

**A DEPARTMENT AT A CROSSROADS:
PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS**

**Stewart E. Tolnay, Chair
Department of Sociology, University of Washington**

**Janet Currie
Department of Economics, UCLA**

**Alan Deardorff
Department of Economics, University of Michigan**

**Avraham Kamara
Department of Finance and Business Economics, University of Washington**

**Tracy McKenzie
Department of History, University of Washington**

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BACKGROUND

The Department of Economics Review Committee included three local members (Avraham Kamara, Department of Finance and Business Economics; Tracy McKenzie, Department of History; Stewart Tolnay [Chair], Department of Sociology) and two external members (Janet Currie, Department of Economics, UCLA; Alan Deardorff, Department of Economics, University of Michigan). On May 3, 2005 the local members of the review committee met with representatives from the University administration for a background discussion, prior to the issuance of the formal charge letter. The administrative representatives included the following: Robert Stacey (College of Arts and Sciences), Susan Jeffords (Provost's Office), Elizabeth Feetham and Gail Dubrow (Graduate School). Subsequently, on May 9, 2005, McKenzie and Tolnay met with Professor Neil Bruce, Chair of the Department of Economics. On May 11, 2005 all committee members received the official charge letter from Gail Dubrow, Associate Dean of the Graduate School. The departmental site visit occurred on May 23 and May 24, 2005. The review committee held working dinner meetings on the evenings of May 22nd and May 23rd. On both days of the site visit, the committee began meeting at 8:30 am and adjourned at about 5:30 pm. An exit interview was held on the second day of the site visit from 3:00 pm until 5:00 pm. From 3:00 pm until 4:00 pm the review committee presented an overview of its findings, which were then discussed with representatives of the Department present. From 4:00 to 5:00 the discussion continued without departmental representatives. [The agenda for the two-day site visit is included as an appendix to this report.] The review committee's full report was prepared with the input of all committee members and represents our best collective assessment of the quality of the programs within the Department of Economics at the University of Washington.

OVERVIEW

The Department of Economics was last reviewed in 2000. That review yielded generally positive assessments of the Department's graduate and undergraduate programs. However, consistent with the conclusions of a previous review committee (in 1990), the reviewers in 2000 were very critical of the levels of scholarly research and extramural funding reported by the Department's faculty. A strategy that combined "sticks and carrots" was recommended to increase research and funding within the Department.

Despite the previous review committee's overall satisfaction with the Department's graduate program, it was placed on probation, with the number of graduate admissions cut by half for the cohort entering in 2001. In 2005, the program remains on probation. Although the size of incoming cohorts has returned to normal levels for every year since 2001, the Department must obtain permission from the Graduate School to exceed the limits imposed in 2001.

Much has changed, and much has remained the same, since the last review in 2000. Our committee echoes the conclusions of the earlier review committee by noting the generally successful graduate and undergraduate programs in the Department. We recommend that the Department be given the resources needed to maintain the large number of undergraduate majors – which has nearly doubled during recent years. We also recommend that the Graduate School refrain from micro-managing the Department’s graduate program. It is our opinion that the steps taken following the review in 2000 (including the imposition of probationary status) were unwarranted and that their net effect on the Department’s graduate program has been negative.

Our committee was also concerned by the unusually large percentage of tenured faculty who are no longer active researchers, and by the surprisingly small portfolio of external grants that is held by the Department’s faculty. These long-standing problems must be fixed for the Department to rise in the national rankings of Economics Departments, or even to maintain their current position in those rankings. The committee recommends a collaborative, proactive, strategy by the Department and the University to accelerate the departure of unproductive faculty and to devise a long-term hiring plan that combines predictable recruitment at the assistant and tenured associate professor levels.

Contrary to perceptions on campus, our committee did not find evidence that the Department of Economics is insular or that it discourages interactions with other units on campus. Indeed, many of the Department’s faculty are actively engaged in interdisciplinary research centers or in collaborative projects with faculty in other departments.

Important recent changes include an improved relationship between the Department and the College of Arts and Sciences, largely due to the leadership of the Chair, Neil Bruce. Morale also appears to have improved in the Department.

The 2000 review committee described the Economics Department as a “Department at Risk.” We would describe it as a “Department at a Crossroads.” There is still considerable risk, but there is also significant potential. Which of these will prevail depends upon key decisions that will be made by the University and the Department. In the following sections we provide the evidence that leads us to this conclusion.

FACULTY

The Department of Economics currently has 25 tenured or tenure-track faculty members and 3 senior lecturers. Among the tenured or tenure-track faculty, 4 are assistant professors, 9 are associate professors, and 12 are full professors. Compared with the strongest Economics Departments in the country, this is a moderately sized, somewhat “top heavy”, faculty.

Alternative assessments of the Department's current ranking within the discipline are available. The "gold standard" for departmental rankings are those done by the National Research Council (NRC) for graduate programs. The NRC has not done a thorough review of Economics Departments since 1993 when the University of Washington's department ranked 26th overall and 10th among public universities. The Department's self study claims that the Department fell in the rankings after 1993, and currently stands at about 30th overall and at about 15th among public research universities. The results of the reputational ranking conducted in 2005 by *U.S. News and World Report*, placed the Department at 28th overall. The review committee agreed with the self-study that a rank of 30 is more realistic, given recent faculty losses and lack of senior replacements. When interpreting departmental rankings such as these, it is important to also consider the number of departments eligible to be ranked, for example 132 were included in the *U.S. News and World Report* data. Because of the large number of Economics Departments in the country, to be ranked in the top 30 is a notable achievement.

Nevertheless, that the Department has declined in quality, and in the rankings, during recent years is a cause for concern. The Department is keenly aware of this, and has set as its goal to raise its standing within the discipline to 20th overall, 10th among public universities (Self Study, p. 12). Given the "clumping" of departments in this range of the national rankings, as well as the significant challenge faced by the Department of uneven and inadequate research productivity, this is an ambitious goal that will not be achieved easily.

One sign of positive momentum is the Department's success in recruiting junior faculty members during the last four years. Now it is important for the Department to give these junior colleagues an opportunity to compile records that will earn them promotion and tenure. This is the clear intention of the senior faculty. And, important steps have been taken in that direction, including the following: release from one course during their first year of appointment, relatively light service obligations, start-up funds, and annual conferences with the Chair, as required by the Faculty Code. However, more could, and should, be done. Aside from the conference with the Chair, it isn't clear to the committee that the junior faculty are being adequately mentored by their senior colleagues, or that the senior faculty are providing as much professional advice as they should be. One outcome of this situation is a sense of uncertainty among the junior faculty regarding the Department's expectations for promotion and tenure. While it is impossible to describe hard and fast thresholds that will guarantee promotion if they are surpassed, the Department should try to reduce anxiety among the junior faculty by communicating more clearly the general expectations for promotion, based on the history of previous cases, the promotion guidelines provided by the College, etc. These shortcomings could be remedied easily through the introduction of a more formal mentoring arrangement that matches junior and senior faculty members, preferably within the same area of concentration, and that supplements the annual conferences with the Chair.

It is also encouraging that, since 2000, three junior faculty members have been promoted and tenured. All three of these young associate professors appear to have research programs that are continuing to thrive after promotion. Combined with the recruitment of new assistant professors, these successful promotions are working to reinvigorate the Department “from below.”

Despite these indicators of progress, the Department continues to face the challenge of having a relatively large proportion of tenured faculty who are not actively engaged in research. In extreme cases, some have not published anything in many years. In other cases, the level of research productivity is far below that which would be expected from a highly, or even moderately, ranked Department of Economics. At the same time, there are a number of very highly productive faculty members who compare favorably in quality to their counterparts in the most prestigious Economics Departments in the country. On balance, however, the research accomplishments of the productive faculty members are diluted by the under-performance of their non-productive colleagues. This results in a record of publications in the top-quality, peer-reviewed, Economics journals, and a portfolio of extramural research grants, that are inconsistent with a highly ranked department.

This is not a new problem. It was a central finding in the last review of the Department in 2000. And, according to the letter (dated August 30, 2000) from then Graduate Dean Marsha Landolt to then Provost Lee Huntsman following the previous review, it was also mentioned in the departmental review that was conducted in 1990. There are many possible reasons for the emergence of a relatively large group of research non-productive tenured faculty, including: poor tenure and promotion decisions, an inadequate incentive structure, a departmental culture that tolerates mediocrity, and excessive consulting which diverts the efforts of faculty away from scholarly research. It is not this committee’s job to adjudicate among these possible explanations. Rather, we have concentrated our attention on identifying the best strategy for extricating the Department from this long-standing challenge of uneven and inadequate research productivity.

The previous (2000) review committee recommended a combination of “carrots and sticks” to improve research productivity in the Department, including the following: (1) differential allocation of merit salary increases to reward active researchers, (2) the imposition of differential teaching loads, (3) enforcement of the University’s consulting regulations, and (4) the use of retirement and other severance packages to encourage unproductive faculty to leave the Department. For a variety of reasons, this multifaceted strategy has not been implemented successfully. First, the availability of merit increases to salary has been too inadequate and too inconsistent to make a real difference in the incentive structure. Second, despite anecdotal claims that excessive consulting activity is reducing research productivity for certain faculty, no reliable evidence has been marshaled to convince the committee of this relationship, or to suggest that those engaged

in extensive consulting would become more productive researchers if they stopped consulting. Third, although some faculty do teach more students than other faculty, variations in teaching loads within the Department are voluntary and relatively modest. Finally, it does not appear that a serious effort has been made during the last five years to use retirement or severance packages to encourage the early departure of faculty who are not research active. In sum, the strategies recommended in 2000 were either never feasible to begin with, because of resource limitations, or were never pursued vigorously.

The committee concludes that relatively modest “carrots and sticks” will be incapable of transforming significantly the research profile of the Department. Once a faculty member has made the transition away from an active research program, for whatever reason, it is extremely difficult to reverse the process. To be sure, it is possible for research-inactive faculty to make other important contributions to a department, through their teaching and service activities, and that needs to be considered as the Department of Economics moves forward with any plan to increase the overall level and quality of research conducted by its faculty, and to increase its portfolio of extramural research funding.

The Department of Economics, and the College of Arts and Sciences, are currently at a crossroads. One path leads to meaningful improvement in the research profile of the Department, and progress toward achieving their goal to become a top-20 Department of Economics. This path will require a significant infusion of resources by the University, and a commitment that the Department will be allowed to execute a targeted and strategic long-term hiring plan. The alternate path leads to a Department that has primarily an emphasis on undergraduate instruction, with a diminished graduate program, a low level of scholarship, the loss of many of its most productive scholars, and a precipitous decline in its national ranking. This is the path that will be followed by default if the status quo is embraced.

As a strategy for building a stronger Department of Economics at the University of Washington, **the committee recommends the following.**

- the Department and Administration work together to identify faculty who are not contributing (research, teaching, service) at an acceptable level to the mission of the Department,
- the Administration take the lead (but keeping the Department informed) in identifying ways to accelerate the retirement or departure of the non-contributing faculty members,
- working from an updated strategic plan, the Department should prepare a long-term hiring plan that targets existing areas of strength, and includes a mixture of positions at the assistant professor and tenured associate

professor levels,

- to facilitate the execution of a coherent long-term hiring plan, the College should commit an appropriate number of lines to the Department for this rebuilding process, including returning those lines that are made available through targeted retirements or departures.

The Department and Administration have a window of opportunity to effect significant change because of (1) the age structure of the Department, with several faculty members at, or approaching retirement age, and (2) the recent endorsement by the College of the concept of long-term hiring plans.

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

The Department of Economics offers two graduate programs: a Master of Arts and a Doctor of Philosophy.

The Department has a long tradition of producing outstanding Ph.D. students. An article in the April 2000 issue of *Economic Inquiry* rated the top 50 research universities based on the publication record of their Ph.D. students in 1987-1992. The University of Washington was #8, immediately behind Yale and Harvard, and ahead of Brown, Cal. Tech, U. Penn, Stanford (# 9-12), and many other outstanding private and public universities. Moreover, it was the highest ranked economics department among public universities.

The department has continued to produce very good Ph.D. students, as evidenced by their placement record in recent years. Graduates accepted jobs in very good universities and public institutions, despite a tougher job market due to weak economic conditions.

There are some extraordinarily productive researchers in the department who produce outstanding Ph.D. students. Yet, unless reversed, the decline in the number of tenured faculty who actively publish in the top academic journals is a cause for concern, and is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the quality of the doctoral program.

During the past five years the Department admitted 24 students, on average, each year. During these years, the Department awarded 11 MA degrees and 14 Ph.D. degrees, on average, each year (including continuing students).

Over the past five years, the average quantitative and analytical GRE scores of the incoming graduate economics class were 768 and 696 respectively, which are much higher than the averages for all Social Sciences. The average verbal GRE was 546, which is lower than the average for all Social Sciences. These differences reflect that economics

is (1) a more quantitative discipline than most Social Sciences, and (2) attracts a much larger fraction of international students than most Social Sciences.

The average (over the past five years) time to completion of Ph.D. is 5.9 years. The median time is closer to 5 years, as the average is increased due to a small number of students who take considerably longer than average to complete the requirements.

In recent years the Department has taken several steps to improve the graduate program. The Department has:

1. Established a separate placement office with faculty and administrative advisors.
2. Created and clearly communicated priorities for allocating assistantship funding.
3. Maintained an environment within which teaching assistants feel valued and mentored.
4. Improved student morale.
5. Involved graduate students in departmental governance.
6. Improved the mentoring of MA students by alumni of its MA program.
7. Joined the new certificate program in computational finance, which is offered jointly by the UW Departments of Economics, Finance, Mathematics, and Statistics. The program, which has both an academic track and an industry track, should help in placing the graduate students.

There were however, several negative developments since the last program review in 2000. The model that the Department had used in its doctoral program before the last review was comparable to that used by other top Economics Departments. In this model, a large number of students are admitted into the graduate program because it is very difficult to successfully screen Ph.D. candidates when they are admitted. Then, through an evaluation process that was based primarily on examinations and course work, roughly 20-30 percent of incoming students were screened from the program and did not proceed to the Ph.D. program. This model had worked very well for the Department. It is also the model that the faculty members continue to support very strongly.

The most recent review of the department in 2000 raised concerns about the low rate of graduate students who proceed to the Ph.D. program. As a result, the program went through changes that have had negative consequences.

First, the program was put on probation. In particular, the Department must get special permission each year from the Graduate School to recruit the desired number of students.

Second, concerns about the relatively high fraction of students who do not proceed to the Ph.D. stage have contributed to the following negative developments:

1. The department has relaxed the standards to proceed to the Ph.D. This has resulted in the belief by some faculty that more “weak” students are surviving to later in the program and are struggling to graduate.
2. There is also concern that an excess demand for the limited number of research active faculty will develop as a result of more students progressing further in the program.
3. These developments are likely to make it very difficult for the Department to place some of its future graduates.
4. Current first-year students are unclear about the criteria for proceeding to the Ph.D. and the fraction of students who are likely to proceed to the Ph.D. The criteria and fraction seem to be “constantly changing.”

The considerable increase in the size of the undergraduate program has forced the Department to use advanced doctoral students to teach upper-level undergraduate courses. A successful teaching experience (as sole teacher not just TA) will help the Ph.D. students when they enter the academic job market. For first-year graduate students, the Department offers a teaching practicum that prepares them to serve as teaching assistants or instructors. However, the timing of the course can be problematic for those students who must begin teaching before completing the class. For this reason the Department may want to initiate a training workshop for new graduate students, prior to the beginning of Fall Quarter, during the orientation period for new students.

Lastly, the department needs additional financial assistance to be able to attract outstanding doctoral candidates and, in particular, outstanding international students. The review committee heard several references to the fact that graduate student stipends were too low to allow international students to obtain visas for study in the U.S.

The Master of Arts Program

The Department also offers a Master of Arts degree which is usually received by students as they progress toward the Ph.D. However, a smaller number of students enter the program with the intention of receiving only the MA degree. In the field of Economics, a “terminal” MA degree has more value as a credential in the non-academic job market than do MA degrees from other social science disciplines.

The Possibility of a Fee Based MA Degree

We explored the possibility of a fee based MA degree. First, a clear majority of the faculty does not support such a program. Second, based on the weak demand for the current MA program as a stand-alone professional program, there does not seem to be a strong market for such a program.

Recommendations

1. The College should not micro-manage the graduate program of the Department.
 - a. The College and the Department should agree on a reasonable size for incoming classes, for the next several years, based on the number of students that the Department and the College can support. They can take into account the following factors: (i) the number of faculty that are expected to be available to advise the new Ph.D. students at the thesis stage; (ii) the Department's model regarding the percent of incoming students who will proceed to the Ph.D. program; (iii) the financial support available, including fellowships, TA positions and RA positions; and (iv) the ability to place students in high quality institutions.
 - b. The Department should then be allowed to determine the most effective strategy for balancing the size of the incoming cohorts and the rigor of their screening process during the first two years.
 - c. The Department should inform, in the clearest terms, all the students who apply to the program of its philosophy regarding expected attrition rates, and the criteria for advancement, *before the students decide whether to come to the program.*
2. The Department should not pursue the fee-based MA degree at this time. There is very little enthusiasm and support for the program within the Department, and it is questionable whether there is a sufficient market for such a program.

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

The undergraduate program is one of the department's signal successes. Indeed, by all appearances it is flourishing, providing an ever larger service to the university in an environment of seriously limited resources. In the academic year just completed, for example, the department's array of undergraduate course offerings accounted for some 45,000 student-credit hours, and the number of undergraduates majoring in economics approached 900, double the level of only five years ago. It is worth noting that, for the vast majority of these students, Economics was their first choice as a major. In particular, fewer than 3 percent of undergraduate respondents to a recent departmental survey opted to major in Economics after failing to gain admission to the Business School. About three-quarters of majors are pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree and will

likely pursue careers in business, law, or public policy. The remainder will receive a Bachelor of Science degree that puts greater emphasis on mathematical treatments of economics and is typically a springboard to graduate study in the discipline.

It is evident that the Department takes its undergraduate teaching mission seriously. It systematically elicits student feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the undergraduate program. It sponsors workshops for faculty and graduate students on innovations in teaching and encourages the activities of both the Society for Undergraduate Economic Studies and the Economics Undergraduate Board, the latter of which maintains a student-staffed tutoring center and offers periodic workshops on mathematical tools for economics. Above all, our interviews with department faculty uniformly indicated that the faculty have a high opinion of the undergraduates they serve.

Significantly, a recent departmental exit survey of graduating seniors (2004) indicates that the undergraduates have an equally high opinion of the quality of instruction they receive. Nearly seven-eighths (86 percent) believe that their academic program in Economics has left them “well prepared” or “very well prepared” for the career paths they have chosen. At least seven-eighths of respondents similarly give the Department high marks in equipping them to define and solve problems, think critically about written material, learn independently, and relate economic principles to other disciplines. When we met with the members of the Economics Undergraduate Board, the committee recognized immediately that the Economics Department has succeeded in attracting a cohort of extraordinarily gifted and ambitious young scholars—a testimony to the strength of the Department—but we were also struck by the high regard with which the students viewed the Department. In particular, they raved about the faculty’s accessibility and the level of individual encouragement and support they had received.

One of the most impressive aspects of the Department’s undergraduate teaching has been the degree to which it has maintained a high quality of instruction while handling a vastly larger number of undergraduate majors. While the typical size of lower-division courses has held constant, the average size of upper-division courses—those consisting disproportionately of majors—has spiraled upward, with 400-level courses now regularly double or triple their average size of only five years earlier. This has forced faculty to reduce (if not wholly eliminate) individualized research projects and small-group problem-solving exercises from their upper-level courses, and it has frustrated students who have found it increasingly more difficult to gain admission into the upper-division classes of their choice. Indeed, almost the only common criticism in a survey administered by the Economics Undergraduate Board involves the increasing shortage of upper-division courses relative to the demand. Over the past two years, between two-thirds and four-fifths of respondents reported being unable to register for one or more desired 400-level classes.

We believe that the Department should receive greater support from the administration for its very successful undergraduate program. In particular, additional lecturer or teaching assistant positions could significantly alleviate the crowding that has occurred in upper-division classes and reduce the difficulty (and frustration) that economics majors now face in completing the upper-division component of their degree program.

SUPPORT STAFF

The Department is served by a very capable support staff. At present, the full-time staff includes a department administrator, fiscal specialist, fiscal technician, and three academic counselors, two who work with undergraduates and one who focuses on graduates. There is also a half-time outreach coordinator who oversees the department's development efforts and a computer technician who divides his time equally among the Economics, Philosophy, and Sociology departments. The department's recent self-study rates the support staff as "one of the best—if not the best—in the College," and we are inclined to agree. Our interview with the staff members suggested that their morale is quite high and that, overall, they enjoy a good working relationship with the faculty and feel both appreciated and respected.

In its self-study the Department was particularly complimentary of its academic advisers, who among them serve nearly 900 majors and 100 graduates students. The review committee was especially impressed by the "open door" policy practiced by the Department's academic advisors. We also note that an amazing 96 percent of undergraduates who consulted with an academic counselor in 2003-4 rated the consultation as "valuable" or "very valuable."

DEPARTMENTAL CULTURE AND CLIMATE

We find much that is positive about the Department's culture and climate. To begin with, it is evident that they take seriously the importance of promoting diversity among both faculty and students. The Department's recent self-study is correct in observing that both women and minorities are significantly underrepresented in economics departments around the country. With 8 women among its 27 faculty and 4 individuals of Asian or South Asian extraction, the UW Department is actually substantially more diverse than the average Ph.D.-granting department. (The proportion of women among the faculty, for example, is approximately double the national average.) The graduate program is actually extremely diverse, considering that nearly two-thirds of current students are international. Among the minority who are U.S.-born, it is true that the overwhelming preponderance are non-hispanic whites. At the same time, it is clear that the Department is aggressive in seeking to diversify its graduate applicant pool. For example, it participates each year in the national minority name exchange program as well as in a variety of GOMAP programs and activities.

Beyond this, we would say that morale among the faculty is, on the whole, much better than we had expected to find. One of the most disturbing findings of the 2000 review was that “a defeatist attitude seem[ed] to permeate the Department.” That assessment noted the “emergence of a victim’s mentality among too many faculty members,” evidenced by a widespread willingness to blame the Department’s identified weaknesses “on the lack of resources and inadequate support from the College and University administration.” We are pleased to report that the morale of the department seems to have improved markedly over the past five years. We frequently encountered a willingness not only to acknowledge departmental weaknesses but also to accept a share of the responsibility for them. In sum, the “victim’s mentality” that so impressed the previous committee seems today to be significantly less prevalent. It also appears that relations among the faculty are more harmonious than was the case five years ago. Finally, we note a fairly widespread sense of cautious optimism among the faculty that, with a reasonable commitment of resources from the College, the Department may be able to reverse its gradual decline in national prestige. We should note at this point that numerous members of the faculty attributed these trends to the very positive influence of the current chair, Neil Bruce, citing especially his efforts to make departmental governance more inclusive and the process of decision-making more transparent.

Although much improved, the departmental climate is not wholly positive, we should stress. There are some personality clashes, to begin with, including one very bitter and long-running dispute with the potential to poison the broader environment if not soon resolved. It is also the case that several members of the Department, including a handful among the most prominent and research-active faculty, express varying degrees of alienation and pessimism, questioning the ability of the Department to grapple with tough questions and make the hard decisions necessary to reinvigorate the intellectual life within the Department and promote a more research-orientated climate of expectations. We would observe, in this regard, that the current chair’s leadership strategy has been to “work on a consensus basis.” While Neil Bruce’s “team building” approach has helped to improve morale and soothe some of the hard feelings that were common when he became chair, some faculty believe that more aggressive leadership may ultimately be called for if the Department is to meet its goal of improving its national ranking substantially. Although it was not the job of this review committee to identify a pool of possible successors to Professor Bruce, we would note, with some concern, that it is far from apparent where such leadership will come from. Next year’s chair selection process will be crucial to the future of the Department, and should be conducted with the Department’s and Administration’s long-term building plan in mind.

ROLE WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY

We now operate in an environment where interdisciplinarity and broad University impact

are increasingly valued qualities that play important roles in decisions regarding hiring, promotion, and retention. The evaluation of academic units, therefore, routinely includes an assessment of the connections their faculty members have with other units on campus. It is also viewed as beneficial for departments to have productive relationships with the relevant College and University administrative units. There has been a relatively long-standing perception that the Department of Economics has not been interested in establishing relationships with other units, and that its relationship with the University administration has been strained. We address these perceptions, in turn.

The final report prepared for the program review of the Department in 2000 noted that “Extra-Departmental relations must be improved. The Economics Department must realize that there is a larger university community that must be dealt with productively” [p. 3]. The apparent basis for this conclusion, and the long-standing perception mentioned above, was comparative – between the Economics Department and other social science departments, and between the “current” and “ideal” situations in the Department. Our committee did not have access to information about the inter-unit relationships for faculty in other departments, so that comparison is not possible. Likewise, reasonable people can disagree about the “ideal” level of inter-unit connections, making that comparison ambiguous and imprecise. However, our committee’s assessment of the current situation leads us to conclude that the Department is not averse to cooperating and interacting with other units in the College or within the broader University community. In fact, the record includes many examples of productive relationships, including the following:

- three faculty affiliates of the Center for Studies in Demography & Ecology (with more interested in becoming affiliates), one serving on the executive committee for the Center’s Computing Core,
- five faculty affiliates of the Center for Statistics and the Social Sciences, including one member of the Center’s Executive Committee,
- the Department’s Center for Research on the Family, which lists affiliates from the Evans School of Public Affairs, the Department of Geography, the Department of Sociology, and the School of Social Work,
- the Department’s Research Center for International Economics, with strong ties to the Jackson School of International Studies,
- research collaborations between Economics faculty and faculty from the Business School, the Department of Electrical Engineering, The Political Science Department, the Statistics Department, and the School of Social Work,

- Economics faculty serving on dissertation committees for students in the Business School.

This is only a partial list of the different ways in which faculty in the Department of Economics intersect and interact with other units and faculty on campus. But, it is sufficient to raise serious doubts about the accuracy of the perception that the culture within the Department discourages or discounts such inter-unit connections. Could there be a higher level of external engagement by Economics faculty? Certainly. But, the committee also believes that it is possible to reach a level of external involvement that threatens the internal, discipline-based, identity and mission of a department.

The previous programmatic review described a general atmosphere of distrust between the Department and the College of Arts and Sciences. The Department complained about mistreatment by the College, while the College expressed frustration over the Department's insularity and inability or unwillingness to address its fundamental problems, such as the low level of research productivity among a large group of tenured faculty. The current self-study refers to the persistence of a "perception" by the College that the Department is "resistant to change and cross-disciplinary research or excessively self-absorbed" [p. 14]. In fact, however, our committee found little evidence of an exceptionally strained relationship between the Department and the College. Steps taken since the last review, including the preparation of a strategic plan, and the improved relationship between the departmental leadership (especially the Chair, Neil Bruce) and the College administration, have instilled within the College administration greater confidence in the Department. At the same time, few faculty members exhibited a "victim's mentality" that blamed all of the Department's problems on unfair treatment by the College administration. This does not mean that the College administration has no concerns about the current state-of-the-Department, nor does it mean that no one in the Department harbors lingering doubts about the willingness of the UW administration to offer competitive salaries to the Department's job candidates, or to invest significant resources in the Department. It does mean that the level of trust between the Department and College that is required in order to move forward with a significant, collaborative initiative to strengthen the Department appears to exist.

The Department continues to enjoy the benefits of a very successful development effort. The Department appears to have the loyal support of alumni, especially those who continue to reside in the Seattle area after graduation. With the help of its energetic and dedicated Visiting Committee, comprised largely of alums, the Department has been able to establish several endowed professorships or term professorships. This is an extremely valuable asset in a climate of limited resources, and evidence of the Department's willingness to take the initiative to improve its circumstances, rather than simply complain about inadequate support from the University. The Committee recommends

that the Department continue to work closely with the Visiting Committee to create additional professorships that can be used to recruit or retain strong faculty, as well as graduate fellowships that can help to attract the best graduate students.