	9,124	8,988	9,407	8,685
Student FTE Total ²	307.50	304.10	299.60	313.60	289.5
Student Majors ³	155	157	180	171	166
other (2nd or 3rd majors)	18	15	23	35	27
Program Graduates ⁴					
Associate Degree					
Bachelor Degree	30	37	37	35	48
Student Demographic Profile ⁵					
Female	71	79	96	80	65
Male	84	78	84	91	101
Faculty FTE Total ⁶	15.44	17.29	14.01	14.42	n/a
Adjunct FTE	4.97	6.68	3.4	3.2	n/a
Contract FTE	10.47	10.61	10.61	11.22	n/a
Student/Faculty Ratio ⁷	19.92	17.59	21.38	21.75	

Table supplied by the university. See the full program review document for definition of footnoted items.

Results of Previous Program Reviews

Problem Identified	Action Taken	Progress
Write a mission, vision, and strategic plan	The department has focused its efforts this semester in formalizing the mission, vision, and strategic plan.	The progress has been great! The department has written a mission and vision. The strategic plan is well underway with a meeting to discuss as a department to be held in November 2017.
Make available different paths through the curriculum to accommodate students who desire professional preparation.	A new major was created, International Business Economics, that has an internship as an option. The department also added an internship option to the	In the last several years, students have been using the internship option.

	Business Economics major.	
Strategies to grow the number of domestic majors.	Many strategies across a range of activities have been taken. There is more awareness of recruitment in lower division classes. The department held an open house, attended Major Fest, sent recruiting emails to a broad range of students informing them about majors in economics, emailed students with only one class left to encourage them to finish.	In 2017 we had a total of 16 domestic graduates, the highest number since 2005.
Recognition of the department's 2+2 program as an important contribution to the college's strategic plan for internationalization	The department has discussed this item with the dean.	The department has lost a little ground here as the international emphasis in the strategic plan has shifted towards study abroad. However, there are plans to revisit the college's strategic plan next academic year.
Use funds generated by the 2+2 program to hire an instructor.	Hiring decisions are made based on needs in the college. No funds have been allocated to hire an additional instructor. The department is still interested in hiring an instructor to teach and coordinate QUAN classes.	Although the department has not been able to hire an instructor, it has hired several tutors to assist in QUAN classes as well as the principles courses. In addition the economics tutors also assist with grading course assignments.
Implement a survey of graduating seniors to assess the quality of the program and program advising	The department now administers an exit survey to all graduating seniors. The survey contains questions on instruction, curriculum, mentorship, internships, career preparation plans, as well as open response questions about the department in general. In addition, the advising center has started a survey to assess advising effectiveness.	The implementation of the survey every semester is great progress for the department. Students seem content with advising. Greater progress can and is being made in the area of career services. The survey also provided support for the idea that majors want additional elective courses. The department has responded and is offering more regular or new electives.

<p>Work more with career services and secure more internship possibility with students</p>	<p>Career services in the college is undergoing changes with the hiring of a new career adviser. In addition, the department has been more involved with Business and Industry Night, the night employers come to campus to recruit. The department has also created a service opportunity for a faculty member interested in jobs and internships. This person will work with employers and career services to enhance opportunities for our students.</p>	<p>The new career advisor is, among other things, implementing a software solution designed to get job announcements to more students. For the service opportunity, the faculty member started this semester and has already begun to work with career services.</p>
<p>More communication between the chair and faculty and staff.</p>	<p>The chair has implemented a weekly news email in which information relative to the department is shared.</p>	<p>Feedback regarding this type of news sharing has been positive.</p>
<p>Meet with adjuncts to ensure quality instruction.</p>	<p>In the last year, the chair has met with all adjunct professors. In addition, the chair reviews the evaluations of the adjunct faculty each semester.</p>	<p>More progress can be made to involve adjunct with the assessment process.</p>
<p>Computer lab space</p>	<p>Computer lab space has held constant in the department but has been reduced in the college. The college has responded to the reduction in physical computers with the creating of more virtual computers. These virtual computers enable students to login via the web and access key software for courses. Computer labs across campus seem to be sufficient for students. More and more, students use personal devices for computing. Surveys of students do not indicate that computing services are an issue.</p>	<p>The department recently replaced the computers in the Quantitative methods lab with current models. The funding for this purchase came through course fee in the courses with a QUAN prefix.</p>
<p>External Advisory Committee</p>	<p>The college has an active external advisory committee that meets every quarter. The department has not formed a separate committee.</p>	<p>No progress on an external advisory committee has been made.</p>

Information Regarding Current Review Team Members:

Name	Position	Affiliation
Rimvydas Baltaduonis	Associate Professor of Economics, Co-Director of Gettysburg Lab for Experimental Economics	Gettysburg College
Cathy Carey	Professor and Chair, Department of Economics	Western Kentucky University
Chris Hoagstrom	Professor of Zoology	Weber State University