

The Graduate School



EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY™

TO: Dr. Mukti Upadhyay, Graduate Coordinator
Master of Arts in Economics

Dr. Linda Ghent, Chair
Department of Economics

FROM: Dr. David Raybin, Review Board Chair
Dr. John Dively, Review Board Member
Dr. Lisa Taylor, Review Board Member

RE: First Choice Consultation Summary

DATE: **December 9, 2009**

Part 1 Consultation Program Team & Review Board

Master of Arts in Economics Program Team
Linda Ghent, Ph.D., Chair
Mukti Upadhyay, Ph.D., Graduate Coordinator

Council on Graduate Studies Review Board
David Raybin, Ph.D., Board Chair
Lisa Taylor, Ph.D., Board Member
John Dively, J.D., Ed. D., Board Member
Robert M. Augustine, Ph.D. Dean of the Graduate School

Part 2 Consultation and Review Summary

Initial Consultations October 27, 2009 and November 3, 2009
Consultation Report December 9, 2009
Program Review Request TBD
First Review Report October TBD
First CGS Review November TBD
Review Report and Recommendations TBD

Part 3 Consultation Report

Program Mission: The Master's of Arts in Economics

The program's objectives are to prepare students for doctoral study and to provide qualified economists to staff industry and governmental positions. Elective courses in the graduate program accommodate students with an interest in areas of economics such as international economics, economic development, theory, labor, monetary policy and banking, government and business, and history of thought.

Introduction

General Comment. The Review Board appreciates the program's willingness to adjust its curriculum in response to external review, and encourages the program to continue in this effort. At this time, the Review Board urges the program to postpone its application for First Choice designation until improvements are made and sustained in the areas of Criterion 1 (most especially in recruitment and retention and in matriculation management) and Criterion 3 (most especially in curricular leadership and in capstone leadership). In addition, additional documentation is needed in respect to Criteria 1, 2, and 3, and some of the information that is included might be reordered to highlight the program's achievements.

Criterion 1: The program documents sustained achievements in strengthening the quality, diversity, and internationalization of the University's student body by attracting candidates who have the potential for academic and professional achievement and who complete degrees and succeed as alumni. Overall Rating for Criterion 1 = 3 - 1

Summary. The Review Board considers that Economics has not yet met the standards in all areas of Criterion 1 but should be encouraged to continue its efforts to recruit, retain, and matriculate superior students. The Review Board commends the program's success in attracting international students.

a. Enrollment Management:

- i. *Recruitment Plan: A clear plan meeting application, enrollment, and diversity goals. **Rating = 2 - 1.*** The program does not meet this standard at this time. Over the past three years, the program has accepted 19 of 20, 26 of 29, and 33 of 35 applicants. It is not clear from the data how many of these students enrolled in the program. It is also not clear what the recruitment goals for the program consist of, as they are not listed. The principal recruitment tools include program brochures, the program website, contacts with faculty members at other institutions, contacts at conferences, EIU classroom presentations, personal contact by the program coordinator, and participation in career services/graduate school fairs. The presentation revealed that the program's total enrollment each year for the past three years has been below the program's stated enrollment goals. The Review Board recommends increased efforts in this area by developing a clear Enrollment Management Plan and by achieving the stated enrollment goals for the program. The program documents substantial international diversity and significant gender diversity. Domestic diversity is limited and only a few students enter the program from other American schools. It would be helpful if Table 1.2 included a) annual acceptance rates and b) diversity levels for each entering class.
- ii. *Selection Criteria: A rationale for selection decisions; fulfilling its expectations for quality. **Rating = 2 - 1.*** The program does not meet the criteria at this time. Admission decisions reflect minimum EIU Graduate School requirements. Applications are screened by the graduate coordinator, who occasionally discourages prospective applicants. External applicants generally are asked for a statement of purpose and two reference letters, but these requirements sometimes are waived. The Review Board recommends that the program adopt more uniform standards for applicants.
- iii. *Acceptance Rate: Desired applicants accept admission offers. **Rating = 2 - 1.*** The program does not meet the criteria at this time. The presenters noted that approximately one-half of the candidates offered admission make the decision to attend. If evidence is available that applicants choose EIU over competing schools, and not simply because of minimum admission requirements, it should be included.

*b. Assistantship/Scholarship Management. **Rating = 3 - 1.***

- i. *Annual Awards: Attracting desired applicants; teaching, research, or service experiences add value to the degree. **Rating = 3 - 1.*** It is not clear if the program meets the criteria. The program does not indicate the percentage of students offered graduate assistantships who accept the offer. The average undergraduate GPA of incoming graduate assistants of 3.4 is not especially high. The high acceptance level among those offered graduate assistantships is admirable. A table indicating graduate assistant

applications, offers, acceptances, and diversity (international, domestic, gender) would be helpful. The teaching, research, and service activities of graduate assistants are appropriate. In Fall 2009, the program awarded the first Lenihan Graduate Fellowship in Economics, an endowed annual fellowship funded by a retired faculty member. A second fellowship, also funded by a retired faculty member, is reported as beginning in 2009, but it is not clear if it has been awarded. The Review Board commends the program for its success in establishing these fellowships. .

- ii. *Competitive Awards. **Rating = 4.*** The program meets this criterion for the sustained period. The program reports successful applications for Presidential Graduate Assistantships and summer Graduate Research Assistantships.
- c. *Matriculation Management: A targeted graduation rate; candidates consistently meet the program's degree completion expectations. **Rating = 3 – 1.*** It is not clear that this standard is met. The program's graduation rate is currently 40-55%. It is not clear from the data how quickly students graduate and whether GAs matriculate at the same rate as other students. It seems that many students who do not graduate were unsuited to the program, which may reflect on the high percentage of admitted applicants.
- d. *Graduate Placement: The program can document sustained placements; earn required credentials; make important contributions to society; pursuit of advanced degree programs. **Rating = 4.*** The program meets this standard. The program documents success in the placement of 2006, 2007, and 2008 graduates, with 40% of graduates working in private companies, 30% working in government and nonprofit organizations, and 20% enrolled in Ph.D. programs. Some alumni have had especially outstanding careers.

Criterion 2: The program documents sustained achievements in fostering advanced scholarship through a depth of knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication, application of technology, research/creative activity, and commitment to professional ethics. **Rating = 4 - 1.**

- a. *Center for Academic Support and Achievement documents that assessment data are used to improve student learning, to guide improvements to the curriculum and to achieve academic excellence.*
- b. *Graduate School documents that assessment data are used to improve student learning based on CGS Criteria.*

Summary. The Review Board considers that although Economics most likely meets the standards of Criterion 2, the report does not document the program's achievements adequately. Additional clarification is needed in the final application. Documents needed include CASA and Graduate School assessment for AY 2006-2009, and the 2006 assessment of external reviewer Michael Watts. If the relatively low assessment results in categories related to "papers in graduate courses," the question should be addressed in a future application for First Choice status.

Criterion 3: The program documents sustained achievements in expanding the curriculum with rigorous advanced courses and options offered through lectures, laboratories, seminars, forums, practicum field experiences, internships, and partnerships with education, business, and industry. **Rating = 3 - 1.**

Summary. The Review Board considers that Economics appears to have met some of the standards of First Choice Criterion 3. Success in some of the criteria was not documented and/or has not been sustained for the requisite time. Additional documentation is needed and we identified the areas below where we were unable to identify evidence to support the criteria. We urge that the report be reorganized in line with the review criteria.

- a. *Sustained Mission and Planning Leadership: Articulates a clear mission; aligned with current and future trends in the discipline; states the program's strengths. **Rating = 2.*** This standard is not met. The program's mission statement seems overly broad for a small student body. We

encourage the program coordinator to consult with Dean Augustine about revising the statement to reflect the program's focus.

- b. *Sustained Curricular Leadership by Program Administration and Faculty. Rating = 3 - 1.* This standard is not met for the sustained period. The efforts by the administration and faculty in this regard are reflected in the program's recent creation of two new courses. This change responds an appropriate initial response to the program's assessments of internal data, external review, and student curricular needs. The program has a sustained record of success in educating its top students. The faculty is encouraged to continue to revise the curriculum in ways that lead to greater success in the student population as a whole.
 - i. *Administrative Leadership: Documents how its administrative structure and leadership advance the quality of its curriculum. Rating = 4.* The program appears to meet the First Choice criteria in this area.
 - ii. *Graduate Faculty Leadership: Documents the significant role of the graduate faculty with advancing the curriculum through curriculum committees or appropriate curriculum processes. Rating = 4.* The program appears to meet the First Choice criteria in this area.
- c. *Sustained Curricular Leadership by External Review: Sustained excellence based on external reviews as appropriate to the mission/discipline. Rating = 3 - 1.* This standard was not met for the sustained period. The program has begun the process of adapting its curriculum in response to the 2006 review by Professor Michael Watts of Purdue University and is encouraged to continue in this direction. A copy of Professor Watts' evaluation and recommendations should be included in a future application for First Choice status along with a summary of how each of the recommendations has been addressed. .
- d. *Sustained Capstone Leadership: Requires a rigorous capstone appropriate to the mission and documents the impact of each of its capstones on the quality of learning in the degree program. Rating = 2.* This standard was not met. The Review Board considers that the capstone experiences provided by the program have not been documented as meeting First Choice criteria. The program offers two capstone options. The standard thesis option with oral defense has generated significant student success, but it is not clear how many students pursue this option. The alternate Graduate Forum option appears less rigorous, and it should be explained in greater detail how participating in a Graduate Forum reflects successful completion of a comprehensive program. A chart indicating the number of students (graduate assistants and candidates who do not hold assistantship appointments) pursuing each option would be helpful in documenting the program's success in meeting student needs for a capstone experience.
- e. *Sustained Student Leadership: Fosters participation of its graduate candidates on student advisory boards. Rating = 3 - 1.* The Review Board considers that the information provided in this area is not sufficient to document the extent of student leadership. The presentation provided the impression of appropriate student leadership, but not a clear picture.
- f. *Sustained Alumni Leadership: The program documents how it fosters participation in alumni programs sponsored by the Graduate School Alumni Advisory Board. Rating = 5 - 1.* The Review Board considers that alumni leadership appears to be substantial and sustained, but that additional documentation is needed to confirm this assessment. The oral presentation suggested alumni involvement that is not reflected in the written request. The achievements of top alumni are substantial.
- g. *Sustained External Partnerships: Sustained external partnerships appropriate to its mission; assets of partners advance the program's quality. Rating = 1.* The Review Board considers that the documentation offered does not permit assessment in this area.

Criterion 4: The program documents sustained achievements in research/creative activity with graduate students and faculty. *Rating 4 - 1.*

Summary. The Review Board considers that Economics may have met the standards of First Choice Criterion 4, but that the documentation offered is insufficient to permit accurate assessment in this area. We note that Appendix 4.1 lists student success in publications, conference presentations, and award competitions, but are unable to determine the extent of this success.

- a. *Sustained Student Research Leadership:*
 - i. *Research Productivity: The program has an annual research productivity goal and documents that its candidates meet or exceed it. **Rating = 4 - 1.*** It was not clear if the program has an established research productivity goal.
 - ii. *Research Engagement: Graduate candidates achieve a sustained record of scholarship through presentations, performances, or exhibits. **Rating = 4 - 1.*** The evidence presented by Economics regarding sustained student research productivity demonstrates that research is an important part of the program for some students, but it is not clear how widespread this research engagement is. We expect that fuller documentation will resolve this issue.
- b. *Sustained Commitment to Research & Travel Grants: A record of sustained participation in the annual Graduate School research and travel grants that includes both applications for awards and a record of earning awards. **Rating = 4 - 1.*** This appears to be an area of strength, as a large number of students have received Williams Travel Grants, but documentation in this area is difficult to evaluate. The Review Board therefore is unable to assess Criterion 4b.
- c. *Sustained Commitment to Showcasing Scholarship: Showcases graduate research and scholarship through the Graduate Exposition or other means. **Rating = 4 - 1.*** This also appears to be an area of strength, as a large number of students seem to have presented their research, but the documentation in this area is difficult to evaluate. The Review Board therefore is unable to assess Criterion 4c.
- d. *Sustained Record of Award Program Participation: Demonstrates participation in the Graduate School's Distinguished Awards Program. **Rating = 5 - 1.*** Information regarding whether Economics graduate students have been nominated or received Graduate School Distinguished Awards suggests substantial student success, but the documentation in this area is difficult to evaluate. The Review Board therefore is unable to assess Criterion 4d.

Criterion 5: The program documents a sustained record of developing opportunities for the discovery and application of knowledge with graduate faculty members who reflect the University's teaching and mentoring priority and who have a record of research/creative activity and professional service. *Rating = 5 - 1.*

Summary. The Review Board considers that although Economics seems to have met the standards of First Choice Criterion 5, the report does not document the program's achievements fully and clearly. Additional information about each faculty member's scholarly achievement and clearer organization of this information would strengthen a subsequent application.

- a. *Coordinator Leadership. **Rating = 5*** The program coordinator's record of leadership is exemplary. Dr. Upadhyay has been active in a broad range of university and professional activities and has an established record of working with students and colleagues
- b. *Faculty Scholarship. **Rating = 5 - 1.*** The scholarly and service records of the program's graduate faculty members appear to be substantial and ongoing, but the presentation is confusing. In a subsequent application for First Choice status, full information on publications and *conference presentations* during the previous 3 years should be included, and the information should be organized in a clearer and more consistent format.

Scale Definitions

- Standard: Standard means the program has an identified goal(s), targeted performance, or expected processes that it is intentionally seeking to meet.
- Sustained Period: Refers to meeting the standard three (3) or more years.
- Exceeds Standard: Means that the program has achieved a level of performance that is higher than or better than the targeted goal, performance, or process.
- Meets Standard: Means that the program has achieved the identified goal(s), targeted performance, or expected process.
- Standard Not Specified: Means that the reviewers failed to show that the program has an established goal, targeted performance, or expected process.

Scale

- 5 = Exceeds Standard **and** Exceeds Sustained Period
- 4 = Meets Standard **and** Meets Sustained Period
- 3 = Meets Standard **but** Not Sustained Period
- 2 = Fails to Meet Standard
- 1 = Standard Not Identifiable by Reviewer

Contact the Dean of the Graduate School if you would like to arrange a time to discuss the Consultation Report.

C: Graduate School