

Discontinuance of the Retailing B.S. Program (UCAP 9/23/2010)

Linda Good, representing Retailing

Our intent is not to debate the decision to discontinue the B.S. program in Retailing. We understand the need to make tough decisions in a constrained economy, even though good programs are proposed for elimination. We also understand that the discontinuance documents must present enough negative evidence to provide a paper trail for program elimination. What we wish to do is to provide a counterbalance to some points presented in the documentation. We are not disputing the *rationale* offered in the proposal.

- The RET undergraduate program, with 212 students is a small, niche program in CAS. However, if the program had been in some of the other colleges, it would not be considered small. Small does not indicate lack of viability. There are 3.5 FTE faculty members in Retailing and they teach a 2/2 course teaching load with an undergrad FTE ratio of 61/1 at the time of the moratorium last fall.
- Enrollments have decreased since joining CAS in 2005.
 - When RET joined CAS, entrance as junior requirements were instituted because ADV had entrance requirements....this led to a rapid decline in enrollment.
 - At the same time, we found out that in Human Ecology, there were no major gpa requirements so that we think RET inadvertently became a “dumping ground” for students who had an overall gpa of 2.0 but they put little effort into maintaining a higher major gpa. Therefore, enrollments also decreased when our major gpa was instituted, which is positive in that it increased the quality of the majors.
- The structure of the RET program is flexible, in that outside of the RET requirements (33 credits) and the Business classes (21 credits), no CAS courses are designated as requirements; likewise, no other CAS undergraduate program requires any courses from other departments in the college.
 - RET students do take elective courses in ADV and COM and some RET students also pursue the Public Relations and the Sales Communication specializations offered in the College.
 - Perceptions that lack of integration of RET students into the College may stem from the above facts.
- Our research informs our teaching and in so much as external funding allows one to pursue more comprehensive projects, RET faculty admittedly, are not significantly successful in securing major external funding. One USDA grant was received and a proposal to NSF submitted since last fall. But external funding is not the only benchmark for a quality program. Other faculty scholarship is of equal or greater importance.
 - Retailing faculty at MSU rank #1¹ nationally in scholarly output in the retailing discipline (4th rank internationally). MSU ranks #1² in scholarly output of doctoral graduates holding faculty positions.
 - Faculty members were successful in securing 7 of 12 applications for external funds in the last 5 years but they were not major grants. Internal success was 6 of 7. Funding from external and internal sources provided funds to support eight RET graduate students during the last six years.
- Retailing undergraduates have placement rates that are higher than the College placement rates. The College placement rates are in the low 90% range and RET has been in the 95% or greater range, according to the CAS Field Career Consultant.
 - Employment rates are stable in the retail sector and average starting salary of MSU Retailing graduates is \$42,000 - \$52,000.
 - Retail companies invest in the program; currently Kohl’s sponsors scholarships for the team members receiving the top rating in the “live” case competition in the senior capstone class.
 - An active alumni database at www.hed.msu.edu/alumni is maintained by one of the Retailing faculty. Current students and alumni can search to find contacts at various companies and alumni can contact RET faculty to solicit applications for open positions, etc. We are very connected to our alumni.

¹Rodney C. Runyan and Jonghan Hyun, (2009) “Author and Institution Rankings in Retail Research: An Analysis of the Four Retail Journals from 1994-2008,” *International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, (in press).

²Hyun, Jonghan and Rodney C. Runyan, (2009) “North American author and institution rankings in retailing scholarship: 1994-2008,” in Joel R. Evans (Ed.), *Strategic Retail Challenges and Opportunities in Uncertain Times*, Hempstead, NY: Academy of Marketing Science, 136-141.