

Program Review
BBA Management
Florida Atlantic University
Review Team Report
April 2, 2014

Our charge was to advise the unit on how to advance the program to the “next level.” This report and recommendations are based upon the self-study report and the meetings we had during the visit on March 25, 2014. Five meetings were with administration including the department chair; one lunch meeting included faculty and the department chair; and one half-hour meeting included students. The meetings and self-study report provided useful data and information; however, some data were not available or existed elsewhere outside of the report and were not accessible to the team. The report provided some interesting and potentially viable ideas for future change, although it was not apparent that the ideas for future change and direction presented in the self-study report were accompanied by a thorough strategic analysis that led to the conclusions. Therefore, in our view, recommendations for specific actions by us are somewhat premature until such a strategic analysis is conducted to include input by relevant constituencies (e.g. faculty, students, administration, alumni, business community, etc.) and comparisons to other institutions (e.g., local competitors and peer and aspirant programs). Nonetheless, based on available information and our experiences with other academic institutions’ programs, we will offer our observations of the BBA program’s strengths, challenges, along with our tentative suggestions for addressing these challenges. We will then close with our direct responses to the three questions posed for the Review Team in the Self-Study Report.

Strengths:

We noticed many positive features during our visit that deserve mention. These should provide a good base on which to build further.

1. Chair dedication. The chair seemed very dedicated to the program and department, was interested in advancing the department to the next level, and recognized the value in pursuing strategic change.
2. Faculty support and collegiality. Faculty we met seemed dedicated to the programs and department and seemed supportive of the chair. The faculty reported strong collegiality.
3. Student engagement and perceptions of quality. Students were upbeat and enthusiastic about their education and were optimistic about their future. They generally viewed their coursework as of high-quality and demanding. The reputation of the program was very good.
4. Culture of openness to improvement. Everyone we met seemed genuinely interested in advancing the stature of the programs, college and university. This is quite commendable.
5. Strong core business curriculum. The business foundation and core courses are consistent with most quality business programs.

6. Facilities and equipment. The buildings, entrepreneurship center, trading room, classrooms, and equipment are very good. They compare favorably to most business schools.
7. Student diversity is an asset and possibly an untapped resource for branding or building of new programs or initiatives.
8. Entrepreneurship Center. Entrepreneurship center is a resource that could help to leverage the entrepreneurship theme in the curriculum, lead to further development opportunities, and help to bridge connections to the community.

Challenges and Recommendations:

Four main issues seemed apparent that deserve future attention in moving the program forward.

1. Declining enrollments. It was not clear as to the underlying cause(s), but the data documented a clear trend toward declining enrollments in the management major.

Suggestions:

- More recruiting and marketing of programs university-wide and to external groups; connect to unique brand/focus. Internally, it appeared that there was little attempt to recruit students to the major during their first two years in the university, nor was there any systematic attention devoted to the core classes as recruiting vehicles to the major. The opportunities seem clear. Broward Community College, adjacent to the FAU Davie campus, seems to be a logical target for transfer student recruitment as well. Connecting to these future students with a unique brand or image would provide a message for the marketing effort. We would suggest rooting it in the program's unique qualities or features.
 - Refocusing the curriculum. Please see item 4. But a refocused curriculum should make it easier to promote the program.
 - Consider honors in the major and undergraduate student involvement in research. While it is unlikely that this will result in large numbers of students selecting these options, they would be consistent with the research focus of the department, university priorities, and provide something distinctive that is consistent with the student's perceptions of the department offering high quality and demanding courses.
2. Student attrition rates. This seemed to be not only an issue for this program, but for the university at-large as well. Although the department could take steps toward some of the suggestions below, a broader approach at the college or university may be in order.

Suggestions:

- More and better advising and also tutoring and individual attention, especially in large section courses. These suggestions came from the students. The advising from the college seemed difficult to access in person or by email. This is obviously a cost issue, but seemed important to the students in keeping them on the right track. Tutoring was offered as a suggestion for the more difficult and larger classes. The

- students seemed to be interested in being able to take advantage of this possible option and thought it would help them do better and succeed in the program.
- Building better sense of community among diverse student populations using social media. The students seemed to recognize the diversity among the students, but didn't feel there was a sense of community within the diverse subpopulations, nor across the student population. Some of this is undoubtedly a function of the commuter campus demographics, but steps could be taken to provide the students opportunities to connect socially, possibly through social media or other college or university sanctioned means. The assumption is that better-connected and socially supported students will not drop out.
 - Considering the addition of a staff position (which could be college-wide) for someone who will serve as a liaison to the university's office of career services as a way of increasing placement rates of graduates and thus making the program more attractive to students.
3. Faculty research productivity decline. This may be a short-term aberration or corrective measures may already be in place, as in recent teaching load adjustments college-wide, but the following are our general suggestions as this trend is further monitored.

Suggestions:

- Continue recent teaching load adjustment to be competitive with research-oriented departments (competitive teaching load for research productive faculty). As was clear in our discussions with the dean and department chair, it was recognized that research takes time and every effort was being made to keep faculty teaching to a 2-2 load for research productive faculty. We consider this necessary to promote future research productivity.
 - Continue supporting viable doctoral program. The doctoral program seemed to have little trouble attracting and graduating capable students. And doctoral teaching and students generally are synergistic with faculty research production. Therefore, continuing this program seemed important to the faculty and their future research capacity.
 - Consider summer support stipend (non-teaching) for key research faculty. Keeping faculty out of the classroom or diverted to other endeavors in the summer is an important part of a research university's arsenal for boosting faculty research productivity. Providing research support helps to commit key research faculty to promising projects. Even if funds were minimal, a limited number and amount of research support could signal the college's research priority to key faculty. This signaling frequently carries over to the non-supported faculty as they see the college's priorities and look to future summer and other year-round possibilities.
4. Lack of vision, sense of distinction, unique brand in the market. This was a notable and consistent theme that emerged during the visit: "We need to do something—but we are not yet sure what that is." This needs to be established with some urgency, specificity and with measurable goals that are tracked rigorously. As part of this, it

would seem important to ensure adequate faculty staffing and time allocation to ensure there are accountable champions for the new initiatives—and not just one person who must manage it all (e.g. the department chair).

Suggestion:

-Do a thorough strategic analysis of the situation and chart the best direction going forward—identify distinctive competencies. We would recommend choosing a direction that is supported by faculty and administration. As part of this, revisit the curriculum and consider whether the best course options are offered, considering program design and also faculty expertise. We believe this is a task for the program's faculty in conjunction with their constituents. Below we identify some viable and logical options, that came from our visit, but these should be viewed more as options to consider than as recommended strategy.

- a. Entrepreneurship focus for the major, leveraging and elaborating existing curriculum, Adams Center, and engagement of the surrounding community with interests in entrepreneurship, small business and family business. Possibly consider uniqueness of the demographics and brand entrepreneurship and small family business within that population.
- b. Two separate majors for leadership and entrepreneurship. This could be developed to appeal to different types of students. As separate majors, there would be distinct major content in each.
- c. Leadership (entrepreneurship) minor or certificate offered to university community (non majors), with entrepreneurship (leadership) focus of the major.
- d. As part of the curriculum review, it might be promising to consider ways to expand global experiences of the students. This would be in line with the courses being taught, the location of FAU, and the demographics of the students.
- e. Since so many aspects of management are best learned experientially, the program might consider making the internship required. For part-time students who are already working, this requirement could be met by means of a reflective capstone project in which they defined their philosophy of management and management style based on their actual work experience. Safeguards should be put in place to assure meaningful internship experiences, which may require an internship director to oversee the program. If pursued, we encourage to use successful internship programs at other schools as guides.
- f. Track success of the Leadership and Entrepreneurship emphases and placement of alumni into jobs or graduate programs generally. How successful has the program been in these areas? Where are graduates of the BBA in Management getting jobs?
- g. Do another study of current best practices in aspirational programs. What are those programs doing that make them distinctive? How could some of these best practices be adapted to the FAU environment?

Specific Questions for Review Team from the Department:

- 1 Do they see the value in moving from a Leadership option in the Management major to a Management minor in consort with a functional area?

While this seems to be a reasonable option, such a decision should emerge from a comprehensive strategic analysis and plan. The applied/skill-oriented leadership theme seems a good focus, but whether that should be in the form of a minor, separate major, certificate or some other form should be carefully determined.

- 2 How do we exploit the current and forthcoming technologies in the business education environment in addition to streaming video (for our own efficiencies) and online courses (to accommodate students who cannot get to classes)?

This is a substantial tactical and technologically-oriented question in an area that is rapidly evolving. Consider engaging technology consultants for higher education, either those already within FAU or from outside, who have the proper expertise and perspective. It might be useful to consider Tegrity and Panopto as resources.

- 3 Can we get some guidance on how to focus our Entrepreneurship programs on technology-driven developments?

Consider developing new courses in technology and global competition, venture creation in e-commerce, the role of technology in small business management, and/or technology commercialization.

Consider partnerships and technology transfer opportunities within the university and also research institute partners such as Torrey Pines, Max Planck, Scripps Research Florida.

Explore available technology resources and existing organizations that might support entrepreneurship education (e.g. Collegiate Entrepreneurs Organization, Advanced Technology Development Center, etc.).