

**PROGRAM REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT
on IP approved 10-28-2019 Retailing and Tourism Management 2023-2024**

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The departmental curriculum committee assessed the content of this report and provided input on how the requirements should be achieved.

Recommendation 1. Develop a strategy to build and communicate department and program brand identity. The combination of two former departments into one department with two different degree programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and all three programs being described by three initials, leads to a confusing brand identity. The department might evaluate simplified program names or develop ways to better brand the existing names in promotional materials. The department should be proactive in identifying and establishing a brand identity that expresses the distinctive characteristics of each major, while identifying the core that holds them together. That future brand identity should be incorporated into a communication strategy that communicates it to stakeholders.

Assessment Method: In 2019, the curriculum committee (Scarlett Wesley, Jason Swanson, RayeCarol Cavender, Vanessa Jackson) conducted a qualitative assessment to identify commonalities between benchmark institutions. A second committee (RayeCarol Cavender, Tracy Lu, Scott Meuret, Mika Pryor) was formed to evaluate marketing and communication strategies for stakeholder engagement.

During the 2018-2019 review period, a faculty survey was conducted to gather input on improving the department's branding and marketing. Additionally, a qualitative review of benchmark institutions was carried out to compare department names and course offerings, which informed the development of the department's branding strategy.

Results: Based on the committee's qualitative analysis of comparable programs (HMT & MAT) and a review of benchmark institutions, the department concluded that retaining the name "Retailing and Tourism Management" was the best course of action, as it appropriately reflects the synergy between both programs. Throughout 2020-2021, the department focused on enhancing communication about its specialized offerings. As a result, new courses were developed to address current trends, such as study tours, soft skill development, and sustainability, all designed to benefit students in both programs. Additionally, a virtual talk series featuring industry practitioners was launched. This phase of the initiative is now fully complete and no further action is needed.

Analysis of Results and Reflections: The department has made significant strides in recent years, beginning with a qualitative analysis conducted in 2019 that compared course offerings at the University of Kentucky to those of benchmark institutions. This analysis revealed key similarities and differences, providing a foundation for program development. Based on this data, the marketing and communications committee proposed industry-led courses to be included under RTM 359 and developed a comprehensive marketing strategy that incorporated tools such

as posters, brochures, and other promotional materials for effective stakeholder communication.

In 2020, in response to growing trends and to expand the department's appeal, several "Special Topics" classes were introduced to diversify course offerings and highlight the uniqueness of the programs. Additionally, the department identified the need for an honors course and a class focused on sustainability and social responsibility, ensuring alignment with industry standards and societal needs.

During 2021- 2023, to strengthen its brand identity and communication efforts, the department enhanced its presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, regularly sharing departmental news, updates, and faculty and student success stories. Significant updates were made to the RTM website to ensure it remained current, and a shared folder system was created for faculty to easily request updates to their profiles, such as adding recent publications, awards, and acknowledgments. Faculty are actively involved in keeping their CVs up to date and submitting content, including photos and videos, to showcase their work with students. This multimedia content is leveraged across both the department's social media channels and website, further enhancing the RTM brand visibility.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: The department will continue to implement strategies for effectively communicating its brand to stakeholders. An alumni database will be established to facilitate periodic correspondence regarding departmental developments. Although the department published its first newsletter in spring 2020, subsequent editions have not been released; thus, producing an annual RTM newsletter has become a current priority. Additionally, the RTM brand is being promoted through various events and activities, including fashion shows, study tours, industry talks, and conferences, all of which invite current and potential stakeholders to participate.

Recommendation 2. Evaluate capacity and opportunities for undergraduate enrollment growth. With increased outreach and communication about the department's two undergraduate programs, enrollment growth is possible. The department should evaluate the instructional capacity of the faculty and the allocation of facilities as it contemplates potential enrollment growth. In addition, developing a more robust graduate program may affect the capacity of the faculty to teach additional undergraduate students.

Assessment Method: During the 2018-2019 review period, the department conducted an assessment of other institutions with similar programs to compare undergraduate and graduate program requirements, as well as recruiting materials and methods. In 2020, the department reviewed its communication tools, including brochures, newsletters, and promotional cards. Additionally, an assessment of the facilities available to the RTM program was conducted, along with a review of faculty capacity for teaching.

Results: In 2019, assessments of other institutions revealed that some do not require the GRE for graduate programs, while the department's promotional materials inadequately reflected its offerings. To address these issues, the department hired a graphic designer to assist with rebranding based on evaluations of similar programs and industry recommendations.

In 2020, the department implemented several communication and marketing strategies, including a newsletter, brochure, and promotional cards that highlighted its diversity. Additionally, the third floor of Erikson Hall was revitalized with new display fixtures and posters, and new recruitment materials were developed to showcase the department's diverse population and reflect changes in program offerings.

In 2021, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the department continued its rebranding efforts with the graphic designer's support. However, the pandemic hindered funding for these initiatives, forcing the department to rely on social media for advertising. COVID-19 also impacted outreach for the undergraduate programs critical to increasing enrollment. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), Scarlett Wesley, and the Director of Undergraduate Studies (UGS), Jason Swanson, collaborated to revise the graduate program, recommending the removal of the internship requirement and the addition of a capstone course to accommodate non-traditional students. Previous assessments suggested the need for a sustainability-focused course in RTM, leading to the development of a sustainability class for both programs.

In 2022, while the leadership team discussed tentative changes to the undergraduate curriculum, nothing was finalized with faculty. During this period, the DGS and UGS worked with faculty to propose revisions to the graduate program, which were accepted. As a result, new graduate students are no longer required to complete an internship or take the GRE; instead, the internship requirement was replaced with an industry project, making the RTM graduate program more accessible to non-traditional students.

In 2023, the undergraduate program experienced a slight decrease in MAT enrollment when Georgia was dropped from the Academic Common Market. To counter this, the academic advisor attended high school conferences to recruit students from neighboring states. Additionally, RTM Department Chair Vanessa Jackson transitioned to the Provost's office, resulting in an internal search for a new chair, which temporarily affected teaching capacity. However, the department successfully hired new faculty for HMT in 2023 and MAT in 2022, maintaining teaching quality. To further increase graduate enrollment, the department applied for and received approval for the University Scholars Program, with plans to promote both in-person and online graduate offerings to boost enrollment. There is more work to be done on the item, and we look forward to hearing from the review committee regarding any additional suggestions moving forward.

Analysis of Results and Reflection: In 2020, the department introduced new classes under “Special Topics” that reflect current industry trends and equip students to be competitive as entry-level workers. Courses previously offered in separate sections (i.e., one for HMT and one for MAT) were combined and promoted as a single core course. Additionally, the textile lab, originally located in two large rooms, was consolidated into one space to enhance in-class lab work.

In 2021, the ongoing impact of COVID-19 continued to affect the department's financial situation, making it challenging to recruit and retain graduate students and offer sufficient scholarships and assistantships. Despite these challenges, enrollment in the online graduate program saw an increase.

By 2022 and 2023, enrollment in the MAT undergraduate program continued to grow, supported by the introduction of new courses that enhanced the program's competitiveness. New MAT electives were added based on current student needs, ensuring that graduates possess the relevant skills required in the job market. Although the HMT program experienced more modest growth, it also saw an increase in enrollment.

In 2024, however, enrollment in the MAT undergraduate program decreased due to Georgia being dropped from the Academic Common Market. Conversely, the HMT program saw a slight enrollment increase, which helped offset the decline in MAT enrollment.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: The department will continue reviewing other institutions and industry recommendations to stay current on necessary course offerings. It will also conduct ongoing assessments of faculty and facility capacity for teaching and research. This aspect of the plan remains in progress.

Recommendation 3. Develop mechanisms to work collaboratively in Cooperative Extension programming. Hospitality and Tourism has a logical connection to the work of CEDIK. RTM faculty members with appropriate research interests could potentially work collaboratively on service or research projects with CEDIK faculty and staff as a preliminary move toward the possible later development of an extension appointment in RTM. RTM has worked to determine the feasibility of the collaboration with CEDIK. At this time, CEDIK and RTM have had some discussions for collaboration. However, no specific collaborations have been implemented.

Assessment Method: A survey indicated that the hiring of a Senior Extension Associate in RTM would create a partnership useful to support student learning in the following content areas: Tourism, Policy and Planning, Agritourism, Small Retailing Business, Destination Marketing, Small Hospitality Business, Customer Service, Special Event Planning, Food and Beverage Management, and Apparel and Textiles.

Results: An HMT faculty member has agreed to serve as the representative for the RTM department to establish a working relationship with CEDIK. Data from a recent survey indicated that this partnership would be beneficial for supporting student learning in various content areas, including Tourism, Policy and Planning, Agritourism, Small Retailing Business, Destination Marketing, Small Hospitality Business, Customer Service, Special Event Planning, Food and Beverage Management, and Apparel and Textiles. The survey results highlighted the need for an associate in our department.

While an agreement between Extension and RTM was in progress to share the cost of hiring an associate, severe budget cuts resulting from the pandemic have made it impossible to proceed with this hiring at this time. Nevertheless, Vanessa Jackson has successfully connected with a faculty member in CEDIK. This aspect of the plan is now complete.

Analysis of Results and Reflection: The need for an Extension Associate is significant; however, hiring for this position remains impossible due to budget cuts related to COVID-19 and the loss of non-recurring funds. Funding continues to be a barrier to hiring for this critical role,

and the ongoing loss of non-recurring funds, coupled with uncertainty about regaining those funds, further delays the hiring process.

Despite the absence of an Extension faculty member, we have made efforts to enhance our extension activities. We have developed partnerships with the 4-H Fashion Board and the 4-H Teen Conference, as well as the Master Clothing Volunteer Program. Additionally, one of our HMT faculty members is collaborating with the School of Human Environmental Sciences (HES) to develop an Extension Agent Study Tour Program, which will help strengthen these relationships moving forward.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: Faculty have a strong record of collaborative projects with Extension Associates and will continue to engage in extension projects as they have in the past. Should future revenue allow for the hiring of an Extension Associate, the department will reopen negotiations for this position.

In the meantime, the department will actively seek opportunities to collaborate with Cooperative Extension and our CEDIK representative to foster a productive working relationship between CEDIK and our faculty. **This aspect of the plan is now complete.**

Recommendation 4. Examine the undergraduate curricula and make appropriate enhancements. Curricular areas that may need review include industry specific topics and methods, the level of rigor of upper-level undergraduate courses, and improvement of scheduling flexibility for students. Evaluating the curricula in view of potential accreditation may be a consideration for the department.

Assessment Method: The curriculum committee (Scarlett Wesley, Jason Swanson, RayeCarol Cavender, Vanessa Jackson) continues to evaluate the needs and changes to the curriculum. The data previously collected continues to guide the selection of courses we need to add to our programs.

Results: The data previously collected continues to guide the selection of courses we needed to add to the programs. During this period of review, two positions were vacated, which allowed the department to hire one tenure-track MAT professor (i.e., Muzhen Li) in AY 2022-2023, and one tenure-track HMT professor (i.e., Yeonjung Kang) in AY 2023-2024. Both new hires and current faculty developed new courses and enhanced upper-level undergraduate courses. **This part is complete.**

Industry Specific Topics and Methods. Two new courses were developed to be suitable for students from both programs. A course entitled, "Soft Skills in RTM," was created based on faculty research (Vanessa Jackson). Another course, "Sustainable Development in RTM" was developed based on the instructor's (RayeCarol Cavender) research in the field, and to fill a curricular gap in the program(s). We have also added an Omnichannel Retailing course and consumer behavior in fashion industry. In addition a long-term education abroad partnership has been established with Regent's University London, which is available for both MAT and HMT students. RTM study tours can also be taken as electives by students from both programs. **This part is complete.**

Accreditation: Evaluating the curricula in view of potential accreditation may be a consideration for the department. The department was previously under the umbrella of AAFCS (American Association of Family Consumer Sciences). The department voted many years ago to not continue our affiliation with the program because the measures were not aligned with the goals of the department. An accreditation program, Textile and Apparel Programs Accreditation Commission (TAPAC) was launched by the International Textiles and Apparel Association (ITAA) in 2017. We need to revisit accreditation options in the next review period. **There is more work to be done on the item.**

HMT Certifications. Students in the Hospitality Revenue Management (HMT 350) course take the industry recognized Certification in Hotel Industry Analytics (CHIA) exam. The certification is the only hotel-related credential focused on analytics. Jointly offered by STR and AHLEI, and endorsed by the Institute of Hospitality, the CHIA has been awarded to professors and industry professionals globally. Upon completion, students can use the "CHIA" designation after their names. The CHIA also counts toward continuing education for other American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) certifications. **This part is complete**

Improvement of Scheduling Flexibility for Students. A review of the course rotation suggests that we are evenly divided for MWF, and TTH courses. A couple of elective courses are offered in both online and in-person formats, which gave students more flexibilities.

Analysis of Results and Reflection: The data collected from benchmark institutions and our research on trends in our area has provided the department with a roadmap to make necessary changes. These changes have enhanced student learning according to required industry entry level job skills. A review of accreditation options for both programs has been conducted. We have selected accreditation agencies for HMT, but not yet for MAT.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: The department has developed new courses based on the recommendations and research provided by our industry expert. Moving forward, we will conduct an annual review of our course offerings to ensure we are meeting both industry demands and the needs of our students. Additionally, we will continue to evaluate the potential for MAT accreditation. The department leadership team will also review course scheduling annually to ensure alignment with our goals and program objectives.

Recommendation 5. Enhance Erikson facilities. Facilities improvement has a spatial/social aspect to provide adequate teaching and learning space and foster community for both undergraduate and graduate students. Facilities improvements also have an aesthetic/communications aspect to convey more vividly the fashion and tourism aspects of the department and its students' future careers.

Assessment Method: Faculty were asked to make suggestions for maximizing the space allocated to RTM. This included how best to use space in hallways and stairwells to present a more modern view of our programs.

Results: New bulletin boards have been installed, replacing the old ones and significantly

improving the overall appearance of the third floor. There are now seven boards, each designated for specific purposes to efficiently promote our achievements and communicate key information. Former Chair, Dr. Vanessa Jackson, secured funding to improve the third floor of Erikson Hall, which was used to enhance the restroom facilities and install a new water fountain. The department's presence is also more visible on the first floor through the use of promotional posters.

Room 300 has been converted into a lab space designed to support lab-based assignments and activities for various courses. The room is now equipped with a TV and speaker system for Zoom conferencing, making it an ideal space for courses like MAT 237, MAT 120, and HMT 308, which regularly utilize this lab setup. **This part of the plan is complete.**

Analysis of Results and Reflection: The third floor of Erikson Hall now has a fresh, uplifting appearance, which has been well-received by both faculty and students. Heating and cooling units in classrooms 300, 302, and 306 were upgraded with new systems. However, we continue to experience several water leaks—from the walls in rooms 300 and 301, the ceiling in rooms 303 and 304, and the air conditioning unit in room 306. These ongoing issues have resulted in recurring repair costs for the department.

The windows and window shades remain noticeable indicators of the building's age. Many of the windows are difficult to close properly, and the walls and windows continue to show signs of peeling.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: We completed several updates to the third floor, including the installation of new bulletin boards, updated flooring, fresh paint, replacement of heating and cooling units, and new window shades. While these improvements addressed the recommended plan, the building continues to present ongoing issues that require attention. Frequent problems, such as leaks and structural wear, highlight the need for a major renovation to ensure the facility remains functional and sustainable long-term.

Recommendation 6. Enhance faculty development and productivity. Faculty development could be enhanced with a program of collaborative faculty mentoring, clarifying research productivity expectations in the department, developing collaboration opportunities with faculty members in other departments, and increasing visibility of faculty research internally and externally. Encourage faculty to include information in their research statements that allows reviewers to understand research quantity and quality, such as length of time from submission to publication in journals in which the author publishes, the impact factor of the best journal in the field, average number of publications per year of people in the field, or other measures.

Assessment Method: Faculty have been encouraged to review the CVs of their colleagues who have included indicators in their research citations, such as their specific contributions to article development and journal impact factors. All faculty were encouraged to add these metrics to research citations in their CVs.

Results: Collaborative faculty mentoring is available through the College's mentoring program, and all faculty have been informed of its availability. Junior faculty have allowed their

department chair to serve as a mentor, meeting regularly to discuss progress. These meetings help ensure that faculty are aware of the department's expectations for research productivity. Additionally, junior faculty have been informed about the College's mentoring resources.

Faculty preparing for tenure have begun including important details in their CVs, such as impact factors, their role in the publication, and the dates of submission and acceptance. Other faculty members have also been made aware of the significance of impact factors and the importance of highlighting their contributions to research productivity, including citation data.

Faculty Collaborations: Before and during this review period, RTM faculty have actively engaged in multiple collaborations with both external and internal members of the academic community. These collaborations span publications, research, service, outreach, and course development. Faculty members have worked with various national and international scholars and regularly participate in conferences at both levels to present their research findings. Additionally, some faculty have collaborated on student development initiatives through alumni engagement. Currently, faculty are kept informed of each other's accomplishments through email updates and via up-to-date CVs available on the RTM website. **This part of the plan is complete.**

Analysis of Results and Reflection: The department has made significant progress in addressing this request, with some areas being more fully accomplished than others. Each faculty member has contributed by adding relevant information to showcase the quality and quantity of their research, including impact factors, Google Scholar citations, and ResearchGate readership metrics. Faculty continue to engage in professional development activities related to teaching, research, and outreach, ensuring ongoing growth in these areas. Efforts to increase collaboration with colleagues within the college are ongoing, as faculty work toward building stronger, interdisciplinary partnerships.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: The department chair will continually promote the importance of using impact factors, seeking mentoring opportunities outside the department, and increasing the visibility of faculty research, both internally and externally.

Recommendation 7. Formalize process for development of alumni relations and philanthropic efforts. The department's active Advisory Board, alumni, and industry connections support student enrichment activities and provide a valuable external network for faculty. The department could work more closely with CAFE philanthropy to translate the loyalty of these supporters and additional alumni into greater financial support for department initiatives.

Assessment Method: The relationship between philanthropy and RTM has been reviewed and new methods of building a relationship have been identified. A LinkedIn group for our students and alumni was created to serve the purpose of better connecting the department with alumni.

Results: Members of the board continue to support student enrichment activities and provide a valuable external network for faculty. Alumni of the department have been sought to participate as speakers in our speaker series through Zoom.

Analysis of Results and Reflection: AY 2023-2024 marked the fourth year of the speaker

series, and it has continued to be highly successful. Topics for the speakers are suggested by both faculty and through student surveys. Some of the topics this year included multitasking, leadership, and teamwork. Additionally, the MAT faculty established a relationship with the Kentucky Retail Federation. Strengthening this connection is a key priority, as it helps build stronger ties with state retailers, leverages industry insights to inform course and program updates, and provides students with valuable professional development and networking opportunities, such as participation in the Kentucky Retail Recharge Conference.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: This project is ongoing, and we will continue to nurture strong relationships with our alumni and industry experts. Maintaining these connections is vital for fostering collaboration, enhancing our programs, and providing valuable opportunities for our students.

Recommendation 8. Continue to enhance the graduate program. Increasing onsite graduate enrollment would allow the development of more robust cohorts for graduate level courses. Other recommended enhancements include increasing graduate student research opportunities, increasing rigor of coursework, and developing diverse opportunities for professional experiences. Greater interaction between online and onsite students could help overcome some of the limitations of the small onsite cohort size.

Assessment Method: Assess graduate program content, program requirements, and enrollment. During the 2023-2024 review period, a student survey was conducted to gather students' expectations, suggestions and preferences for online or in-person learning mode. Results of the survey suggested that a hybrid format was needed to accommodate future graduate students. Graduate curriculum is being adjusted according to the survey results.

Results:

Increasing onsite graduate enrollment would enable the development of more robust cohorts for graduate-level courses. While the launch of the online master's program initially led to an increase in online graduate students, we have seen a decline over the past two years. As of fall 2024, we currently have only six online graduate students, and we do not have any onsite graduate students.

Faculty are eager to establish a strong onsite graduate program to enhance the overall quality of our offerings. During the review period, although the online master's program attracted new students, it also contributed to a loss in onsite enrollment. Faculty members have discussed the future direction of the graduate program and recently voted to maintain both online and in-person options while actively promoting and recruiting for onsite graduate students.

One challenge we face is that online master's students do not engage in thesis writing, which limits our ability to increase research opportunities and fosters little interaction between online and onsite students. While we will continue to support both master's programs, the limited resources make it challenging to sustain both options effectively. This aspect of our plan remains ongoing as we seek to balance these programs and enhance student engagement. **This part of the plan is ongoing.**

Analysis of Results and Reflection: Changes to the program requirements for the online master's program have made it more accessible, such as removing the internship requirement for students who are working full-time. These adjustments have also improved the quality of the

content, which has, in turn, enhanced student interest. However, despite these positive changes, enrollment in the online master's program continues to decline, and there are limited graduate student research opportunities.

Given these challenges, the department needs to determine the future direction of the graduate program. It is essential to assess how we can better engage students and create meaningful research opportunities to attract and retain graduate students effectively.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: This part of the plan is ongoing. In AY 2023-2024, the program has no students enrolled in the face-to-face master's program. Ongoing discussions are focused on determining the future direction of the graduate program, including how to resume the face-to-face offering, ways to enhance the online program, and market and promote the program. Exploring strategies to attract and retain students in both formats will be essential for the program's success moving forward. **We look forward to hearing from the review committee regarding any additional suggestions moving forward**