



A Thunderbird Student Report

Academic Affairs Forum: Feedback Summary

Academic Affairs and Special Projects Chair
Thunderbird Student Government

3/7/2014



Academic Affairs Forum: Feedback Summary..... 3

 Introduction..... 3

 Specific Course Issues 5

 Miscellaneous Issues 7

 Conclusion 7

Academic Affairs Forum: Response from Administration and Academic Directors 8

 MBA/MA/MS Curriculum..... 8

 Specific Course Issues 9

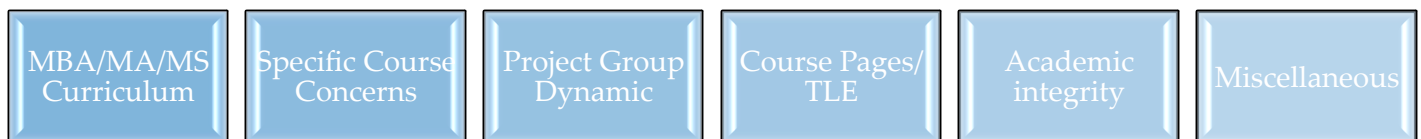
 Miscellaneous Issues 10



Academic Affairs Forum: Feedback Summary

Introduction

On Thursday, February 20, 2014, Thunderbird Student Government (TSG) hosted its first student-led forum. The Academic Affairs Forum was organized by the Special Projects Chair, Pia Oestlien, and was moderated by the Academic Affairs Chair, Michael Reardon. The forum topic was Academic Affairs and students from all academic programs were invited to openly discuss complaints, general comments, and ideas or suggestions for improvements as they related to Academic Affairs. Over 40 students attended the forum. Discussion topics introduced helped to initiate the flow of discussion, and are listed below:



Despite recommending several topics for discussion, the majority of the dialogue concentrated on MBA/MA/MS curriculum, specific course concerns, and miscellaneous topics. In an effort to be transparent and straightforward, and not inhibit the student voice, this report incorporates all of the responses received at the Academic Affairs Forum. Comments are organized and summarized on the following pages.



MBA/MA/MS Curriculum

Communication by Faculty	Communication by Administration	Course Content & Organization
<p>Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not consistent or timely • Timely consistent feedback is helpful to students • Excuses are not appreciated • Some faculty rely too heavily on their TAs to provide feedback 	<p>Administration has marketed MBA program for \$80,000 but in reality the program costs over \$100,000</p>	<p>Soft skill classes are too expensive and skills can be learned elsewhere for cheaper (e.g., BMC course)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students want value for their money, and would prefer using funds and credits toward more impactful electives
<p>Faculty complain that the three week courses limit ability to accomplish tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excuses are not appreciated 	<p>Students are concerned with the lack of effective communication and transparency from the administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some MBAs were notified of curriculum changes during a preview weekend • Many were shocked to find out when they arrived for foundations 	<p>Students request more real-time cases and course material</p>
<p>Students recommended improving the general quality of faculty at Thunderbird (see specific course issues for examples)</p>	<p>Administration announced MS Finance and MS Marketing curriculum changes without faculty approval or feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the scope of changes being made? 	<p>Three week course materials are not tied together across courses</p>
		<p>Three week course structures are unorganized and faculty do not manage course time properly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty have too much material to cover in the allotted course time
		<p>Many students feel like they are Thunderbird's guinea pigs</p>



Specific Course Issues

Quality of Faculty	Quality of Course	Communication by Administration
<p>Quantitative Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wasted time in class going over exercises that were easily learned during self-study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Course was a waste of time and money • Spent too much time teaching the unimportant concepts and not enough time teaching the important ones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students taught concepts and course material to themselves • Did not cover exam topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Testing was useless 	<p>Core Classes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of credits assigned to core courses is too high • Many of the core courses have little to no value-added or are not applicable altogether <p>Requiring English speakers to enroll in the Business Communications course inevitably limits the number of elective courses available to those students who are not required to enroll in BC</p>	<p>Course cancellations or restructuring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following courses were cancelled or restructured without notice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluation of a Private Firm ○ Legal Issues (how are students to know if they are breaking laws?) ○ Corporate Social Responsibility • Only applicable elective offered is Oil and Gas
<p>Decision Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor was tardy to his/her own exam • Exam questions taken directly from a Google query • Exam grading/scoring was inconsistent; Professor relied to heavily on the TA for marking exams • Professors need to create original course materials that cannot be easily found and downloaded via Google 	<p>Business Informatics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students did not learn anything and failed to see any added value (e.g., course material irrelevant) • Course focused more on decision analytics, information science and results of analytics • Students want to learn the tools utilized, not just that these tools work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation: have learning workshops (e.g., Excel Workshop) until the administration successfully 	<p>There is no communication or notification from the administration to students regarding course faculty changes</p>



	addresses these issues	
<p>Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not teach course material; read directly off of another professor's presentation • Course textbook was announced as optional reading, but students were unhappy that the exam tested concepts from the optional reading 	<p>TGE Requirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBAs who did not participate in a summerim, winterim, or module abroad are frustrated that they are required to enroll for an additional trimester to satisfy TGE graduation requirement 	
<p>Global Political Economy (GPE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor lectures too much and should facilitate any and all thought-provoking discourse (including opposing viewpoints) via various teaching methods • Professor did not accept clashing opinions and/or discourse 	<p>GPE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA students have sufficient knowledge and/or experience in this field • MAs, or those with related degrees, should be able to waive the GPE requirement via a boot-camp similar to the economics boot-camp • This course does not need to be longer than 6 weeks in length 	
	<p>MA students would like to have more field-related classes with Professor Fong and condensed classes with Professor Dash</p>	
	<p>Thunderbird is very good at teaching students the necessary soft-skills, but leaves a lot to be desired regarding hard-skills</p>	



Miscellaneous Issues

- Students feel Dr. Penley is not effectively leading and managing the school as they have not seen or heard from him at all over the course of the Winter or this trimester to date.
- There is an obvious disconnect between the faculty and administration which is affecting students in an undesirable manner
- The administration can improve its ability to manage expectations
- Spring First Trimester MBA students are not able to access the Economics Boot-camp to complete the course
- Access should be granted so overdue MBAs have the opportunity to pass the course
- MBA students request a free weekend/break between exams and beginning a new three week course
- Students prefer collaborating and presenting in small groups versus being lectured for long periods of time
- TEM Lab constraints are increasing: students are not in favor nor are they satisfied with the potential that TEM Labs may be discontinued
- Students and their respective academic programs are adversely impacted by the suspension of summerims
- Students at Thunderbird request an increase in international opportunities
- What is the change process?
- Who makes the decision to implement suggested changes?

Conclusion

The Academic Affairs Forum was a successful event due to the overwhelming number of concerns received by the TSG. Students were honest and felt comfortable bringing their comments and concerns to TSG's attention.

This report will be shared with the appropriate faculty, administration and with the students. It is duly noted the importance and willingness of students to partake in the conversation to improve the academic experience for all at Thunderbird.



Academic Affairs Forum: Response from Administration and Academic Directors

On Tuesday, March 4, 2014, TSG Academic Affairs Chair, Michael Reardon and Special Projects Chair, Pia Oestlien presented the above report on behalf of TSG and the current student body. This report was presented to Rebecca Henriksen, Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services Management, Drs. Nathan Washburn and Glenn Fong, Academic Directors of the MBA and MA/MS programs respectively. The report was presented in its entirety. Rebecca Henriksen, Drs. Washburn, and Fong provided insight and responded to the report accordingly:

MBA/MA/MS Curriculum

Communication by Faculty	Communication by Administration	Course Content & Organization
All concerns have been heard and are being addressed. On March 6, 2014, faculty met to discuss and genuinely consider restoring the 6-week MBA format. If approved, implementation will occur for the Fall 2014 trimester.	Marketing degree costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs are listed online at: http://www.thunderbird.edu/graduate-degrees/financing-your-education/tuition 	Soft Skills are an important aspect of Thunderbird’s education. With that said, it is difficult to place students on a benchmark.
This decision to move back from the 3 week course schedule to the 6 week course schedule is under strong advisement and consideration at this time.	Communication regarding Fall 2013 MBA program changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An email was sent to all current and prospective MBA students announcing program changes It was up to the student to check that mail and make themselves aware 	Regarding course materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty will address the need for more timely and relevant case studies, and will work together to tie materials across courses Faculty will resolve to make course materials available prior to course start dates through designation of new role in Debbie/Heidi’s offices
	MS Global Finance and Marketing program changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A special Town Hall for 	Course structure concerns have been addressed. The faculty is earnestly considering restoring the 6-week



	<p>MA/MS students was held on February 26, 2014 (after the Academic Affairs Forum)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Hall explained justification and announced detailed program changes • A comprehensive program structure is now on the website and will go out in Das Tor on March 9, 2014 • Please note, the decision to change these programs did not need to pass the Faculty Senate and had nothing to do with the Laureate partnership 	MBA course format.
--	---	--------------------

Specific Course Issues

Quality of Faculty	Quality of Course	Communication by Administration
<p>Thunderbird is currently recruiting 5 new Faculty hires.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thunderbird is seeking a permanent Operations professor • Thunderbird is seeking a permanent Quant professor 	<p>Business Informatics is not currently designed to be a tools-focused course; however, the feedback provided by students is under consideration and the course will potentially be redesigned.</p>	<p>The administration and faculty will make an effort to improve timeliness of communication regarding course and/or professor modifications.</p>
	<p>At the moment, there is only one academic advisor for all students located at the Career Management Center (CMC). Ideally, classes should be geared toward career goals; therefore, CMC Career Coaches will become academic advisors to help students track career-relevant graduation requirements (including TGE) while also assisting students in obtaining employment.</p>	



Miscellaneous Issues

- Dr. Penley cares greatly for the student body and has received student feedback requesting him to be more visible on campus
- Dr. Penley is making an effort and has been spotted at the Commons speaking to students several times a week and will be addressing the student in a Das Tor article on March 9, 2014
- No upcoming Town Hall is planned at this time (possibility after announcement of HLC)
- Rebecca Henriksen will look into why Spring First Trimester MBA students are not able to access the Economics Boot-camp and will ensure that this issue is resolved
- While there are rumors that TEM Labs may be discontinued, the truth is that TEM Lab opportunities are actually expanding
- Announcements will be made soon