

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INFORMATION SYSTEMS  
&  
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN INFORMATION SYTEMS  
PROGRAM REVIEW: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*College of Professional Studies  
Richard Beer, Associate Dean  
Spring 2007*

**Preface**

The College of Professional Studies invited four external reviewers to conduct a review of its two degree programs in Information Systems (BSIS & MSIS) in Spring 2007. The reviewers were,

Dr. Manoochehr Ghiassi, Director, MSIS Program, Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University, (email: mghiassi@scu.edu, phone: 408-554-4687).

George Ledin, J.D., Chairman, Computer Science Department, Sonoma State University, (email: ledin@sonoma.edu, phone: 707-664-2807).

Robert Nickerson, Ph.D., Professor and Chair of the Department of Information Systems and Director of the Center for Electronic Business, College of Business, San Francisco State University (email: rnick@sfsu.edu, phone: 415-338-7377).

Dr. Steve Chenoweth, Associate Professor, Department of Computer Science, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology (email: Stephen.Chenoweth@rose-hulman.edu, phone: 812-877-8974).

Prior to the two day campus visit the review team read the self-study prepared by then Administrative Program Director, Dr. Moira Gunn, and the full-time faculty of the Information Systems programs (Daryoush Farsi, Art Karshmer, and Richard Beer). Due to the recent faculty turnover in the Information Systems programs the historical perspective was provided by Stan Buller (formerly Associate Program Director). The review team reviewed supporting documentation, including course syllabi, enrollment and revenue trends, marketing materials, and other relevant materials. They visited the University of San Francisco April 6-7, 2007. During their campus visit, they met with the full-time faculty, a sample of the adjunct faculty and students, staff, and the deans. George Ledin also visited the Santa Rosa regional campus where he spoke to regional staff and visited a BSIS cohort in session. Robert Nickerson attended part of a MSIS course session on the San Francisco campus.

The final report was submitted to the Dean's office May 22, 2007.

1. **How did the external review team rate the quality of the Information Systems programs? How does the program compare with top-tier programs nationally?**

The committee considered both degree programs (BSIS and MSIS) of high quality that compare favorably with similar programs offered by respected, accredited universities in the U.S. The reviewers stated that in their opinion the programs serve its population of adult students and provide a service to the community. The committee commended the College of Professional Studies for maintaining quality while keeping costs down.

The decline in enrollment in IS programs is an endemic, nationwide phenomenon that has affected all universities. This decline is also being felt by traditional degree programs in computer science and information systems.

In the committee's opinion this decline is uncorrelated to the quality of the degree programs or the reputation of the institutions offering such programs; it is likely a leading indicator of significant changes in business and industry. These changes are both challenges and opportunities for the College of Professional Studies.

2. **What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process? What re the program's strengths?**

**Curriculum:** The committee expressed that the most immediate challenge is the need to recast the programs to include recent developments in the IS marketplace and/or refocus the undergraduate and graduate programs toward local industries (such as financial, health care, hospitality, and biotechnology sectors). The programs should have an advisory board, with target industries represented.

Furthermore, the technology base used to manage IS in these and similar marketplaces is built on new and evolving fields that are not fully included in the current curriculum. Examples of such developments are web-based technologies, software-oriented architectures, virtualized environments, and wireless communications.

Specific problem areas and/or recommendations voiced by the committee,

- Regular review and revision of the curriculum
- Developing alliances with other schools/colleges at USF
- Course offering format
- Rampant grade inflation
- Elimination of course content redundancy
- Establishing a “course/field coordinator” [within CPS this is the role of the associate program director, which the IS program has been without].
- Formalizing the undergraduate “portfolio” process.

**Students :**

The committee was impressed with the quality of the students, especially with their motivation and sophistication. Current cohorts and recent graduates of both programs show that the University in general and the College of Professional Studies in particular have been very successful in recruiting, matriculating, supporting, retaining, and graduating a diverse and dynamic student body. The students are happy and mature, and they devote considerable effort to the program. Their studies appear to lead them to success and advancement in their careers.

Recommendations by the committee:

- a. The Committee suggests establishment of MSIS pre-program requirements to include some appropriate level of proficiency in mathematics, statistics and programming for the MSIS program.
- b. The Committee suggests development of enrollment statistics reporting number of applicants, their academic metrics, and final acceptance and rejection rates for each cohort.
- c. The Committee also recommends that the College consider requiring GMAT, GRE, or other standardized minimum test scores from each MSIS candidate. .

**Faculty:** The committee noted that adjunct instructors need improved guidance to enable consistent course delivery. Examples of such guidance are (1) earlier notice to the adjuncts regarding their teaching schedules, (2) appointment of area / course coordinators, (3) meeting of adjunct and full time faculty at least once per semester, and (4) preparing a curriculum chart of all courses and their expected learning outcomes. The committee recommends having adjuncts teach only within their

areas of strength, and reducing course preps for adjuncts to no more than 3 or 4 per year.

The formal backgrounds and work experience of current tenure-track, full-time faculty, are not a good fit. The committee strongly recommends that new tenure-track faculty be hired to shepherd the changes needed to make both programs succeed. Specifically, both programs deserve to have a permanent core faculty with both provable IS academic credentials and demonstrable industry or consulting experience, which is not the case now.

**Facilities:** The College of Professional Studies provides adequate learning environments for their students. Neither the classrooms nor the laboratories are state of the art, however (see below).

**3. In the opinion of the external review team is the program following the University's strategic initiatives in that it is:**

- **Recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty of outstanding teachers and scholars.**

Lack of faculty and administrative continuity has hurt and will continue to hurt the program. The position of Program Director should be one with low turnover. The committee recommended hiring of a permanent (preferably a tenure track) Program Director who will teach and bring financial stability and recognition to the programs and the College.

- **Providing the environment necessary to promote student learning in the program.**

In the committee's opinion the College of Professional Studies provides adequate learning environments for their students. Neither the classrooms nor the laboratories are state of the art, however. [Unfortunately, the two class room visits that were conducted by committee members did not take place in "smart class rooms". COWs (Computer On Wheels carts do not make for an impressive classroom environment. With the ongoing upgrading of classrooms this issue will be addressed.]

- **Contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit Catholic urban university?**

The committee stated that USF's legacy in shaping the hearts and minds of many thousands of women and men all over the world and its contributions to the Bay Area are well known. In the committee's assessment the College of Professional Studies makes the mission and goals of the University accessible to a much wider population. The committee believes that BSIS and MSIS have contributed and, under firm and talented leadership, will continue to make significant contributions to the University and its community.

**4. What is the timetable for the implementation of the external review team's recommendations for the program improvements?**

Since the program review Dr. Moira Gunn has been promoted to Program Director. This will lend the necessary stability to both programs and help us move forward. Moira Gunn has already initiated major changes and laid the foundation for the future expansion of the program.

The greatest need for immediate action was in the MSIS program. The curriculum for MSIS was restructured to reflect many of the recommendations and suggestions by the review committee. Courses that had some degree of redundancy were consolidated; while other courses that had become marginal to the mainline MSIS curriculum were eliminated. This led to the introduction of four (4) new courses (out of 12) in the MSIS program. Furthermore the MSIS program now offers a focused emphasis area in Information Security.

Due to resource limitations we have not been able to restructure the BSIS program in a similar manner.

The IS program has also made great strides in hiring new adjunct faculty with terminal degrees (Ph.D., J.D. and/or MBA). A request for a new term faculty line has been put forward.

We expect to complete the restructuring of both the MSIS and BSIS programs by the end of calendar year 2008. At this point we can conclusively address all recommendations and issues raised by the review committee.