

External Review Report  
MA in Organization Development  
Sonoma State University

External Reviewer  
Nancy L. Southern, Ed.D., Saybrook University  
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I appreciate the opportunity to provide this report as an external reviewer for the MA in Organization Development Program at SSU. During my visit to campus on Nov. 7-9 I had a chance to meet with the following stakeholders: Provost Echeverria, Dean Stearns, Dean Eyler, Greg Milton, Karen Moranski, Tenured/track faculty: Debora Hammond, Adele Santana, and Emily Ray, Hutchins faculty Tom Shaw, MAOD teaching faculty: Dave Warner, Lynn Woznicki, John Tarling, Steven Thomas, Tiffany von Emmel, and first and second year MAOD students in the classroom and a self-select group outside of the classroom.

**A: History & Contribution**

The current MA in OD program was established in 1985 as a MA in Psychology with an emphasis in OD as a collaboration between the Psychology and Business Administration departments. The founding faculty included Charles Merrill and Frank Siroky from Psychology, and Saul Eisen from Business Administration. Over the years, the Business Administration's interest in the program waned and Saul Eisen the program director transferred his affiliation to the Department of Psychology along with consolidating the program fully in that department.

When Dr. Eisen retired in 2007, a new tenure-track faculty was hired as Program Coordinator. However, that person left the university after two years. With the economic downturn of 2008, tenure-track faculty resources tightened and created a leadership challenge for the MAOD program. During the academic year 2009-2010, a decision was made to move the program into the Hutchins School of Liberal Studies with Dr. Debora Hammond assuming the role of program coordinator. At that time the program was designated as an MA in Organization Development. The program remains in the Hutchins school and is delivered through the School of Extended and International Education.

Over 31 years of existence, the MAOD program has maintained a strong reputation within SSU and the field of OD. The program is known for developing the personal, interpersonal, and leadership and consulting practice skills of its students. Students have contributed to the university and the local community through their internships and projects. The program is seen as a resource within SSU for support in organizational change efforts. Students develop effective skills as facilitators and leaders of organizational change. The program has maintained a strong reputation within the field of OD for educating practitioners.

**B: Faculty**

The MAOD program currently has an Academic Coordinator, Dr. Debora Hammond and five adjunct teaching faculty. Four of the five teaching faculty are graduates of the MAOD program. One of the five teaching faculty has a PhD in the field. One other teaching faculty has a PhD in another field. Dr. Hammond is a tenured faculty in the Hutchins School. Her academic

background in systems sciences is related to the field of OD and she has the academic and institutional background needed to support the program faculty. While she does not teach in the program, Dr. Hammond maintains good relationships with students, occasionally attends courses and provides the academic leadership in collaboration with the program directors. Dave Warner and Lynn Woznicki are adjunct faculty contracted each semester and paid a stipend to act in the role of program directors. Both are graduates of the MAOD program and actively practice in the field. The program directors carry out the traditional roles of a program director or chair in consultation with the academic coordinator as noted below. The activities in italics are the responsibility of the academic coordinator.

1. Educational Leadership

- a. Assures that the program learning objectives for students are effectively achieved.
- b. Orients and guides the teaching team to continuously pursue and integrate the program's pedagogical principles and methodologies into their teaching.
- c. Updates and develops new curriculum, guides program redesign (e.g. program unit increase), and involves the university's educational committees when needed.
- d. Designs and leads teaching team and faculty meetings.
- e. Provides mentorship to students as they move through the educational process over the course of their participation in the program.

2. Program Marketing

- a. The coordinator reaches out to potential students using means such as newspaper ads, radio announcements and information tables at conferences.
- b. Assesses and updates marketing efforts and creates and updates marketing material.
- c. Helps to maintain positive image of the program in the local as well as the national professional community.
- d. Holds program information sessions, and communicates with potential applicants by email, phone, or in-person visits.

3. Applicant Selection

- a. Assesses applicants' background, readiness, and educational goals via their written applications and group-interviews with OD program faculty
- b. Makes final selection of students.

4. Program Budgeting, Pay, Managing Accounts and Scholarship

- a. *As a self-support program the coordinator works with the School of Extended Education to create and maintain an annual budget.*
- b. Tracks the payments for program faculty activities such as participation in faculty meetings and applicant interviews.
- c. *Evaluates and decides on specific uses of funds.*

5. Faculty

- a. *Hires new faculty who are educators as well as practitioners within the field of OD*
- b. Maintains a pool of experienced visiting resource faculty who are recognized as notables within their field of practice.

6. Program Events

- a. Design, lead, facilitate or support others to facilitate program events such as culminating paper presentation celebrations, inter-cohort learning exchange events, and special guest presentations.
7. Alumni Outreach
    - a. Guide maintenance of a current database of alumni
    - b. Conduct alumni research
    - c. Support program graduates in staying involved with the program students in roles such as teaching associate
  8. Professional Practice, Development and Network
    - a. Is an active practitioner in the OD profession and thereby can draw on his/her experience in guiding and teaching in the program.
    - b. Is in touch with the current developments within the field of OD and can assess the relevance of these trends with regards to the advancement of the program curriculum.
  9. University Committees
    - a. *Participate in Graduate Studies Sub-committee.*
    - b. Support Graduate Studies yearly research showcase and select and prepare students to present at showcase
  10. Program Website, List Serves, Google Drive
    - a. Maintain and update the content of the OD program website
    - b. Help guide the development of new website
    - c. Keep current a number of list serves that facilitate information sharing between program members and alumni
    - d. Maintain and update OD program Google Drive
  11. Schedules
    - a. Develops and updates semester schedules including room requests for all courses.
  12. Staff
    - a. Works with the Graduate Administrative Analyst to maintain and implement current administrative structures processes and procedures

The remaining three program faculty teach courses, supervise and mentor students through their course interactions, attend program meetings and participate in curriculum development. Visiting faculty who are professionals in the field are brought in to supplement the content and share real world experience in the day-long Saturday class in the second year (OD 518).

I had the opportunity to meet with the five program teaching faculty and we had a robust discussion of the program's strengths and opportunities for improvement. All faculty expressed support and commitment to maintaining a strong program. They recognize the need to grow enrollment to the desired 15-18 students per cohort and are optimistic that recent changes in marketing support through the School of Extended and International Education will support that

goal. Additional suggestions that were discussed in relation to program development will be covered later in this report.

### **C: Program Learning Goals and Student Assessment**

The MAOD program goals have remained consistent between 2009-2016. These program goals reflect best practices for practitioners in the field and also apply to competencies valuable for managers and leaders in organizations. The program has maintained a good connection to the National OD Network ([odnetwork.org](http://odnetwork.org)) to maintain a program that develops the competencies needed in organizations. Additional consideration for program goals may be incorporation of working with technology/social networks as well as working with diversity in its many forms

The program uses a number of rubrics to measure students' development and mastery of course learning goals. Students commented that they receive an extraordinary amount of feedback from faculty in support of their development. The program focuses heavily on personal and interpersonal skills development and students expressed appreciation for the support they receive in that area. The academic coordinator and teaching faculty review input from the faculty evaluations, exit interviews and other student input and make changes where appropriate. One instance of a feedback-driven assessment and resulting program adaptation occurred with regard to the criteria for the spring project in the first year. Dr. Hammond noted "In the first couple of years after I came into the program, student teams were having a hard time finding clients early enough to complete the project by the end of the spring semester, and often continued into the summer. As a result the criteria were simplified to ensure that students were able to complete the projects within the expected time frame." Dr. Hammond noted that program goals have been articulated in longer retreats during the summer months several times over the course of her tenure. "This past summer the faculty met twice to share their goals and expectations for the coming year. These goals provide focus for reflection throughout the year."

The Core Skills Competency Self-Assessment has been used for a number of years as way for students to evaluate the competencies they develop in the program as they relate to those considered essential in the field. Faculty also evaluate each student on competency development during the first year. Faculty regularly review and discuss student progress toward learning goals in faculty meetings, provide feedback and support as needed to students, and develop changes to curriculum and academic expectations as needed.

The MAOD program is strongly rooted in experiential learning. Students learn by teaching content and application to each other and facilitating classroom discussions. The program teaching faculty act in supporting roles providing feedback and comments. In the two classes I observed, (OD 513) a first year course and (OD 572) a second year course, students were fully in charge of creating the classroom environment, facilitating check in, delivering content presentations, and facilitating discussion. Faculty and TAs were present and in the first year class were actively making notes on student performance which they noted would be shared with individual students. In the second year course, the faculty member was providing comments to the group and engaging in the student led discussion. In my discussion with students outside the classroom, they shared comments on the value of this approach to their development and noted that they would also like to see faculty take on more active teaching roles, creating a better balance between faculty and student led learning.

The curriculum is based upon a solid core of knowledge in the field of OD. Students commented though that they would like to see more integration of newer approaches to management, leadership and organizational change. They expressed a desire to have more current readings and guest speakers/presenters who are engaged globally. They also noted the need to be effective in a digital environment.

In my review of the course syllabi, I would evaluate the course content as strong experientially and light academically. Course readings beyond the texts assigned are not detailed in the syllabi, so it is unclear to what extent journal articles are assigned. Writing assignments within courses seem light for a graduate program. There are two culminating assignments noted as graduation requirements which include: 1) An analytical case study (the "Spring Project") demonstrating competence in the design and implementation of an organization development project with an actual organization, which is completed in the second semester of the first year. 2) A publishable article on a topic relevant to professional practice in organizations, integrating conceptual frameworks and practical applications.

A strong aspect of the MAOD program is the internship requirement during the second year requiring students to carry out a total of 180 hours of approved supervised field work, applying organization development concepts and methods with groups, organizations, and/or communities.

Courses are delivered on the SSU campus so students have access to the academic support services provided by the university. However, many of the MAOD students are working and don't have the flexibility to be on campus during the day. They attend classes evenings and weekends when not all student services are available. Classroom space that I visited was comfortable and equipped with the technology students needed to support a highly engaged learning environment. Dr. Hammond notes a number of challenges and concerns with support services in the 2016 Self-Study report. These need resolution to ensure the program has the resource support needed.

The program teaching faculty provide mentoring for students both academically and professionally. Since the program is highly experiential, faculty feedback is critical and students I spoke with confirmed they receive significant "meaningful feedback that enables us to recognize our strengths and limitations". Faculty supervision of internship experiences also supports each student's professional development. One student mentioned her desire to see an alumni mentoring program formalized.

#### **D: Admissions and Enrollment**

Enrollment in the MAOD program has been lower than desired for the last five years with the exception of Fall 2012 which reached 30 students. Since Fall 2013, enrollment has been between 20-25 students. My experience with cohort master's programs of this nature is that the educational experience and stability of the program may be compromised when enrollment is below 12 students in a cohort. The current first year cohort has 11 students and the second year cohort 10 students.

The academic coordinator and the program directors review applications and vet students for the program. This is important in this type of program where the quality of students greatly impacts

the quality of instruction and the learning environment. The average number of students admitted vs. applied is 73% over the last five years and ranges between 52-80%. Students are required to have work experience as well as the stated academic requirements. The regional nature of the program along with the work experience requirement likely limits the number of applicants. Undergraduates from SSU without work experience would not be candidates for the MAOD. Given that classes are held during the week as well as the weekend, commuting to campus from outside of the region would be difficult.

Numbers maintained and submitted in the program review did not provide an accurate view of program retention and completion as they were drawn from admission vs. enrollment numbers. In requesting a more accurate view, I was provided with the numbers for 2011 which showed the most significant difference in admitted vs. graduated. The review showed 22 admitted, with seven never enrolled, one leaving the program after the first semester, and one completing all but the final paper.

From the conversations with Dr. Hammond and the program faculty, it appears retention in the program is high with the majority of students who begin the program, progressing to completion. We discussed the need for documentation clearly indicating how students who enter the program and need to stop attending due to illness, work, or other personal issues, are able to rejoin the program and continue to completion.

## **E: Major Findings and Suggestions**

The comments below are offered following my review of the 2016 Self-Study report and my conversations with the stakeholders noted at the beginning of the report.

### ***Faculty Leadership:***

As Dr. Hammond prepares to retire from SSU, the leadership of this MAOD program seems to be the most important issue at hand. Dr. Hammond has recommended that a trio of tenured/track faculty collaborate to provide oversight of the program and support to the adjunct faculty. This approach can support greater collaboration across departments and if it worked well could support program development. However, it seems the three faculty suggested whom I met with during my visit were uncertain as to how much time and support they could provide. An MOU drafted by Dr. Hammond and included in the appendix of the 2016 Self-Study report is still under review by Dean Stearns of the School Arts and Humanities and Dean Eyler of the School of Extended and International Education. While in concept, this MOU addresses the requirements of program oversight, it would leave the primary oversight of faculty, students, and curricula in the hands of adjunct faculty. While these adjunct faculty seem quite capable of managing the program, the fact that they are contracted by semester and do not fully engage with other tenured faculty and administrators, creates likely gaps in their knowledge of university policies and influence needed to secure program resources.

If the university wants to fully support the MAOD program to further its ability to thrive, at least a half-time salaried faculty should be hired to oversee the program and handle the majority of roles now handled by the adjunct program directors. Another option may be to offer a longer

term contract to the adjunct faculty for filling the program director role and ensuring they have the access needed to university resources.

***Program Development to support enrollment increases:***

With a declining number of master level programs in OD across the nation, this program stands out as an excellent contributor to OD practitioner development. Growth in enrollment could be fostered through creating a hybrid program that makes greater use of online learning along with a few intensive residencies. This type of program can draw students from outside the region and possibly from other states.

Discussion is underway about the creation of a certificate program which could support students from other programs at SSU or non-degree seeking students to obtain a certificate in OD. This may be attractive to business, public administration, or communications masters students, or students from other areas desiring to develop people management, consulting, and facilitation skills. The key to a successful certificate program is sufficient marketing resources to support enough student enrollments to enable quality instruction.

***Curricula and Delivery:***

In speaking with the program faculty, we discussed the possibility of replacing some required courses with elective units. This could be attractive to students wanting to learn these skills with a focus in areas served by other programs or departments. For instance, a few students I spoke with work in non-profit organizations. They might be well served by taking a couple of courses in the non-profit management track. Other students working in business might be well-served to take a couple of courses in the MBA program. As OD programs have diversified over the years, students from many professional backgrounds are attracted to them. Key to their decision to enter a program is their ability to customize it to meet their career development needs. The cross-fertilization of the MAOD with other SSU programs will better support its sustainability within the university.

The program faculty and I also discussed the desire stated by students to integrate more online aspects to the current program. Students noted how they would like to see faculty present mini lectures online, have forums for a deeper discussion of theory and application, and to create the ability to bring in more guest speakers from outside the region. Students felt an online forum with videoconference capability could extend the reach of the learning community globally.

Program faculty also discussed their desire to consider a stronger leadership aspect to the MAOD program. A name change was mentioned. Some faculty felt that a leadership emphasis would be a stronger draw for a more diverse group of students from various types of positions. Much of the OD curriculum could remain with more options for application, including students applying their course assignments and culminating project within their current leadership positions.

Program faculty expressed their concerns about the leadership gap created with Dr. Hammond's departure and are uncertain as to how well a committee of tenured faculty would work effectively together with them. If the recommendation for this committee of tenured faculty is considered for implementation, it will be beneficial for the faculty to meet together to establish relationships and discuss roles, responsibilities and a collaborative approach to overseeing the program.

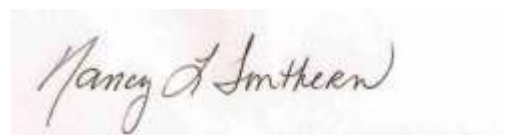
### ***Institutional Support:***

The MAOD program has struggled over the years to find a home at the university. The placement of the MAOD program within the School of Arts and Humanities while being delivered through the School of Extended and International Education creates both an opportunity for collaboration and a potential gap in institutional support. While the deans of both schools expressed support for the program, neither expressed a clear desired direction for the future of the program. Being a small program with a small contribution financially to the university, I question how much attention it receives from either school. As noted in the 2016 Self-Study, Dr. Hammond expressed concerns over securing classroom space, office space, technology, and adequate administrative and marketing support. These are important concerns for the continued delivery of the program and hopefully will be addressed and provided to support the sustainability of this legacy program. Program faculty expressed optimism for increasing marketing support resulting in more applications for next fall.

### **Summary**

In January 2012, the MAOD held a future search conference that brought together a large number of students, alumni, faculty, and community stakeholders to engage in creating a shared vision and path forward for MAOD program. In February 2016, a program strategy meeting was held to review the programs strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges as faculty prepare for the next leadership transition. These meetings demonstrate the commitment of faculty, students, and alumni to support this program. The program has produced graduates who are highly regarded in their field and the program maintains a reputation in the field of OD for developing well-educated, skilled practitioners. I do not see any immediate concerns in terms of the program delivery. The concerns noted above however are important to consider for the long-term sustainability of this program at SSU.

I appreciated the opportunity to review the program and offer these suggestions to enhance its success. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Southern". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Nancy Southern, Ed. D  
[nsouthern@saybrook.edu](mailto:nsouthern@saybrook.edu),  
ph. 505-404-8675