CONCLUDING ACTION MEMORANDUM
SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
Spring 2012

Introduction

The San Francisco State University Department of Economics, housed in the College of Business offers a BA and an MA in Economics. The Department undertook a self-study of its programs, which was followed by an external review by two consultants: James B. Gerber from San Diego State University and Christopher J. Ruhm from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. The external review was, in turn, followed by an internal review from the Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) of the Academic Senate, which examined all documentation from the Department and the external review. Please note that this review was delay over a year due to the reorganization of colleges.

As noted in the APRC report, the BA provides solid training that meets the diverse needs of students at SF State in terms of providing theory for students bound for graduate school, training for students pursuing careers immediately upon graduation, and giving students an academic focus to pursue a liberal arts degree. The MA emphasizes applied economics and is designed to prepare students for an analytical career in the private and public sectors. Graduates employed in the private sector usually find employment in the financial and insurance industry while those who go into the public sector find jobs with state and local governments in regulatory agencies, planning departments, and labor departments.

Commendations

1. The Department is commended for improving the overall quality of the graduate program and maintaining core strengths during a period of constrained resources.

2. The Department is commended for undertaking changes in its curriculum to further align and identify the graduate degree in economics as an applied degree with an increased emphasis on quantitative skills.

3. The Department is commended for its mandatory advising policy.

4. The Department is applauded for its decision to phase out paired courses with deliberate speed while increasing the number of graduate seminars.
Action Plan

Based on the outcome of the academic program review and on the discussions resulting from this review, the Department of Economics will take the following actions:

Curriculum

1. The Department should continue its increased emphasis on quantitative skills, both in admissions requirements and in the curriculum.

2. The Department should conduct a comprehensive survey of employers in the Bay Area to determine the skill sets and competencies they would prefer to see in MA graduates whom they would most likely hire.

3. The Department should continue discussions with the College of Business regarding a graduate specialization in Financial Economics.

4. The Department should begin intentional networking with faculty in other departments on issues related to environmental and health economics and public and labor economics in order to generate opportunities to obtain external funding from sponsors such as the National Institutes of Health or private foundations.

5. The Department should continue to pursue the development of graduate internships at profit and non-profit organizations and should work closely with alumni contacts and existing campus resources to mitigate the high start-up costs that this project might incur.

6. The Department should investigate the use of SF State's Coursestream (or equivalent) technology as it begins to increase class size at the lower division undergraduate level to support the upper division undergraduate courses and graduate program.

Faculty

1. The Department should delay the request for two new faculty hires until it has decided on the curricular foci of the program and then strengthen expertise in those areas.

2. The department should redefine its “best scholars criteria” in hiring to include consideration of factors likely to attract and retain faculty with established professional, community and personal interests in the Bay Area. This
recommendation follows on the heels of a number of faculty who have been lost to higher paying positions in government and corporate employers.

Students

1. The Department should use the rubrics developed for the assessment process also as an advising tool for students as they enter the program and throughout their studies.

2. The Department should investigate “green” technology development in the private sector that will be receiving substantial federal funding for possible intern placements.

Resources

1. The Department should explore a student fee to purchase additional software for partial alleviation of costs of materials.

Provost’s Statement

The following statement from Provost Sue Rosser is intended to provide a context for addressing resource-related issues in all Concluding Action Memoranda: “Student demand is growing in many areas of the curriculum. Furthermore, given the current fiscal setting, we do not expect that overall funding for programs will increase at all beyond current levels. In fact, in the current financial environment, we expect that funding will likely be further diminished. Therefore, all academic units are being asked to examine the depth and breadth of offerings in their programs and to assess the extent to which they can be sustained. Accordingly, as with all academic units in the University, the College of Business and the Department of Economics must look at their ability to continue to offer the full array of current programs and emphases over the next several years.”
Authorization

We hereby approve this Memorandum of Understanding:

Sue V. Rosser, Vice President/University Provost

Caran Colvin

Caran Colvin, Dean

Sudip Chattopadhyay, Chair

4/3/12
Date

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Date

4.3.2012
Date