

Dean's Response to Final Report of Information Systems Academic Program Review June 18, 2025.

An Academic Program Review (APR) was conducted for UMBC's Department of Information Systems (IS), College of Engineering and Information Technology, from Sunday, April 6, to Tuesday, April 8, 2025. The purpose of this review was to provide input on the program's effectiveness and consultation on its needs, priorities, and future directions. The reviewers provided insightful feedback and recommendations that can be used to improve the quality of the IS program and enhance UMBC's contribution to the workforce in the region. IS is an important part of the College's portfolio of programs to help the workforce needs of the state and the nation. I commend the program, and the IS department, for their efforts to create a quality program that was positively reviewed by eminent external visitors.

Summary of Strengths:

- The department is teaching a growing number of students and is responsive to workforce needs.
- The students feel they are getting a high value education with real world perspective.
- There is a strong focus on interdisciplinary research and education, which is aligned with the University's direction.
- Adjunct faculty bring a wealth of professional knowledge and experience, including potential employer connections.
- The reviewers laud the Department for their proactive, systematic assessment and improvement practices.
- The level of productivity for all levels of faculty is commendable.
- Generally, resources are effectively used.
- The Department is a strong basis for interdisciplinary collaboration across UMBC.

Recommendations and Responses:

The Department has worked closely with the College to respond to the suggestions for improvement in the report. The details of the responses are in the Department's submission. We summarize below the support provided by the College.

- Develop, adopt, monitor, and assess strategic directions, department organization, and capacity for academic programs, research, service, and external engagement outside department at the College, University and partners including corporate and alumni.

Response: UMBC and the College are currently engaged in a strategic planning process. As a part of this, the department will conduct strategic planning, which will include setting our goals and action plans for improving education, research, and community engagement. We will support them as they engage other UMBC units, alumni, and industry partners in the process.

- Align student enrollment, teaching, service, and research with resources, especially faculty lines, teaching assistantships, and facility space.

Response: Like the department, the College fully supports this recommendation. It will be a part of the strategic planning of the department, including teaching assistant (TA) budget, faculty lines, enrollment management, research infrastructure, and long-term sustainability.

- Continue to expand relationships with other campus units, alumni, and employers to partner in maintaining momentum in interdisciplinary research and employer aligned education.

Response: The department will ask its Research Committee, with input from the full faculty, to develop a plan to strengthen interdisciplinary research. The College agrees with this plan and will provide support for cross disciplinary research.

- Consider deepening relationships with area employers in undergraduate and MPS degree programs for work-based learning, curricular design and assessment informed by employers, student career outcomes, and intentional pipelines to employers.

Response: We agree with the Department's plan to work more closely with the Career Center, Office of Institutional Advancement, the College, and the IS Advisory Board to grow employer relationships and strengthen our curriculum mapping. They will also consult with the College Advisory Board.

- Consider a holistic advising model supported by full-time dedicated professional advising team following national best practice and standards.

Response: The college is currently redesigning the advising process as part of a NISS review of the campus, to better support the students with professional staff advisors and faculty take on a more mentoring role. The department's advising processes will evolve to be consistent with this direction.

- Reconsider approach to commitments for PhD applicants and current students. Consider an improved matching process between PhD students and advisors to ensure stability in funding, which supports the Department's growing research mission.

Response: The Department proposes to develop a plan to improve the matching process between PhD students and faculty advisors, ensuring better alignment of research interests and mentoring relationships. Given the current budget situation, it would be hard for the College to add resources for TAs, but we will support in other ways wherever possible.

- Offer more training and mentoring of TAs, adjunct faculty, and core faculty

Response: The department has already begun addressing several of the identified issues, including implementation of a comprehensive TA training plan, continuation of the annual evaluation of adjunct faculty, and creation of a mentoring / retention committee to support faculty development. We will work with them so that they can leverage the resources for such training and mentoring at the College and the University Level.