

Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo Economics, BA and MA

The 2017-2018 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for Economics - BA and MA programs concluded with a culmination meeting on October 5, 2018.

The following people attended the meeting: Kari Knutson Miller (Provost), Morteza Rahmatian (Dean, MCBE), Dipankar Purkayastha (Chair), and Su Swarat (Asst. VP for Institutional Effectiveness).

The Provost congratulated the programs on the accomplishments highlighted through the PPR process below. In particular, she commended the program for fostering positive student learning and experiences, and for having a group of productive and dedicated faculty. The Provost also inquired the status of the upcoming AACSB accreditation visit, and the Dean responded that all is ready for the site visit.

- The department is committed to excellence in teaching and research, and there is a high level of function and positive attitude from all stakeholders.
- Students, both undergraduate and graduate, appreciate the smaller class sizes affording more faculty engagement, and praised faculty for their passion, expertise and providing research opportunities.
- MA graduates have successfully placed into highly regarded PhD programs, a variety of local, state, and federal government agencies, and well-known companies in finance, consulting, entertainment, and other sectors.

Major recommendations and concerns raised through the PPR process were discussed as follows:

1. Student enrollment:

- The PPR external reviewers recommended to increase enrollment of the undergraduate program through recruitment and curriculum revision, the creation of interdisciplinary tracks, attracting minors, actively recruiting pre-majors and majors from local community colleges and high schools, partnering with college advisors, and highlighting career opportunities. This issue was the focus of the culmination meeting discussion.
- The Provost recommended the undergraduate program to deepen partnership with Student Affairs to enhance community college and high school outreach and recruitment; She also suggested the graduate program to utilize the soon-to-be launched Salesforce tool for digital outreach and recruitment to potential applicants.
- The Chair acknowledged the need to increase enrollment. He would like to turn the Department of Economics from a “service” department to a “majors” department.
 - The Chair cited potential earnings data from the New York Times to emphasize the importance of economics in preparing students for future success. He suggested the need to raise students’ awareness so that Economics is not a “hidden” major.

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- The Dean and the Chair stated that resources are needed for student and community outreach, which would allow for the creation of an outreach coordinator position (faculty member with reduced course load). The Provost commented that how the college or department allocates reassigned time is a local level decision, and the college could consider using student success funds to support relevant efforts.
- The AVP for Institutional Effectiveness recommended the program to institute progress tracking markers to document the “return on investment”, which would help evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach strategies (e.g. outreach coordinator).
- In the short-term, the Provost recommended the Chair to create outreach materials and/or hold events that help students understand “why major in Economics?”, to work with Student Affairs’ outreach team to see how they could help support the effort, and to conduct targeted recruitment to student populations that are likely to be Economics majors or minors (e.g. students with sufficient math competency).
- For the graduate program, the Chair stated that two graduate tracks are being considered to cater to students who want to go to a PhD program and those who want to gain professional training such as data analytics. The cost of creating two separate tracks is relatively low, and this approach has the potential to be successful given similar strategies taken at other CSU campuses.

2. Student success:

- The Chair stated the program’s strong commitment to student success. Specifically, the BA program conducted a student survey, which revealed that more course offerings are needed in early mornings or evenings. The program is examining the possibilities of adjusting course schedules to accommodate student needs.
- The Chair also asked to increase Graduate Assistants and Supplemental Instruction (SI) (particularly in Econ 201, Econ 202, Econ 310, Econ 315, Econ 320 and in all 300 level GE and global awareness classes). The Provost concurred and informed the Chair that SI expansion is currently under way.

3. Assessment:

- The external reviewers recommended the programs to adopt a more systematic assessment approach. The Chair indicated that the department will follow the college assessment structure and process.
- The Dean indicated that the College’s Assessment Coordinator position is currently being filled. Once filled, the person will work with the programs to strengthen assessment.

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4. Faculty retention:

- The Chair stated that the department has managed to hire great faculty, but there is a concern about faculty retention. He agreed with the external reviewers' recommendation that faculty should be provided with more workload credit (e.g. course release) for important departmental, college, and campus service commitments.
- The Dean and the Provost acknowledged the concern.

The Dean has agreed to *create a special fund* to help the department address the issues raised in the PPR. The Dean and the Chair will collaborate to use the fund to raise faculty retention, enhance faculty research, increase student enrollment and help econ students succeed in the long run by increasing the rigor and the usefulness of economics courses.

The Provost concluded the meeting by commending and thanking the contribution by the Economics faculty to the students and the university.