TO: The Academic Senate
FROM: Committee on Instruction and Curriculum (CIC)
SUBJECT: 15-16 CIC 63: Degree Type Change M.S. Economics
PURPOSE: Approval of the Academic Senate

ACTION REQUESTED: That the Senate approve the degree type change for M.S. Economics and be informed that the curriculum was approved for the transformation from quarters to semesters.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
The Senate process for approving transformed degree programs for the semester calendar is defined by 14-15 CIC 36. The Graduate Programs Subcommittee discussed the M.S. Economics (formerly M.A. Economics) program at its April 28 meeting, which was attended by representatives from the Department of Economics and approved the curriculum unanimously with the acknowledgement that some non-substantive changes may occur in the Catalog copy and recommended that CIC approve the degree type change.

At its meeting on May 16, CIC unanimously recommended that the Senate approve the degree type change. The program will be more quantitatively oriented after the transformation and the norm within the field is that quantitative degrees are labelled as MS, whereas the more social science-oriented programs are labelled as MA. The proposal may be viewed within Curriculog.
Rationale for Changing Degree Designation from MA to MS

Graduate education in economics aims to blend scientific reasoning, advanced mathematical modeling, empirical analysis, and programming. The proposed change in degree designation aims to better reflect this goal, and also signal an increased emphasis on quantitative skills, in particular empirical analysis and econometrics, with the semester redesign. One of the important changes in the redesign involves the creation of the course, “Foundations of Economic Theory,” which covers mathematical techniques essential to other courses in the MS degree. The redesign also creates a new concentration, “Quantitative Business Modeling,” which emphasizes those business courses that have significant quantitative components.

Among the Cal State campuses, programs with a significant econometrics and mathematics component (such as the Cal State Poly campuses) offer MS degrees, whereas those weighted toward policy (including San Jose and Sacramento) designate their degrees as MA. Ours is similar in nature to the Cal Poly programs. There is a high demand in the Bay Area for professional analysts that such programs meet, and it is important to signal to employers that our graduates have the technical skills an MS degree implies.

The change also reflects the Department’s desire to reduce confusion among College of Business and Economics students, and expand program enrollments. For example, a student emailed the following question to our Program Director on November 30, 2015: “Also was wondering why the Econ program is an MA not MS. Is there any additional courses I can take that would allow me to graduate with an MS?” Other Masters level programs in the College include the Masters of Science in Business Administration: Business Analytics (MSBA) and the Masters of Science in Accounting (MS Accounting), which have comparable quantitative requirements.