

The School of Economic Sciences at Washington State University

Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

The vision of the School of Economic Sciences (SES) is to provide an outstanding academic environment dedicated to:

- offering the best undergraduate economics experience possible at a research institution.
- world-class graduate education, research, and scholarship, and
- creating effective links between economics education, economics research, and outreach to the state and nation,

within an environment of trust, respect and dedication to teamwork, in support of Washington State University's four core strategic goals.

This document offers a strategic plan to reach this vision. To offer the best undergraduate education possible at a research university SES will reformulate current course offerings (both in Economics and in Agricultural and Resource Economics) to carefully reallocate teaching resources to achieve the greatest value for evolving undergraduate needs, and to realize crossover efficiencies between the two curricula. Eliminating redundant and peripheral courses, consolidating complementary courses into single courses, and reallocating instructional faculty and resources to currently underserved priorities will produce both enhanced educational opportunities and teaching program efficiency gains. All reorganization and reallocation fall within the University guidelines and Goal *One* of the strategic plan for *World Class, Face to Face* undergraduate education.

A recent assessment of worldwide scientific production in economics, including output in economics from all departments, ranked WSU 150th in the world and 87th in the United States. The focus and critical mass provided by the creation of SES will move WSU higher in this ranking. Building on current strengths, and consistent with the University strategic plan, Goal *Two* (a world-class environment for research, scholarship, graduate education, the arts, and engagement), four Areas of Excellence are identified:

- Environmental and resource economics.
- International trade, markets, and development.
- Transportation policy.
- Economics of agribusiness systems and biotechnology.

Masters level education will be reorganized to focus on these Areas of Excellence and, like the undergraduate programs, to take advantage of crossover efficiencies. The two former departments had already achieved much efficiency in the process of creating their coordinated PhD program, but there will be additional focusing towards the identified Areas of Excellence.

Some current faculty research and teaching programs expand the scope of SES, or contribute in an auxiliary capacity relative to the four Areas of Excellence. While not contributing in a direct manner to the School's strategic focus, such faculty nonetheless have acquired regional, national

and/or international reputations in their respective fields. These faculty members will continue to be recognized for their valued contributions to programs in economics.

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Background

The School of Economic Sciences is the newest degree granting unit at Washington State University. It was formed by merging the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics from the College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences and the Department of Economics from the College of Business and Economics. The School of Economic Sciences has 34 full-time faculty who work with eight support staff and 60 graduate students. Undergraduate enrollment includes 140 majors in economics, agricultural economics, agribusiness, and environmental and resource economics and management. The School of Economic Sciences offers graduate programs leading to the Master of Arts degree in economics, agricultural economics, or agribusiness and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in economics or agricultural economics.

School Vision Statement

Washington State University's School of Economic Sciences (SES) provides an outstanding academic environment dedicated to:

- offering the best undergraduate economics experience possible at a research institution.
- world-class graduate education, research, and scholarship, and
- creating effective links between economics education, economics research, and outreach to the state and nation,

within an environment of trust, respect and dedication to teamwork, in support of Washington State University's four core strategic goals.

WSU Vision: Washington State University offers a premier undergraduate experience, conducts and stimulates world-class research, graduate and professional education, scholarship and arts, and provides an exemplary working and learning environment that fosters engagement.

WSU Mission: As a public, land-grant and research institution of distinction, Washington State University enhances the intellectual, creative, and practical abilities of the individuals, institutions, and communities that we serve by fostering learning, inquiry, and engagement.

WSU's Core, Four Strategic Goals:

1. Offer the best undergraduate experience in a research university.
2. Nurture a world-class environment for research, scholarship, graduate education, the arts, and engagement.
3. Create an environment of trust and respect in all we do.
4. Develop a culture of shared commitment to quality in all of our activities.

Goal 1: The best undergraduate economics experience at a research institution

The creation of SES offers a unique opportunity to raise undergraduate economics education to a higher level, thereby contributing to and enhancing the University's commitment to a World Class Face-to-Face student experience. The curricula supporting the degree programs will be organized to insure that students master the basic principles of economics underlying their particular fields of study and obtain experience applying appropriate theories and methodologies to solve the types of real-world problems they are likely to face upon employment. The SES will:

- Sharpen the focus and overall quality of undergraduate economics courses targeted for majors, minors and non-majors.
- Improve economics undergraduate curriculum efficiency and effectiveness via coordination of program curricula and consolidation of courses into more cost-efficient units.
- Separate and focus the undergraduate and masters-level economics curricula.

Strategy 1: Reorganize the teaching of introductory classes to incorporate innovative, effective teaching and learning, with a special emphasis on relevance and application beyond the traditional approaches of introductory economics education.

Tactic 1: Eliminate redundant and/or peripheral courses, consolidate complementary courses into new merged classes, and reallocate instructional faculty and resources into introductory economics education to offer smaller class sizes and more personalized instruction.

Tactic 2: Support a new and revitalized introductory curriculum through faculty evaluation incentives, and with teaching development grants and additional teaching assistant support.

Tactic 3: Develop a set of common learning goals and core topics for introductory classes, especially those that serve other programs.

Strategy 2: Strengthen the core curriculum in the major with respect to rigor and coverage to ensure that the 400-level courses in support of the major can be taught with the depth and rigor necessary to achieve the quality objectives for majors enrolled in SES's undergraduate programs.

Tactic 1: Identify and implement a common core of foundation-level economics courses for all undergraduate degrees offered by the SES.

Tactic 2: Require that core prerequisites are met for a student to be allowed to enroll in a 400-level course designed for SES majors, enforcing fundamental competencies in economic theory and quantitative methods.

Tactic 3: Establish a senior-level course where students focus on specific economic problem applications relating to their particular degree while relying on the core of economics and quantitative methods training common to all SES degrees. Expect students to engage in research and discussions with instructors to pursue topics of interest and to address real-world problems in economic analysis.

Tactic 4: Align the curriculum optimally to exploit the particular talents and expertise of the SES faculty.

Tactic 5: Eliminate redundant and/or peripheral courses, consolidate complementary courses into new merged classes, and reallocate instructional faculty and resources into both underserved priorities and new enhancements in the focus areas of the SES.

Strategy 3: Increase the involvement of undergraduate student majors with faculty, practicing economists and others who utilize economics in their careers.

Tactic 1: Involve majors in aspects of research programs conducted by SES faculty members, spanning both in-classroom activities, such as independent assignments involving data collection, analysis, and reporting, as well as out of classroom components relating to research endeavors of faculty members in SES

Tactic 2: Facilitate one-on-one faculty-student interaction by sponsoring student clubs that provide a platform for faculty seminars, forums, projects, and social events with students.

Tactic 3: Engage guest speakers from other academic institutions, government, and business to provide presentations specifically geared towards an undergraduate audience.

Tactic 4: Promote a broader and more formal internship program and opportunities for international education for majors that will provide students with valuable real-world experience and industry contacts, enhancing their career opportunities, and developing careers upon graduation.

Tactic 5: Provide evaluation incentives, as well as grants to faculty as appropriate, to provide undergraduate students with hands-on research experience in economic analysis .

Strategy 4: Offer minor programs in the School of Economic Sciences that provide a basic level of proficiency within the discipline, but do not require the attainment of the high level of proficiency commensurate with the major degree program.

Tactic 1: Design the curriculum for minors so that it depends on lower-division 300-level and non-major 400-level courses.

Strategy 5: Continue to meet and solicit the needs of other units for service courses and non-majors curriculum.

Tactic 1: Recognize the economics-training needs of other programs (e.g., CBE and the College of Engineering and Architecture) and develop courses that meet their particular requirements.

Tactic 2: Where possible, offer separate sections of introductory courses with a particular focus or theme consistent with the needs of non-SES majors.

Tactic 3: Offer courses that meet General Education Requirements with fewer prerequisites than most courses for SES majors.

Strategy 6: Utilize existing programs within and across colleges to enhance degrees within SES

Tactic 1: Develop joint programs with other academic units across the University.

Tactic 2: Incorporate classes from other academic units into SES degree programs to supplement or substitute SES classes whenever academically defensible in order to enrich curriculum and to mitigate inter-university class duplication.

Tactic 3: Integrate the minor in statistics with one or more majors in SES.

Goal 2: World class graduate education and research

To become a world leader in graduate education and research, the SES will focus its primary academic efforts on offering applied economics and policy programs in research and graduate education, with special emphasis in four Areas of Excellence:

1. Environmental and Resource Economics
2. International Trade, Markets, and Development
3. Transportation Policy
4. Economics of Agribusiness Systems and Biotechnology

The hallmark characteristic of research by SES will be timely applied economic analysis relating to real-world issues of societal relevance within the four Areas of Excellence. These results will be useful for decision making by policy makers, industry participants, and consumers.

Strategy 1: Build on faculty strengths in core competencies and the Areas of Excellence.

Tactic 1: Use open and new positions to hire new faculty that support the core teaching areas and/or are within the Areas of Excellence.

Tactic 2: Promote and support collaboration among SES faculty on economic research relating to the four Areas of Excellence.

Tactic 3: Utilize faculty contacts and the alumni network established in higher education institutions world-wide to identify and recruit graduate students with demonstrated interest and competence in the Areas of Excellence.

Tactic 4: Utilize existing contacts in government, business and institutions of higher education to identify potential placements for our Ph.D. graduates.

Tactic 5: Emphasize core economic theory, quantitative methods, and the Areas of Excellence in the education, mentoring, and course offerings underlying the graduate program.

Tactic 6: Seek sabbatical visitors and Fulbright scholars from other institutions, especially encouraging visitors within the Areas of Excellence.

Strategy 2: Strengthen programmatic viability and vitality in the core areas of microeconomic theory and quantitative methods to provide the necessary conceptual foundations for ensuring and enhancing the effectiveness of research and teaching in the SES Degree Programs and in the four Areas of Excellence.

Tactic 1: Reformulate the core sequence to emphasize microeconomic and quantitative foundations of SES Degree Programs, and especially as they pertain to the Areas of Excellence, while retaining macroeconomics as a supporting role in the curriculum.

Tactic 2: Expect SES faculty to maintain and students to develop solid foundations in economic theory and quantitative methods appropriate to their chosen areas of programmatic emphasis.

Tactic 3: Require all graduate students to demonstrate competence in the core economic theory and quantitative methods areas before being allowed to move on to their field areas and applied areas of research emphasis.

Strategy 3: Pay particular attention to the four Areas of Excellence in the provision of student-faculty research opportunities.

Tactic 1: Provide incentives for the development of fundable research programs within the four Areas of Excellence.

Tactic 2: Seek to establish endowed sources of funding to support study and research within the core Areas of Excellence.

Tactic 3: Develop internal and external seminar series specifically within the Areas of Excellence.

Tactic 4: Provide incentives for research proposals within the four Areas of Excellence that specifically involve graduate students as grantees.

Strategy 4: Continue to develop specialized degree programs that are related to the Areas of Excellence and that generate additional revenue and recognition for the SES.

Tactic 1: Identify underserved specialized programs related to the Areas of Excellence that can attract additional high quality students and revenue to the SES.

Tactic 2: Provide incentives for the development of these specialized programs.

Tactic 3: Work with alumni and contacts in industry to offer post-graduate short-courses that can generate revenue and recognition for the SES.

Strategy 5: Increase incentives, funding and publications relating to the Areas of Excellence

Tactic 1: Provide incentives for producing grant proposals relating to the Areas of Excellence.

Tactic 2: Provide special recognition and support for publication and funding relating to the Areas of Excellence.

Tactic 3: Promote SES external development activities seeking endowed funding for research and teaching efforts within the Areas of Excellence.

Goal 3: Create and promote effective links between economics education, economics research, and outreach to the state and nation

SES outreach activities will ensure that the implications of research discoveries are clearly communicated to constituent groups who would benefit from those discoveries. In addition, SES outreach activities will offer formal and informal educational opportunities to enhance economic literacy in the state, and will expand beyond traditional agriculturally based extension activities. SES outreach activities are expected to extend beyond the Extension faculty, and will be an important component of the contributions that the SES will make to the State of Washington and society in general. While activities performed by Extension faculty are one component of outreach, they are not the only component. Outreach includes many activities that create a culture of engagement with problems and issues of interest to external constituencies. These include such diverse activities as formal partnerships to apply university expertise to address local, state, national, and worldwide problems and issues, distance degree offerings, less technical talks to community interest groups, and responding to media inquiries about current events.

Strategy 1: Promote relevant outreach functions by all SES faculty members.

Tactic 1: Incorporate into the annual review process an explanation of the public interest in the various research goals and strategies to disseminate discoveries to interested

public. Reporting completed work should include a description of outreach activities and measures of impact, which is not the same thing as attendance.

Tactic 2: Outreach will be evaluated as a responsibility of most SES applied research activities. The Director in conjunction with the faculty member shall weigh the significance of potential/actual impact when considering how to reward such activity.

Strategy 2: Increase the visibility and accessibility of SES educational opportunities across Washington State.

Tactic 1: Offer focused economics seminars for students, industry participants, and policy makers.

Tactic 2: Actively participate in promotional opportunities relating to higher education, especially those participated in or sponsored by Washington State University.

Tactic 3: Create a SES “speakers bureau” with lists of potential topics available for presentations and media interviews.

Tactic 4: Provide economics offerings in the form of distance degree courses and programs offered through Washington State University Extended University Services when consistent with the goals of the SES.

Strategy 3: Determine the future role of the formal Extension Program in the SES, and implement that role in its objectives and operations.

Tactic 1: Appoint a subcommittee of the faculty to produce an analysis and proposal relating to the future role of formal Extension Programs in the SES

Tactic 2: Develop annual review and promotion guidelines for Extension faculty consistent with the future role of Extension Programs in the SES.

Tactic 3: Work with current Extension faculty and future Extension faculty hires to implement a transition from the current Extension program to the future SES Extension program approved by the SES faculty.

Tactic 4: Develop a paradigm relating future Extension activities to the Areas of Excellence, and reward Extension activities within the Areas of Excellence consistent with the rewarding of teaching and research activities within the Areas of Excellence.

Goal 4: Build an environment of trust, respect and dedication to teamwork.

Strategy 1: Collocate the faculty, graduate students and staff to a single set of offices that fulfills the locational and organizational needs of SES faculty and students.

Tactic 1: Accurately represent the locational and instructional needs of the faculty to the administration at WSU.

Tactic 2: Pursue support activities necessary to ensure relocation within the first year of SES operations.

Strategy 2: Increase SES visibility and respect within the WSU Community

Tactic 1: Promote and support university-wide speakers, similar to the Leigh speaker.

Tactic 2: Reward service by SES faculty on key university and college level committees.

Tactic 3: Nominate a SES member for every award offered at WSU, as appropriate and warranted.

Tactic 4: Aggressively pursue funding for scholarships.

Strategy 3: Increase faculty salaries to market levels.

Tactic 1: Document the lagging level of current salaries to WSU administration.

Tactic 2: Pursue endowments for supplemental faculty compensation

Strategy 4: Foster an open, inclusive and cohesive environment.

Tactic 1: Have participatory, open decision making processes and provide access to information used in these processes.

Tactic 2: Hold inclusive events for all SES employees, including receptions, barbeques, and banquets.

Tactic 3: Develop an “open lunch hour” for informal discussions among faculty, staff and graduate students, and encourage attendance.

Tactic 4: Encourage faculty and staff service on SES committees and participation in professional activities.

Tactic 5: Celebrate accomplishments by SES staff, graduate students and faculty.