

# **Program Review Executive Summary**

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## **Western Oregon University: Economics Program (Business & Economics Division)**

### **Majors Reviewed:**

- Economics

### **Minors and Certificates Reviewed:**

- Economics
- Sports Management

Dates of Program Review: Academic Year 2019-20  
External Reviewer Visit: January 2020

Date of Executive Summary: June 2021

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:  
ECONOMICS PROGRAM (BUSINESS & ECONOMICS DIVISION)**

The Economics Program conducted a formal program review during the 2019-20 academic year, with external review taking place in the Spring term of 2020. The self-study was primarily written by Dr. John Leadley and was submitted to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (LAS) in Fall 2019. Dr. Randy Grant, Professor of Economics at Linfield University, conducted an external review in January 2020 and submitted a report shortly thereafter. The LAS Dean visited virtually with the tenure-track Economics faculty in May 2020 to discuss both the self-study and the external review, as well as the strategies for continual improvement identified by the Economics Program. The implementation of most initiatives was already underway at that time, and the Dean made additional recommendations.

The program review emphasized the following programmatic strengths:

- a. Highly qualified and skilled faculty;
- b. Popular minor (even with minors now optional);
- c. Innovative and appealing coursework;
- d. Excellent interdisciplinary interest engagement;
- e. Strong collegiality and collaboration between faculty;
- f. Important contributions to General Education program.

The following challenges were identified:

- a. Small number of majors;
- b. Recent dismissal of an NTT faculty member, along with pending gradual retirement of senior faculty member and possible difficulty with replacement;
- c. FTE further reduced by recent appointment of Economics faculty member as Division Chair (on short notice; this was not included in report);
- d. Lack of full departmental structure/formal governance processes;
- e. Under-enrolled Sports Management minor;
- f. Need for more robust engagement with alumni;
- g. Low representation of female students in the major and minor;
- h. Lack of racial and gender diversity in faculty;
- i. Absence of capstone experience in the major;
- j. Under-developed connections with Career Services and their offerings, such as internships.

Opportunities include:

- a. Economists are relatively well paid, offering excellent ROI which can be leveraged for effective recruitment and retention;
- b. Comprehensive and marketable skill set obtained through study of economics;
- c. Expected above-average future job growth in related fields;
- d. New Math and Economics degree provides innovative, cross-disciplinary approach to quantitative study;
- e. Initiatives underway to support an upcoming minor in Finance (housed in Business); and an interdisciplinary Sports Management major.

As a result of the program review, the Economics faculty has already begun pursuing several new initiatives, all supported by the Dean and outlined in the Implementation Matrix below.

### IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

<b>New Program-Driven Initiatives</b>	<b>Completed/ Ongoing</b>	<b>Underway (Target Completion Date)</b>	<b>To Be Done (Will be Ongoing)</b>
Prepare a departmental strategic plan		X (Summer 2021)	
Submit requests to search for replacement faculty, with special emphasis hiring diverse faculty	X		
Establish Mathematics-Economics degree	X		
Create a formal departmental structure, with a department head		X (2021-22)	
Begin work on creating a new Sports Management major		X (2021-22)	
Develop alumni tracking system to increase alumni outreach and engagement with current students			X
Resume WOU chapter of Omicron Delta Epsilon			X
Review course syllabi and outcomes to ensure that each course incorporates and reinforces core skills			X (Start in AY 2021-22)
Invite industry professionals to serve as guest speakers in classes, particularly to discuss career opportunities		X (Fall 2021-22)	
Work explicitly to attempt to recruit more female students into the program			X (Start in AY2021-22)
Increase mentoring efforts and coordination with WOU Career			X (Start in AY2021-22)

Services to provide more internships and high-impact practices			
Add a capstone experience to the major		X (F2021)	
Closely examine, and possibly eliminate or adjust, prerequisites		X (F2021)	
Create document to assist with student advising process			X

<b>Continuation of Ongoing Effectiveness</b>	<b>Completed/ Ongoing</b>	<b>Underway Target Completion Date)</b>	<b>To Be Done (Will be Ongoing)</b>
Continue to contribute important coursework to Gen Ed program	X		
Continue to support curriculum in Business program	X		
Continue to engage in programmatic assessment and improvement	X		
<b>LAS Dean Recommendations</b>	<b>Completed/ Ongoing</b>	<b>Underway Target Completion Date)</b>	<b>To Be Done (Will be Ongoing)</b>
Consider course title/description revisions to appeal to broad range of students			X – Start in AY 2021-22
Update web site and marketing materials to appeal to diverse students			X – Start in AY 2021-22
Explore additional opportunities to offer innovative coursework and coursework in applied areas			X – Start in AY 2021-22
Engage with Career Services to provide additional internship and career opportunities for students			X – Start in AY 2021-22
Use alumni network as resource for retaining and recruiting additional students			

The Economics program has already proactively initiated many of the above initiatives and is making great strides, especially considering the challenges created by the pandemic combined with the reduction in available FTE. Given the challenge of increasing the number of Economics majors while faculty FTE is constrained, it would be worthwhile to coordinate with the Business

Program in future hires in order to bring in faculty who can teach courses that span both programs. Making a strong attempt to diversify the Economics faculty will also assist the program in recruiting diverse students to the program, in order to keep the Economics program sustainable into the future.