



Interdepartmental Correspondence

May 24, 2001

Marsha L. Landolt
Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost
The Graduate School
Box 351240

Dear Dean Landolt:

Enclosed please find our response to the revised committee report on the review of the Department of Construction Management graduate and undergraduate programs. While we agree with most of the issues addressed, we have some comments regarding Weaknesses or Concerns and Other Recommendations. These comments are enclosed.

We were extremely surprised that the committee did not relate their findings and suggestions to the availability of resources (budget, faculty and staff). Lack of sufficient resources in these areas is the department's most pressing problem. We hope to discuss our financial limitations and needs with you and the Dean of the Undergraduate Education.

Please let me know if you need more information. We greatly appreciate the hard work done by the review committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Saeed Daniali'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Saeed Daniali
Professor & Chair
Department of Construction Management

Enclosure

CC. Dr. Bob Muguerauer
Dr. John Schaufelberger

RESPONSE TO THE PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

We have reviewed the report carefully, and while we agree with the overall findings of the review committee, we are puzzled by the absence of any comments regarding the resource limitations the department faces. During the last four years, enrollment in our graduate and undergraduate programs has increased considerably while our operating budgets were decreased. To make significant progress toward accomplishing our research goals, we need at least two additional faculty members. This faculty shortage was identified as a weakness in our accreditation review. We explained our resource shortfall to the review committee and anticipated the subject would be mentioned in the report. Without additional resources, many of the problems identified by the review committee will persist.

The following are our responses to the weakness or concerns cited in the report and the recommendations provided:

WEAKNESSES OR CONCERNS

Curriculum

There were some comments by students about redundancy in the undergraduate curriculum.

On May 4, 2001, the department conducted a faculty retreat to review the entire undergraduate curriculum and the coverage of each course. Redundancies were identified, and course content modified to build upon topics addressed in preceding courses rather than repeat material previously covered.

Another area of concern for students who wish to take the Master degree is the large number of undergraduate courses required. The department may wish to consider offering a smaller number of intensive classes for graduate students who do not have the entire range of undergraduate Construction Management preparation.

A set of prerequisite requirements was developed for applicants who did not possess a degree in construction management or related degrees. Prerequisite requirements may be validated by transcripts showing completion of similar courses at other institutions or by successfully completing validation examinations. Prerequisite requirements not validated are completed by enrollment in regular undergraduate classes. Each year, we have 4 to 6 students enrolled in these prerequisite courses, which is not sufficient to justify offering special intensive courses. In addition, the department does not have faculty resources to teach these additional courses. If we had sufficient student demand and adequate faculty resources, we would offer a smaller set of intensive prerequisite courses.

We also felt that there should be a broader faculty involvement in supervising graduate student research. Currently that is borne entirely by the graduate advisor. This seems to us to be an unusually high burden for one person, and make the graduate advisor vulnerable to burnout.

The department previously had only two members of the graduate faculty who were qualified to supervise graduate student's research, and one of them resigned in December 2000. We now have three members of the graduate faculty, and the responsibility for supervising graduate student research will be distributed among them.

RA and TA Support

The availability of RA/TA financial support is on the low side, a problem that might be remedied if the program is able to marshal more financial support from local industry.

Only \$2,000 is allocated annually in department budget for hiring TA. No money is allocated in our graduate program budget for hiring TA or RA. We need at least \$20,000 (10 TA @ 10 hours per week) for hiring TA. During the last two years, we obtained \$10,500 and \$18,500 from the Dean of Undergraduate Education for TA support. However, considering the budget forecast for next two years, we are not optimist that we will receive any additional support from the Dean of Undergraduate Education. As a part of our fundraising efforts, we will be seeking to increase our endowment, which may provide some needed TA resources.

Research

The review committee suggests hiring new faculty with strong research experience, and the accreditation reviewers suggest we select faculty with more industry experience. Clearly we want faculty who meet both criteria, but recruiting quality construction management faculty is a great challenge. The demand for experienced construction management faculty members in the United States far exceeds the supply. The department has 7.5 full time faculty. Four faculty members have funded research projects, and two senior faculty members are less interested in research but are involved in several other scholarly activities.

When hired, new faculty members are advised to establish their research agendas. Since 1997, new faculty members have been given one quarter off (normally the first quarter) to develop their research program and were encouraged to apply for research funds paid with department endowment resources. The chair of the department has created an internal sabbatical leave program. Junior faculty members were advised to submit research proposals requesting a quarter off plus \$5,000 to \$10,000 seed money.

Each faculty member is expected to teach five 3-credit hour courses per academic year, which is a normal teaching load in this college.

We strongly agree with the statement regarding the research facility at Sand Point. Without this facility, our plans for becoming a productive research center will be impossible to achieve. We have started fund raising for the facility and have requested some financial assistance from the university for an initial start-up period.

Faculty Turnover

A good economy and better job offers are the most important reasons for faculty turnover. Faculty turnover is not related to the mentoring of faculty. A good example is the departure of Dr. Riley who was promoted and received tenure a few months before accepting a job at another school. The lack of a doctoral program in the department was the main reason he mentioned in his resignation letter. The department is small, and the Chair regularly meets with junior faculty and discusses their research, teaching, and service performance.

Student Diversity

This is a serious problem at the university, and the department is not an exception. However, during the last four years, the number of female students enrolled in our undergraduate program has increased considerably.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

National Construction Certification

We are reviewing the feasibility of using this certification examination as an outcome assessment tool for our undergraduate program.

Scholarship Support

We are reviewing this recommendation with our Industry Advisory Council. We believe department scholarships will help our recruiting efforts.

Use of Lecturers

We agree with the recommendation but need additional resources for hiring lecturers.

Advising of Students

We agree with the recommendation but do not have the budget to implement the recommendation.

Ph.D. Program

We support the concept of establishing a college-wide Ph.D. program in the college. We never will have the resources or the number of students needed to have a viable program within the department. Creating the opportunity for Ph.D. students to study and research construction management issues will significantly strengthen our research program. It also will help satisfy the pressing need for new construction management faculty throughout the nation.