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ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ
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ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

H.Q.A.

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AND
ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT: Political Science and International Relations
ΤΜΗΜΑ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΔΙΕΘΝΩΝ ΣΧΕΣΕΩΝ

UNIVERSITY: University of Peloponnese
(ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΠΕΛΟΠΟΝΝΗΣΟΥ)
School of Social Sciences
(ΣΧΟΛΗ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΩΝ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΩΝ)



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External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Political Science and International Relations Department of Peloponnese University in Corinth consisted of the following three evaluators drawn from the Registry compiled by HQAA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. Symeon A. Giannakos, Professor and Director, Graduate Program in International Relations, Salve Regina University, Newport, RI, United States (Coordinator).
2. Neovi M. Karakatsanis, Professor, Department of Political Science, Indiana University South Bend, IN, United States.
3. Kostas Melakopidis, Associate Professor of International Relations (ret.), University of Cyprus, Cyprus.

Introduction

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) visited the Political Science and International Relations Department of Peloponnese University in Corinth from the 10th to 12th of February and worked on its report until Friday the 14th of February 2014. The EEC met the Alternate Rector, the Vice Rector of the University, the Dean of the School of the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Chairperson, faculty members of the Department, as well as the library, administrative, and other members of the supporting staff. The EEC also visited the Department's library, computer lab and teaching facilities. This report is based on information furnished during the onsite visit, including information presented to the EEC by the Department orally and through a formal PowerPoint presentation. The Department also made available other documents, including the Department's internal self-evaluation report.

The ECC visit took place in a professional environment and was conducted in the most appropriate manner. The information provided to the EEC was clear, concise and comprehensive. The presentations were analytical and inclusive, and the information provided was complete and documented. All members of the EEC believe that the objectives of the internal evaluation process were met. The Department made a concerted effort to review all of its operational aspects; clearly articulated its strengths, opportunities and weaknesses; and presented the committee with a thorough picture of its operations. In this respect, the EEC believes that the evaluation process was most beneficial to the Department as it had clearly taken advantage of the opportunity afforded to it to reflect upon its mission, performance, strategies and objectives.

The EEC feels that the curriculum is organized well, with its various components related to each other sensibly, and it fulfills the overall mission of the Department, imparting knowledge, developing analytical and research skills and connecting theory to practice. The Department makes teaching a priority. This makes for overall high quality of teaching. As regards research, PEDIS has produced a

respectable volume of quality publications, achieving rich collaborations with Greek and international colleagues, as well as having instituted Research Groups of substantial originality. The Department operates in a harmonious and cooperative manner, which results in serving the needs of students efficiently and effectively, be that in the case of course registration, library resources, and overall logistical support. In terms of future objectives, the Department is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and has developed a strategy for continuous improvement.

A. Curriculum

Undergraduate

The Department's mission is to impart students with scientific knowledge, to develop their analytical and research skills, and to relate theory to practice in the field of Political Science and its International Relations subfield.

The undergraduate curriculum of the Department offers a bachelor's degree with concentration options in Political Science and International Relations. The curriculum is organized along four layers of course offerings: a series of core and elective courses that are required of all undergraduate students, followed by a second set of core and elective courses for each of the program's two concentrations. The Department also requires two English language courses which emphasize terminology. The purpose of these latter two courses is to assure that the Department's undergraduate population has command of the English language.

Degree completion requires a total of 240 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) units, or 40 courses at 6 units per course. In all, the Department requires 40 courses of which 28 are core (specific courses for all students), eight are core courses specific to the selected concentration, and four are electives (two for all majors and an additional two courses specific to each concentration). Students are required to complete the core requirements and the core electives in their first three years of study. Once completed, students may pursue the curriculum of their specific concentration in the fourth year of study. Undergraduate students also have the option of completing an undergraduate thesis in place of the two elective courses within their concentration. So far, there have been nine undergraduate theses completed in the first graduating class, five in the second and four in the third. Finally, students who complete the first two years of their studies, or the equivalent of the first 20 core courses in the undergraduate program, are also given the option of participating in the *Erasmus* student exchange program. So far, 11 PEDIS students have used this option, while the Department has hosted ten students from abroad.

The entire undergraduate curriculum includes a list of more than 60 courses, most of which are required. They cover an impressive and wide variety of themes and topics in political science and international relations as well as in area studies, especially in the immediate geographical regions of Greece, but other geographic regions as well, short of Latin America.

The curriculum has also been structured in a systematic and methodical manner from introductory to advanced courses as students progress from one semester to the next, with subsequent courses building on the content of previous ones.

Student reaction to the wide variety of thematic and topical courses offered by the Department ranged from most positive to enthusiastic. Students appeared genuinely content with the breadth of material covered as well as with the information/knowledge they were exposed to through the curriculum. In this regard, the Committee feels compelled to conclude that the Department has developed an impressive array of courses that respond effectively to the needs of today's undergraduate population, catering sufficiently to their educational needs and demands. Courses are offered in all four political science subfields—that is, government, political thought, comparative politics, and international relations. International political economy is an area emphasized within the curriculum, receiving greater attention. Given the current economic realities in Greece and Europe, this is understandable and is to be commended.

In terms of making suggestions to improve an already strong curriculum, the Committee wishes to draw attention to the fact that the Department may consider offering a specific course on Eurasia and integrate a comparative component on democratization in Latin America and Southern Europe within an existing course. The Department should also consider developing a course on environmental policies and issues.

Given the creative nature of the Department, the faculty should consider breaking away from what appears to be a standard curricular practice in the Greek educational context and try to reduce the number of required core course, while correspondingly increasing the number of elective courses. Although there are clear scheduling and staffing challenges entailed in such a consideration, there are also advantages with long-term implications for student development. Providing students with more options to select specific courses of interest to them or to allow them to design their own concentrations of study would give them greater responsibility for and ownership of their education; increase their vested interest in the educational enterprise; encourage greater participation and attendance of courses; and make them partners in charting their curriculum in relation to their specific professional goals and aspirations. The Committee realizes that such an endeavor would not be easy because the number of courses currently offered is not exceedingly greater than the number of courses required for degree completion. Still, a sensible balance between required and elective courses may be both desirable and possible if and when the Department experiences further growth in the number of its teaching staff.

Also, the Department should implement the offering of courses in English and expand such offering to attract more international students through and in addition to Erasmus.

The Department may wish to make more explicit the connection between its curriculum and its overall academic mission—that is, the exact way in which the curriculum serves the academic mission of the Department.

Once again, the above suggestions are not meant to indicate curricular shortcomings but rather to offer ideas for continuous improvement and innovation. Far from it, anecdotal evidence suggests that PEDIS is becoming highly competitive vis-à-vis other, more established Departments in Greece.

Graduate

The Department offers an M.A. in International Relations and Policy and is developing two joint degrees, one in International Political Economy and a second one in Mediterranean Studies to be offered in English.

The M.A. in International Relations and Policy affords students the opportunity to concentrate in either Governance or in Public Management-International Policy. The curriculum for this M.A. degree is divided into two distinct layers: five core courses offered in the first semester of study and eight required courses for each concentration taken in the second and third semesters. In the fourth semester, students are required to complete a graduate thesis.

Constructed in the context of the current domestic and international environment, the graduate curriculum reflects it well and is appropriate to the needs of the graduate student. In this sense, the curriculum is both timely and relevant and is designed to serve student needs. As a result, the curriculum is rational, coherent, functional, and creative, while at the same time it retains a traditional theoretical context. It should be mentioned here that the Department generates resources from graduate tuition which are partly channeled to providing library services to the students.

Considering that the M.A. Program in International Relations is still in its inception, it is obvious that the Department needs to keep a vigilant eye on all of the degree's operational aspects. To this end, the Department should implement yearly reviews of function and performance to ensure its academic viability. This is even more important for the joint M.A. degrees in International Political Economy and Mediterranean Studies, which are currently under development. It is important that all three degrees become sufficiently developed in order to be reviewed favorably by the next cycle of external evaluators.

A suggestion the Committee would like to note is to limit course offerings to fall and spring semesters and then requiring its graduate students to begin work on their thesis in the summer session. This should reduce the total cost to students and expedite the process of seeking employment.

Also, with a third graduate program currently being developed, the EEC wishes to point out that rapid curricular growth could undermine the rigor and quality of offerings, faculty responsiveness to students, and the ability of faculty to devote the necessary time to their own research and writing. It is therefore recommended that over the short and medium term the Department may wish to focus on further deepening and strengthening of existing programs, rather than seeking to develop additional ones.

Doctorate

Unlike the M.A. degrees, the Ph.D. degree has been offered since the Department's inception in 2007-2008. The Ph.D. does not require completion of coursework but is strictly tutorial, emulating the educational practices of academic institutions in the

United Kingdom. In this context, the Department may wish to explore with some degree of determination allowing doctoral students to run discussion sessions of large introductory undergraduate classes without violating state law that prohibits doctorate students from providing class instruction. This would give doctoral students the opportunity to develop their teaching skills, making them more competitive in the employment market. It is important for the Department to organize and offer monthly seminars and writing groups so as to bring Ph.D. students together to present their work, share ideas, and receive feedback from peers and professors alike.

B. Teaching

While the Department does not have an overarching pedagogical policy with regard to teaching approach and methodology, it does appear to give relatively equal weight and importance to teaching and research. As a result, the quality of teaching is high. Lecture formats appear to be the predominant mode of delivery (particularly at the undergraduate level). However, much to their credit, many faculty members also conduct seminars and, to a lesser extent, incorporate into the classroom student presentations, audio-visual materials, and group work. Internships, simulations, field trips, and service/practicum options also provide students with an opportunity to engage in high-impact pedagogical practices and experiential education, which are known to provide students with transferable skills, such as critical thinking, public speaking, research, and writing.

The Department's use of information technologies (student web, e-class, HEAL-Link, PowerPoint, etc.) to advance student learning is particularly noteworthy and should be emphasized. Students avail themselves of this to register for classes, receive and submit assignments, communicate with faculty and administrative support staff, as well as to access scholarly articles for their own research and writing. This embrace of information technologies by the faculty is particularly useful to students, many of whom live in Athens and commute to class several days each week. Students with whom the EEC met commented most favorably on the use of IT to communicate with the faculty. Also, as a large percentage of students (approximately 65%, according to Departmental estimates) are employed, access to information technologies provides them with a needed flexibility, making it possible for them to complete work, receive clarification from instructors, and to submit assignments electronically. Finally, the graduate students with whom the EEC met indicated that the availability of evening and weekend courses—on both Saturday and Sunday morning—along with the Library's corresponding evening and weekend hours of operation, allow students to attend classes and complete their work on both weekdays and weekends. According to students, this distinguishes the Department from other Departments they had also considered attending.

As the Department is just six years old, the student/teacher ratio remains quite reasonable at 35:1 (with 488 registered students and 14 full-time faculty members). This ratio allows for meaningful collaboration between students and their instructors. Graduate students and, to a lesser extent, undergraduates participate in the research programs of faculty and are integrated into committees, e.g., the information technologies committee. At the graduate level, students have published articles with

their professors, and one recent Ph.D. has even coauthored a book with a faculty member.

According to Departmental estimates, over 50% of undergraduate students attend classes, with that percentage increasing substantially at the Master and Ph.D. levels. At the undergraduate level, 31% of students admitted during the program's first year of existence (2007-08) graduated in 2010-2011—that is, by their fourth year of study. However, the overall graduation rate drops to 24% when one considers the total number of graduates as a percentage of all undergraduate students admitted since 2007-08 (104 of 438 students). While graduation rates are indeed low, they are nevertheless in keeping with four-year graduation rates at public universities in other countries, such as the United States. Internationally, departments are facing increased pressures from their governments to improve four- and five-year graduation rates. PEDIS may wish to proactively implement curricular and other changes that would improve the timely completion of its undergraduate program.

At the doctoral level, whose first year of existence was also in 2007-2008, two Ph.D. students have received doctorates (one during 2011-12 and a second during 2012-13). At the time of the site visit, it was also noted that a third doctoral candidate had recently passed his dissertation defense. While it is impossible to draw specific conclusions given the small numbers of Ph.D. candidates, faculty should keep a close watch on the successful completion of dissertations and their defenses. The committee does not feel it has sufficient data to comment on the completion rate of the International Relations and Policies M.A. for it just came into existence in 2012-13.

In terms of physical teaching space, both the number of classrooms as well as their size appears to be adequate. It should be stressed that the library was in excellent functioning order, and students commented favorably on the availability of books and journal articles, both in hardcopy and electronic format. The EEC noted, however, that physical space is extremely limited in the library, which has no reading room capabilities or other space for computers. Such space would provide students with the ability to conduct research and to write between classes as well as to meet in small groups in order to discuss and plan for assigned group projects. Thus, the availability of such study space, as well as a mixed-use student lounge, would greatly enrich the learning environment for students and help build a greater sense of community among them. Finally, while students have access to a high quality (by Greek standards) library and separate computer lab within the Department, currently they do not appear to have printing and/or photocopying capabilities. IT support staff indicated, however, that the Department is in the process of developing a password-protected system that will extend printing privileges to students (for a specified number of pages per semester). Such a system would be in keeping with practices of other universities internationally.

While the EEC was unable to attend classrooms in order to observe teaching first hand (it visited the Department during an examination period), students with whom committee members met commented most favorably on the quality of teaching and, particularly, on the responsiveness of faculty to students. Students who had graduated from the Department's undergraduate program and who have since enrolled in one of its graduate programs indicated that graduate courses deepened

their knowledge of topics and theories covered. Students also found courses to add a great deal to their intellectual growth and understanding of politics and international relations. An evaluation of course syllabi provided to the EEC by the Department corroborated this. Reading loads are lengthened at each consecutive level, reading assignments become more difficult, and the number of sources in English is increased.

As previously indicated, many faculty members use electronic tools effectively to make assignments and other course materials available to students. E-class is particularly used to great effect, as it allows faculty to post assignments, including articles and other reading materials, for access by students both from the Department and from their homes. While syllabi are made available to students electronically, the degree of specificity among syllabi varies. Specifically, while all syllabi reviewed by the EEC appeared to provide an overview of the course, learning objectives, as well as a basic course outline, some syllabi lacked the necessary degree of specificity that would make them even more useful instruments for students. Specific dates for midterm and final examinations, research papers, presentations and other assignments should be systematically incorporated in each syllabus.

In terms of instructor evaluation of student learning outcomes, it is noteworthy that very few instructors evaluate students on the basis of just one grade, such as a final examination. Instead, most instructors integrate midterm examinations, research papers, group projects, simulations, practicums, as well as class participation grades into the grading system. The incorporation of high-impact pedagogical practices into course work also requires students to use and develop their critical thinking, speaking and writing skills. This is to be commended. Pedagogical approaches, which promote active rather than passive learning, should be encouraged and routinely incorporated into the curriculum. Such assignments also encourage higher student attendance and class participation rates. However, it should be noted that for students to experience the full benefit of high-impact practices, they must also be encouraged and, indeed, required to critically reflect upon those experiences, relating them to the substantive and theoretical course content.

In regards to the high-impact practices in existence, students with whom the EEC met commented favorably on their experiences (particularly on study or *practica* completed at the Greek parliament and elsewhere, including with local NGOs or with other organizations in Brussels). Students also shared with the EEC their appreciation that most courses require a substantial amount of student research and writing and that in order to complete research assignments they are also required to integrate English language-source materials into them.

A system of anonymous course evaluation is used for each course. Students are accompanied (by a non-teaching staff member) to the Department's computer lab where they submit anonymous course evaluations during the seventh week of the semester. Each course/instructor is evaluated on common criteria, including clarity of course goals, course content, degree of difficulty of course material, presentation of material, clarity of instruction, ability to ask questions and receive clarification, and on the quality of feedback received on graded work. While the members of the EEC did not ask to see evaluation forms for individual courses, aggregate data was

made available to committee members. According to this data, approximately 75% of students evaluated the courses and instructors favorably.

It should be noted, however, that the instrument used, which has been created and distributed by HQAA, is exclusively quantitative and does not allow for substantive feedback from students. Also it is completed relatively too early in the semester and does not disclose the student response rate. As a result, the EEC recommends that HQAA revise the instrument to incorporate at least a few open-ended questions that would allow students to provide substantive feedback for course improvement purposes. Course evaluations should be conducted one or two weeks prior to the final exams when students could provide a more comprehensive evaluation. It would also be useful to include the number of students completing the course evaluation as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled in the course.

Finally, given the opportunity to add new faculty in the future, the Department should be mindful of the need to create gender diversity in its teaching faculty.

C. Research

Overall, the Department's faculty exhibits an impressive array of publications in such areas as international political economy, area studies, comparative politics, EU-Africa relations, international law, American studies, and so forth. These publications have been accepted by well-known Greek and foreign publishers and by respectable international journals. In fact, at least six faculty are distinguished in terms of both academic quality and frequency of publication and, in some instances, by a large number of international citations. More generally, as noted by PEDIS' presentation, "the average number of publications is between two and three articles a year and by one book every three years per staff member." Impressive as this is, the EEC notes that some curricula vitae appear to be burdened by brief and journalistic articles and commentaries on current issues. On the other hand, many such articles were published prior to their authors being hired by PEDIS.

Respectable, scholarly and peer reviewed international journals, which have accepted contributions by members of PEDIS include such titles as *Orbis*, *Global Society*, *Geopolitics*, *Problems of Communism*, *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, *Survival*, *French Studies*, *Forum for Social Economics*, *Citizenship Studies*, and *French Studies*.

PEDIS has already attained a number of competitive research grants to the tune of €1.8 million, and according to the information provided, this amount has helped create 140 jobs. The Department's research funds are utilized by the faculty, doctoral students, and graduate students. In addition, the Department hosts visiting researchers, accepted for a specific research agenda. Currently, there are four such researchers, who have earned their Doctorates in such universities as Cambridge, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the University of Kent (UK) and the Sorbonne.

Among the externally funded research programs, the EEC notes the following:

1. a program investigating the prospects of integration of African migrants in Greece, with a budget of €243,700 and conducted in cooperation with three other institutions;
2. “THALIS-University of Peloponnese, Evaluation of Greek Non-Governmental Organizations,” with a budget of €373,346;
3. “ARISTEIA-Reassessing the Political Impact of Structural Funds in Greece,” with a budget of €200,000 and co-funded by the European Union and the Greek Ministry of Education;
4. Jean Monnet Chair, with a budget of €45,000, lasting from 1/9/2012 to 1/9/2015;
5. Autumn School, with a budget of €140,000 and lasting from 1/9/2012 to 31/12/2014;
6. Internationalization of the Activities of Greek Enterprises, with a budget of €249,210, co-funded by the EU and the Greek Ministry of Education and conducted in association with five other institutions; and
7. Politics Workshop-NEW GENERATION IN ACTION, with a budget of €68,000, co-funded by the EU and the Greek Ministry of Education and implemented by PEDIS and the University of Peloponnese.

In addition to the above, the Department has also created the following two research groups with specific agendas: (1) “Political Technology” and (2) CEMMIS, the Center for Mediterranean, Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies.

- (1) “Political Technology” deals with policy analysis, which aims to provide information regarding decision-making at the local, regional and national levels of governance. Thus, its research approach addresses decision making, operations research, information systems, information technology, management and governance. The research group involves faculty, Ph.D. candidates, students, and 2 to 20 volunteers.
- (2) CEMMIS has been functioning since 2008. Its website, www.cemmis.edu.gr, publishes, inter alia, the “Middle East Bulletin,” the only Greek periodical on contemporary Middle Eastern developments. Of the 80 CEMMIS analyses that have been published, 80% are in English. The publications aim to connect the analysis of international relations with such issues as gender, social exclusion, religion and cultural production, using multimedia and an interactive chart of sources. The journal *Moyen Orient* has recognized the CEMMIS website as one of the most up to date sources on the “Arab Spring.” In the last two years, CEMMIS, which advises Greek officials and NGOs, has reportedly enjoyed 33,000 distinct hits from visitors from 50 countries. Among the think tanks and research centers collaborating with PEDIS are the German Council on Foreign Relations, the Institut de Perspective Economique du Monde Mediterranee, the Center for Eastern Christianity, the University of London and the Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Center for American Studies (CASAR).

During the site visit, EEC members noted the pride exhibited by the PEDIS staff and many students regarding a conference held by the Department at Loutraki in December 2013. Titled, “Greece and the EU at the Crossroads of Critical Developments: Policy, Strategic Choices and Perspectives,” it facilitated

presentations by 60 researchers from Greek universities and research centers. One session was devoted exclusively to presentations by the Department's graduate students and Ph.D. candidates.

PEDIS has also co-organized two international conferences in Athens, with the participation of numerous European researchers. These conferences were titled "International Development Assistance to Southeast Europe: Lessons for Donors and Recipients" and "Espace mediterraneen: Ecriture de l' exile, migrances et discours postcolonial."

Building on the experience of the aforementioned research and organizational activities, PEDIS plans to repeat the December conference in 2014. Indeed, the PEDIS faculty intends to make this conference not only an annual event, but also the premier conference of its kind in Greece.

D. All other Services

Perhaps no other area epitomizes the philosophy of the Department in relation to services than the administrative staff, which also includes the Library and the supporting staff for information technologies. It appears that the prevailing culture throughout the Department is best summarized by the concept of total quality management.

There are no functional delineations across services or strict job descriptions, but the standard approach is all to be responsible for all and allow proximity to specific tasks to determine involvement. Where this would create bureaucratic inertia in many places, the good will and cooperative attitude of both teaching and administrative staff makes for a harmonious coexistence and for a timely and efficient completion of tasks. This is probably evident in all functions, but most certainly in: course registration, grade reporting and transcripts, *e-classes*, book cataloguing and circulation, subscription and accessing of the electronic library and its holding, and classroom technology. To begin in reverse order, all classrooms are fully equipped with audio-visual capabilities. The library acquisitions are catalogued efficiently and books can be electronically tracked for easy location in case of misplacement. The library subscribes to most electronic journals, and both faculty and students can access the available search engines even from their homes through a VPN access code. As mentioned in the teaching section, students can access course syllabi online, view readings and assignments online, submit their assignments electronically, rely on e-class communication tools to interact with professors, receive feedback electronically, and track their course progress. Professors also submit grades electronically, and the system generates grade reports and transcripts so that students can view and print them. Students are registered for courses online and can submit the necessary information, including photos, for the creation of student identification cards.

The administrative staff, comprised of three administrative assistants, one librarian, along with one contracted assistant librarian, and one contracted IT assistant, comprise a competent and harmonious team that is the heart of the Department's

operational accomplishments. In a short period time, they set up a fully functional operational network that serves effectively some 500 students and 14 full-time faculty and visiting instructors in all aspects of their daily tasks and responsibilities. Perhaps their contribution to the smooth operations of the Department is evident in the enthusiastic and appreciative reaction of the students. Student reaction was positive and especially of those students with experiences in other similar, older and more established Departments where they completed undergraduate or graduate degrees.

There is no evidence of student counseling services or athletic outlets available and only scant evidence of organized cultural activities. In this the Department is seriously deficient.

However, the EEC wishes to mention that students are assigned Departmental advisors. Faculty indicated that few students visit them during their regularly scheduled office hours. Students instead prefer to contact faculty electronically.

Overall, the EEC feels that the initiatives the Department has undertaken in regards to services have paid off. The results are admirable, especially in the context of the educational realities of Greece and especially at this critical time the country is sadly experiencing.

E. Strategic Planning, Perspectives for Improvement and Dealing with Potential Inhibiting Factors

It bears repeating that PEDIS was established at the University of Peloponnese in 2007. During this short period of time, it was inevitably preoccupied with its structural foundations, the formation of its academic identity, personnel hiring, material infrastructure, surfacing on the scientific map of Greece and beyond, and the development of its broad collaborations and bonds.

In the short and medium term, PEDIS aims to strengthen and crystallize its organizational and functional procedures, to further connect all staff members with the Departmental functional framework, and to deepen and update the personnel's qualifications and profile. It seeks further enhancement of its scientific identity, to promote its presence within the Greek and international scholarly community, to upgrade the quality of its research, and to sustain and expand its collaborative efforts in Greece, the European Union, the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond. In addition, PEDIS aims at what it calls "maturing" further, by means of deepening its academic collaborations and further strengthening its links with the local community.

As regards the longer haul, PEDIS envisions operating within a broader institutional context, seeks the constant enrichment of its material infrastructure via an anticipated creation of a campus, and to achieve the potential capabilities of its academic and administrative staff in a broader institutional framework.

Inevitably, PEDIS seems to be subject to the same inhibiting factors that are shared by all Greek academic institutions. In addition, there are some further factors that are peculiar to it. As regards the former, the palpable implications of the deep economic crisis haunting Greece for the last six years, almost co-extensively with the life of this Department, must be kept in mind. Additionally, state rules and regulations marking the Greek higher educational system complicate autonomous decision making. For instance, the absence of the culture of obligatory attendance of

university classes and the strict prohibition of engaging graduate students to lecture even occasionally can be easily mentioned.

As regards inhibiting factors specific to PEDIS, there is need to complete plans for the creation of the Corinth Campus. The need is urgent, and it goes beyond the strictly academic and administrative activities. It relates to the deep desire expressed by the student population for a permanent and residential learning community. A school campus is necessary to remedy the somewhat isolated existence of the Department.

F. Final Conclusions and Recommendations of the EEC

As mentioned, the history of the Department is a short one. The Department was created in 2007. It has made remarkable progress in a short period of time.

The major strength of the Department is the high degree of collegiality among the teaching and administrative staff. A sense of community is prevalent throughout the Department and is easily reflected in the attitude of the students who take pride in being members of this learning community. Truly, this is a student-centered academic environment.

Another strength of PEDIS is its innovative adoption of technologies in the classroom and beyond. Innovation spans the entire spectrum of academic life, from student registration, to instruction and research.

An additional strength of the Department is the interdisciplinary nature of its curriculum, both in its development and implementation. This is accompanied by innovative pedagogical approaches that are integrated in the curriculum.

The greatest weakness of the Department is lack of space and the absence of a physical community associated with it. Facilities are comprised of two buildings at considerable distance from each other. There is no space for student academic or social interaction.

Another weakness is associated with the scheduling of examinations which is not carried out in timely fashion to allow students to plan accordingly. The examination schedule and due days for all assignments should be available at the beginning of each semester.

Also, the Department should institutionalize a process for relating student evaluations to improving instruction.

On the other hand, the Department demonstrated a readiness and willingness to evaluate itself and find ways to improve. The internal Quality Assurance Committee appears dedicated to improving the quality of the Department. This is reflected by the comprehensive manner in which the internal evaluation process was undertaken and completed.

Given the economic and political constraints prevailing in Greece currently, PEDIS has achieved a remarkable success in a short period of time.