CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATION REPORT

Planning and Review Committee

Consultant Recommendation

I. Degree: B.S. in Hotel Restaurant and Tourism Management

Date of Review: January 24, 2012

Program Director: Kristal Gerdes

PRC Consultant(s): Lopamudra Basu and Georgios Loizides

Purpose of the Review: The purpose of the review is to assess the quality of the BS in Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management degree, as part of the seven-year review cycle required of all degree programs at UW Stout.

Committee Findings: The Committee recommends that this program continue to be one of UW Stout’s degree programs for the ongoing seven-year cycle and that recommendations made by this committee be implemented.

Abstract: The B.S. in Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management program prepares students for entry-level management positions in the hospitality industry, with very good placement rates, and is accredited by The Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration. Although declining enrollment had been a concern in previous PRC reviews, the present self-study notes a reversal of this trend, with a 28% increase from last year’s enrollment. Other strengths of the program include a strong core of classes and faculty expertise, as well as a strong recognition and reputation in the industry. Issues of concern include the need for more faculty and staff resources, the lack of proprietary simulation software, a need for increased marketing for the program, and the limited opportunities for faculty professional development. The consultants recommend the continuation of this program through the next scheduled review.

II. Process Followed for Current Review:

The PRC consultants Basu and Loizides met with Professor Kristal Gerdes. Key constituencies were surveyed as preparation for the PRC review. These include faculty teaching within the program, students, and the Advisory Board. The Program Director analyzed the data received from these surveys and presented to the PRC in December 2011. This was followed by the consultants writing a draft report, with recommendations to the Program Director, Chair and Dean, which was brought to the Committee, voted on and sent to the concerned parties.

III. Previous Review Year:

The last full review was in April 2005 followed by a status report in January 2008. Issue(s) of Concern regarding the 2007-2008 Status Report:
1. Teaching: there was a concern about the quality of teaching of some faculty and staff.
2. Curriculum: some students complained of redundancy of content topics in some courses.

Issues of concern in the 2004-2005 full review were:

1. Declining Enrollments
2. Concerns about quality of teaching and overlap of courses
3. Limited laboratory experiences

Previous Recommendations for Program Director:

In the 2007-2008 Status Report, it was recommended that the program director remain especially attentive to problems in redundancy of topics in different courses as well as investigate the introduction of new courses to enhance the program.

In the 2004-2005 review the following recommendations were made to the Program Director

1. Continue to explore and address enrollment issues through the assessment and recruitment process.
2. Continue work to create a laboratory experience outside the restaurant track and encourage professional development of staff and faculty in those areas. Specifically, develop gaming and lodging laboratories to provide students hands-on experiences in those areas.
3. In cooperation with the PRC, conduct an on-campus student survey in fall, 2007 along with the review of the usual 1-year and 3-year follow-up alumni surveys at that time to monitor improvements to the program regarding the student concerns found in the fall 2004 surveys. (The Fall 2004 survey results will be kept so that comparisons may be made.)

Response from Program Director:

Here are the responses to the 2004-2005 recommendations:

1. Continue to explore and address enrollment issues through the assessment and recruitment process.
   
   Response:
   Enrollment is up 28% from last year through the May 2nd report. The 2005 student assessment shows, when compared to 2004, of the 25 categories assessed, 19 improved, 4 stayed the same and only 2 declined. We will continue to strive to achieve similar results.

2. Continue work to create a laboratory experience outside the restaurant track and encourage professional development of staff and faculty in those areas. Specifically, develop gaming and lodging laboratories to provide students hands-on experiences in those areas.
   
   Response:
   Upon receipt of funds, we will focus on those two areas. Our lodging area also needs a faculty member to replace a retiring lodging professor. While we have a lodging lab currently, it is outdated and underutilized.

3. In cooperation with the PRC, conduct an on-campus student survey in fall, 2007 along with the review of the usual 1-year and 3-year follow-up alumni surveys at that time to monitor improvements to the program regarding the student concerns found in the fall 2004 surveys. (The Fall 2004 survey results will be kept so that comparisons may be made.)
Response:
We will do this. It should be noted that the comment made in “Issue of Concern” number 4 has been addressed, as the “Front Office” course and the “Housekeeping” course were combined into a new course in 2003 entitled, “Lodging Operations.”

Previous Recommendations for Department Chair:

In the 2007-2008 Status Report, it was recommended that the department chair and the dean closely monitor teaching quality any address and problems in that area.

In the 2004-2005 review, the following recommendations were made to the Chair

1. Continue to support the program revisions that will update the major and provide students more flexibility.
2. Consult with instructors of selected courses regarding attention to diversity issues

Response from Department Chair:

The following were the Chair’s responses to the 2004-2005 recommendations.
1. The department will continue to support the program and is in the process of revising courses to deliver the updated program. This will provide the students with wider selective in the program along with greater flexibility. The department chair and program director work closely together to schedule an array of courses each semester that will meet the needs of the program and its students.
2. Diversity issues are discussed across the HRTM curriculum in courses such as Introduction to Hospitality, Lodging Systems, and Introduction to Tourism, Hospitality Organization Management and Hospitality Management Strategies as examples. The department chair will continue to work with faculty and staff to ensure that diversity issues are integrated in HRTM courses.

Previous Recommendations for Dean:

In the 2007-2008 Status Report, it was recommended that the dean strive for continuity and consistency in the program director’s role.

In the 2004-2005 review, the following recommendations were made to the Dean of the College of Human Development.
1. Replace retiring faculty with tenure track faculty.
2. Provide funding and support for the gaming and lodging labs.
3. Provide support for the program’s efforts to increase enrollment.

Response from Dean:

Response to #1 in the 2004-2005 recommendations:

The department is currently in the process of a search for a tenure track faculty in lodging for a spring 2006 start date. The college will continue to support replacing retiring faculty with tenure track faculty with significant industry experience. With several faculty and staff nearing retirement, it is essential that we search for and hire top quality faculty with new and more contemporary expertise to fill the vacancies.
Response to #2 in the 2004-2005 recommendations:
The college recently purchased two gaming tables at a cost of $18,169. Over the past several years two lab mod proposals for a gaming lab were submitted but the proposals were not funded because an adequate space was not identified. The college has recently requested rooms 345, 345A and 347 in the Home Economics building for a new gaming lab to the Campus Planner. These rooms are currently listed as inactive on the university space audit and could become functional with a minimum investment in remodeling. If this location is not approved, the college will continue to seek a space for the gaming lab as a priority in its facilities agenda.

The college will also assist the Hospitality & Tourism Department in its efforts to upgrade the lodging lab recognizing that the current lab is very outdated. The new lodging faculty member that will be hired will be involved in designing a new lodging laboratory. The current lodging faculty have been discussing equipment and space needs with the program director and department chair. At the college level, discussions have occurred regarding the possibility of locating a new lodging lab on the second floor of McCalmont, where a lodging environment can be created with the guests who use the housing facilities with SVRI. Minimal investment in equipment would be required to create this lab, which could render a real-life working experience.

Response to # 3 in the 2004-2005 recommendations:
The college has been very supportive of the new program director and applauds his efforts, which have resulted in a 27% increase in freshmen enrollment. The college will continue to support the program director’s initiatives in the area of recruitment, and also in the area of student retention

IV. Current Year Program Review:

Program Strengths-Indicate Source:

Healthy Enrollment
Declining Enrollment had been a concern in previous PRC reviews. The present self-study notes a reversal of this trend. Kristal Gerdes reports “Enrollment is up 28% from last year through the May 2nd report. The 2005 student assessment shows, when compared to 2004, of the 25 categories assessed, 19 improved, 4 stayed the same and only 2 declined.”

These reports attest to the overall health of the program.

Strong core of classes and strong faculty expertise:
The Program Director is in the process of implementing some curriculum revision.

“The goal is to develop strong program that represents each area of the industry; hotel, restaurant and tourism. The elective credits will be reduced to twelve and the cores credits will increase to seventy-two. The revised plan will provide a map to course scheduling creating a long-range schedule for faculty to follow and better prepare for their course loads. The new program plan will also provide a 4 year college career plan for freshman entering the program.” (Gerdes, Self-Study). Industry and other stakeholders have been asked to review the new program plan and offer feedback.
The proposed program revision eliminates courses that were repetitive and additions have been made to increase rigor of the HR major. These were topics that emerged in student comments. A second internship will now be required in the revised program plan. The electives in the program were also reduced to twelve credits, helping to decrease the probability of repetitiveness.

The new Program Director has implemented a strong advisement component to the Program, making herself extensively available to students and also using Internet social media like Facebook to circulate important information to students. There have also been updates to printed material, the website and the student newsletter. The current Program Director holds student office hours by appointment on Mondays and Wednesdays, as of the beginning of the 2011 fall semester three hundred and twelve students have made appointments and were advised.

Faculty are engaged in various campus wide initiatives like Inclusive Excellence and Sustainability.

The Program is accredited by The Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration, This agency reviews the curriculum on the basis of wide-ranging and rigorous criteria that the Program satisfies.

Industry recognition and reputation
According to the self-study by Kristal Gerdes, the HRTM program has a robust relationship with industry partners: “The Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management program has developed more than 100 agreements with different businesses to provide internships, co-ops and other job-related experiences for UW-Stout students. Participating companies include leading hotels, restaurants, amusement parks and food industries. Internships are also available with tourism bureaus, chambers of commerce, and convention and meeting planning bureaus.

Strong Placement Record
The HRTM program continues to have very good industry placement rates. According to the self-study “The number and variety of companies recruiting graduates continues to increase. Most corporations or companies place graduates in management positions. . . The average starting salary of the 2009–10 graduate was $32,000 with some graduates reporting starting salaries as high as $79,000. Many of our graduates have become general and executive directors of large corporations and are managing millions of dollars.”

Issues of Concern-Indicate Source (NOTE: All issues of concern need to have a recommendation related to it. However, there may be some recommendations that don’t relate to a particular issue of concern):

Faculty and Staff Resources: According to the Program Director’s self-study, the primary challenge faced by the HRTM Program is “the popularity of the HRTM Program as measured by student numbers—in relation to program/faculty resources” Kristal Gerdes notes in her report the specific need for faculty in Lodging: “The Hospitality and Tourism department is in need of resources with expertise in the areas of lodging administration and hospitality finance. Currently the Hospitality and Tourism department is in a resource deficit. If our enrollment increases there will not be enough faculty to instruct the needed courses.”
The self-study also articulates the need for a lab manager:

“Lab Manager (technician) position is also needed. This position will reduce faculty workload by charging this person with laboratory procurement duties, expenditure controls, and oversight of furniture, fixtures, and equipment maintenance. The addition of this position will reduce additional duties that were previously assigned to the food lab faculty.”

The Key Faculty survey indicates the need for more support staff, with the change to School Designation and increase in the number of degree tracks.

**Facilities:** The self –study by the Program director notes the lack of “proprietary simulation software,” and calls for more research on different kinds of simulation software, their suitability for courses and then for requesting funds for laboratory modernization.

The self-study also expresses the need for a distinct building for the School of Hospitality to compete with other schools for students: “The biggest weakness compared to the HRTM competition is the fact there is no stand-alone School of Hospitality brick and mortar building. There is a need to develop an identifiable and dedicated home for UW-Stout’s School of Hospitality Leadership, one that supports the program’s core academic needs and stands to further UW-Stout’s strong reputation in hospitality education”

**Marketing**
Advisory Board surveys indicate the need for more publicity about the change to School of Hospitality to industry and other stakeholders. There needs to be more marketing of the new designation within the Polytechnic University.

**Limited Opportunities for Faculty Professional Development**

Kristal Gerdes notes in her self –study that “Due to the current budget cuts, funding for professional development has been eliminated.” Even though faculty are attending on campus professional development events, faculty surveys suggest that they may be falling behind in latest developments in the field.

**Recommendations for the Program Director:**
1. Begin working with the Chair and Dean to hire another faculty member in Lodging, a lab manager and another part time/LTE support staff and purchase of appropriate simulation software.
2. Work with University Advancement and Administration to explore options for a separate standalone building for the School of Hospitality.
3. Work with Admissions, University Publications for greater visibility and marketing of the School of Hospitality.
4. Explore additional sources of funding for faculty professional development, attendance in national conferences, etc. through Research Services.

**Recommendations for the Chair(s) of Department(s):**
1. Support Program Director’s efforts to hire another faculty member, lab manager and support staff.
2. Work with University Advancement and Administration to explore options for a separate standalone building for the School of Hospitality.
3. Publicize the School of Hospitality at different campus and industry venues. Make additional efforts in creating a unique brand for the HRTM Program within the School of Hospitality Leadership and marketing it.
4. Support faculty with resources for professional development.
5. Encourage other tenured faculty to share the work of advisement, program revision, recruitment, and various other aspects of program administration. This will ensure the long-term health of the program by preventing Program Director burn out, which has affected many program directors of large programs with myriad duties.

Recommendations for the Dean of the College:

1. Support the Program Director and Chair in hiring additional personnel, a faculty member, a lab manager and an additional support staff.
2. Work with University Advancement and Administration to explore options for a separate standalone building for the School of Hospitality.
3. Publicize the new School of Hospitality within the university and to external stakeholders.
4. Provide resources for professional development of faculty so that they can be at the cutting edge of their profession and the School can acquire a national and international reputation.
5. Ensure an equitable workload for Program Director by the sharing of advisement duties by tenured faculty, to prevent over-reliance on the energies of a single individual and thereby ensure long-term sustainability of the Program.