A report submitted to the Graduate School of Texas Tech University

April 19, 2010

Submitted by:
Vickie Hampton (Personal Financial Planning)
Rashid Al-Hmoud (Economics)
Steve Fraze (Agricultural Education)
This report is based on materials drawn from The Rawls College of Business Administration (CoBA) Graduate Program Review 2003-2008 document and meetings of the review team with numerous CoBA faculty and students. The internal review team (Al-Hmoud, Fraze, and Hampton) along with an external reviewer (Dr. Sridhar Ramaswami from Iowa State University) held face-to-face meetings with selected groups. Dr. Sridhar has submitted an independent report focusing on the PhD program; therefore, the PhD program is not a primary focus of this document.

The committee recognized four active master programs at the Rawls CoBA—Master of Science in Accounting (MSA), Master of Science in Business Administration (MS), Master of Business Administration (MBA), and International Master of Business Administration (IMBA), and one PhD program. These degree programs were developed from five different areas of business—accounting, finance, information system and quantitative sciences, management, and marketing. In addition, the CoBA has two separately standing programs—Health Organization Management (HOM) and Energy commerce (ECOM).

Program Overview and Vision (good)

The vision of the Rawls College of Business Administration is to be among the top three schools of choice in Texas for prospective students, employers, faculty, business community, and the public at large. They would like to concentrate on programs where they will be excellent and where they have a competitive advantage. The overarching goal of the college is that every faculty member hired, student admitted, and employer invited to campus will be successful.

The review team encountered a very positive energy among faculty and students regarding the Rawls CoBA as a place to study and work. For the most part, students were satisfied with the rigor of their educational experience and the quality of their peers, a notable exception being the concern shared by faculty regarding admittance of students to the MBA program without work experience. Faculty affirmed that the working environment allowed and encouraged them to be successful in their teaching and research, and students were very positive about the faculty and the access they had to faculty. CoBA has developed numerous partnerships with other units on the Texas Tech System campuses, including many dual degree MBA programs, and it continues to improve collaboration with businesses for the purposes of establishing internships, enhancing placement of students, development, and to become a school of choice.

There are several examples in place that have taken advantage of the competitive advantage enjoyed at Texas Tech, a very comprehensive university with both the Law and Medical Schools in the same city with the main campus. These include the executive delivery MBA programs focusing on attorneys, physicians and other medical professionals, and the many resident dual-degree MBA programs. The Health Organization Management program is another example that holds promise. Although Lubbock is a very remote metropolitan area, the committee would like CoBA to consider our location as a competitive advantage, rather than a disadvantage. Lubbock enjoys an extremely low cost of living that can be very attractive to graduate students and potential faculty, and we have an excellent airport with good service especially compared to those in many university communities.

In terms of focus on programs where excellence can be achieved, the committee believes that opportunities exist to consolidate resources to promote excellence in selected programs. For example, the
MSA program appears to be very strong with a limited number of faculty while the IMBA and some concentrations of the MS appear to be struggling. Assuming resources are being spent on the struggling programs, they should be reallocated to build excellence in programs that are strong and/or have strong potential for excellence.

Looking specifically at the goals stated in the CoBA’s Strategic Plan, the committee has noted the following “grades” and comments:

- **Academic excellence**: Become a business school of choice in Texas for students, faculty, employers, and the general public (good). Continue efforts to establish the PhD program with a national emphasis.
- **Access and diversity**: Recruit, retain, and graduate business students who are prepared to succeed in and provide leadership to organizations and who represent a diverse population (good). This college is consistent with national averages for graduate business programs in terms of diversity.
- **Engagement**: Develop great business community interactions that enhance the educational experience of business students and their understanding of the business community (good). CoBA has established relationships that are very strong but need to expand in this area.
- **Technology**: Make appropriate use of technology in the delivery of services by the Rawls College (good moving towards excellent with the new facility).
- **Partnerships**: Build strategic business and academic relationships for the advancement of the Rawls College (good/excellent in case of the executive delivery MBA programs)

It is important to note that the Rawls College reaffirmed their AACSB accreditation in 2005 and have maintained it since then. This is a major accomplishment and extremely necessary in meeting their vision.

**Faculty Productivity (good)**

The faculty is a true asset to the graduate programs in the Rawls College of Business. The number of tenure/tenure track faculty increased slightly (from 64-67) during this review period and two new endowed chairs were added. Over 40 percent of the tenure track faculty members are at the rank of full professor, providing a valuable resource in leadership and productivity level for the college. There are also three Horn Professors currently on the faculty. While the faculty survey showed this group to be a bit more critical compared to graduate students on the items surveyed, the faculty we met with were very positive and passionate about the students they instructed.

The faculty are very good teachers based on student evaluations included in the self-study materials and according to the students we met with during the review. They are very productive compared to Texas Tech University averages in generating student credit hours and in granting degrees; however, this is the result of relatively large class sizes particularly in the MBA program. Some of the best teachers participate on an over-load basis in the executive delivery of the MBA program, producing student-credit hours at no cost to the university. And based on our meeting with the MBA Committee, this extra teaching is not harming research productivity. Overall, the students we met with seemed generally satisfied with faculty.
Regarding research productivity, 80 percent of the faculty members have published something during their tenure at TTU, with the number of journal articles published increasing by 117 percent over this review period. The trend is certainly positive and will be necessary to continue as TTU and the Rawls College try to meet the goal of a tier-one research university. In meeting with PhD students, some indicated that they published with faculty; however, institutionalizing this practice should produce a win-win for faculty and students.

The lack of external grant funding from the faculty is traditional among business schools/colleges across the nation. However, external unrestricted research funding is becoming increasingly important to universities nationally. Texas Tech University is not an exception, and in fact the quest to become the next major research university in Texas makes our administration even more motivated to reward unrestricted grant dollars. Acquisition of these funds also is important in improving faculty publication records and supporting additional PhD students.

Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates (good)

The quantity and quality of graduate students is generally “good” and consistent with the quality of graduate students at peer institutions.

The growth of the non-doctoral graduate program was inconsistent during the study period (2003-2008) as compared to the previous 5 years (1998-2003). Although enrollment in the MBA and MSA programs grew by 19% and 50%, respectively, enrollment in the MS program actually dropped by 50%, and remained the same in the IMBA program during the study period. Enrollment in the MS program did improve slightly towards the end of the study period, which was a direct result of CoBA’s recruiting efforts in India. Graduate students listed affordability of the program and city, availability of graduate funding, and diversity of graduate courses as reasons for joining the graduate program. Student dropout rate was described by faculty members as high, especially in the MBA program—the largest of the four tracks. They attributed that to students’ lack of preparedness, lack of funding, and students’ low placement expectations.

Placement of MSA and MS students (especially those in the Finance area) has been impressive. These students are very satisfied with their level of education and are confident about their chances in the job market upon graduation. Students in the MBA program are less confident of their chances, however. These low expectations spawn from the placement track record of MBA students in the past, which is described as "moderate" by CoBA's self study.

The committee recognizes the importance of recruiting serious and capable graduate students. The committee also believes that the CoBA had done a superb job recruiting students in the MSA and MS programs. From talking to representative graduate students in these programs and their professors, one could easily make the conclusion that students are satisfied with their level of education and potential placement, and professors are quite happy with students’ level of preparedness and seriousness. The same cannot be said about the MBA program, however. Both graduate students and their professors in the MBA program acknowledge the inconsistent quality of the graduate student body in the program. Some of the students in the program have had work experience before joining and are well prepared; others are not (especially those in the 150-hour program). While the committee understands the value of the MBA program to the CoBA and to Texas Tech as a whole, and also recognizes the opportunity cost of
raising admission requirements, the committee believes that the CoBA is now in a strong position that allows it to become more selective in terms of admission. The committee also believes that spending more effort on securing additional internships for MBA students would result in acquiring "directed experience" while in the program that would improve placement upon graduation, and, thus, help in attracting better quality students in the long run. The CoBA has the proper infrastructure to do so. The committee was pleased to hear that the admission committee has started interviewing potential graduate students as part of the admission process.

Curriculum and Programs of Study (good)

Master's Programs—The Rawls College of Business Administration has a very strong and diverse graduate program at the Master's level with four basic degree programs; the MSA (Master of Science in Accounting), MS (Master of Science in Business Administration), MBA (Master of Business Administration), and the IMBA (Master of International Business Administration). One of the major concerns for the college in the previous program review six years ago was student/faculty ratio. This has been corrected through enrollment management and reduction of the undergraduate program by about 1600 undergraduate students. With this reduction, the graduate program has been able to grow without the addition of new faculty other than replacement due to attrition. Although growth has been inconsistent across the different programs, this can be attributed to enrollment management and the state of the economy. This could certainly be the case with enrollment in the international program.

One of the positive points for the college is the MBA Committee. This committee appears to be very active in the oversight and management of the MBA program. In meeting with the committee, there is evidence of concern for a quality program that is both progressive and innovative. This committee is vital to the success of the largest portion of the graduate program with the MBA accounting for 66% of the total graduate students enrolled in degree programs. Most issues that need addressing are related to resources or the lack thereof.

It is apparent that each degree program has a large course offering with adequate diversity in the courses for different specializations. Surveys of both faculty and students were in agreement at somewhere between strongly agreeing and agreeing that the programs offered an adequate selection of graduate courses that are taught at an appropriate level with sufficient rigor. For programs contained specifically in the college, both faculty and students agreed that the selection of courses were offered in a timely manner for completion of degrees in timely manner. Agreement by both faculty and students in the survey about programs was strong throughout with no weaknesses or concerns emerging in the survey. When reading the individual comments, there were numerous items that were positive as well as several concerns, but with any set of individual comments from a survey such as this, they need to be balanced with the overall survey results. Anonymity also allows the comments to be very specific to the problems of the individual that may or may not reflect on the overall quality of the program.

Various groups of students from the different degree programs were selected to interview with the committee for periods of about 45 minutes. There is always concern when it appears a group has been selected for the interview with the review committee and that the interview was not an open invitation. Although students were told that their responses were anonymous, comments made by students were later identified as to who had made the comment by advisors knowing who was present in the interviews. With that in mind, the following is a list of strengths and issues needing to be addressed mentioned by the
graduate students interviewed by the committee. In some cases, what was considered a strength by one
group was viewed as a weakness by another group. One example was the admission of students without
work experience.

Strengths:

- Practicality of the Professors
- Small class size
- Inexpensive to attend Texas Tech University as compared to other universities and colleges
- Availability of scholarships
- Placement of students graduating from MS and MSA programs
- MBA students can be admitted without work experience
- MBA orientation is excellent for non-business students and students with no work experience
- Quality advisement within the college

Issues to Address:

- MBA joint degrees are very difficult in scheduling classes
- Advisement for joint degrees varies in quality
- No apparent articulation between the college and departments outside the college on joint
  programs
- Varying levels of rigor based on who teaches a course
- Redundant classes within the core curriculum
- No clear division between undergraduate and graduate requirements of dual listed courses
- Placement of MBA graduates low
- Transfer of credits for International courses not consistent
- Difficulty of International students transferring credits
- Too easy to be admitted
- Work experience should be required for admission to all programs

With most of the issues, either positive or negative, there was a consensus to each of the listed items
across the different groups of students. As to the validity of the concerns, it would be difficult for the
review committee to make a judgment and these are listed for the administration of the college to be
aware of for possible consideration. Overall, the Rawls College appears to be doing a commendable job
with the different programs offered at the Master’s level. Within any quality program, there are going to
be ongoing issues and problems that arise. It is apparent that the overall quality of the program is high
and that the administration, faculty, and staff are striving to continue to build and maintain a quality
graduate program.

Facilities and Resources (excellent)

Other than reviewing the building plans and touring the current building, we did not focus on facilities
because of the new building that is currently under construction. The committee believes that the new
structure and placement of faculty offices will facilitate synergy among faculty from various programs,
compared to the existing structure.
Recommendations

With the coming of Responsibility Centered Management (RCM), Rawls College will need to make decisions within a different academic environment than they are accustomed to. The following recommendations are made within the context of the mission, vision and goals of CoBA and RCM.

1. Increase the number of PhD students, and encourage more consistently that PhD students publish while they are students. External grant funding (or alternative funding sources) should be pursued for RA positions to increase PhD enrollment.
2. Increase internships for MBAs to acquire directed experience resulting in improved placement. This is especially important if the College continues to admit students without prior work experience. There is currently an infrastructure in CoBA to do this, but it would no doubt require additional emphasis and resources. However, CoBA alumni could be very supportive in this effort.
3. Considered dropping IMBA as a separate degree (could be an option within the MBA). Based on history, this degree will not meet the new Coordinating Board rules (THECB) for low producing MS degrees (a minimum of three graduates per year—not averaged). This is especially important if CoBA is expending resources on the IMBA degree program.
4. Improve articulation both in advising and scheduling across the degrees that comprise the various dual degrees.
5. Address the issue regarding the inconsistency of rigor between courses (issues raised by students who were interviewed). Perhaps a peer review system of teaching would be useful to see if the issue is broadly based and to correct the problem if necessary.

Date 4/19/2010

Vickie Hampton, Ph.D.

Date 4/19/2010

Rashid Al-Hamoud, Ph.D.

Date 4/19/2010

Steve Fraze, Ph.D.