

College of Letters and Science
Annual Survey and Report of Departmental Assessment Practices

Please return to: Associate Dean Herbert Wang by May 25, 2001
c/o Associate Academic Planner Elaine Klein
307 E. South Hall, 1055 Bascom Mall, Madison WI 53706

Department Name: ECONOMICS

I. Assessment Plan

- Q1. The department has an assessment plan for the undergraduate program. (Y) N
- Q2. The department has an assessment plan for the graduate program. (Y) N
- Q3. The assessment plan/s is/are linked to the departmental mission. Y N

Please identify the types of tools in the assessment plan(s); if possible, indicate the academic years in which they have been or are intended to be employed:

Tools used to directly assess student learning:	Undergraduate Program	Graduate Program
National Exams		
Local Exams	X	X
Capstone Courses		
Embedded Testing		
Student Portfolios		
Theses, Dissertations	X	X
Performance Evaluations		
Pre & Post Testing		
Tools used to indirectly assess student learning:	Undergraduate Program	Graduate Program
Student Surveys		
Exit Interviews		
Alumni Surveys		
Employer Surveys		
External Reviews		

Q5. Of the tools used to directly assess student learning, which provide the most useful information?

EXAMS (UNDERGRAD), THESES (GRAD)

Q6. Of the tools used to directly assess student learning, which provide the least useful information?

Q7. Of the tools used to indirectly assess student learning, which provide the most useful information?

Q8. Of the tools used to indirectly assess student learning, which provide the least useful information?

Q9. Please elaborate on any of the responses given above (please attach additional pages as needed).

SEE ATTACHED

II. Assessment Processes

Q10. Responsibility for assessment has been assumed by an individual
 a committee

If responsibility is delegated to an individual, this person is:

the chair / tenured faculty / untenured faculty / academic staff / short term staff / other: _____

If responsibility is delegated to a committee, this group is:

Specially constituted to address assessment of student learning	Y	N
Part of the Curriculum Committee	Y	N
Part of the Executive Committee	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	N
Part of the Undergraduate/Graduate Education Committee	Y	N
Other: _____		

Q11. The department has requested funds from the University Assessment Council (UAC) to help the department assess student learning. Y N

If "yes", did the UAC award the department funds? Y N

Were those funds useful? Y N

Q12. The department has sought professional assistance to conduct assessment. Y N

If "yes", from whom has the department has sought professional assistance? (For example, the LEAD Center, the Office of Quality Improvement, the UW Survey Center, etc.)

III. Additional Information

Please attach any assessment reports you may have submitted to the University Assessment Council in compliance with the UAC's funding support requests.

In the interest of streamlining our requests for assessment information, please identify an assessment contact person: DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Do you have any suggestions for workshops or learning opportunities in the area of student outcomes assessment?

Thank you for taking time to complete this report.

Please return this form to the Associate Dean's Office by May 25, 2001.

Assessment of Programs in the Department of Economics:

Undergraduate Program:

Historically, we have focused our assessment of our undergraduate program on three factors: (i) the breadth of our course offering (ii) the quality of our classroom instruction (iii) the demand for our classes. In all three areas, we continue to improve.

For some time, in response to student and alumni input, we have sought to expand our advanced undergraduate course offerings. During the past year, we approved one new advanced course and are in the process of adding another. James Montgomery who is a new faculty member in Economics and Sociology will teach a new course, Economics 451, on the economic approach to problems that are commonly placed in the domain of sociology. Bruce Hansen has developed a new course on forecasting. There is a high demand for this course among our undergraduates. We hope to gain divisional committee approval in the fall and offer the course in the spring. This course will be the fourth major addition to our offerings in a three year period.

We have also made progress in improving the quality of our classroom instruction. We now have numerous advanced course offerings that involve tenured or tenure-track faculty teaching topics courses related to their research. The following comparison is instructive. In the coming fall, we will offer seven advanced classes taught by tenure-track faculty. Six of these classes will be taught by senior faculty who have established research records that relate to their course materials. By comparison, Northwestern's economics department will offer only four courses taught by tenure-track faculty in the coming fall term. Further, this fall is not unusual. We will have comparable offerings in the spring. We now have a breadth and quality of advanced undergraduate offerings that very few universities can match.

Finally, we are pleased to note that as our program continues to improve, our majors continue to grow. The following chart illustrates:

Enrolled Economics Majors

Spring 97	209
Spring 98	240
Spring 99	232
Spring 00	251
Spring 01	318

Graduate Program:

Our graduate program has enjoyed noteworthy placement success in

the last three years. However, this year we had a small cohort of students seeking jobs, and therefore we placed fewer students in high profile research jobs. We had only nine students seeking employment in the new PhD market. Of these nine, all received job offers. Most received tenure track positions in state universities or research positions in government. Two placements are worthy of specific mention. John Straub accepted a position as a new assistant professor at Texas A&M University. Karen Pence accepted a research position with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

In the previous two years, we have had 29 other graduate students seeking PhD level jobs. Of these 29, only one encountered serious problems finding a job. Therefore, in three years, we have seen only one person out of 38 encounter serious problems on the job market.

Over the 1990s, our graduate program became smaller. At the beginning of the decade our graduate students numbered roughly 175. For the past several years, our graduate student body has fluctuated around 110. We expect a large entering class in the Fall of 2001. However, we do not expect to return to the an overall size of 175. Several factors lead us to believe that the program will remain smaller than it was in the early 1990s. To begin, we have successfully encouraged more students to finish their dissertations in a timely manner. Therefore, we have far fewer students in their sixth year or beyond who are still in the program. We have also raised standards with respect to preliminary examinations, and we have instituted field requirements that involve paper requirements rather than just examinations. By tightening standards, we have raised the number of students who leave our program in the first several years, we also believe that the quality of our program has improved over this period. The success of our students in the job market provides evidence that we are correct in this assessment.