Comprehensive Program Review Report (Narrative)
College of the Sequoias
Program Review - Economics

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What are the strengths of your area?: The most fundamental strength of the Economics Department lies in the quality of its curriculum. Over the past few years content in the principles courses (ECON 40 and 50) has been aligned and sequenced with ECON 40 designated as a prerequisite for ECON 50. In addition cross-disciplinary pre-requisites have been established in English (ENG 1 eligibility) and math (MATH 230). These efforts have resulted in reduced withdraw rates and higher success rates. In addition, students at COS score higher and improve more on the American Economic Association’s Test of Understanding in College Economics than a nationally normed sample of both undergraduates at four-year institutions and community college students.

In conjunction with the establishment of the mathematics prerequisite, the department also developed and began to offer a non-quantitatively focused introduction to the subject (ECON 25). This course was developed to maintain access to the subject for students who do not meet the mathematics prerequisite established for ECON 40 and ECON 50. The course satisfies IGETC and CSU general education requirements as well as economics course requirements in several degree and certificates (e.g. social work and fashion merchandising).

What improvements are needed?: Due to recent budget cuts and a lack of minimally qualified faculty in the district, the department struggles to offer classes across the district and times of the day. Currently, the department is served by a single full-time faculty member and no adjunct faculty. No courses are being offered at night or on the Hanford or Tulare campuses. The development of an adjunct faculty pool would certainly improve the department’s ability to serve the district’s students.

Successful course completion rates in the ECON 25 course were consistently below those of ECON 40 and ECON 50 during the 2010/11 (44%, 66%, and 80% respectively), 2011/12 (55%, 66%, and 81% respectively), and 2012/13 academic years (53%, 65%, and 83% respectively). Increasing the success rate for ECON 025 would improve the performance of the unit.

Describe any external opportunities or challenges.: A membership search of the American Economic Association returned only 3 members (including the department’s sole full-time faculty member) residing within the district. This scarcity of qualified potential adjunct faculty presents a significant challenge to the department with regard to scheduling classes across the district in both time and space. Compounding this problem, neither CSU Fresno or Bakersfield maintains a graduate program in Economics.

Analysis of FTES indicates a significant drop from 2010/11 in subsequent semesters. This decrease can be attributed to class cancellations arising from a reduction in the district’s funding. This decrease in funding will hopefully be reversed in the near future and allow for these cancelled sections to be reinstated should a qualified adjunct pool be developed.

Overall Outcome Achievement: Overall, assessment data comparing utilizing nationally normed data indicate high levels of outcome achievement for both ECON 40 and ECON 50. Currently ECON 50 assessments are based on the “Survey of Americans and Economists on the Economy.” Future assessments in ECON 50 will employ the Test of Understanding in College Economics (as is the case in ECON 40).

Thus far, assessments in ECON 25 have focused on the development of course assignments and student perceptions of outcome achievement. While these formative assessments have been helpful in guiding the evolution of this relatively new course, in the future other summative assessments will need to be developed.

Relevant assessment data for each of these classes can be found in the Documents tab.

Changes based on outcome achievement: Both ECON 40 and 50 have evolved significantly over the past decade based on past SLO assessments and assessment results. Current assessment results have indicated that these past changes have meaningfully improved and supported SLOs in these courses. At present, no modifications to the curriculum or pedagogy are planned.

In ECON 25, however, several recent pedagogical changes have resulted for SLO data collected. For example, assessment rubrics have been revised to improve student achievement in the embedded assignments used to evaluate course SLOs. In addition, the development of new assessment tools will be explored for this course.

Outcome cycle evaluation: The department seems to be making satisfactory progress within the three-year outcome cycle in each of its courses. Because the department is currently staffed by a single full-time faculty member and supported by no (zero) adjunct faculty, maintaining the schedule is both taxing and precarious. A sincere effort, however, to sustain the three-year cycle without any lapse will continue to be rendered.
Action: Adjunct Pool

The department will increase the number of qualified economics instructors in its adjunct faculty pool.

**Implementation Timeline:** 2014 - 2015

**Start Date:** 09/30/2014

**Status:** New Action

**Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position):** Christian Anderson, Professor

**Rationale (With supporting data):** The department currently operates with a single FTEF. Moreover, in past semesters other duties performed by the only economics faculty member have reduced the FTEF in the department below 1.0. Under these circumstances it is extremely difficult for the department to make courses in the discipline available in evenings and across district campuses.

**Priority:** Medium

**Safety Issue:** No

**External Mandate:** No