

**INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS & TRADE  
EXTERNAL PROGRAM REVIEW**

April 8-9, 2014

**REVIEW TEAM:**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over two days, April 8 and 9, 2014, the External Program Review team examined documents and conducted interviews with a group of students, the chair, and three faculty members affiliated with the International Business and Trade program in the College of Business, Florida Atlantic University. The team's findings are contained in the report that follows. The report consists of an executive summary and individual sections addressing each of the three major findings of the team.

International Business (IB), as a field of study, is a subset of business with a focus on activities that cross national boundaries. Because the crossing of boundaries entails a recognition of and response to differences in two or more contexts, IB addresses difference along a range of topics that may affect business activities. These include legal systems and related standards and regulations, political and social institutions and systems, cultures and ethnicities, business practices and customs, particularly with regard to trade, negotiations and ethics. Students pursuing a concentration or major in IB often combine that with a second course of study in one of the functional areas, e.g., finance, accounting, marketing or supply chain management. Because of the size of the domestic economy, business education in the US has tended to be focused on purely domestic practices. With the rise of globalization, IB programs with business schools have grown significantly. Despite an internationally-minded study body, the program at FAU has not been growing.

The International Business & Trade (IBT) program is well-respected by students, who also see it as a valuable major within the College of Business. Faculty working within the program also believe it is valuable, but don't perceive the program as achieving its full potential or moving in the right direction. Faculty expressions of frustration and weariness over the program's current state were common. A steady decline in enrollments over the past five years, culminating in a 15% reduction in enrolled majors during that time, are another indication of a high-potential program that is floundering.

Three major issues lie at the heart of the program's difficulties: 1) the program lacks a structure appropriate for its position within the college and for delivering a high-quality product; 2) students lack a "sense of place," in that the program is perceived as not having a home nor do students in the major view themselves a cohort; 3) there is a lack of data or good information about the program or the students in the program.

1. The IBT program should be established as a college-wide program, with an administrative structure to support that position, identified faculty champion(s) and with objectives that are closely aligned with the college's mission and strategy.
2. The IBT program should create a community of faculty and students that promotes an *esprit de corps*, including an International Business & Trade Club or other student-centered organization.
3. The college should gather, analyze and monitor data on the IBT program, faculty and students, and on employers of the program's graduates.

## I. A COHERENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The IBT program is administered by the chairperson of the Department of Management, where it is one of seven programs (four bachelor-level, two masters-level and one doctoral-level). There are at least three Management faculty affiliated with the program, with an additional cadre of faculty and courses drawn from across the college, including from Economics, Finance, and Marketing. The spread across departments creates discontinuities in communication and conflicts in scheduling. Required and elective courses are not under the scheduling control of a single administrator. There are few well-developed coordinating mechanisms or clearly defined procedures for ensuring that courses are offered in a timely fashion or that the program is aligned with and meets the strategic goals of the college or adequately responds to the needs of the community.

The program offers students an interesting and useful suite of courses in IBT, but there is a lack of strategic direction for the program as well as clarity with regard to how the program fits within the College's mission and vision. The program itself lacks a coherent mission statement or set of strategic objectives. The review team did not have access to the College's strategic plan nor was there evidence that faculty or staff were aware of how the program fit within the College's strategic plan. The review team examined a 2011 proposal for a revised IBT program. The plan is substantive and detailed. However, it does not speak to a connection with the broad range of stakeholders in the program, i.e., students, faculty, employers, the broader community and business community, or the region as a whole. Consequently, there is not much program *esprit de corps* among or between faculty or students.

The current situation appears to be the culmination of an ongoing series of events that include the exit of faculty, disagreements among units, and low morale among previously active IBT faculty. The IBT apparently had a faculty champion years ago, but that individual left and the program has struggled in the absence of a single individual who could provide a primary driving force coupled with constant and consistent direction. Decline subsequent to the departure of champion is a common occurrence in IB programs, which typically lack "bench strength" among faculty. Given the relatively underdeveloped structure and no accepted unit goals for IBT, this is not surprising. Well-intentioned efforts lack efficacy when not targeted to specific ends, nor is there an ability to adequately measure success because there are no milestones against which to measure progress.

The review team recommends that the IBT program be explicitly identified as a college-wide program, similar to how an MBA program might be viewed. The degree is offered by the College; therefore the program should be the responsibility of the College. Accordingly, a program director should be appointed by the dean and program faculty should be designated, drawing from across departments within the college. The director and program faculty should meet regularly as a group, something that does not occur at present. The director would be responsible for coordinating course offerings and course scheduling among department chairs.

It may be useful to envision the administrative structure as a series of concentric circles that form a community of actors and stakeholders, each of which contributes to the quality and effectiveness of the program. The core of the program is the program director and designated IBT faculty. This group is responsible for the design and delivery of the IBT major. The next circle out from the center includes department chairs, college faculty as a whole, along with affiliated departments and faculty across the university that deliver elements supporting the program, e.g., Languages, Linguistics and Comparative Literature, Political Science, Anthropology, etc. The outer ring of the set of concentric circles encompasses employers, area businesses, governmental and non-governmental agencies and community groups.

The review team's recommendation to establish a coherent structure also extends to the design of the program itself. The College of Business majors, overall, are structured in such a manner that a student must complete two years of study before beginning their actual major. The team was unable to identify a flow chart mapping a typical path to the IBT degree, nor does there appear to be an identified "ideal path." Consequently, students' experiences are frequently fragmented. There are multiple paths of entry into the program, which are mirrored by various paths through the program. The team recognizes the constraints of having students entering from 2-year and other 4-year institutions along with the related articulation agreements as well as four-year resident students. Nevertheless, the College must exercise control over its own programs. One way to accomplish this is through a tighter structuring of program requirements.

We recommend the development of a sequenced set of courses and the identification of prerequisites such that students follow a limited set of paths through the program. For example, International Business (MAN 3600) ought to be taken early in the program and should probably be a prerequisite for discipline-specific or advanced topics courses. We raise the topic in this section because program features, of which curriculum is one, are an integral component and complementary to administrative structure, however, details of the curriculum are addressed [at](#) greater length in section II below.

Successful undergraduate IB programs at other universities are characterized by one or more "champions," individuals with a strong passion for IB education who also possess vision. Although the review team met with several faculty with the knowledge base to take on such a role, it did not identify an obvious candidate. If the College intends to strengthen the IBT program, it will likely be necessary to pursue an external hire. An alternative possibility, though not recommended by the review team, is to split the responsibilities for program leadership between a faculty champion and a staff administrator. The faculty champion would promote the program within the College and serve as the "face" of the program in working with stakeholders. The staff administrator would manage the operational aspects of the program, including scheduling, overseeing student recruitment, throughput and placement.

The program's self-study recommended seeking membership in the Consortium for Undergraduate International Business Education (CUIBE). CUIBE is a consortium of approximately 30 institutions with a commitment to high quality undergraduate IB

education. The process of seeking full membership involves a self-study and site visit that, in conjunction with the establishment of a coherent construction, could have a catalytic effect in jump-starting the IBT program. Moreover, a greater understanding of what leading undergraduate IB institutions do would encourage the identification of program benchmarks. The review team also notes in passing that more than half of the designated peer and aspirant schools are current members of CUIBE.

The development of a coherent structure for the IBT program – both administratively and programmatically – will require the College’s commitment from top to bottom. It will also entail investment of financial and manpower resources beyond the program’s current levels. In short, the decision is a strategic one, requiring consideration of where the IBT program fits within the College. This is a question that fell outside the charge of the review team.

## **II. A SENSE OF PLACE**

International Business and Trade students are an eclectic cohort. Unlike functional area majors such as finance accounting, IBT majors have varied interests. These are influenced by business functional area interests and international region interests. To build a cohort of students who will champion an international business major/career option, there needs to be a culture with a sense of structure, a sense of belonging and skill sets for employment opportunities upon graduation. Currently all of these are in need of greater development.

### **A Sense of Belonging**

There must be a unifying core in the IBT program. Students want to belong to something. There are at least two factors that serve to make this difficult. First, courses are held on disparate campuses that students must travel between (especially Boca and Davie). Second, a large proportion of majors are working and living off campus. A solution that the students we met with provided was the need for an IBT club that can provide a sense of place. Many universities with IB programs have, at a minimum, an International Business Club. This is a venue in which information and experiences are shared. Expectations to help develop future students are diffused in this context. There needs to be a sense of place and community where students, faculty, and businesses can share their knowledge and experiences with each other. This will facilitate the exchange of career advice, study abroad experiences, and used as a social opportunity for students. An IBT faculty member must be willing to serve as the Club’s advisor.

### **Courses and Course Sequencing**

The majority of the courses offered for IBT are management courses (60%). A lack of course offerings and scheduling coordination across functional areas is a concern. Courses only offered at one campus (Davie or Boca) are problematic. Courses with a management designation are coordinated such that conflicting course offering times are reduced. This is not the case across other non-MAN course offerings in the overall IBT program of study. To facilitate students taking take a greater range of classes within the

IBT program, better coordination among department chairs relating to course offerings and times is required.

- The foundation survey course MAN 3600 International Business Trade should be structured as the one of the first courses taken for an IBT major. It provides an opportunity to enculturate students into the opportunities within IBT as a career option. Currently, it may be taken as the last class in the curriculum model, after more advanced courses in a functional area have been completed.
- Focus group students requested three course content areas to help them with perceived career opportunities in the FAU service environment. One course is listed in the major's curriculum, but, according to the Chair, is not routinely offered. It is suggested that the IBT program facilitate offering Global Supply Chain Management (MAN 4597).
- The other two courses are: Export-Import Management and Advanced Global Management (composed of global leadership, global & virtual team management, management in global enterprises, international HRM). These content areas fit within the increasing influence of the Port of Palm Beach (4<sup>th</sup> busiest in Florida) and Port Everglades, financial institutions, risk management/ insurance and the businesses that support importers and exporters.

### **Constraints for a mandatory international experience**

Time away from FAU, time away from work, a commuter campus, and a perceived high cost of program fees for a year-long or semester-long international experience is difficult for most students. The most popular international experience is the short-term (1-week to 10-day) international experience. Faculty members referred to it as a weak experience, given the short time frame, but better than nothing. The self-study notes that about 15 students per year participate in this program. This is roughly 15% of IBT graduates. Currently, working as an intern at a local company affiliated with an international company is seen by some IBT faculty as an international experience. However, for most IB degree programs, this would be valued as a local experience, rather than as an international one.

Within the field of International Business, the gold standard for meaningful international experience requires extended study abroad. The potential for such study has not been fully tapped at FAU. The reviewers recommend that the IBT program focus efforts to market international experience to their majors, with the following suggestions:

- Communicate to students the real costs of a semester abroad experience (i.e., FAU tuition plus room and board at many partner universities). The costs are not much more than living on campus at FAU.
- Expand the opportunities for students to have more options (locations and types) for short term study abroad, as these programs offer lower price points.

## **Career Development**

Current IBT students expressed a strong desire for more career placement and advice. The Career Development Center was lauded for its help with resume preparation, but what the students feel they need is information on and access to international career opportunities. This speaks to having within the College an advisor charged with this particular responsibility as well as faculty advisors who are actively seeking to expand the opportunity structures for their majors and graduates. Career expos need to be well-advertised to IBT students; incorporating adequate lead and interview preparation time as well. The upcoming Brand Camp may be used as a pilot for how to share career, internship, and study abroad opportunities. Finally, an International Business & Trade Club can serve as an important career preparation venue, with invited industry speakers, alums who have studied and worked abroad, and career planning.

## **Competency (Skill Sets) and Content**

Today, companies hiring employees for international assignments want students not just academically competent, but with demonstrable, applied skill sets. Most international business entry-level jobs are not at the undergraduate level. This fact puts FAU undergraduate IBT graduates at a disadvantage. Firms that do hire IB majors want students who can “do” something for them.

Normally, IBT students have a strong functional area that is paired with language training and ability to work abroad. Their first assignment is in a content area with a specific skill set (i.e., analysts, sales, supply chain, tourism – hotel/travel, etc.). The content of the current FAU IBT major is heavy on cross cultural communication and general management background. We base this on the range of courses offered. The reviewers were unable to determine how many students seek training (e.g., minor or double major) in skill set areas. The IBT faculty, once constituted, will need to determine the program’s goals and to make decisions about the program’s overall direction: will it be a traditional liberal arts form of education with language skills without a strong industry orientation or a more applied program that produces graduates that companies come to FAU to hire?

To help with the decision on program direction, it is suggested that input from constituents who hire FAU IBT graduates be solicited. This will help position the program such that its graduates will have skill sets valued by those constituents. Once decided, a measureable set of expected outcomes and competencies should be benchmarked and measured against for success. This process will help the program bind the IBT faculty in terms of a targeted mission for the program.

## **III. RELIABLE, CONSISTENT DATA**

The self-study provided by the International Business and Trade program suffers from lack of detail regarding the degree itself, the composition of the faculty and its expertise, and the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Regarding the self-study, it is difficult to learn much about the degree and its strengths. Rather, much of the self-study is a summarization of the general features of the Department of Management programs

overall. The reviewers have been told that there are problems with the university's database reporting system such that tracking majors (and second majors) in International Business cannot be accomplished at present. Even if this is true, every effort should be made to begin to collect data on IBT students. Improving the degree will depend on it. The reviewers feel that the IBT program deserves a serious and sustained individual self-study, along the lines of what might better be described as a business plan. This study should examine who the IB students are in detail, describe their procession through the undergraduate program, and determine where and how they enter the working world with the degree.

Some data is currently available from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analysis (IEA). That data shows a 15% decline in the number of IBT majors over the past five years, from 223 in 2009 to 189 in 2013.

	<u>Semester</u>				
	Fall, 2009 #	Fall, 2010 #	Fall, 2011 #	Fall, 2012 #	Fall, 2013 #
<u>Major</u>					
<b>International Business &amp; Trade</b>	223	218	211	195	189
<b>Total</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>189</b>

However, we have no clear understanding of the dimensions or causes of this decline, especially during a period in which university admissions and transfers have not correspondingly reduced. It can be conjectured that the decline may be due to a more competitive environment with changes in state college system, or the lack of overall programmatic structure, or problems with scheduling courses across programs. A business plan type of self-study should be able to pinpoint the most likely problems and address them in such a manner as to reverse this trend. We are positive that this trend can be reversed. In fact, although the number of majors has declined, there has been no discernable decrease in the number of degrees awarded. The table below demonstrates a bottom-line variability in the number of degrees awarded annually for the past five years. This is actually heartening in the sense that although majors have declined, no such trend is obvious in the number of degrees awarded.



			Degrees Granted				
			2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Major	Type of Student at Admission	Degrees awarded with a:					
International Business & Trade	Beginner - FTIC	Single major	18	12	37	18	18
		Double major	4	5	6	11.5	6
		<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>24</b>
	Early Admit, Prior to High School Graduation	Degrees awarded with a:					
		Single major	1				
		<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>				
	Graduate	Degrees awarded with a:					
		Single major				1	
		Double major					
		<b>Total</b>				<b>1</b>	
	Transfer From A Florida Public Community College	Degrees awarded with a:					
		Single major	40	46	42	44	51
		Double major	12	5.5	3	5.5	9.5
		<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>60.5</b>
	Unclassified Student	Degrees awarded with a:					
		Single major			1		2
		Double major	0.5				
		<b>Total</b>	<b>0.5</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>
	Other Undergraduate Transfer	Degrees awarded with a:					
		Single major	13	17	14	7	10
		Double major	1.5	3	1.5	2	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>14.5</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	
All	Degrees awarded with a:						
	Single major	72	75	94	70	81	
	Double major	18	13.5	10.5	19	16.5	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>88.5</b>	<b>104.5</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>97.5</b>	

There is no question in our minds that the IBT degree is incredibly valuable and worthwhile; more than that, the degree has the potential to attract many more students from the area who come to the degree with demonstrable cultural diversity. That is, the IBT program can take advantage of, or leverage, a student population that already has cross-cultural familiarity, language ability, and even social/economic connections with people in the Caribbean and Latin America. Additionally, there is an appreciable group of students with linkages to Europe and Asia. This “pre-existing” student cultural diversity must be transformed into a strength of the IBT program. The business plan self-study should provide detailed observations on the backgrounds of the program’s students and potential students. The table below from IEA clearly demonstrates the very diverse strengths of IBT majors and, in fact, emphasizes that diversity has increased annually since

Fall 2010. For example, the table suggests that the degree attracts, relatively, a large number of Latina/Hispanic women and this pattern is consistent across the years. Also noteworthy is that non-White IB majors are the majority (2010 – 67%, 2011 – 70%, 2012 – 72%, 2013 – 75%). These demographic characteristics can have implications for the future growth and development of the major and can impact how the major is marketed to students and employers. These characteristics could also suggest how future faculty hires ought to be targeted.

International Business and Trade Majors		Fall, 2010	Fall, 2011	Fall, 2012	Fall, 2013
		#	#	#	#
Asian	<a href="#">Gender</a>				
	Female	7	5	2	3
	Male	5	2	5	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>
Black or African American	<a href="#">Gender</a>				
	Female	9	9	12	10
	Male	6	7	7	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>
Hispanic or Latino	<a href="#">Gender</a>				
	Female	66	65	55	52
	Male	41	44	49	44
	<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>96</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	<a href="#">Gender</a>				
	Female	1	1	1	1
	Male				1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Two or more races	<a href="#">Gender</a>				
	Female	2	2		
	Male		2	2	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
Nonresident alien	<a href="#">Gender</a>				
	Female	3	2	2	6
	Male	4	7	6	9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>
White	<a href="#">Gender</a>				
	Female	30	25	26	23
	Male	42	39	28	24
	<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>47</b>
Race and ethnicity unknown	<a href="#">Gender</a>				
	Female	2	1		
	Male				2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>
Total	<a href="#">Gender</a>				
	Female	120	110	98	95
	Male	98	101	97	94
	<b>Total</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>189</b>

As collecting data on current and potential students is an absolute necessity to good planning, graduates, too, need to be tracked. Current social media, such as *LinkedIn*, can be

utilized to remain connected to graduates and to chart their career paths after graduation. The Alumni Office, too, ought to be accessed by the program. Graduates can provide meaningful input on the most critical skill sets they utilize in their working lives and this information can be fed back into the IBT program's design.

We encourage the IBT program, finally, to carry out an examination of the most important international business employers regionally and, specifically, with the employers of their recent graduates. This examination needs to focus on who those employers are and what are their needs: what skill sets and capabilities do they want from potential employees? What training can the FAU program provide to students that will set them apart from other graduates with IBT degrees? We believe that the business plan ought to forthrightly take into account the needs of such employers and that the degree itself should be informed by these needs.

Overall, we are calling for the IBT program to embark on a more ambitious data gathering plan and business plan-building mission that will allow for it to accurately diagnose its current state and to chart a future growth and development phase. This will require leadership and shared responsibility among program faculty and administration.