

WSU Department of Professional Sales Five-Year Program Review Dean Response (2016-2017)

April 30, 2017

On the whole, the report has noted the strengths of the department and shown progress. Challenges and strengths that have been addressed and will continue to be reflected and acted upon by the department are strategic planning, industry connections, “raising the bar,” faculty, and facilities.

The department is a paragon of student-focused education. The recent retirement of Carl Grunander illustrates two of the issues related to faculty, the focus on students as articulated in the mission statement and the increasing need for academics in the university. Carl was lionized for his student focus. He contacted students directly when he felt that they were slipping. This is something that the university is looking to do with software and it is something he did quite naturally. He is representative of the student focus of the department. Steve Eichmeier and the other faculty are another keystone in that. There is more advisement time per student than any other department in the college. The result is one of the best 4-year retention and completion rates in the university.

However, with Carl leaving the department has made the move to bring in someone close to finishing their PhD who also has substantial sales experience and – from what we can determine – a student focus. Our hope is to continue our successes while raising the academic bar (as we have with the hire of Blake Nielson and Alex Lawrence). Carl leaving has put the overload of faculty in relief as well and that continues to be a challenge. Faculty need to gradually have overload replaced by adjuncts, more hires, and salary increases. But, the latter two of those three requires adequate funding. This continues to be a challenge.

Student learning outcomes and assessment are plain and measurable. The personal goals set by students again illustrates the direct connection between faculty and student. This despite the smaller number faculty per student ratio. There are only eight faculty but more than 600 declared majors.

The connection to students and industry benefits instruction and job placement. All faculty are required to have five years or more of industry experience and most have much more. In addition, faculty continue to work in the field and bring that experience to the classroom and keep avenues for student employment alive.

Active industry advisers through the Industry Advisory Boards for both the department and the Alan Hall Center for Sales Excellence also create synergies with industry and inform content. For examples, the encouragement of foci on Inside Sales and Forecasting has become key to the department’s offerings and improved our relationship with industry, our ability to place graduates and interns in high-level jobs, and the career preparation of our students. Students have very high job placement rates.

The Hall Center has also created more connections to industry by creating classes for company employees that also allow credit towards a degree if desired. The Spring Mobile contract given their salesforce an education in a convenient format.

Curriculum has improved. The 2+2, AAS, BS approach has been hardened. This gives students a career stepping stone. As the saying goes “life happens.” In addition, as noted earlier, more math skills and software skills using various CRM (customer relationship management) puts students closer to the

cutting edge of sales technology. More focus on this going forward will assist the program. Also, the entire program is available online. This is a real benefit but some students also note that some classes might be better in the brick-n-mortar setting. Some students will always benefit from brick-n-mortar but the department is committed to creating as many possible venues to as many of their busy students.

Department facilities have improved as well with increased technology in practice rooms, flexible labs, and presentation capacity. The building is the oldest on campus but there is a substantial likelihood that a new building will be built in the next five years and that will improve things considerably.

Finally, the department has joined the rest of the college in creating a strategic plan. That is helping us move in a good, long-term direction.

Sincerely,

David L. Ferro