**2009 E&M Updates**

\*Below is the executive summary of our data collection efforts from Spring, 2009.  We collected data from four sources as outlined below.  We will be meeting as a department to discuss next steps based on the findings presented.  We also recently finalized plans to offer emphases in the department which support the findings.

Executive Summary – Economics and Management/ Gerstacker Assessment Report

Summer 2009

Overview:

The four data sources (Graduating Senior Survey, Graduating Senior Focus Group, Gerstacker Visiting Committee Focus Group and External GI Review) containing information about the Gerstacker Institute and the Economics and Management department offered similar thoughts and opinions regarding the effectiveness of the program in relation to the current economic environment, business world, and its affect on students.  Areas covered include the current curriculum (e.g. required and elective courses) internships and job placement, assignments, advising, and more.

Point 1: Required Courses

One main theme addressed in all four of the data sources was the required courses for the institute/E&M major in general.

1. There are too many required courses in the Gerstacker/ E&M curriculum
   1. Prevent students from taking other elective classes that are more worthwhile for their area of emphasis
2. Too many of the required courses are offered right at the beginning of the student’s college career.
   1. Gerstacker students are forced to take their general education 100 and 200 level classes when they are juniors and seniors. These final years instead should be spent taking classes relevant to their future.
   2. The numerous early requirements prevent students from joining the institute later in their college career, causing the institute to lose some potentially talented students.
3. Having four required economics courses is excessive.
   1. Students have a hard time finding these classes relevant to the real world
   2. Students that participated in the graduating senior survey felt that E&M 101 and 230, the microeconomics courses, prepared them the least for the world outside of Albion.
   3. The student focus group suggested that the intermediate economics classes could be condensed into a single course.
   4. The Gerstacker External reviewers suggested ways to have less economics requirements

                                                              i.      Offer the principles of economics course as a single course, covering more topics than our current E&M 101.

                                                            ii.      Create two courses that give a thorough grounding of the key topics that are covered in the 4 current required courses.

                                                          iii.      Require two or three required courses and then allow students to choose others from a list of elective courses.

1. Need for more management courses in the Gerstacker and E&M curriculum.
   1. Management courses are very popular among the students and in high demand for the program.
   2. According to the graduating senior survey, the elective courses that were the most useful for the world outside of Albion were Human Resource Management, and Managing People and Organizations
2. Add different tracks or emphases to the existing economics and management major.
   1. Allow the curriculum to address the interests of more students in the program.
   2. The student survey and focus group both mentioned the desire for more classes related to other concentrations (e.g. psychology, sociology, communications, etc.)

Point 2: Skill Development

Other remarks touched on some general aspects of the current curriculum.

1. Critical Thinking Skills
   1. The Gerstacker visiting committee wondered if there was a way to use critical thinking without math.  They suggested the use of case studies in more of the classes for more practical means of helping students develop critical thinking skills.
   2. The student survey supported the idea of possibly removing math from the required classes. Students gained more practical knowledge from their statistics course rather than from Calculus
2. Writing Skills
   1. The survey results showed that students are looking for a class to teach them how to write in a more professional manner, contrary to what they are learning in the expository writing course.
   2. The visiting committee wondered whether the current required writing courses are the right courses to teach students how to write a tight and concise professional document.
3. Communication Skills
   1. The Gerstacker visiting committee suggested teaching students how to communicate with impact by videotaping an interaction and giving feedback on how they handled the situation.
   2. Students could practice how to handle difficult conversations by giving supportive feedback without being confrontational.
   3. The student survey and focus group feedback showed students desire to be assigned more “real world” projects that will better prepare them for what they will encounter when they enter the real world. Students talked about projects from Human Resource Management, Managing People and Organizations as examples of possible projects that should be used as models in other E&M classes.

Point 3: Internships/Summer Programs

The following remarks were made regarding internships:

* Value the opportunity to substitute an international study for one of the internships
* Students also gain a lot of practical knowledge out of these experiences.
* Graduating senior survey results show students wished they had more assistance with internship placement.
* More connections in other areas
  + Students felt that there were a lot of connections with accounting and finance internships, but they wished there were more opportunities available with other companies in marketing and management.

The summer school program is valued by both students and faculty and is one that should remain a part of the Gerstacker requirements.

* Accomplishes many curricular objectives
* Provides extraordinary learning experiences
* Contain real life application that students are looking for
* Mock Interviews are a great opportunity for students to prepare for internship and job hunting

Point 4: Improving Interview Skills

* Give students organized feedback after mock interviews to better prepare them for future interviews
* Students should present themselves as having something different or unique
  + Differentiate themselves from other job market candidates
  + Having extra curricular activities shows well roundedness
  + Be prepared to answer questions about:
    - Handling numerous tasks at once
    - Problem solving
    - Teamwork
    - Leadership ability
    - Communication
    - Integrity

Conclusions

1. Students want classes and activities that are relevant to the real world
2. Students would like to be better trained at how to work in groups/manage groups in a professional manner
   1. Open-ended projects can achieve this by forcing students to develop a plan and strategy based on knowing what the end goal needed to be.
3. More interactive activities in class outside of regular discussion such as simulations, debates and case studies
4. Incorporating current events into more of the courses. This is another way that students can make connections to the real world
5. The Gerstacker institute should present itself as an extraordinary pre-professional training program with the value of a liberal arts base
   1. This will differentiate Albion as well as the Gerstacker Institute from other larger public institutions
6. Showcase both Albion and Gerstacker students as having something that makes them different if not better than candidates from other programs

FINAL REPORT (Vicki Baker: November 15, 2009)

In addition to the above information posted for our preliminary report, we have included the below information/update as part of our final report.

(1) E&M Emphases:

Based on comments from students and employers, we created five emphases that students can pursue within Economics & Management.  These emphases, which were recently approved by C&RC, are: Accounting, Economics, Finance, General Business, and Human Resources.  The E&M major with emphasis requires a minimum of 10 units in E&M, including 5 in the area of emphasis.  The traditional 8-unit E&M major continues to be available for those students who prefer it.

As you will note in the executive summary, students and others are requesting that we also offer an E&M major with emphasis in Marketing.  We hope to do this, but we cannot offer a marketing curriculum unless we can hire a full-time faculty member in marketing.  We were authorized to recruit a one-year visitor in marketing for 2010-11; but even with jobs scarce in the current economic downturn, the marketing faculty candidates whom we found acceptable were unwilling to accept a job that was not tenure track.  If the administration notifies us in mid-May 2010 that we may recruit a tenure-track faculty member in marketing to start work in August 2011, then we have a realistic chance of being able to add an E&M major with emphasis in marketing in time for Albion’s class of 2013.  Otherwise, the idea of adding an E&M major with emphasis in marketing will have to be deferred or, perhaps, abandoned.

(2) As per request of the provost, we will create an alumni survey which will be sent out during the spring semester.  Our goal is to target alumni that have been out for 5 years and then to have a regular assessment schedule that includes surveying alumni (e.g., every 3 years).

(3) Based on feedback from our recent assessment data collection, students and employers believe we need to place greater emphasis on communication, particularly presentations/debates. We plan to focus our spring assessment efforts on our learning outcome #2: Effectively communicate (in writing and orally) ideas, observations, analyses, conclusions, and recommendations to others in a variety of professional and personal contexts.  We plan to propose to C&RC that all E&M majors entering Albion College in fall 2010 or later take at least one E&M course that requires an oral presentation or debate.  The E&M faculty have begun work on a common grading rubric with which to evaluate/assess students' presentation skills.  Our plan is to finalize this rubric by the end of the fall semester so it can be used in the spring.  This will also begin to address the comments of the assessment reviewers regarding our need to use more direct measures of assessment.