

**Summary Report of the University Self Study Committee  
on the Department of Economics  
June 2001**

**A. Preparation of the Self Study**

The self-study report was written by a senior faculty member and distributed to the faculty and administration for review and comments. A second draft incorporated recommendations and suggestions and was completed in February, 2001.

**B. Response to-Recommendations of Previous Report**

The previous external review self-study was conducted in 1996, and there were two major commendations and four recommendations. The two commendations praised the culture of the department and the dedication of the faculty in serving students.

The first recommendation dealt with the need to increase the number of mathematic courses required by students majoring in Economics. After careful review and deliberation the faculty chose not to increase the requirement but did recommend additional courses in math to be considered by majors.

The second recommendation was for the consideration of using distance learning in order to better serve the community and to increase student enrollments. After participating in a distance- learning project, the faculty found it to be cost prohibitive, and not an efficient use of faculty time. Some members are using this modality in their classes on a limited basis.

The third recommendation was to marshal necessary resources to establish an economics technology laboratory and this was accomplished through a \$90,000 grant in 1996. It appears now, that it may need to be upgraded or replaced.

The fourth and final recommendation was to consider extrinsic rewards for faculty professional development. Since 6 of 8 last promotions were based on a "Superior" in professional development, there was a consensus that there was no need for this kind of incentive.

**C. The Department**

The Department has a cohesive faculty who demonstrates a genuine concern for students and who are professionally dedicated to the content areas. Their consistent, on-going scholarly work is also noteworthy. The budgetary support for operations and travel seem adequate; however there is a concern for a capital improvement program to replace the computer lab. There is also a concern regarding the insufficient clerical support that is shared between two programs.

**D. Curriculum** . The B.A. Degree program in Economics seems like a traditional one that may need to be it becoming a gateway to graduate studies in public administration and education. Dialogue would need to continue with the colleges of business and education and may result in; an increase in enrollment. A student needs assessment might also be valuable in determining any future curriculum changes; however, the current curricular offerings seem extensive.

**E. Instruction**

The Department Faculty is dedicated to a commitment to quality teaching and responses from students seem to validate this. Numerous initiatives are listed to promote an increase in enrollment. Faculty members are also engaging students in lectures, labs, and seminars and faculty have begun to use Power-point and the internet in some classes. A plan for outcome assessment has been submitted to the graduate dean (It is not uncommon that specific feedback has not been forthcoming.) Grading of students in Economics seems within acceptable bands when compared to the other departments in the College.

**F. Faculty**

The faculty is comprised of 8 full time members who are experienced, well-trained economists and there appears to be a very high morale within the department. All members are active scholars who are involved in their areas of specialization. Two faculty left in 1999 and have not been replaced. Although there has been as much as 46% of the class sections taught by adjunct faculty, currently the percentage is 25%, and these sections appear to be entry level courses in principles of economics. The department has a positive relationship with the administration. Six of the faculty are tenure full professors with one tenured Associate and one untenured Assistant.

The faculty has continued to be sensitive to work toward a gender balance and to provide a pool of qualified candidates that include individuals of minority ethnic origins. Statistical charts also demonstrate that reasonable accommodations have been made for assigned time and sabbaticals.

**G. Students**

Although the numbers of Economics majors has continually declined in the last ten years, survey findings from alumni suggest that there is a concurrence of opinion of the high quality of teaching. The over all results of the self-selected responses illustrated a high level of satisfaction with instruction and academic course offerings from students. In interviews with students, positive responses were the norm regarding faculty and instruction. High marks were also earned in the areas of sequence of classes and access to faculty.

**H. Library and Related Resources**

Although there has been an increase in on-line journals, the number of hardcopy journals and books are limited in the content area of Economics. There have also been problems with the on-line version of the card catalog. Department offices are satisfactory, but classroom assigned to the department do not reflect equitable distribution of prime rooms.

**I. Departmental Governance** The Department Chair has 1/2 of her teaching load bought-out and there appears to be a suitable governance system in place with faculty participating in a shared governance model. Often the Department acts as a "committee-as-a-whole". Department evaluation, and merit committees are elected at the beginning of each academic year. An annual retreat is held at the beginning of each for planning purposes.

### **Summary**

The students and alumni reflect a high satisfaction rating for the program and faculty. The faculty have established a positive, professional culture that supports the University Mission as well as the College Mission.

Although there have been many efforts to increase enrollment in the last 10 years, there has been a steady decline. Academic standards have been maintained, but the enrollment decline has also contributed to the decision not to replace the last two members leaving the department.

The Economics Department is strong and stable and is meeting the needs of the students it serves.

### **J. Recommendations**

For the Department of Economics to move to the next higher level of excellence, the following recommendations are offered for consideration:

1. Continued efforts should be made to bridge across college lines to improve cooperative efforts to the College of Business and Public Administration and College of Education. This may result in a means of collaboration that would increase student enrollment.
2. Consideration should be given to analyze the work-load of the clerical staff to ensure the support necessary to sustain the program.
3. Measures should be taken to explore sources of income to maintain, improve, and/or replace the computer lab. It appears this equipment plays a vital part of the laboratory experience for students and is necessary to maintain quality instruction.
4. A limited intern experience is offered on an elective basis since many students work full-time. It is recommended to consider an alternative for students working full-time.