

# Economics Program Review

## College of Arts

### Dean's Summary

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Submitted by:

Dr. Jacqueline Nolte, Dean of the College of Arts

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Accepted by:

Senate in February 2018

Academic Planning and Priorities Committee in January 2018

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## Dean's Summary Report, Economics Programme Review

Dr. Jacqueline Nolte, November 2017

The Economics Department offers a relatively new BA major in Economics within the College of Arts as well as a minor in Economics. The department has five full time members, one of whom is fully released to serve as FSA President. In addition it has four non-permanent faculty teaching courses. Twenty-eight sections are taught by fulltime faculty and sixteen sections are in the part time budget.

In May 2017, a Program Review site visit occurred, which in accordance with Policy 189, is designed to: foster ongoing improvement of the quality of programming; enhance the contribution of the programs to the university's strategic goals, vision, mission, plans and value; align the programs with the Institutional Learning Outcomes; achieve and maintain high standards of educational practices; achieve and maintain high professional standards, as recognized by the disciplinary and/or accrediting bodies; and ensure adequate and effective utilization of resources. In June, the Program Review Committee (PRC) report was received.

The Program Review was informed by the Economics Department self-study of their unit, which was in turn informed by the Dean's scope letter. The department drew on data provided by Institutional Research and from surveys conducted with students. The PRC met with a number of stakeholders, including students, faculty, sessional instructors, staff and members of UFV's senior administration. They also toured the campus to assess facilities and supports for faculty and students. The committee focussed its work around three objectives: to examine the Department of Economics in terms of being an independent unit and where it should be located within the UFV academic structure; to examine the new BA major in Economics within the College of Arts and the minor in Economics; to analyze the Economics faculty involvement in teaching, research and service.

Overall, the site visit and subsequent review was positive. In the executive summary of their report, the PRC wrote that "[w]ith a robust faculty and an increasing student body entering the new major in Economics, the Department is on a relatively good growth trajectory." Two additional observations are shared in the executive summary, namely a recommendation of a reduction in faculty overloads which can be addressed by "replacing a full time faculty retirement with a full time tenure track position opening, and by continuing to arrange limited term appointments for faculty on secondment." The PRC also recommends that "to provide ideal conditions for growth of the new major program, we recommend that the Department of Economics remains in the College of Arts, and not be re-structured into the Faculty of Professional Studies or the School of Business." The rationale here is to forge important new linkages for the new major within arts, while retaining strong ties with the business program.

What follows is a list of recommendations organized under distinct categories and with actions drawn from the department's response and in dialogue with the Dean.

### 1. Academic Unit and Strategic Plan Alignment:

#### *Recommendation 1*

That the Economics Department stays in the College of Arts, while maintaining strong ties with the School of Business.

Action: Agreed

2. Program Profile(s): content and delivery:

*Recommendation 2*

That the Economics Department considers creating two streams for the major in Economics, one stream focusing in the area of financial economics with the additional business courses and the other stream focusing more on various economic fields and economic policy.

Action: The department is committed to introducing additional field courses to the curriculum, and will develop a second program / curriculum stream occurs when enrollment is sufficient to offer an additional two 300/400-level field courses per year; tentatively during the 2019/2020 academic year. In the interim, high demand sections will be introduced to pilot courses and to test demand.

*Recommendation 3*

That the Economics Department pursues the development and formal institutional approval of the curriculum and program changes described in Section 4.4 of the program review self- study as per Recommendation [3] of the self-study, and with consideration of the external review recommendations on page 17 of their report and *Recommendation 2* above.

Action: The department has allocated the work of revisions and new course development, with the goals of completing this by December and taking the changes through the approval process in the Winter.

Learning Outcomes and Student Success

*Recommendations 4 and 5*

That the Economics Program increases its efforts to attract students through new courses, new joint majors, and major/minor and minor/minor combinations with other disciplines in Arts and Science. This is of importance given the possible decline in the number of minors in Economics from the BBA program, due to the regulation on combinations of options within a degree. It is recommended that the School of Business and the Economics Department discuss and find possible solutions to minimize this impact.

Actions: The Associate Dean of Students in the College of Arts and the Director of Advising have drafted an interpretation of the guidelines, which has been sent to the Registrar. Although the number of students in the Econ Minor might decline, the impact on course enrollments in Economics will not be affected.

Student Recruitment, Engagement and Retention

*Recommendation 6*

That the Economics Department pursues Recommendation [2] of the program review self- study and develop the formal role for the student association as a program stakeholder, in order to foster increased student engagement. Although students can find sources for funds, the Department may want to allocate some of its discretionary funds towards the association for such purposes as funding student engagement activities and for speaker series. Also that the economics student association be listed among the clubs at the Arts main site and that the association create its own website.

Action: the department has submitted a proposal to Campus Planning for Economics student space to help increase student engagement and presence in and around the department. The department has listed the Economics Student Association on the Arts main site. The department cannot create action items for its student association but will advise and endorse the recommendation pertaining to the creation of an association website. The Association has already created a social media presence on Facebook.

*Recommendation 7*

That the Economics Department create research opportunities for program students through the upper level curriculum, and encourage students to present their findings at the undergraduate research conference at UFV, or other institutions such as UBC-O and TRU. This is in line with Recommendation [12] of the department's self-study document.

Action: To facilitate integration of upper-level research and the ePortfolio requirement of the Bachelor of Arts, the department has already invited Mary Saudelli and Michelle Johnson to discuss the matter and has held one workshop toward this end. This is also in accordance with the BA implementation plan approved by the College of Arts Council. The department will be encouraged to liaise with the AVP Research, Engagement and Graduate Studies to explore the promotion of the research conducted by Economics students.

*Recommendation 8*

That the Economics Department holds regular monthly department meetings with agenda and minutes. That at least one executive member of the economics student association be present at these meetings. Furthermore, the Department can invite for short presentations key players at UFV that can provide insights into student success. For example, the Director of Teaching and Learning, and the Senior Advisor on Indigenous Affairs could both be invited for information.

Action: The department agrees and has linked their response regarding agendas and minutes to the following recommendation #9.

3. Faculty: pedagogy, qualifications, professional development and workload:

*Recommendation 9*

That faculty ought not to be supporting their own meetings and that a 30 per cent staff support position be allocated to the Department of Economics.

Action: The Dean will explore the workload of department assistants to explore where increased DA contracts are logical.

*Recommendation 10*

That a tenure track position be opened for replacement upon the planned retirement of one faculty member and that an LTA position be arranged annually for replacement of the faculty member in the role of FSA President.

Action: The Dean has requested that the department submit a position request. The hiring criteria for a potential future faculty member were discussed at the October 27<sup>th</sup> department meeting and will be submitted to the Dean's office. Funding for LTA appointments has been requested.

#### 4. General comments

##### *Recommendation 11*

That a variety of class hour vectoring options be given to students and not only 3 hour blocks. Some sections of courses that cover theory such as Managerial Economics or Econometrics can perhaps better be vectored as two 80-minute classes.

Action: The department will continue to increase its online course provisions and, where appropriate, experiment with the hybrid class model and expand these offerings where proven successful.

##### *Recommendation 12*

Attract students through improvements to the Program's web page and other recruitment methods.

Action: The department agrees and notes its relationship to # 9 regarding a DA. The dean's office is working with Recruitment and International to increase recruitment and has also introduced an Economics Minor on the UFV Chandigarh campus.

##### *Recommendation 13*

Create more formal protocols for communicating course scheduling between the Department and school of business and reduce potential conflicts and inefficiencies.

Action: The department had made this suggestion itself and will continue communication with the School of Business in order to limit potential schedule conflicts between programs and faculty.

##### *Recommendation 14*

That the possibility of a first year computer course as a requirement or as a recommended elective in the BA major in Economics be explored.

Action: The department is currently investigating courses offered in other academic units for potential inclusion in the Major in Economics. There is a desire to incorporate more technical programming skills as part of the curriculum but these skills are delivered in courses on an ad hoc basis. The department is discussing how to arrive at a coordinated and consolidated set of programming skills for students.

##### *Recommendation 15*

Explore the possibility of offering a course(s) and/ or programs linked to the Tulo Centre of Indigenous Economics <http://www.tulo.ca/>. Offering a possible second year course in Applied First Nations Economics is worth exploring.

Action: The use of the open textbook for topics in various 100- and 200-level courses has been implemented. The department will publish programs and workshops provided by the Tulo Centre on its website and facilitate articulation of these programs for transfer credit. When faculty expertise allows, the Department will pursue a second year course in Applied First Nations Economics. The department has invited the Senior Advisor on Indigenous Affairs to a department meeting for the purpose of discussing potential collaborations across institutions.

*Recommendation 16*

Create courses entitled “Selected topics in Economics” at the 200, 300 and 400 level to test potential new courses before offering these on a regular basis.

Action: As part of the action item in response to *Recommendation 3*, approval will be pursued for selected topics courses at the 200-, 300- and 400-level.

*Recommendation 17*

Work closely with the co-op unit to make BA major in Economics program more attractive by allowing students to combine their academic studies with relevant work experience.

Action: The department will continue to work with the Career Centre and will facilitate communication between the Economics Student Association and the co-op unit in order to investigate more effective outreach and awareness of opportunities presented through these work-study programs.