

2021 Administrator/Faculty Annual Report
Shiferaw Gurm
Chair, Department of Economics
March 20, 2022

In what follows, I summarize my annual (2021) activities in my capacity as chair and faculty.

1. Faculty Recruitment, P&T and Retention

- The two-year limited term appointments of Faraz Farhidi and Christian Imboden were extended for an additional year, starting August 2021.
- Recruiting for a junior clinical position was ongoing in fall 2021. Hongkil (Sam) Kim was ultimately hired to fill this position. Search to hire a limited-term faculty is ongoing.
- One new part time instructor was hired and started teaching in 2021: Samuel Asare. Five other PTIs were rehired to teach various courses during the reporting period.
- The Department had one successful promotion & tenures case: Jon Smith.
- Pierre Nguimkeu was successfully retained through counteroffer supported by the Dean's Office.
- Two senior colleagues Andrew Feltenstein and Jorge Martinez retired effective June 2021.

2. Program Review and Related Follow-up Activities

- Implementation of the action plan for the Academic Program Review (APR) of the Department continued in 2021.
- As documented in (1) above, we were on the market to hire clinical and visiting faculty.
- We participated in recruiting efforts associated with one cluster: Precision Medicine. The search was successful this time. The hired person will join the College of Public Health.
- There was a pause in the adoption of 2+1 teaching load for productive faculty in the Department due to the current budget situation. Nevertheless, an ad hoc committee has produced a preliminary draft proposal for further discussion and refinement within the Department.
- Additional follow-up activities (including curriculum changes) are discussed under academic programs below.
- It is important to note that our focus on APR implementation plans was somewhat curtailed due to the Covid pandemic that started in early 2020.

3. Staff Changes

- Angela Stover (Business Manager I) started work in summer 2021, replacing the previous BM (Shirl Trawick) from over 2 years ago.
- Jamaal Madison (Administrative Specialist- Administrative) resigned in October 2021. A new staff member (Tatiana Weaver) was hired in January 2022 with modified duties.
- As compared to the previous reporting period, we are currently in a better position regarding staff support. We are working on some challenges regarding grant support.

4. Academic Programs, Curriculum, and Students

Overview

- Engaged faculty in curriculum development to build and maintain strong academic programs. This is largely achieved through various academic committees, ad hoc committees, and individual faculty as appropriate.
- The Department continues to be active in supporting the School's strategic initiatives and the University strategic plan.
- Recent changes made to the undergraduate and graduate curricula involve requiring courses in data science, research workshops/internships, and quantitative/computational skills at all levels – bachelor, MA and PhD.
- We have now started offering a PhD level course on Machine Learning in Economics. An MA level course in machine learning is expected to be taught starting in fall 2023. We are also incorporating R into our undergraduate data science course.
- Challenges remain with decline in Econ majors.

Undergraduate Programs

- We continue to reorganize the Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC) led by Shelby Frost. The UPC had 11 members during the reporting period. The UPC dropped the set of standing subcommittees and instead prioritized tasks for AY 2020-2021, and members of the committee volunteered to work on them.
- Major tasks include work done on core assessments, student learning outcomes & curriculum map, program & math pre-requisite changes, econ majors & credit hours, and redesigns of ECON 2106 and, to some extent, ECON 2105.
- The Econ Department continues to collaborate with the departments of Philosophy and Political Science, and has now fully implemented the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Science (BIS) Program with major in Philosophy, Political Science, and Economics (PPE). Spencer Banzhaf is the current Econ Liaison, and there are six Econ faculty affiliates of BIS PPE Program. Yongsheng continued to teach one of the core courses for the PPE Program, ECON 4100 Economics, Philosophy, and Public Policy.
- Updated undergraduate program to enhance the quality of the BS program. Changes made to the curriculum involve requiring courses in data science, research internship, and quantitative skills. Some the changes are tied to the college's Digital Landscape Initiative.
- Continued to discuss to update Econ Undergraduate Program as STEM.
- Continued to assist in pipeline project (School-wide), where undergraduate students who had the potential for graduate school were identified and mentored. Econ graduate students were participating as mentors.

MA Program

- The MA economics program was ranked #19 in the country in 2021 by the TFE times, moving up 1 spot from #20 in 2020, 3 spots from #22 in 2018 and 2019, and up 5 spots from #24 in 2017.
- The last several years have seen increases in applications, enrollment, and graduate counts. We

are now generating numbers that are similar to those we had in 2011-2013 during the short term Indonesian exchange program. New MA enrollment in 2021 stood at 35 compared to 27 in 2019. Total enrollment in fall 2021 is 66.

- The dual 4+1 degree (bachelors + MA) keeps growing. It went from 24 to 30 total students either participating or graduating from the program. Over the past year we went from a total of 2 students finishing their MA via this program to a total of 8.
- We had no major changes to the existing program this year. We were still smoothing out the implementation of our STEM designation and our curriculum changes. The analytic track is getting popular with MA students, with more students enrolling in this track and in analytic econ and non-econ courses.
- Completed background work to develop a fully online MA or MS program with a strong analytic component. We have now established a committee to develop and implement such a program with a target start semester of fall 2023.
- A new Masters in Interdisciplinary Studies (MIS) Program with major in Philosophy, Political Science, and Economics (PPE) was approved in spring 2021, and being implemented this academic year. ECON 8500 History of Economic Thought or another Econ course approved by the program director is required for this program. In addition to a required cross-listed Capstone in PPE course (ECON 8610), 11 Econ courses are listed under electives for the program.

PhD Program

- For the fall 2021 cohort, we received 170 applications, made 34 offers, and had four applicants who were admitted for the fall 2020 cohort but had to defer one year because of restrictions on international travel and visa administration due to COVID. We achieved a fall 2021 cohort of 15 committed students. However, 5 of them did not show up or withdrew shortly after enrolling in fall 2021. So our fall 2021 cohort is 10 incoming students.
- Of the 15 first-year students (entering fall 2020), four were exempt from the macro comp, and five were exempt from the micro comp. Of the first-year students taking the core comps, one failed micro, one failed macro, and two failed both. These students will make a second attempt in January 2022. Both of the two second-year students who had to retake the micro comp in January 2021 passed on the second attempt.
- 18 students chose to go on the job market. As of August 2021, 16 of them found jobs. Five had government jobs, two had private-sector jobs, and the remaining nine had academic jobs. Of the academic jobs, four were tenure-track at American universities, one was tenure-track in India, two were post-docs, and two were non-tenure-track teaching jobs.
- The economics graduate programs (MA and PhD) were successfully reclassified as STEM fields for OPT consideration. Though we initially thought this would only apply to students entering the program fall 2020 or later, we now know that it applies to all current and future students.
- Dissertation workshop 1 (Dan Kreisman) continues to be successful, with each student starting at year 3 presenting to all other students at least once.
- Dissertation workshop 2 (Carlianne Patrick) for the job market students was also successful, with job market students working collaboratively on their application packets, interview preparation, and job talks.
- The History of Economic Thought course requirement has been removed (it is now an elective course). The total number of credit hours required for the PhD degree has been reduced from 57 to 54.
- The base stipend for PhD students was increased to \$26,000 per year for five years, starting with the Fall 2021 cohort (up from \$24,000 per year)

Other Activities Pertaining to Chair Administrative Role

General Activities and Issues

- Unlike the activities in 2020, which was largely driven by COVID disruptions, 2021 has been a better year particularly in the area of instruction.
- Challenges in the area of budget seem to persist well beyond the reporting period.
- Effectively engaged with day-to-day roles and responsibilities of a chair in the areas of student success, governance and management, faculty and staff affairs, and external affairs. These include classroom staffing; interactions with faculty, staff, graduate and some undergraduate students; dealing with IRB, other research protocols, and fellowships for doctoral students; activities pertaining to undergraduate and graduate programs; hold meetings; dealing with student appeals and disruptive student conduct cases.

Communication

- Continued to produce and present the annual “State of the Department” document at our fall faculty meeting. The document provides basic data on faculty, staff, students, grants and budget, and highlights accomplishments and challenges as well as present departmental activities for the year and future goals.
- We held several faculty meetings to discuss various agenda items. In addition, email communications are used on a regular basis.
- I have been in close contact with program coordinators, faculty groups, and Chair Advisory Committee.
- In spring semester, I met virtually with each junior faculty to discuss annual faculty evaluation in the area of research, teaching and service as well as progress made towards promotion and tenure as appropriate.
- I communicate with econ staff on a regular basis. In particular, I regularly meet with the Business Manager III and the Administrative Specialist - Academic.

5. Personal Points

- My CV is attached.
- Taught ECON 9730 Advanced Econometrics (Fall 2021; Enrollment 21).
- Chair, Dissertation Committee for Samuel Asare; graduated in May 2021.
- In terms of service on standing and ad hoc committees, I serve on the following committees: Chair, Econometrics and Statistics Educational Policy Committee; Member, AYSPS Executive Committee; Member, AYSPS Management Committee; Member, Search Committee for Next Generation Faculty in Precision Medicine, College of Public Health; Chair, Quantitative Economics Award Committee.
- Wrote referee reports for some journals.