

Evaluation Report for Program Review Face to Face Meeting University of Wisconsin-Whitewater: Economics (BA, BBA, BS, BSE) Majors and Minors, 2020-2021

Date: 2/10/2021

Invited: Interim Provost Greg Cook; Interim AVC Kristin Plessel; Dean John Chenoweth (Business & Econ); Department Chair/Program Coordinator Jeff Heinrich; faculty and staff in the Economics program; Program Review Team Chair Eric Appleton; Program Review team members Janine Tobeck, Tom Klubertanz, and Assessment Representative Katy Casey.

Overview of review team evaluation, program comments:

The college expert made note of the above-and-beyond work of the program; the committee appreciated the program's candid, self-reflective/self-critical, and honest reporting, which allowed them to provide better feedback.

Discussion of Review Team's evaluation:

1 – What are the unique features of this program, what sets it apart from other program in the region? Is there an identity re-evaluation occurring, and in what direction would the program like to head? How does this connect to the current perception of the program's reputation amongst potential students?

Ahmad: Much self-evaluation in past five years; what does program do well, what not so well? Perception reported by general students is that economics is hard

Winden: Program is in midst of ongoing serious discussions; program has pride in robust and rigorous curriculum. Can the program find a way to be more accepting but maintain rigor? Perhaps dual tracks; one aimed at graduate study, and a track for more general accessibility.

Heinrich: On question of program's consideration of Equity and Social Justice curriculum, noted that the professional organization has adopted guidelines for inclusivity and that the program is working to align

Huh: Notes that she is currently teaching Economics of Discrimination

2 – How does the program prioritize goals and actions? The program has an extensive list of goals and activities with proposed completion dates, but what mechanism is in place to prevent the program from overwhelming itself?

Ahmad discussed program strategic planning process: long term goals determine year to year goals; every 5 years the program does an envisioning exercise, reviews mission statement, etc. Short term goals them feed into the long- and medium-term goals. At the end of the academic year, the program takes

stock and revises goals and activities for upcoming year, selecting higher priority and most actionable items.

Heinrich: prioritization is done via personnel interest, opportunity, cost, and time availability

Casey: How equitably are the efforts shared by members of the program?

Winden: voluntary; assignments are made by interest, but the program tries to offer support broadly and evenly. The majority of the program made contributions in assembling the A&R report; feels workload is shared very well.

Ersal: The strategic plan committee is working on adopting a more student-centric approach to goal making, collecting data from past and present students; in recruitment looking for ways to help students to see career and social/personal values

Casey: Sounds like the issue is more recruitment than retention

Heinrich: Program is building on assessments in lower level courses to better track student progress as they move through the curriculum

3 – How does the program pull data for assessment? What sources across the curriculum provide the data? It looks like decisions are made based on collected evidence, but there was curiosity as to the means of data collection.

Heinrich: IRP dashboard is a godsend; thank you Lois.

Cook: Regarding DFWI rates: are there areas of the program that seem to be barriers? Are rates even across the program?

Winden: 201 (Intro) has highest rates in program, but compared to intro classes across campus not out of average. Program has been conscientious about addressing DFWI rates – more student centered, lower caps, more interaction – met with mixed success, as much seems to depend upon the student's preparation as a new student

Heinrich: Program knows what rates are but the question is why; remark of concern about administration's seeming lack of interest in addressing the why.

Cook: Gratified to see program exploring DFWI matters; overall concern across campus regarding preparation difference among different groups of students. Program should consider a follow up session with ACV Plessel.

Winden: No one wants students to get Ds and Fs; how as instructors can we get extra resources to help students with less pre-university preparation without making it a part of the course itself? Lack of preparation does not mean lack of success. If the university accepts a student, it's the program's job to help them be successful.

Cook: Plessel's strength areas in active learning and student success programs; suggests adoption of asset-minded mindset rather than deficit-minded mindset. Student population will continue to diversify;

focus less on students' perceived weakness, and bolster their strengths; university needs to work to connect with strengths the students already possess.

Plessel: LEARN center has resources. Also think about students' hidden potentials; how do we as educators unlock these.

Heinrich: Program has been working the last five years to move to a more student-centered mindset

Plessel: The fact that there is a conversation shows progress

Hayek: Teaches 2-4 sections of 201; noticed that when there was a shift to soft skills the students responded; not just focus on academic success, but personal maturity and growth

Plessel: Soft skills are also 21st Century employability skills (LEAP principles)

Heinrich: We don't teach economics – we teach students.

Recommended Actions:

Recommended Action #1

Work on exterior perceptions of program, marketing, recruitment; develop realistic goals for enrollment within available resources. a) Work on strategies to better differentiate the majors and how to better connect and inform across all advising bodies b) Look for ways to improve gateway student experiences; pros and cons to open more doors to non-CoBE students c) Revise mission statement to better reflect program aspirations

Recommended Action #2

Work on consistency in curriculum across multi-section courses

Recommended Action #3

Continue work on current self-identified program goals and assessment efforts, including creating SLOs for minor. (see self-study sections on Program Goals and Program Areas of Improvement).

Recommended Action #4

Begin conversations with College and University on ways to offer a broader variety of upper division courses (balance of service, research, staffing, etc.).

Recommended Result:

Continuation without qualification

Next Self-study and/or Progress Report Due Dates:

1 - Next SHORT self-study will be due to the Dean on May 1, 2026 and to the Assessment Office on August 1, 2026

For a copy of the full evaluation report and detailed comments, please reach out to the assessment office: assessment@uww.edu.