

Departmental Summary

Strengths

The Department of Business and Economics (DBE) serves a very large number of students among its declared majors, and these students are in high demand by employers upon graduation. DBE participates in all of the high-impact practices (though not all to the same extent). The Department has found numerous ways to maximize the benefits of shared resources through integrating curricular requirements of its programs; this allows programs to exist and flourish within DBE though primarily supported by as few as one or two instructors. At the same time, this sharing of resources can pose challenges for a review at the level of an individual program.

DBE is effective in coordinating and communicating the assessment of student learning, academic advising, and other mandated and beneficial practices across all of its programs. In particular, the advising philosophy of DBE is exemplary and neatly weds professional programs with liberal arts study. With the recent rebuilding of faculty within the department, DBE stands poised for continued growth and improvement.

Recommendations

The department as a whole has had significant staff turnover since the prior review. This turnover has resulted in both opportunities and challenges as they struggle to provide seamless instruction to students while also providing support for junior faculty retention and promotion needs. Financial stress is compounded by market forces on wages at the same time as the campus experiences an overall drop in student population. Salary compression is an issue which is common across DBE programs (and indeed the entire university). The Department suggests that faculty salary compression within DBE could be alleviated by raising funds from a new differential tuition to be imposed on business students. The APRC recommends that the feasibility of this idea be explored in communication with the Planning and Budgetary Council, the Student Government Association, and university administration.

The student learning outcomes for DBE have not been revised in several years. It may be worthwhile to re-examine these outcomes in light of the increased experience with student learning assessment gained since these outcomes were written, and in consultation with the assessment office.

Problems with facilities, especially with the classroom Erlanson 202 and with the Erlanson elevator, should be addressed to campus administration. A request for new chairs for Erlanson 102 and 203 might be framed using the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), since it is stated that the current chairs in those classrooms are not handicap-accessible.

Many DBE programs expressed a need for "simulation software" for instructional purposes. The APRC recommends that DBE supply a more detailed description of this need, and of the software required. A case could then be made to either the University Technology Committee or to university administration; perhaps some of the "overhead" dollars apportioned to administration from external grants could be channeled back to the department in the form of simulation software.

Other budgetary issues of concern to DBE, such as the requirement to purchase rather than lease copiers without any budgetary direction on how to do so – especially with cuts to S&E – are campus-wide issues which should be addressed to the campus administration and the PBC. This also applies to the campus' mode of technology upgrades for classrooms, where programs have to fight for resources that should be standard.

Another suggestion from the DBE program prioritization documentation involves the potential value of allowing lifetime email accounts to alumni. The APRC recommends a study to assess the associated costs and benefits, with special consideration for the effectiveness of university email communication with the current generation of students. A move to cloud-based email hosting could eliminate the current constraints on email account size (and number of accounts), but may also have associated problems.

Sustainable Management

This review applies to both baccalaureate and master's degree programs.

Strengths

The program demonstrates clear alignment with the university mission.

Sustainable Management did not record students assigned to UW-Superior in the program's first 2 years of 2009-10, but shows strong growth in 2011 and 12 (Table Criterion 2A), which represents a significant number of the UW-Superior population (Table Criterion 2B). The program currently shows a 100% employment rate among its students.

APRC commends the program for offering multiple means of achieving student success through offering online certifications and other career-advancement paths. The program is also commended for its well-developed web presence that helps with interaction both with the program and between and among students across institutions.

Recommendations

While staffing seems appropriate to support the program beyond initial launching, the resultant pressure on overall department S&E, coupled with the decrease in the departmental budgets caused by dropping student population, makes it difficult for the department to support its programs equitably. We commend the program for its practice of teaching distance courses on load.

Assessment of a multi-institution program that is still in its infancy means that there has been little data gathered so far on student learning outcomes (especially as it is seniors who are the subjects of assessment). As the program continues, care must be taken to respect the assessment needs of each campus while not placing undue burden on its constituent members to gather and analyze that data. The program should consider how the inter-institutional annual reports (proposed in the System review) can be leveraged in communicating to its 'local' stakeholders.

Because of the multi-institutional online component, as well as the newness of the program, there is less emphasis on the campus HIPS. The program might explore with the other institutions how they might emphasize some of the HIPS in an online environment. To that end, the campus should consider how it will support the changing technological needs (e.g., SmartBoards, simulation systems) of the Sustainable Management program.

The APRC supports the recommendations of the 2013 Report (p. 19; and DBE APR, p. 102), wherein the program continues to explore means to create opportunities for field experiences for all students.

Summary

Sustainable Management is a new program that is quickly gaining ground, especially due to alternative modes of delivery and inter-institutional cooperation. The System review of the multi-institution program (Dec. 2013) demonstrates that both the inter-institutional model and the program itself are responsive to the needs of its stakeholders.

Cross-disciplinary instruction within the department is a strength of the Department. It is also a significant element of the current Sustainable Management faculty, which provides the opportunity to draw resources to the campus through multiple research grants.

Accounting

Strengths

The Accounting program has aligned itself well with the missions of the university and the Department of Business and Economics. It has made concerted efforts to integrate HIPs into its curriculum, most notably WAC, URSCA, SYE, Global Awareness, and Experiential Learning. The program has a clear assessment plan, and is actively addressing the results of that assessment. The advising philosophy to which the program subscribes is likewise thoughtful and comprehensive.

The program has demonstrated that it is proactive in community outreach, and is actively implementing strategies to reverse the recent decrease in transfer students that it has identified; the program's successful efforts to establish articulation agreements with regional community colleges is commendable.

The program supports both undergraduate research and the research agendas of its faculty, resulting in an accomplished faculty that is active in advancing knowledge in their fields as well as in their classrooms.

Recommendations

The high turnover of faculty in the program has resulted in both a high student/instructor FTE ratio, consequently overburdening the remaining faculty and staff, and has most likely been a significant factor in producing the highly variable enrollment figures since the last review. The cited cause for this turnover is the low faculty compensation at UW-Superior relative to other universities. Because it is perhaps difficult for a small liberal arts institution to match salaries with larger universities, the APRC agrees with the program's assertion that the option of differential tuition for DBE students should be carefully considered and perhaps pursued.

The APRC acknowledges that the university should invest sufficient funds in the Accounting program to guarantee functioning, adequate teaching facilities and technology, to allow Accounting to remain competitive in its field. These issues are addressed in the departmental summary above.

Responses in the "Other Key Stakeholder" section of the program's self-study were minimal, making it difficult for the APRC to make recommendations. If systematic, documentable engagement with external stakeholders does not currently exist, the APRC encourages Accounting to explore discipline-appropriate options for cultivating such engagement (i.e., surveys, community advisory boards, internship programs, etc.). The APRC appreciates Accounting's suggestion, elsewhere in the self-study, that Career Services be enabled to more systematically and uniformly collect data from alumni, so programs can use the data to engage in more nuanced stakeholder research.

Finally, the APRC recommends that Accounting evaluate the sustainability of continuing to offer courses in Not-for-profit Accounting and Business Taxation, in light of the cited enrollment figures (APR, pp. 17-18).

Summary

The Accounting program practices a conscientious and meaningful liberal arts approach to professional education. However, the program's efforts have been significantly hindered by the disproportionate societal valuation of business education compared to liberal arts education, resulting in high human resource costs for the program and insufficient institutional revenue to offset those costs. The APRC supports enabling the program to explore differential tuition options that would provide more competitive compensation for faculty and staff, without losing sight of UW-Superior's institutional ethic. This might be the most feasible way to affect the faculty stability that has been the primary cause of the cited decline in the program's quality.

Economics

Strengths

The Economics program demonstrates that it is dedicated to providing students with a high-quality education, in alignment with the university mission, and, in doing so, has proven both innovative and adaptable. The program's curriculum supports the General Education program as well as other programs inside and outside the Department of Business and Economics. The program participates effectively in a number of High Impact Practices, particularly SYE, URSCA, WAC, ASL, and, most notably, Global Awareness. The program has an ongoing assessment plan that includes modifying the curriculum to address the results of assessment.

Despite financial constraints, the program has succeeded at creating a stable body of qualified and accomplished full-time faculty that seem to share a common educational philosophy.

The program has likewise exhibited that it is proactively pursuing productive relationships with external stakeholders, including regional businesses, research organizations, and alumni, relationships which the program intends to further cultivate. These relationships involve opportunities for student research and scholarly activities while benefiting the local business community.

Recommendations

The Economics self-study cites that the three-year average DBE student-to-FTE ratio is about three times the national public college average (PPP, p. 13). If this is so, the APRC recommends that the program consider this fact in light of the university's commitment to individual attention to students.

Though total enrollment in the Economics major is slowly rising, decreases in graduation rates in recent years are concerning. The APRC urges the program to carefully monitor the situation, particularly noting how changes in curriculum and the recently lowered student-to-FTE ratio might influence graduation rates.

The APRC recommends exhaustive research regarding the proposed plan to make the Economics major comprehensive. As mentioned in the self-study, the current nature of the major allows students to customize their degree of study in a fashion that complements the liberal arts mission of the university. A decision to make the major comprehensive at the present time might not be the most advisable use of university resources. Likewise, the proposed major in Actuarial Studies, while we do not wish to discourage such long-term planning, entails curricular proliferation that might not be sustainable. Further analysis of market demand is advisable, as the program itself acknowledges, before either plan is seriously pursued.

Summary

The program's plans to enhance educational quality through careful curricular assessment, revision, and development, as well as its support of faculty development and its cultivation of relations with external stakeholders and alumni should be supported and presented as exemplars by the university. The APRC suggests that plans to offer new or reconfigured majors be both thoroughly researched, particularly with regard to the potential for attaining system-required graduation rates.

Marketing

Strengths

The Marketing program supports the university's mission to provide professional programs to students and to engage with the local and regional community in support of their needs. The program is healthy, with moderate enrollment growth and strong employment prospects for its graduates. Faculty are valued through a mentoring program in which annual plans are produced, and faculty in turn mentor students with a well-developed advisement model, including a graduation plan developed for each student.

Assessment of student learning has resulted in meaningful suggested changes to the program, completing the loop of assessment. The program recognizes and interacts regularly with its stakeholders to determine its course of action. Engagement with the community takes multiple forms, including internships and partnerships with local businesses. The program actively invests in its future, by redesigning existing courses such as Internet Marketing and becoming involved with new programs such as Data Science.

Recommendations

It is unclear from the materials provided whether the Marketing program has certified its service-learning courses with the AS-L office. If not, we recommend doing so.

Communication with stakeholders (p. 150) takes several forms, but it is not clear whether students are targeted comprehensively; an electronic newsletter or email announcement seems appropriate here.

Unmet needs of the program include salary compression relief, facilities work, and support for analytical software products. These needs are common across most DBE programs and are addressed in the departmental summary above.

Summary

The Marketing program does a tremendous amount in support of the university and its students through peer mentoring, student advisement, assessment, and curriculum review, while continuing to build for the future.

Management

Strengths

The Management program supports the university's mission to provide professional programs to students and to engage with the local and regional community in support of their needs. In addition, Management is well-integrated in the DBE program array. The program suffered in enrollment due to departure of faculty in the review period, but has recently recovered its numbers with the influx of new faculty. Management is in demand as the third-most-popular area in business, with strong (but declining) starting salaries for new graduates and a 100% job placement rate.

The Management program supports several HIPs, including Writing Across the Curriculum, Academic Service-Learning, Senior Year Experience, and Global Awareness (through courses on International Business and International Economics).

Assessment of student learning has resulted in meaningful suggested changes to the program, which seem to be department-wide suggestions. We commend the program for communicating its student learning outcomes directly to the students in its courses. The Management program actively pursues relationships with local entities as partners in student internship offerings, in line with the university's commitment to experiential learning. The program shows a dedication to intentional planning for its own future, with curricular improvement underway: e.g., the reintroduction of Organizational Behavior into the program (APR, p. 54), and development of online versions of certain courses (PPP, p. 30).

Recommendations

It is unclear from the materials provided whether the Management program has certified its writing-intensive courses with the Writing Center or its internship courses with the AS-L office. If not, we recommend doing so. For SYE, the program mentions the inability of students to attend final presentations due to classroom size limits (PPP, p. 16); we recommend booking a larger room for these special events, perhaps looking at buildings across campus (e.g., Swenson Hall).

The Management program's student learning outcomes (SLOs) as stated in the Program Prioritization document (p. 12) and in the APR self-study document (p. 48) differ. Outcome #8 contains several sub-outcomes, and should probably be split up. We recommend consulting with the University Assessment Office or Committee (if such a committee is eventually formed) regarding the program's SLOs. Additionally, the table of assessment results (PPP, p. 31) is difficult to interpret.

Summary

The Management program is a viable and enduring pillar of the Department of Business and Economics that supports the university's mission in numerous ways. The program has quickly rebuilt itself in the most recent two years, and is on track to meet the needs of its students and the greater community it serves.

Transportation and Logistics Management

Strengths

The Transportation and Logistics Management program (T&L) demonstrates a dedication to the types of teaching, scholarship, and research that are clearly compatible with the stated mission of the University of Wisconsin - Superior. The Program successfully combines liberal arts education with professional preparation and the experiential application of acquired knowledge.

The APRC commends T&L for its ongoing dedication to both educational effectiveness and operational efficiency. The program contributes to institutional efficiencies by meaningfully sharing curricular resources with other units, as it does, for example, with the Sustainable Management program and other units within and without The Department of Business and Economics. T&L has also managed to secure sound enrollment figures for itself, indicated by a steady increase in declared majors. Contributing factors to this success likely include the program's ongoing efforts to establish articulation agreements with other institutions, the program's conscientious effort to provide high-quality student advising, its dedication to employing and developing accomplished, full-time faculty for all of its internal instruction, as well as its ongoing communication and collaboration with regional stakeholders in both business and education.

T&L also demonstrates a dedication to the continuous improvement of its methods of instructional delivery. The APRC was impressed with T&L's cited use of assessment data to identify performance deficiencies in its students and correspondingly improve learning outcomes by introducing more oral presentation opportunities and more math-based problems into its curriculum (PPP, p. 12). T&L continues to support the university's high-impact practices, most exceptionally in its curricular integration of Global Awareness, in the mindful design of its Senior Year Experience (which incorporates internships as a form of experiential learning), and in the URSCA opportunities it provides to its students. The APRC likewise commends T&L for partnering with The American Society of Transportation and Logistics to enhance its students' opportunities for career advancement.

Recommendations

The APRC affirms the good sense of the Program's request to have its offices relocated to Erlanson Hall, closer to the rest of the Department of Business and Economics. Likewise, the APRC agrees with the program's observation that greater uniform data collection on graduate activity would be a critical component of improved institutional planning at all levels. Finally, the APRC echoes the program's recommendation that the administration develop and communicate a strategic, sustainable, and transparent plan for the distribution of grant funds.

Summary

All evidence indicates that T&L is guided by an ethically engaged, comprehensive educational vision that takes into account its impact on all stakeholders, beginning and ending with the students themselves. The APRC commends T&L on its successful adaptation to the evolving educational needs of students and the communities they serve as graduates of the University of Wisconsin – Superior.

International Business

Strengths

The International Business (IB) program supports the university's mission to provide professional programs to students and to engage with the local and regional community in support of their needs. In addition, IB is well-integrated in the DBE program array, serving other DBE programs with its course offerings. The program suffered in enrollment due to departure of faculty in the review period, but has recently recovered its numbers through the influx of new faculty and curricular revisions, thus addressing the concerns raised in the previous program review. Faculty in the IB program are experienced in the global marketplace and have themselves traveled extensively. The IB program is particularly attractive to international students, and thus is a potential draw to UW-Superior from emerging new markets.

The IB program supports several HIPs, most notably Global Awareness. By requiring either foreign language or Global Studies coursework, and by encouraging study-away experiences for its students, IB shows its commitment to this HIP. Like other DBE programs, IB also encourages internships (experiential learning).

Assessment of student learning has resulted in meaningful suggested changes to the program, which seem to be department-wide suggestions. We commend the program for communicating its student learning outcomes directly to the students in its courses.

Recommendations

The stated unmet needs of the program are common across the department (and indeed span all departments to some extent), and are addressed at the department level summary. These include the perceived need for simulation software and facilities upgrades.

The IB program states (APR section IV question 10, p. 42) that it is working to strengthen its curriculum by adding two new courses (Business Law and Organizational Behavior). It is not clear exactly how these two courses are specific to International Business as distinct from Management or other programs in DBE; indeed, the same two courses are cited in the Management program review (APR, p. 55). The APRC recommends making this distinction clearer in future communications about the program.

In section V of the APR (p. 43), the program states that student credit hour loads are maintained at reasonable levels by hiring additional staff as needed; however, no evidence is given to support this statement (the relevant data sets are said to be missing, although this particular data can be found in the program prioritization data sets). The APRC recommends a more proactive approach on the part of the program, namely, to contact the appropriate office with a data request so that the requisite analysis may be completed.

The program notes (APR, p. 45) that retention and graduation rates for international students (a prime demographic for IB) are negatively impacted by high rates of transfer away from UW-Superior. It would be beneficial to determine the reasons behind this tendency and also the point in their undergraduate careers at which such students typically make the decision to transfer. Gathering information would help not only the IB program, but the entire campus, in its mission to better serve its students and better understand how we serve them.

Summary

The International Business program plays an important role in supporting both the mission of the university and its peer programs within DBE. The IB program appears to be improving its enrollment numbers and curriculum, with qualified, dedicated instructors working to ensure its continued improvement.

Business Administration - Finance

Strengths

The Finance program supports the university's mission to provide professional programs to students and to engage with the local and regional community in support of their needs. Despite suffering high faculty turnover in the past decade, the program has remained viable, with near-steady enrollment numbers. A small number of instructors (one faculty and one part-time adjunct) support the Finance program, which has a healthy average enrollment (about 36 students), making the program relatively efficient. Finance is a high-demand field as reported by employers (at the top among the business programs) with a high average starting salary, and is essential to any business operation; thus the program should prove attractive to students into the foreseeable future.

The program actively supports on-line course development through participation in the consortium-based Business Alliance Program. Additionally, the program faculty stays engaged with students via participation in the Financial Management Association (student chapter). The faculty is also working to improve the student advisement process.

The Finance program supports several HIPs, at levels comparable to other DBE programs. Like other DBE programs, Finance also encourages internships (experiential learning).

Recommendations

The stated unmet needs of the program are common across the department (and indeed span all departments to some extent), and are addressed at the department level summary. These include the perceived need for simulation software and facilities upgrades, as well as a need for more S&E funding for faculty development and conference attendance.

The student learning outcomes for the Finance program include two outcomes that will prove hard to measure (PPP, p. 11), and indeed do not seem to have been assessed yet: namely, #4 (increase global awareness) and #5 (conduct themselves ethically in and out of the classroom). The former would require a study of the same cohort over time (pre- and post-testing), while the latter would be difficult to measure for a variety of reasons. The APRC recommends revisiting these outcomes for feasibility of evaluation, with a view to rewrite or replace them; other programs on campus (e.g., Social Work) also attempt to assess students for ethical thinking, and may prove to be valuable collaborators in this venture.

Given the relatively stable enrollment in the major, and the frequent overload status of the faculty in the Finance program, additional staffing could be looked into as a way of reducing the high workload of current staff. This would also enable additional courses/sections to be offered, enabling timely graduation plans and fulfilling stated needs of the program (APR, p. 28).

Summary

The Finance program plays an important role in supporting both the mission of the university and its peer programs within DBE. The Finance program has developed a stable (though perhaps somewhat understaffed) platform from which to provide quality outcomes to its substantial student population as it continues to improve and expand in the areas of advisement, online course development, and articulation agreements with other institutions.

Business Administration – Non-comprehensive Major; Minor

Strengths

The Business Administration – Non-comprehensive major (BA-NC) and BA minor programs support the university's mission to provide professional programs to students and to engage with the local and regional community in support of their needs. The BA-NC program has proven attractive to students, with high enrollment in the major (second only to Finance within the Department of Business and Economics). With the recent hiring of new full-time faculty, the BA-NC program has increased its percentage of dedicated full-time staff to 100% from a low of 10% a few years earlier (PPP, p. 9). While this last fact has meant a fall in the number of declared majors per FTE staff, this ratio has remained high in absolute terms (70 as of Fall 2012) (PPP, p. 17).

The BA-NC major and BA-minor are “value-added” programs (APR, VI.1), meaning that they use the same resources already in place for the other Business Administration programs, thus imposing less of a resource burden than would otherwise occur. Benefits of this integration into other DBE programs also include participation in activities common to all DBE programs, notably a well-articulated advisement process, assessment of student learning, and high-impact practices (particularly in experiential learning).

The BA minor has recently undergone a redesign effort (APR, pp. 137-138) with a view to continued improvement by providing greater focus on areas of perceived demand. The stated goals of this redesign are laudably clear and well-intentioned.

Recommendations

The opportunities (e.g. in career choices) available to BA-NC graduates are never articulated; we recommend, for future communication to external audiences (students, staff outside of DBE, and administration), that the nature of these opportunities be described. A number of duplications seem to have occurred from reports submitted by other DBE programs, without any alteration: e.g., references to “BA-MGT” (PPP Criteria 2A, B, C, p. 8). On a similar note, the PPP report is inconsistent in reporting the faculty who make up the program (PPP, pp. 1 and 21). These anomalies should be corrected in future reporting.

Other concerns are common to most or all programs in DBE, and are addressed in the departmental summary.

Summary

The Business Administration – Non-Comprehensive major is a high-performing major by the standards of student demand, employability of graduates, and efficient delivery of instruction. The major is well integrated into the Department of Business and Economics, enjoying a synergistic relationship with the other DBE programs. The Business Administration minor benefits from the attention of faculty looking to

improve its curriculum, though less well-documented than the major. The APRC finds the BA-NC major to be a viable part of the university's array of programs.