Program Review
Planning and Review Committee 2007-08

I. **Degree:** B.S. Retail Merchandising and Management

**Program Director:** Dr. Kathleen Maglio

**PRC Consultants:** Dick Tyson and Joshua Fox

**Purpose of the Review:** To assess the quality of the Retail Merchandising and Management program as part of the seven-year cycle required of all degree programs at UW-Stout

**Committee Findings:** The committee recommends continuation of this program for the ongoing seven-year cycle and implementation of committee recommendations.

The program has done a good job in addressing some of the concerns of the last report regarding communications, student expectations, and advisement. The PRC sees these as areas for continuous review. Continued attention, however should be directed to the concerns regarding course overlap, facilities/lab, and the relatively high percentage of graduates who retrospectively might not enroll in RMM. Finally, with significant program growth since the last review, attention should be paid to the question of the number and preparedness of students in relation to the number of instructors.

II. **Abstract**

The BS in Retail Merchandising and Management prepares students for management-level employment in retail organizations in a variety of areas, involving the management of stores, or areas within stores, buying products in national or international markets, or may involve preparing visual presentations, advertising, special events, or distributions. The RMM program combines studies from 15 or more academic departments to prepare students for a career in retailing and related fields and allows students to pursue concentrations in: buying/management; fashion marketing; human resource management; and interior decorating. Students also may complete a minor in business administration, art, journalism or other disciplines. The program of study combines general education with retail and business courses to produce graduates knowledgeable and competent in merchandising and management. Retail courses include promotions, merchandise planning and control, and store management, while business courses include economics, accounting, marketing, international business and human resource management. These provide the foundation for operation of a successful retail business. The program requires hands-on application of what has been learned to a 500+ hour off-campus internship or work in a student-operated specialty store (the Niche).

This review included a presentation by the program director, review of the recommendations from the last review; placement, graduate and employer follow-up data; and program committee, current student and key instructor surveys. While the consultants found that several concerns raised in the last program review in 2001-2002 have been satisfactorily dealt with by the program director (advising, communications, realistic student understanding of RMM), these are areas that require continuing vigilance, review, and revision, as necessary. Course overlap continues to be reported by students, and the need for a good
retail lab remains. A newer concern has arisen regarding the significant program growth, which is adequate staffing.

III. Process Followed for Current Review
The PRC Chair met with the dean, program director and chair of the primary department to discuss the review process. In addition, a PRC consultant met with the program director during the process to review the procedures and offer assistance. Data regarding the program were collected from PRC program committee, current student and key instructor surveys in addition to BPA placement, graduate, employer follow-up, and other data. This data was analyzed and provided to the program director and other PRC members. Out of 190 juniors and seniors surveyed, 59 participated in the online student survey. While none of the key instructors within the department responded to their survey, three responded along with 7 other members (of 19) to the program advisory committee survey. Seven of 14 key instructors from outside the department responded to the key instructor survey. Sixteen of the 54 2004 RMM program graduates surveyed responded, while 10 of 27 Class of 2000 graduates responded.

The Program Director presented the RMM report to the full PRC at its February 29, 2008 meeting and responded to their questions. The consultants then wrote a draft program review document summarizing the consultants’ analysis of these surveys, and assessment in the major report and submitted the draft report for the program director’s review and comments. The report and comments were then discussed by the PRC which approved the findings contained herein.

IV. Previous Review

Recommendations to the Program Director

1. Develop and implement a plan to improve participation and communication with the Key Instructors and the Program Advisory Committee.
2. Continue efforts to eliminate course overlap and duplication.
3. Continue positive work to improve advising.
4. Continue to help students have a realistic understanding of the pros and cons of their career field.
5. Conduct a program specific follow up analysis to determine why students would not enroll in the same program after they have been in the field for several years.

Response from the Program Director (2002)

1. The program director is planning a variety of actions/events designed to improve the participation of and communication among the program director, key instructors and members of the Program Advisory Committee.

The location of the Program Director's office and assigned laboratory responsibilities distant from key retail faculty makes frequent contact difficult. In lieu of face-to-face contact, the program director sends an average of 40 e-mail messages to the RMM academic advisors
(key retail faculty) each academic year. These advisors have been strongly encouraged to attend Advisement Day meetings with the students.

At this time, the Program Advisory Committee is in place, fulfilling the university's membership required positions. Regular input from these members has been sought by the program director on an individual basis. Future formal meetings of this committee plus a broader cross section of representatives from the retail industry will be held each semester to foster greater collegiality among key program advisors and provide greater interaction with RMM students. At this time, the program director has scheduled this meeting for Tuesday, April 30, 2002. An attempt will be made to meet once or twice a month for lunch with key retail faculty, as advisement and teaching responsibilities of the program director allow. The PRC program review process has better informed the program director as to information that should be shared with the Advisory Committee.

2. As a part of the program revision process scheduled for 2002-03, the program director and key instructors will examine course objectives and concepts and revise plans to eliminate course overlap and duplication. A survey of all RMM majors is presently underway to more thoroughly identify any areas of concern. The results of this survey and the student survey conducted by the PRC for this review will be the focus of this process.

3. A portion of the student survey underway at this time will more specifically identify the quality of program advisement. Any areas of concern identified will be dealt with appropriately. The program director will continue the following:

   a. Regular e-mail messages to majors and RMM academic advisors regarding program-related issues.
   b. General advisement informational meetings on Advisement Day by concentration or classification (Interior Decorating majors, other RMM majors with <30 credits, other RMM majors with 30 or more credits.)
   c. Sharing information with other RMM academic advisors to be passed on to their advisees.
   d. Encouraging other RMM academic advisors to the general advisement informational meetings on Advisement Day.
   e. Using the Course Sequence Charts by RMM concentration and the Semester-by-Semester Plan for Graduation as advisement tools.
   f. Offering advisement to any and all RMM majors by open appointment, regardless of their assigned academic advisor.

Additionally, the program director will regularly meet with other RMM academic advisors to clarify expectations and curricular issues related to their academic advising responsibilities.

4. The program director will enlist the help of the key retail instructors to accurately reflect the duties and responsibilities, both rewards and challenges, of a career in retailing in each retail-specific course. Frequent guest speakers from the retail industry will also be
advised to do the same. The Retail Careers unit of BURTL-105 Introduction to Retail Merchandising and Management will be revised to better convey the advantages and disadvantages of a retail career.

5. In preparation for the upcoming program revision, an expanded follow-up survey of RMM graduates will be conducted to obtain greater detailed comments as to the responses given, particularly to the question "Would you enroll in this program again?" Key retail instructors will also be consulted for advice as to why students may have responded negatively in the past and how this might be avoided in the future. Findings will be used to implement changes in the career unit in the BURTL-105 Introduction to Retail Merchandising and Management course and in other retail courses where appropriate, to better reflect a realistic view of a career in retailing.

Consultant’s Summation: (2008)

1. Survey data of Advisory committee members seems to indicate that there has been increased communications to a satisfactory level. The PD and key faculty are in the same building now. The Program Advisory Committee/Industry Advisory committee meets twice per year and members feel this is adequate.
2. Survey data of current students seems to indicate that they still perceive a high level of overlap in several marketing/merchandising courses. The PD indicates that an effort is underway to differentiate depth of concepts and learning outcomes in classes cited for overlap.
3. Survey data of current students seems to indicate that advising is improved, (particularly with the program revision and dropping Interior Decorating). However, only 31% of the 2004 graduates rated advising as good/excellent (vs. 55% of all graduates)
4. No clear pattern of concern emerges from analysis of current students regarding realistic expectations. Transfer students are now required to take the Intro to RMM course to understand the industry. The 500 hour work requirement is cited as giving students a real retail experience. The 2004 RMM graduates, however, are considerably less likely than other graduates to say that their classes and co/extra curricular activities prepared them for employment.
5. While 2004 graduates (& current seniors) still are less likely than other graduates to say that they would take the program if they were to do it all over again, juniors are pleased with their choice of RMM.

Recommendations to the Department Chair

1. Discuss classroom and lab facilities with key faculty to get recommendations on improvements.

Response from the Department Chair (2002)

1. Key faculty involved in the Retail Merchandising and Management program will be surveyed to determine recommendations for program improvements related to the
classroom and lab facilities. Avenues to pursue funding to make the improvements will then be pursued.

Consultant’s Summation: (2008)
1. Survey data of students and the Program Director’s report indicate that the Visual Merchandising and Promotions lab problem has not been resolved.

Recommendations to the Dean

1. Identify and seek approval for appropriate space to replace space that will be lost in Home Economics. (A possibility would be converting the Micheels computer lab as the laptop program replaces the need for a large computer lab.)

Response from the Dean: (2002)

1. In 1990-91 the university experienced a restructuring that condensed the four colleges into three. Subsequently, the newly formed College of Technology, Engineering & Management received two undergraduate programs, Apparel, Design & Manufacturing and Retail Merchandising and Management, previously housed within the School of Home Economics. Both of these programs and their respective faculty were located in the Home Economics Building. Due to a lack of adequate laboratory and office spaces, both of these programs and many of their faculty continue to be located in the Home Economics Building. Attempts to secure adequate space for faculty offices and laboratories have been impossible within the current building availability.

All of the Retail Merchandising and Management faculty with the exception of the program director are housed within the Department of Business. Office space has been made available for the program director. However, with the laboratories for the program, Visual Merchandising and the retail laboratory, the Niche, that person has elected to maintain an office in the Home Economics building, due simply to logistics.

The suggestion from the PRC to assume the Micheels Hall computer lab and relocate the Visual Merchandising and retail laboratories is encouraging to the program director, department chair, and dean's office. Every effort will be made to secure this space and use it to house the laboratories and faculty offices for the Retail Merchandising and Management program.

Consultant’s Summation: (2008)
1. Survey data of instructors and the Program Director’s report indicate that while the issues of office locations has been addressed, the Visual Merchandising and Promotions lab problem has not been resolved.

V. Current Program Review

Program Strengths
1. The RMM program has had strong growth followed by stable enrollment to become the 7th largest program. Students graduate fairly readily with less than average attempted credits.

Source: BPA

2. The RMM program has had excellent placement (100% most recent years) at around the average salaries of Stout graduates. They are more likely to be employed in their major.

Source: BPA

3. Expertise of faculty and staff, having retail experience, is knowledgeable, and provides students with current and relevant information. Program director listens to students and stakeholders and willing to implement their ideas.

Source: Student survey, Advisory Committee survey, key instructor survey.

4. The RMM program requirement of 500 hours of retail experience is seen as an excellent opportunity for students to practice skills, learn about the reality of retail, network, and to help in employment.

Source: Student survey, Advisory Committee survey, key instructor survey, program director’s report

Program Opportunities for Improvement

1. Concerns about course availability. Students, Key instructors, and Advisory committee members report that the ballooning enrollments without increased staffing is problematic for students to be able to get into courses as needed, particularly when sequenced. There has been a doubling of enrollments in RMM over the decade without increased staffing; instructors in the program have multiple preparations each semester.

Source: Student survey, key instructor survey, PRC consultant meeting with program director, Advisory committee survey, program director’s report, BPA.

2. Student preparation. Students, Key instructors, and Advisory committee members report that the large enrollments include students with poor preparation, particularly math skills. The recent program revision has increased the required math level for some students.

Source: Student survey, key instructor survey, Advisory committee survey,

3. Curriculum/overlap. Only 24 of 59 juniors and seniors agreed that the RMM program has little or no unnecessary repetition. Promotions/Retail Strategies/ Trend Tracking/Social-Psych Aspects, Marketing/Target Marketing/Advertising/ Basic Merchandising are among those classes quite frequently cited. “Curriculum effectiveness” is not rated as highly by recent RMM graduates compared to other graduates; however, when asked about specific competencies (“speak effectively”, ….“appreciate…history”…”work in teams”…) they rate the RMM program highly.

Source: Student survey, graduates survey

4. The RMM program continues to have need of adequate lab space and equipment for Visual Merchandising and Promotions.

Source: Program Director’s report, Student survey.
Recommendations

Recommendations for the Department Chair

1. Work with the program director and the dean to ensure effective enrollment management. Examine student concerns about limited course offerings and too-large numbers of students.

2. Work with the dean to address the need for enhanced facilities/labs and equipment

3. Work with faculty and program director to review the RMM curriculum in the retailing/marketing coursework to address student concerns regarding coordination and especially duplication.

Recommendation for the Program Director

1. Work with the department chair and the dean to ensure effective enrollment management.

2. Work with the dean to address the need for enhanced facilities/labs and equipment

3. Work with faculty and department chair to review the RMM curriculum in the retailing/marketing coursework to address student concerns regarding coordination and especially duplication. Monitor 2007 revisions for their impact on these concerns.

4. Work with faculty to maintain improvements in student advisement.

Recommendations for the Dean

1. Work with the program director and the Department Chair to ensure effective enrollment management and/or adequate staffing. Examine student concerns about limited course offerings and too-large numbers of students.

2. Work with the program director and the Department Chair to address the need for enhanced facilities/labs and equipment.