

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

2020-2025 Academic Program Review

Narrative Report

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PART 1 – Learning Outcomes

The program is on par with others at other regional comprehensive universities. The department clearly identifies three learning outcomes. These are quantitative skills, critical thinking skills, and communication skills. Student learning outcomes have been assessed in intermediate-level courses but will be moving to a senior-year capstone course. This is a needed change as it provides students with more time to develop the assessed skills.

For the quantitative skills assessment, students responded to a question about labor supply/demand, employment level, and wage rate. Students were graded with a rubric to determine if they met, exceeded, or were below expectations. The department expected that 80% of students would either meet or exceed learning expectations for each learning outcome. This is appropriate. However, this standard was not met in any of the three assessments. Scores should improve by assessing students' knowledge later in the program once assessment begins in the senior-year capstone course. However, this labor-supply question seems specific to Labor Economics, which is an elective course, rather than core course material. Is the material being covered adequately in the core courses?

For the critical thinking skills assessment, students respond to a three-part essay question about the IS-LM model, interest rates, and national income. Part A and Part C of the question are used for the assessment. In these parts, students are required to demonstrate the effects of a change in government policy and make recommendations about appropriate policy to address the issue. This is appropriate. The standard was met in all three assessments.

For the communication skills assessment, Part B of the essay question described above was used prior to 2022. This asked students to describe the effects of interest rate changes on investment and consumption. Starting in 2022, a new Part D was added to the essay question and was used for communication assessment. It asked students to discuss the macroeconomic implications of the changes that occurred in the earlier parts of the question. This is appropriate. The standard was met in the 2020 assessment and the

2024 assessment, but not the 2022 assessment. It is not clear why only 52% of students met or exceeded expectations in the 2022 assessment.

It appears that most of the assessment is macro-oriented. Perhaps more micro-oriented material could be added to the assessment. Additionally, perhaps more econometrics-related material could be assessed as this is what most consider to be important “quantitative” skills.

PART 2 – Curriculum

The program does not require an econometrics course, although such a course is standard in Economics BA programs. It would provide students with the quantitative skills required for the job market. It would not require additional resources as the course is already being taught to other economics students. Therefore, I recommend that it be required for the BA program. Otherwise, the curriculum is appropriate to the level and purpose of the program.

The department reviews curriculum content and organization regularly and the results are used for curricular improvement. The department does regular assessments and adapts its curriculum to the results. One such improvement is the development of a capstone class and a move of assessment to this course.

Given the size of the faculty and enrollment in the program, core and elective courses are offered often enough for students to make timely progress toward their degree. The course rotation is appropriate.

The program incorporates appropriate pedagogical and/or technological innovations that enhance student learning into the curriculum. Examples include using the latest textbook editions from a variety of publishers, incorporation of the latest published research contributions in the field into the classroom, and statistical software such as STATA.

In my meeting with students, BA students requested more quantitative skills and more co-curricular activities (internships). Currently, BA students can take econometrics as an elective, but they are not encouraged to do so. Requiring econometrics for BA students should improve their quantitative skills. While study-abroad participation can earn credit toward the BA degree, it does not appear (from the list of courses) that internships can earn credit toward the degree. Advertising and recommending students for internship opportunities that are paid and can earn credit can increase take-up of such co-curricular opportunities by BA students.

BA students could be provided with opportunities for credentialing. Given existing courses, it would not require much in the way of additional resources to create a CFP® Board

Registered Program (track, certificate, or minor) which would allow students to sit for the CFP® exam and create job opportunities for them in financial planning and counseling. This could be not just for the BA majors but also for the BBA majors. However, it may be of a greater benefit to the BA students. Similarly, the Certified Business Economist designation should be explored as that could lead to job opportunities in consulting firms.

PART 3 – Student Experience

The program provides students with opportunities to regularly evaluate the curriculum and faculty relative to the quality of their teaching effectiveness through student evaluations toward the end of each course.

The program exposes students to professional and career opportunities such as internships and work-study programs. However, in my meetings with students, BA students felt less able to participate in these opportunities than BSBA students. BA students should be encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities. Improving their quantitative skills should improve their ability to attain these positions.

In-house experiential learning/internship opportunities for BA students could be provided by the Center for Regional Economic Research (CRER) and the Probasco Chair.

The program seeks to include diverse perspectives and experiences through inviting students to attend guest lectures by speakers from both the local community and other academic and research institutions. The program has just started a cohort of “Phillips Free Enterprise Scholars.” BA students should be encouraged to apply and participate.

Students have access to appropriate support services including the Success Center in the Rollins College of Business, the Disability Research Center, the Counseling Center, Student Success Programs, the Student Outreach and Support office, and the Writing and Communication Center. They also have access to sufficient library resources.

PART 4 – Faculty

The faculty meet or exceed the AACSB faculty qualification of “Scholarly Academic” and they also meet the SACSCOC guidelines. They publish and participate in conferences. They also serve as reviewers of journal articles and books. Four faculty members serve on editorial boards, and one is an editor, a co-editor, and a contributing editor to three different journals. Faculty members participate in other professional service roles. Two faculty members are engaged with the local community.

The faculty feel they do not have enough faculty lines given that multiple faculty members have reduced teaching assignments due to administrative roles. Creating a CFP® board-registered program or a CBE program (as discussed in the curriculum section above) might require a new faculty line as the program would require some additional teaching and a program director.

Faculty are appropriately evaluated every year through an EDO process.

The faculty are diverse.

The faculty are actively involved in the assessment and curricular revision processes.

PART 5 – Learning Resources

The program regularly evaluates its equipment and facilities, and its library holdings and other resources are appropriate. The department has a dedicated IT staff member who attends to faculty and staff.

PART 6 – Support

The department's operating budget is consistent with the needs of the program. The department has multiple programs and so shares fixed resources across programs.

Overall enrollment in the department's programs is up. Enrollment in the BA is somewhat flat. Increasing quantitative and internship opportunities for BA students may increase enrollment in that program. However, enrollment is currently sufficient given the number of faculty and other resources that are shared across programs.

Student placement numbers for the department are high. However, a breakdown by program would be helpful.

The program is responsive to local, state, regional, and national needs. The department has streamlined its economics elective offerings, created new courses and tracks, and created the Center for Regional Economic Research (CRER). They are continuing to explore other initiatives.

PART 7 – Summary Recommendations

- 1) Require econometrics. It is standard in Economics BA programs. It provides students with the quantitative skills required for the job market. It would not require

additional resources as the course is already being taught to other economics students.

- 2) Provide students with opportunities for credentialing. Given existing courses, it would not require much in the way of additional resources (maybe a faculty line) to create a CFP® Board Registered Program (track, certificate, or minor) which would allow students to sit for the CFP® exam and create job opportunities for them in financial planning and counseling. Similarly, the Certified Business Economist designation should be explored as that could lead to job opportunities in consulting firms.
- 3) Provide experiential learning/internship opportunities for BA students in the Center for Regional Economic Research (CRER) and under the Probasco Chair.
- 4) It appears that most of the assessment is macro-oriented. Perhaps more micro-oriented material could be added to the assessment. Additionally, perhaps more econometrics-related material could be assessed as this is what most would consider to be “quantitative” skills.

The department has used assessment data to support a change in the communication skills question and to support a move to assessment in senior-year capstone.

The program aligns with the university’s mission by actively engaging students with co-curricular activities, working toward increased diversity with their “Empower Your Future” event to attract female students, and preparing students to compete in a global environment through its focus on quantitative, critical thinking, and communication skills as learning outcomes.