MEMORANDUM

To: Ron Henry, Provost/VPAA  
Georgia State University

CC: Mary Finn  
Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness

From: Robert E. Moore, Interim Dean  
Andrew Young School of Policy Studies

Date: January 23, 2009

Subject: Department of Economics Self-Study

The department of economics in the Andrew Young School has followed a strategy of focusing its limited resources on several applied microeconomic fields with broad policy implications. This strategy of focus in the areas of urban, labor, public, and natural resource, and experimental economics has led the Department to be recognized as among the best in the nation in these areas according to a recent ranking in the Southern Economic Journal (May 2008). Specifically the rankings are: urban-8th; public-11th; natural resource-20th; and labor-23rd (all in the top quintile). This strategy of policy focus and concentration in areas of strength makes us stand out from the more traditional economics departments that typically try to cover many more subfields, but in much less depth, at the other research universities in the state and region. Economics is also one of the leading departments in the University in attracting external grants and contracts. Indeed it is one of the top economics departments nationally in terms of external funding.

The current self-study plan documents much of the progress the department has made while identifying the bottlenecks that exist. We now have 3 endowed chairs who make substantial contributions to our areas of distinctiveness. The department has also hired strong junior faculty members who find being an economist in a policy school to be an attractive professional option.
The prominent placement of Economics within the Andrew Young School is also quite distinctive for a policy school. The success of the economics department is amplified in the success of the Andrew Young School and the School could not have obtained its current level of recognition (and rankings) without drawing on the strength of the economics department.

The strategy for the department to move forward is to continue to do focused policy research of the highest academic quality, but also to make this work accessible to a broader non-academic professional audience. The strategy of carrying out the instructional and academic mission through the department and the research and outreach mission through the centers will continue to be followed.

We have an opportunity to build on past success. With continued selective investment in our areas of strength there is no reason why the Economics Department should not aspire to be recognized as in the top ten in each of our areas of specialization. We can have an even stronger and larger Ph.D. program and we can further develop the thriving and growing masters and undergraduate degree programs. The department already contributes in many ways to the University's stature, but it can do more and do it more efficiently per dollar of investment than just about anywhere else in the University.