January 15, 2018

RE: School of Hospitality Academic Program Review

Dear External Review Team Members:

On behalf of the faculty and staff members of the School of Hospitality, and the members of the dean’s office of the J. Mack Robinson College of Business, thank you for the time and care that you are taking to participate in the academic program review of our Cecil B. Day School of Hospitality. Your commitment to provide advice and counsel to another program in the profession is greatly appreciated. We all look forward to the forthcoming discussions.

The materials for this review accurately represent the journey the School of Hospitality has been on over the past five-plus years covered by this review. The school has been, and still is, experiencing a period of transition. Just a few years ago, the school employed a stable and larger faculty base than it does today. The faculty members were, on average, mature in their careers and they had worked together for a long time. For various reasons, in recent years the faculty base has significantly turned over, gotten smaller, and the new faculty members are more junior in the profession than those they replaced. This process of renewing the faculty base took place at the same time the school launched a new master’s program in fall 2013.

As you review these materials, the larger context of the college and the university is also relevant to help understand the School’s journey and the allocation decisions made with respect to the school.

At the college level, I was installed as a new dean during summer 2014 after the previous dean had served in the role for ten years and after he had also served as the associate dean for the college (one of only two associate deans at that time) for six years. Robinson had very stable leadership for over 15 years.

Upon assuming the deanship, I judged Robinson faced several challenges. Perhaps most critical, Robinson had not developed a strategic response to several emerging risks to the traditional model of business education, including emerging transformational technologies, shifting financial models, and rapidly evolving employer demands. Numerous prominent business leaders and scholars have signaled the need for business schools to adapt, but Robinson at that time was not well positioned to lead in this new environment.

To address this concern, we launched a college-wide strategic planning effort. Developed collaboratively between faculty, staff, alumni, corporate partners, and other stakeholders, the strategic plan we developed is bold as it positions Robinson as a new kind of business school – one uniquely capable of producing smart and talented business leaders from all backgrounds who are able to create value in an era of profound digital transformation. A summary of the college’s strategic plan is online at http://robinson.gsu.edu/advancing-vision-2020/.
We are implementing the college strategic plan within a university that *U.S. News and World Report* has identified as the 4th Most Innovative University in the United States for the past two years in a row (2017 and 2018), trailing only Arizona State University, Stanford, and MIT in its most recent ranking. University leadership have developed and are executing their own strategic plan which is leading to the remarkable rise in Georgia State University’s national visibility due, in large part, to numerous initiatives that *U.S. News*, identifies as “outstanding examples of academic programs that are believed to lead to student success.” In preparation for this review, I encourage you to watch the video blog by Bill Gates following his visit to our campus last summer where he discusses the impact of these initiatives. The blog is online here: [https://www.gatesnotes.com/Education/Georgia-State-University](https://www.gatesnotes.com/Education/Georgia-State-University).

Clearly the School of Hospitality is operating in a college and university environment where there is competition for scarce resources, and where we need to critically evaluate the viability of all our academic programs. In addition, finding new and more efficient ways to get the work that we agree remains to be done is critical. Although the college will be able to provide the School additional faculty resources in the next few years, we will do so on the margin as scaling up the School to staffing levels seen in the past is unlikely in the foreseeable future without significant outside funding.

Given this background, the areas where you, as external reviewers, could be most helpful to us in the dean’s office, would be to offer advice about how the School of Hospitality can most effectively use its current resources to maximize its return on investment. In addition, given the scenario that the school could add one or two additional faculty members over the next couple of years, how would that change your answer?

Thank you again for your time and commitment to participate on this academic program review. We look forward to seeing you in Atlanta soon.

Sincerely yours,

Richard D. Phillips