Program Assessment Report (PAR)

Social + Applied Economics (SAE) Masters Degree

REPORT PREPARED by: Beauchamp, Andrew

ACADEMIC YEAR COVERED BY THIS REPORT: 2020-2021

I. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

WSU-Masters Learning Objectives 1. Students will use economic models in domestic and global contexts to analyze individual decision making, how prices and quantities are determined in product and factor markets, and macroeconomic outcomes 2. Students will analyze the performance and functioning of government, markets and institutions in the context of social, economic and ecological problems. 3. Students will use critical thinking skills to examine different microeconomic models, evaluating their assumptions, implications and applications. 4. Students will identify salient developments in the world economy, in both present-day and historical contexts. 5. Students will demonstrate the use of mathematical and statistical skills in the analysis of complex economic problems and to make use of those skills in their future careers. 6. Students will communicate economic thought and analysis in both written and oral contexts to varied audiences.

II. PROCEDURES USED FOR ASSESSMENT

A. Direct Assessment

We used indirect measures listed below.

B. Scoring of Student Work

We used an indirect survey measure for these responses. This included our attempt to recruit all graduated students in the recent past.

C. Indirect Assessment

This year we launched our first indirect measure of student achievement via an online Qualtrics survey which asks students to rate their learning on the five program learning objectives. Responses were recorded on a five point scale.

III. ASSESSMENT RESULTS/INFORMATION:

1. Economics Alumni Survey

Summary Overall the data revealed specific areas in which students would like to see program level changes, which is quite helpful. Our consistent finding across all years surveyed was that students believed they learned the most with regard to learning objective three and the least with regard to learning object five. For all learning outcomes we split the sample among those graduating in the past three academic years and those who graduated before that to ensure that past performance wasn't driving the conclusions. As we move forward administering this survey for each graduating cohort, we'll gain more real-time information. Analysis The total sample size was 37 response (15 from last three years 22 from earlier years). A strength of our program according was learning objective three (critical thinking in microeconomics), which 93% of recent respondents said they strongly agreed with. An area of improvement is learning objective five (mastery of math and stats skills needed in the labor market). Here only 33% of recent respondents said they strongly agreed with that question. In the following table we present mean fraction of respondents who said they strongly agreed that they mastered the learning outcome in question. Table I Graduate LO past 3 years Prior significant change(** is 5% level, * is 10%) LO 1 0.667 0.630 LO 2 0.733 0.667 LO 3 0.933 0.630 ** LO 4 0.867 0.630 LO 5 0.333 0.519 * LO 6 0.667 0.556 Importantly we note that the gaps for LO3 and LO5 in the Table 1 are statistically significant, suggesting a meaningful change in the past three years with regard to our students learning on those outcomes. This is the case even though the sample size was relatively small. So while it appears we have significantly improved our efforts at teaching critical thinking regarding microeconomic models, our data analysis preparation has been on the decline.

[Analysis]
IV. ACTIONS TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

We plan to discuss this just completed survey at our first faculty meeting of the next calendar year. Major topics to discuss are differences between master's and undergradaute responses, the need for more data analysis courses and how we can improve our core courses and elective offerings to better align with student needs. Additionally I plan to make changes to the scheduling of courses, teaching assignments and course offerings that are consistent with the goals of improving student learning outcomes. We are in the process of searching for an adjunct instructor who can offer an introductory course on data analysis

software blended with economic forecasting.

V. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Additional documentation, when provided, is stored in the internal Academic Program
Assessment of Student Learning SharePoint site.