



Office of the Acting Vice President
For Academic Affairs

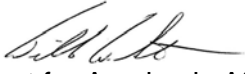
P.O. Box 6910
Radford, Virginia 24142

Phone (540) 831-5404
FAX (540) 831-5142

Email: wstanton@radford.edu

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Duncan Herrington
Associate Dean and Director of the MBA Program

FROM: Wilbur W. Stanton 
Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: MBA Program Review

DATE: 21 August 05

COPY: Dr. Paul Sale, Chair of the Academic Program Review Committee
Academic Program Review Committee Members
Penelope W. Kyle, President
Dr. Bill Dempsey, Dean, College of Business and Economics
Dr. Carole Seyfrit, Dean, College of Graduate and Extended Education

Introduction

Academic program review is designed to assure regular examination of the University's curricula and academic structure and guide recommendations for improving academic quality. In addition, the process guides the effective allocation of resources, encourages continuous faculty and program development, and provides a rationale for making decisions about maintaining, enhancing, reconfiguring, or phasing out programs as required by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and/or as indicated through other analyses and by other criteria. Further, the Program Review process provides a tool for working with departments and academic programs to implement the University's Strategic Plan. For the process to be fully effective, departments and programs must commit themselves to following through after the initial self-study and analysis by responding to the recommendations and/or required actions of the Academic Program Review Committee (APRC), the appropriate dean, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, the APRC and the academic programs under review worked with program review criteria that were approved in April 2003. I commend the Academic Program Review Committee for the diligent, thoughtful review of academic programs and for the

report detailing its study and recommendations. Moreover, I commend each of the academic programs that undertook the self-study required to develop and present reports that allowed the APRC to complete its work.

This memorandum completes the first stage of the Academic Program Review process. Included in this memorandum are the APRC's specific program recommendations for the MBA Program. Also included are the APRC's overall recommendations.

Observations Pertaining to All Programs in General

I have several general observations that come from the reading of all the program review materials:

1. While graduate programs need not make specific references to the QEP (since implementation of the QEP has an undergraduate focus), graduate programs should discuss responses to recommendations for programmatic changes and improvements, giving special attention to those program modifications designed to enhance student engagement.
2. We need to continue efforts to collect alumni data. For example, helpful information may include alumni employment data, satisfaction with the program, and recommendations for improvement. This information is burdensome for individual programs to collect and maintain. Therefore, I am working with the Division of Institutional Research to enhance University coordination with programs and thus facilitate centralization of the data for program use during review processes. The APRC committee recommended that this information be gathered in possibly 1, 3, and 5 year intervals. While this would be robust and useful for program enhancement, the ability for the university to implement this will be dependent upon faculty workloads and the capacity for Institutional Research to design, gather, analyze, and disseminate resulting data. At a minimum, however, this must be part of every program review cycle meaning that alumni data must be collected once every five years as part of the self-study.
3. Finally, programs continue to make good cases for faculty and staff needs. It will remain increasingly important in a continuing environment of constrained resources that Radford University use the academic program review process to contribute to the determination of how to most effectively deploy available resources. We will continue to use the state's rubric (Schedule M) as a major determinant of workload expectations, but this metric alone cannot fully capture the uniqueness of a program and its centrality or contribution to the mission of the University. During the next academic year, I will work with the Council of Deans to explore a more inclusive set of workload criteria while retaining the state's workload principles.

Observations for the MBA Program

The following observations, recommendations, and conclusions are based on my review of APRC's analysis and Program Review Report, the self-study of the MBA Program submitted by the College of Business and Economics, and the comments and recommendations submitted by Deans Dempsey and Seyfrit.

The Committee and Deans Dempsey and Seyfrit noted several strengths of MBA program. I concur with these.

1. The Educational Benchmarking Institute survey results indicate that Student Satisfaction with the program is high in several key curricular areas (faculty and instruction, breadth of the curriculum, and curriculum coverage of most basic areas of study) as well as in essential student service areas (student advising, facilities and computing resources, and availability of instructors).
2. Recommendations from previous program review were addressed and action taken in regard to updating the strategic plan, implementing assessment measures, revision of the curriculum, and attention to admissions standards.
3. The QEP plan has identifiable learning outcomes, specific assessment measures, and outcomes of the assessments performed to date have been used to make improvements in the program.
4. The program is attuned to and responsive to the career planning and professional development needs of the students, as evidenced by the initiation of the MBA Career Planning and Development program, in conjunction with the Center for Experiential Learning and Career Development at Radford University.
5. The program is continuously reviewed and changes are implemented to meet the needs of students and employers, meet AACSB accreditation standards, and ensure that the program maintains a high degree of quality.
6. Due to its broad based nature, this program prepares candidates for a variety of positions. This provides a competitive market niche.
7. The program promises diversity, as 30% of its candidates are international students. The curriculum also provides a global perspective including optional study abroad trips.
8. The program is increasingly student centered as evidenced by the increased emphasis on career planning and professional development programs as well as the reactivated MBA Student Association.
9. Assessment strategies used a variety of internal and external data sources.
10. The program has examined overlap between undergraduate and graduate coursework to ensure that graduate courses do not repeat undergraduate prerequisites.

The MBA Program has made both a significant and positive contribution to the Graduate College, the College of Business and Economics, and to Radford University as a whole.

As noted by the Committee, there are two areas that raised some concern, and I concur with these.

1. The committee recognized that updated learning goals were integrated into the program. However, the program review report did not indicate sufficiently how other COBE strategic plan elements were addressed by the program.

2. Not unlike other stated learning outcomes across the University that we have reviewed, the committee finds the expected learning outcomes to be vague and questionably measurable, especially #1, #4, and #6. We applaud the program for starting curriculum mapping to assure the measurability of these outcomes as related to the courses in the MBA program, as well as the attendance of five faculty members at an assessment workshop this summer.

Recommendations and Conclusions for the MBA Program

The APRC made four recommendations, and I concur.

1. Given the relative high percentage of international students in the program, faculty should evaluate success of these candidates compared to others to ensure that the program is addressing issues of language and culture. The on-line orientation provided to international candidates should be supplemented by other measures in conjunction with the Center for International and Multicultural Student Services. Additionally, as Dean Dempsey indicated in his report, an effort should be made to formalize how international students and concerns are factored into the program.
2. Strengthening of the academic nature of the summer study abroad opportunities should be made. Additionally, these available opportunities should be developed to enhance the international dimension of the program.
3. Although the number of assessment instruments is admirable, some streamlining could be done to avoid duplication.
4. The Program should formalize a comprehensive exam as a requirement for the MBA degree, consistent with other programs in the College of Graduate and Extended Education and University policy. A plan to implement this should be developed and be in place for students entering the 2006-2007 academic year.

I commend the APRC for making recommendations whose intentions are clearly to strengthen the MBA Program.

It is essential that that faculty in the MBA Program immediately undertake the work required to secure these improvements. In doing so, the Director, Department Chairpersons, and the faculty members in the MBA Program should work collaboratively and persistently with the Dean of the College of Business and Economics to make the changes and improvements that are recommended.

Following the Program Review Guidelines, "the Department Chair or Program Coordinator will submit a report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and appropriate Dean(s) on or before April 1 [2006], indicating how the program has addressed recommendations of the Academic Program Review Committee and any recommendations from the Dean(s) or Vice President for Academic Affairs."

In conclusion, the MBA Program is a viable program that meets SCHEV productivity standards and should be maintained.