California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Academic Senate

Academic Programs Committee
Report To
The Academic Senate

AP-002-256

Program Review for BS and MS Economics

Academic Programs Committee	Date: 06/11/2025
Executive Committee	
Received and Forwarded	Date: 02/18/2026
Academic Senate	Date: 02/25/2026 First Reading

Background

The external program review took place in Fall 2024. The three external reviewers were:

- Bevin Ashenmiller, Chair, Economics, Occidental College.
- Ed Balsdon, Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Fowler College of Business , San Diego State University.
- Bree Lang, Professor of Teaching, Economics Department, University of Santa Barbara Department of Economics.

Resources Consulted:

Jocelyn Chong (Office of Assessment and Program Review),
Camille Johnson (Dean, CLASS)
Bruce Brown (Department Chair, Economics).

Discussion

The external reviewers noted that the faculty is student-focused and that student satisfaction is high, both in teaching useful skills for the future and the faculty's "willingness to help." Another strength is the diverse student body, including many transfer students and female majors. The MS program "provide[s] a superb broad, graduate-level technical training program, with some students using the program as a substitute for an MBA program and some as preparation for a PhD program."

The external reviewers felt the primary challenge in the BS program is that enrollment of non-majors is declining. This is due in large part to a change in General Education which allows students to fulfill the social sciences D4 classification (older classification) with a history course and a political science course. The external reviewers note:

"the choice to remove economics entirely from social sciences education is perplexing. Cal Poly Pomona is the only university in the California State University and University of California systems with this characteristic."

The challenge for the MS program is also enrollment: it is down from ten new students pre-pandemic to five. The external reviewers identified probable causes, but also noted the viable size of the program vis-a-vis the cost to run it, and offered several suggestions to grow enrollment. The second challenge is that the strategic plan is out of date. The decline in tenured and tenure-track faculty and the concomitant increase in service load are also an issue.

It concluded that both programs offered substantial strengths in "student-focused instruction, practical skill developments, and career preparation," and challenges primarily in enrollment. They recommended working towards the return of economics to the GE program and the development of a strategic plan, and the Economics Department's ability to improve enrollment, and that the approved hire of a new tenure-track faculty member may ameliorate this.

The internal review was conducted on April 23, 2024. The review committee consisted of Sara Langford (CLASS); Amalia Llombart (CLASS); and Amy Gimino (CEIS). It expanded and clarified some of the observations of the external review. The committee noted that the Economics Department was "well aligned with the elements of an inclusive polytechnic education identified by the university." They identified strengths other than those highlighted by the external reviewers, such as collaborative learning, integration of technology, community engagement, and the successful exchange program with Germany. They also noted the dedication towards STEM and a STEM reclassification initiative initiated by the program, and the department already changed the CSU code and CIP code to a STEM designated program past AY. The internal committee also noted that the number of undergraduate majors had risen, while the number of tenure track faculty had fallen: 2005 saw ten TT faculty and 53 undergraduate majors, while in 2022, the department had five TT faculty and 166 undergraduate majors.

The shortage of tenured and tenure-track faculty seems to affect everything else. The department was unable to have the same instructor teach all three prep courses for continuity. In the Graduate program, the lack of TT faculty meant that courses students needed to graduate sometimes could not be offered. The internal reviewers had many suggestions to improve the distribution of service and assessment but cautioned that it should not increase the level of WTUs dedicated to service. They strongly recommended hiring additional Economics faculty.

The post-program review and action plan submitted by the department concurred that that the challenges to the program largely originate from the lack of tenure-line faculty and the reduction of GE enrollments due to the restructuring of GE requirements. They note that a recent update now includes economic principles courses, but since History and Political Science are the only way to fulfill the American Institutions requirement, this may not help. They also note that they have since hired a new TT faculty member, but a current TT faculty member will begin FERP shortly.

Department’s short-term priorities include a revision of the graduate program, reducing required courses, and graduation time. They also plan to investigate a 4+1 program to attract undergraduate majors to the MS program. They plan to expand the use of social media to advertise the department and events, highlighting their successful Economics Club, and to hire additional tenure line faculty to strengthen instruction and service needs. Hiring more TT faculty is also part of their long-term priorities, as is including recent technology such as AI, R, and Python, and "developing new technology-based courses." They also plan to collaborate with other departments to fulfill GE requirements and cross listing some courses across departments. They are developing a plan to continue the successful German exchange program and the updating of the website as faculty begin to retire.

Dean Camille Johnson has noted the "strong, student-centered approach," "the innovative and career-focused curriculum," and the strong, dedicated and harmonious department. She agreed that priorities included the revision of the graduate program, reducing the required units and shortening the completion time (as the program has suggested), and integrating the use of and inclusion of modern technology in instruction and "creating more tech-focused offerings."

Both external and internal reviewers noted many strengths of the BS and MS programs, especially the student focus, high student satisfaction, and preparation for various career paths. They identified many of the challenges to the current program arising from the scarcity of tenure track faculty in relation to student majors. The department is continuing and expanding its student-centered and career-focused approach, while planning and implementing ways to increase enrollment, improve visibility, and incorporate technology into current and future course offerings.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Academic Programming committee commends the Economics department for its student and career focused programs, and concurs that additional hires would be a great help in ameliorating current challenges to course offerings. They agree that the integration of modern technologies, as proposed by the department and supported by the Dean, and the investigation of collaborations with other departments and the possible creation of a 4+1 program are creative ways to strengthen the department.