



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

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**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS AUR 2018-2019
RESPONSE AND PROGRESS REPORT
ON EXTERNAL REVIEWERS RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Economics Department has worked diligently to implement reviewers’ recommendations that require departmental actions. In the 18-month Report we noted that we were looking forward to knowing the position of the senior administration and Dean’s office regarding a number of recommendations (R8, part of R11, R12, R17, R18, R19) directed to them. This continues to be the case.

We would like to start by acknowledging that the last five years have not been business-as-usual. Instead, as many other academic units we faced unprecedented challenges due the global Covid-19 pandemic and the shift to remote teaching, learning and research. Before presenting the progress on implementing AUR recommendations in details, we would like to briefly indicate the impact of the pandemic in our programs but also take note on where we currently stand as a unit.

1. Enrollments

As in many programs, Economics enrollments were adversely affected during pandemic experiencing a considerable decline particularly in Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 terms (see Table 1). This is not surprising given that international students have always been an important part of econ programs and other programs we service regularly. Table 1 summarizes the annual growth/decline rate of enrollments in Econ courses for Fall and Winter, based on internal records for the first day of the term.

Table 1. Growth rates in enrollments (% annual and 5-year)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	5 year
Fall	-1.2	-26.5	5.5	19		-8.8
Winter		-4.3	-9.5	-1.4	24.1	5.7

In Winter 2024, Econ total enrollments finally recovered to the pre-pandemic level showing a 5.7 percent increase compared to W2020. While encouraging, this recovery is primarily driven by the strong numbers in the 100 and 200 level core courses. Many senior level courses, both core and electives, are underutilized compared to the pre-pandemic period. Most concerning is the low number of Econ majors (4- year bachelor’s degrees), which is currently at 145 students including the combined programs. We think this is due to not only the low intake in the 2021 and 2022 student cohorts that are now moving up to senior levels, but also due to the high intake in micro-credentials such as the BUS Admin Certificate, run by CCE.

2. Scholarship

The department has seen a continuous renewal of research culture with numerous research collaborations within and outside the department. In addition to active research members who joined the department in 2019 and 2020, a number of colleagues in the Associate rank have reset their research agenda to be more productive as they prepared/are preparing for promotion.

Table 2. Research Output

Scholarly activity in Economics	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Peer-reviewed book-related publications			2	4	2	8
Peer-reviewed journal articles	9	9	12	14	10	54
Significant invited contributions	2	2	3	4	5	16
Significant grey literature (reports, working papers, policy papers etc.)	2	3	7	6	12	30

Table 2 summarizes the research output during 2019-2023 period. Additionally, colleagues have been presenting their work in various international conferences and many have actively pursued internal and external grants. The progress report outlines some successes in securing these grants. Lastly, Econ colleagues have engaged in undergraduate research pursuing both the UGRA summer matching awards by FGSR (10 awards during 2020-2024) as well as research through the Econ Honours Fellowship (10 Fellowships of \$ 11k during 2019-2024). We are very proud to provide these undergraduate research opportunities for our students and intend to continue building this research capacity.

3. Progress Report

The following present the response and progress in implementing each recommendation.

R1: There needs to be proactive, effective, and tailored academic advising available to students

R2: Economics be assigned a dedicated academic advisor. The academic advisor should be responsible for reaching out to stakeholders each year, identifying areas of concern, and consulting with respect to what advice should be given to students.

Initial response and 18-progress report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress
<p>As indicated in the verbal response of Department Head Dr. Çule and Dean Kleer, who appeared at CCAM meeting on Dec 5, 2019 the department found these recommendations very important and worked diligently in implementing them swiftly. After exploring various funding models, the department got Dean's approval to redirect funding from its budget in creating a half-time advisor position for 2 years, commencing on Feb 2020.</p> <p>Working closely with the Arts Program Coordinator, Joni Borne, the department decided that a position dedicated to Economics advising would serve the student needs better if it were embodied within the Arts Student Services team. We have reached out to advising offices in Science, and Federated Colleges to better coordinate the advising while acknowledging the separate jurisdictions.</p> <p>Since March 2020, the advisor has attended all departmental meetings. The Head Dr Çule and the Undergraduate Coordinator Dr. Guliani hold regular virtual meetings with her to discuss the progress in advising activities and have tried to identify potential concerning patterns in student program completion that require attention and action.</p> <p>Despite the remote operation due to Covid-19, we have reached out to students with reasonable success. More specifically, to date the advisor has produced and updated each new term program outlines for more than 185 students, accounting for over 300 program outlines; She has reached out to 153 ECON majors enrolled with Arts</p>	<p>Due to the difficult financial situation and the claw-backs imposed on the Faculties, the funding for extending this position was not protected. As a result, this initiative has died.</p>

<p>at U of R and has arranged individual appointments with 124 students, 25% of whom have met with her multiple times at their request. We hope that in the future as we return to working on campus, with direct in-person interaction with students as well as with additional availability for drop-in meetings, we will further improve the efficacy of advising services.</p> <p>Lastly, the department is pleased to report that it has been able to commit funding for extending the position for additional 3 years. The department is grateful for the continued support from Dean Dea on this project.</p>	
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R3: Require a minimum grade of C- on all prerequisite courses in the microeconomics /macroeconomics/ quantitative methods sequence. So, for example, the pre-requisite for ECON 307 would be ECON 301 with a grade of C- or better, and the pre-requisite for ECON 301 would be ECON 201 with a grade of C- or better.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
<p>The department acted swiftly to implement R3 but decided to approach this incrementally. We decided to first implement it for Part I of the Intermediate micro/macro courses (Econ 301 and 302), closely monitor its effect on enrollment and student preparedness and then consider extending the requirement for Part II micro/macro courses (Econ 307 and 310) and courses in the quantitative sequence. In November 2019, the department approved changes for Econ 301 and 302, requiring a minimum grade of 60 for their respective prerequisites of 201 and 202. Given the lengthy approval process at the university, the changes came into effect in Winter 2021 term.</p>	<p>No further changes have been made or considered. Since we have experienced a decline in the enrollment in the 300LVL courses due to pandemic, it is only prudent to not impose additional restrictions in enrollments.</p>

R4: Consider introducing second-year courses with minimal pre-requisites, similar to the “Economics of Beer” and “Economics of Sport” courses currently offered, but which appeal to other demographic groups in the student body. We would suggest policy type courses such as dealing with the non-profit or volunteering sectors, community and regional economic development, gender, indigenous issues, or economic and social inequality.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
<p>As indicated with the unit’s verbal response at CCAM December 5, 2019 meeting, Econ did not have the resources and expertise to take on R4 immediately. At the time the Head and the Dean appeared at the meeting, the department had received approval for recruiting two tenure track positions (one to replace a recent resignation and another new position), commencing in July 2020. As indicated at the CCAM meeting, the department intended to prioritize recruitment in the areas specified in R4.</p> <p>We are pleased to report that the department was in fact successful in recruiting colleagues that not only will make a contribution in delivering existing courses in our program, but who will also be able to expand teaching in two of the specified areas. More specifically, Dr. Moeeni specializes in family and gender economics, while Dr. Mirzaei specializes in economic development of indigenous communities. These new colleagues both are excited about the prospect of developing new courses in these areas in the coming academic years.</p> <p>In addition, having a new colleague who conducts research and teaches about economic issues pertaining indigenous communities, the department is better positioned to contribute to indigenization, as one of the strategic directions at U of R.</p>	<p>Dr. Mirzaei, has been an active researcher on issues of economic development of indigenous communities. He was successful in securing external funds to undertake a couple of important projects such as on mapping Indigenous businesses in the agriculture/agri-food sector in Canada (Mitacs Accelerate Fellowship of \$30K, in 2021) and another one on exploring the First Nations education funding gaps in Saskatchewan (SSHRC, Insight Development Grant of \$41K, competition 2022). As an Associate faculty member with the Johnson Shoyama Schools of Public Policy, Dr Mirzaei is currently involved in graduate supervision of two Ph. D students to advance these projects.</p> <p>Furthermore, in his Econ 237, Economics of Canadian regionalism course, Dr. Mirzaei has incorporated significant additional content on these important issues. More recently, Dr. Mirzaei and Mr. G. Hartner received an Open Resource grant from CLT and will be developing a repository of open sources in indigenous economic issues that can be used in economics courses.</p> <p>The department scheduled a 300LVL course in Family Economics to be taught by Dr. Moeeni. Unfortunately, this course was cancelled due to low enrollments. In addition, in January 2024, Dr. Moeeni took a position with the University of Manitoba, and we have regrettably lost the research and teaching capacity in this area.</p>

R5: Work with other units to develop joint graduate programs in areas where the department has research strength and student demand is strong, such as big data, data analytics, sustainable energy, financial economics or health economics.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
<p>As reported at the CCAM December 5, 2019 meeting, the department will explore opportunities of the nature recommended as they arise organically in the future. As members with expertise in areas specified in R5 will build and cultivate research collaborations with other colleagues housed in other academic units of interest, we would like to further capitalize in those productive collaborations and seriously explore opportunities for participation in graduate education.</p> <p>We are particularly keen in engaging with JSGS and have expressed our interest in pursuing collaborative work to the new leadership. In preliminary discussions with the JSGS Regina Director Dr. Jim Farney we have agreed to explore possible participation in their current programs, particularly in the high demand program of Master for Health Administration. Please note that we also have available and intend to make use of the option of admitting Master students on a special case basis.</p>	<p>While there has been no active pursuing of creating collaborative graduate programing, the department has worked hard to facilitate and support those members who sought deeper involvement with Johnson Shoyama Graduate Schools of Public Policy.</p> <p>To date Dr. Mirzaei and Dr. B. Dolter have become Associate faculty member with the JSGS a status that affords them the role of the main co-supervisor for Master’s and Ph. D thesis students. In addition, we had a couple of our Econ graduates pursuing the special case MA in Economics.</p>

R6: Explore the possibilities of partnering with the business or policy faculties to deliver Executive Education programs.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
<p>In principle we like the idea of participation in such collaborative initiatives and will be open to any opportunity that may arise. However, it is important to note that in practice we have limited capacity to participate. Executive programs of good reputation that generate demand and interest tend to enlist instructors that have practitioner experience with the public sector. Most of our current in-house members do not have such history. Of those who did at the time of review, one retired in 2020 and the other holds a part-time and limited term, “teaching only” appointment.</p>	<p>Continues to be the case.</p>

R7: Explore the possibility of affiliating research active Department of Economics faculty with the Faculty of Business or the Johnson-Shoyama School, and promote exchanges of teaching resources between the units.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
<p>In more recent discussions with Dr. Jim Farney, Director of JSGS (Regina Campus) we have agreed in principle to pursue this for colleagues that have expressed interest and have a good fit of their research agenda with the school’s existing research capacity.</p>	<p>As reported in R5, Dr. Mirzaei and Dr. B. Dolter currently hold the Associate faculty member with the JSGS.</p>

R8: Resources directed at improving Tri-Council grant success rates should be directed to faculty pursuing collaborative research projects both within and external to the university.

18-month Progress Report	5-year Progress Report
This recommendation is directed to University's senior administration and Dean's office.	There has been a shift in pursuing grant applications, with junior tenure track members being especially active. Four junior members participated in the SSHRC grant cohort program and submitted applications during 2020-22. Dean's office provided stipends for course releases for three of them and the department accommodated teaching shortfalls for these course releases in short notice. Dr. Mirzaei and Dr. Moeeni received SSHCR Insight Development Grants of ~\$41K (2022) and ~\$54K (2023) respectively. In addition, there were two successful MITACS grants, Dr. Mirzaei (~\$30K in 2021) and Dr. Razek (as a co-investigator with PI Dr. Kahn (BUS), ~\$270K, in Fall 2023), and a number of smaller external grants by other members.

R9: There needs to be clearer articulation of unit level standards in research and promotion.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
The department has taken the implementation R9 seriously and the process is ongoing. The department struck a subcommittee of two colleagues to compile an initial draft and bring it for discussion to the group. In our Sep 2020 meeting we had a thoughtful and thorough conversation about the proposal. Seeking best practices, the Head solicited documents of similar nature from other Economics departments across Canadian universities and received a number of them. These were further discussed in the January 2021 departmental meeting. We aim to produce a final document by the end of June 2021 and in time for the next performance review cycle.	The guidelines were approved in May 2021 and are being used in supporting application for tenure and promotion since.

R10: A hire at a senior level may be required to help build the research profile of the department, and provide leadership to junior faculty.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
<p>Although we fully appreciate the rationale for R10, we decided that pursuing its implementation would most likely be a fruitless effort. Having gone through the process of requesting market supplements, the comparative analysis for salaries in Economics departments revealed a considerable gap in compensations in all ranks. Given the comparative disadvantage in compensation at the U of R, it is the department's position that it would be extremely unlikely that the department could attract a candidate of the calibre implied in R10.</p> <p>Instead, we would like to focus our energy on continuing to renew the research culture in the department in two major ways. First, by supporting the existing faculty members at the Associate rank in their success pursuing in the next few years the full Professor rank. Second, by recruiting and supporting productive, energetic and promising scholars at the starting rank of Assistant, who are well positioned to maintain an active research agenda and further enhance the research environment within the department.</p> <p>Given R9 and R10, it is important that there is no monetary disincentive for members to seek promotion. Some additional planning should be conducted in order to make the market supplements flow smoothly throughout the ranks - there should be no drop in salary due to different rate supplements in the different ranks when one is promoted from assistant to associate, and from associate to full professor ranks.</p>	<p>Our approach is working. The distribution across the professorial ranks has changed and will continue to change in the next couple of years. In 2023 two members (Dr. Çule and Dr. Wilson) received promotion to the Full professor with another member expected to be successful this year.</p> <p>In the next two years, it is highly likely that another three Associates will successfully join that rank of Professor and all the current Assistants would have moved to the Associate rank.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the structure of market supplements results into a paradoxical transition up the ranks where the promotion is in fact a financial demotion.</p>

R11: The department start a newsletter which is circulated to current students, alumni and the broader university community and celebrates departmental achievements. There should also be a university and faculty wide initiative to promote economics research and

accomplishments. Note of major media contributions should also be included in this type of communication and recognition.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
Regarding the part of R11 that involves departmental actions, given the information overload through email communications, it was suggested that we explore other means to recognize our successes and improve the communication with our alumni and current majors such as social media platforms. For various reasons, to date there has not been much progress in acting on that particular suggestion. Upon further reflection, the department has returned to implement R11 with the intent of circulating a newsletter per term, starting this term. With a particular focus on reaching out and maintaining communication with our alumni, we are working to maintain and expand a contact list of recent graduates.	The Department of Economics newsletters are posted at the department website, and circulated to current students list. In addition, the Library is archiving the department newsletters in the U of R's institutional repository <i>oURspace</i>

R12: Given the revenue streams generated by the Department of Economics for the University, consideration should be given for investments in course release, conference travel and data resources and statistical research support for faculty in the Department.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
The department greatly appreciates this recommendation which is directed to University's senior administration and Dean's office.	Continues to be the case.

R13: Explore the possibility of cross-listing selected policy school and business courses as electives in the program for fourth year honors economics students.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
The department is not pursuing R13 for a number of reasons. First, there are real limitations in cross-listing undergraduate and graduate courses and FGSR has normally discouraged the practice, perhaps something that reviewers were unaware of. Second, the rationale provided namely "Deepen course offerings for majors at lower department resource costs" implies that the department's elective course offerings for economics majors may not be adequate. Please note that the 4-year Econ programs requires 4-5 elective econ courses; we offer at least 15 elective courses each academic year all of which are well subscribed by econ and non-econ majors.	Continues to be the case.

R14: Students who take public policy school courses as undergraduate electives as per recommendation 5 be fast-tracked into the Master of Public Policy program.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
R14 involves decision by JSGS, and is out of Econ purview. However, given the Econ approach with R13, there is limited scope to pursuing R14.	Continues to be the case.

R15: That there be a frank and open discussion at the Department and University level of whether the program, teaching and research needs of the Department of Economics could be better met in an alternate configuration than that which currently exists with its home in the Faculty of Arts.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
In the initial discussion of this recommendation members had various degree of interest in pursuing this conversation. To date the department has not undertaken	The department is very keen and motivated to explore this question. Our internal discussions in 2022-23 indicated that we attentively and seriously start exploring this question and thus we informed Dean Dea of our intention. External AUR

any deliberate process for such discussion. This is an item "to be continued."	reviewers suggested Business or Science faculties as potential models for our home. We wanted to start the conversation with Business and approached the former Dean Grandy (currently departed) in Winter 2023 and intend to pick up this conversation once a new Dean of Business is installed. Since R15 is also addressed to the University, we believe that the Provost office has an important role in this exploration.
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R16: That future Academic Unit Reviews at the University of Regina schedule a visit between reviewers and department-level administrative support staff in order to gain insight on the departmental administrative support environment.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
The department has taken note of R16 and will follow through as recommended. Some context to why such interview was not scheduled. At the time of campus visit, the admin assistant was fairly new to the department and shared her appointment 50-50 with the Dean's Office. Given her short history with the department, she did not feel very comfortable to participate and our understanding was that such participation was not mandatory. Please note that reviewers met with the Faculty Administrator in order to gain insights in the administrative processes involved.	Continues to be the case.

R17: That administrative staff in the Department of Economics report directly to the Economics Department head as their principal supervisor.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
This recommendation is for the University's senior administration and Dean's office. We fully appreciate the rationale for R17 and see potential benefits of such reporting structure in enhancing efficiency in operations and the promise of building effective working relationship with admin staff. We are however, cognizant of the reality of overall administrative organizational structure in Arts and University and are committed to work as effectively as possible within it.	<p>The Economics administrative support situation has changed drastically since we last reported to CCAM. In January 2022, our admin assistant was relocated from the adjacent office of the department head to the opposite wing of the floor, the most distant location from all Econ faculty offices. This has had adverse effects not only on the workflow and workload of the department head but also on our open-door culture. For decades, the main office has been the heartbeat of ECON department, a place of convergence and interaction among colleagues and students and an important part of the departmental identity. VERY SADLY, this heartbeat is dead.</p> <p>Despite our advocacy to resolve our legitimate concerns about the non-consultative process and the arrangement itself, or to meaningfully consider the University Auditor recommendations on the matter, this suboptimal situation continues. Please note that during this 5-year period, the admin support for Econ had declined from having the assistant only supporting the Econ to around 0.75 (as the individual started to partially support PAIS), to currently 0.5 (since January 2023 the admin assistant fully supports PAIS). While the reduction in support is something we could work, we cannot understate the externality cost and inefficiencies this configuration has imposed on our day-to-day operations.</p> <p>Decision has been made to create two admin hubs in Arts; Econ will be served by the CL Bldg hub. While we do not yet know of the location and of the manner of operation, Econ is deeply concerned that this situation may become from bad to worse to the worst. It is highly likely that the hub will not be located in our floor and we may lose the single point of contact and affiliation with the person that supports us currently. But most importantly, based on our past experience on the matter we have come to expect that we have no say in a matter that directly and greatly affect our daily work.</p>

R18: Compensation is an issue in trying to attract faculty. Along with ensuring that offers are competitive with similarly placed universities, there is a continued need for market supplements given Regina’s location in attracting and retaining faculty.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
The department greatly appreciates this recommendation which is directed to University’s senior administration and Dean’s office. We hope that R18 is considered seriously in future decisions pertaining market supplements.	Continues to be the case. As mentioned above, the structure of market supplements results into a paradoxical transition up the ranks where the promotion is in fact a financial demotion.

R19: The Department of Economics should be encouraged and allowed to generate and retain a larger percentage of revenues from current and future revenue generating activities for own use in order to enhance its internal research and travel support.

Initial response and 18-month Progress Report (submitted to CCAM on Jan 22, 2021)	5-year Progress Report
The department greatly appreciates this recommendation which is directed to University’s senior administration and the Dean’s office. We remain hopeful that in the future revenue sharing arrangements of Arts and University, beyond the current pilot, Economics will continue to receive at least the same share (3.75%) of total CCE revenues generated in Econ courses that it currently receives.	Continues to be the case.

4. Future priorities and initiatives

- a. Strengthen the collegial and supportive departmental culture
- b. Seriously explore R15 in 2024 and 2025.
- c. Address the decline in the number of Econ majors
 - Promotional campaigns
 - Proactive participation in recruitment
 - Exploring block transfer opportunities with URI
- d. Explore new collaborative programing (BSc and Diploma) in Economics and Data Analysis, an area with potentially strong demand
- e. Continue to strengthen the Honours programs and build undergraduate research capacity; creating opportunities for our honours to pursue graduate studies with highly reputable graduate schools across Canada we will enhance our reputation for excellent undergraduate education.

Submitted on March 25, 2024
 by
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