What is the Academic Business Review (ABR)?
The Academic Business Review is a comprehensive, data-driven evaluation of Simmons’s academic structure and offerings. The objectives of the review are: to better leverage the College’s strengths, to align the academic structure and curriculum offerings with the College’s mission, to carefully review academic resource allocation, and to assess opportunities for additional revenue generation. The ABR is not an assessment of faculty or teaching quality, nor is it an evaluation of faculty qualifications.

Why is Simmons doing this?
Like many other institutions, Simmons has been impacted by the worldwide economic recession. In addition to the difficulties brought on by this recession, Simmons also has had to manage some additional financial challenges related to its overall fiscal structure. The College has been working diligently to make appropriate operating budget cuts and to look for efficiencies in every department.

Who is making the final decisions? When?
President Helen Drinan, Provost Charlena Seymour, and Senior Vice President Stefano Falconi will evaluate the recommendations created by the deans and faculty work groups. They will make changes or additions as they deem necessary and present final recommendations to the board of trustees at the February 2010 meeting.

Who is overseeing the ABR?
The ABR is being led by Provost Charlena Seymour, with participation from all five deans and faculty members from all schools who have assisted in data collection, assessment, and analysis, and the development of interpretations and recommendations.

What was the role of the Deloitte team?
Because of the vast amount of data that needed to be collected and analyzed, Simmons hired the Deloitte Higher Education and Academic Restructuring Team. Deloitte reviewed data from the last three fiscal years and was responsible for helping to identify opportunities that meet the objectives explained above.

What is the timeline for implementing decisions from the ABR?
The College expects to begin implementing most decisions made from the ABR in the next fiscal year, which begins July 1, 2010, if not sooner.

Will this save Simmons money?
Yes, one of the major goals of the ABR is to save money and create a more sustainable financial structure for Simmons that will allow us to continue to offer a strong student-centered education, and to succeed in this very competitive higher education environment for many years to come.
Will Simmons eliminate all classes with 15 or fewer students?
No. The College has no plans to eliminate all small classes. The College leadership and the faculty members involved in the ABR are very much aware of — and value — the unique experience that Simmons offers by providing students with small classes and close relationships with their professors. This has to be balanced, however with the need to operate the College more efficiently to ensure a successful future.

Will Simmons eliminate all women’s studies classes?
No. The ABR is reviewing all classes and course sections to ensure that Simmons is delivering classes in the most cost effective manner. Similar to the small class size, the College leadership and the faculty members involved in the ABR are very much aware of — and value — the special role of women-focused content at Simmons.

How are students involved in the ABR?
The Dean of Students Sarah Neill, President Helen Drinan and Provost Charlena Seymour are working to keep the lines of communication open with students. President Drinan held an open meeting about the ABR with students October 14, students received a detailed email Nov. 3 about the review, and President Drinan plans to hold additional meetings throughout the academic year. Additionally, students have been invited to send their questions and concerns to a dedicated email address: simmons2010andbeyond@simmons.edu and will soon have access to a website with additional information.

Will courses be cut as a result of the ABR?
The ABR will consider various options, with the overarching goal of aligning the academic structure and curriculum offerings with the College’s mission. Simmons wants to ensure that all resources are allocated as effectively as possible in order to offer an exceptional student-centered learning experience and to succeed in this very competitive higher education environment for many years to come. Some of the options being considered include consolidating identical course sections, reducing the frequency of specific course offerings, consolidating courses dealing with similar subject matter and/or themes, and eliminating courses.

What provisions will be made for students impacted by the ABR?
All current students will be able to graduate from Simmons in their current major or program.

Will the ABR impact Simmons as a women’s college?
No. The ABR has no bearing on the decision for Simmons to remain single sex at the undergraduate level.

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