**Annual Departmental Report**

***Amended for 2020-2021 Academic Year to Accommodate and Reflect Adjustments due to Pandemic***

*There are amended instructions throughout this document to reflect the special circumstances of this academic year (AY20-21) that you will find red.  As an institution and as departments we have learned that we can use our creativity to deliver learning even in the most difficult of circumstances.*

**Program Information**

Program/Department:Political Science/Economics, History and Political Science

Department Chair:  Ben Lieberman

Department Assessment Committee Contact:

*This document is to be kept in the department and an electronic file is due to the AVP of Institutional Research & Planning by June 1, 2021.*

**A.**   **Departmental Special Section for AY2021**

Department Lessons Learned and Accomplishments

In thinking through the academic year, report on how the department adapted to changes brought on by the pandemic. Reflect on actions that surprised you, on lessons learned that will help in the future, and major accomplishments.

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| The speed of response. Faculty made changes to multiple courses and continued to make changes as the pandemic persisted.  The department continued to make progress on important initiatives and continued to advance innovative methods of teaching and learning.  The responses to the pandemic demonstrated both the many ways in which we can make use of technology for high quality teaching and learning and for advising and meetings and the importance of in-person teaching and learning. A modality in which a faculty member met with some students in person while others attended remotely proved to be the most problematic. |

**B.**   **Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) (Educational Objectives)**

**I.**               **List of PLOs and the timeline for assessment.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **PLO #** | **PLO – Stated in assessable terms** | **Where are the learning outcomes for this level/program published? (please specify) Include URLs where appropriate** | **Timing of assessment (annual, semester, bi-annual, etc.)** | **When was the last assessment of the PLO completed?** |
| **1.** | Students will be able to critically analyze and evaluate issues in local, national, and global economic life using evidence-based arguments | https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/academics/programs/economics-bs | Annual | Spring 2021 |
| **2.** | Students will be able to articulate economic models in a multidisciplinary context | https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/academics/programs/economics-bs | Annual | Spring 2021 |
| **3.** | Students will be able to demonstrate understanding key economic concept through quantitative reasoning and through written communication | https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/academics/programs/economics-bs | Annual | Spring 2021 |
| **4.** | Students will be able to apply economic theory through experiential learning | https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/academics/programs/economics-bs | Annual | Spring 2021 |
| **5.** | Students will be able to communicate economic ideas effectively through the use of statistical analysis, through the use of writing, and through the use of oral skills | https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/academics/programs/economics-bs | Annual | Spring 2021 |
| **6.** | Students will be able to identify assumptions and assess implications of diverse economic perspectives | https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/academics/programs/economics-bs | Annual | Spring 2021 |

**II.**            **PLO Assessment** (Please report on the PLOs assessed and/or reviewed this year. Programs should be assessing at least one each year.)

Using the table below, list and briefly describe the **direct method(s)** used to collect information assessing whether students are learning the core sets of knowledge (K), skills (S) and attitudes (A) identified as essential. **We only collected assessment information using an indirect method during this academic year.**

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| **PLO # (from above)** | **Assessment description (exam, observation, national standardized exam, oral presentation with rubric, etc.)** | **When assessment was administered in student program (internship, 4th year, 1st year, etc.)** | **To which students were assessments administered (all, only a sample, etc.)** | **What is the target set for the PLO? (criteria for success)** | **Reflection on the results: How was the “loop closed”?** |
| 1 | Survey | Senior Year, Final Semester | Graduating Seniors | Sufficiently met |  |
| 2 | Survey | Senior Year, Final Semester | Graduating Seniors | Sufficiently met |  |
| 3 | Survey | Senior Year, Final Semester | Graduating Seniors | Sufficiently met |  |
| 4 | Survey | Senior Year, Final Semester | Graduating Seniors | Sufficiently met |  |
| 5 | Survey | Senior Year, Final Semester | Graduating Seniors | Sufficiently met |  |
| 6 | Survey | Senior Year, Final Semester | Graduating Seniors | Sufficiently met |  |

      If applicable, use the space below to report on PLO assessment impacted by the move to remote learning.

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| PLO assessment for our majors is carried out by evaluating ECON4000: Senior Seminar artefacts in the academic years that we offer this course. Since this AY, we did not offer this course, the PLO assessment is conducted by an online anonymous questionnaire sent to our graduating seniors. This is our indirect assessment method outlined in the Economics Assessment Plan. |

**Summary of Findings:** Briefly summarize the results of the PLO assessments reported in Section II above combined with other relevant evidence gathered and show how these are being reviewed/discussed.  How are you “closing the loop”?

Please reflect on changes that the department has had to engage in given changes to teaching modality and especially capstone experiences.

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| **Reflection Prompt** | **Narrative Response** |
| **Other than GPA, what data/ evidence is used to determine that graduates have achieved the stated outcomes for the degree? (e.g., capstone course, portfolio review, licensure examination)** | In response to the open ended questions of the online questionnaire, students provided detailed feedback about some of our core and elective classes.  Regarding PLO #1: Students report that the Economics program did a phenomenal job of challenging their understanding of the world in general. A student mentions Development Economics, Public Finance, Political Economy of Gender, and History of Economic Thought as courses that were noteworthy in terms of using evidence-based arguments to explain the real world economic issues. Specifically, the student reports that the Political Economy of Gender course utilized various means of measuring gender inequality and assigned students to form their own research on gender inequality in a country of their choice. They add that the Development Economics course traced the historical paths to development that today’s developed countries pursued. They also state that the Public Finance course challenged students to pick a certain policy used and reflect on it and analyze if the program was truly effective. Further, they mention how in the History of Economic Thought course they study several important influential economists, and how these economists’ ideas and prescriptions influence economic policymaking today. They also note that in this course professors’ questions and assignments allowed them to articulate the limitations to the approaches of various economic schools of thought and their inability to capture the real world economic issues.  Regarding PLO #2:  Students cite several ways that they discuss economic issues in multidisciplinary contexts in their economics classes. For example, they note that in many economics courses, political science can influence the way economic issues are studied since many economic fluctuations are based on government policy such as taxes and subsidies etc. They also mention the influence of psychological science on economics in regards to how consumers act and why they make the choices they make.  Regarding PLO #3: A student notes the use of solving demand and supply models as well as graphing microeconomic production and cost curves in Intermediate Microeconomics course in improving their quantitative skills in economics and helping them understand the key economic concepts.  Regarding PLO #4:  A student gives the example of the multiplier process simulation conducted in their Public Finance course. This hands-on simulation helped the student understand how the multiplier process works in real life.  Regarding PLO #5:  A student notes that in the Money and Banking course, they had an opportunity to make a short presentation about a topic related to monetary economics. They add that their presentation of how Certificates of Deposits’ interest rates were influenced by the Federal Reserve monetary policymaking improved their understanding of the financial system’s functioning. Another student mentions that the Economics Program showed them how to work through an economic problem “whether it is a short question or a more advanced open response.”  Regarding PLO #6:  A student notes that one of the favorite parts of learning about economics for them was the criticism of economic assumptions. Since Economics is a social science and it studies the economic decision making by individuals, groups, and societies, they add that economics is much more complex than a few assumptions and this complexity is mostly due to how complex people are. Regarding diverse economic perspectives, they state that Development Economics and Political Economy of Gender provided diverse economic perspectives that were accompanied by various economic models that they otherwise would’ve never seen in an introductory class. Another student notes that in the Intermediate Macroeconomics course, they discussed the implications of macroeconomic models on different countries' labor markets. |
| **Who interprets the evidence?**  **What is the process?**  **(e.g. annually by the curriculum committee)** | Dr. Marr emailed the students the questionnaires and compiled their responses. The survey responses were anonymous and disclosed as such. All three Economics faculty (Drs. Elveren, Marr and Ozay) interpreted the responses by the students. |
| **What changes have been made as a result of using the data/evidence? (close the loop)** | Since we are only conducting an indirect assessment of program learning outcomes this year, we will postpone the process of closing the loop to next AY when we offer the Senior Seminar course. We will discuss future administration of the indirect assessment and the inclusion of minors in order to increase the sample size and validity of results. |

**C.**   **Assessment Plan for Program/Department**

I.               Insert the program or department Assessment Plan

**Please see the Economics Assessment Plan attached.**

II.             Explain any changes in the assessment plan including new or revised PLOs, new assessments that the program/department plans to implement and new targets or goals set for student success.

The Economics Assessment Plan was completed in Summer 2020. This is the first year of implementation, and, therefore, no changes have been made at this time.

III.           If you do not have a plan, would you like help in developing one?

We have a plan but have yet to receive feedback on the one submitted. We would like help in developing from what we currently have.

**D.**   **Program Review Action Plan or External Accreditation Action Letter/Report**

*Annual Reflection/Follow-up on Action Plan from last Program Review or external accreditation (only complete the table that is appropriate for your program)*

**I.**      **Programs that fall under Program Review:**

                                               i. Date of most recent Review: **AY 2016-2017, scheduled for AY 2021-2022**

                                               ii. Insert the Action Plan table from your last Program Review and give any progress towards completing the tasks or achieving targets set forth in the plan.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Recommendation:** | **Response:** |
| Create new routes to feed into major | In order to create new routes to feed into the major, we have created multiple new courses that are cross-listed and/or apply to the general student population. We continue to create courses that are rooted in the general education curriculum and that apply to multiple majors.  For instance, Dr. Ozay created ECON2010: Political Economy of Gender which satisfies two separate designations in our current general education curriculum. Dr. Elveren cross-listed his ECON2005: Game Theory course with the mathematics department. ECON3001: Economics of Inequality was created with two general education designations to attract students across majors who are interested in understanding social welfare from an economics perspective. Further, GEOG3000: Geographic Economic Systems continues to be offered with no prerequisites. This course is cross-listed between Geographic Sciences and Economics.  Dr. Marr has taught economics-themed freshman seminars in all three years of the First Year Experience (FYE) pilot in hopes of recruiting students into the economics majors or minor.  Dr. Ozay created ECON3002: Basic Data Skills for Economics and Business, with a Science, Math, Technology (SMT) designation in the general education curriculum, to introduce students across majors to data and Excel skills.  The economists have also worked to align the economics major with the new general education curriculum (to begin Fall 2021). In AY 2020-2021, we have submitted and received approval for designations for eight of our courses in the “critical and creative thinking across disciplines” (CCTAD) part of the new curriculum including our two core courses, ECON1100 and ECON1200 for Procedural and Logical Thinking. We also received outcome *and* advanced designations for our electives in Diverse Perspectives (ECON2010: Political Economy of Gender, ECON2500: Economic Development, and ECON3550: International Economics); Civic Learning (ECON2600: Public Finance); and Ethical Reasoning (ECON3000: History of Economic Thought and ECON3001: Economics of Inequality). These designations should help us maintain our full enrollments and create new routes to feed into the major. |
| Require Intermediate ECON Courses (Intermediate Micro and/or Macro) for minors | While we do not currently *require* either intermediate microeconomics or macroeconomics for our minors, we are now offering them consistently following our program review. Both courses are offered each year, and, as a result, most minors do take one or both of these classes to fulfill their requirements for the economics minor. We offered ECON3660: Intermediate Microeconomics in Fall 2020 with 24/25 seats filled, ten of whom were majors, two of whom were minors, and the remaining twelve considering a minor or further economic study. ECON3650: Intermediate Macroeconomics with 20/25 seats filled. Based on our major size, these courses recruit beyond the major. |
| Remove Money and Banking from requirements for major | We have not removed this requirement. At this point, it is one of our most popular courses. Therefore, we want to continue to offer it each year, and, with our small faculty size, it best serves the students to allow this course to count for the major. |
| Ensure Principles classes engage students | We have continued to refine our principles courses in order to ensure engagement. Our courses included open access textbooks, multiple modalities of instruction (in person, video supplements, audio recordings of slides) as well as assessment (in class work, exams, quizzes, short response, discussion, etc.), and variety in presentation (real world and current events, simulations, functional examples, etc.). Students seem to respond positively to these courses based on SIR-II survey scores, written feedback collected, and returning enrollment in our courses. |
| Limit independent studies | We have achieved this by offering ECON3650: Intermediate Macroeconomics and ECON3660: Intermediate Microeconomics more frequently and by coordinating course offerings, based on advising information, on student needs. Prior to our program review, we were frequently offering independent studies for these major requirements. |
| Create and Staff a course *Statistics for Social Scientists* | Our ECON3002: Basic Data Skills course is the response to this recommendation. |
| Look over catalog to see what programs require ECON classes | We have done so and have taken meetings with different departments as a result (see, for instance, our response below to “outreach to BSAD students since almost do a minor”) |
| Incorporate own research into class lectures | We routinely do this and have created courses (such as Economics of Inequality and Political Economy of Gender) that enable us to frame our own work in the context of the course field. |
| Reduce number of course preps | We have tried to do this by offering more principles courses (ECON1100: Principles of Macroeconomics and ECON1200: Principles of Microeconomics). This has allowed faculty in the economics major to, at times, limit their course preparation to two preps. In semesters we have taken this approach (such as Fall 2019), enrollment in all three sections was strong with 76/75 seats filled in ECON1100: Principles of Macroeconomics and 74/75 seats filled in ECON1200: Principles of Microeconomics.  However, the norm is that each faculty member has three course preparations. |
| Increase interactions with area/regional economic actors, student projects, internships | Over the academic year 2018-2019, the economists met with the professor and graduate students from the Innovations Field Lab (IFL) at Harvard University to discuss potential collaborations in economic development work in the city of Fitchburg.  As a result, in Fall 2019, the economists founded the Fitchburg Leading Innovations Project (FLIP) in order to engage students in the community with coursework, research projects, and internships. We are currently working with three students during the summer of 2021 on community-related research. We have further goals for this project that align with this recommendation. A copy of the FLIP proposal is attached.  The economists continue to work with the Crocker Center, including serving in the Community Consultants Group and attending the Campus Compact regional conference, to navigate local opportunities of involvement. |
| Improve website | Yes, without our doing, the university has taken this on and provided a clear outline of the Economics program (including Program Learning Outcomes), faculty information, and courses offered. |
| Increase the number of ECON Minors--- outreach to BSAD students since almost do a minor | We have taken meetings with faculty from multiple departments on campus including but not limited to Business Administration (BSAD), Industrial Technology (IT), Math and the newly formed Public Health program in order to offer courses and content that are aligned with their major requirements and make the pathway to a minor accessible.  Please see the table below to see our department performance measures and how our minors (as well as enrollment) have tracked over time. Based on this table, our minors (the target tracking measure recommended) are up over 12 percent in a year where the pandemic adversely impacted overall enrollments. Further, our majors are up 44% (Student Success Collaborative -SSC Data) or 18% (DegreeWorks). While both data sources are with accuracy issues, measuring changes over time mitigates the impact of the inconsistencies. Finally, we have increased the number of students enrolled in our concentration. |

**Department Performance Measure Table**

***Program Statistics for Summer 2019, Fall 2019, and Spring 2020***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Source** | **Major** | **Minor** | **IBE Concentration** |
| SSC | 18 |  |  |
| Degree Works | 56 | 49 | 18 |

*Note: 10 graduates or transfers in DegreeWorks search*

***Program Statistics for Fall 2020, and Spring 2021***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Source** | **Major** | **Minor** | **IBE Concentration** |
| SSC | 26 |  |  |
| Degree Works | 66 | 55 | 20 |

We responded to three other recommendations as either longer term considerations or no longer applicable. For one, our program reviewer suggested we make IDIS1800: Global Issues a requirement for the major given our frequency in teaching the course. However, the other recommendations of this review (above) made it clear that we were better off stepping down from teaching Global Issues in favor of creating more feed-in routes for the major. Secondly, we were recommended to offer more two-tier electives and to encourage econometrics. We believe that FLIP will enable us to offer two-tier electives in the future (i.e. a yearlong course) and to encourage econometrics with local data and collaborative student-faculty work.

                                         iii. If you do not have an action plan, would you like help in developing one based on your last program review and needs of the program?

Yes; we would like to formalize an action plan. We would like to incorporate the findings in the upcoming program review (AY 2021-2022).

**II.**   **Programs with external Accreditation: Not Applicable to the current Economics program**

                                               i. Professional, specialized, State, or programmatic accreditations currently held by the program/department. **None**

                                               ii. Date of most recent accreditation action by each listed agency. **None in history of our program**

                                              iii. Date and nature of next review and type of review. **None planned**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **List key issues for continuing accreditation identified in accreditation action letter or report.** | **Key performance indicators as required by agency or selected by program (licensure, board or bar pass rates; employment rates, etc.)(If required.)** | **Update on fulfilling the action letter/report or on meeting the key performance indicators.** |
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**E.**   **Departmental Strategic Initiatives**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Accomplished Initiatives AY 20-21                    Add more rows as needed** | **Corresponding Strategic Plan Goal & Strategy**  **Goal # followed by Strategy # ex: 1.3** | **Indicate if a Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness (DEI) Goal** |
| Placed classes into the new LAS | 2.12 |  |
| Davis Education Foundation Grant mapping to improve department advising and mentoring | 2.19 | **x** |
| Explored alternative pedagogies through Reacting to the Past, simulations and through faculty experimentation with digital and critical pedagogies. | **2.17** |  |
| Offered and creating courses to ensure diversity in the curriculum | **2.18**  **1** | X |
| Participated in use of Open Educational Resources | **2.25** | X |
| Explored new methods to recruit students and to publicize courses  Used  social media to publicize courses | **5** |  |
| Continued to build  FLIP (Fitchburg Local Innovation Project) | **3** | **X** |
| Carried out community-engaged coursework and scholarship with students (Economics and Political Science) and pre-practica in History teaching methods courses | **1: 5,15** |  |
| Carried out collaborative research and exhibitions with students (Economics, History and Political Science) | **1:15** |  |
| Carried out High Impact Practices: through Internships,  the Washington Center  Experiential learning—Moot Court, Model UN, and Study abroad (remote work this past year), and interdisciplinary team-taught class | **1: 13,14, 17** |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Planned Initiatives for AY 2021-22                Add more rows as needed** | **Associated Strategic Plan Goal & Strategy**  **Goal # followed by Strategy # ex: 1.3** | **Indicate if a Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness (DEI) Goal** |
| Advance Davis Education Foundation Grant by creating new advising materials | 2.19 | **X** |
| Carry out alternative pedagogies through Reacting to the Past, simulations and through faculty experimentation with digital and critical pedagogies. | **2.17** |  |
| Offer courses to ensure diversity in the curriculum | **2.18**  **1** | X |
| Participate in use of Open Educational Resources | 2.25 | X |
| Use new methods to recruit students and to publicize courses | **5** |  |
| Continued to build  FLIP (Fitchburg Local Innovation Project) | **3** | **X** |
| Carry out community-engaged coursework and scholarship with students and pre-practica in History teaching methods courses | **1:5,15** |  |
| Carry out collaborative research with students | **1:15** |  |
| Carry out High Impact Practices: through Internships,  the Washington Center  Provide Experiential learning—Moot Court, Model UN | **1: 13,14** |  |

**F.   Departmental Reflection:**

*Take this section to reflect on--*

*1)*      *Initiatives that you may be considering for 22-23 academic year that you did not already capture above.*

*Economics will be carrying out a program review.*

*After the retirement of Dr. Christy, we hope to be able to carry out a Political Science search.*

*Economics, History, and Political Science are all course disciplines in the liberal arts and sciences. We hope to strengthen the Arts and Sciences.*

*2)*      *Reflect on how the department adapted to the pandemic. Reflect on actions that surprised you and on lessons learned that will help in the future.*

*Again, we showed even great flexibility and speed and found many ways to make use of technology. At the same time, the pandemic also underscored the value of in-person teaching and learning for significant numbers of students even as significant numbers of students adapted to remote teaching and learning.*