

DATE: June 1, 2015, 2015
TO: Jose Cruz, Provost
FROM: Anil Puri, Dean, Mihaylo College of Business and Economics
SUBJECT: Program Performance Review, Business Communication Program

After completion of the Program Performance Review report, the Business Communication Program met its external review team: Irena Praitis (CSUF, Freshmen Programs), Robyn Walker (USC, Management Communication), and Jolanta Aritz (USC, Management Communication). In general the team's evaluation of Business Communication was positive. In particular, the program was commended on its use of a "clear, progressive pedagogical structure" and noted that it was successfully educating a large number of students each semester. However, the team also observed challenges in two areas: instruction and faculty.

INSTRUCTION

- **Classes are too large.** The university standard for writing courses is 25 students per section. Undergraduate BusComm classes have 37 students per section; graduate BusComm classes have 30 students per section. The size of the classes affects both the types of assignments given and the amount of feedback possible on each assignment.
 - **Mihaylo Response:** Undergraduate class sizes for the F15 semester have been reduced to 33 students per section.
- **Insufficient support for ESL students.** Large classes and limited feedback also has a negative impact on ESL populations. Current writing tutoring opportunities are severely limited in Mihaylo College; the Mihaylo Tutoring Center currently has one tutor to work with over 1000 students enrolled in BusComm courses, thus in most cases students must attend the University Learning Center or the Writing Center for help with writing and grammar issues. The team noted that mentoring strategies may be a good method to improve ESL students' performance, as well.
 - **Mihaylo Response:** BUAD 201 has been identified by the University as a bottleneck course, and as such has participated in the Supplemental Instruction Program since F14. The program is being expanded to accommodate additional BUAD 201 sections for the F15 semester. The Mihaylo Graduate Program has been sponsoring additional tutoring for BUAD 501 students since SP14. BUAD 301 currently has no additional support.

FACULTY

- **The faculty is insecure.** Although the reviewers were impressed by the dedication the instructors, both full- and part-time, showed toward their students, they observed that the faculty was also insecure. The majority of courses are taught by part-time faculty whose jobs are contingent on enrollments. The number of full-time faculty has shrunk from 11 to 5 over the last 15 years. All full-time faculty members are temporary lecturers. Thus, job security is a continual concern for everyone in the program.
 - **Mihaylo Response:** BusComm has been cleared to hire two new full-time faculty members for the F15-SP16 school year. A third position is undergoing approval for the following year.
- **Professional development opportunities may be burdensome.** To maintain academic or professional qualification under AACSB requirements instructors must demonstrate academic and/or professional currency in their fields. Instructors are encouraged to produce traditional scholarly or professional work in addition to their teaching assignments. Given the current teaching loads (4/4 + service for full-time and up to 5 sections per semester for part-time instructors) this

may become a burden, especially since resources to support such efforts are limited for full-time instructors and absent for part-time instructors.

- **Mihaylo Response:** BusComm faculty are provided resources for professional development that are similar to those for the discipline-based faculty.
- **Faculty reviews are conducted by another department.** Faculty members are reviewed under standard guidelines set forth in the CBA. However, because there are no tenured members of BusComm (tenure is not offered) faculty portfolios are reviewed by the Marketing Department's personnel committee. This committee knows little about the BusComm program, its learning objectives, and its standards. This has resulted in numerous errors and low scores when BusComm faculty is held responsible for activities that are not part of the lecturer position requirements. The program needs clearly defined criteria for full- and part-time instructors that suit the discipline in which they work, as well as an appropriate reviewing process.
 - **Mihaylo Response:** A different review team will be created to include members from a discipline that is closer to BusComm than Marketing, i.e., English.
- **Pedagogy should reflect current practices.** The reviewers were impressed by the number and variety of curriculum innovations and experiments the BusComm faculty has undertaken, but felt that those efforts could only benefit by a demonstration of their relationship to issues like student retention and success. They also recommended a clearly articulated plan to measure student progress at various checkpoints throughout their careers.
- **The program has a potential for development.** BusComm is a support program, currently housed in the Marketing Department. The reviewers see missed opportunities in the administration and development of the program. Their suggestions included
 - *Offering a Business Writing Concentration or other certificate program.*
 - *Expanding/revising the curriculum to include a general business writing course (BUAD 201) and a discipline-specific writing course (instead of the current BUAD 301).*
 - *Offering more opportunities for students to engage in applied writing projects (like the current Insurance Writing Contest).*
 - *Giving the program autonomy as an institute or separate program headed by a director.*
 - **Mihaylo Response:** The program is headed by a director.