Form E-1-A for Boston College Undergraduate Programs

Program: Economics, B.A. Degree

1) Have formal learning outcomes been developed? What are they? (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect its majors to have acquired before they graduate?)

(a) Students are expected to develop a thorough understanding of micro and macro economic theory at the undergraduate level. Students should be able to apply their knowledge of economic theory and the tools of calculus to analyze economic problems and interpret public policy alternatives.

(b) Students are expected to understand the core methodological tools for working with economic data. These tools are presented in two courses required for all majors (statistics and econometrics). Students should be able to interpret and apply basic statistical and econometric methods and understand empirical papers of an appropriate level.

(c) Students are expected to use their knowledge of economic and econometric theory as foundations for exploring economic applications via a set of electives.

(d) When writing papers, students are expected to utilize economic data and research methods responsibly and to cite original work and source material appropriately.

(e) Students are expected to understand the differences between positive and normative economics. In particular, they should be able to distinguish cases where efficiency and equity objectives are compatible from those where tradeoffs are necessary.

2) Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific. (Where are the department’s learning expectations accessible to potential majors: on the web or in the catalog or in your dept major handouts?)

The above learning outcomes are found at the “Undergraduate Studies” heading found at the Economics department website [fmwww.bc.edu/ec/ec.php]. They also are presented in alternative prose in the university course catalogue.

3) Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether graduates have achieved the stated outcomes for the degree? (What do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes are being achieved more or less well?)

(a) Faculty teaching spring semester electives will use a 1-5 scale to evaluate senior final exams taken in their courses with respect to each of the learning outcomes detailed in (1) above. The Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) will construct average scores across courses. Annual reports will be maintained in department files.
(b) Reports will be maintained in department files of annual faculty meetings held to assess (i) strengths and weaknesses of our students collectively in both our required and elective courses, (ii) the breadth and depth of our elective offerings, and (iii) whether the curriculum (prerequisites and/or course offerings) needs modification.

(c) In addition, the DUS will form and chair a faculty committee every third year to formally review the undergraduate curriculum and make recommendations to be discussed at the annual faculty meeting. A written report will be maintained in department files.

4) Who interprets the evidence? What is the process? (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate?)

The Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) will have primary responsibility for arranging teacher reviews, designing and evaluating exit surveys, and designing/implementing all program modifications. The DUS reports to and is advised by the department faculty at an annual meeting to discuss undergraduate issues, curriculum and program modifications.

5) What changes have been made as a result of using the data/evidence? (Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum or program? Why were they made?)

The following changes have been made in the past two years based on similar data to those described above.
(a) Econometrics was moved from the set of elective offerings to the required category. This decision reflects the growing demand from both private and public sectors and graduate programs for applicants with strong empirical skills in econometric analysis.
(b) The course requirements for the major were increased from 10 to 11 to ensure that our majors, now having six required courses, would obtain sufficient exposure to a variety of applied fields in the discipline.
(c) The department now serves nearly one thousand Economics majors and minors, Economics concentrators in the Carroll School of Management and the International Studies program, and the growing number of Environmental Studies minors. The department has petitioned the university for a full-time staff person (an undergraduate program administrator) to respond to a wide variety of routine student inquiries including the interpretation of department rules, prerequisites and procedures, available internships and internship credit, independent study, course substitutions, applications for the honors program and honors thesis, study abroad issues, summer and study abroad course approvals. Regarding study abroad alone, approximately one-third of Economics majors spend a semester or year abroad, presenting numerous requests for course approvals. Faculty will continue all academic advising functions.

6) Date of the most recent program review. (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

1994