ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT
OF THE
COLLEGE of BUSINESS GRADUATE and UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

COMMITTEE PROCESS

This Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) Report is based on the following source material:

4. The APRC Interview with John Dopp, Director of Graduate Business Programs; Kathleen O'Donnell, Marketing Department Chair; Yim-Yu Wong, International Business Department Chair; Robert Saltzman, Decision Sciences Department Chair; Associate Dean Caran Colvin; and Dean Nancy Hayes; September 24, 2008.
5. Guidelines for the Sixth Cycle of Academic Program Review.
6. The APRC customary evaluative procedures.

These sources were employed to construct an integrated view of the College of Business graduate programs present strengths, aspirations, and possibilities for future development. The College of Business requested that APRC and the Office of Academic Planning and Development conduct a program review of both its graduate and undergraduate programs as a means for helping the college stage its accreditation visit from AACSB. Since the program review process was completed over a year ago, AACSB has conducted its visit, has made recommendations, and has given the college full AACSB accreditation. The reports here are offered to conclude the review process for the college.

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The College of Business graduate programs include the Master of Business Administration (MBA), the Master of Science in Business Administration (MSBA), and the Executive MBA (EMBA). The professionalism and overall high quality of the College’s graduate programs is impressive. This quality is reflected in the various reports and interviews that the APRC has reviewed.
The College of Business graduate programs are successful in a competitive marketplace, and the overall view of APRC and the external reviewers is that the programs are thriving.

MOVE TO THE DOWNTOWN CAMPUS

In Fall 2007, the College of Business moved its MBA and EMBA programs to the new SF State Downtown Center. This move has brought many benefits to the program as well as many challenges. This location offers tremendous promise for the faculty to interact with San Francisco’s vibrant business and finance community. As one department chair stated, “Being downtown in a new space felt like it provided new energy and excitement to my department.” At the same time, however, the move has brought a number of challenges. For example, it is now more difficult for students to physically access the SF State on-campus library and its services. The library is responding by providing improved online access and downtown delivery of books and other services. This may be an ongoing problem that will have to be addressed in the near future. In addition, there have been some extra expenses arising from a second location such as parking and commute time, and there are now heightened safety concerns for faculty and students who are downtown in the evening.

Perhaps most critical is the physical separation of faculty, staff, and students from the undergraduate College of Business programs and the broader SF State community centered on the main campus. Some faculty who teach and advise students in both the graduate and undergraduate programs have expressed concern over splitting their time and efforts between programs in two very distinct locations. Faculty commuting time and expense (between campuses), use of temporary office space, and perceptions of disconnection arising from working in two different locations have challenged some faculty since the move. The College should monitor these concerns and collect feedback from students, faculty and staff in order to ensure the quality of the educational experience at this location.

The APRC also considers it important to note that when this move was initiated by the university, very few of these issues were identified and thoughtfully considered, and the College was not consulted. This lesson was clearly learned as the Administration worked more collaboratively in the initial planning of the next sequence of large-scale moves.

The College of Business graduate programs were the first programs to move, and were the vehicle through which many issues were identified. Especially in light of the many challenges which have been overcome, and those left to be resolved, the APRC commends the College of Business for the effort and energy expended in planning for and implementing the move to the Downtown Campus.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE STANDARDS

The College of Business graduate programs is to be commended for meeting and in many
cases exceeding University-wide standards relating to admission requirements, program requirements and faculty requirements.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC STANDARDS

Program Planning and Quality Improvement Process

The College has established a thorough and effective planning process that involves faculty, students, and alumni. The newly formed College of Business Curriculum Committee (COB Self-study, p. 20) should be an appropriate coordinating and governing mechanism to review and strengthen the curriculum on a continuing basis.

The College of Business utilizes a Strategic Planning and Implementation Committee (SPRIC) which provides strategic direction to the entire college, and therefore to the graduate programs as well. This committee considers the input of faculty, administration, alumni, and students (Ibid., p. 7) in determining strategic direction and program emphases. In addition, the College has formed a Program Review Committee to coordinate the regular review of the college's degree programs. The existence and effectiveness of a comprehensive program review committee at the college level distinguishes the College of Business; the APRC commends the College for the thorough and effective strategic planning process it has implemented.

The Student Experience

A notable feature of the College of Business graduate program is its diversity in many forms, including its student body. In the graduate program, much of this diversity can be attributed to the large number of international students who are attracted to San Francisco and SF State's MBA program. Though international student enrollments are still well below the peak levels experienced in 2003, they account for approximately 30% of the graduate student body (2007 IPEDS data).

College of Business graduate students who are U.S. nationals experience a significant opportunity to benefit from international perspectives as reflected by the many international students with whom they share classes, internationalization efforts in the curriculum (noted further below), and opportunities to study abroad.

While large numbers of international students provide an overall benefit to the graduate program, there remain significant challenges. Because the international students are not allowed to work while enrolled in the graduate program, they prefer courses scheduled during the day. Most U.S. nationals enrolled in graduate programs do work (most full-time), and so they prefer courses scheduled after normal work hours. This preference may lead to unintentional segregation of international students into courses with very few U.S. nationals. If this segregation occurs, the overall learning experience, including its cultural and social components, will suffer for both international and U.S. national students.
International students have also expressed a desire to experience the full SF State campus environment while enrolled in the graduate program. Since the program is located at the downtown campus, this desire is impossible to fully meet, but there may be ways the college and university can work together to improve the connection to SF State that international students desire. The APRC strongly encourages the College of Business to develop other means of ensuring that domestic and international students have the opportunity to work together and get to know each other as well as each other's cultures.

APRC notes that College of Business students have the highest participation rate in Study Abroad programs at SF State (Ibid., p. 6).

The Student Advising Center offers an unusually comprehensive support system that assists students in course selection, helps with interpreting policies and procedures from admissions to graduation, and provides support to students dealing with performance issues. The APRC commends the College for creating and maintaining such an effective Student Advising Center.

Other aspects of the student experience in the College of Business graduate programs appear to be positive. The faculty has thoughtfully incorporated an array of activities and mechanisms designed to enhance the graduate experience beyond the requirements of the program. These efforts include Job Fairs, Ethics Week speakers and activities, the Taste of the Bay community fundraiser, and others.

**The Program and the Community**

The graduate program benefits directly from the significant efforts made by the College of Business to reach out to and integrate the local business community in its efforts. These efforts include special events such as the Taste of the Bay and Job Fair mentioned above.

The inclusion of alumni in strategic planning efforts also strengthens ties to the community. Alumni membership on the College of Business Advisory board, SPIC, and participation in focus groups and surveys (Self-study, p. 7) provides ample opportunity to engage alumni and the community in program review, planning, and overall improvement.

There are also notable efforts being made to bring in working professionals and guest speakers to present relevant topics in graduate courses. In some cases, special guest speakers have been shared with other MBA programs (such as Golden Gate University). This coordination and leveraging of expert resources across universities is commendable.

**The Faculty Experience**

The APRC notes the significant efforts made by the program to increase its number of
academically qualified (AQ) and professionally qualified (PQ) faculty. Recent changes in the requirements to achieve AQ status and increases in the number of AQ faculty should serve to strengthen the graduate program, providing opportunities for faculty development (including tenure and promotion) and expanding the student experience to include professional academic activities such as authoring presentations and publications.

As noted in other sections of this report, there remain salient issues raised by faculty who teach at both the downtown campus and the main SF State campus. APRC believes that resolving these issues merits the attention, effort and resource commitments of both the University and College.

The Curriculum

Internationalization of Curriculum

The internationalization of the curriculum is being achieved partly through the sheer numbers of international students in the graduate programs in the College of Business. With the opening of China and easing of US visa requirements and the increased recruiting activities of the Office of International Programs, these numbers are increasing even more. However, the presence of large numbers of international students (some of whom have difficulties writing and speaking well in English) has also created some concerns on the part of some faculty and students. (External Reviewers Report, pp. 3-4)

The APRC finds the programs created by the College of Business in support of international students to be exemplary. These include moving an existing remedial writing course to the graduate level and providing tutors and an additional class for oral presentations where needed. We applaud the College's perseverance and dedication to ensuring the positive impact of the international presence for faculty and students.

Assessment

The efforts that the College faculty and leadership have put into the development of a student learning outcomes assessment process is impressive. It is encouraging that so many faculty have now been trained in AACSB assessment concepts and processes and that there has been so much work done on the identification and mapping of student learning outcomes with appropriate assessment points in the curriculum, and that several rubrics have already been developed for assessing outcomes. (Interview)
The APRC is aware of the rigorous assessment requirements of the AACSB and anticipates that they will be looking for not only results from the assessment process, but also college-wide responses to the assessment results. Therefore, the APRC is looking forward to seeing the first set of assessment results for the College, as well as any subsequent changes in policies and curricula that are made as a result of the assessment.

The APRC also concurs with the advice of the External Reviewers (External Reviewers Report, p. 6) in recommending that the College strive to establish not just a culture of assessment but also the broader culture of a learning organization, using assessment and student satisfaction results to make continuous improvements in their degree programs and the College.

**Culminating Experience**

The External Reviewers report (External Reviewers Report, p. 5) states that the culminating experience is “problematic” for several reasons. Students must begin the project far in advance, and they have trouble finding a first reader. On the faculty side, faculty find the experience to be a burden with minimal compensation. In addition, students often do not finish on time, creating a backlog of responsibilities for faculty. In response to feedback from faculty and students, the External Reviewers recommend seeking alternative models. In the APRC Interview, Graduate Director John Dopp reported that the College has already reviewed several options and is considering two in particular. One is a case-based course where a student works on case analysis as part of a class and then conducts a more complete case study analysis for the culminating experience requirement itself. The second option is a large group course (60 to 70 students) with students listening to speakers from the business community who present on topics about which students write.

Although the external reviewers state that such a large class size is common among business graduate programs, APRC believes that a smaller class size may be more appropriate for a culminating experience. In fact, SF State University standards for graduate programs specifically state that graduate courses should enroll 30 students or fewer, and graduate seminar courses should be limited to 15 students. It is not clear to the APRC that the proposed second option will meet the academic requirements of a graduate level culminating experience; APRC also recognizes that this option has not been fully planned and is still under consideration.

The APRC applauds the College for moving ahead with this important issue so quickly and recommends working closely with the Graduate Dean to ensure the professionalism, intellectual rigor, and appropriateness of whatever model is finally chosen.
Course Delivery

The APRC notes that a number of courses listed in the course rotation schedule (e.g., ISYS 812, ISYS 862, ISYS 863 and ISYS 864 as well as ISYS 882, 818, 830, 855, 857 and 869, and MGMT 818, 831, 832) have not been offered for some semesters. The APRC strongly recommends addressing this issue by banking them or offering them as electives once every three semesters as some other graduate programs do. However, continuing to have them listed as part of the degree programs without being taught is misleading to students and must be addressed.

Resource Support for the Program

The APRC fully supports the recommendation of the College and External Reviewers (Self-study, p. 36; External Reviewers Report, p. 3) that the College should make more effective use of its alumni in their fundraising efforts. The APRC further recommends that the College work with their advisory board and University Advancement to obtain long-term external funding.

Executive Education

The College recommended moving into executive education, which is a move supported by the External Reviewers (External Reviewers Report, p. 2). Pursuing efforts in this arena would address some of the College's needs for additional resources and development activities as well as expand the presence of the College further into the community. The APRC supports the use of College resources and faculty to create executive education programs, which would further the influence of the College and also help build the College's degree programs.

However, the challenges facing the College in pursuing these efforts go beyond this one College. The APRC recommends that the Provost and the Provost's Curriculum Committee address the fiscal challenges faced by departments when seeking alternative means of course and program delivery. While CEL and their services have improved enormously, departments and programs still feel that their share of revenues raised are not commensurate with their efforts.

Other Self-Support Programs

Further, the APRC agrees with the External Reviewers' assessment (p. 6) that another self-support alternative might be the online provision of a relatively unique program like its new Sustainability emphasis. Harnessing SF State's reputation for social justice and its own expertise for areas like sustainability could allow the College to develop a lucrative online offering, an option at least worth exploring.
Concluding Remarks

It is clear that the College of Business graduate programs are healthy and effective. Overall, they meet the needs of the students, faculty, college and university. The programs are well-conceived, effectively planned and implemented, and include built-in mechanisms for continuous review and improvement. With dedicated attention to the issues identified in the self-study, external reviewers report, and this report, APRC believes that the College of Business graduate programs will continue to thrive and improve into the foreseeable future.