

Date: October 10, 2007

To: Terri Swartz, Interim Dean, College of Business and Economics
Nan Maxwell, Chair, Economics

From: Michael Mahoney, Provost and Vice President, Academic Affairs



Subject: MOU Meeting – B.A. Economics, M.A. Economics

On September 26, 2007, I met with Terri Swartz, Interim Dean, College of Business and Economics; Nan Maxwell, Chair, Economics; Aline Soules, Chair, CAPR; and Carl Bellone, AVP, Academic Programs and Graduate Studies to discuss the Program Review for the B.A. and M.A. in Economics and to develop an MOU as required by CAPR 9.

Most of the Department of Economics course offerings (about 80%) are service courses for undergraduate and graduate Business majors. Relatively few courses per quarter (20%) are offered for Economics majors. The department used to offer Econ 1000 as a university-wide service course and participate in the freshmen clusters program but both were cut by a former interim dean. However, Econ 1000 is now being offered again and plans are underway for a freshmen cluster in 08/09 that will include an Economics course.

The Economics Department has a very senior faculty. Until Fall Quarter 2007, every faculty member was a full professor and the last new faculty member came aboard in 1991. In Fall Quarter 2007, the department added a new Assistant Professor, Dr. Michelle Lee, and is currently recruiting for an additional assistant professor to begin Fall Quarter 2008. The Chair is planning to request another tenure-track search for 2008/09. However, the Chair realizes that other departments in the college, which have a lower percentage of full-time to part-time faculty may have a greater need. In Fall Quarter 2007, the department was composed of 8 full professors and 1 assistant professor. Due to the senior nature of the faculty, some retirements are expected over the next five years.

The department does not use many part-time lecturers, thus it exceeds the goal of 75% to 25% full-time to part-time faculty. However, many of the full-time faculty members have part of their time “bought out” by grants and/or they take periodical difference-in-pay leaves.

The Department’s majors have been growing in the recent past bucking the national trend, but very recently they have seen a decline. The department has revised its curriculum to reduce the number of options (due to lack of student interest) and is continuing to explore curricular revisions.

The Department and CBE have decided to include the B.A. and M.A. in Economics as part of its upcoming AACSB accreditation. This was not the case in the past, which apparently made the department somewhat of an outsider in the College. I hope this change improves cross-department integration in the CBE.

The department has a history of high student-faculty ratios (SFRs) which were in the 50s but are now down to the 30s. Most of the upper division courses are certified for GE credit which means they have a writing requirement and must be capped at 45 students. Even with a cap of 45, the writing requirement put a burden on Economics faculty. The issue of providing sufficient writing in large classes is one that is of concern to the department as is the overall high SFR numbers.

Understandings

The CAPR report raised several issues including: 1) a very senior faculty which needs to be balanced by “new blood,” 2) greater course coverage by full-time faculty, 3) quality of lecturers, and 4) the inadequacy of non-faculty resources, particularly departmental secretarial resources, control over scheduling, and identification as a separate entity. Here are my comments concerning these four issues.

1. A new faculty member (the first since 1991) began in Fall Quarter 2007. The department is currently recruiting for an additional faculty member to begin in Fall Quarter 2008. The department is encouraged to apply for yet another faculty position for Fall Quarter 2009, but consideration of this request will be balanced against other needs in the College, including those of departments that have not reached the 75% to 25% full-time to part-time ratio. Regardless of the outcome of the request for a Fall 2009 new faculty member, the need to “refresh” the Economic faculty over the next 5 years is critical for the long term vitality of the department. The department should therefore develop a 5-year plan for refreshing its faculty and present it to the dean before Spring 2008.
2. The elimination of most of the overseas programs has made the lack of coverage of courses by full-time faculty a non-issue.
3. The department is encouraged to continue to monitor the quality of its lecturers in accordance with standard university procedures under the CBA.
4. The chair indicated that the secretarial, scheduling, and identity issues have been successfully addressed and are no longer major issues. These improvements are valued.

Dr. Carl Bellone and I sincerely appreciate the very important teaching and other activities that the Economics department continues to do and we thank the faculty for their continuing strong efforts on behalf of our students. We'd also like to thank CAPR for their informative report.

MKM:sbk

Cc: Aline Soules
Hank Reichman
Susan Correia
Carl Bellone