

## Response to the Reviewers' Report: AEC undergraduate program review

We are very appreciative of the time and thought that has gone into the review process for our undergraduate programs, and are looking forward to preparing a detailed action plan that integrates the useful advice from the reviewer recommendations into the development of our programs going forward.

We would like to briefly address some specific aspects of the report that may reflect committee misperceptions and incorrect interpretation of some of the data of our program.

We would first like to correct the description of our faculty in the report, which states, "The Department of Applied Economics on the Corvallis campus currently has 19 tenured or tenure-track faculty, 2 full-time instructors, and approximately 5 part-time instructors." Two of the faculty members listed as part of the AEC faculty have full time administrative appointments, and hence do not contribute directly to our undergraduate mission. Therefore, at the time of the writing of the report, we had 17 tenured or tenure-track faculty contributing to undergraduate education, one of whom has since retired.

A second correction is on the role of the undergraduate committee, which is described as "informal." The undergraduate committee is one of the standing committees of the department, and is comprised of a chair and a number of tenure track and instructional faculty. It is not any less formal than the graduate committee, the P&T committee, or any of the other regular committees in the department.

There is considerable discussion of the lack of diversity among both faculty and students, and that our recruitment of students, particularly minoritized populations, is weak. We recognize that these are excellent goals and have been actively producing social media and reaching out to community colleges in an effort to increase the representativeness of our student population. And we acknowledge that there is always room for improvement in these efforts; however, many levers for affecting student diversity do not operate at the department level, but rather at the level of the College or University. We would have appreciated specific suggestions on how we as a department might improve on these metrics, other than redefining diversity and collecting data, as suggested in the report. It also bears mentioning that while traditional economics programs have female student enrollment between 25 and 30% (our own OSU economics program has 16% female majors), our undergraduate program exceeds 50% female enrollment. Finally, we note that the diversity of the faculty cannot change in the absence of hiring or retirements. When we do hire, we will follow CAS commitment to diversity guidelines, which are widely recognized across the university for their proactive commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The overall recommendation of "Restructure" seems like a rather extreme description of the actions suggested by the reviewers. The suggested actions that support this recommendation include reducing the number of minors, increasing the role of tenure track faculty in undergraduate education, adding a 100-level course to attract new students, and potentially combining two 200-level courses. We think there is merit in these ideas, but perceive that restructuring suggests much more substantial changes than are suggested here. We are unsure if their choice is driven by the form that they are using. If so, the form might in the future include the option to "modify."

It bears mentioning that one of the conclusions of the report is that too much emphasis is placed on teaching in the graduate program. While we agree that the undergraduate program requires support and attention, we note that our graduate program review last year concluded that there should be more resources dedicated to the graduate curriculum and that collaboration with the economics program might serve to move towards this goal. These recommendations are at odds, and highlight a weakness of the program review process, whereby undergraduate and graduate programs are evaluated in isolation, rather than seen as part of a broad education, research, and outreach enterprise. We think that a unified program review process would both save time and result in more holistic suggestions for departmental improvement.

On a related note, we think it very telling that the number one reviewer recommendation in both the undergraduate and graduate program reviews was that the upper administration make efforts to resolve the disconnect between AEC and CLA econ. The undergraduate review states:

University (Provost office level) and College leadership should work to resolve the disconnect and increase collaboration and coordination between the Applied Economics department and the Economics program in the College of Liberal Arts. This would help encourage efficiencies in course offerings and minimize potential duplication.

While the graduate reviewers write:

Administrators at OSU should facilitate efforts by economists in multiple units to implement a formal collaboration among them that can harness synergies across units and between undergraduate and graduate programs.

Clearly, there are opportunities here that can strengthen the university's delivery of social science education, and while the steps for moving forward are outside of AEC's hands, we strongly support administrative efforts to build a bridge between our department and CLA economics.

On a final note, we are somewhat concerned that the reviewers did not directly respond to the 7 questions that the department explicitly asked the committee to consider. We were hoping for specific, actionable suggestions in response to these queries, but did not receive them. We do wonder if we are at fault for this seeming failure of communication, and would welcome suggestions on how to improve on this the next time that our programs are reviewed.

We hope that the Curriculum Council will take these amendments and thoughts into account as they review the report.