

Response to “Review of Business Program at University of Washington Bothell”

November 21, 2006

The faculty and staff of the Business Program at UW Bothell are pleased with the following statement from the Academic Program Review Visiting Committee’s report: “Our overall impression is that the program seems to be operating quite well, with the various constituent groups generally satisfied.”

The report goes on to say, “At this time we recommend that the Program be continued, but subject to further review in five years.” It is our understanding that the normal cycle of program reviews is ten years. Therefore, the recommendation for further review in five years appears to be at odds with the previous statement that “the program seems to be operating quite well.”

Our view is that a full ten-year review period is justified for five reasons:

1. Our faculty are productive scholars, strongly committed to delivering excellent MBA and undergraduate business programs. Our full-time MBA faculty pursue active research programs and publish in respected journals, including some of the top journals in their fields. At the same time they are engaged in continuous efforts to refine curriculum and improve teaching effectiveness. During the past year we successfully recruited four new faculty members, who will contribute to the quality and breadth of our programs.
2. We deliver rigorous programs that are well received by our students. Alumni report a high level of satisfaction with their educational experience and strongly support the Business Program. They report that their education was challenging, relevant and professionally empowering. Many alumni, especially for the MBA Program, achieve rapid career advancement after completing the program.
3. Demand for the MBA Program is robust. Applications were significantly higher this year than the previous year (90 vs. 73 applications for 40 slots) and are at near-record levels. Average quality of enrolled students, measured by GMAT scores (median 600 vs. 580) and average years of work experience (14 vs. 12), is also higher.

Note: The number of applications for the class entering in 2005 was abnormally low, possibly because in that year the Business School at UW Seattle expanded its fee-based Technology Management MBA Program offered in Kirkland less than ten miles from our campus. By devoting more resources to recruiting, we were able to increase applications to near-record levels for the class entering in 2006.

4. Demand for the undergraduate business program is growing and is projected to increase significantly beginning in 2008 as our new freshmen become juniors. We have enrolled for this fall quarter the largest class of entering undergraduate Business majors in our history. Measurable indicators of applicant quality have held roughly steady for the past few years.
5. The areas for improvement pointed out by the report are generally ones that we have recognized already and plan to address in the near future. The report provides a confirmation of their importance, however, and an impetus for the faculty and staff to make needed changes. We describe our plan by responding below to the individual recommendations made in each section of the report.

Identity of the UWB Business Program

Recommendation: Identify a well-defined set of peer schools/programs to serve as benchmarks (the committee suggests branch campuses of other major state universities)

The recommendation raises issues related to both campus and program peers. This is partly a matter to be worked out with the Provost and President as decisions regarding the level of integration or separation of the newer campuses are being made. The campus has so far taken the approach of comparing itself to the peers of the entire university plus an evolving set of branch campuses of major state universities and the universities that participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement.

There has been no formal set of peers established for any of the individual programs at UW Bothell. However, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs has asked us to choose “comparable” programs to make some informal comparisons of financial resource availability. These are primarily programs at branch campuses of major state universities.

As the Business Program moves toward its goal of separate accreditation by AACSB in 2016 (with review period to begin in 2011), we will designate official peer programs for accreditation purposes. Within the next year or two the faculty will discuss how to choose these peers.

Recommendation: Focus on serving our clientele in the East/Northeast portion of the Puget Sound area; don’t replicate or compete with the Business School at UW Seattle.

The Business Program has always considered its major responsibility to be serving the students in the East/Northeast region and will continue to do so. We’ve never attempted to replicate the Business School at UW Seattle and won’t do so in the future either.

Regarding competition, our vision is to provide the premier undergraduate business and evening MBA education in the region. We intend to pursue that vision without regard to whether it is viewed as competition by the Business School at UW Seattle or anyone else. The Business School recently expanded its fee-based MBA program in the East/Northeast portion of the Puget Sound area (Kirkland) without consulting with or informing us until after the fact. We have initiated discussions about the need for the impact on our program to be considered in cases such as this in the future.

Recommendation: Devote more resources to recruiting good-quality students.

We agree wholeheartedly with the committee's recommendation. For the MBA Program, we have increased the resources devoted to recruiting in the past year with a very strong class entering in 2006 as a result. For undergraduate business majors, we plan to work with the Student Affairs Office, which has primary responsibility for recruiting undergraduate students, to

- Implement previously-approved dual admission program for community college students by Fall 2007
- Offer information sessions on campus for UWB, CC, and UWS freshmen and sophomores by Fall 2006
- Develop articulation agreements with community colleges where appropriate by Fall 2007
- Host an annual event for community college faculty in business and economics by Winter 2007
- Develop an advertising plan for the Business Program by Winter 2007.

Guidelines for Expectations of the Faculty

Recommendation: Create guidelines for evaluation of teaching and research to be articulated to new hires and current faculty including clear answers to the following questions:

1. Can an individual be promoted on meritorious teaching alone?
2. What are the tradeoffs between teaching and research for tenure-track faculty?
3. Should teaching load vary with research productivity?
4. Should service load vary with rank?
5. Should service load vary with research productivity?

Standards for appointment and promotion to various ranks come from the University Handbook and apply to UW Bothell as they do to other campuses. There is substantial room, however, for differences in interpretation of the standards, which are implemented through collegial discussion and professional judgments. While the faculty resists arbitrary numeric standards for research output, at least one generalization can be made from previous decisions and discussions: we expect research of the same quality but, because of the higher

teaching and service loads at UW Bothell, lower quantity than would be expected at UW Seattle.

We are in the process of finalizing a new statement describing in more detail how we evaluate teaching and research for purposes of promotion and tenure decisions. The discussions have been extensive and we are “almost there.” All of our new faculty members have been informed about the nature of these ongoing discussions and have begun to participate in them. The most recent version includes the following statements.

“The candidate for promotion to Professor must have a national reputation in his or her field. The candidate for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor must show promise of attaining a national reputation. Letters from external reviewers are extremely important, as are the reputations of the reviewers. Any other evidence to indicate the quality of the research, such as the quality of journals in which publications appear, citations, awards, etc., is also valuable. A number of different types of scholarly contributions are valued (grants, book chapters, presentations, etc.) but there must be a base of publications in high-quality refereed journals.

There must be evidence of effective teaching in the various courses the candidate teaches regularly (core, electives, MBA, etc.). This can be provided by student and peer evaluations, testimonial letters from students, teaching awards, etc. Particular attention is paid to the level of intellectual challenge of the courses.”

Recommendation: Devote serious consideration to determining some system whereby senior faculty provide guidance to junior colleagues; create a more relaxed ongoing relationship between junior and senior colleagues.

The faculty has already begun to have discussions about improving the mentoring of junior faculty. We’ve previously relied on a formal review process involving written communication from the Personnel Committee and at least two meetings a year with the Program Director for Assistant Professors. This has been supplemented by informal relationships among the faculty. We are a small group and there are strong and extensive informal ties and communication among faculty members. All faculty members know that the agenda for our meetings is open: any item they suggest will be included including those relating to career issues. UW Bothell also supports “research and teaching circles,” which have been used as vehicles for mentoring.

We are somewhat skeptical about the effectiveness of assigning each junior faculty member a mentor from the senior faculty and so will be seeking to develop a mentoring program that improves on the current methods without creating the problems of assigning mentors. This is an important project for the coming year.

Process/Culture/Governance

Recommendation: Transparency and completeness with regards to process, especially for personnel decisions.

During the four-plus years of the tenure of the current Program Director, all personnel decisions have been made with complete transparency and adherence to the faculty code. During the first two years, meetings of the full faculty and the senior faculty were held for the purpose of stressing the importance of process in hiring and promotion and tenure decisions. The program successfully hired four new Assistant Professors and one visiting faculty member during the 2005-06 academic year without controversy regarding process. Since most personnel matters are decided in executive session (by state law), total transparency is not always appropriate.

For non-personnel decisions, the Program Director unknowingly violated university policy in early 2006 by allowing a student to enroll in a course without having taken all of the prerequisite courses. Once it became clear that a violation had occurred, he acknowledged it, apologized to the faculty and staff, and promised that it would not happen again. The Director does not know of any other violations that have occurred during the past four years.

Recommendation: Devote less time to administrative details and more to strategic issues during faculty/staff meetings.

The program has been moving in this direction and during the past year the length of monthly faculty/staff meetings was reduced to two hours from its previous length of three hours. Nonetheless, there is more work to do in this regard as the need for efficiency increases as the size of the program grows.

The culture of the program was created when the faculty was very small and virtually all decisions could be made by a small group during meetings. That culture will change gradually as we attempt to hold on to the best aspects of our strong faculty governance structure. The administration is constantly looking for ways to reduce the time burden on the faculty and staff in making decisions.

Student Concerns with Curriculum

Recommendation: The Director should monitor the teaching performance of visitors and adjuncts more closely.

Although we have had a few problems recently with student complaints about adjunct and visiting faculty, most of these faculty members are effective teachers. Our goal, however, is to have as many permanent faculty members teaching the classes as possible given our resource constraints. As a result of recruiting four new permanent faculty members who will begin teaching this year, we expect to have many fewer classes taught by adjuncts and visitors.

We are also working to provide better mentoring to adjunct and visiting faculty members. The new faculty orientation for UW Bothell has been greatly expanded and new adjunct and visiting faculty members are asked to attend. We are also devoting more efforts to mentoring these faculty members during the school year through two positions that have been created during the past year: Assistant Director and MBA Academic Coordinator. The Assistant Director mentors adjunct and visiting faculty members teaching in the undergraduate program and the MBA Academic Coordinator mentors adjunct and visiting faculty members teaching in the MBA Program.

Finally, the Director monitors the student evaluations of all faculty members including adjuncts and visitors, works with those who appear to be having problems, and in some cases recommends against renewal of contracts. Student evaluations are required for every course taught by visitors and adjuncts.

Community and Outreach

Recommendation: Future role of the Advisory Council needs to be addressed.

The Business Program Advisory Council has now been in existence since early 2004 and has held six meetings. It started with eight members and has now grown to nineteen. To this point, the meetings have focused primarily on members learning about the Business Program and providing their perspective on issues relating to development of the program (as well as recruiting new members).

We are now entering the second phase of the Council's development in which its other major objectives – connecting students and faculty to the business community and helping with fund-raising -- will be increasingly important. For the first time, the Advisory Council will have a Chair (Randy Serroels, appointed for a one-year term). To help in setting the future role of the Council, the Program Director attended an AACSB seminar on effectively using an advisory council in San Francisco on Sept. 28-29, 2006.

Recommendation: Increase the effort to attract private sector funding to support the Business Development Center.

Phase 1 of fund-raising for the Business Development Center was designed to attract funding sufficient to open the center. The strategy was to invite local city and county governments to become Founding Advisory Board members for a \$5000 contribution that is renewable annually. We raised \$30,000, hired a half-time Business Counselor, and opened the Center in May 2006.

We have now begun Phase 2 of fund-raising to broaden the involvement to include the private sector (as well as additional government entities). Companies such as banks and providers of services to small businesses will be invited to participate in a number of ways, all of which will include some sort of financial commitment on their part.

Recommendation: Increase participation in the Business Development Center by tenured faculty members in order to create potential synergies between industry and faculty research and enhance Business Program visibility and distinctiveness.

The Business Development Center (BDC) will make it much easier for a faculty member to use community-based projects in the classroom. It reduces the time and cost of managing these experiences. For example, a faculty member who has an interest in using “live cases” no longer has to seek out potential business clients because the BDC can do it for him or her.

The committee is absolutely right that the class projects facilitated by the BDC create potential synergies between industry and faculty research and enhance the visibility and distinctiveness of the program. Collaboration with the community through class projects is one of the hallmarks of the Business Program (and is recognized as such in our mission statement).

The BDC was developed primarily through the efforts of the Director and a Senior Lecturer, Walt Freytag. While it is true that we have not yet had the involvement of senior faculty members in class projects facilitated by the BDC, the Center is still in its infancy. There have as yet been very few class projects of any kind.

We expect that over time all faculty members, not just tenured faculty members, will come to appreciate the value of BDC services and will be more likely to get involved with class projects facilitated by BDC. For most classes it will be up to the individual faculty member to decide whether this type of community-based project enhances student learning in a particular course. For some classes, however, the faculty as a whole will make this decision.

Other General Recommendations

Recommendation: Encourage strong linkages with new first- and second-year students at UWB.

We intend to offer information sessions about Business majors and minors to freshmen and sophomores (as well as potential transfer students) on campus starting this year. We will strongly encourage students with an interest to see our advisors and talk to members of our faculty.

A Few Words About Other Comments in the Report

The committee notes that the issue of gender came up during its time on campus but it doesn't believe gender discrimination is a major issue. It did not recommend any action. Nonetheless, the Business Program takes gender issues seriously and will continue to make every effort to cultivate an environment that promotes gender equity.

When a female faculty member expressed concerns about gender equity, the Program Director asked the other three women on the faculty at that time specifically about that issue. None of them expressed concerns about gender equity in the Program. In addition, the two women who left the program at the end of last year indicated that their departures had nothing to do with gender issues within the Program. The statement in the report suggesting that one of the departures may have been involuntary is incorrect; there have been no involuntary departures from the Business Program to this point in its history.

The committee also notes that there was some concern expressed about speaking openly in faculty meetings for fear of retaliation. It did not recommend any action. The Business Program will continue to make every effort to cultivate an environment that promotes open and respectful communication among faculty, staff, and students. No one should ever have to fear retaliation for expressing his or her views.

The committee heard from some staff members that the Business Program should hire additional staff. We agree and will be adding new staff members as soon as the campus budget allows.

Finally, the committee makes some preliminary comments about the newly revised MBA curriculum. We recognize that adjustments may have to be made as we learn more about the effectiveness of the new curriculum, and we plan to review the program periodically, at least every three-five years as the committee recommends.

Conclusion

The Business Program at UW Bothell is healthy, and the MBA Program is thriving. The faculty is productive, students and alumni are happy, and our problems are being addressed. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to understand why the Academic Program Review Visiting Committee would recommend less than the normal ten years before the next program review. We believe that a full ten-year review period is justified.