

## WSU Department of Professional Sales Five-year Program Review Committee Report

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WSU Department of Professional Sales

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Subject: External Review Committee's Report

The external review committee, comprised of Edward Walker and Jennifer Wamas, visited the Weber State University Sales Program on March 16, 2017. The committee toured the program's facilities interviewed students, faculty, and staff associated with the program. Our report is based upon this site visit.

### Evaluation of Standards

Strengths/Challenges	Standards <i>(as listed in the report guidelines)</i>
Program Strengths	A – Mission Statement C – Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment D – Academic Advising G – Relationships with External Communities H – Results of Previous Program Reviews
Program Challenges	B – Curriculum E – Faculty F – Support (Facilities, Equipment, etc.)
Program Weaknesses	None
Recommendations	Detailed Explanations by Standard (below)

### Program Strengths

#### Mission Statement

The program's Mission Statement clearly defines their objectives in educating students and preparing them for employment, with a variety of learning activities including traditional instruction, role-playing with peers and one-on-one time with professors, and learn from successful, practicing sales professionals from industry. Students also have the opportunity to participate in competitions and national student organizations.

The Professional Sales Department actively engages their industry advisory committee members as advisors to the program and in lectures and meetings with students. Their mission goal to immediately place students into employment following graduation is being fulfilled successfully, with close to a 100% placement rate of their 150+ annual graduates.

### **Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment**

The program's outcomes and assessments are clearly defined and designated on the curriculum map by course demonstrating the level in which the student will learn and practice that designed outcome within the program. The three tiers of demonstration are Mastery, Adequate and Developing which have been equally distributed throughout the core classes of the Professional Sales degree. Each class provides an Evidence of Learning detailed analysis and clearly articulates the measurable learning outcome, the threshold of evidence of student learning, a method of measurement, findings linked to the learning outcomes, interpretation of findings, and the action plan/use of results. Within each course, the student sets personal goals that will provide additional measurement and evidence of student learning. The measurable learning outcomes have been designated into 14 different competencies and reviewed on a four-year cycle.

### **Academic Advising**

Faculty advisement is a strength of the department. One faculty member (Dr. Steven Eichmeier) provides the bulk of formal advisement in regards to student progress and helping them select courses and plan for academic success. Discipline-specific pathways strengthen their advisement process early in each student's individual educational plan. He receives 6 hours (one-half faculty load) of reassigned time for this effort. However, every faculty member is engaged in advisement and spends significant quality time with students. The faculty has open door policies and welcome students to visit with them about all aspects of their courses and their employment goals. It was abundantly clear from our interviews with both students and faculty that advisement and developing meaningful relationships with their students is a high priority. With more than 700 declared majors, academic advisement demands significant commitment from all faculty, and they are carrying this load well.

Their success in student advisement is further underscored by the fact that many of their graduates call their "old professors" asking their opinions about new job opportunities and career strategies. A significant number of students rely on their professors for advisement long after graduation.

### **Relationships with External Communities**

Professional Sales enjoys exceptionally strong connections to external communities. Many corporate representatives visit their department frequently. Their advisory committee is very active, contributing financially to the program as well as providing guest lectures and volunteering as mock customers during one-on-one practice student sales calls. The department seeks and responds to suggestions from their industry partners in regards to curriculum enhancement and other ways to strengthen their program.

The Alan Hall Sales Center is a strong component of their connection to external communities, providing a unique, synergistic strength through its partnership with the Professional Sales program.

Another indicator of strong relationships with external communities is the fact that the program's students enjoy a very high job placement rate for their graduates. This is a direct result of the strong connections the department cultivates and maintains with industry.

## **Results of Previous Program Reviews**

The program has made clear progress in following the recommendations of prior program reviews. In a recent example of a suggestion made in their last review, the Professional Sales program has added a lock-step AAS degree for their majors along the way towards their 4-year degree.

## **Program Challenges**

### **Curriculum**

The program's curriculum provides the graduates with a broad range of skills and techniques (both hard and soft) that are needed to be successful in the field of Professional Sales.

The addition of both the Sales Planning and Forecasting and Social Media in Sales courses demonstrates the adaptability, creativity, and innovation of this curriculum to stay up to date with the ever-changing processes and tools that are available in this field of study.

Challenges that were noted; the need to “raise the bar,” increase the vigor and to set higher expectations for the students both in writing and verbal presentations. The perception of this being an “easy degree” was frustrating to the students that want the Professional Sales program to have a stronger presence or reputation on campus and to be more aligned with business type courses. The curriculum could have a stronger focus on real-world case studies, role plays, presentations, and more practice in understanding how to ask the right questions with the use of the SPIN selling technique. The use of iPads and other technical aids and software programs could be beneficial for the students to incorporate more visual components into classes and presentations where appropriate.

The online classes are needed within the program to accommodate the needs of the diverse student demographics and population, although learning outcomes and progress is harder to measure when it comes to hands-on application. For example; the Sales Supervision Methods class was discussed as an online course where the student felt they did not learn as much as they would in the classroom and it is hard to demonstrate the supervision methods taught. A focus on better ways to connect with the online students is recommended.

### **Faculty**

The program currently enjoys a diverse, well-qualified group of faculty who are genuinely committed to providing high-quality instruction for their students. Their newest faculty member is in his first year, while their most senior faculty has been at WSU for 48 years. Each faculty member brings a unique background and experience that strengthens the department. The faculty enjoys a strong esprit de corps, with a strong respect for one another's ideas and opinions. Their open discussions, sharing of ideas, and willingness to try new ideas together as a team provides team strength and enjoyable environment for students, faculty, and staff. The program enjoys strong, effective leadership by their department chair. Dr. Nielson's excellence as chair was mentioned numerous times during interviews of faculty, staff, and students.

However, the department recognizes that faculty changes are coming shortly as senior faculty members retire. Dr. Grunander, a 39-year veteran faculty member, is retiring this year and others with 30+ years of service will be leaving in the not-too-distant future. The general feeling among the current faculty is that it will be advantageous to hire new faculty with

doctorate degrees whose tenure will depend on conducting research and publishing. Conversely, their teaching program benefits greatly from having faculty experienced in sales. The artful balance between sales experience and advanced degrees among future faculty will be critical to the continued success of the department. Given the growth and focus of the university and their college, this will be a significant challenge in recruiting and retaining future faculty.

The committee notes that the Department is meeting this challenge with their latest hire. Dr. Alex Lawrence is currently in his first year as a new tenure-track faculty in the department. He recently earned his doctorate and enjoyed the extensive experience as a successful business leader with exceptional marketing and sales experience. He is engaged in active research that will likely lead to publications while also maintaining a full teaching load. It will be important for the department to continue to hire outstanding faculty and provide them with faculty mentors to help guide them through the challenging and demanding path to tenure. The department will also need to add additional faculty shortly to maintain their program. The demands of high teaching loads, advisement of large numbers of majors, and expectations of scholarly activities and service will risk burning out existing and new faculty unless additional faculty positions are added to help carry the load.

### **Support (Facilities, Equipment, etc.)**

The Professional Sales program is housed in one of the oldest buildings on campus. While they have modernized and utilized their spaces successfully, the program clearly needs more space and resources as they strive to grow and improve their program. They need more spaces for students to practice their sales presentations to small and large groups. One student stated, “You can’t learn sales from a book!” She went on to explain that their most poignant educational activities are the times spent practicing their skills in one-on-one meetings, role playing, and competitions with peers and faculty. Video recordings, technology to support distant sales meetings (e.g., video meetings), sales presentations using mobile platforms, and other such support technology are needed to help train their students in the newest technology platforms available.

Certainly, the prospect of a new building on campus promises opportunities for improvement. However, careful planning that includes the creative design of additional space will be necessary to support enhanced quality and growth of the Professional Sales program.