

**Year-Three Review following the 2021-22 Academic Program Review for
UMBC Department of Economics
September 2, 2025
Salem Abo-Zaid, Chair**

In response to the Academic Program Review (APR) Action Plan developed for the Department of Economics following its 2021-22 APR, what follows is a summary of department progress regarding each recommendation of the Action Plan.

Provide support for the newly endowed faculty position.

During the Academic Year 2022-23, the Department of Economics successfully completed the search for an endowed Pausch Assistant Professor. The hire (Dr. Enrico Berkes) is an advanced assistant professor with PhD from Northwestern University and spent multiple years as a post-doctoral fellow at The Ohio State University. This position was established thanks to the generous donation of an UMBC alumnus. Upon hire, the faculty was provided with a startup plan that allowed him to purchase equipment and continue his research productivity. The hire package of Dr. Berkes was quite strong; the salary offer and research support were well above the normal for a starting assistant professor. This reflects hiring a faculty with an established record of publications in top journals in the profession, who also continues to be highly engaged in research activities as well as grant submissions. In addition, the hire was provided with course releases and with funding to travel, internationally and domestically, for conference presentations and other scholarly activities.

Review teaching load, research expectations, and professional development for ECON faculty in light of UMBC's recent R1 status.

The Department of Economics continued to provide support to faculty to reduce the burden of teaching while advancing their research agendas. This effort included, among others, course releases when feasible, assigning teaching assistants and combining sections of the same course to create one larger section. In Fall 2024, a committee was formed to review applications from faculty for course releases, and it has already been useful for couple of our faculty. The committee will continue to solicit applications for course releases in the foreseeable future, subject to the needs of the department and budget constraints. Furthermore, some faculty took advantage of the Dean's initiative to support tenured associate professors who aim to advance to Full Professor in the foreseeable future. We are pleased to report that since our APR in 2022, we had one Associate Professor promoted to the rank of Full Professor and two Assistant Professors promoted to Associate Professor with Tenure.

The Department has also worked on providing support to faculty for personal or family reasons. These Family Support Plans generally amount to relieving the faculty from teaching duties for an entire semester (with the possibility that the beneficiary faculty would provide some service to the Department). It is the belief of the Department that such a balance between life and work is essential and indeed conducive for scholarly work over the longer term. It is also consistent with one recommendation by the external reviewers. Furthermore, given that a significant number of our faculty are international, the Department of Economics and UMBC have worked on supporting

these faculty members with immigration matters, such as applications for Visa and Permanent Residency. Specifically, during the reviewed period, the Department has worked on obtaining a Green Card for two full-time faculty and started the process of helping one faculty member (who joined UMBC in Fall 2024) in the process of acquiring permanent residency in the United States.

These efforts have allowed our faculty to allocate more time to research activities, which has translated into a good stream of publications, both in terms of quantity and quality. During the reviewed period, some of our faculty had acceptances of articles at highly regarded journals in the Economics profession. A faculty (Professor Tim Gindling) has co-edited a book that was published by the Oxford University Press. In recognition of these achievements, and others, since the APR, Professor Gindling was named by the Dean of CAHSS as a Lipitz Professor in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and two of our faculty members (Professors Michael Andrews and Salem Abo-Zaid) serve on the Associate Editorial Board of well-known journals in Economics. One faculty member (Professor Dennis Coates) serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Sports Economics, and he is considered a leading figure in this field.

Furthermore, since our APR, the Department of Economics has hosted two Sports Economics Conferences under the leadership of Professor Coates. The first was held in March 2024 and the second in March 2025. Attendees praised the institution's growing reputation in the field of Sports Economics. These back-to-back conferences represent a major accomplishment for UMBC Economics, showcasing the department's capacity to convene leading scholars and foster cutting-edge discussion at the intersection of sports and economic analysis. We also wish to highlight a significant achievement beyond these conferences; Professor Coates was honored in June 2025 by the North American Association of Sports Economists (NAASE): the Coates-Humphreys Distinguished Research Award was established in the honor of Professor Coates and Professor Brad Humphreys (West Virginia University), recognizing their foundational contributions to the field. The two conferences and the high-profile awards in the discipline reflect UMBC's rising stature in Sports Economics, its intellectual vitality and its growing impact on both academic research and policy-relevant discourse in the field of Economics.

In November 2023, the Department of Economics also hosted the Patents, Innovation, and Technological Change in History (PITCH) Conference. The conference brought together an international and interdisciplinary collection of scholars devoted to improving the quality of historical patent data available to researchers and providing an international perspective on the history of technological innovation. Participants represented universities on three continents from departments of economics, business, and history, as well as the U.S. federal government. The conference was organized and hosted by Professors Berkes and Andrews. Indeed, both of these two faculty members are establishing themselves as important figures in the area of patents and the economics of innovation, with a clear national and international recognition that brings more visibility to our department and to UMBC.

Dr. Berkes has significantly advanced the research reputation of UMBC through international collaborations with leading institutions such as the Ohio State University, the University of Toronto, LSE, Bocconi University, and the University of Bristol, focusing on urban economic resilience and knowledge diffusion. His roles on scientific committees for major economics and policy conferences, along with frequent presentations at prominent institutions worldwide,

highlight the university's active role in shaping scholarly and policy debates. These contributions both expand the university's global visibility and reinforce its R1 designation by demonstrating leadership and rigor in economic research.

While the Department of Economics has used all tools available to reduce the teaching burden from faculty, particularly full-time faculty with research expectations, the teaching load remains considerably higher than the standard at R1 and peer institutions. To match the standards at such institutions, the load would need to be reduced at the institutional, College or departmental level. The Department of Economics is willing to work with the College and other relevant units on campus to meet that goal and to further implement the recommendations of the external reviewers.

The Department of Economics also faces constraints on office space. Starting Fall 2025, some of our faculty will be sharing offices. We expect these constraints to become more severe moving forward. Providing our faculty with sufficient office space to conduct research, meet students in-person and prepare for their classes is essential, and we would welcome initiatives to create more office space in the future.

Furthermore, the initiative of the Dean to help associate professors to advance to the rank of Professor is commendable. Currently, there are six (6) associate professors at the Department of Economics, and this program could be instrumental in achieving that goal. However, it is unclear what the horizon for this program is, and whether this initiative will remain in place moving forward, particularly given the budget situation at the State level and the Federal actions regarding higher education.

Reflect on curriculum broadly and strategically consider enhancements

The two most recent Department of Economics biennial assessments, in 2023 and in 2025, have focused on key service courses: Principles of Microeconomics (ECON 101), Principles of Accounting I (ECON 121), Principles of Accounting II (ECON 122) and Financial Literacy (FINC 150), as well as core gateway courses that an elevated number of students repeat: Intermediate Microeconomic Analysis (ECON 311) and Financial Management (ECON 374). ECON 311, a required course for all of our major and minor programs, was a focus in the 2023 assessment and the subject of a looping exercise in the 2025 assessment.

The 2025 biennial assessment included Principles of Accounting (ECON 121), a GEP assessment of Principles of Microeconomics (ECON 101), and a "closing-the-loop" evaluation of ECON 311. The Department seeks to "close the loop" on a recommendation from our previous biennial assessment, which indicated that ECON 311 students may benefit from access to review materials of key concepts from Principles of Microeconomics (ECON 101), such as demand and supply, the cost of production, and firms in competitive markets. These supplementary materials allow students to see how concepts that they learned in ECON 101 are elaborated on in ECON 311, and will be available throughout the semester. This is consistent with the Department's recent awareness that an increasing number of students are delaying ECON 311 until their senior year, sometimes three years after their introductory microeconomics course. The goal is to evaluate whether the availability of online review materials on Blackboard would impact student performance. As a point of comparison for the effectiveness of the online review materials, we will also examine the relationship between class attendance and student performance. Going forward,

we intend to include other courses, such as Data Analysis for Economics (ECON 310) and Introduction to Econometrics (ECON 421), in the next biennial assessment.

Since the APR, the faculty at the Department of Economics have observed an increase in the number of students who require multiple attempts to pass upper-level courses required for our majors. This is most pronounced for Financial Economics (FIEC) BS students, who must take Financial Management (ECON 374) and several 400-level financial economics courses. In 2024, we updated the requirements for the accounting certificates and submitted a proposal to update the requirements for students who switch into the FIEC BS. It was approved in June 2025. According to this proposal, students who would like to switch to FIEC from another major should complete three key courses: Intermediate Microeconomics (ECON 311), Intermediate Macroeconomics (ECON 312) and Financial Management (ECON 374). The proposal further specifies that students must earn a GPA of 2.5 or higher in these three courses with no third attempt, and an overall GPA of 2.5 or higher. The declaration of FIEC would then involve approval from the adviser. This requirement does not apply to students who wish to declare BA in Economics as their major. This change reflects the view of the Department of Economics that certain student may struggle to complete the requirements of the FIEC BS, thus leading to delays in completing the course requirements, multiple course attempts, delays in graduations or even to leaving UMBC. The BA in Economics allows for greater flexibility in the selection of courses and raises the likelihood of completing the degree in a reasonable amount of time. That said, students who apply for UMBC can still choose FIEC as their major as part of the application process, but upon admission they would need to maintain the aforementioned requirements of the FIEC BS program.

The Department would like to suggest, though, some areas for improvement, primarily with regards to timely feedback on biennial assessment reports and updating the undergraduate functional competencies. These competencies are at the center of the current outcomes assessment process both for General Education courses (such as ECON 101 and ECON 102) and for degree program outcome assessments. The current formulation of these five competencies is not easy to operationalize. The Department views the lag in updating these competencies as a real holdup on making the processes of learning assessment more useful and meaningful.

Cultivate interactions with other departments within CAHSS and within COEIT and CNMS

In recent years, the Department of Economics has expanded its Master's in Economic Policy Analysis (ECPA) program to include a Data Sciences track. This track is designed for students who are interested in learning more about computer programming languages and statistics programs that are relevant to Economic Policy Analysis, as many entry-level jobs for Economic M.A. graduates require these skills. This concentration is offered in collaboration with the Master's in Professional Sciences in Data Sciences at UMBC. At least three electives must be Data Science graduate classes.

To further foster our collaboration with other departments and units at UMBC, during the AY 2024-25, the Department of Economics has successfully completed the search for a full-time faculty (at the rank of Assistant Professor) in the Economics of Cybersecurity. The hired faculty will collaborate with other hires in the area of Cybersecurity at the Cybersecurity Institute of UMBC. The hire will be offering new courses in this area, thus adding to the variety of our course offerings.

During the reviewed period, the Department of Economics at UMBC continued to organize a joint seminar series with the School of Public Policy and the Center for Social Science Scholarship (CS3). The series brings scholars from the Washington D.C.- Baltimore area, other parts of the United States as well as from international institutions to present their work at UMBC, either in-person or virtually. The Department of Economics and the School of Public Policy often alternate the lead on coordinating the series, and it is attended by faculty and students from both departments as well as other departments on campus. Recently, discussions took place regarding organizing joint seminars with the Mathematics & Statistics Department, and these discussions will likely continue as new chairs will assume office in both departments. The Department of Economics will consider scheduling seminars from Data Sciences and the Cybersecurity Institute.

Provide more guidance to students on career opportunities. More effectively communicate with potential students and with alumni.

The main area of improvement since the APR has been the development of our website to direct students to career opportunities, internships, UMBC VITA and other opportunities. The website also has direct links for alumni to re-connect with UMBC and the Department. Furthermore, the Department of Economics has created a Linked-In account to better outreach to recent alumni, and there are considerations for using other social media platforms. We are also considering bringing the Economics Council of Majors into this effort.

Improved student advising as related to time-to-degree completion

In recent years, the Department of Economics developed a pre-advising form for students to complete prior to their required advising appointments. This effort was led by Mr. Robert Pawloski, who is a CAHSS/ECON Academic Advisor and Adjunct Faculty. The form has been useful. Students check the courses that were completed from each category of their degree, thus allowing them to identify the courses that are left to complete. It also allows professors to provide students with better suggestions and advice on which courses to take towards the completion of the degree. The Department also provides advice to students on choosing between a degree in Financial Economics and B.A. in Economics (which has lighter requirements) that better fits the needs, skills, and objectives of students. The website of the Department has been developed to better prepare students for advising, registering, understanding the various degree pathways that the Department offers, course repeats and various other options.

Work with the Office of Institutional Advancement (OIA) and other offices to provide funding for support resources such as key finance and other data bases for teaching and research as well as software.

A late former Economics Professor, Wendy Takacs, left a bequest for our ECPA graduate program, that is expected to bring between \$100-200 thousand over time. OIA could help with raising further funds from alumni, especially ECPA alumni, that would set up an endowment to generate enough spendable funds for all or part of a GA position. At the same time, funding large key data sets has been a challenge, and the Department will continue to think about ways to overcome this challenge. That Department would also welcome any ideas that would help to accomplish that goal.