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**To:** Dean Mark Peceny, College of Arts and Sciences, UNM

**From:** Robert Berrens, Chair, Department of Economics, UNM *Robert P. Berrens*

**Date:** January 7, 2012

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## **Department of Economics' Response to the External Review Team Report, Academic Program Review**

### **I. Introduction**

As part of the Academic Program Review (**APR**) process, the Department of Economics completed and distributed its detailed 286-page Self-Study Report (**SSR**) in February, 2011. The site visit by the External Review Team occurred on March 23<sup>rd</sup> -25<sup>th</sup>, 2011.<sup>1</sup> The External Review Team Report (**ERTR**) was provided to the Department Chair on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, and then distributed to the APR Office, (under the Provost's Office), and to the Dean's Office in the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S). While the SSR and the ERTR have both been previously provided to the Dean's Office in A&S, they are also archived electronically at the APR website: [www.unm.edu/~apr/](http://www.unm.edu/~apr/). Consistent with A&S procedures, an **Action Plan** (attached) is also provided with this **Response** to the ERTR.

Subsequent to the completion of the external review team site visit, and the distribution of the ERTR, the former Provost, and the former Dean of the College of A&S both announced their resignations. In the summer of 2011, they were subsequently replaced with Interim Provost Chaouki Abdallah, and Interim Dean Mark Peceny, respectively. Associate Dean Janet Cramer, who had been responsible for handling APR's in the College of A&S, also left UNM in October 2011. As the Department of Economics was proceeding ahead with required response planning, Dean Peceny was provided copies of the SSR and ERTR in August, 2011 (previously provided to the prior Dean, Brenda Claiborne, and Associate Dean Janet Cramer). Dean Peceny was also made aware, from discussions with the Department Chair and individual faculty members, of ongoing spring/summer 2011 discussions in the Department on possible alternatives on the key

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<sup>1</sup> The external review team consisted of: Kevin J. Boyle (Virginia Tech), Rachel T.A. Croson (University of Texas, at Dallas), James S. Shortle (Pennsylvania State University), and Thomas F. Turner (UNM Department of Biology).

strategic planning issue of possible reductions in the number of PhD graduate fields in economics (e.g., from four to three or even two, and different configurations) at UNM.

## **II. Summary of ERTR**

The Department faculty members were pleased with the very positive overall review, and the many constructive recommendations provided in the External Review Team Report (ERTR). Summary comments included:

“The Academic Program Review team was very impressed... ...The performance of the faculty and staff is exceptional given their small size. They provide excellent academic preparation to undergraduates and graduate students, have nationally and internationally recognized research programs, provide important outreach to the citizens of New Mexico, and are good citizens of the College of Arts and Sciences and the University.” (pg. 1)

“The Academic Review Team is unanimous in our praise for the Department of Economics and their many successes.” (pg. 2)

“Overall we feel that the Department of Economics is doing an excellent job and our recommendations are intended to help them enhance performance while not adding to an already overworked faculty and staff.” (pg. 19)

The external review team acknowledged:

“[A] small faculty and staff trying to do too much with diminishing resources” (pg. 2)

“[T]he Department faculty and staff are martyring themselves to be all things to all people...in the hopes that this behavior will yield new resources to support teaching and research. These new resources have not been forthcoming. The faculty is doing much more than is reasonable given existing resources.” (pg. 4)

Against this background, the external review team raised a number of key concerns and made a series of key recommendations, commonly connected to the need to develop a consensus vision and to make strategic trade-offs (pg. 19); they further identified some opportunities to enhance program quality. Additionally, the external review team identified some pivotal resources to be provided by the College, including approval to fill an open staff position (pg. 8), and increase the number of tenure track faculty (pg. 7). As stated in the ERTR (pg. 7): “Consequential reinvestment by the College of Arts and Sciences and the University of New Mexico is required if the Department of Economics is to continue to deliver high quantity teaching, scholarship, outreach and service, and to take advantage of the opportunities...”

## **III. Key Recommended Resources for the Department**

As stated in the ERTR (pg. 4): “The Department has reached a tipping point and the current exceptional performance it has exhibited is not sustainable without an influx of resources from the College and University”; and also (pp. 19-20), “The size of the

Department's faculty is too small to support the variety of ongoing undergraduate, graduate, research, outreach and service missions." Given these concerns, the external review team's recommendations on critical resources included:

1. "[W]e strongly recommend that the Department be immediately allowed to hire a full-time grant support staff person." (pg. 8)
2. "[I]mmediate allocation" (pg. 7) of two tenure track positions to the Department, given its current faculty FTE (pg. 19-20). Further, without endorsing a further specific number of future faculty FTE, the review team also endorsed additional new faculty investments conditional on the faculty identifying focus areas of excellence (e.g., for graduate fields) (pp. 19-20).

Related to key recommended resource #1 above, the Department was not allowed to hire its Grants Coordinator position (Grade 9; \$30K annual salary) that had been held open, as part of this line was taken as part of a required budget cut for 2010-2011. However, in June 2011 the Department was given approval, with the lifting of the "Pause and Hold" policy at UNM, to hire an Administrative Assistant II (Grade 7, \$24K annual salary). In response, this position was successfully filled by the Department in July, 2011.

Related to key recommended resource #2 above, while in May 2011 the Department was initially denied at the College level all requests for any new faculty hires (despite the ERTR), this was starkly reversed in August/September 2011. Subsequent to a new interim Dean of A&S hired in July 2011, the Department was given tentative approval for six "net" new faculty hires for FY13-FY15. Specifically, in the College of Arts and Sciences FY13 Hiring Plan, the Department was given tentative approval (subject to final approval by the Provost's Office) for:

- (i) new tenure track assistant professor search for 2011-2012, to begin at UNM in FY1, in environmental and resource economics;
- (ii) new tenure track assistant professor search for 2011-2012 (to begin at UNM in FY13) in health economics; with service responsibilities in Economics and BA/MD program, and regularly teaching up to one course per year in BA/MD program;
- (iii) new teaching-centered Lecturer search (continuing full-time position under 9 month contract) for 2011-2012, to begin at UNM in FY13; with 3+3 teaching load and service responsibilities in both Dept. and to BA/MD program, and regularly teaching up to one course per year in BA/MD program;
- (iv) new teaching-centered Lecturer search (continuing full-time position under 9 month contract) for 2011-2012, to begin at UNM in FY13; with 3+3 teaching load and service responsibilities as new Online Program Coordinator for Department;
- (v) new tenure track assistant professor search for 2012-2013, to begin at UNM in FY14, in health economics;
- (vi) new tenure track assistant professor search for 2013-2014, to begin at UNM in FY15, in international development and sustainability.

In addition to needing eventual approval from the Provost's Office, this proposal was also conditional on faculty approval (and the interim Dean was open to revisions). Further, the *quid pro quo* for this package proposal was that the Department had to agree to greatly reduce its future reliance on part-time instruction (PTI) funding support from the College, as a pilot case for larger efforts in the College. As negotiated between the Dean and Department Chair, the offer to the Department faculty would be to reduce use of PTI and move the Department into the selective delivery of online courses (e.g., ECON 105 and ECON 106 Principles courses, and possibly others). Specifically, if agreed to then beginning in Fall 2012, the Department would only be allocated PTI funds from the College to cover the courses lost by service of Economics faculty with administrative appointments in the College. On other hand, for the very first time this would explicitly recognize the need to cover the teaching loss of the Department's service contribution to the College. Finally, with the potential hiring of the Lecturer (iv above) as Director of Online Course delivery program for Department, and one current T/TT faculty developing an ECON 300 online course, the Department will begin with online instruction in Fall 2012; these online offerings come with extended university (EU) revenue sharing from tuition to help replace some of the operating budget and GA lines cut from Department during 2008-2011.

While the loss of the Grants Coordinator position still leaves the Department critically unable to fully provide the needed support for externally-funded research grants, the provision of the administrative assistant II staff position covers the front-desk help lost when the bulk of Work-study funds were cut from the Department (over 2008-2011 budget cuts). And, critically, assuming no further net losses, the provision of the four tenure-track assistant professors and two full-time Lecturer lines would come close to restoring the Department back the level of faculty numbers in the 1990's (but still lower than in 1980's). Such resources would help push the Department back away from the "tipping point" and better allow continued (strategic) pursuit of excellence.

#### **IV. Key Planning Process Recommendation for Department Faculty to Undertake**

The external review team recommended that the Department faculty undertake one very specific further planning process:

1. Conduct facilitated, off-campus, two-day strategic planning retreat "to set goals and make key decisions about what activities they are going to continue to support and what activities they are no longer going to support." (pg. 10)

In response to this key planning process recommendation #1 above, the Department of Economics conducted an off-campus, two-day facilitated retreat on August 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, in Albuquerque, NM. With her significant professional experience across government, non-profit, and academic settings, Rosemary Romero was hired to serve as the professional facilitator.

Fortuitously, the Department Retreat was scheduled to be held shortly after the College of A&S held the 2011 Chairs' and Directors' Retreat, where the new interim Dean first broadly introduced his significant new faculty hiring plan for FY13 in the College of

A&S. Strategic goals at the College level included increasing tenure track faculty lines, reducing reliance on part-time instruction, and careful increases in the use of online instruction and extended university course delivery (with revenue-sharing back to Departments). Targeted areas of focus in the College plan included: health-related research and teaching; strengthening Latin American Studies and broadening the internationally-oriented curriculum; and an African American faculty hiring initiative.

At the request of the Department Chair, and in the days immediately prior to the Department Retreat, the Dean provided a brief memo (8/16/11) to Economics faculty, which acknowledged the importance of strategic planning and consideration of trade-offs and priorities (consistent with the ERTR), but also acknowledged the availability of additional faculty hiring resources, and the availability of a unique opportunity for the Department to act as a pilot or case study (not foreseen in the ERTR).

“My sense is that until very recently you have been thinking about the trade-offs in stark terms because you have been given every reason to expect that your department would be limited to 12 FTE indefinitely. If the strategic plan we have developed in the College succeeds, we should be able to provide significantly increased faculty resources to your department... If your department is willing to participate as a pilot project for implementing this new strategic plan, we will do everything we can ensure that the College provides you with the increased faculty resources to achieve your priorities in the future.”

More specifically, the pilot project that the Dean referred to was an offer from the College to the Department to help initiate new College efforts to reduce reliance on part-time instruction (PTI) funding for course delivery while growing back the faculty numbers with net additions. These were more fully articulated in the College of A&S FY13 Hiring Plan, which was made available to the Economics faculty prior the Department’s Strategic Planning Retreat. It also specifically related to key recommended resource #2, from the ERTR.

## **V. Strategic Recommendations the Department Faculty Urged to Consider**

The ERTR included a wide variety of suggestions and thoughtful discussion points for the Department to consider in the decade ahead. For consideration at the recommended planning retreat, the external review team offered six strategic issues/recommendations (ERTR, pg. 11), which they urged the faculty to consider. Along with issues of critical resources and needed faculty lines (#1 and #2 from Section III above), the faculty chose to focus on those primary strategic recommendations at the retreat, as also emphasized here in the Department response:

1. Reducing the number of undergraduate classes and delivery mechanisms and increasing the quality (e.g., the mathematical prerequisites) for majors,
2. Reducing the number of graduate fields and increasing the quality of the PhD program (e.g., higher admission requirements),

3. Reconsidering the current MA program and possibly replacing it with an applied policy masters' degree in collaboration with other units on campus,
4. Setting priorities for faculty service within and outside the Department so that primary effort can be focused on teaching and research,
5. Adding flexibility to the rules of governance, now that the cultural problems in the Department have been resolved, and
6. Developing a formal and explicit mentoring program for junior faculty that goes beyond informal (friendship) ties.

After articulating these six strategic issues/recommendations, the ERTR stated (pg. 11): “We believe that the retreat should focus on what areas of excellence the Department wishes to collectively pursue and should consider what resources are needed to support excellence in these activities. The retreat should be facilitated, where the goal of the facilitator is to challenge the Department to make difficult trade-offs...”

The topic of reducing and reconfiguring the number of graduate fields generated considerable discussion in the Department, and faculty members responded positively to the suggested retreat. In the months prior to the strategic planning retreat, as announced by the Chair in late Spring 2011, faculty members circulated a number of detailed proposals developed in small groups for revising the graduate fields in the program. Groups were also asked by the Chair to seek input from the members of the Graduate Committee (e.g., for advice on needed curriculum details, etc.). Members of the Graduate Committee (Jennifer Thacher and Kristine Grimsrud, current and recent Graduate Director, respectively) also provided faculty with simulations of alternative curriculum sequences, under different program configurations (e.g., 4-, 3- and 2-field alternatives), and associated faculty resource needs and the expected number of graduate students that could be sustained. Finally, along with the ERTR itself, a booklet of all revised field proposals was prepared by office staff and provided to the faculty in the week prior to the retreat.

All 15 (12 FTE) T/TT UNM economics faculty members attended the retreat. By agreement, only informational votes were taken at the retreat. With the collective intent that if a “zone of agreement” could somehow be struck, then such implicit contracts could be implemented by later formal faculty votes under the Department’s *Rules of Governance and Decision-making* (e.g., required 48-hour notice on all motions for voting, etc.).

As the primary outcome of the Strategic Planning Retreat, the faculty unanimously passed a combined motion on August 23, 2011, which: (a) endorsed all new College FY13 Hiring Plan tenure-track assistant professor faculty positions (4) and Lecturer positions (2) for FY13-FY15; (b) established a vision statement for the Department; (c) endorsed seeking (in future Department hiring plans) one additional tenure-track assistant professor search as early as FY 14 in the area of international development and sustainability, (d) reduced the number of graduate fields from four to three; (e) endorsed

continued participation in developing the proposed new MPP program, and potential conditional elimination of department's stand-alone MA degree; and (f) endorsed reducing off-campus offering (e.g., at UNM-West) as the Department selectively begins introducing online course offerings. Of note, (a) and (b) relate to the key recommended resource #2 (section III). Specifically, the faculty motion read:

Following the department's strategic planning retreat, the faculty accepts and strongly endorses all elements of the Dean's hiring plan for the Economics Department, which includes a total of 4 new tenure-track faculty positions and 2 new lecturer positions over the next three fiscal years (FY 13, FY 14, FY 15).

We also adopt the following vision statement for the department:

**Our department (faculty, staff, and students) is an applied economics program. We value collegiality, intellectual diversity and excellence. We work to improve the well-being of communities. Collectively, we aspire to:**

- **Provide quality learning experiences that produce intellectually curious and highly capable graduates**
- **Conduct policy-relevant and high-quality research**
- **Serve the community, university, and discipline.**

We endorse a new strategic plan that identifies 3 graduate fields as our areas of emphasis (Environmental & Natural Resource Economics, Public Economics, and International Development & Sustainability) that are consistent with the priority areas in health and Latin America/international identified in the Dean's strategic plan for the College. To realize the department's vision of excellence, to achieve critical mass in the field of international development & sustainability, and to enhance the university's strengths in the study of Latin America, we request additional resources from the College for FY 14 to fill a tenure-track position at the junior level. This additional position would be in the field of international development & sustainability, and would have an emphasis on Latin America. In order for each field to be self supporting, the faculty will collectively develop a plan to incentivize the allocation of GA slots for incoming students across primary fields, based on external graduate student support generated from outside the University by individual faculty members.

Conditional on the successful implementation of the MPP program, the department may consider dropping its stand-alone MA program in the future. Furthermore, without the introduction of new revenue-sharing opportunities, the department may significantly reduce or eliminate economics courses offered at UNMWest.

Relating to the key planning process recommendation of the retreat (#1 in section IV above), adopting a formal "vision statement" for the Department helped set the tone for the discussion of strategic tradeoffs. The vision statement re-emphasized the Department's historical focus on applied economics, while valuing collegiality,

intellectual diversity, and excellence, and with the collective goal of working “improve the well-being of communities.”

Relating to strategic recommendation #2, perhaps the most critical change considered was the reduction of graduate fields, with emphasis on the PhD program, from the prior set of four (Environmental and Natural Resource Economics, Public Finance, Labor Economics, and International and Development Economics) to a resulting new set of three (Environmental and Natural Resource Economics, Public Economics, and International Development and Sustainability). As discussed at the retreat, the new Public Economics field lines up better with the title for many similar fields in economics and would include a UNM focus on health economics; the new International Development and Sustainability field would emphasize complementarities with the Department’s traditional strength in Environmental and Resource Economics. While the ERTR included a review team recommendation at one point (pg. 14) of reducing down to two graduate fields if faculty size was maintained at 12 FTE, the faculty felt that the targeted three fields could be supported with the critical influx of new faculty lines in the A&S FY13 Hiring Plan (plus one additional requested line), and emphasizing greater flexibility in course requirements and the complementarities between these final chosen three.

Relating to strategic recommendation #5, while the topic of revising the Department’s “Rules of Governance and Decision-Making” was discussed, no changes were proposed. The faculty recognized the somewhat burdensome effect of some rules (e.g., supermajority required for all personnel decisions for faculty support or recommendations), but there was discussion that these rules has worked well for last 10 plus years in improving the democratic culture of governance in the Department.

Relating to strategic recommendation #6, the topic of improved mentoring for the assistant professors was discussed. The faculty chose to not take any actions at this time, nor were any proposals made. However, there was recognition and consensus that it is important to always be promoting a department culture supporting mentoring, where chosen senior mentors to assistant professors provide constructive criticism and advice where needed (with both push and pull components), and not just try to be a friend. Faculty members discussed how this will have be an ongoing collective process and effort. No new formal rules were put in place by faculty at the retreat. However, all current assistant professor now have one or two explicit mentors (chosen by them and announced to the Department Chair, by the end of their first year at UNM) from the UNM economics senior faculty who will work with them. And, to help improve mentoring, the Department chair (subsequent to the retreat) also allocated an initial \$1,000 from available discretionary funds to each of the current assistant professors on September 1, 2011; these funds are to help the assistant professors develop an academic mentor from outside UNM in their chosen area of research specialization (to visit the mentor at their home institution or a conference, or to bring the mentor in for a visit to UNM). This was consistent with a more specific comment in the ERTR (pg.19).

Relating to strategic recommendation #4, faculty discussion at the retreat did not lead to any new departmental rules on administrative service appointments outside the



Department. Faculty members were unwilling to restrict career options in UNM administration for individuals. However, there was discussion that it would be a good idea to include Department Chair in any negotiated arrangements and recompense to Department when a temporary administrative assignment would reduce a faculty member's FTE in Department. This has subsequently been followed in a new case. Further, faculty felt that the interim Dean in A&S was aware of the issue and his proposed FY13 Hiring Plan for A&S incorporated consideration, especially the two teaching-centered Lecturer positions, for the prior heavy administrative service load carried by Department for the College, and associated loss to our Teaching Program. Also, the new PTI arrangement in the proposed Pilot Project would make all future College administration duties explicitly covered by full PTI support for every course reduction in teaching load. Such an explicit arrangement has never been in place before, and the ambiguity was viewed as detrimental in the ERTR (pg. 7). Thus, by the faculty voting to accept/endorse all elements of the Dean's proposed FY13 College Hiring Plan, with respect to Department of Economics, it was anticipated that this situation would be significantly improved going forward.

A number of items were left for future work and deliberations. It was decided at the retreat to consider revisions to the graduate and undergraduate curriculums at subsequent faculty meetings in the Fall 2011 semester (see below), as relating to recommendations #1 and #2 (curriculum change aspects).

Returning again to key recommended resource #2 (section III), on September 12th, 2011 the Department was given the approval by the College of A&S (after review of the College plan by the Provost) to proceed with searches in 2011-2012 for all four of the faculty positions to begin in FY13. Search committees were formed by the Chair, and the proposed searches were submitted and approved through the UNMJobs process. All job advertisements were posted in the November Job Openings for Economists (JOE) and a wide variety of other outlets. As of mid-December, 2011, semi-finalist lists for both tenure-track assistant professor positions had been unanimously approved by the Department faculty (December 7th and 14th, 2011 faculty meetings), and the two Lecturer searches were receiving applications through national searches as well. The expected growth in faculty FTE numbers in economics should greatly reduce past reliance on PTI (including heavy use of graduate students) for supporting a large proportion of our curriculum. This outcome will help to rectify a concern of the external review team on the heavy teaching burden imposed graduate students (pg. 12).

Related to strategic recommendation #2, on October 5th, 2011 the faculty unanimously passed a motion package from the graduate committee (with Jennifer Thacher as Graduate Director) concerning the prior approved reduction to three graduate fields, and needed changes in the Department's Graduate Handbook. These included creating new lists of required courses and options for the three fields (with greater flexibility), dropping some courses, adding a new Health Economics course, and revising some titles, content descriptions and pre-requisites for some courses. All changes were then submitted for possible initiation in the 2012-2013 AY, through UNM's Curriculum Workflow Process, and consideration by Faculty Senate for approval.

Related to strategic recommendation #1, on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011 the faculty unanimously passed a package of motions by the undergraduate committee (with Melissa Binder as Undergraduate Director) to require calculus for the BA major or minor in economics (previously recommended but not required), and to create a new ECON 307 math tools course, with a prerequisite of MATH 121 to also meet this requirement (as an alternative). The undergraduate committee is also seeking course development funds through a Teaching Allocation Committee grant at UNM, and possible use of the new Learning Studio classroom at UNM. With department approval in place, these changes will be processed through UNM's Curriculum Workflow process in Spring 2012 (and consideration by the Faculty Senate for possible approval) before future implementation. It should also be noted that faculty discussion at the retreat acknowledged that the addition especially of the two new teaching-centered Lecturers, as well as addition of tenure-track lines, should help reduce Department reliance on graduate students teaching a heavy burden of undergraduate courses. This should help improve the quality of both the graduate program (reducing burdensome teaching loads on graduate students [ERTR, pg. 12]), and improve the quality of undergraduate instruction (greater reliance on full-time faculty for teaching key courses).

Additionally, the Department submitted a proposal to the College of A&S's Fall 2011 RFP for Extended-University (EU) funded TA initiatives. The Department proposal requests approximately \$10,000 of additional annual TA support from the College, to be matched by Department use of EU funds (from revenue-sharing from planned introduction of online Economics courses in EC 105 and EC 106). The use of these TA funds would be to support a supervised graduate student teaching experience, similar to our SUCCESS program in several of the principles courses, to support labs for EC 309 (introduction to econometrics) and the new EC 307 course. This is also consistent with a recommendation in the ERTR (pg. 12). Creating high quality learning experiences in our math and quantitative tools courses (EC 307 and EC 309), combined with improved attention to course sequencing in our advising, should benefit the learning experience for all our upper division (300 and 400 level) economics courses. These changes are also consistent with providing a set of supervised teaching experiences available to graduate students. Seeking improved institutional support for teaching is also consistent with external review team comments and discussion in the ETRT (e.g., pg. 19).

Related to strategic recommendation #3, on November 2, 2011 the faculty unanimously approved proceeding ahead with participation in the proposed interdisciplinary Masters on Public Policy (MPP). This proposed program is joint with Sociology and Political Science, and possibly other Departments. Approval to proceed with planning was provided by the Office of Graduate Studies in Summer 2011. Subsequently, Department faculty (with Melissa Binder as representative) have been involved in writing a revised proposal (curriculum, budget, market analysis), and receiving community input from throughout New Mexico, as well as on campus at UNM. The faculty vote of continued endorsement was based on a revised proposal (10/28/11), which will still have to go through the UNM Faculty Senate and state CHE approval process before any program could be implemented. Once implemented, the faculty will take up the issue of

eliminating its stand alone MA in Economics (which for now is being de-emphasized relative to the PhD program in Department, given 2008-2011 budget cuts to GA lines).

## **VI. Summary and Conclusions**

Going through the APR process, our first since 2000, has been a very healthy process for the Department of Economics over the last year and half. While it has not been without a few bumps along the way, it has generated *forward-looking strategic planning*, which should serve the Department well in the decade ahead. To begin, a detailed Self-Study Report (SSR) was written through a collaborative faculty process. Then, an exceptional group of external reviewers was chosen. They took their professional task very seriously, and their efforts have been greatly appreciated. Their thoughtful external review team report (ERTR) provided praise for the overall efforts of the Department and identified some critical resources that the Department needed, but also provided some constructive recommendations for the faculty to consider in order to sharpen the Department's strategic focus.

Primary among the recommendations in the ERTR was one very specific process recommendation -- that the Department faculty members undertake a professionally-facilitated, off-campus two-day retreat (which would be the first ever for the Department). To their credit, this recommendation was favorably received by the faculty, and the retreat was held in August 2011, prior to the start of the Fall 2011 semester.

Notably, in the weeks and months prior to the retreat a variety of administrative changes had happened at UNM (e.g., new interim Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences, new interim Provost, and new Dean of Graduate Studies). Further, the new interim Dean (Mark Peceny) had read the SSR and ERTR, prior to recommending new faculty lines for the Department in the College of Arts & Sciences FY13 Hiring Plan, released in early August 2011. [Previously the Department had been notified in late Spring 2011 that it would receive no new faculty lines.] These recommendations in the Dean's FY13 Hiring Plan, which also included future year commitments to the Department in FY 14 and FY15, were eventually accepted by the Provost's Office (FY13 component to date).

Anchored by the collaborative efforts at the two-day strategic planning retreat, and bolstered by a badly needed influx of re-investment in the Department's personnel resources (lifting of the Pause and Hold on a staff line, and approval of 6 faculty searches for FY13-FY15 [with four in FY13]), the Department faculty have synchronously (!) proceeded ahead with a variety of strategic changes. The strategic changes were moved forward through a series of targeted faculty meetings in the Fall 2011 semester. While there is still work to be done, the Department is now fully into the implementation stage. The essential elements of Department hiring plans are in place through FY15 (six net new positions tentatively approved, with one additional tenure-track assistant professor line being requested). Four faculty searches are currently in progress during for Fall 2012 start dates (FY13). Consistent with the general recommendation to reduce graduate fields, the faculty reduced the Department's Phd fields from four to three, and initiated an associated set of flexible curriculum changes. All three graduate fields are be targeted

with additions of new (net) hires of assistant professors. With respect to the undergraduate curriculum, two new teaching-centered Lecturer positions will be in place for FY13 to support course delivery, with one of those focusing on initiating Department efforts to carefully (e.g., with full outcome assessment) and selectively introduce online courses for the first time. Also, the faculty has initiated curriculum changes to raise math requirements for Economics majors and minors, which should ease some of the demand pressure and help improve the rigor of our undergraduate training. Further, all recent part-time instructors for the Department (some 20+) have been notified by the Chair in Fall 2011 of the availability of new full-time openings for two Lecturers, and the intent of the Department to greatly reduce reliance on PTI funding of instruction, and to reduce delivery of off-campus courses while selectively introducing some online courses. Finally, the Department faculty have approved moving forward with participation in an interdisciplinary MPP degree program, and expect to eliminate the stand-alone MA degree if the MPP is eventually approved by the UNM Faculty Senate and the state review process.