



## **COLLEGE OF BUSINESS**

### **PROGRAM REVIEW**

*June 2003*

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## **Abstract**

In the statement unanimously recommending initial AACSB International (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) accreditation for the Florida Gulf Coast University College of Business programs, the Peer Review Team noted that the programs in the College of Business “achieved overall high quality and processes are in place to ensure the maintenance of high quality within an environment committed to continuous improvement.” Apart from noting that there were no areas requiring improvement prior to the granting of accreditation, the visiting Peer Review Team provided seven (7) commendations for unique strengths, innovations and unique features, and two notations for effective processes and practices (*Team Visit Report*).

## **Introduction**

Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) is a new school that was created to be a distinguished institution of higher education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The University was established on a powerful base of technology, with all of its buildings and facilities equipped for modern computer and information systems support. Opened for classes in the fall of 1997 with 117 instructional faculty, two academic buildings, a library, a broadcast facility, three support buildings, and approximately 2,500 students, FGCU became Florida's tenth public institution of higher education. The University has five academic units: the College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business (CoB), College of Education, College of Health Professions, and a College of Professional Studies. The University currently enrolls approximately 5,200 students, operates with a total annual budget from all sources of about \$53.3 million, and employs 178 instructional faculty. Since opening for classes six years ago, the University has expanded its infrastructure by completing a loop road around the academic buildings and adding three more academic buildings, an athletic complex, a physical plant facility, and a

resident complex that now houses over 1000 students. The University also initiated intercollegiate athletic programs. The University Foundation has assets in excess of \$50 million and an endowment of over \$16 million. Within this overall growth, the College of Business has seen a robust expansion and now reflects 34 percent of the declared majors in the University.

The focus of this “Program Review Report” is the FGCU College of Business. The College has systematically planned and made strategic decisions that are consistent with its mission. Immediately upon being hired in August of 1995, the founding Dean started the planning process that would place the College on a course to meet or exceed the accreditation standards of AACSB International, the premier national accrediting agency for colleges and schools of businesses. One fundamental step in this plan was to target the creation of academic business programs that would be nationally competitive and staffed by faculty appropriate to achieving that goal. A second element of initial planning was to immediately develop program measures for continuous improvement that would satisfy both the AACSB International and University accreditation expectations. In 1995, the University had also commenced planning for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Finally, since the University was created as an institution with a regional mission, the College aggressively began to establish relationships with area economic development and business leaders. These networks would be central resources in guiding program development that would add value to the Southwest Florida economy, while academically connecting campus programs to the business environment. The College was poised to develop strategies to shape and deliver its mission.

During the 1995-96 academic year, two years prior to the opening of the University, the founding Dean visited AACSB International’s office in St. Louis to discuss accreditation plans and then initiated a series of focused meetings with area and national business leaders. Initial College vision and mission statements were developed that are consistent with the University’s founding mission statement, as approved by the Florida Legislature. The Dean also began recruiting a leadership team of associate deans and department chairs to assist in strategic and curriculum planning and faculty recruitment. Following their arrival on

campus, the faculty were engaged in shaping the initial vision into a mission statement for the College.

***VISION.*** *The College of Business will help set new standards of excellence with its academic programs, faculty accomplishments, and student success, while continuously reflecting the dynamic environment of modern business opportunities. The College's model of partnership with its external business constituents will be a national benchmark that will consistently bring powerful knowledge into our undergraduate and graduate learning. The College will be an international leader in innovative ways of integrating technology and global awareness into the business education experience.*

To drive its goal of accreditation by AACSB International, the College intended to distinguish itself in three areas of strategic importance to its mission: interaction and partnership with external constituents in the business community, the integration of technology skills throughout the business curriculum, and the advancement of global awareness within the faculty and academic programs. Strategic programs were then conceived to attain these three areas of distinction. The College submitted its plan for AACSB International candidacy status in March 1999. By AACSB International standards, that plan was rather ambitious as it placed the CoB on the road to obtaining accreditation in a three rather than five-year period with the Academic Year 2001-2002 designated as the year of self-evaluation (SER, p. 2).

In November 2002, the visiting team from the AACSB International came to the FGCU campus and reviewed the degree programs within the college. After their comprehensive two and one-half day visit, the team drafted a report that had no concerns, seven commendations, and two citations for areas of exceptional performance (see copy of the *Team Visit Report*).

As part of the statewide Program Review Process, representative from the state of Florida were invited to be observers at the AACSB International onsite review process.

Unfortunately, they were not able to attend. What follows is a systematic review of the programs within the College of Business. Instead of rewriting the review that was completed for the AACSB International, the three self-evaluation documents (*Executive Summary; Self-Evaluation Report; Response to the Peer Review Team*) along with the *Team Visit Report* are submitted with notations aimed at indicating where the various requirements of the program review report are to be found.

## I. Program Description

### Background

The conditions under which the University and the College were established are discussed in the “Preconditions” section of the *Self-Evaluation Report* (SER, p.4). Immediately upon being hired in 1995, the dean started the planning process by meeting with business leaders to develop the College’s initial Vision and Mission Statements as an outgrowth of the University’s Mission (SER, p. 5). With a mission in place, he began hiring the leadership team that was to assist in strategic and curriculum planning, and the hiring of faculty. The Preconditions section also outlines the college’s initial AACSB International related activities that led to the visit of the peer review team (SER, p. 1-4).

The degree programs in the College of Business (CoB) are meeting the current needs of the five-county area for undergraduate and graduate education in business. Evidence of this can be found in the relatively high number of students enrolling in the CoB. The overall college enrollment (SER, p. 13) and the budget to support the programs (SER, p. 9) are also described in the preconditions section of the report. Table P3 (SER, p. 13) shows that the

University opened with an enrollment of 1895 degree seeking students. Of this number there were 520 (27.4%) business students of which 431 were undergraduate students. By the fall of 2001 there were 1,088 (29.5%) business students with 910 undergraduates (SER, p. 13). The need for the various degree programs in the CoB is also demonstrated by the number of courses offered and the rapidly increasing enrollment in these courses (see *Response to the Peer Review Team*, pp. 14-24).

The CoB offers five Bachelor of Science degree programs, an MBA, and two Masters of Science degree programs on its main campus in Fort Myers, and an Executive MBA, a version of the MBA program, at its off-campus Center for Leadership & Innovation, a Type II Center (SER, p. 4). The education objectives of each degree program offered by the College are provided in the SER (p. 23-26). Information about the curriculum for the various programs is also provided in the SER (p. 66-78).

The College also houses two undergraduate non-business degree programs, one in Computer Science, and the other, a Florida International University (FIU) Bachelor of Science degree program in Engineering offered through a partnership agreement (SER, p. 14). Information about the enrollment for the programs in the CoB can be found in the SER (Table P.3, p. 13, and Table S.1, p. 114). Information on the College's retention and completion rates is provided in the *Response to the Peer Review Team* (pp. 39-44).

### Curriculum and Assessment of Student Outcomes

Identification of curriculum planning processes is articulated in the Curriculum Content and Evaluation section of the self-evaluation report (SER, pp. 65-92). This section of the report presents a detailed description of the five undergraduate degree programs. Tables C-1 and C-2 (SER, pp. 67-68) identify the learning perspectives or outcomes required for successful

completion of a business degree. These outcomes are spread throughout the curriculum and are evaluated in the assessment of student learning outcomes (SER, pp. 66-76).

### Student Composition

The profile of business students is addressed in the students' section of the (SER, pp. 112-131). Section S.1.a (SER, p. 113) note that the University was established to serve the five (5) county region of Southwest Florida and beyond. Table S.1 (SER, p. 114) shows that between the fall of 1997, when the first university opened, and the fall of 2001 the CoB reflected a strong annual enrollment growth of approximately 21 percent for undergraduate students and 20 percent for graduate. Over 80 percent of business students come from the primary five-county service (Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee) area (SER, Figure S.1, p. 115). Details of the grade point average (GPA), and SAT scores for incoming students are presented in that section of the AACSB International report entitled *Response to the Peer Review Team* (pp. 32-38). These scores illustrate that business students are similar to those entering the other colleges. Relevant student learning outcomes are addressed in detail in this Program Review Report under the section entitled "Program Implementation." Quantitative and qualitative measures indicate that business students are achieving the learning outcomes set for the various programs in the college (SER, 82-92).

### Mission and Goals

The College has a mission and a set of goals that are in keeping with the mandate of the university. The CoB's mission and its relationship to the University's Mission and the curriculum are articulated in the SER (pp. 16-36). The activities of the college are supported by a set of activities (SER, pp 28-32) aimed at the implementation of the mission. As a strategic tool the CoB's mission is linked to long-range Strategies (SER, p. 32) and long-term goals (SER, p. 34).

## Governance

The CoB has adopted a relatively flat organizational structure (SER, p. 8) aimed at facilitating the entrepreneurial bent of the faculty and staff. The faculty in the five degree programs report directly to one of three department chairs: (1) Accounting and Finance, (2) Computer Information System and Decision Sciences, (3) Management and Marketing. The college also has an associate dean who works with the department chairs and reports directly to the dean. An assistant dean for student affairs heads the student academic advising function. The CoB's external, partnership, international, and economic development related activities are coordinated through the Center for Leadership & Innovation and are run by a Director who reports directly to the Dean (SER, pp. 29-32).

## **II. Program Implementation**

The CoB is very cost effective in its operations as assessed in terms of the amount budgeted in relation to the student credit hours (SCH) produced by the College and the average class size (see *Response to the Peer Review Team*, pp. 7-9). Overall, the CoB accounts for about 16.5 percent of the undergraduate SCH and about 34 percent of the graduate level SCH (*Response to the Peer Review Team*, p. 8; and SER p. 13). The CoB receives \$3, 518, 352 or about 10.1 percent of the overall university budget (*Response to the Peer Review Team*, p. 8; SER, p. 9). In terms of the funds allocated to instructional activities, the CoB's receives 18.2 percent of the university's allocation or 28.5 percent of the funds received by the five academic colleges (see *Response to the Peer Review Team*, p. 7). Enrollment by degree program in the CoB is shown in the SER (p. 114). The completion and retention rates are shown in *Response to the Peer Review Team* (pp. 39-44).

Faculty teaching is assessed using the state's Student Evaluation of Instruction instrument (SER, pp. 107 – 109). Outcomes from student evaluations indicate that the faculty are excellent teachers. Student learning and outcomes measures are obtained through alumni surveys (SER, pp. 85-89) and external examinations such as the ETS major field exam (SER pp. 82-85). In the three years since the CoB instituted the exam, business students have scored higher than the national average. In 2001-2002, our students scored in the 82nd percentile. More impressively, finance students scored in the 99th percentile and accounting students scored in the 98th percentile nationally.

The Faculty Composition and Development section of the SER (pp. 37-64) shows that the CoB has a highly qualified and very diverse faculty (SER, Table FD.1, p. 44). The CoB has 34 full-time faculty three of who are eminent scholars (SER, p. 39). The faculty is well deployed and managed through the College's Faculty Resource Management Plan (SER, pp. 59-61). Business faculty are exceedingly productive as assessed by teaching production (SER, p. 47 & p. 48), scholarly output (SER, p. 53 & 63), and service activities (SER, p. 46). The support for faculty development activities is addressed in the SER (pp. 54-58). In addition to financial support, the College employs two computer technologists to assist faculty with distance learning web-based teaching applications, and to maintain the CoB web pages and accreditation web site. As illustrated in Figure FD.11 (SER, p. 63), the faculty is extremely productive. In the five years since the university opened, business faculty authored or coauthored some 198 refereed journal articles and 360 conference proceedings and presentations (SER, pp. 132-142).

The library and other resources related to supporting teaching and learning are addressed in the Instructional Resources section of the SER (pp. 93-111). The analysis indicates that the University and the CoB is well served by an array of hard copy and electronic library resources, and information technology housed in new infrastructure and amply supported by knowledgeable staff.

Student profile and diversity is addressed in the SER (pp. 118-122), and in the *Response to the Peer Review Team* (pp. 32-44) that addresses SAT and ACT scores and student retention and completion rates.

### III. SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis outlines the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the programs in the CoB and is derived from the SER and the College's *Response to the Peer Review Team*. The strengths and weaknesses for the programs in the college are also described in the "Relevant Facts and Assessment of Strengths and Weaknesses" section of the AACSB International Peer Review *Team Visit Report* (pp. 3-11).

#### Strengths

Among the many strengths are:

#### Mission Related

- Mission statement that includes significant and appropriate input from all relevant stakeholders.
- Assessment processes to ensure ongoing review of the mission's currency and relevance.
- Emphasis on teaching and learning and partnering with the regional business community.
- Appropriate education objectives for each of the degree programs

- Ongoing assessment of the degree programs
- Energy and positive results from the aggressive pursuit of the CoB's strategic objectives

### Faculty Related

- Development and implementation of a Faculty Resource Management Plan consistent with the University and CoB's mission and in support of the hiring and continued development of sufficient qualified faculty to meet program needs.
- Faculty recruitment in a manner consistent with maintaining overall high program quality.
- Nationally recruited, highly qualified and diverse faculty
- Process created and implemented to support the development, promotion, retention and renewal of high quality faculty.
- Teach and workload assignments based on Professional Development Plans.
- Sufficient academically qualified faculty to deliver its programs.
- Intellectual contributions of faculty impressive for a new university and reflect the attention given to hiring faculty at all ranks and levels of experience.
- Very knowledgeable faculty readily accessible to students.
- Funding of endowed professors has been a major factor in attracting mature faculty to provide leadership in critical areas

### Curriculum

- Attention given to the balance between general and business education courses and between courses taken at FGCU and those transferred in from other institutions.

- Tracking processes implemented to ensure cross-functional approaches to organizational issues present within the core courses in the MBA program.
- Specialized MS programs in Accounting and Taxation, and Computer Information Systems to meet community needs both developed with high stakeholder input.
- Impressive track record of changes in degree programs related to stakeholder input and feedback.

### Instructional Resources and Responsibilities

- Instructional resources are excellent and supportive of the learning environment.
- Available computer labs
- New infrastructure
- Library holdings consistent with providing quality business education
- Library resources heavily oriented towards providing electronic on-line access to a large array of information and retrieval databases
- Presence of a business librarian

### Students

- Positive student feedback toward the quality of instruction
- Well established internship and career placement services
- Easy access to student services
- Graduates performance at the 82<sup>nd</sup> percentile in the 2001-2002 ETS Major Field Exam in Business.

### Intellectual Contributions

- Significantly high level of intellectual contribution with increasing level of journal articles compared to other forms of intellectual contributions.
- Total of 198 refereed journal articles out of 558 peer reviewed intellectual contributions from 34 full-time faculty over the past five years

### Weaknesses

The weaknesses identified by the Peer Review Team are as follows:

- Favorable retention and completion rates that are slightly lower than the university's.
- Student wait time of two or more days to meet with an academic advisor.
- Library facility that is relatively small for the growing student population (will be addressed with the addition of 108,000 square feet).

### Opportunities

- Rapidly growing student population
- Increased number of area students who would opt to pursue a business degree from FGCU now that the college is accredited by the AACSB International.

## Threats

- Rapidly growing student population that outstrips state funding to the University
- Growth in student population enrolled outstripping infrastructure and faculty and operational resources.
- Budget cuts and or freezes in the face of “double-digit” enrollment growth resulting in declining operational and faculty funding for the CoB.
- Inability to hire new faculty given budget constraints
- Faculty turnover that may result from the inability of the University to keep pace with market rate for existing faculty salary.
- Infrastructure not large enough to accommodate relative growth in class sizes.
- Cost of Distance Learning

## **IV. Recommendations**

Many of the recommendations provided here have been taken from the “Opportunities for Improvement” and the “Consultative Feedback” sections of the *Team Visit Report* (pp. 11-12).

- Given the professional credentials of area business people, the CoB should find the best qualified and bring them into the classroom as adjunct professors
- Increase the value of the CoB’s international efforts by getting more FGCU students to go abroad to study.

- Hire an additional professional advisor(s) to meet student need
- Given the relative size of the CoB, a dedicated business facility seems essential.
- Additional faculty needed to keep pace with growth
- Upgrade the CoB's database to allow for remote access and further institutionalization.