

University of Washington Tacoma
Milgard School of Business

Program Review Committee Report

Site Visit: October 4-5, 2018
Date of Report: November 6, 2018

Program Review Committee Members

C. Leigh Anderson, Professor and Associate Dean, UW Evans School of Public Policy and Governance
(Committee Chair)
Divya McMillin, Professor, UWT School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences; Executive Director, UWT
Institute for Global Engagement
Cliff Allen, Dean, School of Business Administration, Portland State University
James Lumpkin, Dean, College of Business, Texas Women's University

Background

The Milgard School of Business (MSB) is one of seven units that comprise the University of Washington Tacoma (UWT) campus, a campus established in 1990 to increase access for students in the South Puget Sound region. The Business Administration program, established in 1994 to offer the Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration (BABA) became the Milgard School of Business ten years later, following a \$15 million gift from the Milgard family.

A months long strategic planning process engaging faculty, staff, students, alumni and the Milgard Executive Council produced The School's new Mission approved in early 2018: "The Milgard School of Business ...cultivates leaders through cutting edge and personally accessible education, diverse scholarly exploration, and innovative community engagement while promoting social responsibility. We inspire students to become lifelong learners."

MSB enrolled 725 students across the undergraduate major and four Masters Degrees in the 2016-2017 cohort, with 31 full-time and 18 part-time faculty. The UWT total enrollment is 5,185.

The Master of Business Administration (MBA) was launched in 2000 followed by an undergraduate Business Minor in 2007, an undergraduate Corporate Responsibility Minor in 2017, the Master of Accounting (MAcc) in 2012, the Master in Cybersecurity and Leadership (MCL) in 2013, and the Master of Science in Business Analytics in 2017. There is no doctoral program.

In addition to funding for an endowed Dean and scholarships, the initial Milgard gift supported a Center for Corporate Leadership and Social Responsibility (CLSR) and a Center for Business Analytics (CBA). In 2017, the Milgard Success Center was created with a \$1 million Gary E. Milgard Foundation gift. In the same year, the Milgard Initiative on Women and Innovation (MIWI) was launched.

The MSB was last reviewed in 2005-2006. This review is being conducted in accordance with state legislative mandate, under the direction of the Graduate School. On May 30, 2018, the Graduate School issued a charge to the Review Committee, to review the requirements and due dates for the Self Study, to decide on which programs should be included in the review, and to decide on the dates for the site visit.

Committee Charge

Overall, the charge to the committee was to assess the quality of the degree and certificate programs offered by the department, and to provide faculty and the Chair of the Department constructive suggestions for strengthening those programs.

This review is intended to provide the University with a clearer understanding of the School and its programs, overall quality, educational value, role within the University and community, role within the academic discipline, and resource requirements.

Recommendation

Based on a review of the materials provided to the committee, interviews conducted during the two-day site visit with faculty, staff and students, and our subsequent assessment of the School's quality, educational value, and current resource utilization, the committee unanimously recommends that the Milgard School of Business continue its current status for the maximum ten-year period.

Similarly, the committee recommends that the Master of Accounting continue its current status with a subsequent review in 10 years.

The remainder of this report describes in more detail what we heard and assess to be the strengths of the School, challenges that it faces, and opportunities for the future.

Overall Assessment

The Review Committee's overall assessment of the MSB follows, with recommendations presented in no particular order of importance.

Some of the recommendations are informed by AACSB standards and pillars (engagement, impact, innovation) and what the committee believes to be of importance for the MSB to successfully earn a re-accreditation. Some of the comments are internal to Milgard, which we took as our primary scope, but some comments are necessarily influenced by Milgard's position within UWT, and likewise UWT's position within the UW system.

Unit and Program Strengths

1. The centers, particularly those that are community facing (CLSR, CBA) were regularly mentioned as being agile, focal points of community engagement, and offering recognition and other value to the School. Likewise there is much excitement around the Student Success Center and MIWI.
2. Faculty and staff appear very dedicated to an important mission. They understand that changing people's lives in this community matters, and they are proud of the access offered.

3. We heard from several employers that the quality of graduates they hire from MSB is high.
4. We heard from a sizable and enthusiastic advisory board about the importance of the access mission, how invested this community is in the MSB, and how the campus has transformed Tacoma.
5. Faculty and staff seem to work well in an informal environment and within the current organizational configuration. By-laws exist and shared governance appears to be working and valued.
6. We heard high praise from multiple stakeholders for School leadership and a common view that in the past couple of years the leadership has moved the School in the right direction.
7. Though there are always budgetary challenges, State funds have grown continuously since 2010-2011 (64%) relative to an approximate student body increase of 68%. A faculty line has been added every year since 2010, though two of the last three have been full-time lecturers which, to our understanding, does not have long term guaranteed funding. MSB is able to offer relatively generous faculty and staff professional development funds and summer salary (relative to some other UW professional schools), which are important for recruiting and retaining talent. Staff positions have likewise been growing recently with five new (1.0 FTE?) staff added in 2017.

Challenges and Risks

1. Promotion and Tenure (P&T) clarity: P&T criteria were under development with discussions ongoing regarding connections to UWT's current strategic plan. It is imperative to have clarity and specificity in P&T standards that are discipline based and accreditation based, e.g. to develop peer-reviewed journal lists that can differ from an R1 and be adjusted over time, but serve as a reference for how numbers and journal quality or other publication outlets are viewed.
2. Budget clarity: The UWT budget is not transparent. There does not appear to be a shared or common understanding of the distribution of revenue to the School. Similarly, the proposed sweeping of carry-forward and details of a model of increasing UWT centralization are unclear. These budget uncertainties can create disincentives to innovate and grow, penalize increasing cost efficiencies, impede strategic planning and execution, and ultimately restrict the ability to meet mission. If redistribution is necessary, or subsidization of certain units on campus are required for the health of the UWT more broadly, a discussion with the School to determine the best ways to do this could mitigate some of these risks. Trying to calculate average "operational efficiency" by the metrics available seems subject to misinterpretation, given differences in which units teach core courses that serve the campus, which units have the highest growth and impact potential, which units are able to attract multiple funding streams, and so on. For example, calculating averages with two UWT outliers with very low student-to-faculty ratios (for example, the School of Education and the Urban Studies Program), means that any other single school compared to a university average can look above average on this metric.
3. UWS relationship: Some of the resource relationships and layers of decision-making between UWS and UWT appear to impose real costs on units at the Tacoma campus. In particular we

heard from more than one unit at UWT that waiting for UWS approval for faculty hiring, even for visiting scholars, had resulted in missing the primary market for hiring in their respective disciplines. We also heard concern about the potential inefficiencies from the layers of P&T review. We did hear that some central resources, specifically the Graduate School, were appreciated by staff at Milgard.

4. Growth and Scale: As noted below, for its size, the MSB has fairly detailed programmatic structure and a number of programs with small student numbers. The School's ability to grow to scale in existing areas or expand to others appears to be primarily hampered by FTE hiring restrictions, uncertainty over revenue flows from self-funded programs, and physical infrastructure (small classrooms). Despite new hires, staff are spread over a complex curriculum, and in the absence of course buyouts, faculty administrators, in particular, face a high workload.

MSB is currently the smallest across its nine listed peer and aspirational schools. One committee member noted that UWT could be much larger if unleashed in a strategic way, including taking advantage of a rare large and emerging market open to just them and two other small liberal arts schools: "They may only have this open window for a short time and it could be closed by the next review. One strategy to block market entry is to meet demand. They could do this with greater online presence and expansion into Olympia."

5. Branding and Marketing: The University and Milgard School must find a way to better "Tell their story" to attract more students and donors. Emphasizing the unique community and industry need filled by the MSB, would go a long way in establishing a brand.
6. Diversity: The School does not have a diversity plan or committee. Given the diversity of the student body, it seems particularly imperative to consider staff diversity (who appear to be mostly women), faculty diversity, and diversity across the Milgard faculty leadership team (who appear to be all men). There are obviously supply-side challenges across multiple aspects of diversity (i.e. a relatively limited number of candidates), but that is another reason for a plan. Advisory Boards (for both the MSB and MIWI) might also be more responsive to student needs through diverse representation.
7. As a largely commuter university, MSB might try to further encourage and leverage more student clubs and services and offer additional guidance and perhaps minimal resources to the student leaders on the range of needs and interests across their cohort (i.e. not interests particular just to the students who have the time to initially self-select in). In addition to creating a closer cohort throughout the program, these clubs can foster additional professional networks post-graduation.

Assessment Particular to Degree Granting Programs

The MSB offers one undergraduate BA, four Masters Degrees, described here, and two minors (in Business Administration and in Corporate Responsibility, one non-matriculated accounting program, a Certificate in Sustainable Business, and an Initiative in Women in Innovation.

- a. Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration (BABA)

The BABA was the first, and is the largest program at MSB with 560 students. For transfer students, e.g. from community colleges, it is offered as a two year upper division undergraduate baccalaureate degree. It is also available as a four year degree and as of 2014 has a Freshman Direct Admit program. Students can choose from five options: accounting, finance, management, marketing, and general business. The steady-state enrollment of the BABA has grown almost 50% over the past five years, losing around 10% but slightly fewer admits each year to UWS or UWB.

b. Master of Business Administration (MBA)

The MBA is a more traditional, face-to-face, 64 credit program that requires students have work experience. Enrollment has been relatively flat with a slight decline to a 2016-2017 cohort of only 51 students (20% lower than in 2010-2011), and graduation rates are the lowest across the programs. Waning demand is not unique to the MSB MBA, a decline attributed to both a strong economy and the emergence of more specialty programs. Nonetheless, in 2015 several changes were made to admissions and credit requirements in the hopes of addressing declining demand and low retention, including the ability to complete the MBA in seven quarters.

c. Master of Accounting (MAcc)

The MAcc is a self-funded (fee based) credit granting degree with two tracks: a nine month 45 credit evening program allowing qualified students to earn sufficient credits to sit for the Certified Public Administration (CPA) exam. Current enrollment is 46, with this the inaugural year of a two-year track for students without a business or accounting background.

d. Master of Cyber Security and Leadership (MCL)

The MCL was approved in 2011 as a 40 credit self-funded, degree program joint with the UWT School of Engineering and Technology. The committee heard from the advisory board that this degree is important across all Tacoma businesses – particularly those such as health care and insurance dealing with customer information – and well positioned for JBLM interests. Enrollment has grown to 33 students, an approximately 40% increase over three years.

e. Master of Business Analytics (MSBA)

The MSBA was approved in 2016 with an initial cohort of 35. Though this program is outside the purview of our review, it bears mentioning that in combination with the Center for Business Analytics the MSBA is offering training that is in high demand locally and across the region. Demand is high, with over 150 applications for 40 spots in Fall 2018.

Specific Curriculum Related Observations

1. For a relatively small unit (in faculty, staff, and student numbers), there is a fair amount of programmatic complexity. It would be very helpful for prospective students (and reviewers) to have consistent “apples-to-apples” information available on the website when looking through and comparing the MSB offerings: number of credits, number of quarters, day/night/weekend classes, total cost, work and/or academic requirements etc. The suite of offerings also appear administratively complicated, with different admission requirements, at least two programs (MBA and MAcc) admitting twice a year, and the MAcc with seemingly two credit tracks and one

non-matriculated program. There are multiple advisory boards across centers and programs with plans for more. We found it difficult, even with the self-study, to be confident in our understanding of the different degree structures. Perhaps a table for students to compare across these programs characteristics, in addition to some consistent content across MSB programs, could help with marketing and reduce staff time fielding questions.

2. The BABA and MBA programs have relatively low graduation rates (just over and under 50%, adjusting for the likely year of enrollment, respectively). These two programs share traits of having a longer duration from enrolment to graduation, and a lower financial cost as tuition-based (state supported) relative to the fee-based programs. The School might consider admitting some international students into its MBA, though we realize that without an ability to grow, this strategy further restricts local access.
3. The School might consider more curriculum or advisory board members in the area of consumer products and supply-chain.
4. In general there appears to be room to improve School-wide systems for tracking alumni and job placement (as the MSBA is doing).
5. The student learning goals and outcomes are well articulated for each program, and though some of the specialty programs currently serve small numbers, they are well thought out and managed.
6. The MSB faculty seem committed to maintaining a dynamic and relevant curriculum, and with some programs, concentrated efforts are underway to revise and update the structure to increase demand and retention. The Committee appreciates how time consuming this process is, and how difficult it can be across faculty with vested interests. We encourage the UWS to continue to support the MSB's ability to respond and adapt to their local markets as they read them.

Unit Defined Questions

Question 1.

Will moving to a departmental organization improve the Milgard School's self-governance, achieve operating efficiencies and better position itself to achieve its mission and strategic objectives?

The question of areas and departments was asked of faculty, staff, and external stakeholders including the advisory board(s) and students. Overall the feeling was that the MSB could force the organization towards departments or areas, but the faculty seem to work well together as is. Currently the faculty work in "informal clusters" to discuss curricular issues at the school. An active faculty council was recently developed where issues can be discussed and resolved. It was also expressed a number of times that the size of the school (24 faculty members) was an "in between" size with some areas only having 1-2 faculty, therefore potentially creating a bureaucracy where it may not be warranted, and may unfairly increase the workload for P&T review for some faculty. On the other hand, staying as is posed the challenge of faculty voting on P&T cases on which they had insufficient area expertise.

Stakeholder feedback was as follows:

- Faculty were concerned that the number of members was too low to have areas or departments.
- Academic Program Directors expressed that compensation to be an area lead was a very small stipend and not a course release. This was not expressed negatively, but the feedback was that a chair or area Director may not be compensated enough with a small stipend.
- Staff worried that creating departments without adding staff would increase workload. In addition, they were worried that a course release granted to faculty who may fill the roles of area leads or chairs would make scheduling of courses more difficult.
- Advisory Board(s) felt that any improved innovation or communication generated by adding departments or areas was already happening through the excellent Center for Corporate Leadership and Social Responsibility (CCLSR) and a Center for Business Analytics (CBA).

The final recommendation is that the School may want to consider a departmental organization as they grow, but it appears that the addition of a second Associate Dean has alleviated current pressures to have Department Chairs.

Question 2.

Academic units at the University of Washington Tacoma are now operating on the premise that fee-based degree and non-degree programs will be administratively overseen by a central office. What strategic direction should the Milgard School consider for its executive education programs and fee-based graduate degree programs (Master of Accounting and Master of Cybersecurity and Leadership) vis-à-vis the non-fee-based graduate degree programs (Master of Business Administration and Master of Science in Business Analytics)?

The Milgard School offers four graduate degree programs: the Masters in Business Administration (MBA), Masters in Accounting (MAcc), Masters of Cybersecurity and Leadership (MCL), and Master of Science in Business Analytics (MSBA). Two of these for-credit, master's degree programs (MAcc and MCL) are self-funded program that do not rely on state funding. It is the committee's understanding that the self-funded model was required due to the lack of state funding available. These two programs in particular are being received well in the business community according to the advisory board and meet a community need. They were cited as examples of Milgard's responsiveness to the business community and its innovation and flexibility in program development. The committee was not aware of non-credit, executive education programs offered by Milgard.

There has been a proposal by the UW Tacoma administration to create a central office to administratively oversee all self-funded (fee-based) programs. It is our understanding that as part of this centralization, Milgard staff who currently oversee the programs could be removed from the School to a central office and the School would be required to provide funds to the administration to support the central office and general University overhead. There appears to be a communication gap between the administration and the Milgard School as there is no common understanding of which programs would fall under this proposal or what revenue would be required and what it would support. It was not clear to the committee what additional university functions (financial aid, registrar, enrollment management, etc.) the two master's degree programs require beyond the other degree programs offered across campus. It is understood that non-degree, executive education programs would require support outside of the degree offerings and necessitate some funding from those program fees. However, it was not explained how that is the case for regular degree programs, nor has that been communicated.

Beyond those issues, centralizing degree programs outside of the College and, in addition, “taxing” the revenue from self-supporting programs has the real possibility of stifling innovation and innovative approaches to growth. It is the view of the committee that all degree programs should reside within the School and specifically regarding self-supporting programs, the revenue should stay with the School providing the degree. The case and value for centralizing credit bearing, fee-based programs was unclear to the committee as well as the faculty and administration of the Milgard School.

Question 3.

Are the Milgard School's standards for promotion and tenure for all ranks aligned with the School's mission and are the standards of the Milgard School's peer and aspirant schools and the resources provided to faculty?

It was indicated that the P&T policy is currently under revision. The existing policy on scholarship is philosophically sound. It prioritizes work building expertise, interdisciplinary research, quality and rigor over quantity, lead author role on publications (i.e. demonstrating the ability to conceptualize, execute, and disseminate knowledge through sole or lead author role while supporting collaboration), published work over unpublished work (such as conference presentations), peer reviewed scholarship, and external review by peers. However, there is no development of objective metrics associated with the process. It is not clear how the policy connects to the AACSB standards for Faculty Qualification. The policy for teaching and service suffer from this same limitation.

The committee received different views from the tenured faculty and the non-tenured faculty regarding the specificity required in the policy. The tenured faculty generally did not want specifics or a “check list”. The non-tenured faculty painted quite a different picture. They had only a vague idea of what was expected of them regarding the quantity and quality of their scholarship and provided wildly different understanding, based on who they were advised by. Criteria for P&T appeared to be based on precedent, i.e., previous cases, which does not allow for consistency or for measured changes in standards over time. Relying on advice from the senior faculty in place of specific requirements is problematic and opens the door for personality-based evaluation. Promotion criteria for Lecturers seemed to be more systematic as a result of a recent process seeking standardization. The revised P&T policy shared with the committee showed a movement in the right direction. The committee strongly urges the development of objective metrics for P&T as the policy is revised.

We note that the 2006 review similarly concluded that, “There must be clarity of the vision on the quality (acceptable target journals) and quantity of peer reviewed articles” (p. 5). At the time, the tension was thought to arise between those who wished to retain the research/teaching balance, and those who wanted to emphasize research more. Ten years later, it is our observation that the tension appears more around “traditional scholarship” and newly instituted definitions of “publicly engaged” scholarship. As UWT attempts to expand and shift P&T criteria to reflect its urban serving mission and current strategic goals, MSB and campus leadership need to assess the implications for junior faculty on both tenure and non tenure tracks. Support structures need to be in place at the campus level to guide faculty through shifting metrics.

Question 4.

Is the School's resource support (state funding, physical plan and technology/equipment) aligned

with the School's strategic plan and supportive of the School's effort to attain its strategic goals?

The MSB lists seven strategic goals: to integrate AAC&U high impact learning practices within the curriculum, foster diverse intellectual contributions, offer distinctive programs responsive to community and market needs, equip students for successful careers, cultivate a supportive alumni base, and invest in faculty and staff to optimize potential. Resources to accomplish these goals were uneven across key constituents, that is, students, staff, faculty, leadership, and alumni.

In brief, the MSB is highly responsive to student needs, with the creation of the Student Success Center through a \$1 million gift from the Milgard Foundation. The Director of the Center detailed its high impact activities, connecting students to internships and professional development opportunities. Students interviewed were cautiously optimistic about its potential, stating that it was as yet new and needed more time to be fully informed and responsive to student needs. Students seemed to be somewhat aware that the Center existed, yet had not fully availed of its benefits. Community Executive Council members were enthusiastic about the potential of the Success Center, noting that it provided them another avenue through which to contribute to the MSB. Graduate students reported high satisfaction in the School, noting especially the professional CPA certification offered and the opportunity to study abroad.

Faculty, both on the tenure and non-tenure track, reported high satisfaction with professional development grants that allowed them to travel to conferences and conduct research. Tenure track faculty teaching loads were reduced by one quarter so that each carried a load of five courses per year, providing much needed research time. In addition, tenure-track faculty were able to avail of one summer month of salary to further their research. Lecturers reported they were happy with the professional development funds and their teaching load of seven courses per year was feasible due to repeated course preps where necessary. Both tenure and non-tenure track faculty were supported in their development and execution of study abroad courses. Resources for faculty and student support led to success across strategic goals connected to high impact learning and intellectual contributions. Alumni outreach was in development, and a comprehensive database was yet to be constructed.

A significant concern emerged among MSB leadership regarding a newly articulated plan to centralize fee based programs in terms of staffing and revenue. Such a plan would not allow for strategic planning which hinges upon budget knowledge. The Committee learned through a discussion with other UW Tacoma Deans and Directors that this was a concern across the board. In addition, during 2017-18, UW Seattle mandates to slow growth and reduce significantly new faculty lines, resulted in a reduced ability to meet the UWT's access mission. Campus leadership expressed a desire for greater autonomy from UW-centralized decision making.

The MSB enjoys a significant level of support from the community it serves. Fundraising is a high expectation. The Committee noted through its focus group discussions, that Advancement support for such efforts was inadequate. Furthermore, demands made by budget and personnel issues on the Dean's portfolio limited the capacity to truly be an external facing leader and fundraiser.

The Committee concluded that clarity on budget allocation was critical, and perhaps more importantly, clarity on how the new model allows the MSB to fulfill its mission. MSB appears to be doing well with what it has. But given additional resources the School could have a much greater reach and impact in the community and increase access. Given uncertainty over future claims to revenue flows, it is difficult to strategize.

Question 5.

In what ways can the Milgard School be innovative in teaching?

To foster innovation in teaching, integration of the curriculum with experiential learning, expansion of teaching models to co-teaching, greater responsiveness to industry needs, and increased access through online learning, are some ways that emerge as best practices. Within the MSB, high teaching loads and hefty core requirements were cited as barriers to team teaching. Yet faculty expressed a desire for interdisciplinary collaboration, and enumerated examples of co-authorship. Co-teaching could be considered as a way to build signature pathways to better prepare students for the marketplace which demands multiple competencies. Courses in international or global content were very limited despite the needs articulated by external stakeholders for a curriculum responsive to the global profile of the city of Tacoma. Study abroad courses were noted as a step in the right direction, yet access needs to be expanded to the diverse student body given that such courses are possible only for a small proportion of the population.

In the context of budget challenges that constrain the School's access mission, online and hybrid programming were under discussion. Unit leadership had initiated the conversation among faculty, considering that 39% of online content for any course did not require centralized approval. The Committee noted that more courses were under discussion and redesign, to include such hybrid or blended delivery.

The Committee recommends that current low graduation rates in the longer programs and with infrastructure limits, the MSB might consider more on-line and hybrid programming. The Masters programs, in particular the MBA, MCL, and MSBA might consider looking at establishing or expanding "student consulting labs" that cover costs, provide capstone credits, and offer experiential learning. With respect to the integration of experiential learning within the curriculum, the Committee noted that most such integration was offered through the Centers, i.e., CLSR and CBA. These Centers seemed to be high-functioning, but understaffed. Capacity was limited despite increasing demand. Such demand affirms the need for innovation and greater responsiveness to area needs within the core curriculum itself. While the MIWI and Success Center could be regarded as further responses to student needs, the sustainability of such external sites for innovation is a concern.

Concluding Remarks

The MSB is an important and valued component of the UWT, the UW generally, and the local community. Many of the challenges noted in our report are well recognized by the School and its leadership, with ongoing efforts to prioritize and address these issues. Like all units within the UW system, they are limited by declining state funding, while still committed to offering a high quality, affordable, education to a diverse student body. The UWT additionally must manage very real physical infrastructure constraints (particularly small classrooms), a relationship to UWS, and a mission of access particular to the local community. Despite these challenges, as the South Puget South grows, this period offers MSB, with its motivated and passionate staff and faculty and highly engaged external stakeholders, opportunities to consolidate, innovate, scale, and move forward on their strategic plan.