2013-2014
Cyclical Program Review of the
School of Business and Economics

PROGRAMS:
Honours Bachelor of Business Administration
Master in Business Administration
Master of Finance
Master of Science in Management
PhD in Management

Final Assessment Report

Submitted by: Michéal Kelly, Dean, School of Business and Economics; Joan Norris, Dean, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies; Pat Rogers, Associate Vice-President: Teaching and Learning; Deborah MacLatchy, Vice-President: Academic & Provost

Date: November 21st, 2014
PART ONE: SUMMARY OF REVIEW DOCUMENTS

a. Summary of the Self-Study

The Business Self-Study provided a comprehensive overview of all 10 of SBE’s business programs. The study covered program structure and administration, learning outcomes, admission requirements, curricula and quality indicators. The study also set out SBE’s concerns in terms of its ability to provide a high quality educational experience in all of its business programs. In many respects, the self-study replicated an equally comprehensive report prepared for the School’s AACSB accreditation maintenance review.

The concerns expressed in the Self-Study focused largely on resource and technology issues. A major concern was the substantial growth in our BBA program in recent years. The BBA grew from 850 first year BBA students in 2007 to 1185 first year BBA students in 2012 (numbers include BBA double degrees) with little in the way of additional resources. This has resulted in both increased class sizes and dramatically decreased classroom availability. Increased class sizes translate in general to less individual feedback, a growing emphasis on group work, and a shift to more quantitative/standardized testing. The shortage of classroom space has a similar effect on testing: with limited space to schedule midterms outside the regular classrooms, faculty rely increasingly on in-class, multiple choice exams to standardize results and stem the tide of academic misconduct in multi-section courses for which midterms extend over an entire week. Shortages in classroom space have forced us to offer classes at 7 a.m. and on Saturdays. We expressed our concern in the Self-Study that this might negatively affect attendance and ultimately student performance, especially for first year students. Assessments completed after the Self-Study would seem to suggest that this is a valid concern.

Moreover, the substantial increase in enrolment has put in jeopardy the viability of some of our most successful immersive learning activities (New Venture Competition, Integrated Case Exercise) undermining a key element of the BBA value proposition. Increased enrolment has also resulted in an increased reliance on part-time and limited term faculty members to teach our courses. We feel the impact in fourth year where we cannot open new sections of specialized electives because we don’t have enough qualified faculty to teach them.

The study highlighted the need for more flexible and effective IT infrastructure for the registration system. Such a system should allow more effective management of our double degree programs with UW as well as providing the ability to make simple registration changes at the department level.
Similarly, there is a critical need for the registration system to recognize “exclusions” (and so block ineligible registrants) and to flag students with “progression” issues. Currently, progression is determined manually, with academic advisors having to process by hand thousands of grade reporting sheets. As enrolment numbers increase, these manual processes are becoming untenable, and are leading to increases in the number of petitions and decreased student satisfaction.

In the MBA, our current IT infrastructure strictly limits our capacity to make use of mobile platforms and applications that create competitive advantages and enhance learning. Our part-time MBA students, particularly those in Toronto, have limited access to many of the resources on campus, much of which should be available electronically. When possible, we arrange to have dedicated resource people on site to ensure services can be accessed by part-time learners. Investment in additional on-site support must be considered in our Toronto office.

While students in the Toronto and local part-time programs have particular access needs, all students rely increasingly on IT resources and communication technology for course support and for research with academic and business databases. Expectations of MBA students are continuously increasing; there are many who expect the same or better electronic resources in their learning environment as they have in their professional environments. Limitations with our current LMS and IT infrastructure are keenly felt in the MBA programs and we welcome investment in these areas to improve speed and access for our students.

b. Summary of the External Reviewers’ Report

The review committee for the Business Cyclical Review consisted of Dr. Donald Cyr, Goodman School of Business at Brock University, Dr. Ryan Lee, Haskayne School of Business at the University of Calgary, and Dr. Anne Wilson from the Department of Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University.

The reviewers provided a detailed assessment of the school's programs and challenges and provided 12 recommendations for consideration.

Overall, the review team was highly complementary of SBE's programs, faculty, staff and students. The team recognized, in particular, that much of what SBE does in the area of experiential or immersive learning is at the leading edge of practice. The team also complemented the School on its learning goals and assessment of the learning process. They noted that the recent AACSB re-accreditation confirmed SBE fully meets the current state of the discipline with regards to the content and delivery of curriculum.
The major concerns expressed by the reviewers focused on what they saw as the School’s tenuous resource situation, which in their opinion jeopardizes the sustainability of SBE’s current competitive position and potentially its continuing accreditation.

The reviewers noted that growth in the School of Business was of major concern. To quote their report: “In order to keep class sizes ‘intimate’ at the senior elective levels, core and introductory class sizes have grown in recent years to accommodate greater enrolment. Growth in the faculty complement, however, is insufficient to staff all classes and as such, many faculty members are asked to teach overload sections. This then puts the balance between research and teaching at risk, which has potential longer-term repercussions regarding accreditation.”

The reviewers expressed particular concern that the experiential component may be jeopardized if the staff/faculty complement continued to suffer relative to enrolment. They suggest that a more appropriate balance between student enrolment and full time faculty be considered in order to maintain the University’s very important reputation as an institution with an intimate community environment without jeopardizing other critical values.

The report’s primary recommendation is that the School of Business needs more full-time faculty. It noted the salary anomalies that exist for faculty in specific areas of the School and pointed out that in order to maintain competitiveness in high demand specialization areas, SBE must be able to compete in the market. According to the review team “the inability to offer salaries that are anywhere near where competitor schools can offer puts the great reputation and sustainability of the school at risk.”

Continuing on the resource theme, the reviewers also focused on the issue of staff sufficiency. Referencing a study by the Canadian Federation of Business School Deans, they noted that SBE has among the lowest staff to FTE student ratios (0.79) in the country, as well as one of the lowest staff to faculty ratios (0.32).

Finally the report suggested that the current organizational structure of the academic administration within SBE is also light and that a school of this size, with this many substantial programs, would be well served with another Associate Dean to support the school’s programs.

c. Summary of Recommendations and Unit Response

The Department of Business sincerely appreciates the efforts made by the external reviewers in their careful review of our Self-Study report, in the many frank and collegial discussions
during their visit, and in their clear and thorough report. We thank them especially for their thoughtful analysis and insightful recommendations. Their work has already been immensely helpful to the department and will ultimately be valuable to the university as a whole.

Below is a list of all of the external reviewers’ recommendations and our response to each.

**Recommendation #1:** A more appropriate balance between student enrolment and full time faculty be considered in order to maintain the University’s very important reputation as an institution with an intimate community environment that provides experiential learning without jeopardizing other critical values. This likely involves working with the Faculty Union on an agreement that allows the School to be competitive in salary for specific areas where the market rate is above the allowable maximums.

**Response:** We agree entirely with the reviewers that our faculty numbers are inadequate in relation to the increased enrolment in the BBA program. We are engaged in ongoing discussions with senior administration to find a way to offer market salaries in accounting and, especially, in finance. We are working with Development to fund chairs and fellowships to supplement compensation for faculty in key areas. We note that 5 of the 14 faculty members in Finance currently hold chairs or fellowships.

**Recommendation #2:** A review of areas where staffing increases can allow faculty to focus on teaching and research and where students are underserved should be done, so that when the ability to hire arises, the School knows immediately where hiring priorities are.

**Response:** In-house technical support would enable faculty to spend less time on technology and more time on teaching. Senior staff roles (Assistant Dean; Assistant MBA Director; etc.) could be used to lighten the burden of (or largely to replace) faculty currently acting as program directors and associate deans. Additional marketing support would relieve faculty acting as associate deans and program directors of the need to produce written materials in support of programs.

A full review of staff resources was one of the recommendations made by SBE in the IPRM (Integrated Planning and Resource Management) evaluation/prioritization of administrative programs.

**Recommendation #3:** Revisit the English Language Proficiency requirements for international applicants in comparison to competitors in the Canadian marketplace.
Response: Recent discussions with the new Director of Laurier International, Ben Yang, and with the former Assistant VP Academic Services, Tom Buckley, have focused on the failure rates in the BBA (and in Economics) of international students who have graduated from Laurier LEAF. The Director puts an emphasis on high quality in recruiting; as a result we expect to see stronger students admitted to the LEAF program. The international recruitment and admissions team was also represented in our most recent discussion with Ben Yang. Discussions are ongoing; we will request that admissions compare our English proficiency requirements with other competitor universities.

Recommendation #4: Review the BTM program and its place in the SBE portfolio of programs. If the program is desirable, a discussion of the differential admission standards compared to the BBA should be lengthy and consider reputational impacts.

Response: The admission standard for the BTM was raised in this last admissions cycle to 80%. We will continue to monitor attrition rates and student success measures in this program with a view to ensuring that the quality of the program, its faculty and students, is comparable to that of the BBA.

Recommendation #5: Explore different methods of delivering service courses to the greater Laurier community while keeping availability open to UW students.

Response: In ongoing discussions with the Faculties of Arts and of Science, the Department of Business is asking that any revision of, or replacement for, the current Management Option (such as a Minor in Management) be designed to not increase amount of service teaching currently done by SBE.

We have in the past tried constituting the Option (formerly the Administrative Option) with courses that were not the same as those used in the BBA, as suggested by the external reviewers (p4). The Administrative Option with these non BU courses was offered from 2003 – 2011. Ultimately, we found this model less effective, in terms of staffing (we had to staff “normal” and “light” BU courses separately); in terms of faculty relations (CAS members hired to teach the “light” courses lobbied that these should provide seniority in BU courses); in terms of student satisfaction (excellent non-business students who had taken the “light” courses were not eligible to progress into senior electives); or in terms of quality (the “lighter” courses were clearly not providing the quality of our BU courses).

We would be happy to offer better quality courses to fewer, higher-performing students.
**Recommendation #6:** Review whether fields available in the MBA are demanded by students and offered in a cost-effective way.

**Response:** We manage cost efficiencies at the course level: whether or not a course is required for an option, it is not offered unless there is a critical mass (usually a minimum of 15 students). We have cancelled electives due to low enrolments and we have consolidated fields because of demand - e.g., in marketing we had two specializations that we consolidated into one. Where interest/enrolment in particular courses is limited, we allow MBA students to sit in on senior undergraduate courses. In these cases, as the reviewers have noted, additional assignments are used to supplement the curriculum and raise the course content and expectations to the graduate level. We will continue to review fields as suggested.

**Recommendation #7:** Consider improvements to the PhD program including use of cohort-based admissions, more common coursework for all students regardless of field, removal of the requirement to have a Master’s degree, increasing the financial incentives to prospective students (e.g., tuition waiver), and increasing the number of students taught in a doctoral seminar to grant on-load teaching.

**Response:** The dean has provided funds for entrance scholarships ($5000). The discussion of cohort-based admissions and more common coursework is underway. We have not formally raised the issue of increasing the number of students taught in a seminar to grant on-load teaching, but have added this item to the agenda for the first dean’s advisory meeting and the first research committee meeting scheduled for the fall.

**Recommendation #8:** Discussion of the currency and demand for the EMTM program given changes in the local economy.

**Response:** Our program portfolio strategy specifies “redesigning [this] elite program to broaden demand”. But we are not likely to begin redesigning the EMTM until we have funds available to (a) increase our faculty complement and (b) expand our offerings in the management of technology.

**Recommendation #9:** Continue working with centralized resources to ensure business-specific programming and services are provided to the student body. Where possible, location of personnel within the business building is ideal.
Response: Having a dedicated Career Services presence in the Schlegel Building for MBA students has worked very well. We would welcome a similar re-location of representatives from Co-op and Career Services to the GIE building to provide support to the very large BBA population, as well as to Economics and MFin students.

We need (and have designed) more student academic assistance and advising support for the undergraduate programs; this support is on hold due to budget cuts.

We have a clear need for IT support in-house.

We appreciate the dedicated support we now have for alumni and development services. One development position is temporary. We would love to see this position continued.

We believe we could benefit greatly from more dedicated support in Recruitment and Admissions. We would also benefit from dedicated support in Laurier International and Instructional Development.

None of this additional support is likely to come to us from centralized resources. SBE continues to work closely with Development to raise additional funds to increase staff support.

Recommendation #10: Investigate the possibility of obtaining in-School IT resources. Technical innovations in teaching can be furthered only when faculty feel they have adequate support for their use in the classroom. As well, having IT professionals who can perform database and program maintenance instead of the academic will assist research-active faculty. This may also assist with having more bodies to assist with what were normally centralized IT functions (e.g., website design and maintenance).

Response: We would be more than happy to have dedicated, in-house IT support, as well as more control over such IT functions as web design and maintenance. We will continue lobbying.

Recommendation #11: Considering an increase in the number of Associate Deans to support the number of programs now offered by the School.

Response: We agree that our academic structure is outdated and overstretched. The dean has been working on a proposal for an additional associate dean position as well as an assistant dean (non-faculty) position.
**Recommendation #12:** Work with the University for better data collection in areas regarding student retention, satisfaction and placement. This can also assist with improving alumni relations.

**Response:** We believe the ongoing IPRM process has clarified the importance of data collection, for programs, departments and for the university as a whole. Business faculty are well represented in the IPRM process and program leaders – along with other faculty – were heavily involved in completing program evaluation templates built around data that the university has recently pulled together. We are now in a much better position to identify and describe the data we would find most useful, and will provide that feedback to central administration.

We are also determined to create more opportunities to collect important data. We piloted a student survey and had a terrific response rate. We are now designing surveys to be used mid-program and at exit.

We continue to work with alumni relations to improve the quality and quantity of alumni data.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

We want to take this opportunity to underline comments made by the external reviewers in the first section of their report, at the top of page 2, indicating the significant burden faced by SBE in having to replicate the work done for AACSB international accreditation, in slightly different form, in the report required for the Cyclical Review of Business Programs.

The committee feels that the AACSB standard goes far towards, and often exceeds the provincial quality assurance requirements. Although in some instances the quality assurance review process provides for a broader viewpoint than that associated with the AACSB, the committee would suggest that future consideration be given to simply requiring an addendum to the AACSB accreditation review.

The writer of the AACSB report and of the Self-Study Report for the Cyclical Review was a member of the university Quality Assurance Committee that provided input to the redesign of the review process. Representatives from units with external professional reviews/accreditations (Social Work, Seminary, SBE) asked and were reassured repeatedly that the considerable work of accreditation would not need to be duplicated for the Cyclical Review. Virtually none of our AACSB work, however, was deemed acceptable for the Cyclical Review.
The Cyclic Review in its current form not only demands needless duplication of the re-accreditation requirements, but insists upon the inclusion of data that are not available centrally. These data must be compiled manually – a remarkable waste of time when resources are stretched to the limit. Overall, the data requirements for the review need to be reassessed. Perhaps lessons learned from the data collection task for IPRM will clarify – and simplify – data requirements for future Cyclic Reviews.

We appreciate the comments of the external reviewers, and hope their input will prove useful at the university level.

Executive Response

This exercise along with the recent AACSB reaccreditation highlights the high quality and high standards of SBE’s business programs. However, both the Self-Study and reviewers report point to the serious resource challenges that SBE’s business programs face and that are having a deleterious impact both on the quality of education that it provides and its position and reputation in an increasingly competitive market. Issues related to faculty and staff sufficiency and the ability to compete for faculty in key strategic areas need to be addressed on a priority basis if SBE is to be able to sustain its program quality and the unique array of immersive experiences it offers its students.

As noted in the response to the reviewer’s recommendations, several of the issues identified have already been dealt with and the following section provides an implementation plan for the others that we deem critical.

It is anticipated that the new resource model emanating from the IPRM process will provide SBE with some of the additional resources to address the concerns expressed by the review team. This and the ability to offer competitive salaries in high demand disciplines will be critical to the School’s continued ability to provide a high quality educational experience and maintain its position in a fast changing and competitive environment for business education.
### PART TWO: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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<tr>
<th>Recommendation to be Implemented</th>
<th>Responsibility for Implementation</th>
<th>Anticipated Completion Date</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Discussions with Senior Administration on competitive salaries for faculty in high demand areas.</td>
<td>SBE Dean</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>2. Develop In-house technical support.</td>
<td>SBE Dean</td>
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<td>4. Increase BTM admission standards.</td>
<td>SBE Associate Dean Programs</td>
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<td>5. Redesign Management Option to support Students in Arts and Science.</td>
<td>SBE Associate Dean Programs</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>6. Review whether fields available in the MBA are demanded by students and offered in a cost-effective way.</td>
<td>FGPS &amp; SBE Deans</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Include development of MBA/MFin double degree</td>
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<td>7. Consider improvements to the PhD program.</td>
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<td>2015</td>
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<td>Determine implications for services provided by FGPS &amp; Office of Graduate Studies</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Increase the number of Associate Deans to support programs offered by the School.</td>
<td>SBE Dean</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Work on better data collection on student satisfaction and placement.</td>
<td>SBE Associate Dean Programs</td>
<td>2015</td>
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