

# **Assessment of Student Learning in Business Schools: Best Practices Each Step of the Way**

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THE ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH  
and AACSB INTERNATIONAL  
Volume 1; Number 2  
Assessment in the Disciplines

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222 Stone Building  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4462

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Printed in the United States

ISBN 882393-13-9

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## Editor's Note

A few weeks after I started to work with the AACSB on Assurance of Learning, I received an e-mail request from a dean: "Please send me the names of 10 Best Practice schools for outcomes assessment." I resisted the temptation to write back "If you find them, please let me know!" Since then, I have been asked a variation of that question many, many times. It is, of course, a logical question. Just as faculty turn toward the literature when they must learn something new in their field, so deans turn toward "best practices" when they must develop a new expertise. Usually, it is an effective approach. Distance learning education, development and fund raising, creating advisory boards, academic advising, and developing innovative curricula are just a few examples of topics where best practices exist to guide the neophyte.

Unfortunately, this is not true with program assessment. The mandate of program assessment based on student outcomes is new to all of us. Yes, there were a handful of schools who already had vibrant assessment programs in place, but they were few in number and, since they were guided by their own purposes, they were not necessarily in compliance with AACSB requirements. "What about the schools that are going through the accreditation process now?" I'm asked at assessment seminars. "What are they doing?" Again, a good question for which there is no satisfying answer. Accreditation reports are, of course, confidential, but even if the AACSB were to put this year's submissions on their Web page there would not be many answers there. The transition schedule that the AACSB developed for complying with the assessment standards calls only for learning goals to be developed in 2004, and for data collection to begin this year (2005). It's just too early for best practices!

But the call for examples is unrelenting – and some schools have started on some very good work. So when I was invited to work on this project, my goal was to find schools that are doing some **part** of the assessment process very well. After securing the enthusiastic participation from the experienced assessors – King's College, Seton Hall, Valparaiso, and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville – I went on a search for schools that had made promising starts on assessment. Schools which were doing part of the assessment process very well – hence, *Best Practices: Each step of the way*. Each step of the assessment process described in chapter 1 (Vol. 1, No. 1) has accompanying best practices in this volume, starting with goal setting and ending with assessing the effectiveness of the assessment process itself.

A second goal was to gather a diverse set of examples, and this has been achieved. In these pages you will read of large and small schools, public and private, schools with years of experience in assessment and others that are just beginning. There is diversity with regard to region, mission, resource base, accreditation status, Carnegie classification, and admission selectivity. Some assessment programs are very well funded,

others are run on a “shoe string.” There is one commonality among all chapters, however – the generosity of the authors. In these pages you will find dozens of examples of learning objectives, methods, rubrics, and report writing templates. The authors candidly share their lessons learned, how their school “closed the loop”, and the budget and personnel requirements for their programs. Finally, these remarkable people created these excellent contributions in a very short period of time. On behalf on the AACSB, the AIR, and my co-editor, Thomas Calderon, let me express our heart-felt appreciation to the chapter authors for helping us all on our journey of improved student learning through assessment.

Kathryn Martell  
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December 2005

*The assessment process should begin with an earnest faculty discussion of their expectations for their graduates: What should they know? What should they be able to do? How should they think? This discussion launched the Girard School on a journey to reinvent itself that included a dramatic overhaul of their curriculum, and an aggressive, comprehensive assessment program. The Girard School's approach to assessment is predicated on the belief that in order for their program to be judged a success, students, once taught, must retain and apply their learning in multiple settings. Thus, they designed an assessment program built around student portfolios that track their learning outcome achievement across the full span of their four years in the business school.*

**CHAPTER 1**  
**LEARNING GOALS: THE FOUNDATION OF**  
**CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & ASSESSMENT**  
**Edward T. L. Popper**  
**Merrimack College, Girard School of Business**

**Background, Mission, and Goals**

Merrimack College, located, 25 miles north of Boston, is a comprehensive college of the liberal arts and professions founded in 1947. The business administration program has been an integral part of the college since it was founded and has continued to provide programs consistent with the mission of the college. As a result of a naming gift in 1999, the Business Division became the Girard School of Business and International Commerce.

The Girard School of Business and International Commerce offers a single undergraduate program leading to a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA). In the fall of the academic year 2003-2004 it serviced 781 of the 2,042 students attending Merrimack College. The Girard School faculty comprise approximately 20 percent of the Merrimack faculty with 29 of the 142 full-time faculty.

Merrimack College is a comprehensive undergraduate school. The Girard School of Business and International Commerce is the only division/school of the College to offer degrees in business or management. That degree is the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA). Students in the BSBA program choose between one of six concentrations: Accounting; Finance; Information Systems; International Business;

Management; Operations and Quality Management; and Organizational Studies and Marketing. Students may also choose a Business Economics major, a joint program of the Girard School and the Economics Department (in the Division of Liberal Arts).

The Girard School Mission is composed of four parts. **The Vision Statement** presents the shared aspirations of the School's students, faculty and stakeholders. **The Values Statement** presents the shared values that are at the heart of all the School's programs and activities. **The Mission Statement** presents the focus for all Girard School programs. Finally, the **Goals Statement** presents what the Girard School must do to achieve the aspirations of the Vision.

**Figure 1**  
**Girard School Mission**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>VISION</b></p> <p>The Girard School of Business &amp; International Commerce aspires to be a leading school in our region for an undergraduate education in business with an international perspective and Catholic liberal arts foundation.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>VALUES</b></p> <p>At the Girard School we value ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The critical role of the Liberal Arts in providing a foundation for the professions.</li><li>• Faculty and students interacting in an environment of challenge, respect and exploration.</li><li>• Innovation in pedagogy that integrates the functional areas of business.</li><li>• Honesty and integrity in all of our personal, professional and community activities.</li><li>• Opportunities for students and faculty to develop breadth through diversity of thought, opinion, and culture, both inside and outside of the classroom.</li><li>• A personal commitment to lifelong learning.</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MISSION</b></p> <p>The Girard School of Business and International Commerce provides an undergraduate educational experience that develops students' knowledge, skills and values. Graduates will have the ability to become global business professionals of integrity, recognized for their accomplishments and effective leadership.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GOALS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Graduates will have demonstrated mastery across all Girard School learning outcomes.</li><li>• Each student and faculty member will have an international business educational experience.</li><li>• The Girard School will use innovative pedagogy and curricula to maximize student learning.</li><li>• Girard School faculty will maintain currency in their area of teaching through ongoing peer-reviewed pedagogy, practice or discipline-based intellectual contributions. Half of the overall Girard School Portfolio of intellectual contributions will be pedagogy based.</li><li>• There will be continuous improvement in measurement and achievement of all the above goals.</li></ul>

The Girard School Mission Statement grew out of a continuing dialogue among the School's stakeholders. A similar dialogue led to the development of the Girard School learning outcomes which were unanimously adopted by the School's faculty in 2002.

The first six outcomes are not specific to business. However, as will



## Figure 2 Learning Outcomes

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

The goal of the Girard School is to assure that our graduates have learned and are able to demonstrate the skills, competencies, and values they will need to achieve their personal and professional goals. The learning outcomes detailed below show what is expected of every Girard School graduate.

#### **General Knowledge and Abilities**

1. Communications
  - Demonstrate active communication skills, collaboratively and individually, in speaking, writing, listening, and using electronic media.
2. Analytical Skills
  - Demonstrate the ability to integrate, synthesize and apply complex information effectively.
  - Demonstrate the ability to apply quantitative and qualitative reasoning for problem-solving both individually and in a group setting.
3. Cultural Understanding and Flexibility
  - Demonstrate the ability to work effectively in different roles in a diverse group and in diverse environments.
4. Ethical Understanding and Reasoning
  - Demonstrate the ability to make moral and ethical business decisions.
5. Reflective Thinking
  - Demonstrate the ability to learn from one's own experiences and to participate in one's own emotional and intellectual growth.
6. Adaptability
  - Demonstrate the ability to adapt to a rapidly-changing environment.

#### **Business-Specific Knowledge and Abilities**

7. Financial Reporting, Analysis, and Markets
  - Demonstrate an understanding of recording and accumulating financial data to further the stewardship of an organization.
  - Demonstrate the ability to apply the analysis of financial information as a basis for business decisions.
  - Demonstrate an understanding of the role and function of financial markets and institutions.
8. Business Environment
  - Demonstrate the ability to make management decisions that reflect how dynamic relationships among economic forces in international and national trade affect the operations of a business.
  - Demonstrate the ability to make management decisions that reflect the impact of political, legal, governmental, cultural, and technological issues.
9. International Perspective
  - Demonstrate the ability to function effectively in an international environment.
  - Demonstrate the ability to apply international perspectives to local business decisions.
10. How Businesses Serve Customers
  - Demonstrate the ability to manage the creation and production of goods and services and bringing them to the market.
11. Human Behavior in Organizations
  - Demonstrate the ability to make management decisions that reflect an understanding of interpersonal functioning of organized activity in groups and organizations from the perspective of both the individual and the organization.
  - Demonstrate the ability to lead a group toward the successful completion of goals.
12. Cross-Functional Integration

be discussed below, while the Merrimack College general education contributes to the achievement of these skills and competencies, the Girard School curriculum has the responsibility for the achievement (and retention) of these outcomes. These non-business specific outcomes were subsequently adopted (with minor modifications) as the learning outcomes for Merrimack College. The remaining six outcomes are business specific. Their structure reflects the commitment to functional integration- one of the Girard School's shared values.

### **Defining Assessment**

Like many educational enterprises, grading was long viewed as the primary and sufficient assessment of students' "learning." However, the adoption of the schools learning outcomes forced the re-examination of those views.

The introduction to those outcomes states: "Our graduates [will] have learned and are able to demonstrate the skills, competencies, and values they will need to achieve their personal and professional goals." This is consistent with the AACSB's perspective on learning: "Student learning is the central activity of higher education. Definition of learning expectations and assurance that graduates achieve learning expectations are key features of any academic program."<sup>1</sup> Common to both statements is the notion is that achievement of learning outcomes requires that the learning be observable in program graduates.

To be able to demonstrate that achievement at graduation requires monitoring of progress towards achievement of those goals across all four years and at graduation. To assume that demonstration of learning outcome achievement can be accomplished by a single measure in a single course requires the unrealistic assumption that students learn (that is they are able to retain and apply) all that they are taught in that classroom.<sup>2</sup> This led the Girard School to an assessment program that tracks learning outcome achievement across the full span of their four years in the business program to assure that, once taught, students retain and apply their learning.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in addition to meeting accreditors' requirements, the goals of our assessment program are to:

- Assure that graduates of the Girard School can demonstrate that they meet the Girard School learning outcomes overall and in their chosen concentrations.
- Identify those areas where the Girard School's core and concentration curricula need to be improved to better assure students' learning.
- Assure that Girard School programs meet the needs of students, graduates, and employers.

These overall goals are then translated into more specific student learning goals for the two broad categories of learning outcomes (knowledge and competencies). As discussed below, different methodologies are employed to assess knowledge and competencies.

Our definition of knowledge-based learning outcomes requires a measure of knowledge retention beyond the end of a course (for knowledge that will be built upon in subsequent courses) and upon graduation (for program level outcomes). As discussed elsewhere in this book,<sup>4</sup> traditional “pen and paper” methods are well suited for assessing knowledge. Competency outcomes, however, require some type of student demonstration (e.g., the ability to collaborate in a team) that is then assessed according to specified criteria. Because competencies typically require integration and application of knowledge and skills from various domains, they must be developed across the curriculum and not in a single course. Therefore, to be complete, the actual development of the competency should be assessed as its ultimate achievement (presumably at the end of the program). This distinction between the two different types of learning outcomes (knowledge and competencies) requires that those outcomes be sorted to distinguish between knowledge-based goals and competency goals.

#### **Knowledge Goals:**

- Students have retained the knowledge from previous coursework necessary for continued success in the program.
- Graduates of the Girard School will have acquired and retained the diverse business knowledge specified in the Girard School learning outcomes.

#### **Competency Goals:**

- Students will develop and enhance competencies through the four year Girard School curriculum. Upon graduation, students will meet the competency components of the Girard School learning outcomes.

Having identified the nature of the learning outcomes, the assessment committee developed an assessment plan that included multiple assessment methods (both direct and indirect), multiple instruments, and multiple measurements. Direct Assessments are assessments that draw on actual student work (tests, papers, presentations, etc.) to measure performance on specific learning outcomes. Indirect Assessments are assessments that do not actually measure performance but use other information as a basis for inferences about performance. Thus, for example, starting salary data, students’ self-evaluation of their learning, and satisfaction surveys are all indirect assessments.

## **Assessment Methods - Direct:**

*Knowledge Test:* An internally-designed knowledge test was developed for the purpose of measuring students' progress over time in achieving the knowledge-based learning outcomes. The knowledge test consists of approximately 160 questions. This represents about 16 questions each in the following ten areas:

- Accounting
- Business Law
- Ethics
- Finance
- Information Systems
- Operations & Quality Management
- Management & Organizational Studies
- Marketing
- Statistics
- International Business

The questions in each area also represented different levels of learning. Faculty responsible for each of the topical areas (except international) developed 16 questions from their area which span the range of learning levels, plus two questions which address international issues (for all areas except statistics); one at a lower level of learning and one at a higher level of learning. For example, faculty in accounting might have submitted three accounting questions at the "Knowledge" level, two at the "Understanding" level, three at the "Application" level, three at the "Analysis" level, two at the "Synthesis" level, and three at the "Evaluation" level, plus one international question at the "Understanding" level and one at the "Synthesis" level.

The knowledge test is completed online by students using Secure Exam software.<sup>5</sup> Students take this test three times during their tenure at Merrimack College, providing feedback on their scores each time, for each of the knowledge areas specified in the Girard School learning outcomes.

- ***Incoming freshmen (pre-test):*** During the first week of classes, incoming freshmen take the knowledge test to provide a baseline measure of their knowledge coming into the program.
- ***Beginning of the junior year:*** The knowledge test is repeated at the beginning of the junior year to measure progress in each of the knowledge areas. Scores on the knowledge test at this stage are compared to the students' scores as freshmen. The results of this comparison identify the individual student's knowledge weaknesses which allow faculty to guide the student to appropriate remediation. Students also receive a summary of their scores for each knowledge category, receiving separate scores for three levels of knowledge per category. Tracking the results of these tests provides formative feedback to individual curricular groups in those cases where the deficiencies are concentrated in specific knowledge areas. Finally, the results provide a basis for curriculum review and enhancement in those cases where the deficiencies are pervasive.

- **Outgoing seniors (post-test):** Just prior to graduation (embedded in their capstone course) students take the knowledge test for the final time. Aggregate results provide a measure of retained knowledge relevant to the learning outcomes at graduation. Initial results indicate that Girard School juniors in the new curriculum (which is described below), demonstrate more increased knowledge than freshman, particularly on lower levels of learning. Results also show that the juniors who are entering their third year score higher in all categories than seniors who are graduating from the old curriculum.

*Portfolio Evaluations:* The Girard School elected to use student portfolios for both assessment of learning outcome achievement and diagnosing when and how the curriculum could be improved. The inclusion of actual samples of student work allows the faculty to track the arc of a student's performance on each of the competency-based outcomes. Initially these evaluations are conducted through rubrics which will be discussed in greater detail below. Tracking the progress of learning over the four years using rubric scores provides an easy measure of learning development. However, when the scores indicate systematic failure of large number of students, the scores can only indicate where the breakdown occurs. Having access to the actual documents and images allows course faculty to examine student work and more readily identify the specific course or curricular areas that need to be modified, reordered, or replaced.

The presence of the actual documents in the portfolio also allows the students to see their own progress and self diagnose deficiencies. Finally, providing the students with a DVD ROM of their portfolio during their senior year provides them with a device they can use to differentiate themselves as they compete for jobs. The DVD allows them to demonstrate their skills and competencies to prospective employers. The four-year arc of the DVD also allows students to demonstrate their capacity to learn and improve. The tangible benefits of the DVD Portfolio motivates students to take the assessment elements (including the knowledge tests) more seriously.

Throughout the four years of the Girard School Undergraduate Program, specific student assignments (embedded within specified core and concentration courses) are designated for inclusion in a student's portfolio (students will not be aware of this designation). These assignments are selected by the Assessment Committee to encompass the skill and competency areas of the Girard School learning outcomes and include many forms (e.g., documents, spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations, digital video recordings of presentations). While the primary purpose of portfolio evaluation is to assess competency-based learning outcomes, the content requirements of many of the portfolio items also provide an additional measure of knowledge outcomes. The contents of a typical student portfolio are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Contents of a Typical Student Portfolio**

<u>Program Year</u>	<u>Portfolio Contents</u>
<b>Freshman</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freshman Knowledge Test</li> <li>• Two group presentations (Digital Video) one per semester</li> <li>• Two individual written assignments (in doc form) one per semester</li> </ul>
<b>Sophomore</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written accounting case analysis (with exhibits)</li> <li>• Written statistics case analysis (with exhibits)</li> <li>• One group presentation (Digital Video) from Accounting or Statistics</li> <li>• One written assignment from each of the second semester modules</li> <li>• One group presentation (Digital Video) of semester project</li> </ul>
<b>Junior</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junior Knowledge Test</li> <li>• Written journal from international experience</li> <li>• New Business Proposal (Group-Based) and Business Plan</li> <li>• Group presentation of proposal to "venture capital" panel (Digital Video)</li> <li>• Various assignments and presentations from concentration courses</li> </ul>
<b>Senior</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduating Senior Knowledge Test</li> <li>• Business report from Operating New Business (Mini Annual Report)</li> <li>• Group presentation of operating results to Board (Digital Video)</li> <li>• Representative assignments from final business simulation</li> <li>• Various assignments and presentations from concentration course</li> </ul>

The Girard School Assessment Committee developed standard rubrics to assess student progress on each of the competency-based learning outcomes across all four years of the Business Program. Individual faculty members collect designated portfolio items from students and evaluate them using the appropriate rubric for each student. Faculty then deliver those (graded) portfolio items to the Assessment Administrator, along with a summary of the rubric scores for each student. The original forms are returned to the students along with their graded assignment for feedback purposes. As an example, the rubric used to evaluate the student presentation is presented in Table 2.

### **Assessment Methods - Indirect**

*Student Course Evaluations:* At the end of each semester, students complete online course evaluations for all Girard School courses in which they are enrolled. The course evaluation instrument includes questions on each of the course's learning outcomes to assess the extent to which students believe they have individually achieved the outcomes specified for the course. These questions also allow students to indicate whether or not the course addressed specific outcomes. Additionally, the instrument includes a section asking students to assess the effectiveness of the learning experiences provided in the course.

These evaluations are analyzed to identify how demanding the students perceive the course to be; to identify course learning outcomes that, in students' views, were not met; and to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the learning experiences provided. The evaluations are also analyzed to identify significant differences between sections of multi-section courses and to identify potential development needs of individual instructors.

**Table 2**  
**Presentation Assessment**

Use this table as the identifier of each criteria. Please record each student name & ID number in the corresponding Excel spreadsheet with the appropriate points (or N/A) for each criteria. When completed, the excel file can be submitted to [assessment@merrimack.edu](mailto:assessment@merrimack.edu)

Students: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

		<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Points</b>
<b>Introduction</b>		No introduction.	Introduction was there, but weak.	Introduction was adequate, but could be improved upon.	Introduction was clear; excellent opening to the presentation.	
<b>Organization</b> (i.e., sequence and flow of presentation)		Presentation had no logical sequence or flow. Intent of the presentation was unclear.	Presentation was somewhat unorganized and difficult to follow.	Presentation was adequately organized, but could be improved upon.	Presentation was very well organized and flowed well.	
<b>Conclusion</b>		No conclusion or summary; presentation ended abruptly.	Conclusion/summary was there, but weak.	Conclusion/summary was adequate, but could be improved upon.	Conclusion/summary was clear; excellent closing to the presentation.	
<b>Visuals</b> (e.g., slides, graphs, charts)		Presentation had few appropriately formatted visuals and/or visuals did not support the presentation.	Presentation had some appropriately formatted visuals, which provided some support for the presentation.	Presentation had appropriately formatted visuals related to the presentation.	Presentation had appropriately formatted visuals which reinforced and enhanced the presentation.	
<b>Mechanics</b>		Presentation had numerous spelling, grammatical and/or usage errors.	Presentation had some spelling, grammatical and/or usage errors.	Presentation had few spelling, grammatical and/or usage errors.	Presentation had no spelling, grammatical, or usage errors.	

*Student Survey:* Administered in conjunction with the knowledge test, this survey measures students' perceptions of the importance/relevance of each Girard School learning outcome and their level of knowledge and/or proficiency in each of those outcomes. Students complete this survey at the beginning of their freshmen and junior years, and at graduation. These survey results are analyzed to identify areas in which students do not perceive progress. Additionally, when analyzed along with the knowledge test results, the survey results provide an indicator of whether students' self-perception of learning tracks what they've actually learned.

*Graduate Exit Surveys:* Every April, Girard School graduating seniors complete an online survey specific to their concentration. This survey measures general satisfaction with Merrimack College, the Girard School, and their specific concentration. It also measures students self assessment of the importance of each of the concentration's learning outcomes and the Girard School learning outcomes. The graduating seniors also self-assess the extent to which their studies at Merrimack College, the Girard School, and in their concentration have prepared them in each of the outcome areas.

*Alumni and Employer Surveys:* Girard School alumni are periodically surveyed (five years after graduation) to assess the career impact of their Girard School education in each of the areas of our learning outcomes. Similarly, major employers of Girard School graduates are periodically surveyed for their assessment of the adequacy and appropriateness of their employees' Girard School education. Together, the alumni and employer data allow the Girard School to evaluate the Girard School learning outcomes and revise them, where appropriate, to better serve the constituencies identified in our mission.

Taken together, this multi-method, multi-measure, quasi-longitudinal assessment process allows the Girard School curriculum to provide a cumulative sequence of learning experiences moving towards a defined learning endpoint rather than a series of discrete experiences in individual courses. The assessment methods used for each of the learning outcomes and the timing of those assessments is summarized in Table 3.

### **Resources and Responsibilities for Assessment**

At the Girard School responsibility for assessment is shared between Girard School faculty and staff. Faculty determine what to assess, the assessment methods to be used, and how assessment results will be used. Faculty also use assessment results to modify courses and/or programs. Girard School staff construct and implement assessment instruments, collect and manage the assessment databases, analyze assessment results, prepare assessment reports, and create assessment portfolios online for student use.



**Table 3**  
**Summary of Assessment Methods by Learning Outcome**

<b>Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Assessment Method</b>	<b>When Assessed</b>
1. Communication Abilities	Portfolio evaluation of Written Assignments, Presentations	Across all four years
2. Analytical Skills	Portfolio evaluation of Case Analysis, Problem Sets, etc. Knowledge Test	Across all four years Beginning of junior year and at graduation
3. Cultural Understanding and Flexibility	Student evaluations of group members Knowledge Test	Across all four years Beginning of junior year and at graduation.
4. Ethical Understanding and Reasoning	Portfolio evaluation of case situations with ethical dimensions Knowledge Test	Across all four years Beginning of junior year and at graduation.
5. Reflective Thinking	Portfolio evaluation of written reflection pieces required after all evening speaker presentations	Across all four years
6. Adaptability	Portfolio evaluation of case analyses and project presentations	Across all four years
7. Financial Reporting, Analysis, and Markets	Content of selected portfolio assignments Knowledge Test	Across all four years Beginning of junior year and at graduation.
8. Business Environmental Analysis	Content of selected portfolio case assignments Knowledge Test	Across all four years Beginning of junior year and at graduation.
9. International Perspective	Portfolio Evaluation of Content of international experience learning journals Knowledge Test	Across all four years Beginning of junior year and at graduation.
10. How Businesses Serve Customers	Portfolio evaluations of case analyses, presentations and projects Knowledge Test	Across all four years Beginning of junior year and at graduation.
11. Human Behavior in Organizations	Portfolio evaluations of case analyses, presentations and projects Knowledge Test	Across all four years Beginning of junior year and at graduation.
12. Cross-Functional Integration	Content of selected portfolio assignments Knowledge Test	Across all four years Beginning of junior year and at graduation.

### **Faculty Responsibility:**

As will be described below, the Girard School Curriculum Committee is responsible for developing learning outcomes (for ratification by the entire faculty). The committee applied these learning outcomes in evaluating and redesigning the Girard School core curriculum. This committee also applies assessment results to identify opportunities to improve courses, concentrations, and the entire core. See Figure 3 for the process used for identifying and acting on those assessment driven opportunities.

**Figure 3**

### **Francis E. Girard School of Business and International Commerce Policy for Curriculum Review and Revision**

In order to provide for a systematic rather than Ad Hoc process of curriculum oversight and revision, the core and concentrate curricula will be subject to a comprehensive annual review culminating in a written Course Development Plan (CDP). The general process involves an annual report from each of the BE teams (for core courses) and track chairs (for required concentration courses). CDPs will evaluate the following:

The effectiveness of specific learning activities within the course

- Learning outcomes attainment
- The methods through which AACSB Standards 13 and 14 are satisfied
- How consistency of educational experiences is maintained across multi-section courses
- Remedies for course deficiencies identified through assessment data

CDPs will conclude with a set of specific recommendations that demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement. Appropriate appendices to the CDP include syllabi, exams, and major assignment descriptions.

CDPs will be submitted to the Curriculum Committee by the start of the fall semester. The Curriculum Committee is responsible for reviewing and approving CDPs and offering feedback where warranted. In instances where the committee concludes that the CDP does not adequately provide for continuous improvement, the CDP may be remanded for additional work. The Curriculum Committee, in conjunction with core teaching teams and track chairs, will monitor the implementation of CDPs.

In addition to overseeing "within-course" evaluation and development, the Curriculum Committee is also responsible for maintaining curricular effectiveness across the BE sequence. Central to this process, the committee will ensure that the core curriculum adequately and effectively achieves the school's learning outcomes. In instances where assessment data suggest deficiency, the Curriculum Committee will investigate whether the problem is course-based or the result of problems in courses earlier in the core sequence.

After the Curriculum Committee identified the learning outcomes for both the entire curriculum and for specific courses, the Girard School Assessment Committee developed the processes and instruments for assessing outcomes achievement. In doing so, the Assessment Committee developed the types of measures to be used for each learning outcome, the assessment modality to be used, and it specified the timing for each assessment. The Committee consults the faculty on the appropriateness of the assessment instrument, or it approaches and works with the faculty to develop and implement rubrics for non-metric outcome measures. The Assessment Committee specifies the required analyses and reports that need to be prepared and then reviews those reports and makes recommendations to the Curriculum Committee.

### **Staff Responsibility**

At the Girard School the secretarial responsibilities have been dramatically reduced to reflect the increased faculty access to and use of, technological resources (particularly course management systems such as Blackboard). This allows them to manage their own document production and distribution, schedule student meetings, and conduct online exams. Much of the time that support staff had devoted to word processing, copying, and scheduling was redirected into assessment-related activities.

A newly promoted Girard School Director of Assessment has assumed the responsibility of moving assessment instruments from roughly delineated items and measures produced by the Assessment Committee to functioning, online surveys and examinations. This director manages the assessment database that captures and stores documents, data, images, and digital video for each student over the entire four years the student is in the Girard School. The director is also responsible for designing specific assessment analysis plans and preparing assessment reports.

Other support staff have the responsibility for entering assessment data (when those data are not automatically compiled by online instruments), loading documents and images into the database, capturing and entering digital video, and preparing DVD ROM portfolios for students to use in job interviews.

### **Best Practice**

The Girard School's best practice is the integrated cycle we've created that uses learning outcomes to guide curriculum design and assessment processes. Our discussion of our expectations for our graduates - What should they know? What should they do? How should they think? -led us to dramatically overhaul our curriculum. Thus, the very first step in the assessment process - goal definition - led to a major thrust to improve our students' learning before we had gathered a single data point. After defining our learning goals (step 1), the second stage of the cycle was the detailed

operationalization to guide course design and assessment measures. The final stage of the cycle is our diagnostic use of the assessment results. This helps us to identify specific components of the curriculum that need to be modified and assures that learning occurs and is retained. Finally, curricula are modified and, simultaneously, the efficacy of the measures themselves is examined and modified where appropriate.

### **Learning Outcomes Guide Curriculum and Assessment Design**

As described above, in 2002 the Girard School adopted a set of learning outcomes (see Figure 2) through a multi-stage process that incorporated the perspectives of the School's various stakeholders. Armed with that set of outcomes, the faculty evaluated the core business curriculum to determine whether it had the capacity to allow students to achieve the outcomes.

The core curriculum that had been in place had remained roughly unchanged for 25 years.<sup>6</sup>

During that 25-year span, technology revolutionized the workplace, flattened the organization, and dramatically reduced the functional hierarchy (silos) that had previously characterized business organizations (and business education). Examining the core curriculum (including the content of its courses) in terms of the learning outcomes quickly revealed that many of the learning outcomes were not addressed in the curriculum. Other outcomes were, at best, secondary objectives, and few of the outcomes were addressed solely in a developmental manner. In short, we felt our curriculum failed to reach our goal that states: "Our graduates [will] have learned and are able to demonstrate the skills, competencies, and values they will need to achieve their personal and professional goals." As discussed below, in order for us to meet this goal, our curriculum would need a major overhaul. Tinkering at the edges by adding a course here or modifying one there would not develop the type of graduates we envisioned.

We felt that much of this developmental deficiency was a result of the one-course-per-function nature of much of the business core. This structure assumed that it was possible within a single semester course (e.g., forty-five contact hours, including exams, spread across fifteen weeks) to move a student through all the stages of Bloom's taxonomy of learning. The single-exposure structure of the core curriculum drastically limited the student to little more than basic knowledge of an area without understanding, much less the ability to apply, that knowledge in the solution of business problems. This structure also assumed that any learning that occurred in the one-semester class would be retained through graduation and into the workplace without further reinforcement ... an assumption that belied the observation and experience of most faculty.

The result of this analysis was that the faculty agreed to redesign the curriculum one year at a time, implementing a new first-year curriculum in fall 2002 and adding one more year as that class (the class of 2006)

**Figure 4**  
**Girard School of Business and International Commerce**  
**Core Curriculum (Adopted 2003)**

**Freshman Year**

- Business Enterprise 101 - Introduction to Business I (4 SCH)
- Business Enterprise 102 - Introduction to Business II (4 SCH)

A two-semester course sequence, team taught (2 faculty per section) providing basic business vocabulary, understanding of what a business is, a roadmap to understanding the basic knowledge and competencies all Girard School graduates will need to demonstrate, and setting standards for academic rigor in all business courses. The two-course sequence includes 3 hours of class each week, field trips to local businesses, guest speakers (evenings), and weekend retreats.

- Business Enterprise 107 - Computer Applications I (1 SCH)
- Business Enterprise 108 - Computer Applications II (1 SCH)

A two-semester course sequence developing competency in basic business computer applications.

Additional required core courses taught outside of the Girard School:

- Quantitative Analysis for Business (4 SCH)  
Basic mathematical analysis skills; a prerequisite course for statistics.
- Economics for Business (4 SCH)  
Principles of Micro- and Macro-Economics.

**Sophomore Year**

- Business Enterprise 203 - Accounting for Business (4 SCH)  
User-oriented accounting course.
- Business Enterprise 213 - Business Statistics (4 SCH)  
Statistics for business.
- Business Enterprise 220 - Integrated Business Core (12 SCH)  
An integrated business core course providing 2 SCH each of Finance, Information Technology, Law and Ethics, Marketing, Organizational Behavior, and Operations.

Additional required core courses taught outside of the Girard School:

- Foreign Language (6 SCH)

**Sophomore Summer or Junior Fall**

- International experience (6 or more SCH)  
Course work taken outside the US at a partner school (e.g., ESC-Grenoble).

**Junior Year**

- Business Enterprise 302 - New Business Project (4 SCH)  
Students (working in teams) propose, start up, operate, and liquidate an actual business. Two hours of class time per week, with the balance spent on the project.

**Senior Year**

- Business Enterprise 401 - New Business Startup (4 SCH)
- Business Enterprise 402 - Capstone Course (4 SCH)  
Students (working in teams) conduct a consulting project for a not-for-profit organization.

progressed through their four years at the Girard School. Each year a task force designed the curricular components for the coming years, and a team of faculty who would teach the course implemented it. As the students progressed into their second year, and the second-year curriculum was introduced, assessment results for the first year would be reviewed. That curriculum would be modified as appropriate and so on for each subsequent year. See Figure 4 for the new Girard School core curriculum.

The new Girard School core curriculum spans all four years of the student's enrollment at Merrimack. Regardless of their planned concentration, all Girard School students take the same course for their first two years. In the spring of the sophomore year, students elect which major they will enter. The principal component of the freshman year is two sequential, four semester hour courses (Business Enterprise 101 & 102. These courses are team taught by two faculty member teams ... one from a "soft" discipline (OB or Marketing) and the other from a "hard" discipline (Finance or Accounting). The course also is writing intensive (on average a paper every other week), presentation intensive (two PowerPoint, group presentations a semester), team based (including a weekend ropes course, experiential team building retreat) and extends outside of normal class hours (mandatory evening speaker series). This demand level is maintained through the entire four year core.

The first half of the sophomore year includes-user oriented accounting and statistics courses. The second semester revolves around a massive 12 credit hour core course that integrates six functional modules: business law/ethics, finance, information technology, marketing, operations and quality management, and organizational studies. The course also includes a team-based integrating project where students select an actual business, go into the business (with management permission), and analyze how the firm executes each of the six functional areas of the course. The results of the analysis are presented in a report with an executive summary (which with modifications/improvements will be shared with the firm they studied) and a formal group presentation of the findings. Students receive a single grade for the course but receive scores for each of the six modules and the project. These scores identify students who passed the course but need remediation in a particular content area, and also provide thresholds for admittance into a concentration.

In their junior year students have an international experience. This is either a semester abroad or a short course at a partner academic institution outside of the US. It is recommended that these international experiences occur in countries where English is not the primary language. In the second half of their junior year students take a class in starting a business. This is a team-based class where students develop a business plan for a student-scope business that they will operate, if funded, the following semester. The students compete for venture pool funds, and about half of the teams

receive funding (around \$5,000 per team) in the form of a loan which is due, payable in full, at the end of the next semester. In the next semester the successful teams launch and operate their companies. Unfunded students take senior level core electives. The senior year concludes with a capstone course which includes service projects and business simulations.

As the Curriculum Committee and faculty task forces were designing the new curriculum, the Assessment Committee was exploring how to assess the achievement of learning outcomes.<sup>7</sup> As the assessment process was designed, the committee considered how best to assure that the learning which occurred was retained and further developed in a manner that would allow students to demonstrate their learning upon graduation. The result was the assessment process described above.

For the curriculum and assessment process to result in demonstrated achievement of learning outcomes, specific assessment measures and tasks needed to be assigned to each course in the core and to each course in the concentration. This specificity required the learning outcomes to move from their initial, conceptual formulation, to a very specific set of operationalizations for each of the learning outcomes. For example, the first learning outcome was communication. This was presented in very general conceptual terms as follows, "A Girard School graduate will demonstrate active listening and communication skills, collaboratively and individually, in speaking, writing, listening, and using electronic media." Operationalizing that outcome required breaking it into four components: speaking, writing, listening, and presenting via electronic media. Each of those four components then needed to be broken down by content type, format (presentation or discussion), size/length, individual or group, etc. Finally each of those elements needed to be placed in an appropriate position over the four-year developmental arc. This required understanding what a freshman needed to achieve versus a sophomore, etc.

### **Learning Outcome Operationalization**

The need for detailed operationalizations became apparent as the Curriculum Committee realized that each of the Girard School learning outcomes needed to be deconstructed. That deconstruction meant breaking each of the learning outcomes into developmental steps and determining where in the curriculum each of those steps needed to occur. That deconstruction required each of the outcomes to be broken down into components, each of which needed to be incorporated into the curriculum and developed over the span of the program. Further, the committee determined that it was insufficient to simply list a series of outcomes. The Curriculum Committee, working in concert with the Assessment Committee, concluded that each outcome needed to be presented in terms of something observable and, therefore, assessable at each step in the process. The result was the set of operationalized learning outcomes presented in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
**Operationalized Learning Outcomes**

Outcome	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
<b>Communication</b>  A Girard School graduate will demonstrate active listening and communication skills, collaboratively and individually in speaking, writing, listening, and using electronic media.	Present descriptive information relating to business problems/situations presented in structured learning activities.	Present and defend recommendations to resolve business problems/situations presented in structured learning activities.	Make sophisticated presentations of an unstructured functional-level problem/situation and its resolution.	Write succinct and persuasive documents that analyze and resolve unstructured functional-level problems/situations.
	Understand and summarize business problems/situations presented through oral discussions.	Critique and respond to business problems/situations presented through oral discussions.	Make sophisticated presentations of an unstructured functional-level problem/situation and its resolution.	Present compelling and reasoned resolutions of business problems/situations to a range of target audiences.
	Write a range of documents (e.g., reports, memos, proposals, letters) using correct grammar, spelling, formatting and punctuation to describe business problems/situations presented in structured learning activities.	Write succinct and persuasive documents that incorporate functional knowledge and techniques to analyze and resolve business problems/situations presented in structured learning activities.	Critique and respond to information presented through unstructured and informal discussions of functional-level problems/situations.	Understand, critique, respond to, and resolve unstructured business problems/situations, with appropriate questions to improve clarity, to develop greater depth and insight, and to promote problem identification and resolution.
<b>Analytical Skills</b>  A Girard School graduate will demonstrate the ability to integrate, synthesize and apply complex information effectively  A Girard School graduate will demonstrate the ability to apply quantitative and qualitative reasoning for problem solving both individually and in a group setting.	Identify business problems depicted in structured learning activities and describe the information necessary for problem resolution.	Utilize appropriate analytical techniques to identify viable alternatives for business problems/situations presented in structured learning activities.	Apply appropriate analytical techniques to primary research data to provide a descriptive account and appropriate recommendations and potential consequences of a non-structured functional-level problem/situation.	Use relevant primary research methods, perform appropriate analyses, interpret results, and provide recommendations to resolve a complex business problems/situations.
<b>Cultural Understanding and Flexibility</b>  A Girard School graduate will demonstrate the ability to work effectively in different roles in a diverse group and in diverse environments.	Identify dimensions of cultural difference that are relevant to business activities.	Understand how cultural differences apply to business practices.	Apply cultural understanding to make functional-level decisions .	Make business decisions that are mediated by the need for cultural understanding and flexibility.
<b>Ethical Understanding and Reasoning</b>  A Girard School graduate will demonstrate the ability to make moral and ethical business decisions.	Define a set of personal values that are based upon one's experience.	Analyze, critique and defend one's personal values and ethical standards	Apply and appraise one's personal values and ethical standards.	See Below
	Recognize and describe ethical problems/situations presented in structured learning activities.	Analyze and resolve ethical problems/situations presented in structured learning activities.	Analyze and resolve functional-level ethical problems/situations.	Make ethically, legally, and socially appropriate decisions that consider the consequences for a range of organizational stakeholders.
<b>Reflective Thinking</b>  A Girard School graduate will demonstrate the ability to learn from one's own experiences and to participate in one's own emotional and intellectual growth.	Evaluate past experience and the role that cumulative liberal and professional learning plays in one's personal development.	Identify, reflect upon, and articulate one's aspirations and personal strengths and weaknesses.	Solicit, integrate and evaluate feedback from peers and mentors to assess one's progress toward their aspirations.	Make decisions that reflect constructive self-awareness and the necessity for continuous growth and learning.



**Table 4**  
**Operationalized Learning Outcomes**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Adaptability</b> A Girard School graduate will demonstrate the ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment.	Recognize how ambiguity and change affect business activities.	Identify areas of ambiguity and change that are key to business decisions.	Make a series of functional-level decisions that incorporate an understanding of ambiguity and change.	Make a series of business decisions in conditions of ambiguity and change.
<b>Financial Reporting, Analysis and Markets</b> A Girard School graduate will demonstrate an understanding of recording and accumulating financial data to further the stewardship of an organization. A Girard School graduate will demonstrate the ability to apply the analysis of financial information as a basis for business decisions. A Girard School graduate will demonstrate an understanding of the role and function of financial markets and institutions.	Identify the purpose of and relationship among the basic financial statements. Identify major financial institutions and markets and the impact they have upon commerce.	Understand the process underlying the basic financial statements and utilize financial analysis tools to assess a firm's financial condition Understand how the activities of financial institutions and markets influence business strategies.	Make functional-level decisions that consider a firm's financial condition. Make functional-level decisions that consider the impact of financial institutions and markets.	Use financial reports/data to make business decisions that consider financial implications. Make business decisions that reflect the activities of financial institutions and markets.
<b>Business Environment</b> A Girard School graduate will demonstrate the ability to make management decisions that reflect how dynamic relationships among economic forces in international and national trade affect the operations of a business. A Girard School graduate will demonstrate the ability to make management decisions that reflect the impact of political, legal, governmental, cultural, and technological issues.	Identify the external environmental issues that affect a firm's operations	Understand how important changes/trends in the external environment impact businesses.	Make functional-level decisions that reflect the impact of the external environment.	Make business decisions that reflect the impact of the external environment.
<b>International Perspective</b> A Girard School graduate will demonstrate the ability to function effectively in an international environment. A Girard School graduate will demonstrate the ability to apply international perspectives to local business decision.	Identify the global environmental issues that affect business decisions.	Understand how global environment affects a firm's operations.	Make functional-level decisions that reflect the global environment.	Make business decisions that reflect the global environment.
<b>How Businesses Serve Customers</b> A Girard School graduate will demonstrate the ability to manage the creation and production of goods and services and bringing them to market.	Identify the activities that enable firms to produce and deliver goods and services that profitably satisfy consumer needs.	Understand concepts, techniques, and strategies that enable firms to identify consumer needs and produce and deliver products that profitably satisfy consumer needs.	Make functional-level decisions that facilitate the production and delivery of goods and services that profitably satisfy consumer needs and expectations.	Make business decisions that facilitate the production and delivery of goods and services that profitably satisfy consumer needs and expectations.

Development of these operationalized learning outcomes presented a number of challenges to the Girard School faculty. The first challenge was identifying the set of competencies that comprised each learning outcome. Thus, for example, when the communications outcome specifies, “active listening and communication skills, collaboratively and individually, in speaking, writing, listening, and using electronic media”, the faculty had to determine what each of those terms meant. What were active listening and communication skills and how could they be demonstrated for each of

the communications modes?<sup>8</sup> Then the faculty had to determine how each of those competencies would develop over a student's four years in the Girard School. As illustrated in the Communications row of the operationalized learning outcomes, this required three separate series of outcomes (Formal Presentation, Discussion, and Written Communication) each with progressively sophisticated tasks for each of the four years.

To arrive at this level of operationalized detail for each of the learning outcomes required faculty to go through a developmental learning process themselves. They had to not simply be able to identify a learning outcome, they needed to understand what that learning outcome entailed, how it could be applied in different curricular settings, how it could be integrated into other functional frameworks, and how it could be observed and, therefore, evaluated. This required the faculty to move through the entire range of Bloom's taxonomy for each outcome.

A part of this developmental process required faculty to reduce what students needed to truly learn to its core concepts. When taken as a whole, the operationalized learning outcomes presented a substantial set of specified tasks for each year of the curriculum and each course in those years. It quickly became apparent that existing core courses could be squeezed and prodded into new formats with the operationalized learning outcomes setting tasks for each course content that would not lead to outcomes achievement being de-emphasized or even dropped from the core. This resulted in an iterative review of the operationalized learning outcomes as faculty had to specify what they would expect students to retain and apply long after they had taken a course.

The operationalized learning outcomes also made it clear that few of the outcomes were amenable to assessment via straightforward knowledge tests, because those tests rarely went beyond the earliest learning stages. The multi-faceted competencies of the outcomes were best assessed in more qualitative forms as envisioned by the Portfolio Assessment Process presented above. Fortunately, the types of information represented by any given portfolio element (e.g., a final group presentation in the second year-core course) could encompass many outcome elements simultaneously.

The qualitative nature of these portfolio elements required faculty to develop rubrics for evaluating them. This rubric development process was accomplished by the Assessment Committee and required extensive faculty training in their application. A faculty retreat was devoted to this training.

### **Findings and Reflection**

Here are some of the "lessons learned" (in no particular order) as a result of going through this process:

- You don't know what something is until you figure out how to measure it.
- Simple, elegant concepts often are neither simple nor elegant to measure.

- Being able to answer the question, “I will consider my course a success if, when I run into former students, they will be able to tell me they remember and use the following concepts: \_\_\_\_\_,” is very helpful in determining learning objectives.
- If you hold students accountable for remembering everything in the course (i.e., test to the text’s index), little retained learning will occur.
- If student grades are not linked to learning outcome achievement, the importance of that outcome is minimized.
- Learning must be cumulative. If each course doesn’t hold students accountable for applying what they have learned in prior required courses, they will have no reason to retain what they previously learned.
- Every course must be able to achieve a variety of learning outcomes. If each outcome must have its own course, a curriculum will implode because of sheer size.
- Multiple sections of a course all need to have the same learning outcomes and the same measurable tasks. Academic freedom has nothing to do with this.
- It takes time for faculty to understand that learning takes more than one semester.
- If rubrics can be used for both grading and assessment, faculty demands are reduced.
- If rubrics are shared with students, they can work toward improving upon the evaluated elements.
- There’s nothing wrong with teaching to the test (i.e., assessment method) if the test is testing the right thing.
- Freshmen and seniors need to be assessed by the same rubric. If all freshmen receive the same high score, there is limited opportunity for development or improvement. A low rubric score can translate into a good grade for a freshman and a low grade for a senior.
- Assessment ultimately results in accountability. Accountability isn’t always pleasant.
- Implementing operationalized learning outcomes in a curriculum represents change.
- Change is hard. Change in an academic setting is ....?
- Change requires champions.
- Change doesn’t stop.
- Requiring consensus cedes control to the most obstinate and least rationale members of the group. Not everyone needs to agree.
- For students to make good faith efforts to accomplish assessment, they must have a stake in the assessment. Grades may not be a high enough stake.
- A tangible benefit for a student (like a DVD of their portfolio to use for recruiting) is of more value than an intangible benefit.

## Conclusion

The evolution of the Girard School learning outcomes into a curriculum, into operationalized learning outcomes, and then into detailed course outcomes and tasks is an ongoing process. It reflects a commitment to assessment that requires us to constantly re-examine what we do and consider how we can do it better.

To accomplish this process requires faculty commitment and involvement at every stage of the process. Getting that involvement is not easy as faculty are required to reconsider what they do and how they do it. Shifting to an outcome-driven curriculum requires faculty members to consider the possibility that the teaching they've done for many years may not have resulted in student learning. When teaching defines a faculty member's life, this is not something easily considered. This results in long, drawn-out reviews and often contentious deliberations. External deadlines can help drive the process and achieve progress.

This process has resulted in energizing the Girard School faculty and dramatically increasing the challenges set for Girard School students. Not surprisingly, the students have risen to the challenges. In striving to demonstrate what the Girard School's students have learned, everyone at the Girard School has learned a great deal about what we do well, what we can do better, and how much we have yet to learn. Once started, the journey to demonstrating the achieved learning of Girard School graduates never stops. Learning what the students have achieved allows the Girard School faculty to consider how much more can be achieved.

The curriculum that evolved (and continues to evolve) through this process is very demanding. As with students everywhere, complaining occurs, but frequently students say, "It should be even more demanding." However, to date, no student who has completed the 12 semester-hour BE 220 integrated core course has suggested that it should be harder. In fact, at the end of that course, all students receive BE 220 Survivor T-shirts.

### Endnotes

- 1 AACSB *Standards for Accreditation*, St. Louis, MO: AACSB, January 1, 2004, p.58.
- 2 A simple demonstration of the unrealistic nature of the assumption that a course grade is a reasonable measure of what a student has learned and retained in a class is to consider how many students would be likely to pass a course's final examination if they had to retake it six months later without an opportunity to study for the exam.
- 3 *Editor's note:* While the Girard School's requirements for their assessment program (continual assessment tracking retention as well as learning) fits well with their mission, this approach is not required by AACSB.
- 4 *Editor's note:* See Chapter on Assessing Business Knowledge (Vol.1, No. 1) by D. Rotondo.
- 5 This is a commercially available, Internet-based program that administers the

test and prevents students from printing that test or accessing other files on their computers.

- 6 To put that in context, in 1978 (25 years before the Girard School learning outcomes were adopted) the personal computer did not exist beyond the garages of a few innovators.
- 7 *Editor's Comment:* Note how the Girard School faculty considered assessment at the same time that they were designing the new curriculum. Not only did this facilitate the implementation of an assessment plan in terms of the choice, place, and timing of methods, but it kept the focus on the learning goals throughout the curriculum design period.
- 8 *Editor's note:* The chapter by Bommer et al. (volume 1) also notes the difficulty in operationalizing "active."

### **Author Bio**

**Ed Popper, Ph.D.**, Dean of the Girard School of Business at Merrimack University, has served as a dean of small business schools for the past fourteen years. Dr. Popper has also been a consultant on policy issues related to consumer protection for the Federal Trade Commission, the Attorneys General of New York, California, Massachusetts, and Iowa, and as the U.S. Surgeon General. His scholarly publications are in the areas of marketing and public policy.

*Like many schools, Texas Christian University (TCU) requires that its students apply for separate admission to its business school. The admission process for the Neeley Business School goes far beyond the required GPA and prescribed courses that most Business Schools require; however, to include comprehensive communication competency tests, computer software certification, an interview, and an online application that includes a cover letter and resume. This admission process provides valuable data to assess core competencies, in addition to ensuring a high quality student body.*

## **CHAPTER 2 (ALMOST) PAINLESS ASSESSMENT: USING INTAKE PROCESSES FOR ASSESSMENT PURPOSES**

**Gay Wakefield  
Texas Christian University, Neeley School of Business**

### **Background, Mission, and Goals**

In 1884, AddRan Male and Female College established a commercial school that grew into the School of Business by the time the college became Texas Christian University (TCU) in 1902. An MBA program was added in 1938 and in 1963 TCU's School of Business achieved membership in the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, now known as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business). Designation of the school as the M. J. Neeley School of Business occurred in 1967 to honor the man who, as a TCU trustee for 25 years and then as chairman of the Board of Trustees, left his indelible mark upon TCU.

At the beginning of the Great Depression, M. J. Neeley (1898-1996) took a bookkeeping job with a trailer manufacturer located in Fort Worth, Texas. Soon he owned the company. Neeley became successful in widely diverse fields: banking, mining, hat manufacturing, transportation, land development, ranching, petroleum, insurance, and finance. Neeley's success was due largely to his strong business sense and his devotion to integrity and fairness.

The one constant throughout M. J. Neeley's career was dedication to assisting others. The consummate mentor, he helped employees establish their own businesses and become their own bosses. Grounded in principles and commitment, Neeley made a lasting impact on Texas commerce—and on the M. J. Neeley School of Business at Texas Christian University. With his belief in leading without trampling and motivating without exploiting, Neeley lived by the principles that the Neeley School proudly embraces. As our benefactor and namesake, M. J. Neeley and his philosophies guide our most crucial mission: to develop respected leaders.

The Neeley School is committed to developing ethical leaders with a global perspective who help shape the business environment of a rapidly changing future, and to developing and disseminating leading-edge thought in order to improve the practice of business. Core values of TCU and the Neeley School are academic achievement, personal freedom and integrity, dignity and respect of the individual, and a heritage of inclusiveness, tolerance, and service.

Core learning goals for the BBA program (current as of spring 2005) indicate that students will: (1) communicate proficiently in both written and oral forms; (2) exercise skillful interpersonal teamwork, and leadership behaviors; (3) apply analytic skills regarding financial theories, internal and external reporting, and markets; (4) utilize technological tools proficiently; (5) exhibit understanding and reasoning abilities regarding ethical and legal responsibilities in organizations and society; (6) solve complex problems to create value through the integrated production and distribution of goods, services, and information; (7) understand how information technologies influence the structure and processes of organizations and economies, and how they influence the roles and techniques of management; (8) understand domestic and global economic environments of organizations; (9) understand multicultural and diversity issues faced by organizations; and (10) apply statistical data analysis and management science to make sound business decisions.

For the full-time MBA program, core learning goals (current as of spring 2005) indicate that students will: (1) gain analytical skills for recognizing and solving complex business opportunities and problems; (2) develop interpersonal, teamwork, and leadership skills; (3) communicate effectively in both oral and written formats; (4) develop personal and social competence supportive of career success; (5) exhibit global awareness; (6) apply cross-functional approaches to business issues; (7) develop effective personal career strategies; and (8) understand the context of managerial decision-making.

### **Defining Assessment**

Assessment efforts in the Neeley School of Business began when the Department of Marketing implemented exit examinations and alumni surveys during academic year 1987-1988. By the late 1990s, all undergraduate departments conducted annual exit exams and some did periodic alumni surveys. Instruments employed at that time focused on two types of information: (1) basic definitions and facts related to the major and (2) student/alumni perceptions about their educational programs.

As incoming Director of the M. J. Neeley Center for Professional Communication (CPC), with a master's focused on communication in human relations and a doctoral minor in organizational communication, I developed

the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ and CPC Communication Certification™ programs in 1997.<sup>9</sup> These programs were the first attempts at competency-based assessment in the Neeley School but were voluntary, and only the better students tended to undertake them. My appointment expanded in 1999 when I also was appointed Neeley School Director of Assessment, coinciding with the fact that Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and AACSB accreditation reviews were looming in 2003.

Because the program heads responsible for developing assessment plans had no background in theory or methods for learning-outcomes assessment, the first order of business was awareness and education. Careful not to let them know that the planning and implementation we would have to accomplish in three years normally would encompass a six-year assessment cycle, I focused on reinforcing that the task definitely was achievable and that I would walk—OK, sprint—them through it step by step. The dean probably was on-target when he began referring to me as the “assessment cheerleader” and to our assessment meetings as “pep rallies.”

Appointment of the first TCU Director of Assessment in 2001 provided reinforcement, validation, and support for our efforts, with the Neeley School lauded as leading the campus in effective learning-outcomes assessment as accreditation visits approached. Establishment of the Neeley Assessment Committee in 2004 was another developmental step in the business school’s assessment process, fostering faculty ownership and control of learning-outcomes assessment.

A user-friendly assessment planning and implementation template was developed by the campus assessment director and immediately adopted by the business school. It has proven effective with Neeley program heads by helping to focus planning efforts, encouraging complete and consistent results reporting, and spurring action-based improvement plans which have resulted in annual enhancements for programs and assessment methodologies. The assessment template in Table 1 provides the reporting format currently employed in the Neeley School.

Though a number of assessment competencies are program specific and vary from department to department, there are several learning areas that apply universally in the Neeley School. Those competencies relate to (1) analytic skills, (2) problem solving, (3) global awareness, (4) leadership, (5) teamwork, (6) oral communication, (7) written communication, and (8) interpersonal communication. Though these same competencies are addressed for all Neeley graduate and undergraduate students, learning outcomes and assessment methods vary by program.

For example, the MBA core and the BBA core both have competencies concerning problem-solving abilities and integration of business functions, but learning-outcome statements and measurements differ for the two programs.<sup>10</sup> The related BBA learning outcome, that students will



**Table 1**  
**Assessment Plan**

Program Name AY20__-__  Department Mission Statement Developing ethical leaders with a global perspective who help shape the business environment of a rapidly changing future.  Program Competency Students will _____				
Intended Outcomes	Action Steps	Method of Assessment	Results of Assessment & Proposed Improvements	Resources Needed for Proposed Improvements
Measurable statement of the desired output. What students should know, think, or do upon completion of the course, sequence of courses, and/or program.	Specific program actions to help students achieve intended outcome. Courses/assignments supporting intended outcome.	Methods of assessment directly addressing the intended outcome (not the action steps) and specifying who will administer what assessment instrument(s) when.	Results of Assessment. Were intended outcomes achieved? What improvements were proposed? What person(s)/group evaluated results and made recommendations for improvement?	List of resources needed, including staff, funding, facility, materials, etc.

demonstrate proficiency in integrating various business functions for effective decision making, is measured by automated scoring during an embedded computer simulation activity in the fundamentals core course. The related MBA learning outcomes are that (1) students will integrate the functional areas of business and that (2) students will apply appropriate analytical skills to recognize and solve business opportunities and problems in a case scenario. Both learning outcomes are measured dually each semester via:

(1) Fall MBA core faculty members' scoring of written and oral student responses to a major case problem that serves as the final exam in all core courses at the end of the first semester, and

(2) Automated scoring of a computerized business simulation exercise, combined with spring MBA core faculty members' scoring of oral student analysis of the business simulation experience, that serves as the final exam in all core courses at the end of the second semester.

### **Resources and Responsibilities for Assessment**

Since inception of the position in 1999, I have been the Neeley School Director of Assessment, the first such assessment position at TCU. Simultaneously, I have continued my duties as Director of the M. J. Neeley Center for Professional Communication. At the time of my appointment as assessment director, the dean in office quoted several reasons for my selection: (1) holding a doctorate in higher education and adult learning, (2) originating and directing new programs at other universities, and (3) creating and managing the first competency-based assessment effort in the Neeley School. I strongly suspect another overwhelming factor: (4) nobody else wanted to take on the challenge of launching competency assessment for the business school.

The Neeley Assessment Committee was instituted in 2004. It is comprised of dean-appointed faculty representatives from programs throughout the business school and fulfills a major service commitment required of all Neeley faculty. The committee currently is chaired by a dean-appointed faculty member who has completed AACSB assessment training and has served on the campus-wide assessment committee. The business school's assessment director is a standing member of the committee, serving as a resource person for the committee, a liaison to the campus assessment director, and a final check point before assessment plans and reports are submitted to the campus assessment director. Aside from a small summer stipend for the chair of the business school's assessment committee, there are no resources now designated for assessment in the Neeley School of Business.

Logistically, the Neeley assessment process is composed of several steps, some at the school level and some at the university level. Neeley program heads submit assessment template drafts to the Neeley Assessment Committee, which reviews the templates and adds comments and recommends changes. The Neeley Director of Assessment does a final check of drafts and forwards the templates to the TCU Director of Assessment, who reviews the templates and committee notations and adds her comments and recommended changes. The Neeley Assessment Committee reviews recommendations with Neeley program heads, who then submit revised assessment templates. Committee members confirm responsiveness to recommended changes before the Neeley Director of Assessment reviews template revisions with the dean and submits them to the TCU Director of Assessment.

### **Best Practice**

While Neeley MBA core assessment developed steadily over the past few years, assessment of the BBA core was slow to develop and faced strong resistance from some key faculty. In Spring 2004, following the Fall 2003 recommendations from our AACSB accreditation review team, the business school turned its assessment focus to the BBA core. Coinciding with the 2004 attention on BBA core assessment was the institution of the Neeley Assessment Committee and the hiring of several new faculty members committed to assessment processes. This laid the groundwork for more dynamic BBA core assessment.

However, the concept of concentrating a majority of the core assessments in the capstone course remained contentious with a few key faculty. Though some assessments require end-of-program measurement, some learning outcomes lend themselves to measurement earlier in programs. As it turns out, such is the case with a number of learning outcomes for the Neeley School's BBA core.

## Development

During the AACSB assessment conference I attended in January, 2004, it occurred to me that some of the processes used in admitting undergraduates as business majors could be utilized for assessment of several BBA core program competencies. Lower-division business core requirements are intended to assure students develop basic skills they will need to apply in their majors. So it seemed reasonable to assess the lower-division core's development of those skills as we admit students to upper-division business coursework. After verifying validity of this idea during the AACSB conference, I worked with the Neeley School's undergraduate associate dean and with Neeley Student Resource Center staff to embed lower-division core program assessments into the admission process for new business majors.

The BBA admission procedure was instituted in academic year 2001-2002 as an enrollment management procedure to help balance resources and effectively meet student needs. To become business majors, students formally apply for admission to the Neeley School. Admission is competitive and is not guaranteed, and students may enroll in upper-division business courses only if they are approved as BBA majors. Students typically apply in the sophomore year for admission to upper-level business courses. Before being accepted as a business major in the Neeley School, each student must accomplish the following:

- (1) Complete 54 credit hours,
- (2) Complete the business core's lower-division requirements, with no less than a 2.5 GPA in those courses,
- (3) Earn a TCU GPA of at least 2.5 overall,
- (4) Pass the Microsoft® Office Specialist certification exam<sup>11</sup> for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint,
- (5) Complete and submit the online BBA application form by the posted deadline,
- (6) Complete and submit a cover letter and a resume<sup>12</sup> by the posted deadline,
- (7) Complete a 20-minute interview (see note 3) with Neeley School faculty and local business professionals who are frequently Neeley alumni, and
- (8) Pass the Neeley BBA admission committee's review of all student application materials and records, as well as all interviewer evaluations.

Three existing requirements of the BBA admission process are appropriate for BBA core assessment purposes, including the criteria that applicants (1) submit a cover letter and a resume, (2) participate in an entrance interview during Neeley Interview Day,<sup>13</sup> and (3) pass the Microsoft®

User certification (MOS) (see note 2). MOS certification procedures already were embedded as part the BBA core program assessment, but the cover letter, resume, and interview procedures were not.

When the BBA admission procedure began, a Neeley School Admission Interview Assessment Form was created for Neeley Interview Day. The form focused on evaluation of students' resumes, cover letters, and interviewing skills. That form covered much of the information needed for BBA core assessment, but existing item clusters and scoring mechanisms mixed the factors related to various learning outcomes. This resulted in scores that did not allow "teasing out" data required for specific lower-division outcomes assessment. Each semester's interviewers are instructed to ask a list of stipulated questions when interviewing potential business majors, so redesigning and expanding the Neeley School Admission Interview Assessment Form made it possible to collect usable assessment data at Neeley Interview Day (see Appendix C for revised assessment form).

### **CPC Communication Diagnostics and Certification™**

While considering use of the BBA admission process for embedded assessment, I suggested we assess a few more of our BBA core learning outcomes by incorporating administration of the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ during Neeley Interview Day. Graduate business students' pre-program orientation workshops include pretest administration of these communication diagnostics, but there was no expedient forum for capturing similar data at the undergraduate level until the advent of Neeley Interview Day. During their orientation workshops, all incoming MBA, PMBA, and MAc<sup>14</sup> students take the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ as part of their required Level I CPC Communication Certification™ program (see note 1), and EMBA students take the diagnostics as a pretest for EMBA program assessment.

The communication diagnostics consist of a battery of standardized assessment instruments for which norms have been established among working professionals. For each of the diagnostics, the CPC offers preparatory training through online workshops, video workshops, print and computerized training materials, and/or personalized coaching.<sup>15</sup> The CPC Communication Diagnostics™ provide data about current knowledge and skill levels in the following business communication areas:

Communication style. Phillips' (2003) *Communication Style Inventory* assesses proclivity toward four common communication styles: aggressive, avoiding, accommodating, and collaborative.

Communication Apprehension. McCroskey's (1994) *Personal Report of Communication Apprehension* assesses self-perceptions of apprehension levels in meetings, public presentations, small group sessions, and dyads.

Presentation style. The Neeley Center for Professional Communication's *Presentation Style* instrument assesses understanding

of five primary presentation elements: preparation, graphics, nonverbal communication, confidence, and vocal communication.

Business writing. The Neeley Center for Professional Communication's *Business Writing* instrument assesses understanding of individual and team processes for writing, editing, and proofreading. For personalized coaching in this area, the CPC refers students to the business and technical writing coaches at TCU's William L. Adams Center for Writing.

Academic honesty. The Neeley Center for Professional Communication's *Communication Technology and Academic Honesty* instrument assesses understanding of the university's Academic Conduct Policy and ability to apply it.

Intercultural Communication. Tagliaferri's (1992) *Intercultural Communication Inventory* assesses knowledge related to effective communication among diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Listening. Watson and Barker's (1992) *Listen Up* instrument assesses five types of listening comprehension commonly used in business: evaluating message content, understanding meaning in conversation, understanding and remembering lectures, evaluating emotional meaning, and following instructions.

For BBA core assessment purposes, and to encourage BBA students to pursue CPC Communication Certification™, it was determined that Neeley Interview Day should include all CPC Communication Diagnostics™ except the listening instrument. The listening diagnostic consists of an hour-long video portraying numerous situational vignettes, each followed by questions to test listening effectiveness, so Neeley Interview Day inclusion of that diagnostic would require simultaneous, large-group administration in a computer lab equipped with video projection capability. But the fluid nature of Neeley Interview Day scheduling lends itself only to activities students can complete individually as they each finish their interviews, so the listening diagnostic was reserved for later administration to students choosing to pursue Level II CPC Communication Certification™ (see note 1). The rest of the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ instruments easily can be completed in one hour or less via individual administration in the business computer labs.

Both sets of new BBA core assessments—those collected by admission interviews and those collected by administering the CPC Communication Diagnostics™—were embedded for the first time as part of the Fall 2004 Neeley Interview Day. Students were notified to plan on spending up to two hours at the business school on Neeley Interview Day. They were informed that their applications to the business school would be considered complete only after they finished taking the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ and that they could do so at the CPC prior to Neeley Interview Day or in a business computer lab immediately following their admission interviews on Neeley Interview Day.

Pursuant to Neeley Interview Day, the BBA admission committee meets to review all resulting data and make admission decisions. The Neeley Student Resource Center staff then notifies applicants of their admission status. Students who are not accepted have the opportunity to reapply the following semester and are encouraged to take advantage of the Center for Professional Communication training opportunities before doing so (see note 3). CPC staff members compile each student's CPC Communication Diagnostics™ profiles and notify students by e-mail of their results. The inaugural administration of the diagnostics at Neeley Interview Day resulted in 8.3% of newly admitted BBA majors earning Level I CPC Communication Certification™. The e-mail messages to students failing to meet required norms for Level I certification (see note 1) directed them to CPC training designed to help them raise their performance on those instruments, and 4.1% of them immediately began pursuing CPC training toward Level I certification.

### **Learning Goals**

Embedding lower-division, learning-outcome measurements in the intake procedure for new BBA majors makes the process as unobtrusive and painless as possible for students and faculty by placing the workload on administrative staff. Following are the learning outcomes addressed in the admission process for incoming BBA majors:

*Computer software skills.* Students are expected to have basic proficiency using Microsoft® Word, Excel, and PowerPoint software. This learning outcome is assessed with Microsoft® Office Specialist certification (see note 2), passage of which is required for incoming BBA majors.

*Written communication knowledge.* Students are expected to understand effective business writing methods. This learning outcome is assessed with the Center for Professional Communication's proprietary *Business Writing* instrument, administered as part of the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ during Neeley Interview Day. The target goal is that admitted students score above the norm for working professionals. For the inaugural application of this measurement, 31.0% of admitted students scored above the norm.

*Written communication skills.* Students are expected to create resumes and cover letters of the quality required for employment and submit them with their applications for BBA major admission. Effective format, strong content, and correct grammar and punctuation are scored on the Neeley School Admission Interview Assessment Form, completed by business professionals and Neeley faculty members who review resume and cover letter submissions. The target goal for admitted students is a mean score of 3.5 or higher on a 1.0 to 5.0 Likert scale. For the inaugural application of this measurement, the mean score was 4.05.

*Oral communication knowledge.* Students are expected to understand effective presentation methods. This learning outcome is assessed with the Center for Professional Communication's proprietary *Presentation Style* instrument, in concert with the *Personal Report of Communication Apprehension* (McCroskey, 1994). Both instruments are administered as part of the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ during Neeley Interview Day. The target goal is for admitted students to score above the norm for working professionals on both instruments. For the inaugural application of this measurement, 37.1% of admitted students scored above the norm for understanding presentation development and performance and 96.6% scored above the norm for communication confidence.

*Communication style skills.* Students are expected to select collaborative communication styles in work situations. This learning outcome is assessed with the *Communication Style Inventory* (Phillips, 2003) as part of the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ administered during Neeley Interview Day. The target goal for admitted students is a collaboration score above the norm for working professionals. For the inaugural application of this measurement, 91.4% of admitted students scored above the norm.

*Interpersonal communication skills.* Students are expected to exhibit interpersonal skills of the quality required for employment. This learning outcome is assessed during the required intake interview, with the strength of students' interpersonal skills scored on the Neeley School Admission Interview Assessment Form by working professionals and Neeley faculty. The target goal for admitted students is a mean score of 3.5 or higher on a Likert scale of 1.0 to 5.0. For the inaugural application of this measurement, the mean score was 4.0.

*Academic honesty knowledge.* Students are expected to identify accurately ethical choices related to academic honesty. This learning outcome is assessed with the Center for Professional Communication's proprietary *Communication Technology and Academic Honesty* instrument, administered as part of the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ during Neeley Interview Day. The target goal is that admitted students score above the norm for college students. For the inaugural application of this measurement, 90.5% of admitted students scored above the norm.

*Business law and ethics understanding.* Students are expected to apply ethical and legal standards in business contexts. Students' discussions on this topic are scored by working professionals and Neeley faculty on the Neeley School Admission Interview Assessment Form during the required intake interview. The target goal for admitted students is a mean score of 3.5 or higher on a Likert scale of 1.0 to 5.0. For the inaugural application of this measurement, the mean score was 4.0.

*Business-functions integration knowledge.* Students are expected to effectively discuss with business professionals ways in which the functional areas of business are interdependent. Working professionals and Neeley

faculty score students' discussions on this topic during the required intake interview, using the Neeley School Admission Interview Assessment Form. The target goal for admitted students is a mean score of 3.5 or higher, on a Likert scale of 1.0 to 5.0. For the inaugural application of this measurement, the mean score was 4.0.

*Diversity and multicultural issues knowledge.* Students are expected to discuss effectively with business professionals the importance of diversity and multicultural issues in organizations. This learning outcome also is scored by working professionals and Neeley faculty on the Neeley School Admission Interview Assessment Form. The target goal for admitted students is a mean score of 3.5 or higher, on a Likert scale of 1.0 to 5.0. For the inaugural application of this measurement, the mean score was 4.15.

### **Data Management, Discussion, and Reporting**

Results of the assessments embedded in the admission process for new BBA majors are maintained in Microsoft® Excel files on Neeley School administrative network drives to which students have no access, and all information on individual students is kept confidential. This system provides easy, rapid data retrieval and saves storage space over hard-copy file maintenance. Electronic filing also is safer from loss, since the university's computer system backs up all files every 24 hours.

Because CPC Communication Certification™ (involving passage of the CPC Communication Diagnostics™) is required for MBA, PMBA, and MAc graduations, hard-copy coaching files related to CPC diagnostics results are generated and maintained for the 175-200 Neeley graduate students entering each year. Electronic assessment files also are maintained for these students. Upon graduation, students' hard-copy files are moved to Neeley School storage areas.

With 400 or more undergraduates applying for admission to the BBA program annually, hard-copy CPC file storage simply is not available for all BBA students. Hard-copy files related to BBA communication diagnostics results are generated and maintained, in addition to maintenance of the electronic assessment files, only for Neeley undergraduates who make appointments to meet with CPC coaches regarding CPC Communication Diagnostics and Certification™. Limited CPC file storage currently is not a major problem, because BBA students are required to take the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ only as part of internal program assessment and have no requirement to earn CPC Communication Certification™. Should serious consideration be given to requiring certification for BBA students in the future, resource concerns of varying types will need to be part of the decision process.

Data are gathered in the fall, spring, and summer semesters and are reported to the Neeley Assessment Committee and to the TCU Director of Assessment each fall. After results are determined for the learning outcomes,



related faculty and administrators discuss effective approaches, problem results, and potential improvements. Currently BBA core assessment results are reviewed with the Neeley Assessment Committee, the BBA Curriculum Committee, the undergraduate associate business dean, BBA core faculty, and others as relevant. Results, recommended improvements, and any resources needed to implement improvements are reported by the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies on the standardized assessment template (see Table 1).

### **Action**

Because the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ have been used successfully for several years as part of assessment for graduate business programs, the same follow-up processes are being applied for undergraduates. BBA students are not required to pass the diagnostic assessments, but they are encouraged to do so in order to be able to list CPC Communication Certification™ on their resumes. Students who do not pass one or more of the instruments in the communication diagnostics are invited to complete individualized follow-up training with the Center for Professional Communication, and then retake the assessment(s). Retakes are not permitted until training is completed. Training can be carried out online, by video workshop, and/or with a CPC communication coach. CPC staff members administer retakes on an individual basis as students complete their designated training.

A new lower-division BBA fundamentals course was introduced in the Fall of 2004 to address deficiencies previously identified in the core program, including concerns that business communication skills were being short-changed in some of the business school's majors and needed to be spotlighted in the BBA core to help assure communication competencies for undergraduate Neeley majors. For similar reasons, also in Fall 2004, the dean's office appointed a Neeley Task Force on Student Communication Skills to encourage a stronger focus on undergraduate business communication competencies. It is reasonable to expect that, as the assessment program progresses, needs identified in other areas will be addressed in similar ways.

### **Benefits**

One of the greatest benefits of embedding BBA core assessments in the intake process for new business majors was the rapidity with which the assessments could be developed and implemented. No negotiation was required with our faculty for dedication or coordination of class time for the new assessment procedures or for course incentives to encourage participation and serious attention from students. Also, the intake assessments are part of a high-stakes process that the students take very seriously, helping assure their best possible performance.

Another major benefit is having 100% of incoming majors participate in the process. The Neeley School BBA admission process is still in its infancy, so it is too early to know what long-term rewards may be realized for enrollment management and resource balancing. But we have observed that students enrolling in upper-division Neeley School courses, since institution of the BBA admission process, exhibit decidedly higher levels of aptitude for business education, interest in business and industry, and quality of performance.

### **Findings and Reflection**

As previously noted, embedded intake assessment for the Neeley BBA core is a new program yet to develop a track record for feedback and reflection. However, other Neeley School assessment processes have been in place for several years and provide some insights that may prove helpful to other business schools that are developing assessment procedures.

We have learned the hard way that exit exams present numerous problems that sometimes make them more trouble than they are worth, especially where skill competencies are concerned. The new Neeley Assessment Committee members came to grips with this reality during the past year while trying, unsuccessfully, to create an exit exam measuring various competencies in the BBA core program. They were able to develop multiple-choice items addressing only four of the ten BBA competency statements and, after administering the exit exam following the BBA capstone course in the Spring and Fall 2004 semesters, have concluded that comprehensive core exit exams are not adequate measures of any BBA core competencies and should be abandoned in favor of embedded assessments.

Because exit exams comprised the only undergraduate assessment approach used for the first decade of assessment in our business school, and since programs had invested time and energy in developing departmental multiple-choice exit exams and were comfortable with them, moving away from exit exams to embedded assessments has been slow and difficult. During the past five years, articulation of school-wide undergraduate skill-based competencies that cannot be addressed adequately by multiple-choice exam items has moved the Neeley School in a more progressive assessment direction. AACSB's 2004 revisions to the accreditation standards provided additional support for movement away from definitional, rote memory exams to skill-based learning outcomes.

Another challenge we have faced is that of key faculty who do not value the assessment process as a valid and integral part of educational programming. When faculty in key positions resist assessment, and even work actively to undermine development of more effective methods for measuring program effectiveness, it becomes difficult to maintain support among faculty who value assessment but do not have the clout to stand up

to key faculty resisters. For five years, I cautioned the dean's office that assessment is doomed unless it is embraced by faculty and designed to encourage new thinking and result in clear program improvement. When those cautions were reinforced by our AACSB accreditation visit team, the Neeley Assessment Committee was formed with representation from all academic programs in the business school. The committee process allows faculty to take ownership of their programs' assessment processes, making implementation and change far more likely. When committee members are faculty who believe in assessment and are committed to its success, there is the added benefit of knowledgeable advocates on each program's faculty to help counter potential blockers.

Another lesson we have learned is that processes initially designed for a small voluntary program can experience tremendous growing pains when suddenly expanded to a large compulsory program. The first application of the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ as BBA intake assessments, involving 114 students on one Saturday in October, 2004, worked smoothly and provided a good testing ground for the process. But the Spring 2005 administration of these assessments is expected to involve about 270 students, more than twice as many ever previously assessed with this process in one day, and definitely will test—and task—current processes.

Since 1997, the CPC Communication Diagnostics™ assessments have been administered and scored in Excel programs. This process involves each of the diagnostic files, for each of the students, being individually opened so the macro programs I developed can score them. Then scores are electronically recorded onto the master Communication Profile form for each student and also onto a master list of student results for each class cluster, so that CPC staff can track each undergraduate and graduate class's progress and follow-up with individual students who are working toward CPC Communication Certification™. This process was workable in the beginning, when CPC Communication Diagnostics and Certification™ programs were not required for Neeley students and diagnostics were administered only to the few students who chose to pursue CPC certification. The process was stretched dramatically when CPC Communication Certification™ became a graduation requirement for MBA, PMBA, and MAc students, and the process is far too cumbersome and time consuming for current and anticipated levels of diagnostics administration and record keeping. Microsoft® Access has proven too limited in design and unstable in practice to handle the processing required for CPC Communication Diagnostics™, so an appropriate automated database solution currently is being sought.

Also, the current administration process for communication diagnostic assessments requires that a zip disk be formatted for each student taking the diagnostics. The addition of the BBA applicant pool to the CPC

Communication Diagnostics™ program raises the annual cost for this purchase to \$1,250-\$1,500, if 50% of old zip disks are reused each year, and will add at least \$3,200 to CPC administrative support costs for handling, formatting, scoring, and recording the data via disks. Web-based administration of the diagnostics would eliminate these annual expenses and could provide faster administration and scoring, as well as automated record keeping, but details of support and coordination for a transition to Web-based administration are yet to be secured.

For any new or expanding program, such obstacles are neither atypical nor overwhelming. The Neeley School is strongly committed to learning-outcomes assessment and already has invested five years in developing competency-based outcome measurements. If the new intake assessment results continue to prove as valuable to the Neeley BBA core as the inaugural results suggest, resources assuring continuation of the program are likely.

### **Conclusion**

Positive perspectives on assessment—held by faculty and administrators who understand and publicly support competency-based assessment that is disengaged from faculty-effectiveness evaluations—comprise what I believe is the most fundamental necessity for pedagogically consequential assessment development. If learning-outcomes assessment does not measure factors of true value for program improvement, if it does not result in faculty discourse focused on constant and consistent enhancement of the educational process without fear of reprisal, then assessment efforts are a waste of time and energy. Unfortunately, developing such a positive culture regarding competency-based learning assessment is difficult, at best. However, in my experience over the past five years, it is a challenge worth the effort when the end product is better prepared, more confident, more successful graduates—who become supportive alumni.

Programs in the Neeley School that have adopted competency-based learning-outcomes assessment have improved significantly. Some have dramatically overhauled academic programs that had gone dormant during the years when other priorities so easily drew attention away from continual enhancement of academics. Annually such programs are taking their own pulses and assuring their academic health, serving as examples to more resistant programs in the business school. Gradually during the past five years, with continual nurturing and successful in-house examples, competency-based learning-outcomes assessment has edged into the Neeley School culture one program at a time. Until learning assessment became a hot topic nationally, it was too easy to apply to education the old Southern adage, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." But when it comes to academic programming, preventive maintenance helps avoid breakdowns.

## Appendix A

### Center for Professional Communication Cover Letter and Resume Coaching Form

#### Cover Letter and Resume Feedback Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

(circle one)      BBA Admission                      Internship                      Employment

#### **Cover Letter**

**Format:**                      Excellent    Very Good    Satisfactory    Needs Improvement    Unprepared

Visual appeal Paper choice Address section Main paragraphs Closure section
--

**Content:**                      Excellent    Very Good    Satisfactory    Needs Improvement    Unprepared

Introductory paragraph Internal paragraphs Action paragraph
---

**Language Usage:**    Excellent    Very Good    Satisfactory    Needs Improvement    Unprepared

Grammar Spelling Punctuation Phrasing
--

#### **Resume**

**Format:**                      Excellent    Very Good    Satisfactory    Needs Improvement    Unprepared

Chronological/Functional (circle one) Visual appeal Paper choice Heading Body Clarity Number of pages
---

**Content:**                      Excellent    Very Good    Satisfactory    Needs Improvement    Unprepared

Order of sections Section structure Action words
--

**Language Usage:**    Excellent    Very Good    Satisfactory    Needs Improvement    Unprepared

Grammar Spelling Punctuation Phrasing
--

Coach \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Center for Professional Communication Mock Interview Questions

Questions in Cluster 1 are asked in each mock interview. Questions from Cluster 2 are chosen from the list by coaches based on applicability to specific coaching sessions:

#### Cluster 1

- What do you really want to do in life?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
- Why did you select this college or university?
- What led you to choose your field of major study?
- What college subjects did you like best? Why?
- What college subjects did you like least? Why?
- In what kind of a work environment are you most comfortable?
- What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives? When and why did you establish these goals and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
- What can you tell us about our company? What do you know about our competitors?
- What one major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
- What have you learned from your mistakes? If a similar situation occurred in the future, what would you do to avoid the error?
- Tell me about a difficult situation where it was desirable for you to keep a positive attitude.
- Tell me about a time when you had to persuade someone to accept an idea or a proposal.
- Give me an example of a time you worked under extreme stress.
- Tell me about a time when members of your team weren't pulling their weight and how you handled it.
- Give an example of a time when you had to teach someone a skill and how you went about it?
- How important, if at all, is diversity in the workplace? Why?
- Imagine you are a member of a corporate quality team and that you are asked to pick members from other areas of the company to work on a major project. From what areas of the business, other than your own, would you draw members for the team?

## Cluster 2

- What do you consider to be attributes of a good leader?
- Do you believe you are a good leader? Why?
- What goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- What are your long-range career objectives?
- How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
- What do you expect to be earning in salary in five years?
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- Which is more important to you, the money or the job?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How do you think a friend or professor who knows you would describe you?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest efforts?
- How has your college experience prepared you for a business career?
- Why should I hire you?
- What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful in business?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
- What qualities should a successful manager possess?
- Describe the relationship you think should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her.
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
- If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?
- What changes would you make at your college or university? Why?
- Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
- Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
- What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?
- How well do you work under pressure?
- What part-time or summer jobs have most interested you? Why?
- How would you describe your ideal job following graduation?
- Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?

- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
- Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?
- Are you willing to travel for the job?
- Are you willing to spend at least six months as a trainee?
- Why do you think you might like to live in the community where our company is located?
- Give me an example of something you have done that helped build enthusiasm in others.
- Describe the last time you had to deal with a difficult person and the outcome.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make an important decision. How did you go about making that decision?
- Describe a time when you had to handle multiple responsibilities and how you managed it.
- Describe a time when you had to use creative problem solving and the outcome.



### Mock Interview Feedback

Name \_\_\_\_\_

(circle one)    **BBA Admission Interview**

Internship Interview

Job Interview

**EXPECTED CRITERIA**

	Excellent	Very Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unprepared
<b>Written Communication:</b> <u>Cover Letter</u> Format Grammar and Spelling Content <u>Resume</u> Format Grammar and Spelling Content	<b>Notes:</b>				
<b>Interview Content:</b> <u>Values and Attitudes</u> Student seems to understand: Effects of perceptions Consequences of actions Importance of ethical decisions and actions Legalities of decisions and actions Importance of strong work ethic <u>Business Knowledge</u> Student seems to understand: Importance of multiculturalism/diversity Interdependence of business areas Positive teamwork Creativity in the workplace	<b>Notes:</b>				
<b>Professional Communication Skills:</b> <u>Non-Verbal</u> Business Attire Grooming Posture, gestures, eye contact, etc. Handshake Professionalism <u>Verbal</u> Ideas presented effectively Excellent grammar and vocabulary Strong interpersonal skills	<b>Notes:</b>				

Coach: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### M. J. Neeley School of Business Admission Interview Form

<b>NEELEY SCHOOL ADMISSION INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT FORM</b>
--

Please submit ONE EVALUATION FORM PER STUDENT PER INTERVIEWER.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

FIRST NAME LAST NAME

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Room: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Rating Scale**

Please circle number corresponding to your response for each evaluation criterion.

Strongly Disagree.....Agree.....Strongly Agree  
 1                    2                    3                    4                    5

EVALUATION CRITERIA	NOTES
<b><u>Cover Letter &amp; Resumé</u></b>	
• Effective format employed 1 2 3 4 5	
• Strong content included 1 2 3 4 5	
• Correct grammar & punctuation used 1 2 3 4 5	
<b><u>Values &amp; Attitudes</u></b>	
• Understands how reactions to people, objects, or events affect situations 1 2 3 4 5	
• Accepts the fact that actions have consequences 1 2 3 4 5	
• Recognizes the importance of ethical behavior in the workplace 1 2 3 4 5	
• Is personally committed to legal & ethical behavior in business 1 2 3 4 5	
• Displays outstanding work ethic 1 2 3 4 5	
<b><u>Business Knowledge</u></b>	
• Understands importance of multicultural & diversity issues in organizations 1 2 3 4 5	
• Grasps importance & interdependence of the functional areas of business 1 2 3 4 5	
• Is positive about teamwork 1 2 3 4 5	
• Recognizes the need for workplace creativity 1 2 3 4 5	
<b><u>Professional Communication Skills</u></b>	
• Is wearing attire that's business-formal 1 2 3 4 5	
• Is well groomed 1 2 3 4 5	
• Presents ideas effectively & professionally 1 2 3 4 5	
• Communicates well nonverbally (handshake, posture, eye contact, etc.) 1 2 3 4 5	
• Has strong interpersonal skills 1 2 3 4 5	
• Uses excellent grammar & vocabulary 1 2 3 4 5	
• Overall, behaves professionally 1 2 3 4 5	
<b>Overall, my impression of this candidate is positive</b>	1 2 3 4 5

Please leave this form in your interview room. Thank you.

For office use only

Mean Score: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Endnotes

- 9 The CPC Communication Diagnostics™ and CPC Communication Certification™ programs address communication skills of most concern to employers. Several major employers hold this certification in such high esteem that they refuse to interview internship candidates who have not earned it. Level I requires scores above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile for working professionals on diagnostics in communication areas of most concern to employers: communication style, presentation style, and business writing. Level II requires completing at least three CPC training sessions and scoring above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile for working professionals in additional diagnostic areas: intercultural communication and listening. Level III requires satisfactory completion of a public speech, a personal employment Web site, an employment communication package, and a 360° assessment of on-the-job communication skills. Level IV requires completion of three additional CPC training sessions and scores above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile for each diagnostic. Students may not retake any diagnostic without first completing designated CPC training in that content area.
- 10 *Editor's note:* The AACSB standards allow for some common learning goals across programs (see [www.aacsb.edu/ARC](http://www.aacsb.edu/ARC)). The Neeley School's approach – some common goals (competencies) in the BA and MBA, but different standards and measures – is appropriate and acceptable.
- 11 The Microsoft® User Specialist (MOS) certification is globally recognized as the standard for demonstrating desktop skills with the Microsoft® Office suite of business productivity applications. Microsoft® Office Specialist certification encourages individuals to develop advanced skills with Microsoft's business desktop software, skills that are pertinent to business students' success in and out of the classroom. To help students prepare for the exam, the Neeley School provides Microsoft® Office Specialist Practice disks and offers preparatory classes for Word, PowerPoint, and Excel at \$125 per student, per prep class. Since prep classes involve significant investment on the part of students, they may opt to pursue MOS certification after learning whether they pass the admission committee review. In that case, admission is provisional on MOS certification before entering upper-division courses. Further MOS information: <http://www.microsoft.com/learning/mcp/OfficeSpecialist/default.asp>.
- 12 Students are encouraged to use Neeley Center for Professional Communication cover letter, resume, and interview handouts (<http://www.cpc.tcu.edu/resources/jobsearchskills.asp#handouts>) to seek CPC cover letter, resume, and interview coaching, and to participate in mock interviews at the CPC. Neeley Student Resource Center staff members caution applicants that CPC coaching may give them an advantage, because it better prepares them to compete in the admission process and because, especially in close-call cases, the BBA admission committee considers CPC coaching as evidence of commitment to professional development (see Appendix A for the cover letter and resume coaching form and Appendix B for the mock interview questions and coaching form).
- 13 Neeley Interview Day occurs on a specified Saturday in each fall and spring semester. Students are notified of their assigned interview times in advance.

They do not know with whom they will interview until they arrive for their appointments.

- 14 “MBA” refers to the full-time Master’s of Business Administration program, “PMBA” refers to the part-time Professional Master’s of Business Administration program, “MAc” refers to the Master’s of Accountancy program.
- 15 Center for Professional Communication services are free of charge to undergraduate and graduate business students.

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## Author Bio

In addition to directing assessment for TCU’s Neeley School of Business, **Dr. Gay Wakefield** directs the Center for Professional Communication for which the Neeley School is so well known. She practiced public relations prior to heading communication programs at three universities, and has been listed in the *International Who’s Who of Professionals*, *The World’s Who’s Who of Women*, *Who’s Who in the World*, and other *Who’s Who* publications.

*The College of Business at Valparaiso University, initially funded by a grant from the Lilly Foundation, researched and developed a sophisticated assessment center that all of their Business students pass through twice. The Assessment Center, which includes activities targeted at learning goals that are difficult to assess (e.g., conflict resolution, ethical decision-making), makes use of local business people as assessors, and is consistent with the School's mission to provide a "holistic learning experience" for its students.*

### **CHAPTER 3**

## **FOSTERING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EVERY BUSINESS STUDENT: THE VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION ASSESSMENT CENTER**

**Mary York Christ**

**Valparaiso University, College of Business Administration**

#### **Background, Mission, and Goals**

Valparaiso University (VU) is a private, comprehensive university located in northwest Indiana one hour from the Chicago Loop. The University enrolls approximately 3,800 students in five undergraduate colleges, a graduate division, and a school of law. The College of Business Administration (CBA) is AACSB accredited and offers a BS in Business Administration with six majors-accounting, finance, information and decision sciences, international business, management, and marketing. The College also offers a 150-credit hour BS in Accounting degree and an MBA. As of Fall 2004, approximately 440 undergraduate and 50 MBA students are enrolled in the VU CBA, and there are 20 full-time faculty members including the dean. The mission of the College of Business Administration is:

**"To provide a holistic learning experience that develops exceptional leaders who are conscientious stewards prepared to meet the challenges of a complex and dynamic global environment."**

The four main points of the mission statement are clarified below:

1. The phrase "***provide a holistic learning experience***" means that the College of Business Administration strives to develop the whole person. This involves providing each student with opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom, to develop his or her

- interpersonal skills, professional competencies, spiritual beliefs, ethical foundation, and cultural awareness and sensitivity.
2. The phrase “**develops exceptional leaders**” means that the College of Business Administration strives to develop authentic individuals who are capable of inspiring others toward a meaningful vision. This involves preparing students to be proactive, goal-oriented, optimistic, credible, and professionally competent.
  3. The phrase “**conscientious stewards**” means that the College of Business Administration strives to provide students with a strong ethical foundation that is grounded in the Lutheran Christian tradition. Stewards are leaders who know they have been entrusted with valuable resources (human, natural, and financial), act as responsible global citizens, are accountable to the well-being of the whole organization, and operate in service to others.
  4. The phrase “**challenges of a dynamic and complex environment**” means that the College of Business Administration strives, through a faculty engaged in professional development activities, to prepare students to be life-long learners who are flexible, creative problem solvers capable of dealing with a complex and changing world.

The core learning goals of the College derive from the elaboration of the four key points of the mission statement. Specifically, the CBA would like its students to develop the following: core business knowledge, knowledge in the major, communication skills, information technology skills, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, teamwork and leadership skills, a strong ethical foundation, self-concept and awareness, and informed attitudes towards work and life.

### **Defining Assessment**

Prior to the mid to late 1990s, assessment activities at VU and within the CBA were conducted fairly informally. For example, numerous curriculum changes were implemented as the result of feedback from alumni. The primary mechanism for this feedback was a CBA Dean’s Advisory Council as well as informal feedback received through communications with alumni. Given the size and nature of the University, faculty regularly keep in touch with former students and such feedback is easily obtained. Similarly, given the size of the CBA faculty as a whole and within each discipline frequently discuss the implications of such feedback and propose periodic curriculum changes.

The first major step towards a formal CBA assessment program occurred in 1996 when the development of an Assessment Center (AC) was included as part of a grant proposal submitted to the Lilly Endowment, Inc. A private philanthropic foundation, the Endowment supports Indiana-

based projects focused on religious, educational, or community development causes. Although the CBA was AACSB accredited at the time, the motivation for the AC was not related to accreditation. Rather, it was part of a package of curriculum initiatives aimed at improving the learning process for the students.

More specifically, the entire proposal (entitled “Partnering for Success”) was designed to support the following goals of the Lilly Endowment: increase employment of Indiana college graduates within Indiana; enhance interaction between institutions of higher education and business and industry; strengthen private higher education; and improve success rate of Indiana students in college. Upon receipt of the grant, the goals and objectives of the AC were further defined. An initial pilot AC was conducted in Fall 1997. Beginning in Fall 1998, the CBA has conducted Assessment Centers each fall and spring semester.

**Table 1**  
**Learning Outcomes and**  
**Assessment Techniques**

Desired Outcome	Assessment Technique
<u>Cognitive Outcomes</u>	
Core Business Knowledge	Course Projects/Exams Internship Evaluation EBI Satisfaction Survey
Knowledge in the Major	Course Projects/Exams Internship Evaluation EBI Satisfaction Survey
<u>Behavioral Outcomes</u>	
Communication Skills	Course Projects Assessment Center Internship Evaluation
Information Technology Skills	Course Projects EBI Satisfaction Survey
Problem Solving/Critical Thinking Skills	Course Projects Assessment Center Internship Evaluation
Teamwork/Leadership Skills	Assessment Center Internship Evaluation EBI Satisfaction Survey
<u>Affective Outcomes</u>	
Ethical Behavior/Values Awareness	Assessment Center Internship Evaluation EBI Satisfaction Survey
Self Concept & Awareness	Internship Evaluation EBI Satisfaction Survey
Attitudes	Internship Evaluation

Subsequent to the development of the AC, the CBA formulated a more complete Assessment Plan (Pirie, McCuddy, and Christ, 2005). Table 1 summarizes the approaches used to evaluate the CBA's learning objectives. The focus of this chapter is the Assessment Center. The remainder of the discussion will focus on the AC concept and implementation.

### **Resources and Responsibilities for Assessment**

The responsibilities for the VU AC have evolved as the program itself has grown. As stated above, the Assessment Center<sup>16</sup> initially began as one component of a grant received from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., running from July 1996 through June 2000. A CBA professor served as Project Director and had oversight

responsibilities for all elements of the grant. A subgroup of VU CBA faculty was responsible for developing and delivering the different grant components. Accordingly, a small group of faculty assumed responsibility for researching, developing, and administering the initial iterations of the Assessment Center. During the Fall 1997 semester, a new staff position was created in the College. The Internship and Assessment Center Coordinator is a full-time position, originally funded through the grant, and added to the CBA operating budget at the completion of the grant period. As the title suggests, the person in this position coordinates both the Internship and Assessment Center programs in the CBA. During the period of the Lilly grant, the Internship and Assessment Center Coordinator reported to the grant project director; subsequent to the grant the coordinator reports directly to the CBA dean. This staff position represents the largest financial cost of the AC. The CBA budget also includes funds for food, photocopying, and gifts related to the AC as well as travel and other costs the Internship and Assessment Center Coordinator incurs. These additional miscellaneous costs total \$10,000-\$12,000 per year.

Faculty continue to be involved with the AC. While the Internship and Assessment Center Coordinator handles the recruitment of assessors and most of the logistics of the AC, faculty maintain responsibility for deciding which skills to assess, for developing and updating AC materials, and for summarizing and evaluating AC results. One faculty member has served as faculty coordinator for the AC since its inception. Additionally, the College created an Assessment Committee to oversee all assessment activities. The committee includes three faculty members, one student, one alumnus or employer, and the Internship and Assessment Center Coordinator (exofficio). The committee recommends and implements policies related to College assessment activities and forwards curriculum recommendations (derived from assessment results) to the CBA Curriculum Committee.

During the Lilly grant period, some faculty received small stipends. Otherwise, faculty receive no release time or other compensation for their involvement with assessment activities. It is considered a part of their service to the College.

## **Best Practice**

### **Background**

An Assessment Center is a series of individual and group tasks designed to evaluate a student's strengths and weaknesses. The AC participants perform realistic tasks (thus, an authentic assessment) while being observed by experienced managers, who then provide participants with feedback on their performance. ACs have been in use for over 50 years and are currently used in industrial, educational, military, government, and law enforcement settings. They are used for varied purposes, including employee selection, identification of managerial talent, identification of



training needs, development, and promotion. The use of ACs in higher education, however, is still relatively rare.

### **Skills Assessed and Objectives of the AC**

During the Fall 1996 semester, focus groups were held with regional business executives to determine what skills they believed graduates of the business program should possess. The desired skills were categorized into cognitive (“I know”), behavioral (“I can do”), and affective (“I feel”) outcomes. In general, cognitive outcomes may be assessed with traditional paper and pen methods, affective outcomes through survey data, and behavioral outcomes are best evaluated through observation using a technique such as an Assessment Center. The Assessment Center is a central, but not the only, part of the assessment program at VU, and some of the desired outcomes are assessed elsewhere in the College. The following skills were determined as ones that would be evaluated through the AC: oral and written communication, problem solving, leadership, teamwork, conflict resolution (a component of problem solving), and ethical behavior/values awareness.

The VUAC has two specific objectives. The first is to foster the personal development of the individual student, and the second is to provide information on student outcomes to aid in the continuous improvement of the curriculum. The first goal is particularly consistent with the mission of the University and the College. It is hoped that students will develop an awareness of the importance of skills assessed in the AC and take some personal initiative to improve in these areas. Because of this goal, students participate in the AC two times. They receive their first assessment, which can be thought of as a baseline evaluation, in the beginning of the fall semester of their sophomore year. The second assessment occurs late in the spring semester of their junior year. At the individual level, the two assessments provide students with the opportunity to see their progress during approximately one-and-a-half years of development and coursework.

The CBA also requires that every student complete an internship experience. Students must have junior standing before satisfying this requirement, and most try to complete their internship during the summer between the junior and senior year. The timing of the required Assessment Centers provides most students the opportunity to be cognizant of their strengths and weaknesses, particularly in the area of many “soft skills,” prior to completing an internship. During the internship, students are required to maintain a reflective journal in which they consider what they have learned about themselves in the workplace. One goal of the AC program is that this reflection will include consideration of skills that were evaluated during their AC experiences. At the completion of the internship, employers complete an evaluation form that includes, among other factors, an assessment of the same skills that are observed during the AC.

The original plans included having students participate in a third Assessment Center during the spring of their senior year. However, feedback from students suggested that they were not receptive to a third iteration. Consequently, senior skills are assessed through senior course projects. In the future, the CBA may implement a new program that links each of these individual components together near a student's graduation date.

With respect to the second objective of the AC—to provide information on student outcomes to aid in the continuous improvement of the curriculum—the CBA Assessment Committee aggregates and evaluates data from the AC—along with that from other CBA assessment mechanisms, to consider potential curricular changes. This process is discussed later in the chapter.

### **Assessment Center Exercises**

Typical AC activities include in-box exercises, leaderless group discussions, role-plays, and presentations. Traditionally, AC activities are not necessarily linked together in any meaningful way. Because many undergraduate business students do not have “real-world” business experience, a decision was made to use the AC materials to simulate a “day in the life of a business person.”<sup>17</sup>

Four sets of materials have been developed to date, and each has a central theme that runs throughout. The general themes include a budget-cutting scenario, a product selection scenario, the development of a mission statement, and a student government scenario.

In the introduction of each set of materials, students are told they are one of several managers (e.g. a department or division manager) of a hypothetical company.<sup>18</sup> The materials provide background on the company, present the student with an appointment book for the day, and provide background information for each appointment. The AC is conducted in the CBA building and lasts three hours. Each set of materials includes four “appointments” or exercises that last anywhere from five to thirty minutes. The schedule also allows for preparation time before each exercise, feedback time after each exercise, breaks, and introductory and wrap-up sessions for the AC.

While technical knowledge is not evaluated in the AC, the materials have been designed with the student's level of business knowledge in mind. For example, the product-selection scenario is used for sophomores. They are told that they are management trainees in one of six departments of a large retail store. Part of the day's objective is to decide on new products the store will add during the next year. Potential products are all ones that sophomores should be able to relate to, and these materials require minimal actual business knowledge. On the other hand, the mission statement scenario is used with juniors. In this scenario, a group of “division managers” comes together to develop a mission statement for the company. Students

should draw upon their coursework in considering what issues are important to include. For example, finance students inevitably want to include “maximize shareholders’ wealth” somewhere in the mission statement. By using materials that draw upon the students’ current academic level, they will hopefully find the scenarios more engaging.

One exercise is an oral presentation. Students are given one or two short readings on a topic related to the theme of the materials.<sup>19</sup> They are given fifteen minutes to prepare a five-minute formal presentation on the topic. Subsequent to the presentation, assessors spend ten minutes providing feedback to the students.

A second exercise is a role-play that is intended to assess the student’s conflict-resolution skills. The materials describe some kind of conflict that has occurred with another manager or supervisor. A meeting has been scheduled for the two of them to work out their difficulties. In the role-play, the two managers have been given different explanations of the problem so that they begin the meeting with different perspectives on the issues. The role-play is currently operationalized by using volunteer business people who are not serving as assessors as the second party in the conflict. These “confederates” are trained and instructed to ensure that the meeting begins in conflict. If the student works towards a win-win solution, they work with them. If, on the other hand, the student works towards a win-lose solution, the confederates continue to generate conflict. In the AC, there are five minutes allocated to preparing for the role-play, 10 minutes for the actual meeting, and 10 minutes for assessor feedback.

A third exercise is a written memo or letter completed in the computer lab. The materials tell the students that they are to do some research for the upcoming group meeting. They “check their e-mail” and find a message from the boss who has received a message from an irate stakeholder. Example memo variations in the product selection scenario include a parent upset about violence in some of the movies sold in the store, and an environmental group upset about the store selling products from companies that test their products on animals. The students are told they are not in a position to make any policy changes, but their manager wants them to draft a response. This exercise is intended to evaluate written communication skills as well as the handling of a sensitive issue (ethical behavior / values awareness). Students have ten minutes to prepare, and fifteen minutes in the computer lab to complete the memo, print it out, and submit it to a lab attendant. They do not receive any verbal feedback on the memo during the AC.

The fourth appointment is a leaderless group decision-making exercise. This exercise is always last in the AC and focuses on the theme of the materials (e.g., product selection, mission statement). Groups of six managers<sup>20</sup> from different departments or divisions of the company are formed to tackle the group task. Earlier exercises will have seeded certain

ideas in their minds that may or may not influence the students' opinions during the group meeting. For example, if a student responded to the irate parent about the violent videos in the memo exercise, that student may be more sensitive to any violent products included on the potential new product list. The group meeting is intended to provide evidence of the students' problem-solving, leadership, and teamwork skills. The schedule includes

**Table 2**  
**Skills Assessed in Assessment Center Exercises**

<i>Skills</i>	<i>Assessment Center Exercises</i>			
	Oral Presentation	Role Play	Memo	Group Meeting
Problem Solving				X
Leadership				X
Teamwork				X
Conflict Resolution		X		
Oral Communication	X			
Written Communication			X	
Ethical Behavior/Values Awareness			X	

ten minutes of preparation for the meeting, followed by a thirty-minute meeting and fifteen minutes of assessor feedback. Table 2 summarizes the skills that are assessed in each of the four exercises.

All of the materials used in the AC have been developed by faculty and a hired consultant (a former student). Particular care has been taken in the materials not to tell the student how to behave. For example, the materials do not say “you are known for being very stubborn.” An important consideration is that the students do not act out a part. The emphasis of the instructions is that they should react to each exercise the way they really think they would handle it in the workplace. Furthermore, the materials have been written in such a way as to try to immerse the student in the scenario.

**Assessors, Assessor Training, And Assessor Responsibilities**

Assessors are regional business people who are at the middle-management level or higher. The Internship and Assessment Center Coordinator makes cold calls and other contacts with potential assessors

and also maintains an ongoing relationship with the assessor pool. To date, there have been no problems recruiting sufficient assessors to participate in the program, and the CBA has a current pool of more than 200 assessors.

The first time assessors participate in the AC, they are required to complete a two-hour training session. This session is conducted by two CBA faculty members and is held during a breakfast meeting early in the week of the AC. The training includes background information, a discussion of rating errors and biases, and issues to consider in giving constructive and supportive feedback. A number of handouts on the topics are also provided to the assessors. For each exercise in the AC, faculty have constructed an evaluation form (rubric) developed from appropriate concepts in the management and organizational behavior literature. The Appendix includes a sample rubric used for evaluating individual performance during the group exercise. During the training session, assessors are familiarized with the forms and then watch a video of students completing exercises from the AC. After each video segment, assessors are given the opportunity to complete the evaluation form and practice giving feedback. This is followed by a discussion of how to assess the behaviors seen in the video. Generally, assessors find the training session very helpful and frequently comment that it will also help them in evaluating employees in their own jobs.

During the AC, assessors observe students completing the oral presentation, role-play, and group exercises. During and after the activities, they complete the evaluation forms, including whatever comments they want to add. At the end of each of these three exercises, the assessors have a face-to-face meeting with the student being assessed, discussing both strengths and areas for improvement. Students are not observed completing the written memo in the computer lab. However, assessors use free time during their schedule to read and evaluate the memos.

The activities in the AC are scheduled so that students complete the exercises in different sequences. This scheduling generally allows for each assessor to observe two role-plays, two oral presentations, one group meeting, and to assess a number of written memos. For this schedule, there must be at least one assessor for every two students participating. Because on-site assessors are used,<sup>21</sup> every effort has been made to incorporate activities that make use of the assessors' time. In-basket exercises, for example, are commonly used in corporate ACs. However, in-baskets can be manually or computer graded and do not actually require the use of a trained assessor. Therefore, they are not used in this AC but could be incorporated into other college activities, if desired.

### **Assessment Center Participation**

An initial pilot AC was held with 35 students in Fall 1997.<sup>22</sup> No AC was conducted in Spring 1998. Beginning with the Fall 1998 semester, an AC has been held every semester. Individual ACs have varied in size from 36

to 110 students with from 22 to 64 assessors. Initially, all students participated on a voluntary basis. They were recruited through classes using a variety of approaches. Some faculty chose either to make the AC a course requirement or to award extra credit points for participation. Additionally, a number of arguments in favor of participating were presented to the students. These included the opportunity for self-development, the opportunity to meet business executives, and the fact that employers are generally very impressed with the AC concept and students' participation.

Beginning with the freshman class of 1999, all CBA students are required to participate in the AC twice, during the fall of their sophomore year and again in the spring of their junior year. To implement this requirement, two zero-credit courses were added to the curriculum and must be completed prior to graduation. Grading is on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. If students attend and participate in a required AC, they receive a grade of S; unexcused absences result in a U grade. Requiring sophomore and junior participation provides some flexibility for students who have valid excuses for missing a scheduled AC (e.g., study abroad or travel with a sports team). In these cases, students participate in the next year's AC. While this puts them somewhat out of sequence, it does allow the student to complete the requirements.

With mandatory participation and a grade of S just for participating, motivation is a potential issue. Generally, students fall into one of three categories. First, there is the group that enjoys this type of activity and does not mind participating. Second, there are some students who are very intimidated by the prospect of being assessed and approach the activity with great apprehension. This second group generally puts forth a sincere effort and finds the experience and the feedback beneficial. Lastly, there are those who think the AC is a waste of time and who do not really want to participate. A variety of approaches have been used to convince this latter group of the usefulness of the experience. At the beginning of the AC, one or two experienced assessors often stand up and explain that they view the activity as extremely useful and that the materials and exercises are very realistic. On some occasions, handouts have been distributed with examples of how companies use the AC approach for interviewing. Lastly, since the assessors are business executives, many students want to make a positive impression on potential employers even if they don't agree with the AC concept itself. During the feedback portions of the AC, assessors are encouraged to discuss poor attitudes as part of the feedback. The student member of the Assessment Committee also serves as a source of ideas on how to encourage positive attitudes towards the AC experience.

Mandatory participation has also increased the size of the Assessment Center. To manage the logistics, four AC sessions are held each semester, one in the morning and one in the afternoon on two different Fridays.

## Use of Assessment Center Results

At the individual level, student results are confidential. The goal is that students will take the results to heart and both capitalize on their strengths as well as focus on areas where improvement is needed. The written evaluation forms are compiled after each AC, copies are made, and files are created for each student. The forms are then mailed to the student with a cover letter stressing that the written evaluations should complement the oral feedback they received on the day of the AC. Students are encouraged to share their results with their parents and advisors.

At the aggregate level, the results from all students each semester are compiled and analyzed. Each of the evaluation forms for the AC exercises was constructed such that the results can be converted to a numerical scale. The data from all ACs to date have been entered into spreadsheets for summary and analysis. However, care has been taken in interpreting the data, because it is very “noisy” and the measurements are imprecise. Now that a significant number of data points has been accumulated, the Assessment Committee is reviewing data trends and achievement levels to determine appropriate recommendations.

As an example, Table 3 presents the aggregated results related to the AC oral presentation exercise, segregated by sophomore-level performance versus junior-level performance.<sup>23</sup> What can be observed is that on every dimension, the juniors performed at the same level or better than the sophomores did. Secondly, the junior scores are consistently at the “very good” level, versus the “adequate” or “excellent” level. The Assessment

**Table 3**  
**Assessment Center Oral Presentation Results**

		Dimensions Assessed									
		1. Eye Contact	2. Voice	3. Physical Presence	4. Pace	5. Is Expressive	6. Well Organized	7. Clear Purpose	8. Clear Points	9. Grammar	10. Adequate Support
Sophomores	Number of Observations	459	453	455	448	440	445	445	450	447	446
	Average	3.1	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9
Juniors	Number of Observations	179	178	179	179	179	179	179	179	179	179
	Average	3.2	3.2	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.1

Rating Scale: 1=Poor, 2=Adequate, 3=Very Good, 4=Excellent

Committee establishes target goals, combines these data on oral presentation skills with data collected from senior course presentations, and considers whether the observed performance level is appropriate for the desired outcomes defined by the college. If not, the Assessment Committee will recommend changes (e.g., a required public speaking course, more oral presentation guidance in classes) to the Curriculum Committee.

As a second example, the data on written communication skills (not presented here) show little change from the sophomore to the junior level and performance at an “average” level. The Assessment Committee is therefore formulating recommendations to the Curriculum Committee aimed at improving students’ written communication skills.

### **Feedback and Reflection**

At the individual level, both assessors and students complete evaluation forms at the conclusion of each AC. Generally, their reactions are very positive. Students enjoy the interactions with the business community and find their feedback to be very useful. The following quotes are representative of the student feedback.

- Very helpful. My observer pointed out certain things that I would have never realized on my own.
- Helped show my weaknesses and my strengths. I’m really impressed by how they reinforced my strengths. I came out feeling good about myself and my future.
- Very helpful. My weak spots were reiterated, and now I know the areas to target.
- Very helpful. I learned more about how to respond to situations in 3 hours than I have in 3 years.
- You have selected very pleasant, qualified individuals that have provided feedback that will be useful throughout my career.

Anecdotal evidence is also available with respect to the impact the AC has had on students. One young man, an accounting major, participated in the AC during the spring of his junior year. While his technical skills were not the strongest, his behavioral skills were excellent. Feedback during the AC essentially confirmed this, and he reported that for the first time, he felt like he might actually be able to get a job and succeed after graduation. His AC experience was followed by a very successful internship the summer before his senior year. During that fall, he received several offers from public accounting firms and accepted employment with a major regional firm. Clearly, both the AC and the internship bolstered his confidence in his abilities.

In another instance, a student received feedback during the AC on areas that needed improvement. That young man took the advice to heart and consciously worked on his skills during his summer internship. Both



his personal feedback to the CBA and his internship evaluation suggest that his efforts at improvement were successful.

As a final example, some employers have recently begun to include Assessment Center type activities as a component of the interview process. Two students who received job offers after such an interview returned to the CBA to say “thank you” for the preparation the AC provided them for this interview approach.

Assessor feedback has also been very positive. Assessors generally report that the materials and scenarios are realistic of situations encountered in the workplace. Using regional business people as assessors has strengthened the relationship between the College and the business community. Future employers of the CBA's graduates are now actively involved in the education process. They have the opportunity to get an “early look” at future graduates and to provide input regarding the skills needed in today's workplace. The following quotes are representative of the assessor feedback:

- Role-playing can be a very beneficial activity. To have experienced business people and community leaders assess the activity makes it even more beneficial. The students will draw on this experience and the constructive criticism for years to come.
- The best thing about this is they are able to receive feedback and suggestions from professionals and use the information to better themselves for their careers ahead.
- Watching the ‘light bulb go off’ as you discussed the exercises and they realized what was positive and what needed improvement.
- Very realistic. Although some don't realize it now, they will experience the same type of scenarios in the workplace.

Both students and assessors also provide useful constructive feedback about the AC process. Each iteration of the AC usually includes some changes made as a result of these comments. For example, the sophomore AC materials that are set in a university environment were developed as a direct result of student feedback. At the beginning of the sophomore year students have little or no business coursework. Although the sophomore materials were developed with this in mind, some students were still not comfortable dealing with a business setting. The materials using the VU campus setting were written to incorporate issues that sophomores living on campus are familiar with and passionate about. Student response to these materials has been very positive.

### **Conclusion**

The Assessment Center at VU has been a very successful initiative. However, there are still many opportunities to expand and improve the

program. At the aggregate level, the highest priority issue is to successfully “complete the loop.” The Assessment Committee is critically reviewing data collected to make appropriate curricular recommendations aimed at continuous improvement. At the individual level, the Internship and Assessment Center Coordinator and the Assessment Committee are working towards a program where students will complete a development plan and track their actions and results related to a variety of skills. Additionally, the CBA and the Assessment Committee need to regularly reevaluate the desired learning outcomes and appropriate assessment techniques. The skills assessed and the materials used in the AC need to remain current and appropriate.

The Valparaiso University MBA program is a new one launched during the Fall 2002 semester. To date, two small Assessment Centers have been conducted with MBA students. The College is still exploring the most appropriate way to expand its established undergraduate AC in the graduate domain.

The development and implementation of the Assessment Center in Valparaiso University's College of Business Administration directly reflects the mission and goals of the College. Specifically, CBA faculty believe every student should be assessed more than once and that using on-site assessors was important. In another University setting, some variations might better suit the environment. For example, a sample of students might be assessed, or assessors might view videotapes and prepare their evaluations after watching the tapes.

The current AACSB standards stress the importance of direct measurement of student achievement. The Assessment Center approach is an excellent example of direct measurement. Published research has shown that Assessment Center data provide measurement of knowledge acquisition not captured by traditional classroom techniques (Bartels, Bommer, and Rubin, 2000). Furthermore, AC results have been shown to be good predictors of both intrinsic and extrinsic early career success (Waldman and Korbar, 2004). While the development of an AC requires time and resources, both individual students and Colleges of Business can benefit from this approach.

**Appendix A**  
**GROUP PROBLEM SOLVING**  
**INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION FORM**

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

We are interested in the extent to which the participant works effectively in a team. Using the scale below, please evaluate the participant's effectiveness in the group exercise. Leave blank any dimension where there is not enough information to make a fair assessment. Non-verbal behaviors may also provide insights about the person's role.

**Constructive**  
 (useful, pertinent, helpful)

vs.

**Destructive**  
 (counterproductive, unfavorable)

**Constructive Roles**

**Destructive Roles**

Giving Relevant Information	1	2	3	4	5	Giving Irrelevant Information
Seeking Relevant Information	1	2	3	4	5	Seeking Irrelevant Information
Giving Relevant Opinions	1	2	3	4	5	Giving Irrelevant Opinions
Seeking Relevant Opinions	1	2	3	4	5	Seeking Irrelevant Opinions
Credit Giver	1	2	3	4	5	Recognition Seeker
Reviewer	1	2	3	4	5	Ignorer
Recap issues discussed	1	2	3	4	5	Aimless wandering
	1	2	3	4	5	Revisiting issues
Includer	1	2	3	4	5	Dominator
Encourages others to enter the discussion	1	2	3	4	5	Only concerned about what he/she has to say
	1	2	3	4	5	Prevents others from voicing their opinions
Encourager	1	2	3	4	5	Negativist
Positive attitude toward working things through	1	2	3	4	5	Always concentrating on what is wrong with a situation or an idea
Elaborator	1	2	3	4	5	Withdrawer
Further explains thoughts and ideas	1	2	3	4	5	Refuses to further comment even when asked

Comments:

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### Endnotes

- 16 *Editor's note:* For other discussions of assessment centers, see Bommer et al in Vol.1, No. 1, and the Seton Hall chapter in this volume.
- 17 *Editor's note:* The assessment center described in the best practice section in the Seton Hall chapter is an example of a non-integrated AC experience, while the Iliad AC described in the Bommer et al. chapter (Vo. 1, No. 1) follows the "day in the life" approach described here.
- 18 The student government scenario is set in a university rather than a corporate setting. Students are members of a hypothetical new government board at VU that provides input on campus issues directly to the president and vice-presidents of the University.
- 19 Students also receive the readings a few days before and are instructed to read them prior to coming to the AC. However, they are not told specifically why they should read them.
- 20 Depending on the number of students participating, some groups may have only four or five members.
- 21 Some ACs videotape the exercises, and assessors review the tapes at a later date.
- 22 The pilot AC did not utilize the business simulation approach described here. Rather, it used a series of typical AC exercises that were not tied together in any way. This approach was subsequently abandoned for the one described in this chapter.
- 23 The initial voluntary ACs included a mix of juniors and seniors. Since mandatory participation began, the fall ACs have been limited exclusively to sophomores, and the spring ACs have included only juniors. The numbers presented in Table 3 are data accumulated since mandatory participation began. It does not yet include the most recent iterations and is presented for illustration purposes only.

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### Author Bio

**Mary York Christ** joined the faculty of Valparaiso University in 1996. Previously, she held faculty positions at The Pennsylvania State University, Bryant College, and Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Dr. Christ received a B.S. in Management Science and Systems from the University of Iowa,

an M.S. in Accounting from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a Ph.D. in Accounting from The University of Texas at Austin. She also is a Certified Public Accountant.

### **Acknowledgements**

**Dr. Mary Christ** has been the Faculty Coordinator for the Valparaiso University Assessment Center since its inception and chairs the College of Business Assessment Committee. **Dr. Michael McCuddy** and **Dr. Wendy Pirie** have been extensively involved in the development and implementation of the Assessment Center and conduct the assessor training sessions. **Dr. Larry Mainstone** contributed to the development of the Assessment Center.

*Generous financial and staff resources, combined with collaboration, commitment, leadership and education, enabled the Bauer School of Business at the University of Houston (a large, Doctoral granting institution) to develop a comprehensive, innovative assessment program in just a year. "Maturity" isn't always a function of age!*

**CHAPTER 4**  
**GOING FROM ZERO TO SIXTY IN TWELVE MONTHS:**  
**IMPLEMENTING ASSESSMENT AT THE BAUER**  
**COLLEGE OF BUSINESS**  
**Elizabeth Anderson-Fletcher**  
**University of Houston, C.T. Bauer School of Business**

**Background, Mission, and Goals**

The University of Houston's College of Business Administration was established in 1934, and renamed the C. T. Bauer College of Business in August 2000 after receiving a \$40 million cash gift from Charles Theodore Bauer, founder of AIM Management Group (now part of AMVESCAP). The University of Houston, located in Houston, Texas, the fourth largest city in the US, serves a student population of 36,000. The Bauer College's enrollment is approximately 5670: 4600 undergraduates, 1000 master's, and 70 doctoral students. Approximately 26% of all University of Houston graduates are from the Bauer College. The student body at this metropolitan business school is substantially different from that found at a typical rural, public business school. For example, the majority of our students are employed, including undergraduate students who work to support families as well as put themselves through school. The student body is also quite diverse, with 10% African American, 18% Hispanic, 26% Asian/Pacific Islander, 10% International, and 36% White. Additionally, 50% of the students are women.

The college's mission is to be recognized and respected as a major center of academic and scholarly achievement by providing a broad range of high-quality educational, research, and service programs to local, state, national, and international constituents, with a particular focus on Houston's business community. While the college has a focus on its top-tier research mission, it also strives to provide the most relevant education to its students, preparing them for the real world of business. One example of such relevance is our Program for Excellence in Selling (PES), the leading undergraduate sales management education curriculum in the US, which engages students in live selling to senior-level executives and provides business-to-business call center operations training in our state-of-the-art facilities. Another example is the Cougar Fund, a stand-alone, \$3.5 million private investment fund managed by Bauer graduate students.

The Bauer College has been undergoing tremendous change over the past four years. The college has hired 54 new faculty (31 tenure-track and 23 clinical) since Fall 2001. The Melcher Hall facility is currently in the final stages of a \$13 million renovation project that has transformed the physical facility into a first-class office environment complete with wireless student study space with a Starbucks coffee shops. The renovations began with the construction of the AIM Center for Investment Management, a \$5 million learning laboratory for the Bauer College of Business students and home to the Cougar Fund. The college also recently launched the Global Energy Management Institute (GEMI), a major effort by the Bauer College of Business, the University of Houston, and corporate partners to tie our college into the fabric of the energy capital of the world.

The college's broad learning goals are as follows: graduates from the C. T. Bauer College of Business will demonstrate (1) disciplinary (and cross-disciplinary) competence, (2) critical thinking skills, (3) effective communication skills, and (4) an awareness of ethical and legal issues as they relate to business. These are the key learning goal themes of the college, although each of our seven degree programs (BBA, PPA, MBA, EMBA, MS-ACCY, MS-FINA, PhD) has its own set of learning goals. Program learning goals will be discussed later.

### **Defining Assessment**

For many colleges of business, the world changed in April 2003 with the passage of the new AACSB standards and the resulting new requirement for a formalized assurance of learning and outcomes assessment process. The Bauer College, like many others, had been conducting some assessment of learning, but had not yet instituted a comprehensive, formal plan for all degree programs. In the past, the individual departments (e.g., Accountancy & Taxation, Finance, Decision and Information Sciences, Management, and Marketing & Entrepreneurship) had worked with the university's Institutional Effectiveness (IE) division to develop departmental goals and provide progress updates on measurement activities and results. With the passage of the new AACSB guidelines, the college realized that it would have to change its assessment process. The college's assessment team worked with the university's IE team to change the focus of the university's requirements of the college regarding reporting format for IE plans. The college's previous IE reports were required to be at the department level, but this was changed to the program level to be in line with the new AACSB standards. This eliminated the need to have two separate assessment systems.

Prior to development and implementation of the formal assurance of learning and outcomes assessment initiative, the Bauer College had just completed a series of assessments of the BBA program, with a resulting change in curriculum. In January 2003, the dean appointed a task force of

faculty members to completely overhaul the undergraduate curriculum. The members of the Undergraduate Task Force were the standing Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (composed of an elected faculty member from each department) and an additional member appointed by the dean from each department, representing various constituent groups (e.g., Honors). The Task Force was chaired by the Associate Dean for Administration and Academic Affairs with the assistance of the Director of Undergraduate Business Programs. The Task Force began meeting in Spring 2003. The revised curriculum was voted on and passed by the entire faculty in April 2004, with pilot course implementation beginning in Fall 2004, and full implementation slated to begin in Fall 2005.

The Task Force identified four key issues which needed to undergo significant change in the new curriculum: the structure of the minor, the incorporation of business law and ethics, the writing component, and the incorporation of an introduction to business and career services component. While each of these four components is a critical part of the new curriculum, the writing component presented some of the most difficult challenges. Faculty and corporate partners were in agreement that our BBA graduates needed better written communication skills, especially in light of the fact that one in five of our undergraduate majors is either of foreign or immigrant status. Additionally, students themselves, according to exit survey data, believe that more emphasis should be placed on writing in the curriculum.<sup>24</sup> The new curriculum requires undergraduate students to pass a Writing Proficiency Examination (WPE) before being allowed to declare a major. We are partnering with the University of Houston (UH) Writing Center to design the WPE, as well as provide remedial instruction through a peer-tutoring model for those students not meeting the threshold. The threshold will be determined by faculty (the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee) in consultation with the UH Writing Center.

In order to determine how significant the students' writing problems were, and to get an idea of how many students might not pass the exam and thus require remedial work, we partnered with the Writing Center to conduct a pilot study in Spring 2004. We conducted a writing assessment in two sections of a large, junior-level marketing core course. The extra-credit assignment (2 points on the final grade average) required students to turn in a one-page, double-spaced document. The writing samples were rated based on clear and concise exposition and audience persuasion, structure, sentence crafting, and mechanics. A total of 335 writing samples were evaluated, and it was determined that approximately 15% of the students exhibited difficulty with basic writing skills (grammar and mechanics), and 20% exhibited difficulty in understanding the audience and addressing the topic. We are currently working with the Writing Center to conduct a trial run of the writing examination this spring semester.

Although it is an indirect assessment, we have been using the EBI exit



survey for the last few years for both the BBA and MBA programs. BBA graduates (response rate of 53%) indicated a perception of poor service in academic advising regarding advisors' knowledge of requirements, helpfulness of recommendations, availability, and interest in student progress. After increasing staffing and heightening awareness of these issues among the advisors, scores on those criteria improved the subsequent year. The survey also indicated that students felt they graduated with writing skills inadequate for the job market. This feedback, coupled with similar feedback from faculty and employers, led to the new Writing Proficiency Examination. MBA graduates (response rate of 64%) indicated some dissatisfaction with the integration of the core curriculum and coordination among instructors of those courses. This is currently being addressed through development of a new required ethics course and a greater focus on interaction among faculty teaching in the program.

The above discussion illustrates what the Bauer College had been doing regarding assessment of learning prior to developing its comprehensive assessment program. Program development and implementation will be discussed in the "Best Practice" section, later in this chapter. Our partnership with the UH Writing Center, a key component of the assessment process, will also be more fully discussed in that section.

### **Resources and Responsibilities for Assessment**

The position ultimately responsible for program assessment at the Bauer College is the Associate Dean for Administration and Academic Affairs. The associate dean was selected, because this position oversees the college's academic programs and student services. In addition, the staff person responsible for support of the assessment program is the Director of Assessment and Accreditation Services, who reports directly to the associate dean. This position was formerly a statistical analyst, a new position created in March 2003 to handle the ever-increasing data reporting requirements of the college (e.g., AACSB Business School Questionnaire and Salary Survey, various survey and rankings questionnaires). In addition to providing data for these questionnaires, the statistical analyst began working with the associate dean in developing the college's assurance of learning and outcomes assessment program. The responsibilities of this position increased dramatically, thus warranting a reclassification to the program director level. Currently, the Director of Assessment and Accreditation Services has administrative staff support, but as the assessment program grows over the next year, we plan to add a statistical analyst and two graduate assistants, reporting to the director. In sum, the positions working on assessment in Fall 2005 will be the associate dean, the Director of Assessment and Accreditation Services, a statistical analyst (new hire in Fall 2005), an executive secretary, and two graduate assistants (new hires in Fall 2005). Annual assessment costs are currently estimated

to be \$102,700, including \$85,000 for personnel (exclusive of associate dean), \$2,700 for administration of the EBI survey, and \$15,000 for UH Writing Center costs. Total annual costs are expected to increase to \$182,700 in Fall 2005 due to the additional support personnel. As we continue to ramp up the assessment program and discover areas where more resources need to be allocated, this annual cost will likely increase.

The plan for personnel and budget for the assessment program was drafted by the associate dean, the Director of MBA Programs, and the Director of Undergraduate Business Programs after attending the AACSB's conference on undergraduate and graduate programs in November 2002. In discussions with other schools, we learned we were not the only ones struggling to collect data to meet reporting requirements of the various rankings organizations as well as the AACSB. Additionally, with the new AACSB assurance of learning standards on the horizon, the need for resources dedicated to this function became evident. At that point we developed a proposal for an Assessment Center, and budgeted for a director, an administrative assistant, and graduate assistants. The funds for the assessment center were budgeted out of student fee revenues. (The college had been transitioning the majority of its student service personnel to student fee accounts to free up instructional dollars to hire more faculty, so this precedent had already been set.) The dean approved the proposal, but the university's HR department suggested hiring a statistical analyst rather than a program director. We hired a statistical analyst in April 2003, and reclassified that position to the program director level in December 2004, commensurate with the increasing level of responsibility. The assessment program has grown organically over the past year-and-a-half, and as we inevitably discover more holes, we will allocate additional resources accordingly.

Faculty involvement in the assessment program has been at two levels: the curriculum committees and the individual instructors whose courses are targeted for course-embedded assessments. This involvement will be discussed later; however, it should be noted that faculty are not compensated directly for their participation. Participation on college committees and in assessment activities is documented in the annual Professional Data Report, and is included in the service component of a faculty member's merit review.

### **Best Practice**

As the title of this chapter indicates, we feel that one of the successes of our assessment program has been the development and initial implementation plan, which has taken just about twelve months for the faculty involvement component. The development and implementation process is described below, followed by examples of initial measurement of two learning goals. We will then conclude this section with a description of our partnership with the UH Writing Center.

## **Development and Implementation Process**

The Associate Dean for Administration and Academic Affairs and the statistical analyst (now the Director of Assessment and Accreditation Services) began work on the new assessment program in Summer 2003. We met with members of the university's Institutional Effectiveness (IE) team, who had extensive experience in the development of learning goals, assessment of those goals, and in working with faculty to put assessment programs in place. One of the key take-aways from these initial meetings was that faculty buy-in can be very difficult. The UH IE team read through the AACSB assurance of learning standards and remarked that the AACSB's requirement of faculty involvement was going to be extremely beneficial in program implementation. In fact, it was remarked that had this requirement not been so explicitly emphasized, achieving faculty buy-in would have been very difficult.

We began discussions with faculty in Fall 2003, beginning with the department chairs who serve on the college's Administrative Committee. We worked through the college's existing curriculum committee structure to involve faculty in the development of the assessment program. Specifically, for each degree program (BBA, PPA, MBA, EMBA, MS-ACCY, MS-FINA, PhD) there is a standing faculty curriculum committee, composed of one faculty member from each department for BBA, MBA, EMBA, and PhD, and faculty members within the specific department for PPA, MS-ACCY, and MS-FINA. Additionally, at that point in time the Undergraduate Task Force was in the process of working on the redesign of the BBA curriculum. We used the BBA as the "guinea pig" program, because it was already under intense scrutiny and experiencing significant faculty involvement in the curriculum redesign.

The first step was to "educate" faculty about the new AACSB requirements and our plan for the assessment program. In Fall 2003, we held an initial assessment luncheon meeting with members of the Undergraduate Task Force as well as the chairs of the other curriculum committees. The Associate Dean for Administration and Academic Affairs presented the AACSB's assurance of learning standards along with the plan for the development and the timeline for implementation. The university's Institutional Effectiveness Coordinator presented material regarding student learning, learning goals, and program assessment methods. The curriculum committees then began a series of meetings to discuss their ideas for learning goal development.

In January 2004, the associate dean attended the AACSB's Assessment Seminar, obtaining a much better understanding of assessment in general, business school assessment in particular, and how to develop and implement an assessment program with faculty buy-in and participation. A second luncheon presentation for faculty was conducted by the associate dean, with a much more specific focus on AACSB requirements, specific

examples of learning goals and measurement techniques, and a much more detailed plan for development and implementation. (It should be noted that the AACSB requirement of faculty involvement in learning goal development was emphasized strongly.) After that meeting, the associate dean and statistical analyst (who also attended the AACSB Assessment Seminar) worked with the individual curriculum committees to develop a list of four (the minimum requirement for accreditation) learning goals. Several faculty members felt that there were many more goals that should be considered, but we stressed that simplicity was important in our initial development and implementation efforts. More learning goals can always be added later, or existing learning goals can be modified, as we go through the implementation process and gain more experience.

Learning goal development was an iterative process. The curriculum committees met to discuss ideas for learning goals and prepared rough drafts. The committee chairs would then meet with the associate dean and statistical analyst to discuss how to measure these goals (e.g., course-embedded assignment or stand-alone exam), and then go back to their individual committees to work out the details. By Summer 2004, a minimum of four learning goals were developed for each of our seven degree programs, along with a measurement plan. For Fall 2004, one learning goal per program was measured (except MS-FINA). For Spring 2005, two learning goals per program will be measured, with full-blown implementation of measurement of all learning goals slated for Fall 2005. Appendix A lists the learning goals for each of our degree programs, along with the “targets” for measurement.

### **Examples of Initial Learning Goal Measurement: BBA and PhD**

One of the learning goals for the BBA is that students shall demonstrate a working knowledge of ethics and legal compliance. This learning goal is measured through a course-embedded assessment in our Business Law and Ethics course. This course, a component of the new BBA curriculum to go into effect Fall 2005, will be required of all students. It was first offered in Fall 2004 as an elective course on a pilot basis, with an enrollment of 94 students across two sections. The course was developed and is taught by a clinical faculty member who is a licensed attorney and CPA, who also holds an LLM and a Master of Accountancy, and is the college’s Director of Business Law and Ethics Studies. The instructor gives an assignment based on a scenario containing a legal and ethical dilemma. The students must prepare a well-organized, three-to-five page memo analyzing the potential legal consequences and ethical dilemmas of the scenario. In addition to grading the ethical and legal requirements of the assignment, the instructor also grades the writing. She requires the students to attend at least one meeting with UH Writing Center consultants to work on the paper. The assignment requires students to submit an outline, draft, and final paper. Students receive written feedback regarding the quality of their ethical reasoning during both the outline

and draft stages of the paper. The grading standards are shown in Appendix B, and are given to the students with the assignment.

While this assignment is a component of the grade for this course, we designed it to also serve as the assessment point for the learning goal regarding “working knowledge of ethics and legal compliance.” Appendix C shows the translation of the grading criteria into the assessment scoring mechanism. For the initial assessment, we focused on the ethics component to make the process more manageable. In the Spring 2005 semester, the legal compliance piece will be added to the assessment, along with the assessment of a second learning goal regarding written communication skills. It should be noted that in working with the instructor to design this assignment, it was decided to target two learning goals with this one course-embedded assignment to be more efficient regarding faculty involvement. This is an approach we intend to pursue with the other degree programs as we phase in measurement of multiple learning goals.

**Table 1**  
**Preliminary Results of Ethics Assessment**

Trait	Mean Score*	N=1**	N=2	N=3
1. States and discusses the ethical issue/dilemma	2.56	6	27	61
2. Discusses alternative courses of action to the ethical issue/dilemma	2.47	4	39	51
3. Discusses theory of utilitarianism and the effect on stakeholders	2.54	5	31	58
4. Recommends most appropriate course of action based on utilitarianism	2.56	6	27	61
<p><b>*Scoring key for each trait:</b>            1 = does not meet expectations            2 = meets expectations            3 = exceeds expectations</p> <p><b>**Number of students receiving the scores of 1, 2, 3 for each trait</b></p>				

Our preliminary results indicate that mean scores on all four traits are in the “exceeds expectations” range, which really doesn’t tell us much. However, if we break the responses down by the number of students scoring 1, 2, or 3 on each trait, we get a clearer picture of the results. It appears that the students scored lower on the trait “discusses alternative courses of action to the ethical issue/dilemma.” We are currently analyzing these results and will compare them to the results we obtain from this assessment in the Spring 2005 semester.

One of the goals for the PhD program is that the student will be able to competently teach a full-semester class at the sophomore or above level. To measure this goal, two faculty members will independently rate the student's teaching competence after one or more unannounced visits to the class. A standard form was developed by the PhD Curriculum Committee to rate the students based on direct observation of the PhD student's teaching by faculty members (see Appendix D). This is distinct from our standard teaching evaluation process required of all instructors, which is an indirect assessment of teaching based on students' perceptions. This assessment was undertaken in Fall 2004 with two faculty members from each department visiting classes and rating the doctoral students in their own department. These results are currently being analyzed.

### **The Bauer College and UH Writing Center Partnership**

Our partnership with the UH Writing Center has been a critical factor in our assessment initiative, primarily because it takes a huge burden off of faculty. Our assessment team's mantra regarding developing and implementing both the writing assessment and the Writing Proficiency Examination required in the new BBA curriculum has been "outsource to the Writing Center!" Outsourcing much of the labor has been key in our success with faculty buy-in.

The UH Writing Center, which reports to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, was established in 2000 to address the growing needs of the colleges of the University of Houston regarding writing in the disciplines. The mission of the UH Writing Center includes reaching out to the university at large and working with college deans, department chairs, faculty, directors, and students to define their particular writing needs, values, and conventions by designing, implementing, and assessing discipline-specific solutions. The Writing Center focuses on writing as an organic thinking process rather than a mechanical, abstract exercise. The center employs writing consultants (undergraduate peer tutors) who do not edit papers, but assist students in organizing their thoughts, talk to them about their writing, and help lead them to logical conclusions. Currently, fifty-four writing consultants are attached to various writing programs, projects, and courses across the university, coaching students to think of their writing not as a problem but as a means of communicating to be understood. The writing consultants are supervised by a team of graduate students and PhD-qualified rhetoric and composition specialists. The large majority of the Writing Center's projects are surveyed and assessed, and the statistical information is shared with the collaborating colleges.

When it became clear that writing was going to be an important component of our assessment program, in addition to the new writing hurdle test in the BBA curriculum, the assessment team began a series of meetings with Writing Center personnel. We knew that it would be a tremendous

burden on college faculty to develop, implement, and analyze the results of these two initiatives without help. A pilot baseline study was conducted in a marketing core course in Spring 2004. This was discussed previously, but the bottom line was that approximately 15% of the students exhibited difficulty with basic writing skills (grammar and mechanics), and 20% exhibited difficulty in understanding the audience and addressing the topic. The college is currently working with the Writing Center to conduct a trial run of the Writing Proficiency Examination this spring semester, with full implementation in Fall 2005. The WPE will be linked to the college's undergraduate orientation program, the Bauer Experience. There are several reasons for this. First, since 70% of our students are transfer students and may have taken their English courses at community colleges, the sooner they can take the exam the better, so as not to significantly delay their degree progress due to remedial writing work. Second, with approximately 1800 students new to the Bauer College each year, logistics dictate that the WPE be tied to the required orientation program. Finally, by linking the WPE to the Bauer Experience, the \$50 per student orientation fee may be used to cover the costs of the WPE, as well as the costs of remedial work required at the Writing Center.

With the implementation of the new BBA curriculum in fall 2005, the Bauer Experience will evolve from an orientation program to a full-fledged required course. The course will contain introduction to business and business careers, professional development, and career services components, in addition to the Writing Proficiency Examination. As mentioned previously, students must pass the WPE in order to declare a major. Those not meeting the standard will be required to work with writing consultants at the UH Writing Center to improve their writing. Rather than have the students retake the WPE (which creates issues regarding how many times they would be allowed to retake the test), Writing Center personnel suggested having those students compile a portfolio of work over the course of the semester working with the writing consultants. This portfolio would then be assessed to determine if the student had made sufficient progress to meet the standard.

What is interesting is that students themselves feel that they don't get enough writing in the curriculum. When we conducted focus groups with students in developing the new BBA curriculum, students admitted that, although they didn't particularly like writing assignments, there needed to be a much greater emphasis on writing in the program. This was also observed in the responses to the EBI exit survey.

### **Feedback and Reflection**

In thinking about our activities over the past year in developing and beginning to implement our assurance of learning and outcomes assessment program, several things come to mind. First, it was important that the assessment team become "experts" on assessment. While the associate

dean in title alone has some degree of credibility with faculty, it is much better to be as knowledgeable as possible when discussing something as foreign as assessment. We worked with our university's Institutional Effectiveness team initially, then attended the AACSB Assessment Seminar, and have tried to stay current with the AACSB's online Assessment Resource Center (ARC). The university's IE team has begun to conduct assessment luncheons for the various faculty and staff responsible for assessment in the colleges to get together and discuss assessment issues. What has been interesting is that while we have been learning, developing, and implementing assessment for only a short time, other colleges on campus are looking to us as a role model.

Second, faculty buy-in is critical, and we knew this from the outset. One of the most useful pieces of advice from the AACSB Assessment Seminar was how to battle faculty resistance to implementing an assessment program. Our second mantra (in addition to "outsource to the Writing Center") has been "assessment is the monitoring of student learning, it is *not* the evaluation of faculty teaching." In addition to reducing the anxiety of confusing student assessment and teaching evaluation, our assessment team's mantra, regarding developing and implementing both the writing assessment and the Writing Proficiency Examination required in the new BBA curriculum, has been "outsource to the Writing Center!" Outsourcing much of the labor has been key in our success with faculty buy-in. When the assessment team began discussions with faculty, one of the initial reactions was concern over the amount of faculty time that would be required to develop and implement the program. Our consistent message to faculty has been that they must be involved in the creation of learning goals, setting the standards for measurement of those goals, and making any curriculum changes based on the outcomes. However, faculty do not need to be involved in the day-to-day administration of the assessment program. Faculty do not necessarily need to collect or analyze data, nor do they need to write extensive reports. Furthermore, there is no need to require that all faculty members have a thorough knowledge of assessment beyond what is required of them in the above activities. However, if a particular faculty member's course has been targeted for a course-embedded direct assessment, that faculty member must spend some time working with the college's assessment team to conduct that particular assessment.

Third, working with faculty to design course-embedded assessment has been a challenge. In certain cases modifications needed to be made to the format in which results were reported, thus requiring follow-up and rework. There is an inherent tradeoff between prescribing a specific approach for faculty to use and allowing them to design their own. We erred in several cases by not being precise enough in communicating our requirements. Therefore, we need to do a better job communicating with faculty in the future.

Finally, while the speed with which we developed and began



implementation of our assessment program has been labeled a “best practice,” moving quickly has created some problems. It takes time to learn the assessment concepts and become comfortable with the terminology—it really is a foreign language. It also takes time to learn how to develop appropriate learning goals, how to measure those goals, and ultimately how to report the results. We conducted two assessment workshops for faculty, and that was probably not enough. The assessment team has continued to meet regularly with the curriculum committees to discuss assessment problems with the learning goals measured this fall and to choose the next goals to measure going forward according to our phased-in approach. The assessment program is not yet an integral part of the college’s culture—it will take time. As we move ahead with the implementation of the program, and as more and more faculty become directly involved in assessment activities, we envision that a gradual cultural change will take place.

### **Conclusion**

Assurance of learning and outcomes assessment in business schools came to the forefront of international attention in 2003 with the passage of the new AACSB standards. Many schools have had systems in place for years—some of which are documented in this book. Others, like the C. T. Bauer College of Business, had been conducting some assessment of student learning, but not to the extent required by the new standards. Our story has chronicled our experience in going from “zero to sixty” in about a year. Many lessons were learned along the way, and we hope that the lessons we’ve shared will be useful to others.

We set out believing that faculty buy-in would be almost insurmountable, and we were proven wrong. Through fostering faculty awareness of the assessment program, by communicating the parameters of required faculty participation, and by providing substantial staff support, we have found that we have been able to gain faculty buy-in and support of our assurance of learning and the outcomes assessment program. Our faculty, in general, genuinely believe that it is the right thing to do, regardless of accreditation standards. The challenge will be to continue to have this level of buy-in and support as the assessment program is ramped up in the coming months by increasing the number of learning goals that are measured. This will, by definition, involve more faculty directly. In Spring 2005, two learning goals for each degree program will be measured. In Fall 2005, all learning goals for each program will be measured, which represents full implementation of the learning goal measurement component of our assessment program. After Fall 2005, we will begin analyzing the results from our assessment program to close the loop and make further recommendations for curriculum redesign or refinement.

While we have come a long way in a year, our assessment program is neither complete nor perfect—it is a work in progress. During initial meetings with faculty regarding learning goal development, we emphasized that this

was going to be a learning process and that mistakes were going to be made. The AACSB has made it clear that the assurance of a learning process is to be a phased-in approach and that no one structure is imposed. Furthermore, it is expected that there will be mistakes made and lessons learned along the way. For example, if one goal doesn't work out because of measurement problems, it might need to be refined. Additionally, as our curriculum is modified in response to assessment feedback, new goals may need to be developed to replace old goals. This is the true spirit of continuous improvement—focusing on measuring learning to improve our programs, and hence, the quality of our graduates.

**Appendix A**  
**Learning Goals and Target Measurements for Degree Programs**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Learning Goal</b>	<b>Where Measure?</b>	<b>How Measured?</b>	<b>Implementation Status</b>
BBA	Working knowledge of ethics and legal compliance	Course-embedded assignment (b-law and ethics course)	In a 3-5 page memo, demonstrate awareness of legal and ethical issues and a framework for resolving them	Measured Fall 2004 in Business Law and Ethics, will repeat in Spring 2005 (see Appendices 2 and 3)
	Disciplinary competence	ETS Major Field Test	Each department's sub-group will achieve an assessment indicator score of X%	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Communication skills	Course-embedded essay (b-law and ethics course)	Students will write in a correct business style using proper structure, spelling, language, grammar	Will measure in Spring 2005 in Writing Proficiency Exam
	Critical thinking	Course-embedded case analysis	Students will apply problem solving models to business situations	Will measure in Fall 2005
MBA	Communication	Course-embedded case analysis	Students will demonstrate effective written communication skills	Will measure in Spring 2005 in Marketing Administration
	Cross-disciplinary competence	Course-embedded case analysis (capstone)	Demonstrate ability to integrate different functional areas in solving business problem	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Critical thinking	Course-embedded case analysis	Demonstrate ability to analyze business situation and recommend appropriate action	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Awareness of environment of business	Course-embedded case analysis (marketing core course)	Demonstrate awareness of environment of business, e.g., law, politics, culture, technology	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Ethical reasoning	Course-embedded case analysis	Demonstrate ability to identify ethical dilemma and be able to recognize and evaluate alternative courses of action	Measured Fall 2004 in Strategic Management, will repeat in Spring 2005

## Appendix A

### Learning Goals and Target Measurements for Degree Programs

Program	Learning Goal	Where Measure?	How Measured?	Implementation Status
EMBA	Critical thinking	Course-embedded case analysis addressing novel business problem	Demonstrate ability to analyze business situation and recommend appropriate action	Will measure in Spring 2005 in Corporate Politics
	Cross-disciplinary competence	Course-embedded case analysis (capstone)	Demonstrate ability to integrate different functional areas in solving business problem	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Ethical reasoning	Course-embedded case analysis	Demonstrate ability to identify ethical dilemma and be able to recognize and evaluate alternative courses of action	Measured Fall 2004 in Corporate Politics, will repeat in Spring 2005
	Proficiency in business law	Course-embedded assignment (b-law course)	Demonstrate working knowledge of business law	Will measure in Fall 2005
PPA	Capacity to identify and diagnose accounting problems (mechanics)	Course-embedded case analysis	Demonstrate ability to recognize dysfunctional accounting situations	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Capacity to engage in accounting research and to present the findings of such research effectively in written context	Course-embedded case analysis	Demonstrate ability to assess and use appropriate professional research sources in solving complex accounting problems and to communicate those findings to other professionals in a clear and concise manner	Measured Fall 2004 in Advanced Accounting, will repeat in Spring 2005
	Capacity to work effectively with others in solving accounting problems	Course-embedded case analysis	Demonstrate ability to coordinate actions and solve problems jointly with other members of a professional team	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Understanding of accounting and financial concepts	Course-embedded case analysis	Demonstrate knowledge of financial conceptual issues	Measured Fall 2004 in Advanced Accounting, will repeat in Spring 2005
	Capacity to recognize and respond appropriately to ethical and regulatory dilemmas	Course-embedded case analysis	Show understanding of ethical decision-making, corporate governance, and social responsibility	Will measure in Fall 2005

## Appendix A

### Learning Goals and Target Measurements for Degree Programs

Program	Learning Goal	Where Measure?	How Measured?	Implementation Status
MS-ACCY	Capacity to identify and diagnose accounting problems (mechanics)	Course-embedded case analysis	Demonstrate ability to recognize dysfunctional accounting situations	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Capacity to engage in accounting research and to present the findings of such research effectively in written context	Course-embedded case analysis	Demonstrate ability to assess and use appropriate professional research sources in solving complex accounting problems and to communicate those findings to other professionals in a clear and concise manner	Measured Fall 2004 in Advanced Accounting, will repeat in Spring 2005
	Capacity to work effectively with others in solving accounting problems	Course-embedded case analysis	Demonstrate ability to coordinate actions and solve problems jointly with other members of a professional team	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Understanding of accounting and financial concepts	Course-embedded case analysis	Demonstrate knowledge of financial conceptual issues	Measured Fall 2004 in Advanced Accounting, will repeat in Spring 2005
	Capacity to recognize and respond appropriately to ethical and regulatory dilemmas	Course-embedded case analysis	Show understanding of ethical decision-making, corporate governance, and social responsibility	Will measure in Fall 2005
MS-FINA	Ability to competently apply the appropriate principles of valuation for major financial assets and securities	Course-embedded assignments, examinations and case analysis	Ability to recognize mispricing of securities and assets and arrive at the correct value	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Capacity to engage in research on firms to evaluate if their investment and financial policies maximize firm value	Course-embedded case analysis	Ability to assess and use appropriate professional research sources in solving complex financial analysis problems and to communicate those findings to other professionals in a clear and concise manner	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Capacity to evaluate various types of financial risks relating to the energy industry and devise operational risk management strategies	Course-embedded assignments, examinations and case analysis	Ability to recognize the nature of different financial risks and arrive at appropriate hedging and trading strategies	Will measure in Spring 2005 in Financial Reporting capstone
	Ability to understand the trade-off between risk and return in investment management	Course-embedded assignments, examinations and case analysis. Also, through operation of student-managed real and "virtual" portfolios	Ability to recognize the correlation of risk amongst different securities and utilize this knowledge to form efficient portfolios	Will measure in Spring 2005 in Real Options

**Appendix A**  
**Learning Goals and Target Measurements for Degree Programs**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Learning Goal</b>	<b>Where Measure?</b>	<b>How Measured?</b>	<b>Implementation Status</b>
Ph.D.	Research record established	Graduate will present work at conference ranked "high" or better, or have original work accepted for publication in academic journal ranked at that level	All graduates will publish or present (yes or no)	Will measure in Spring 2005
	Function independently as a competent researcher in business discipline and within organizational context	Graduate will complete and defend dissertation before audience from discipline as well as 1 additional discipline by fourth year	Completed and defended dissertation by fourth year (yes or no)	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Acquired sufficient knowledge as well as interviewing and presentation skills to qualify for faculty position after degree completion	Offered a faculty position at a college or university offering graduate level coursework in business administration	Offered a faculty position (yes or no)	Will measure in Fall 2005
	Competently teach full semester class at the (college) sophomore or above level	Two faculty members will independently rate the student as a competent teacher after one or more unannounced class visits	Doctoral student teaching evaluation form	Measured Fall 2004, will repeat in Spring 2005

<b>Grading Scale</b>	<b>A (90-100 pts)</b>	<b>B (80-89 pts)</b>	<b>C (70-79 pts)</b>	<b>D (60-69 pts)</b>	<b>F (0-59 pts)</b>
	Score based on how WELL these STANDARDS are achieved	Score based on how many of these MINOR PROBLEMS are presented, and how seriously	Score based on how many of these MAJOR PROBLEMS are presented, and how seriously	Score based on how many of these MAJOR PROBLEMS are presented, and how seriously	Score based on how many of these MAJOR PROBLEMS are presented, and how seriously
<b>Legal Analysis</b>					
<b>Statement of legal issue and applicable laws</b>	Authoritatively and thoroughly discusses the correct legal issue and correctly identifies and cites the applicable laws.	The stated legal issue has minor flaws, or the discussion regarding applicable laws is missing appropriate citations.	Either states an inappropriate legal issue, or does not adequately discuss the applicable laws.	Restates the facts of the case without presenting any clear legal issue, or the statement of applicable law is incorrect or missing.	Paper fails to address any legal issue or relevant law
<b>Application of facts to laws</b>	Thoroughly and concisely applies key facts to relevant laws	Applies key facts to laws but tends to ramble or is disorganized	States the facts and law together but does not directly link the facts to the law	↕ ↔	Fails to adequately discuss any key facts within the context of the relevant laws
<b>Conclusion</b>	Correctly, strongly, and succinctly concludes in appropriate section(s) of paper.	Correctly concludes but conclusion is either not succinct; or attempts to discuss additional items.	Incorrectly concludes based on stated legal issue.	↕ ↔	Incorrectly concludes and/or tends to simply restate the facts, issue, or law in the case.

Grading Scale	A (90-100 pts)	B (80-89 pts)	C (70-79 pts)	D (60-69 pts)	F (0-59 pts)
<b>Ethics analysis</b> (based on Utilitarianism)	Authoritatively states the appropriate ethical issue.  Authoritatively and thoroughly discusses at least 3 different choices.  Authoritatively applies and analyzes the facts with respect to Utilitarianism, including a discussion about effect of choices on all stakeholders.  Recommends the most appropriate course of action.	The stated ethical issue has minor flaws; the application of the facts to Utilitarianism and alternative choices is not complete; or does not discuss ethical theory within context of most of the stakeholders.	Inaccurately describes the ethical issue or Utilitarianism; provides inadequate alternative choices; does not apply relevant facts to the alternative choices according to Utilitarianism; or fails to address more than one of the stakeholders' interests.	Inaccurately describes the ethical issue or fails to provide adequate alternative choices.	Does not discuss any ethical dilemma; does not provide at least one choice; or does not accurately discuss Utilitarianism.
<b>Organization, Format, and Writing Center Participation</b>	Follows the FLAC method and methodically analyzes each law/ethical theory and the key elements.  Follows format consistent with instructions.  Attended at least one UH writing center meeting.	↕  ⇕	↕  ⇕	Seemingly random order of paragraphs, and/or order of sentences within paragraphs; disregard of formatting instructions; and/or failure to attend at least one UH writing center meeting.	
<b>Written expression of ideas</b>	Makes it easy for the reader to follow the analysis and discussion  Accurately cites appropriate laws.	↕  ⇕	Parts of the essay are difficult to read.  Quotes, applies, and cites, but inaccurately or improperly.	↕  ⇕	Paper is difficult to read, careless, irresponsible.
*This is the grading rubric the instructor uses to assign students' grades for the Business Law and Ethics Course writing assignment.					







*Situated near the heart of the Kentucky Bluegrass mountains, and serving a predominately first-generation college student body, the EKUBusiness faculty considered developing their students' professional, oral, and written communication skills to be a very high priority. The college tapped the local business community to help them tailor their curriculum to meet the requirements of business professionals, and to assess its students against these standards. Since 1995, visiting executives have formally reviewed the oral presentations of over 1,500 business students, participating in more than 500 teams. EKUBusiness' use of external reviewers in their assessment program has helped develop their students' professional awareness, furthering the School's (and University's) mission as "a school of opportunity."*

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DEVELOPING THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS**

**Janna Vice**

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#### **Background, Mission, and Goals**

The business program at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) is housed in the College of Business and Technology and is referred to as "EKUBusiness." The College of Business and Technology, one of EKU's five academic colleges, is a diverse college with six academic departments: accounting, finance, and information systems; agriculture; communication; management, marketing, and administrative communication; military science and leadership, and technology.

EKUBusiness is comprised of the College's two business departments, which jointly offer (1) a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree with eight optional majors and (2) the Masters of Business Administration (MBA). EKUBusiness was accredited by AACSB International in April 2003.

Eastern Kentucky University, located in Richmond, Kentucky, 25 miles south of the Bluegrass area of Lexington, will celebrate 100 years of educational service to the Commonwealth in 2006. The University is a comprehensive university that values its connections to its Appalachian service area and is traditionally a school of opportunity for first-generation college students in central, eastern, and southeastern Kentucky. Although EKU serves students from across the nation and around the world, the

majority of EKU students are from the region. The University estimates that approximately 70 percent of EKU students are the first persons in their immediate families to graduate from college.

While EKU has a three-fold mission in higher education of teaching, service, and scholarship, high-quality instruction is imperative. EKU's motto, "the University where students come first," is reflected in the following mission statement:

Eastern Kentucky University is a student-centered comprehensive public university dedicated to high-quality instruction, service, and scholarship. EKU's curricula lead to associate degrees, baccalaureate degrees, and master's level and specialist degrees in a number of fields.

### **Defining Assessment**

*EKUBusiness'* formal, systematic assessment began in conjunction with its anticipation of pursuing AACSB accreditation. The first formal assessment was in 1990, when *EKUBusiness* conducted its first alumni survey. By the mid 1990s, a mission statement and goals had been adopted along with a list of learning objectives. Although the mission statement, goals, and learning objectives have been periodically reviewed by faculty, students, alumni, advisory councils, and other stakeholders, the learning objectives have remained virtually the same since 1995. The *EKUBusiness* learning objectives align closely with the curriculum expectations and business perspectives stipulated in the AACSB accreditation standards, as shown in Table 1.

### **Resources and Responsibilities for Assessment**

The assessment of the *EKUBusiness* program is coordinated by the associate dean as a member of the Dean's Office of the College of Business and Technology. The dean, associate dean, chairs, and faculty work in concert with the University's Office of Institutional Effectiveness to coordinate the annual strategic planning and assessment processes. The University requires annual assessment at the college level and the individual program/major level. Each program reports to the University, annually, the changes that have been made as a result of assessment and how these changes will impact the program's strategic plan.

### **Resources**

The University pays for the annual Educational Benchmarking Institute (EBI) Student Satisfaction Survey and Educational Testing Service (ETS) instruments. The University has also implemented an electronic data warehouse, TracDAT, for monitoring programs' goals and objectives in support of EKU's mission and goals. *EKUBusiness* pays for the biennial alumni survey sent to graduates of the most recent five years. Other assessment methods are conducted within the business curriculum with no additional outlay of money.

**Table 1**  
**Method of Assessing Learning Objectives for *EKUBusiness***

Learning Objective	Sampling	Methodology	Finding/Evidence	Response/Action Items
Written Communication	Students enrolled in one section of CCT 300, Managerial Reports.	Biennially a business executive assigns a realistic case. Students write the report based on the assigned case and submit two copies—one for the instructor, one for the executive. The executive reads and evaluates the students' reports. The executive returns to the class and provides the instructor and students with specific feedback as to the extent that the students' reports met his/her expectations.	The report-writing principles taught in CCT 300 are valid and consistent with real-world writing.	Faculty continue to engage business executives to review students' writing and incorporate executives' criteria/comments into the course instructions of future semesters.
Oral Communication	All students enrolled in CCT 300 each semester.	Students deliver a team, PowerPoint presentation to a visiting executive(s). The executives evaluate each student according to the oral communication skills expected in the professional arena. Each student receives one of five possible ratings: Very Effective, Good, Acceptable, Needs Considerable Work, Unacceptable.	Generally more than 90 percent of all students each semester are rated by the executives as giving either a very effective or good presentation.	Faculty incorporate the executives' comments into the course instruction. As they prepare for their presentations, students receive a list of executives' comments from prior semesters.
Team Skills	All students enrolled in CCT 300 each semester.	Students in three-member teams deliver a PowerPoint presentation to a visiting executive(s). The executives evaluate each team according to the teamwork the students display (e.g., the delivery and organization of the presentation.) Each team receives one of five ratings described above.	Generally more than 90 percent of the teams each semester receive either a very effective or good rating. The executives' ratings indicate that students are learning the necessary team skills to prepare and present a formal presentation.	Faculty incorporate the executives' comments into the course instruction in future semesters.
Functional Areas of Business	All graduating seniors	Students take the ETS Major Field Test in Business.	Generally EKUBusiness graduating seniors will mirror the ETS' distribution of scores nationally.	EKUBusiness faculty will work to prepare students to exceed the national average on the ETS exam.
Ethics Awareness	All business graduates within the five most recent years	EKUBusiness conducts a biennial survey of all alumni who graduated within the last five years.	Responses in the early 90's indicated a lack of ethics preparation.	Strengthened business law course, integrated ethics throughout curriculum, developed Ethics Awareness Week.

### Best Practice

The most successful assessment activity that *EKUBusiness* has established is using external reviewers (business executives) to assess students' performance in the area of oral communication skills. This systematic assessment process began in 1995 and has proven to be important to the business program's goal of continuous improvement and accreditation.

The following discussion describes how the systematic assessment of students' oral communication skills was developed and how it has been maintained for almost ten years. The discussion will include (a) the process

*EKUBusiness* used to develop the learning objective initially, (b) the structure used to engage faculty and students in the process, and (c) the method used to provide feedback of the students' performance evaluations in order to make needed changes to improve classroom instruction and curriculum development, commonly referred to as "closing the loop."

### **Development of the Systematic Assessment**

The *EKUBusiness* faculty decided to develop an assessment program that would systematically measure business students' skills, knowledge, and abilities. In developing this program, the *EKUBusiness* faculty took the following steps to begin a strategic planning process:

1. Conducted an environmental scan which included a SWOT analysis (identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) to determine the faculty's and other stakeholders' perceptions and values regarding the role of the business program at Eastern Kentucky University and the greatest needs of its students.
2. Developed an *EKUBusiness* mission statement and goals based on the stakeholder input and consistent with the mission and goals of the University and the standards of AACSB.
3. Established nine student-learning objectives to accomplish the *EKUBusiness* Goals.
4. Defined the learning objectives by identifying the performance standards (traits/criteria) students would have to demonstrate in order to successfully achieve these learning objectives.
5. Designed a systematic plan (a) to measure student performance against the established standard and (b) to use the performance evaluations to provide feedback to faculty and students to make needed changes to ensure continuous improvement.

### **Learning Goals**

The *EKUBusiness* faculty considered developing students' professional oral and written communication skills to be the greatest priority for all *EKUBusiness* students for the following reasons:

- Because the majority of EKU students are first-generation college students, they may have had limited exposure to a professional environment prior to attending college.
- The importance of students' developing effective communication and team skills is documented by employer surveys, indicating communication skills and team skills are essential skills for career success.
- Communication and team skills are required by the AACSB curriculum standards.

Therefore, *EKUBusiness* faculty established the following goal and objectives pertaining to developing students' communication and team skills.

**Goal 1: To graduate students who demonstrate the skills and understanding necessary for successful careers in business and public service.**

Objective 1<sup>24</sup>: To develop students' skills in oral and written communication.

Objective 2: To educate students to analyze and solve complex business problems, and to do so as a team member.

Objective 3: To educate students to be able to use information technology effectively.

Objective 4: To educate students to be knowledgeable about business core subjects and their integration.

Objective 5: To educate students to be knowledgeable about and skillful in their chosen business major/option.

Objective 6: To provide students with cooperative education, internships, and other professional development opportunities.

Objective 7: To develop students' appreciation and understanding of the global and multi-cultural practices of business.

Objective 8: To develop students' understanding of ethical, legal, regulatory, environmental, and social influences on organizations.

Objective 9: To graduate students who will be prepared to seek graduate education, if they so choose.

### **Essential Traits of Effective Communication**

In defining the performance criteria required to demonstrate acceptable professional communication skills, the *EKUBusiness* faculty identified specific traits required for written and oral communication. Because this "best practice" discussion highlights the oral-communication assessment, only the traits for effective oral communication are presented. The expectation/traits *EKUBusiness* systematically expects students should demonstrate when giving an oral presentation throughout the business curriculum are as follows:

- identify and communicate a purpose
- express information and ideas clearly and concisely
- organize and express information and ideas in a manner appropriate to the purpose
- use appropriate grammar, sentence structure, and word choice
- use vocal delivery and non-verbal cues in a manner appropriate to the situation
- describe, analyze, and synthesize data, ideas, and information correctly and effectively
- show awareness and knowledge of the audience

- listen and comprehend others' oral communications
- ask questions of others to clarify information and gain understanding
- adapt oral communication to a variety of situations
- use presentation technology effectively.

## **Measurement**

In order to articulate to all faculty and business students these expected standards for oral presentations, a trait-analysis evaluation form was developed by the *EKUBusiness* Corporate Communication and Technology faculty. (See Appendix.)

## **Performance Expectations**

*EKUBusiness* faculty expect all business students to be able, at a minimum, to present an "acceptable" oral presentation as determined by the evaluations of external reviewers, who will be described in further detail in the following discussion.

## **Methodology and Processes**

Although oral presentations are required across the business curriculum in each discipline, the most logical place to introduce, develop, and assess the oral communication skills expected of every business student was in the CCT 300 (Managerial Reports) course. The CCT 300 is part of the Business Core and, therefore, required for all business students, including transfer students.

The CCT 300 is taught by the *EKUBusiness* Corporate Communication and Technology faculty, who have been committed since 1995 to ensure systematically that all business students develop the oral communication skills that will be required of the business professions they are preparing to enter.

The following description of the assessment method and process used to measure students' oral communication skills will outline a formal assignment every semester in CCT 300 that requires every business student to give an oral team presentation to visiting business executives. The assessment method has been designed to answer the following questions:

1. Are the oral-communication standards/traits established by *EKUBusiness* faculty valid traits that meet the expectations of business professionals?
2. Is the instruction that business students receive in CCT 300 valid and effective in equipping students with adequate or better oral communication skills?
3. To what extent can *EKUBusiness* students demonstrate oral communication skills that meet business executives' expectations?
4. What team skills can be assessed by observing a team oral presentation?

## **The Assignment**

All students in CCT 300 are required to write a formal, analytical report and to orally present the results of the formal written report to the instructor, to the students in the class, and to a visiting business executive. For this assignment, students are required to conduct a primary research study and are grouped into three-member teams.

Each team selects a topic pertaining to professional development (e.g., teamwork, cultural diversity, etiquette, time management, ethics, etc.) and develops a seven-to-nine item questionnaire. Each team member, by telephone, schedules an interview with two business executives. Students then conduct their individual interviews with each executive, in-person, at each executive's workplace. Each interview ranges between 20-30 minutes.

When all six interviews are completed, the team reconvenes to compile the data the students gathered from the executives. When the data have been compiled and analyzed, each student prepares his/her individual written report for the instructor. Each team then prepares a seven-to-ten minute oral presentation to be given to the class and a visiting business executive whom the instructor has invited to hear and evaluate the presentations.

To ensure students are adequately prepared to give a professional oral presentation (using PowerPoint), the Corporate Communication and Technology instructors use the following instructional process:

1. Provide students with the list of traits *EKUBusiness* faculty identified as being evidence of an effective oral presentation.
2. Model an effective business presentation that incorporates the instructor's expectations.
3. Assign and discuss the textbook's chapter pertaining to oral communication.
4. Show the students a video prepared by Toastmasters International that further illustrates how to prepare an effective oral presentation.
5. Discuss with students the do's and don'ts of using PowerPoint slides effectively.
6. Require that the teams rehearse a practice presentation, using their PowerPoint slides, in front of the class and the instructor.
7. Ask students, during the rehearsals, to become active listeners while the teams are presenting. One half of the class is asked to critique constructively the rehearsing team's delivery style. The other half of the class is asked to critique the organization of the team's presentation. After all the rehearsals are completed, the students' comments are given to each respective team, along with the instructor's suggestions. To encourage students to think critically, instructors ask that each student list at least two positive aspects of each individual's presentation and also list two ways the individual could improve his/her presentation with practice.



8. Ask student teams to meet individually with the instructor, if more practice is needed, to work on aspects of the presentation not yet ready to present to an external reviewer.

### **The External Reviewers**

Since 1995, dozens of business executives have served as external reviewers and visited the CCT 300 classrooms to observe the students' oral presentations. These executives hold mid- to high-level positions, including bank presidents and vice presidents, human resource managers, plant managers, certified public accountants, lawyers, and successful entrepreneurs. These executives have each achieved high levels of professional success and work for companies that the University considers community partners and employers of ECU students. Many of the visiting executives are ECU alumni, including a number of members of the *ECUBusiness* Advisory Council. The dean of the College of Business and Technology, the department chair of Management, Marketing, and Administrative Communication, and other directors and coordinators of programs at the University have also observed the students' presentations.

### **Assessment of the Presentations**

Although the instructor assigns the grades for the presentations, the business executives evaluate the presentations and provide important feedback to the students regarding individual as well as team performances.

### **The Evaluation Process**

The external reviewers are asked to evaluate the students' oral communication skills based on the reviewers' personal criteria for effective oral communication. During the presentations, the reviewers write specific comments about both the positive and negative aspects of each student's performance by responding to two open-ended questions:

1. What did you like about the presentation?
2. How could the student improve his or her performance?

The reviewers also rate each student on the basis of a five-point scale: (5) very effective, (4) good, (3) acceptable, (2) needs considerable work, or (1) unacceptable.

In addition, reviewers use the same five-point scale to evaluate the overall effectiveness of each team in presenting its report.

### **Data and Information Management**

Visiting executives have formally reviewed the oral presentations of more than 1,500 business students, participating in more than 500 teams. The CCT 300 instructors tally and report the reviewers' evaluations. The

reviewers' evaluations of 2004 are typical of the annual evaluations, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Executives' Evaluations of Students' Oral Communication Skills\***

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Very Effective</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Needs Considerable Work</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>
Spring 2004	38%	56%	6%	0%	0%
Fall 2004	50%	46%	4%	0%	0%
*N=135 students					

**Analysis of the Assessment Outcomes**

During the past 10 years, executives have written thousands of comments (both positive and negative) about the students' oral presentations. These comments can almost always be grouped in six categories:

1. Report content
2. Speaker's rapport with the audience
3. Speaker's appearance
4. Speaker's voice
5. Design and use of visual aids
6. Speaker's nonverbal communication.

The executives offer candid comments that also provide students and faculty with interesting insights as to clothing styles and appearances that are and are not acceptable within the corporate culture of their companies. These comments have addressed issues such as facial hair and length of hair for men, fad clothing styles and jewelry for men and women, and the executives' companies' expectations. For example, on occasion the executives have told male students that if they wear earrings, "The business world is not ready for you yet."

**Results and Observations**

The overall results and observations of the external reviewers' assessment of the business students' oral team presentations indicate the following:

1. The executives generally rate the majority of students' oral communication and team skills as either "good" or "very effective."
2. The executives' and instructors' evaluations have a high level of consistency regarding students' overall performance, areas of strengths, and areas for improvement.

3. Business students are preparing and delivering oral presentations in CCT 300 (Managerial Reports) that are acceptable and appropriate for real-world business presentations.
4. The performance standards/traits established by the *EKUBusiness* faculty are valid measures of oral communication skills. The executives' criteria align closely with the faculty's established performance standards and the CCT 300's textbook coverage of oral presentations.
5. Similarly, the reviews indicate that students are demonstrating the ability to work as team members to (a) gather and compile data and (b) organize, prepare, and present effective oral reports.
6. Certain non-verbal behaviors, as identified by the executives' comments, can be used to determine whether the students worked effectively as teams. For example,
  - a. Did the presentation appear to be well organized? (e.g., Did the team use only one "attention-getter" or three?)
  - b. Were the transitions from one speaker to the next smooth?
  - c. Were team members able to operate the PowerPoint slides for each other?
  - d. Did the slides have one coordinated look with consistent formats and headings? Or did the slides have two or three different looks?
  - e. Did the team members' overall appearance indicate they had discussed the appropriate attire for their team?

## Reporting

The instructors report the results of the external reviewers' ratings and comments as follows:

1. Current CCT 300 students are provided with their individual evaluations from both the instructor and the external reviewer.
2. Instructors also provide summary reports to the students of subsequent semesters to assist them in preparing their presentations.
3. For AACSB accreditation purposes, summary reports are also reported annually to the *EKUBusiness* assessment efforts, coordinated in the associate dean's office, to illustrate how the business program continues to "close the loop" in achieving continuous improvement in the area of oral communication.
4. Assessment outcomes are also reported to the ECU Office of Institutional Effectiveness as the University develops a university-wide strategic planning and assessment process in preparation for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' (SACS) review.

## **Discussing Results**

A challenge of most assessment programs is using the assessment results to their fullest potential. *EKUBusiness* continues to find ways to communicate the results among business faculty. The methods used to date include discussions with interested faculty during Business Brown Bag lunches, informal discussions with faculty, and discussions in curriculum committees.

## **Actions from Assessment**

The external reviewers' evaluations continue to indicate that the course content is appropriate and the instruction is effective. Therefore, only minor adjustments have been made in the curriculum. The faculty, however, continue to look for ways to improve student learning. As a result of faculty discussions and collaboration regarding using external reviewers to assess oral communication and team skills, the following actions have been taken:

1. Each semester CCT faculty incorporate the executives' comments into their instruction of oral communication by focusing instruction on needed areas of improvement. For example, as a result of executives' comments about students' graphics, business faculty began requiring that all students incorporate PowerPoint technology into their presentations, giving business students an advantage over other students at ECU in using this important technology. CCT faculty also provide students with lists of executives' specific comments from the previous semesters to help the current students overcome the mistakes of students from previous semesters.
2. During the last two years, faculty teaching the business strategy capstone course have begun requiring students to rehearse their final presentations and inviting external reviewers from the business community to hear the seniors' presentations. This action has validated the importance of the communication skills that students learned earlier in the business curriculum as well as reinforces and requires students to practice these skills.

## **Benefits**

*EKUBusiness* can identify the following benefits of its method of assessing oral communication skills. This assessment method:

1. Has provided a systematic and valid way to assess the *EKUBusiness* program's goal for developing students' oral communication skills at no additional cost to the program, college, or the University.
2. Provides feedback necessary for continuous improvement at the program level, individual course level, and individual student level.
3. Validates classroom content and methods of instruction.

4. Establishes real-world job expectations for students and provides them with evidence as to how well their current oral communication and team skills align with those expectations.
5. Provides students an opportunity to observe business professionals firsthand. The visiting executive always shares a summary of his or her evaluations with the class and gives the class an opportunity to ask questions. As a result, students can observe the executives' impromptu presentation styles and skill in answering questions. Students also interview the executives they select to collect their data.
6. Allows the *EKUBusiness* program to showcase its students' skills to the local and regional business community. In some cases, students have been offered jobs and internships as a result of their professional performance.
7. Increases students' motivation to excel. When students are preparing for a bank president, for example, they become motivated to do their best. They no longer see the instructor as the motivating force or the grade as the end result.
8. Increases students' openness to receive criticism. Students often accept criticism from a business professional more easily than from their instructors. For example, a male student may take offense at an instructor who asks him not to wear an earring during his presentation. However, when the student reads this advice on a handout listing executives' suggestions, the student generally accepts it as a fact and a non-confrontational point.

### **Feedback and Reflection**

*EKUBusiness'* practice of using external reviewers to evaluate every BBA business student's oral communication skills has been instrumental in enhancing students' understanding of the skills required by professionals. For EKU's first-generation college students, this professional awareness is very important in order to accomplish *EKUBusiness'* (as well as EKU's) mission as a school of opportunity.

*EKUBusiness'* accomplishment in the area of communication was also cited in the AACSB peer-review team's report and was important in documenting that an assessment method is in place to ensure a high-quality program, and that assessment data are used to make meaningful changes, ensuring continuous improvement of instruction.

As EKU's Office of Institutional Effectiveness is ensuring that the University is appropriately engaged in strategic planning and assessment, the *EKUBusiness'* communication assessment was spotlighted during the Fall 2004 semester as having a "best practice" assessment program that could serve as a model for other programs.

To maintain this no-additional-cost system of assessing the entire population of business students for almost a decade, *EKUBusiness* has

relied on committed faculty members who have collaboratively worked as a team themselves. They have ensured that all sections of CCT 300 use common course objectives, have the identical requirements and procedures for the analytical report and oral presentation, and use visiting executives to observe every team's presentation.

The faculty have also had to be committed to networking and forging professional relationships with high-profile executives in the business community. Faculty have had to communicate effectively when coordinating the executives' visits to campus. Faculty pay attention to detail to ensure the executives' trips to campus are pleasant as well as professionally rewarding.

### **Conclusion**

The method *EKUBusiness* uses for assessing students' oral communication skills can be expanded to assess written communication skills as well. The Corporate Communication and Technology faculty have established a goal to engage business executives as reviewers to assess students' written documents in at least one section of CCT 300 per year.

The faculty have successfully piloted this project during two previous semesters. The goals of the pilot project were to determine (a) if the performance criteria for written communication, as established by the *EKUBusiness* faculty, are in fact valid; (b) if the classroom instruction in CCT 300 is appropriate to prepare students to write for the professional business arena; and (c) if *EKUBusiness* students are developing the necessary written communication skills that will be essential for them to succeed in their careers.

In each semester of the pilot projects, a senior-level executive visited one section of the CCT 300 class and assigned a report that would be germane to the executive's company. The executive discussed the report with the class and outlined his/her expectations for the completed report. The students wrote their reports according to the executives' expectations, while also adhering to the report-writing principles they were learning in CCT 300. The executives evaluated the students' completed reports and returned to class to discuss their findings. Every semester, the executives' evaluations indicated the *EKUBusiness* students were developing effective written communication skills.

A second future plan for *EKUBusiness* is to formally assess students' *professional* skills by surveying the executives who are interviewed by the students. With many students having limited exposure to business professionals, *EKUBusiness* tries to provide students with as many opportunities to interact in a professional setting as possible. The CCT 300 analytical report methodology was established partially for this purpose. The Corporate Communication and Technology faculty are also preparing scoring rubrics that can be used by all *EKUBusiness* faculty to evaluate oral and written communication.

As a result of the successful experiences of EKUBusiness faculty using external reviewers to evaluate students’ oral, written, and team skills, the use of external reviewers in the classroom is recommended. The approach described in this discussion is a highly integrated, systematic process that has succeeded as a result of the faculty’s and administrator’s commitment and support.

*Endnotes*

24 *Editor’s note:* These are School objectives RELATED to student learning — they are not student learning objectives. The objectives listed here have been developed to indicate what the School will do to develop students’ business competencies. A student learning objective that corresponds to these School activities might include: “Upon completing our program, students will use information technology effectively to analyze a business issue, and effectively communicate their analysis and recommendations to a professional audience.”

**Appendix A**  
**Oral Presentation Rating Sheet**

	Weak	Average	Good	Excellent
<b>Audience Rapport</b>				
Adapted to a specific audience				
Maintained eye contact; did not read				
Showed enthusiasm; voice, tone; energy				
Used good posture, natural gesturing, controlled movement				
Wore appropriate attire; demonstrated professionalism				
Was friendly, creative; used appropriate humor				
Showed accuracy, preparedness, attention to detail				
<b>Introduction</b>				
Gained immediate attention in appropriate manner				
Stated purpose clearly and early				
Introduced team members				
Told why presentation is important				
Gave an overview (preview)				
<b>Body</b>				
Stated the key observations				
Supported statements with facts				
Sounded believable-confident				
Gave appropriate examples/illustrations				
Used questions for effective transitions				

## Appendix A Oral Presentation Rating Sheet

	Weak	Average	Good	Excellent
<b>Conclusion</b>				
Made smooth transition from body				
Summarized major points; matched the conclusion with purpose in opening				
Ended with memorable statement				
<b>Organization</b>				
Kept the message SIMPLE				
Was coherent, easy to follow; gave periodic cues to remind audience the stage of the presentation				
<b>Visual Aids</b>				
Used appropriate visual aids				
Used aids effectively; did not read slides; made a "big deal" of the information; allowed time to absorb				
Used large font/type (at least 24)				
Answered one question per visual				
Had visuals organized effectively				
Demonstrated teamwork with visuals				
Kept audience focused; used appropriate text and animation				
Avoided distractions: Audience did not "see one thing and hear another."				

### Author(s) Bio

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*The Stillman School at Seton Hall University has every reason to be proud of its unique undergraduate assessment process. It's a comprehensive process that illustrates the nuances of an action-oriented assessment culture. Their process has provided input into improving every facet of the undergraduate experience for the Stillman student. It has caused the faculty to become reflective about their work and the objectives of the curriculum. It has helped increase the important linkages between the School and its alumni and the School and its business partners.*

## **CHAPTER 6 UNDERGRADUATE ASSESSMENT AT THE STILLMAN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**

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### **Background, Mission, and Goals**

The faculty at the Stillman School of Business established an undergraduate assessment process in 1998, shortly after it implemented its new undergraduate core curriculum. The new core curriculum included both general business curriculum goals as well as specific competencies that would be developed as students completed core courses. In this chapter, first we present a brief description of Seton Hall University and the Stillman School of Business. From there, the reasons for the development of a unique and specialized undergraduate assessment process are detailed. Then, the process itself is described. After that, the impacts that the assessment process has had on the Stillman undergraduate educational experience are put forth. These impacts include modifications in the process, changes in the curriculum and assessment's unintended positive benefits. Last, reflections on future directions for the process at the School are presented.

### **Seton Hall University and the Stillman School of Business**

Seton Hall University, founded in 1856, is the oldest Catholic diocesan university in the United States. It is comprised of eight colleges, five of which offer undergraduate degrees. The University is located in picturesque South Orange, New Jersey, one of the many bedroom communities of New York City. Seton Hall University is considered by the Carnegie classification system as a Doctoral/Research University-Intensive institution and recently

was ranked in the top tiers of major national universities by *U.S. News and World Report*. Nearly 90% of the University's revenues come from the tuition of its 5,000 undergraduate students and 6,000 graduate students.

The Stillman School earned AACSB accreditation in 1978, the first private business school in New Jersey to achieve this honor. Today, the School enrolls 900 undergraduate students, 40% of whom come from outside New Jersey but predominantly from the Northeast and Middle Atlantic regions and, to a lesser extent, the metropolitan areas in the Midwest.

The Stillman School is one of the most competitive colleges at Seton Hall University. The average SAT score for all incoming freshmen has ranged from 1150 to 1170. The School's acceptance rate of 48% is impressive, as is its retention rate of 86% for freshman students. By virtue of having earned accreditation by the AACSB and having that accreditation reaffirmed several times, the School has developed strong processes and a spirit of continuous improvement that has certainly advanced its reputation. Within the School are approximately 50 full-time faculty, and 40 of these are either tenured or on a tenure track. The School's operating budget is \$8 million for academic year 2004-2005, and it has another \$3.9 million in endowment funds.

In 1998, the Stillman faculty approved the following new mission statement:

Our mission is to be the school of choice for business education in the state of New Jersey and to be known nationally as among the best business schools within a Catholic university.

This mission statement, which certainly has elements of a vision statement as well, comports with the mission of Seton Hall University's president, Monsignor Sheeran, to move Seton Hall University to the top tiers of Catholic universities nationwide. It has become the lens through which all of the School's strategies and operational plans are examined. The School proudly notes that in a recent survey of its undergraduate students, fully two-thirds of them were able to articulate the School's mission. The School also takes pride in the most recent rankings of undergraduate business programs published by *U. S. News and World Report*, where the School was slated in the top ten best undergraduate business programs nationwide at a Catholic university.

### **Defining Assessment**

The School's undergraduate assessment process was pointedly designed to give the School a competitive advantage. With the overarching beacon to be "the school of choice" and to be among the best business schools nationwide at a Catholic university, the School had its first real opportunity to make manifest its commitment to its mission with its design

for undergraduate assessment. So, with its mission as its guide, designing a unique undergraduate assessment process that would be more advanced than similar mechanisms offered by others became a key component in differentiating the Stillman School from its competition.

But assessment was to be more than a tactic to differentiate the School. The new curriculum, with its new course requirements and competencies, was designed to be responsive to the School's many stakeholders, including prospective employers. The School felt strongly about the merits of its new curriculum, with its goal of enabling our students to be well-prepared professionals as they moved from collegiate life to their first positions in their career. So, it became important to have a process that would provide the very best information on the degree to which the curriculum was meeting this goal. Once the faculty developed what they felt was the best curriculum that would best develop our students, it became necessary to have the best information possible to measure the success of the curriculum's goal. In turn, this mandated the best assessment process possible: to inform, effectively and efficiently, regarding whether the curriculum was meeting its objective, and to provide impetus where changes in content and pedagogy were warranted to correct gaps between the intended goal and the actual outcomes. From this, then, the faculty designed and approved an assessment process that has three distinct elements: pre-assessment, sophomore or senior assessment, and post-assessment.

### **Resources and Responsibilities for Assessment**

Typically, the Stillman School's Office of the Dean has implemented faculty-driven initiatives. These have included such initiatives as (1) the Faculty Annual Report and Plan process, in which all faculty report and self-evaluate their work on the just-concluded academic year and then plan for the next academic year and (2) the Teacher Course Evaluation process. Likewise, the Office of the Dean has implemented the faculty-determined admission standards for undergraduate and graduate students. In July 1997, the School reorganized itself, establishing an associate dean for the undergraduate curriculum. Following the School's practice, then, this individual's responsibility included implementation and evaluation of the new undergraduate curriculum, including the assessment process that would eventually be designed by the faculty. Since then, amidst several organizational changes within the School, a Director of Undergraduate Assessment has been appointed. This person has been a faculty member, receiving a stipend of \$20,000 while reporting to the Associate Dean for the Undergraduate Curriculum.

More recently, undergraduate assessment has moved to an assistant dean, who has other functions within the School, but the assistant dean still reports to the associate dean on all assessment matters. About 30% of a secretary's time is devoted to the many administrative functions associated

with assessment. Faculty members volunteer their time to help shape assessment materials, which will be discussed subsequently. There is a University-wide task team for assessment in which the School participates. Even so, the School has funded assessment through its own operating budget.

### **The Stillman Undergraduate Assessment Process**

In this section, the Stillman undergraduate assessment process is described. First, we present the new core curriculum and discuss how specific competencies are mapped onto core courses. From there, we discuss the pre-assessment phase, and the sophomore and senior assessment panels. Next, we discuss “assessment day” itself. After that, the feedback that students receive from their performance at assessment is presented. Last, we discuss the post-assessment phase of the process.

### **The Undergraduate Core, Competency Definition, and Mapping**

The undergraduate core curriculum develops students’ skills in the traditional disciplines of business through coursework in accounting, economics, finance, international business, law, management, management information systems, marketing, statistics, organizational behavior, and strategy. In addition, Stillman students appreciate the strengths of a liberal arts education, with additional coursework in English, ethics, mathematics, oral communications, world religions, the sciences, and world cultures. Throughout this range of required coursework, whether taught by the School’s colleagues in the College of Arts and Sciences or by faculty in the Stillman School of Business, students’ competencies in five critical areas are developed. These competencies were drawn from input contributed by employers and alumni as to the important attributes students should bring to their professional careers. These competencies are change management, communications, critical thinking, teamwork, and technology.

Each of the undergraduate core courses takes ownership of developing at least one of the competencies. So, as might be expected, some of the basic skills and abilities in technology are mapped onto the core course in management information systems. Core courses in accounting and marketing are charged with developing competencies in critical thinking and communications. Core courses in management and organizational behavior are relied upon to develop students’ abilities in teamwork. The finance core develops students in the areas of critical thinking and technology. The full delineation of competency development is contained in *Competencies Development in the Undergraduate Business Curriculum* (June 1998, Revised June 2000). In Table 1 below, we illustrate how the faculty have linked the curriculum with its learning objectives. We also indicate which component of the assessment process informs as to whether or not the curriculum has prepared the Stillman students as designed.

**Table 1**  
**Linking the Curriculum, Learning Objectives**  
**and Assessment Methods**

<b>The Curriculum, including coursework and the competencies</b>	<b>Learning Objectives<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Assessment Method</b>
Core Coursework	Acquisition of discipline-based knowledge in accounting, economics, ethics, finance, international business, law, management, management information systems, marketing, mathematics, organizational behavior, sciences, statistics, strategy, world cultures, world religions	Analysis of case(s) in the team presentation component of assessment, individual Excel assignment
Change Management	Ability to be flexible in examining issues, ability to handle stress, ability to change strategies given new circumstances or information	Observations from working on the team presentation, handling recalcitrant team members, responding to extemporaneous questions from assessors, pre- and post-vocabulary test
Communications (oral and written)	Ability to express one's position, logically, succinctly, and using correct grammar, both orally and in written form, in both structured and ad-hoc business settings, ability to change one's communication style given the audience	Observations from the team presentations and from students' responses to the extemporaneous questions from the assessors, evaluation of the written assignment, pre- and post-vocabulary test
Critical Thinking	Ability to identify and analyze alternatives in a business context and to articulate and defend a course of action	Analysis of case(s) in the team presentation, observations from responding to the extemporaneous questions from assessors, evaluation of the individual written components, pre- and-post vocabulary test
Teamwork	Ability to manage teams effectively, including dealing with performance issues, to produce a quality product on time	Observations from the team presentations, from consultations with the Director of Assessment, from the questions by assessors, and from the student evaluations of other team members' work, pre- and post- vocabulary test
Technology	Ability to use technology to research and add value in presentations, including preparing professional reports, business communiqués, and oral presentations	Observations from the team presentations, from the Excel assignment, from students' use of Blackboard, internet resources, and library databases, pre- and post-vocabulary test

Notes: <sup>1</sup>For a comprehensive presentation of the desired knowledge, skills, and abilities of each of the competencies, see Competencies Development in the Undergraduate Business Curriculum. This document may be obtained directly from the authors by emailing [wisenbjc@shu.edu](mailto:wisenbjc@shu.edu).

## **Pre-Assessment**

First, during Freshman Orientation, all Stillman students are given a vocabulary test, focusing on the key vocabulary of the competencies. This is called “Pre-Assessment.” This vocabulary roster was developed by the faculty and is contained in the manual *Competency Assessment for Undergraduate Business Students and Key Vocabulary Terms for the Competencies* (February 1999, Revised 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004). The rationale for the vocabulary test was fairly straightforward—for one to assert mastery of a competency, one should be able to use the basic language associated with that competency. While there are over 200 words in the vocabulary roster, the Pre-Assessment test consists of defining only 25 of these. The word is given, and students must provide a definition. The basis for grading the test is “if this explanation were delivered in a business meeting, would it satisfy as the definition of the word.”

## **The Sophomore and Senior Assessment Panels**

The second stage of assessment consists of sophomore or senior assessment panels. The assessment panels are designed to measure students’ mastery of the competencies and their grasp of the functional knowledge of the core. In the School’s view, the panels are best suited to measure competencies and functional knowledge, compared to paper-and-pencil tests, electronic portfolios, and other forms of assessment. This is because, as subsequently described, the panels resemble “real life” business experiences.

Each Stillman student is required, as a condition of graduation, to participate in assessment, either during the spring of his/her sophomore year or in the fall of his/her senior year. Students are so notified of this requirement during their freshman year.<sup>25</sup> Students are then informed that participation in the assessment panels consists of working in teams on a case, presenting the answers to specific case questions to a group of business professionals from outside the University, and completing two individual assignments.

Then, generally during October of their sophomore year, about 60% of the sophomore class (about 140 students) are randomly selected to participate in sophomore assessment.<sup>26</sup> Those students not randomly selected to participate are notified just prior to the start of their senior year (generally, in August) that they must participate in senior assessment. In either case, the total group of participants is further broken down into random samples of teams of about five students each. Students are so notified of their selection, by regular mail and e-mail. In the letter, they are reminded that successful completion of assessment is a degree requirement, and, for sophomores, that they do not have a choice in deciding to postpone their participation in assessment until their senior year. At that time, they are also told to set aside specific dates and times on their calendars for

assessment, and when to expect their case materials for assessment and their full team assignments. Shortly thereafter, students receive their team assignments. Since these assignments are random, students may not share any classes with their teammates and, more often than not, they may never have met their fellow members. Students are told that their case materials for their team presentations will be posted on the School's Web site. In addition, they are reminded that a portion of the two hours allotted for assessment includes two individual assignments which they will have to complete. The sophomores' assessment panels take place the February following their October notification; seniors are assessed in November, after their August notification.

The team presentation cases that are selected for sophomores focus on issues in economics and legal studies, since students will already have completed this particular coursework as freshmen and first-semester sophomores. Students also will have completed their required coursework in oral communications, so they are expected to put forth a professional presentation, appropriately using technology where it adds value. Typically, two smaller cases are given, with associated questions. For the sophomores, one individual assignment focuses on applications from financial accounting, which is also a first-semester sophomore course, and the use of Excel. The second assignment requires that students prepare a one-page memo, providing evidence of their ability to construct a typical business communiqué. This demonstrates their mastery of two required courses in English.

For seniors, the case materials are complex, and, up to now, have been selected from the collection of *Harvard Business School* cases. Seniors are expected to demonstrate their mastery of a wider array of business disciplines, including finance, management, and marketing. The seniors' Excel assignment focuses on more complex ratio analyses and interpretations, and the written assignment is also more contemplative than the one assigned to the sophomores.

In preparation for their presentations at assessment, students are invited to workshops conducted by the Director of Undergraduate Assessment to learn more about how to maximize their performance. They are encouraged to come to these workshops with their fellow team members. The director posts a "Tip of the Week" for students to help them ready themselves. Faculty members, from both the Stillman School and the College of Arts and Sciences, have helped to guide students in preparing their presentations and have offered, as the Director of Undergraduate Assessment has done, to observe practice presentations. Beyond that, the director is available for informal help that may be requested. These requests generally have centered on working with team members who may not be pulling their weight or have otherwise removed themselves from the preparatory work. It is important to note that, despite the support provided to assist students with their preparations, assessment teams are expected

to manage the process on their own. Teams are given the autonomy to allocate work in whatever manner they choose, to select those students who will actually present the team's analysis to assessors, and to exclude team members who have not participated fully in the team's preparations.

### **Assessment Day**

The assessment panels are held either on a Friday evening or during Saturday, so that the participating students do not miss any of their regularly scheduled classes. On their assigned day, students report to their presentation rooms, typically dressed in business attire. Using appropriate technology, students deliver their presentations to a panel of two or three assessors. These assessors are business practitioners, both alumni and friends of the Stillman School. The use of outside assessors, who are business professionals, adds an incredible amount of realism, practicality, and what the School believes is constructive stress to the process. The assessors have been trained and receive extensive manuals detailing the proposed answers for the case questions that the students address. They also are given guidelines regarding the application questions designed to measure students' masteries of each of the five competencies. The assessors grade the students' performances on each of the competencies, using a scale ranging from "1" (poor) to "5" (excellent), and are also asked to provide written comments in support of each rating. The team's performance is evaluated as a unit, and students do not receive individual scores. However, assessors often cite specific students who either excelled or did poorly. Most assessors use University "loaner" laptop computers to enter their scores and comments on an electronic form.<sup>27</sup> While the School cannot truly compensate the assessors for their time and wisdom, it does offer them honoraria of \$200 per assessment session.

After observing and evaluating the students, the assessors proctor the students' completion of their individual work. In addition to the two individual assignments, the students each complete a survey regarding their views of the assessment process and their perceptions of the contributions made by their fellow team members in preparing the team presentations.

The Director of Undergraduate Assessment arranges for support personnel from the University's Division of Information Technology to be on site, in the event that technology in a presentation room malfunctions. In addition, the School coordinates with that office to ensure that no system maintenance work or upgrades take place during assessment weekends. In true Seton Hall tradition, refreshments are provided for the students, and breakfast, lunches, or dinners are prepared for the assessors.

### **Assessment Feedback**

After assessment concludes, the evaluations of each team's assessors are compiled. The assessors' ratings of competency mastery are averaged,



and then an overall score of either “pass” or “fail” is assigned to the team presentation portion of assessment. The assessors compile their evaluations independently, but, even so, high inter-rater reliability in their evaluations of a given team has been observed.

For the individual Excel and writing assignments, the Director of Undergraduate Assessment, and, more recently, the Stillman faculty members, have graded the individual assignments. Like the team presentations, these are graded on a “pass/fail” scale and are scored according to rubrics developed by the faculty.

Then, four to six weeks after the assessment panels, each student receives his or her team’s scores, the assessors’ written comments, and his/her scores on the individual components. The assessors’ written comments provide developmental insights for students, even when teams have passed assessment. Students also learn if they passed or failed either the quantitative or written component of the individual assignments. When students pass the team presentation component and the two individual components, they have successfully completed assessment and have fulfilled this degree requirement. The Registrar’s Office is so notified, and changes are made to students’ course audit reports to reflect this achievement.

If students fail the team presentation component, they are then required to participate in another assessment panel.<sup>28</sup> In rare cases, students have had to return to School even after they completed their coursework to fulfill this portion of their degree requirements. If students fail either or both of the individual components, they are encouraged to meet with the Director of Undergraduate Assessment for suggestions on how to improve their performance on their retake assignments. In addition, students who fail the writing assignment are advised to utilize Seton Hall University’s Writing Center, housed in the College of Arts and Sciences. The Writing Center offers several workshops and tutorials for students who need to improve their skills in this area. Likewise, students who fail the Excel/financial analysis assignment are encouraged to visit the University’s Technology Center to develop their mastery of Excel. Students are generally given 30 days to retake these portions. If they fail again (which has not happened) or they opt not to participate in the retake (which has happened), they are then assigned to the next assessment session for this work.

In Table 2 below, the trends on pass/fail rates are provided. All data reflect teams and students who successfully completed assessment when they were first assigned. Overall, by the scores the assessors have given the student teams, from the written assessors’ feedback to the student teams, from the assessors’ informal discussions with students, and from the students’ passing rates on their written components, the faculty conclude, generally, that the curriculum is meeting its goal of developing well-prepared business professionals moving to their first positions in their careers.

**Table 2**  
**Trends on Teams and Students who have**  
**Successfully Completed Assessment**

Assessment Panel	Number of Student Teams	Number of Students Assigned to Assessment	Number of Students Successfully Passing all Components of Assessment / %	Number of Students Failing the Team Presentations / %	Number of Students Failing One of More Components of the Individual Assignments / %
Sophomore 2/2000	14	66	42 / 64%	9 / 14%	15 / 23%
Sophomore 2/2001	15	75	44 / 59%	14 / 19%	17 / 23%
Senior 11/2001	24	132	109 / 83%	2 / 2%	21 / 16%
Sophomore 2/2002	16	85	54 / 64%	12 / 14%	19 / 22%
Senior 11/2002	24	136	106 / 78%	0 / 0%	30 / 22%
Sophomore 2/2003	19	115	75 / 65%	21 / 18%	19 / 17%
Senior 11/2003	37	225	176 / 78%	12 / 5%	37 / 16%
Sophomore 2/2004	24	138	102 / 74%	27 / 20%	9 / 7%
Senior 11/2004	28	158	65 / 41%	13 / 8%	80 / 51%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>1130</b>	<b>773 / 68%</b>	<b>110 / 10%</b>	<b>247 / 22%</b>
Source: Annual Reports of the Undergraduate Assessment Process					

### **Post-Assessment**

All seniors are required to take the international business capstone course, Global Business Colloquium. This course is offered once each year in the fall semester. In this course, students retake the pre-assessment vocabulary test, and they are expected to show far greater knowledge of the terms than before, since students have completed by now just about all their business core courses.<sup>29</sup> On average, seniors have been able to adequately define 10 of the 25 vocabulary words included in this test. The average pre-assessment figure for incoming freshman has been four. These figures have been fairly consistent over the past several years.

Overall, the assessment process is a well-conceived and robust learning experience. It is unique and, as subsequently discussed, has been a tremendous source of organizational learning and improvement for the School.

### **Closing the Loop: The Impacts of Undergraduate Assessment**

The impacts that the Stillman undergraduate assessment process have had on the Stillman educational experience can be divided into three categories. These are impacts on the assessment process itself, impacts on the curriculum, and unintended consequences of assessment. Each of these is discussed below.

## **Impacts on the Assessment Process**

Since the inception of assessment, and especially the assessment panels for sophomores and seniors, the process has been continuously and regularly modified. These changes have come about from input the different directors of undergraduate assessment have received from students, faculty, and assessors as well as from their own insights from the process. We describe several of those changes and their impacts in this subsection.

## **The Student Satisfaction Survey**

One of very first changes to the process was the addition of an annual student satisfaction survey, administered to juniors just as they completed the spring semester of their junior year. Shortly after the administration of the first sophomore assessment in February 2000, Stillman assessors wondered whether or not participation in assessment as sophomores changed for the better students' seriousness about their college work. Since only half the students actually were assessed, the School had a naturally occurring sample of assessed students and students who were not assessed to use in investigating this question.

A questionnaire was designed by the faculty, seeking to determine students' satisfaction with the development of the respective competencies and other aspects of academic life both within the Stillman School and, more broadly, at the University. In addition, the survey was designed to measure students' level of engagement in their studies through such questions as the amount of time they devote to their studies, whether or not they utilize the library's resources, the degree to which they visit the Career Center, and the number of out-of-class contacts they have with faculty members and advisors. In June 2001, the "rising senior" students were all sent a survey to their homes, and this has continued ever since.

The results of this survey, which has seen an impressive response rate of 60% to 70%, have typically been debriefed at what has become the School's Annual Teaching Workshop. The survey results have confirmed what Stillman assessors have measured—that students generally are most adept in the teamwork and technology competencies and less skilled in the area of critical thinking. The School was not able to measure any significant difference between assessed and not-yet-assessed students in their engagement of academic life. However, the survey has informed the School that Stillman students' satisfaction with their academic experience at the School is predominantly dependent on excellent faculty teaching and a strong sense of community within the School. As such, the School has invested resources into strengthening student clubs. These clubs have, in turn, held alumni-speaker events, community service projects, and specialized holiday parties. The School, at the dean's level, hosts an annual student and faculty dinner-dance. In addition, each department holds at least one department event each semester for students within its concentration area.

## **Support for the Assessors**

The rating form used by the assessors has been modified in response to their input. There are more indicators of desired performance on this form, and many of the indicators are specifically related to the content of the cases assigned to students. Case solutions provided to assessors now indicate what response elements constitute an “acceptable” answer, a “very good” answer, and an “excellent” answer. Furthermore, assessors now receive laptops, so that they can complete this form and their associated comments electronically. This has saved considerable time in compiling what were once their longhand comments, so that students can receive their feedback about assessment sooner.

## **Motivating and Engaging Students**

The School has increased the support for students as they prepare themselves for assessment. Workshops for the assessment panels were established from the very beginnings of the process, but the School now recommends much more strongly that students attend these. At a minimum, each student team is advised to have one person from that team attend a preparation session. Attendance records are maintained and, with these, the School has demonstrated that attendance at the workshop can improve students’ performance at assessment. In addition, faculty avail themselves to view students’ mock presentations.

For students who are experiencing difficulty with a member of their team, the director will make a special outreach to that student to investigate the matter and take corrective action. Students are also given the tools to deal with recalcitrant team members, and those decisions have proven to be an important reflective experience for them.<sup>30</sup> Recognizing that students have other important School obligations, which, to date, have related solely to the School’s student-athletes who must attend games, the School and the assessors have been flexible in rescheduling assessments to manage around the conflicts. Even in these cases, however, it has been the responsibility of the student-athletes to work with their assessment teams to get alternative dates that would work for all assessment team members.

The degree requirement of satisfactorily completing assessment is now recorded on each student’s course audit report, which is the standard document used for academic advising. So, students are reminded each semester of their assessment obligations. When students are notified of their selection for assessment panels, they are informed that their failure to participate in those panels will delay their graduation. So, students are made aware of the consequences if they, using their words, decide to “blow off” this assignment when they are selected.<sup>31</sup> For students who feel that the grade they received does not accurately reflect their work, the School has widened the University’s Academic Grievance Process to include assessment.<sup>32</sup>

Prizes of \$250 per student are given to the one sophomore team and one senior team that perform at the highest levels. These awards are presented at the School's Annual Integrity and Professionalism luncheon, where academic achievements are recognized. All students receive a small gift on assessment day. For sophomores, this has been a set of personalized business cards and a card holder. For seniors, the gift has been a set of luggage tags with a sewing kit. These small tokens have been appreciated by the students and have helped to underscore their maturation as business professionals at the School.

### **The Use of Blackboard**

Originally, when the first assessment panels were conducted, students were required to submit their individual Excel and writing assignments on 3.5" disks. Given the many advances in instructional technology in which the University has invested, coupled with the technology competency itself, students are now required to submit their assignments using a digital drop box in Blackboard. In addition, the Director of Undergraduate Assessment utilizes Blackboard to communicate with students, posting reminders and a "Tip of the Week." This has proven to be an extremely effective means of keeping students engaged in the assessment process.

### **Elimination of the Major Field Assessment Test**

Initially, the School participated in the Major Field Assessment Test (MFAT) for business education, along with its other assessment activities. However, after several iterations of the exam, the faculty decided that the MFAT was not an appropriate tool for measuring student learning from a Stillman education. The MFAT did not test competency acquisition, and it did not provide a realistic venue for applying the entirety of a student's studies to real business problems. Beyond that, because the MFAT was administered near the end of students' careers at the School, it was very difficult to isolate lapses, if any, in the curriculum. Since students are assessed either as sophomores or seniors, it has become easier to pinpoint where there may be deficiencies in the curriculum.

### **Grading Rubrics and Time Limits**

One of the most recent changes to the process has been the development and use of grading rubrics for the Excel and writing assignments. In an effort to ensure consistency in the grading process, the Stillman faculty created rubrics that were used for the first time during the November 2004 panels. The faculty then graded the assignments. At the same time, the faculty put into place strict time limits for the completion of the assignments. As can be seen in Table 1, the pass/fail rate for the individual components has changed dramatically, but the faculty members feel the rubrics were warranted, given the continued concerns related to

students' ability to communicate effectively in writing. The requirements set forth in the rubrics are now conveyed to students participating in assessment so that they fully understand the performance expectations for these assignments. Faculty members are now reflecting on whether the time limits should be extended, given the feedback from the assessors.

### **Impacts on the Stillman Curriculum**

Besides the changes in specific assessment activities, the School has also made several changes in its curriculum as a result of information and dialogue that originated from assessment. Examples of those changes are described below.

### **Communications Competency and the Individual Assignments**

Faculty grew concerned about students' preparedness for writing concise and logically crafted memos, as measured by the number of students failing the individual written assignment component of assessment. This concern was also discussed at great length at the School's Annual Teaching Workshop. Furthermore, alumni were continually expressing their concerns about the poor writing skills generally observed in their places of employment. From that, nearly 20 Stillman faculty participated in a year-long initiative on "writing across the curriculum." In this program, faculty from the Department of English led workshops for Stillman faculty on how they could increase the number and variety of writing assignments in business courses. At the same time, faculty in the School's Undergraduate Educational Policy Committee worked with their colleagues in the Department of English to design a business writing course. This course met with the approval of the Stillman faculty and has just been implemented as a requirement for the first time in the Spring 2005 semester. This particular course is now one of the mandatory communications courses that Stillman students must take.<sup>33</sup> It is recommended that this course be taken during students' freshman year or during the first semester of their sophomore year.

### **Core Curriculum Modifications**

Motivated by assessment data, the school has modified core courses in oral communications and management information systems. Greater emphasis has been placed on the effective use of PowerPoint and the optimal use of physical space in making presentations. The management information systems, accounting, and finance faculty have also considered better ways to develop students' expertise in Excel, and to apply that development to areas in accounting and finance. In addition, students are now guided to one of two specialized oral communications courses to complete their communications sequence. These are Persuasive Speaking and Group Discussion. With these tailored recommendations, the School hopes to see an improvement in the performance of students in both their oral presentations as well as in their written exercises.

## **The Freshman Seminar**

During academic year 2003-2004, faculty have worked to design the Freshman Seminar. This is a series of experiences that will acculturate students to the Stillman School and, more broadly, to a business education. In part, this experience will help students understand the high expectations that the School has for their performance within the School and in their future careers. The Seminar proposal is now being studied within the School's faculty governance committee. At the same time, the University is now in the process of developing a new University-wide core curriculum. This revision of the University's core may result in a modification in what the School hopes to do with its Seminar, so that development is part of the Stillman faculty's review of the Seminar.

## **Tighter Controls on Student Advising**

Because success at assessment depends upon the successful completion of specific coursework, the School has managed its model program for students in a very tight fashion. In the past, there were few controls on students bypassing prerequisites or "waiting until their senior year" to take a course. That no longer can happen. Otherwise, students will not be prepared for assessment and will disadvantage themselves and their teams. The poor sequencing of coursework also has the potential to give misleading information about the degree to which the School is meeting its educational goals.

## **Unintended Positive Benefits of Assessment**

With all new processes, there are unintended consequences that flow from implementation. The Stillman assessment process is no different. These unanticipated consequences are shared in this subsection.

## **Recruitment Benefits For Our Students**

While assessment was designed to demonstrate to prospective employers that our students were "job ready" upon graduation, assessment has also given our students the immediate opportunity to compete for positions. Several students, by virtue of their excellent performance at assessment, have received internships and other job opportunities that have been extended by assessors. Other students have been able to provide excellent evidence of teamwork and leadership skills by sharing their assessment experiences with prospective employers. Students have returned from job interviews, excited about their performance because of the animated discussions they were able to have with the hiring managers about assessment.

## **Observing Undergraduate Assessment by High School Students**

In 2003, the Stillman School signed an agreement with West Side

High School, in Newark, New Jersey. West Side is both the public high school for students in this particular section of Newark and the business and finance specialty high school for the entire city. West Side and the Stillman School fashioned the “Junior MBA Program.” Under this program, students at West Side follow a high school curriculum that is especially developed as a “business” track. In addition, these students come to the Stillman School and participate in several experiences here. These include participating in Stillman Open House events, attending Stillman School Integrity and Professionalism convocations, taking a Stillman freshman-level course, and being mentored by Stillman leadership students. In addition, all Junior MBA students are required to observe one team’s sophomore assessment panels and grade the Stillman students’ presentations as if the West Side students were assessors. Naturally, the evaluations by the West Side students do not factor into the grades of the Stillman students. Instead, these evaluations are used as a writing assignment for the high school students. In addition, the high school students debrief the performance of the Stillman students, commenting on both the substance and the style of the presentations. Thus, the high school students can readily see how some of the materials they are learning in high school are subsequently developed in college. The Junior MBA students also see how their older student colleagues dress, interact with outside assessors, and otherwise receive a most robust exposure to a rich learning experience. Obviously, the Stillman faculty never intended undergraduate assessment to be used in this fashion. Nevertheless, the assessment panels presented the School with an opportunity to help another population of students see how their education now can translate into their futures in college.

### **Engagement of Stillman Alumni**

Another unintended benefit of the design of the assessment process is how the use of external assessors has provided the School a terrific opportunity to further engage its alumni. Stillman alumni have enjoyed serving as assessors for the student panels, and, in particular, the School’s young alumni, both undergraduate students and MBA students, are thrilled to be able to give back to the School by giving their time as assessors. The external assessors also provide an additional source of insight into teaching and curriculum issues. Because many of these assessors represent firms that employ our students, they provide important feedback regarding areas where they would like to see further skill development.

### **Building Community Among Stillman Students**

Because students are randomly assigned to assessment teams, they are frequently working closely over an extended period of time with other students with whom they were not previously acquainted. Assessment can be a great bonding experience for students, and, as such, is another



opportunity for the School to increase the sense of community among its students, an attribute that student survey results have identified as being a significant predictor of satisfaction with the School.

### **The AACSB's New Accreditation Standards**

As the School sought to develop an assessment process that would give it a competitive advantage, the AACSB was in the midst of developing new standards for accreditation. While the School would like to assert that it was prescient on the new assurance of learning standards, the truth is these two initiatives intersected quite by accident. Nonetheless, the School has the good fortune to be well-positioned in undergraduate assessment, and its strides in this domain have helped tremendously to advance the School's reputation.

In all, the feedback loops from assessment have been expansive for the School. Indeed, the faculty have commented that there is even more information that can be mined from the many sources of data that come from assessment.

### **Reflections on Future Directions**

The Stillman undergraduate assessment process has been an excellent example of how an initiative can advance a School in a variety of ways. The process itself has been one that has modeled continuous improvement. Naturally, the School continues to reflect on how to keep the process vibrant and enriching for the School. Several areas present new opportunities for enhancing the educational experience of our students.

### **Acceptable Pass/Fail Rates**

From the very beginning of the assessment process, the faculty did not specify the pass/fail rate among student teams that would affirm to the School that the curriculum was meeting its objectives. Likewise, there were no standards specified on the acceptable pass/fail rates for the individual components. Finally, the Stillman faculty have never addressed students' weak performance on the competency vocabulary post-assessment test. Enough data has now been accumulated over time to begin to set performance benchmarks that should signal the degree to which the curriculum is meeting its objectives.

### **Change Management as a Competency**

Assessors have expressed concern over the degree to which they can observe students' mastery of this competency. On an individual level, they can detect students' flexibility in altering presentations according to questions posed by assessors. But, on a macro level, assessors do not feel they have adequate information on how students can manage change in organizations. At the same time, faculty have begun to explore whether or not the change management competency should be replaced with a competency

geared to students' "entrepreneurial spirit." This discussion is informed by the School's growing expertise in entrepreneurship. So, over the next year or so, the competency of change management may be modified or eliminated.

### **The Scoring of Team's Performance**

In the future, teams' performance will be scored using intervals of five-tenths of a point. This system will further differentiate superior, above average, average, and unacceptable performance by teams.

### **Assessment as a One Credit Course**

Presently, assessment is a degree requirement, but it is not credit-bearing. Students remark that they spend a significant amount of time preparing for assessment, but their efforts do not translate into a grade that is reflected in their grade point average. Several faculty members believe that assessment should not be credit-bearing, as that change would translate into a tuition fee, and may increase the total number of credits needed for graduation at the same time the University is trying to reduce the total credits required to earn an undergraduate degree. Some faculty members have defended the appropriateness of giving students important learning opportunities that have no grade point average impact, since, as students move into their professional careers, the grade point average will not be the motivator for high intrinsic work standards. In any case, this is a question that will require additional faculty discussion.

### **Stillman Students' Observations**

Now that the Stillman School has seen the positive impacts that have been achieved when the West Side High School students have observed assessment, the School is contemplating doing something similar for its own freshman students. Perhaps the School will tape students' performances, so that these presentations can be viewed by our students. In this way, freshmen can better understand how to prepare themselves for assessment. It also may impress upon our upperclassmen how they can mentor underclassmen by their excellent examples.

### **Panel Presentations from our Assessed Students**

The School is contemplating inviting its former students to participate in a panel presentation on assessment. In this way, the School can understand whether there are any broader lessons students obtained from assessment now that our graduates have embarked on their professional careers. This input may help the School identify additional factors that should be included in the assessment panels. It also may provide guidance to the School in further strengthening its curriculum, content, and delivery.

### **The New Writing Component of the SATs**

Students who apply to colleges requiring the SAT will now be obliged to provide a writing sample. This writing sample, composed by the student

in a 25-minute period, may provide the School an excellent baseline report on the student's writing skills before he/she comes to the Stillman School. From there, the School may require further modifications in the coursework of the different required writing courses.

### **Conclusion**

The Stillman School is quite proud of its work in strengthening its undergraduate curriculum by virtue of its unique undergraduate assessment process. This process has provided input into improving every facet of the undergraduate experience for the Stillman student. It has caused the faculty to become reflective about their work and the objectives of the curriculum. It has helped increase the important linkages between the School and its alumni and the School and its business partners. In all, the process has helped the School advance its national reputation as an excellent undergraduate business program, and, indeed, one of the best business programs within a Catholic university in the United States.

### **Endnotes**

- 25 During Freshman Orientation, typically held during June prior to the students' enrollment into the Stillman School, students first learn about assessment. Then, during their freshman year, students are required to attend one of the information sessions about assessment. They receive the manual *Competency Assessment for Undergraduate Business Students and Key Vocabulary Terms for the Competencies*. As students transfer to the Stillman School, they likewise receive this manual.
- 26 Originally, when the first sophomore assessment panels were conducted, the School created a random sample of half of the sophomore class. However, it found that the size of a given class does increase with transfer students. This, in turn, increased the number of senior students who had to be scheduled for assessment, and created several logistical challenges. So, by overdrawing the sophomore sample, the School was able to compensate for this.
- 27 Initially, these forms were paper rating sheets. Over time, the forms have been modified, with greater clarity on how to evaluate, say, communications or teamwork. Now, assessors receive laptops on assessment day and complete their evaluations electronically.
- 28 As noted earlier, November is set aside for senior assessment. If a senior team does not pass its team component, those students are reassigned to a team for February, when sophomore assessment takes place. Usually, there are at least 15 to 20 additional seniors who need to be assessed then, either because of their late transfer into the Stillman School or other emergencies that surfaced on assessment day. While the senior "retakes" happen during sophomore assessment, the seniors are nevertheless given case materials appropriate to seniors. Sophomores who fail are reassigned when they become seniors.
- 29 It is possible that students still have to complete Business Policy, but, insofar as the vocabulary of the competencies is concerned, the students will have been exposed to all of these terms as part of their coursework already.

- 30 In several cases, students have “fired” their team members. In at least two instances, students who absented themselves for all the preparatory work have “shown up” for assessment, seeking to participate in the presentation. As difficult as it has been, the teams have stepped up to this issue, advising the remiss students that there was no work for them. In these situations, the remaining teammates have discussed how difficult these decisions were, but felt that, as managers, they were acting appropriately and professionally.
- 31 During the course of the assessment process, of the 110 students who failed assessment, 70 of these (64%) failed because they chose to remove themselves totally from the process.
- 32 Of the 1130 students who have participated in assessment, there have been only four instances of cases where students wanted to challenge the grades they received. Once these students completed the preliminary steps of the process, namely a discussion with the Director of Undergraduate Assessment and then the associate dean, these cases were dropped by the students.
- 33 Heretofore, as part of the new core, students had the freedom to select any two additional communications electives beyond the required “Oral Communications” course. Now, that latitude had been decreased, given the evidence from assessment that students were not fully prepared to handle ordinary business communications solely from their two required English courses.

### **Author(s) Bio**

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*Effective communication skills is the most popular learning goal for undergraduate programs of business. Cal State Fullerton defined their expectations that their graduates would “Create, proofread, edit, and revise business documents that are clear, courteous, concise yet complete, and correct; i.e., workplace acceptable.” Guided by Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives, as well as the communication and assessment literature, CSUF faculty developed an original, comprehensive, value-added, direct assessment of students’ communication skills that included both online and course-embedded assessments.*

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **TAKING THE TIME TO DO IT RIGHT: A COMPREHENSIVE, VALUE-ADDED APPROACH FOR ASSESSING WRITING SKILLS**

**Katrin R. Harich**

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**California State University, Fullerton, College of  
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#### **Background, Mission, and Goals**

The College’s Mission and Goals Statement (MGS) was developed with the active involvement and participation of all College stakeholders — students, faculty, administrative personnel and members of the external community. It is considered a living document, subject to periodic review and revision. The document drives strategic planning and resource allocation decisions. It is also the motivating force for creative expansions of programs, including curricular innovations, faculty recruitment and development, instructional enhancement, and community outreach. By providing clear areas of focus, the MGS forms a solid operational basis for College decision making.

#### **Mission and Goals Statement**

The College of Business and Economics is committed to delivering high-quality, accessible, and affordable undergraduate and graduate programs to a diverse student population. The College also serves the business needs of the community by providing research, consulting, continuing education, and training programs. The complete MGS is described in Table 1.

As detailed in Table 1, the College’s MGS describes its desired

**Table 1**  
**Mission and Goals Statement**

College of Business and Economics  
Cal State Fullerton

The College of Business and Economics is committed to delivering high-quality, accessible, and affordable undergraduate and graduate programs to a diverse student population. The College also serves the business needs of the community by providing research, consulting, continuing education, and training programs.

In pursuit of its mission, the College:

1. Offers programs that prepare undergraduate and graduate business students for careers and professional advancement by developing:
  - a. Critical thinking, analytical and problem-solving skills
  - b. Interpersonal, teamwork, leadership and communication skills
  - c. Functional business knowledge
  - d. Multicultural understanding
  - e. Technology skills
  - f. Awareness of the global economy and business environment
2. Provides its current and future students:
  - a. Outreach and recruiting programs
  - b. Career planning, internship, and placement assistance
  - c. Student support services and extracurricular activities
  - d. Off-site and distance-learning program access
3. Attracts, develops, and retains highly qualified, diverse faculty by encouraging and rewarding:
  - a. Teaching excellence and innovative instructional development
  - b. Active participation in applied and basic research
  - c. Involvement in professional activities and university service
4. Supports high-quality teaching, learning, and research by maintaining:
  - a. An assessment program
  - b. An up-to-date technology infrastructure
  - c. An attractive and well-equipped instructional environment
  - d. Corporate and individual fundraising
5. Promotes alumni and business involvement through:
  - a. Outreach events
  - b. Centers and institutes
  - c. Interaction with College alumni and business practitioners

relationships and interactions with a variety of constituencies, including undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, alumni and the business community. The College's Assessment Plan specifies assessment projects for all of these constituencies. The following sections detail the College's approach to assessment and its assessment activities to date.

### **Defining Assessment**

Continuous improvement should be based on ongoing assessment activities that provide evidence of performance and guidelines for future actions. The *California State University, Fullerton [CSUF] Mission and Goals* require that we "assess student learning collegially and continually use the evidence to improve programs" as part of our commitment to "ensure student learning." The goal reinforces the *California State University Cornerstones Implementation Plan* requiring that our "university will periodically collect, analyze, and evaluate evidence of the extent to which its students are achieving the learning outcomes to which it is publicly committed" (Principle 1c).

While assessment activities in the broadest sense have been conducted in the college for decades, it is not until more recently that the need for an integrated approach and the establishment of more formal assessment procedures and processes was recognized by business colleges and accrediting bodies. In the past six years, accountability based on outcome measures has become an increasingly prominent requirement in the continuous improvement processes at institutions of higher learning. AACSB International has been a driving force in this movement, which is ultimately evidenced in the new AACSB standards for accreditation maintenance.

Recognizing this need for a formalized, systematic, and integrated approach to assessment, the College of Business and Economics at Cal State Fullerton established an *ad hoc* assessment committee in the Fall 1999 semester. The charge for this *ad hoc* committee was to develop a formal process for the college's assessment activities. In response, the *ad hoc* committee presented to the college Senate a proposal to create a standing assessment committee. Its membership and functions were specified in the proposal. The college Senate approved the proposed standing Assessment Committee at its March 28, 2000 meeting. The college's Assessment Committee is concerned with all matters related to assessment activities at the program level. These activities include direct and indirect assessment measures. Direct measures are used to gauge student learning in written and oral communication, technology skills, functional knowledge, and other core competencies. Indirect measures are used to determine overall satisfaction with the program, advising services, and career development.

The Assessment Committee developed an assessment plan for the college that was approved in November 2000 by the college Senate. This assessment plan is based on the College's MGS and educational objectives.

It devises assessment strategies for each of the five main objectives expressed in the MGS. While a detailed description of each objective can be found in Table 1, a summary is listed below.

The College of Business and Economics:

1. Offers programs that prepare undergraduate and graduate business students for careers and professional advancement.
2. Provides its current and future students quality support services to enhance academic programs.
3. Attracts, develops, and retains highly qualified, diverse faculty.
4. Supports high-quality teaching, learning, and research.
5. Promotes alumni and business involvement.

The specific functions of the Assessment Committee are:

1. Develop a long-range assessment plan for the college for approval by the college Senate, including assessment objectives, timelines, implementation criteria, assessment tools, and a sequencing of assessment efforts.
2. Provide continuing review of college assessment activities and make recommendations for changes in assessment policies and procedures.
3. Insure that assessment results are directed to the Instruction Committee, Graduate Committee and/or departments, as appropriate.
4. Provide a written annual report to the college Senate by the last regular meeting of the academic year.

Membership consists of one faculty representative per department and one faculty representative from the Business Communication program. Given the need to develop and implement a programmatic written communication assessment program, however, two Business Communication lecturers serve on the committee at the present time. Members are appointed by the department chairs.

When the Assessment Committee commenced its work, the college and its faculty members had little prior exposure to formalized assessment processes and procedures. As mentioned earlier, continuous improvement had been practiced for years—but changes and improvements were implemented based on the input of experienced faculty members via committee participation, and via informal feedback from students and the business community. A “culture” of assessment had to be built from “the bottom up.” To gain faculty buy-in and trust was a priority in the process. Faculty were involved at multiple levels in the design and implementation of the direct measures used to assess student performance at the program



level. The Associate Dean for Administration was the chair and the Associate Dean for Academic Programs served as the Secretary of the Assessment Committee. They met with the college Senate, department chairs, and faculty to explain the purpose and processes involved in assessment making it clear that assessment of student learning is separate from the evaluation of teaching. In addition, university-level recognition and college-funded release time was given to faculty members who led the initial assessment initiatives.

The college now has an infrastructure in place for conducting assessment activities. Assessment activities and their importance have been communicated to the departments through department representatives on the Assessment Committee. Faculty participation and interest have increased greatly. The college's assessment efforts were commended by AACSB reviewers during their 2003 maintenance visit. This recognition helped solidify faculty members' perception that assessment is an integral part of authentic teaching and learning. To further integrate assessment into programmatic development, representatives of the Assessment Committee meet twice a semester with the college's Instruction and Graduate committees to discuss learning objectives, assessment, outcomes, and ways to implement change where needed.

The college has revived its Assessment Center and developed and pre-tested in-house methodologies for the assessment of a variety of core competencies, including written communication skills, oral presentation skills, and technology skills. Individual faculty members' expertise contributes greatly to the development of assessment methods. Faculty members take pride in a "home grown," bottom-up, and innovative approach to assessing student learning.

The following section presents a brief description of assessment activities in the college at the undergraduate level. A summary of these efforts can be found in Table 2.

### **Assessment Activities – Undergraduate Students**

Because approximately 95 percent of the college's student enrollment is represented by undergraduate programs, the Assessment Committee chose to give assessment activities in this category the highest priority. The college's MGS and its educational objectives specify a set of competencies to be developed in its undergraduate students. In assessing these student competencies, the Assessment Committee chose a value-added approach, where the impact of the program is measured by comparing the performance of incoming students to that of outgoing students rather than by only comparing the performance of outgoing students to national averages (if/when available). Skills of incoming students (freshmen and transfer students) are compared to skills of graduating students.

Since the inception of the college's Assessment Committee, the following competencies have been assessed:

**Table 2**  
**Business Administration, B.A.**  
**Comprehensive List of Assessment Activity to Date (January 2005)**

<b>Learning Objectives - Program Quality</b>	<b>Direct Measures</b>	<b>Indirect Measures</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Sample / Total</b>
Functional Business Knowledge (ETS) (core course knowledge, communication skills, critical thinking skills, ethics & social responsibility, complex decision-making skills, interpersonal and leadership skills, technology/computer skills, global perspective, and cross-functional perspective) Pre- and Post-test	X		Spring 01, 03, 05 (Biennial)	Sample (incoming freshmen, transfer students, graduating students)
Written Communication Skills Pre- and Post-tests Multiple-choice test (knowledge) Written case assignment (skills)	X		Spring 03 (Biennial)	Sample (incoming freshmen, graduating students)
Oral Communication Skills Self-assessments Interviews	X		02, 03, 04 (Semi-annual)	Sample (juniors and seniors)
Technology Skills (Excel) Self-assessments Skill tests	X		Spring 03 (Biennial)	Sample
Graduating Senior Surveys In-depth survey focusing on all aspects of the College Sample survey - job placement		X	Annual	Total (seniors) Sample (graduating students)
Advising Services		X	Bi -Annual	Total student body
Long-term Career Growth		X	Biennial 3, 5, 10 years after graduation	Alumni base

1. Functional business knowledge
2. Written communication skills
3. Oral communication skills
4. Information technology skills

Functional business knowledge was assessed via the ETS Field Test in Business in Spring 2001 and Spring 2003. Written communication skills were assessed by means of a pilot study in Fall 2001 and a follow-up study in Spring 2003. Oral communication skills assessment was conducted in an assessment center approach in Spring 2002, as a pilot. A second study was conducted in Fall 2003. Information technology skills were assessed in a pilot study in Summer 2003.

In addition, undergraduate students' perceptions of the college's Advising Center (2000, 2002) were assessed. Another assessment project was conducted to assess undergraduate students' work experience (2002). The goal of the latter project was to determine the extent and quality of our current students' work experience and to assist us in gauging the need for expanded internship offerings.

Along with the BA degree in Business Administration, Cal State Fullerton's College of Business and Economics also offers an MBA program. Its related assessment activities are highlighted below.

### **Assessment Activities – Graduate Students**

As part of its multi-year assessment plan, the college has recently started to assess its MBA students. As an initial step, the Assessment Committee conducted a pilot study in which 40 graduating MBA students were asked to answer questions as part of their terminal paper requirement in the graduate capstone course, where students complete a consulting project for a local business.

The questions focused on the course(s) that students found to be most useful in completing their consulting assignment, and on how the learning that they achieved in the program will help them in the future. Students were also asked about any topics/content areas or skills that were not covered or sufficiently included in the program.

Data on the graduate students' perceptions of the college's Advising Center was gathered in 2002, and further surveys are planned for every other year. We have also begun to collect data on the career planning and placement needs of graduate students. Toward this end, a survey of new graduate students during a student orientation session was conducted in August 2003.

The college's assessment activities are not only program based. Assessment of alumni satisfaction and community outreach are also assessed in a systematic fashion. The following sections detail the activities in each area.

### **Assessment Activities – Alumni**

Beginning in 2000, the college has been conducting annual satisfaction surveys by mailing questionnaires to all its graduates at the undergraduate level. The issues covered in these surveys included student satisfaction with the time to degree, skills development, services provided by the college and the university, and courses.

During the Spring 1992 and 2002 semesters, the college sent a questionnaires to all alumni in the database regarding the influence their education had on their professional success. In 1992, 19,000 graduates between 1959 and 1992 were surveyed, with 4,400 responding. Approximately 38,878 degree recipients from 1959 to 2002 were surveyed in the 2002 study, with 2,737 alumni responding.

The results of the questionnaires indicate that the college educational experience has had a positive professional influence on its graduates. Orange County businesses and local offices of Fortune 500 companies hire significant numbers of the college's graduates. Many former students have attained executive status in large companies. Continuing education is reflected in the increase in the number of graduates who pursue additional certificates and advanced degrees.

### **Assessment Activities – Business Community**

As reflected in the college's MGS, the involvement of the business community is critical for its success. Toward this end, we have assessed the perceptions of representatives from the business community of various college events. We have also conducted a pilot study to gauge employers' perceptions of the college's graduates.

As noted earlier in this chapter, assessment of learning outcomes is not sufficient. Change is required in some areas as a result of assessment activities. Continuous improvement requires adjustments be made to curriculum and programs to meet the needs of the study body and other stakeholder groups as noted in the college's MGS.

### **Resources and Responsibilities for Assessment**

As stated earlier in this chapter, the Assessment Committee is concerned with all matters related to assessment activities at the program level within the college. It is not responsible for implementing prospective changes from assessment results. Rather, assessment results are shared with the Instruction and Graduate committees, along with the college Senate, department chairs, and the dean. Curricular changes are made through the Senate and Instruction and Graduate committees. Changes in student advisement, career development, and other student services are administered through the dean's office.

Resources, both financial and in-kind, are provided to assessment through the college for faculty release time (one course per semester) for

the director of the college-based Assessment Center. The center also employs two graduate assistants on a part-time basis. The assistants help acclimate the students to the various assessment activities. They explain the exercises and help them to feel comfortable with the process. Their approach with the students helps give the participants a sense of achievement based on their contribution to the program. The assistants also help with assessment test administration, data analysis, report writing, database management, and other administrative tasks.

Faculty release time (one class per semester) is also granted to the coordinator of the written communication assessment. As stated earlier, the Assistant Dean, Administration chairs the Assessment Committee and oversees all college-based assessment activities. The college also covers the costs of the functional knowledge tests and all administrative costs associated with assessment.

### **Best Practice**

Our Best Practice is our assessment of written communication skills and knowledge at the program level.<sup>34</sup> Based on the College's MGS and its learning objectives, the Business Communication faculty developed the following core competency statement:

Competent business writers will:

- a. Create, proofread, edit, and revise business documents — in response to short information-based situations — that are clear, courteous, concise yet complete, and correct, i.e., workplace acceptable.
- b. Compose, revise and edit business documents —in response to topical case studies—that are informative, well organized, logical, and persuasive, i.e., professional in form and content.

### **Assessment Methodology**

At the request of the Dean of the College and under the direction of the chair of the Assessment Committee, the Written Communication Assessment Coordinator organized and coordinated an assessment project to administer a multifaceted assessment of students' ability to write, proofread, edit, and revise business documents that would appeal to a target audience. The project included an online diagnostic assessment and an in-class writing in response to a prompt. The goal was to design entry and exit tests that would offer reliable assessment of our BUAD 201 (Business Writing) and MGMT 449 (Strategic Management/Capstone) students' skills.

### Specialized Diagnostic Assessment—Online, Multiple-Choice Exam

The purpose of this examination was to develop and pilot-test an online diagnostic assessment examination that utilized Course Info/Blackboard technology. The test evaluated the students' entry/exit skills in the following areas: content, literacy, audience, strategy, and style. A team of Business Communication faculty members worked throughout the Fall 2002 semester to develop the exam. Five meetings were needed to discuss measurement and evaluation research, testing, methodology, and the exam drafts. The published research used to develop the exams is noted at the end of this chapter under references.

In order to design the online component of the diagnostic exam,<sup>35</sup> each team member composed 15 questions. As a group, the team members reviewed the test questions and selected 35 test items to be included in the first draft. After a final review, 25 questions were selected for the official assessment exam. The selection criteria were based upon the student learning outcomes required by the Business Communication Program. The methodology was derived from measurement and evaluation texts (Downie, 1967; Gronlund, 1985) and from the "Test Blueprint" recommended in the *Assessment Workbook: Ball State University, Office of Academic Assessment & Institutional Research* (available at [www.bsu.edu/web/assessment/resources.htm](http://www.bsu.edu/web/assessment/resources.htm). Click on "Resources" and "Assessment Workbook"). We reduced 36 questions to 25 and balanced the test across the content and process levels (knowledge, comprehension, and application). The topics and level of difficulty were further developed, and the breakdown of each criterion and the number of questions related to each area is illustrated in Table 3 below.

**Table 3**  
**Test Blueprint**

#### Question Descriptions and Number of Each Type of Question

PROCESS	TOPIC				
	Content	Literacy	Audience	Strategy	Style
Knowledge	1	3	2	2	1
Comprehension	2	1	1	0	2
Application	2	1	2	3	2

By using this blueprint, the link between each test question and the evaluation criteria designed to measure mastery of the core competencies could be established.

To further explain the criteria used to develop and evaluate questions, definitions for each topic category are provided in Table 4. The term "CLASS"

is the acronym used to define the topic categories and is based on the compilation of the first letter of each word used to label each topic category.

**Table 4**  
**Description of Skills Needed for each Topic Category - (CLASS)**

Term	Descriptions
Content	Understands all elements of situation, develops and supports ideas using well-chosen examples, and provides creative details.
Literacy	Understands and applies appropriate grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation, paragraph and sentence structure rules.
Audience	Addresses reader's questions and / or objections and provides reader with all needed information.
Strategy	Adopts strategy to achieve desired outcome, clearly defines purpose and uses logical and / or emotional appeal effectively, and creates goodwill.
Style	Demonstrates a sophisticated grasp of language, writes in a fluid manner using varied syntax and vocabulary, uses original language, and chooses the appropriate message format to aid in reader understanding.

Students' accomplishment of these cognitive behaviors at multiple levels of proficiency was assumed to correlate with their achievement of our core competencies. These skills are embedded in the student's ability to "create, proofread, edit, and revise business documents."

The terms used to define levels of difficulty were adapted from Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Although there are six levels to Bloom's taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), only the first three levels were included in the online, multiple-choice assessment test. The definitions of each term are outlined in Table 5.

The behaviors which can be measured in the multiple-choice test are limited to the student's recognition of correct syntax and grammar, the comprehension of business-writing strategies, and the application of those strategies in the selection of the best writing sample offered among several options.

**Table 5**  
**Description of Levels of Difficulty**  
**Tested in the Online Assessment**

Process Level	Cognitive Behaviors Related to CLASS Evaluation Criteria
(1) Knowledge	Recall facts or concepts
(2) Comprehension	Interpret or compare / contrast
(3) Application	Apply knowledge to new situations or to solve problems

Table 6 provides examples of questions that were developed by the committee but were not selected for the online exam.

Each question was identified by the topic (grading criteria) and process

**Table 6**  
**Sample Questions with Topic and Process Levels Indicated**

Topic	Level	Question
Content	2 (Comprehension)	<p>Read the following paragraph carefully. (1) On May 1 2002, I placed an order for 35 HP LaserJet VR printers with fax and scanner features. (2) However, on May 15, our shipping and receiving "department accepted Bill of Landing #432 from Continental Movers. (3) Unpacking the boxes, we discovered that we had received 35 HP LaserJet IIP lower-capacity printers without scanning and fax capabilities. (4) This product does not meet the specifications stated in our purchase order (#45098-02) or in your invoice (#V435).</p> <p>Identify the topic sentence of the paragraph.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence #1</li> <li>sentence #2</li> <li>sentence #3</li> <li><b>sentence #4</b></li> </ol>
Literacy	1 (Knowledge)	<p>A document that has perfect spelling and is grammatically error-free is</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>expected in the business community</b></li> <li>not as important as the information it contains</li> <li>unusual in business communications</li> <li>unimportant</li> </ol>
Audience	2 (Comprehension)	<p>"You will be pleased to know that you received a credit to your account" is an example of</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>obsequious and subservient writing</li> <li>rudeness and terseness because "you" is used</li> <li>unacceptable overuse of passive voice</li> <li>the so-called you view or you attitude</li> </ol>
Strategy	3 (Application)	<p>Select the best arrangement of sentences to create an indirect sales message.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For only \$30 a month, you can feed a starving child.</li> <li>Imagine being hungry, and then imagine watching your children starve.</li> <li>With all the benefits and luxuries we enjoy each day, it's easy to forget how others suffer.</li> <li>Then imagine how good you'll feel once you've helped a child.</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1, 2, 3, 4</li> <li>3, 2, 1, 4</li> <li><b>2, 4, 3, 1</b></li> <li>2, 3, 1, 4</li> </ol>
Style	2 (Comprehension)	<p>Which sentence is condensed?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There will be a meeting on January 2.</li> <li><b>Please attend the meeting on January 2</b></li> <li>I want you to attend the meeting on January 2.</li> <li>I would appreciate your attendance at the meeting.</li> </ol>



(level of proficiency) and quantified for data collection that could be cross-referenced with the in-class writing sample (Part 2 of the assessment).

**Value-Added Assessment—In-Class Writing Sample**

An entry-exit assessment of writing in response to a prompt was used to gauge progress in case analysis, critical thinking, problem-solving and written communication skills from entry into the CSUF business program to exit. The prompt (case) was administered to 89 BUAD 201 (Business Writing) students and 94 MGMT 449 (Strategic Management/ Capstone) students.

The prompt objective was to persuade supervisors to behave professionally in monitoring employee e-mail (ethics, persuasion, and internal communications issues). Assessed student outcomes included:

- Reading and identifying case elements necessary to produce an objective, thoughtful memo outlining e-mail usage and monitoring policies.
- Demonstrating ability to properly assess professional behaviors at both the supervisory and subordinate levels.
- Writing a memo that clearly defined appropriate e-mail usage and monitoring behavior, guidelines related to this behavior, and the reasons to support the guidelines.
- Preparing a complete, concise, and properly formatted business document.

The case responses were assessed based on content development, literacy skills, audience considerations, strategy development, writing style and document formatting issues. Table 7 provides descriptions of each assessment point.

**Table 7  
Topic Descriptions (CLASS)**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
<b>1 - Content</b>	Understands all elements of situation and recognizes how to develop and support ideas using well-chosen examples.
<b>2 - Literacy</b>	Understands and applies English grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation, and paragraph and sentence structure.
<b>3 - Audience</b>	Addresses reader's questions and / or objections.
<b>4 - Strategy</b>	Adopts strategy to achieve desired outcome, clearly defines purpose and uses logical and / or emotional appeal effectively.
<b>5 - Style</b>	Demonstrates a sophisticated grasp of language, uses original language, and chooses the appropriate message format to aid in reader understanding. Document is pleasing to the eye.

In the in-class writing assessment, the student's accomplishment of these cognitive behaviors at multiple levels of proficiency was assumed to correlate with the student's achievement of the "workplace acceptable" product that is "professional in form and content" as defined in our core competencies.

### Timeline

The assessment plan required one academic year to plan and implement. Table 8 provides the required action points assigned to each semester.

**Table 8**  
**Assessment Plan Timeline**

<b>SEMESTER</b>	<b>Action Item</b>
Fall 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design entry-exit diagnostic assessment (multiple-choice online exam)</li> <li>• Create a prompt that will require a problem-solving response (writing assignment)</li> <li>• Submit assessment exams to Assessment Committee for approval</li> <li>• Submit assessment plan for review by the Institutional Review Board, Office of Contracts and Grants</li> </ul>
Spring 2003	<p><b>Online Diagnostic Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Configure two Blackboard Web sites for online assessment: one site to collect entry data, one site to collect exit data</li> <li>• Administer the online entry exam in Business Writing classes to approximately 100 students</li> <li>• Administer the online exit exam in Management classes to approximately 100 students</li> <li>• Evaluate the outcome of the exam and the feasibility of using this technology on a larger scale</li> </ul> <p><b>Value-Added Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer the exam in Business Writing classes, 100 students maximum</li> <li>• Administer the online exit exam in Management classes to approximately 100 students</li> <li>• Score the writing samples; Business Writing faculty who volunteer will grade the documents; Grading will be blind</li> <li>• Receive and tabulate entry/exit data</li> <li>• Write follow-up report</li> </ul>

During the planning stages, the timeline appeared to be quite generous; in retrospect, the deadlines were difficult to meet. Our goals were accomplished only because the Business Communication program already had extensive experience with entry/exit assessment at the department level and because of the department chair's leadership. This program-level assessment was a logical extension of that process.

### Costs

Along with the cost of release time, costs included labor costs of \$2,000 for faculty involvement in the exam development and grading and \$50 for copying costs.

### Feedback and Reflection

The online assessment offered students immediate feedback

concerning their overall achievement of business-writing outcomes. Each student was also able to see this outcome in relation to the overall average achieved by other students. Feedback for the student is an essential part of any assessment endeavor, and students expressed great satisfaction in receiving immediate results.

Faculty members and administrators were able to evaluate specific outcomes as well as gain a global view of the student’s writing skills. This balanced view helped to “close the loop” by offering recommendations for improving student learning by working with faculty in other departments to develop effective written assignments or providing evidence for praising their significant achievements.

Overall, the exit scores increase by about one grade level over entry scores, as indicated in Tables 9 and 10. Please note that the grading scales for the assessment differ. To expedite the rubric grading, a 0-4 scale was used. The Blackboard testing used a 100-point scale.

**Table 9  
Online Assessment of Writing Knowledge  
Entry/Exit Averages**

Type of Assessment	Overall	Content	Literacy	Audience	Strategy	Style
Entry	52.35	48.6	47.8	62.6	55.2	47.4
Scale	0-100					
Population	79					
Exit	63.69	58.8	66.6	70.8	69.8	52.4
Scale	0-100					
Population	89					
<b>Delta</b>	<b>11.33</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>5</b>

**Table 10  
In-Class Assessment of Writing**

Type of Assessment	Overall	Content	Literacy	Audience	Strategy	Style
Entry	1.32	1.28	1.56	1.32	1.22	1.23
Scale	0-4					
Population	89					
Exit	2.08	2.08	2.08	2.19	2.11	1.92
Scale	0-4					
Population	94					
<b>Delta</b>	<b>.75</b>	<b>.80</b>	<b>.51</b>	<b>.87</b>	<b>.89</b>	<b>.69</b>

According to the online test results that appear in Table 9, students made their greatest gains in their ability to recognize effective writing and appropriate strategic positioning in a writing sample. Comprehension of the test questions and answers increased, indicating an improved understanding of business practices. These results signal their achievement of our core competencies at a basic level: “proofread, edit, and revise business documents.”

Based upon the multiple-choice questions, the students’ appreciation of the interests of the audience, as well as the nuances of style, received limited gains. This may, in part, be due to the limitations of multiple-choice testing which requires the students to assess audience and style samples in isolation, outside of a specific business context or subject position. The student’s view of the correct answer may be contingent upon the student’s major. Finance and Accounting majors may assume that formal discourse is preferable for their informed audience of auditors and stockholders. Marketing majors may assume that sales discourse is more effective for their purposes. In future testing, qualitative measures to determine the students major may be needed to evaluate whether the multiplicity of audience and style directives, implicit in business disciplines, is impacting the validity of the multiple-choice test.

The in-class writing data, presented in Table 10, support the results in the strategy area. Strategic thinking, evident in the students’ writing, demonstrates the achievement of the most challenging behavioral objectives in Bloom’s taxonomy tested in the college: synthesis and evaluation. These abilities are crucial to the success of every business person; they signal that our globally aware and diverse students are ready for the most challenging business problems.

The “audience” area, which received the lowest gains in the multiple-choice test, was a strong area in the in-class writing. For this assessment, the students were given a subject position and a business situation. Under these conditions, the writing required a response at the most challenging levels of proficiency (analysis, synthesis and judgement). By cross-referencing the data from the two assessments (multiple-choice test and in-class writing), the discrepancy among the results could call us to question the validity of the multiple-choice questions in this category.

In terms of content, audience, and strategy areas of the in-class writing, improvements were made in the production of “workplace acceptable,” “business documents...that are informative, well organized, logical, and persuasive” — the deliverables indicated in our core competencies.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of this assessment, the college concluded that improvements are needed in the business writing skills at the exit level, now at a “C” level. Given the high expectations as defined by the Business

Communication Program's grading criteria, the C level means the document is "ready to mail subject to minor revisions." Business Writing faculty are partnering with faculty in other departments (Economics, Accounting, and Marketing, to date) to develop a program for improving written communication skills by incorporating written assignments into the program's core curriculum. To track progress in this regard, a similar assessment of written communication knowledge and skill is scheduled for 2005.

In the Fall 2005, this multi-tiered assessment of writing will be administered again to a sample population of entering and exiting business students. For this testing, a larger group will be selected (150 students from both the entering and exiting classes). In addition, subject to approval by our internal review board, qualitative data will be collected to determine the students' majors. If applied writing requirements that vary by discipline are affecting the validity of the multiple-choice questions, qualitative data could point to the need for a different question design.

In addition, to avoid possible bias in the scoring of the in-class writings, each writing sample will be scored by two graders. If there is a discrepancy in the overall score greater than 10 points on a 100-point scale, a grading specialist will be called in to determine the grade.

For the online test, new software, independent of course-specific sites, will be tested to expedite access to the tests and complex data collection. If more components of the testing can be automated, costs should be significantly lower in the future. With these changes, the reliability and validity of the tests and the procedures should be evident.

As college assessment activities continue, a culture of assessment will become an even more integral part of overall program development. The greatest challenge is to foster change based on the data collected. Only with the consistent implementation of changes based on assessment results will program quality improve.

#### Endnotes

- 34 This section is based on the collaboration of many faculty members in the Business Communication program. We would like to thank the following individuals in particular for their input and guidance: Kathy Brovick, Dana Loewy, Teanna Rizkallah, and Gayle Vogt. Thanks, also, to Judith Remy Leder, the former director of the Business Writing Program at Cal State Fullerton, who created the original CLASS grading criteria that became integral to both components of this assessment package.
- 35 *Editor's note:* The Neeley School (TCCU) best practices case in this volume presents another example of a comprehensive, internally developed communication diagnostic exam.

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*Five years ago, Rowan developed, and received recognition for, a comprehensive AOL program that assessed a range of learning goals with multiple direct measures. Two years ago, they expanded their focus to include assessment of their assessment program. The penetrating questions they used to evaluate their assessment activities in a cost benefit analysis led them to five organizing principles...and a dramatically different assessment model. The best practice recounted here provides food for thought on what to consider when designing an assessment program.*

**CHAPTER 8  
SAME SONG, SECOND VERSE:  
EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF  
AN ESTABLISHED ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Diane M. Hamilton**

**Edward J. Schoen**

**Rowan University, College of Business**

**Background, Mission, and Goals**

Rowan University is a comprehensive, state-related Carnegie II, selective institution located in south central New Jersey that is divided into a graduate school and six academic colleges: Business, Communication, Education, Engineering, Fine and Performing Arts, and Liberal Arts/Sciences. Enrolling nearly 10,000 students, the University offers 36 programs leading to a bachelor's degree, 26 programs leading to a master's or specialist degree, 31 post-baccalaureate programs leading to certificates or certification, and one doctoral program in educational leadership. The College of Business, which is accredited by AACSB, has 34 full-time faculty members, enrolls approximately 950 undergraduate and 80 graduate students, and offers three degree programs: the BS in Accounting, the BS in Business Administration (with specializations in Entrepreneurship, Finance, Human Resources Management, Management, Management Information Systems (MIS), and Marketing), and the MBA. The primary mission of the College of Business is excellence in teaching, and ongoing and appropriate scholarship of all its faculty members is expected in order to support its teaching mission.

**Defining Assessment**

The College of Business (COB) faculty developed their learning outcomes assessment program ("the assessment program") during the decade preceding their successful attainment of initial AACSB accreditation in November 2002. The assessment program was designed primarily to



demonstrate compliance with the AACSB accreditation standards adopted in April 1991, namely, (1) specifying educational objectives for each degree program; (2) planning, evaluating and revising curriculum in consideration of educational outcomes; and (3) monitoring instructional effectiveness and evaluating student achievement. The assessment program was fully developed, implemented, and employed during the late 1990s. Although not required at the time by AACSB, the assessment program included direct measures in addition to indirect measures and institutional data. During this time, the COB's assessment program consisted of seven principal assessment devices and a summary document, as listed below:

- Institutional research data on students enrolled in COB programs;
- Course embedded assessment of skills and themes specified in the AACSB curriculum standards;
- The ETS major field test in business;
- Comprehensive specialization examinations;
- Student satisfaction survey results;
- Employer and advisory board feedback and placement data; and
- Faculty instructional development type publications and presentations.

These seven items, along with the program mission and learning goals, were summarized every August by faculty within each specialization resulting in annual program review documents. All faculty within each specialization then met separately to discuss their discipline's document, to review the completion status for program improvement recommendations generated by the same faculty in the previous academic year, and to develop a program improvement action plan for the current year. The seven assessment devices are herein briefly described.

**Institutional Research Data on COB Students.** The Rowan University Office of Institutional Research provides data describing the qualifications of the students who apply for admission to COB programs and who matriculate as entering freshmen (SAT scores and class rank), and transfer students (GPA) in each academic specialization. These data provide helpful insight into trends in student demand and quality over time and are easy to acquire.

**Course Embedded Assessment of Skills and Themes.** The COB employed an extensive assessment of skills and themes identified in the AACSB accreditation curriculum standards (i.e., oral communication, written communication, teamwork/interpersonal skills, research/quantitative analysis, critical thinking, information technology, ethics/environmental, international/global issues, and diversity.) The COB faculty worked as a committee of the whole to create rubrics to operationalize the components

of each identified skill/theme and the criteria by which student attainment was evaluated. Each skill/theme was assessed (in at least three courses) by a variety of course-embedded assessment devices, such as examination questions, homework assignments, projects, student self-assessment, and computer-based exercises. Student performance was evaluated on the basis of the common criteria, and the teaching faculty members prepared reports assessing their students' performance. The course embedded assessments demonstrated operational compliance with the AACSB curriculum accreditation standards and, in summary, described the level of overall student performance in each of the identified skills/themes. Unfortunately, they provided little actionable information for program improvement initiatives due to the inconsistency in measurement methods as well as inevitable grading differences among faculty. Further, the course embedded assessments were extremely labor intensive not only in the design of the original skill/theme rubrics, which required faculty consensus, but also for administration of the assessments in multiple courses, the filing of assessment reports by faculty members each semester, and the generation and distribution of assessment summary reports. As will be discussed later, the COB faculty decided to suspend the course embedded assessments after the revised AACSB accreditation standards were adopted in April 2003.

**ETS Major Field Test in Business.** The COB has required all undergraduate COB students enrolled in Business Policy to take the ETS Major Field Test in Business to assess their knowledge of the business core (accounting, economics, management, quantitative business analysis, finance, marketing, legal environment of business, and international business). The ETS Major Field Test has provided valuable information that led to substantive changes in the curriculum. For example, continued poor performance on the "international" assessment indicator led the faculty to require all students to take an international course.<sup>36</sup> The Major Field Test results also permit analysis of student performance by specialization, thereby informing faculty in each discipline how well the subject matter is understood by their students. While the test has provided actionable information over the years, it does have some drawbacks, which likely will result in the COB abandoning its use. To begin with, considerable time must be devoted initially to develop faculty consensus regarding whether it is an appropriate instrument to measure students' knowledge of the business core. Further, it is expensive (currently \$26 per student), and the standard feedback to schools does not provide discipline-specific information on individual student performance (just an overall score). Hence, the results are helpful in judging overall program performance, but much less so in demonstrating individual student learning outcomes. Moreover, in order to encourage students to take the ETS examination seriously, student scores on the examination are included in computing the student's final grade in

the course. That being so, fairness dictates that students are provided with appropriate resources and review materials to enable them to succeed on the examination. Over the past several years, Rowan students have routinely scored at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile on the test nationally, and it appears that initial fluctuations in assessment indicators have leveled out. One could conclude, therefore, that the test results have already contributed to curriculum redesign and pedagogical changes, and one or more new instruments might prove a logical alternative at this point.

**Comprehensive Assessment Examinations.** In order to gauge COB student knowledge in their chosen specialization, faculty have created and employ assessment examinations that measure overall student knowledge of their field (i.e., accounting, entrepreneurship, finance, human resources management, management, MIS, or marketing). These examinations are administered in a selected, senior level specialization course, and the results are analyzed by faculty teaching in the specialization in order to ascertain whether students are achieving desired learning outcomes and whether instruction in particular subject areas needs improvement. Over time, trends in student learning can be highlighted and tracked. The development and deployment of comprehensive assessment examinations is labor intensive, because faculty consensus within each discipline must be developed regarding the type of examination<sup>37</sup> (e.g., multiple-choice, essay, true/false), the level of difficulty of the questions, the specific topics included, the length of the exam, and the method and responsibility for grading and analysis).<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, the comprehensive assessment examinations provide useful information on individual student learning in their academic specialization, specific subject matter in which instruction must be improved, and areas of the curriculum that should be revised. In one specialization, an external assessment instrument was found and utilized. The initial low scores on this exam led the faculty to redesign the curriculum so it was more in keeping with the generally accepted model offered by the professional societies. The external exam ties each of its questions to specific learning objectives in the curriculum model, thus allowing analysis of the results to be tied to specific courses. As the new curriculum begins to be offered, scores on this exam are expected to rise.

**Student Satisfaction Survey Results.** The COB employs several surveys, created by the Rowan University Office of Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) and by Educational Benchmarking Inc. (EBI), to gauge student satisfaction with various facets of their educational experience. IRP administers alumni satisfaction surveys one year after graduation and ten years after graduation that measure satisfaction with the quality of instruction students received, the perceived quality of their overall education, the quality of their education in their major, and the quality of their academic advisement

(and, for alumni 10 years out, perceptions of their critical thinking and communication skills). Graduates are also asked to compare their educational experience and career preparation with those of graduates of other academic institutions with whom they work. EBI surveys are administered in the spring semester of every other academic year and measure student satisfaction with a number of general factors: faculty and instruction in core and specialization courses, grades and student effort; breadth of the curriculum, size of enrollment in major courses, involvement in student organizations, quality of advisement, extracurricular activities, placement and career services, and overall satisfaction. EBI surveys also measure student satisfaction with the following specific outcomes: ability to work in teams, presentation and writing skills, ability to use and manage technology, ability to be an effective leader and manager, critical thinking and problem solving skills, academic quality, teamwork and camaraderie. While the satisfaction surveys administered by the Office of Institutional Research do not require any commitment of COB resources, EBI surveys do. More particularly, those surveys cost approximately \$6.00 per student, and COB faculty must reach consensus about how often and in what class the EBI surveys should be administered.

**Employer and Advisory Board Feedback and Placement Data.** The COB routinely gathers employer evaluations of student interns which measure the students' performance and provide corroborative evidence of student attainment of specific skills. These evaluations also provide valuable comments about student strengths and weaknesses that trigger program improvement discussions among faculty. Advisory boards, to whom the annual program review document is routinely presented, have also provided useful comments which have led to changes in curriculum content and requirements. Finally, placement data (collected several months after graduation) lets the COB know what companies are employing their graduates and the type of positions for which they are initially hired.

**Faculty Instructional Development Type Publications and Presentations.** The COB faculty members often engage in a research activities designed to address pedagogical issues or test the effectiveness of various aspects of the curriculum. Topics addressed in faculty research have included, for example, how to use WebCT to increase student learning, frameworks for assessing educational effectiveness, effects of using in-class focus groups on student course evaluations, effectiveness of group research projects in attaining learning objectives, and the effect of strict enforcement of prerequisites on learning outcomes. Abstracts of these intellectual contributions are included in the program review document and can provide insight to colleagues for improving program effectiveness and enhancing student learning outcomes.

**Annual Program Review Document.** As noted above, the COB faculty members in each academic specialization study the results of the assessment as reported in a program review document. One faculty member is charged with pulling together the materials and creating the review document, and he/she has been paid a small stipend for this work. The document is then reviewed, discussed and analyzed by all faculty teaching in the program, which leads to the development of an action plan responding to the information contained in the program review document. All seven assessment processes were included in the academic program review documents developed through academic year 2002-2003; academic program review documents for the years subsequent to that have omitted the course embedded assessment of skills and themes. Each program review results in multiple action items, and action items have been the result of virtually all the individual components in the review, not just the ones you might expect (e.g., ETS MFT or specialization exam). For example, the MIS faculty added a requirement for students to either test-out of or enroll in a course that covers the MS Office software at an advanced level in response to comments by an internship employer reported in the program review and subsequent recommendations by the Dean's Advisory Board and the Alumni Advisory Board. A published study by a finance faculty member indicated that accounting students who took Intermediate Accounting before Principles of Finance (rather than simultaneously or afterwards) significantly improved their performance in Principles of Finance. Discussion during the program review meeting resulted in accounting faculty deciding to advise their students differently, that is, to take Intermediate Accounting prior to taking Principles of Finance. Routinely low student satisfaction scores on "career planning and placement" have led faculty to take steps to improve this service (e.g., meet with recruiters on campus, develop a database of local companies, improve the number of attendees at the Career Day program, etc.) and led the dean to request a professional staff member who would reside within the COB to perform these functions.

### **Resources and Responsibilities for Assessment**

A decade ago, when Rowan's College of Business began to investigate and consider assessment, a faculty group was charged with this task. However, as soon as assessment activities began to take place, it became apparent that there is a reasonable-to-significant work load associated with managing the process and results. At that time, since the school was a candidate for AACSB accreditation, the person who was chairing the accreditation process took responsibility for all assessment-related activities. This person was already receiving significant course reassignment. After AACSB accreditation was attained in 2002, this person agreed to continue to lead the assessment program and take responsibility for its maintenance, reporting, and improvement. A one-course reduction in load is provided

each semester for this position. In terms of non-salary resources, the majority of funding is currently spent in relation to the ETS Major Field Test in Business. Approximately \$18,000 is spent annually to support assessment.

### **Best Practice**

#### **Development**

The AACSB accreditation standards, adopted in April 2003, specify that assessment data should be used for three distinct purposes: (1) feedback to students regarding their academic performance, (2) accountability to external stakeholders, and (3) program improvement. Discussion of the new accreditation standards led the faculty to embark upon an evaluation of all COB assessment processes to ensure they would fulfill those purposes and generally to look for opportunities to refine and improve upon the assessment methods that had been used for the previous many years. During academic year 2003-2004, faculty engaged in brainstorming. Pros and cons for each assessment process were delineated in an effort to determine the overall costs and benefits provided by each. The major advantages and disadvantages of each process have already been stated; however, faculty considered many factors with regard to *each* assessment process, for example:

- What is the annual dollar cost of this process, if applicable?
- How much faculty time is required on an ongoing basis to utilize this process?
- How many faculty members must actively participate for the assessment to take place?
- Do adjunct faculty need to fully understand and participate in the assessment process?
- Do the results produce potentially actionable data?
- Do the results provide the students with a good assessment of their learning?
- How much class time is utilized to administer the assessment?
- Are we confident in the consistency of the assessment for all students?

Answers to these questions led to the suspension of the course embedded skills/themes assessment. Even though this was the first assessment that was put in place, and even though a tremendous amount of time and energy was put into creating and refining this process over time, faculty agreed that the cost of the process exceeded its benefit. That is, virtually every faculty member had to devise and administer an assessment in almost all courses they taught.<sup>39</sup> Then they had to summarize the results and submit a standard report to an Assessment Committee, which

aggregated the results, attempted to draw conclusions across all the reports, and distributed the results to all faculty members. The benefits of this process were small and diminishing over time. While it helped some individual faculty members to understand what was going on in their own courses and gave them an opportunity to improve upon their own course delivery, the process did not generate clearly actionable data. Since all faculty members were involved in creating and administering various assessment instruments, the results lacked consistency across all courses. For example, what one faculty member considered “competent” might be what another considered “very competent” and another only “developing competence.” Even though the rubrics described and tried to quantify for each skill/theme the meaning of six levels from “incompetent” to “very competent,” these descriptions were still largely subjective.

Table 1 indicates how each of the Rowan assessment processes fared on this cost/benefit evaluation. A plus sign (+) indicates that when the question is asked in conjunction with the line item, the item evaluates favorably in relation to the specific question. A negative sign (-) indicates that the line item does not fare well in terms of that question. Looking at the second row, course-embedded skills/themes assessment, it is easy to see why this process was discontinued.

Removing the course embedded assessments from the assessment

**Table 1  
Cost/Benefit Analysis for Assessment Methods at Rowan University**

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Institutional Research Data	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	na
Course-Embedded Skills/Themes Assess	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ETS MFT in Business	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Comprehensive Specialization Exam	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+ (within discipline)
Student Satisfaction Surveys	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	na
Employer & Advisory Board Feedback	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	na
Instructional Development Publications	+	+	+	+	+	na	na	na
Program Review Document & Process	+	+	-	+	+	na	na	na
Q1 - What is the annual dollar cost of this process, if applicable? (+ indicates low cost) Q2 - How much faculty time is required on an ongoing basis to utilize this process? (+ indicates less time) Q3 - How many faculty members must actively participate for the assessment to take place? (+ indicates few faculty) Q4 - Do adjunct faculty need to fully understand and participate in the assessment (+ indicates no need for adjunct participation) Q5 - Do the results produce potentially actionable data? (+ indicates actionable data) Q6 - Do the results provide the students with a good assessment of their learning? (+ indicates individual student results) Q7 - How much class time is utilized to administer the assessment? (+ indicates little class time needed) Q8 - Are we confident in the consistency of the assessment for all students? (+ indicates consistency)								

program meant that only the business core (through the ETS Major Field Test in Business) and the advanced knowledge and skills in each specialization (through the individual specialization exams) were being assessed. Only student self-reports of satisfaction in regard to such important factors as communication skills, understanding and awareness of ethical principles, etc. remained. Since this void had to be filled with one or more new processes, the faculty agreed upon a set of principles that would guide the search and implementation for these new processes. These principles, explained below, follow directly from lessons learned over the previous many years.

**1) Assessment will take place outside of the normal course structure wherever possible.** Many reasons exist for this decision. One is the value that comes from de-coupling teaching and assessment. When the same person is teaching and assessing, it's difficult to avoid personal bias in the results. Further, when many different types of assessment instruments are used, the results cannot be easily compared, and when many people are judging the results, the evaluations are generally inconsistent. Finally, this situation puts the responsibility for learning more in the students' hands than in the instructors' hands. Students will be told upon entrance to the business program that they will be held responsible for certain knowledge and skill sets, and they will need to perform acceptably on various assessment instruments throughout their college careers in order to graduate from the program. It must be noted, however, that placing assessment outside the course structure is not possible in all cases. For example, assessing group dynamics requires that groups operate over a period of time and pursue a meaningful task. Therefore, this skill will be assessed within the context of a course. However, in most cases, assessment can be done outside a class.

**2) Web-based assessments will be used wherever possible, and "assessment days" will be held several times each year during which time students can sign up to take whichever assessment instruments for which they feel prepared.** The use of Web-based assessments and the administration of multiple assessment instruments simultaneously during an "assessment day" have many advantages. Once created, Web instruments pretty much administer themselves. Instruments can be designed with a large set of questions addressing each learning objective, and students can be given a smaller number of questions to answer, as selected randomly by the software. This type of instrument can then be taken as many times as needed until the student can demonstrate minimum competence, because students will not be able to "just learn the questions" from repetition. Third, a computer lab full of students can be engaged in



many different assessment activities simultaneously, while requiring only one “monitor.” Finally, Web-based assessments can score themselves, aggregate the results, and provide consistent, actionable data to faculty as well as individual scores to students, with no additional resources needed. However, like the first principle described above, not all things can be assessed with a web-based instrument. For example, assessing oral communication requires that students speak and evaluators listen; these assessments *can* still be conducted outside of a class, during the context of an assessment day.

**3) Phase in new assessments two per year, and utilize learning acquired in the early implementations.** The course embedded assessments were implemented for all skills and themes at the same time. After the first year faculty learned that without common rubrics to operationalize the various components comprising each skill and theme, and without defining multiple levels of competence for each component, nothing existed but a large pile of paper. So the faculty met for two days to develop and reach consensus on components and competency for each skill and theme. After the second year of this process, faculty learned that without standard reporting instruments, the reported data was still pretty much useless. So a standard reporting instrument was created. After the third year, the data could be summarized. However, all faculty were involved in doing a lot of work for two years that resulted in nothing of value. Thus, when venturing on a new process, such as Web-based assessments administered during an assessment day, the first few implementations will likely yield valuable data that can be used to improve future implementations. This is why faculty decided to start with just a few assessment areas and add more as competence increases. Further, the assessment results will not be tied to graduation until a viable and workable process can be guaranteed.

**4) Be satisfied with one measure for each learning goal and accept that more can be added later.** Conventional wisdom indicates that multiple and different types of measures are much better than a single measure. However, when faculty insist on creating a perfect, triangulated measure for each item to be assessed, either it will take too long to implement or it will burn out too many faculty members in the process. Therefore, one measurement will be selected and administered initially, for each of the following items, as listed in the AACSB accreditation criteria:

- Communication abilities;
- Ethical understanding and reasoning abilities;
- Analytic skills;
- Use of information technology;

- Multicultural and diversity understanding;
- Reflective thinking skills;
- Ethical and legal responsibilities in organizations and society;
- Financial theories, analysis, reporting and markets;
- Creation of value through the integrated production and distribution of goods, services and information;
- Group and individual dynamics in organizations;
- Statistical data analysis and management science as they support decision-making processes throughout an organization;
- Information technologies as they influence the structure and processes of organizations and economies, and as they influence the roles and techniques of management; and
- Domestic and global economic environments of organizations.

**5) Combine assessments whenever appropriate.** Some of the areas to be assessed can be combined with other areas. For example, assessment of spoken communication can be coupled with multicultural and diversity understanding, thereby providing assessment for two areas simultaneously. This guideline arose directly from discussions about Web-based instruments, which led to a decision that those areas not easily measured by multiple-choice type Web tests can become candidates for dual assessment.

Having agreed that these five guidelines would drive the search for new assessment processes, faculty pairs conducted literature and internet searches for potential assessment instruments. If no existing instrument could be found, faculty members invented what they thought would be a viable alternative for assessing the assigned item. The following questions were answered for all potential alternatives:

- What is the start-up cost in terms of dollars and faculty time?
- What is the expected annual cost in terms of dollars and faculty time?
- Who will be responsible to administer the instrument?
- How will the instrument be graded and by whom?
- How and when will students be able to take the instrument?
- Can students be afforded multiple opportunities to meet the minimum requirements?
- How can consistency be ensured?
- How will results be maintained, and who will maintain them until graduation?
- How will transfer students be affected?
- Will curriculum changes be needed, and if so, what?

## Findings and Reflections

One and one-half years have passed since the COB faculty began evaluating and redesigning their assessment program. The following actions have been accomplished as of January 2005.

- (1) Research has been conducted for each item to be assessed. Currently available instruments have been analyzed, and where no appropriate instruments were found, recommendations on alternative assessment devices have been made.
- (2) A validated instrument was found and pilot tested for assessment of “ethical awareness and understanding” after faculty conducted a thorough analysis of three possible instruments. The instrument is adapted from a survey by James R. Harris.<sup>40</sup> This instrument is comprised of 20 general business vignettes, and comparative results are available for MBA students, certified professional accountants, and other groups. The instrument is now Web-based and has been accepted as the assessment instrument for this item. Each specialization has prepared five additional vignettes that are specifically applicable to the discipline (i.e., accounting, entrepreneurship, finance, human resources management, management, marketing or MIS). At assessment time, students will identify their specialization on the instrument, and the vignettes created for their discipline will be added to the general business vignettes.
- (3) A Core Course Assurance of Learning Committee has been created and begun work. The charge for this committee is to:
  - a. Determine which business core courses will take responsibility to teach and/or reinforce each of the items to be assessed.
  - b. Develop appropriate student learning objectives for each item to be assessed within each of the courses holding primary responsibility.
  - c. Ensure consistency of coverage among all sections of the core courses.
- (4) During the 2004-2005 academic year two committees have been convened to develop or select assessment instruments and/or processes for two items: (1) written communication and (2) domestic and global economic environments of organizations. These committees are comprised of faculty who teach courses that will cover or reinforce these two areas.
- (5) An implementation plan has been created that indicates how each item will be assessed, and is shown in the table below. This plan, along with the guidelines presented earlier, will drive the next level of assessment in the COB.

**Table 2  
Implementation Plan**

	Web-Based Assessment	Assessed by Writing or Speaking	Course-Based
Communication abilities (written/oral)		✓	
Ethical understanding and reasoning abilities	✓		
Ethical and legal responsibilities in organizations and society		✓	
Use of information technology	✓		
Multicultural and diversity understanding		✓	
Reflective thinking skills			✓
Analytical skills		✓	
Financial theories, analysis, reporting and markets	✓		
Creation of value through the integrated production and distribution of goods	✓		
Group and individual dynamics in organizations			✓
Statistical data analysis and management science as they support decision-making processes throughout an organization	✓		
Information technologies as they influence the structure and processes of organizations and economies, and as they influence the roles and techniques of management		✓	
Domestic and global economic environment of organizations		✓	

### Conclusion

Because the Assurance of Learning program at Rowan University's College of Business is continually evolving, it is possible that some of the plans stated in this chapter could actually be changed before they are implemented. For example, the working group charged with assessing writing skills has recommended that it is inappropriate to assess any other item along with writing. That is, the initial plan as outlined in the table above, calls for "communication ability" to be assessed along with, for example, "domestic and global economic environment of organizations." However, as the writing assessment group moved forward with its charge, they decided that writing assessment should stand on its own, so problems could be clearly delineated. If the two items were coupled for assessment, one could not be sure whether a problem arose as a result of skills lacking in writing, or in reading, or in understanding the economic environment.

Nonetheless, as faculty move forward with the implementation of the next phase of assessment at Rowan's COB, it is clear that the important

lessons learned from the early phases of assessment will drive all future changes:

- (1) Assessment activities will take place outside the normal class structure so as not to burden the entire teaching faculty with assessment activities and to ensure that all students are assessed in the same manner and with the same instrument.
- (2) As much as possible, assessment instruments will be computerized. Some instruments are adaptable to a WebCT structure where questions can be randomly assigned and graded. Other assessments can be delivered via dynamic Web pages where results can be automatically stored in a database for analysis. This eliminates an ongoing cost for someone to grade or evaluate the assessment instruments.
- (3) Rather than first plan the entire new program, then implement it all at one time, new assessments will be phased in as they are ready, so faculty can learn from previous mistakes.<sup>41</sup> This will allow for continual improvement and eliminate the potential for analysis paralysis. Implementation of future assessment processes will simply be part of an ongoing improvement mechanism.
- (4) Cost, efficiency, and effectiveness will be considered simultaneously. While every school has a limited budget, there is value in paying for good assessment practices. So, funding will play a part in determination of future assessment processes. In terms of efficiency, it is important to realize that faculty must develop learning goals, and faculty must receive the results of assessment so they can act to improve the learning process. However, all faculty members do not have to be involved in the administration and grading of the assessment instruments themselves, and it is likely a poor use of their time. Finally, even if an assessment instrument is inexpensive and easy to administer, if it doesn't provide sufficient and appropriate data that enable teaching faculty to understand what they need to do to improve student learning, its effectiveness must be questioned. Planning and implementing a comprehensive assessment process involves trade-offs among the multiple, and often competing, goals and objectives.

Because each institution and its faculty will have varying levels of experience with assessment, it is difficult to provide generic advice for all schools. However, for schools which have had a comprehensive assessment program in place for at least a few years, we might recommend that they consider the learning that has occurred at Rowan. Perhaps the lessons learned and some of the guidelines for program improvement might be appropriate in these cases. For schools which currently have assessment

processes but are having difficulty taking action as a result of these processes, we would recommend consideration of a comprehensive program review document where all the relevant data are provided, combined with a faculty meeting process having the specific purpose of discussing the results and looking for areas where improvement can be sought. Finally, for schools which are just beginning to embark on assessment or are in the very beginning stages, we would recommend that a faculty champion be found and given reassigned time to study assessment and lead the business school through consideration and implementation of the options. It should be noted that a good assessment program will likely have to cost something in terms of both salary and non-salary resources. Therefore, a school that is unwilling to dedicate any resources to this effort is likely not sufficiently committed to assessment, and the chances for success are not good.

#### Endnotes

- 36 While marketing students were already required to take International Marketing and finance students had to take International Finance, the other specializations did not have a similar requirement. This decision resulted in a requirement for accounting students to take International Finance and the creation of a new course, Managing International Business, which is required of the other specializations (Entrepreneurship, HRM, Management and MIS).
- 37 *Editor's note:* Assessing Business Knowledge by D. Rotondo in Vol.1, No. 1, discusses issues involved in creating examinations to test for business knowledge.
- 38 Ultimately Rowan faculty agreed that the instruments should be multiple-choice, be of a length such that they can be administered in a 1.25 hour class period, and be of a level to expect an average score of approximately 75 percent. Responsibility for grading and analysis is handled at the specialization level.
- 39 *Editor's note:* There are models of course embedded assessment that are simpler than those employed by Rowan. See, for example, chapters developed by University of Houston, Eastern Kentucky, and Rockhurst.
- 40 Harris, James R. (1990) Ethical values of individuals at different levels in the organizational hierarchy of a single firm," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 9(9), 741-750.
- 41 *Editor's Note:* The AACSB's transition of AOL standards allowed time for Schools to phase in their assessment program and build upon their experience.

#### Authors Bio

**Diane M. Hamilton, Ph.D.**, Professor of MIS and primary architect of the College of Business assessment program, has been on the Rowan University faculty since 1983, and during her tenure has also served as department chair and associate dean. She has spoken about assessment at AACSB Continuous Improvement Symposia and at the invitation of business faculty at several universities. Much of her research is focused on pedagogy and student learning.

**Edward J. Schoen** has been Dean of the College of Business of Rowan University since July 1, 1999, and presently serves as the Past President of the Middle Atlantic Association of Colleges of Business Administration. A graduate of La Salle University and Georgetown University Law Center, Dean Schoen's principal research interests are in the areas of First Amendment protection of commercial speech, business ethics, and assessment of learning outcomes.

*“... The magic of the balanced scorecard lies in the fact that it works to actively link traditional faculty responsibilities and assessments to broader goals of the institution, with special emphasis on student outcomes... In contrast to the weight of outcomes assessment falling primarily on one or two individuals, every faculty member and every department now shares a common platform for participating in and supporting the entire assessment program.”*

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **DEFINING ASSESSMENT AS A SHARED FACULTY RESPONSIBILITY: A BALANCED SCORECARD APPROACH**

**S. Mark Comstock**

**Missouri Southern State University, School of  
Business Administration**

#### **Background, Mission, and Goals**

Missouri Southern State University (MSSU) originated in 1937 as Joplin Junior College. Today, the institution operates as a moderately selective liberal arts public university offering coeducational associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees. Situated on 340 acres on the northeast edge of Joplin, Missouri, it serves approximately 5,400 students. Most of its students are from a suburban or rural background, and a majority (90%) live off-campus and have full- or part-time jobs. It offers more than 60 majors through four schools: Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education, and Technology.

The business education program at MSSU began with a limited number of course offerings and faculty in the mid 1960s. Responding to a growing demand, course offerings and degrees grew steadily until the School of Business Administration was conceived in 1980. Thus, the School of Business Administration is a relatively new part of a relatively new institution. Today, there are approximately 900 undergraduates enrolled in the Bachelor of Science and Associate of Science degree programs in Business Administration (with concentrations in Accounting, Economics and Finance, General Business, Management, Marketing, and International Business). The School of Business was accredited by the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) in 1997. ACBSP is a specialized accreditation association for business education with an emphasis on supporting, celebrating, and rewarding teaching excellence. At this stage in the evolution of MSSU, ACBSP accreditation is appropriate because of its



traditional emphasis on teaching excellence as well as complementary scholarly research and faculty involvement with the contemporary business world. ACBSP's assessment requirements are extensive and include the demonstration of student learning skills such as analysis, comprehension, communication, and effective research. There are mission-driven standards for selection and use of data and results as well as requirements that evaluations of student learning and performance processes and results be linked to continuous process improvement.

The mission of the School of Business Administration emphasizes the development of appropriate intellectual, personal and professional attributes along with analysis, communications, leadership and interpersonal skills. Central to the mission of the University, as well as the School of Business, is a passionate commitment to international education, along with a commitment to continual assessment of the effectiveness of its programs. The international mission dates back to 1995, when the Missouri state legislature directed that Missouri Southern State University would develop academic support programs and public service activities to establish international or global education as a distinctive theme of its mission. The legislation was enacted as part of Missouri's "Blueprint for Higher Education," and supported by funding specifically identified for its implementation. This double *idée fixe*, on international education and continuous quality improvement (ACBSP, 2004), results in an assessment program that must continually interact with and mutually reinforce international education as well as other emphases of the business program.

Core learning goals include preparing students for a global environment by stimulating rigorous, imaginative, analytical and probing attitudes. There is an emphasis on managerial and administrative education, preparing graduates for leadership roles, and producing graduates that can express themselves competently and apply problem solving techniques. The School of Business maintains an active interaction with the business community to identify and serve educational needs ranging from those of local firms to those of internationally-oriented competitors in the world of business. Again, there are multiple emphases, but always with attention to the promotion and encouragement of international education. The school is also committed to maintaining the same level of quality in its rapidly growing distance learning program that it has traditionally featured in its traditional classroom environment.

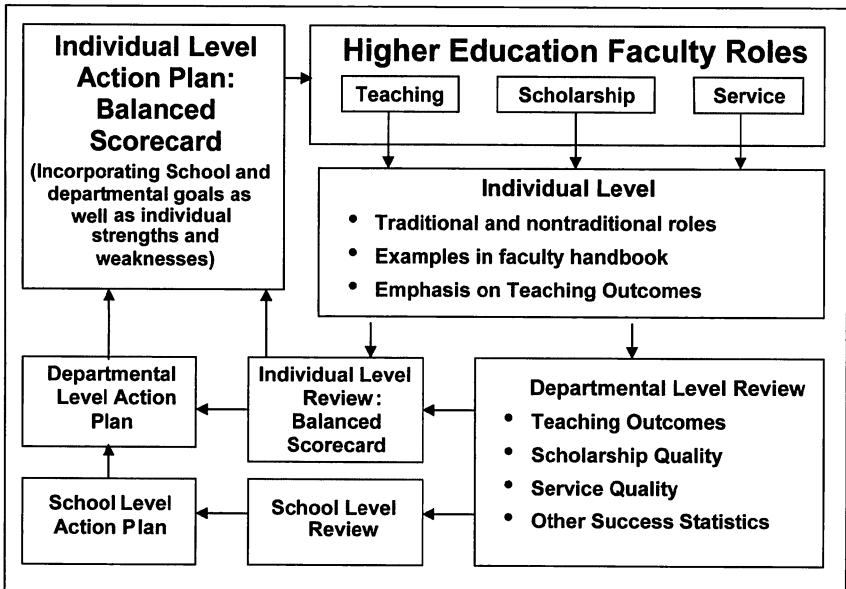
Like all business programs, the school is challenged to stay current with rapidly changing social, cultural, political and economic contexts, as well as dynamic changes in technology. Operating in this environment demands a School of Business and an assessment approach that are lean, effective, rich in actionable evidence, and agile to adapt to an extraordinary environment.

## Defining Assessment

Outcomes assessment has been an important feature at the MSSU School of Business since the years before it reached its current level of emphasis at accreditation bodies and among authorities of higher education. The school sits between two larger business schools, each less than an hour's drive away. In this competitive environment, it has necessarily been open, innovative, and responsive to opportunities for improvement in diverse areas. MSSU's responses to reviews of student outcomes dating back to the late 1980s included the acquisition and usage of advanced technological applications, an emphasis in faculty recruitment on quality and diversity, and continual improvement of physical facilities to accommodate changing needs and opportunities.

Although not comprehensively documented in its fledgling years, the early outcomes assessment program followed the model shown in Figure 1. It was (and is) designed to be a straightforward and functional program that facilitates proper measurement, evaluation, and responses. It emphasized a total quality approach, guided by the quality principles that became widely-accepted in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 2001, approximately midway between accreditation affirmations, the faculty, the Long Range Planning Committee, and the dean voted to reorganize the school and the assessment plan, as detailed later.

**Figure 1**  
**A Simple Representation of the Basic Outcomes Assessment Program at the MSSU School of Business**



The MSSU School of Business has long appreciated what has become a widely-accepted truism: assessment is good for a business school in many ways. One event related to test scores demonstrated the power of this notion. In this incident, a negative result from an ongoing assessment resulted in improved resources and incentives for students, and promises to improve the quality of the program even as it brings in additional funding support from the business community. The incident involved the tracking of ETS Major Field and ETS academic profile test scores as part of the outcomes assessment program. For the Major Field test scores, the business unit's goal is to score at or above certain percentiles nationwide, using a three-year average. The 2002 test scores, while technically acceptable according to the established criteria, demonstrated a downward trend that was projected to result in violation of the criteria in the near future. The business school leadership made a decision to present these data to the 10-member School of Business Advisory Committee. The result was a surprisingly passionate and powerful response from the committee members.

Advisory Committee members welcomed the opportunity to participate actively in the assessment program even when traditional evaluation criteria had not been violated. Committee members forcefully debated and argued the appropriate response, if any, for the committee and the business school. Ultimately, the advisory committee chose to take an active part in addressing the matter. Members provided funding to generously compensate students who performed well on the major field test, as well as to endow fellowships for teaching awards, based on recommendations of the School of Business Administrative Council. (As described later, the Long Range Planning Committee had become the School of Business Administrative Council, comprised of the dean and the chairs of the Departments of Accounting, Economics and Finance, and Marketing and Management.) The teaching awards are for those faculty members identified by the Administrative Council as having exemplary teaching as shown primarily by student evaluations.

The act of inviting the Advisory Committee to address a specific test score assessment issue accomplished several important objectives. First, it produced a concrete method of addressing the test score issue (subsequent years' data will be evaluated for the effectiveness of the resolution). Second, it provided the Advisory Committee with a strong and legitimate sense of empowerment in making real decisions that impacted the program and the lives of students. Third, it brought additional resources into the School of Business in a time of tight budgets and constrained resources. Incidents like this one have shown that a business school outcomes assessment program can be a valuable asset, as opposed to an inconvenient documentation requirement.

### **Resources and Responsibilities for Assessment**

Assessment is conducted at multiple levels at MSSU. An Assistant

Vice-President for Institutional Assessment and Institutional Research oversees university-wide assessments and reports directly to the president. A separate assessment program is administered by the university-wide director of the Institute for International Studies, who continually monitors the impact and results of the university's commitment to its international mission. The university as a whole devotes significant resources to assessment to ensure compliance with its accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, to be responsive and accountable to requirements of the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education, and simply to reinforce its ongoing emphasis on excellence in education. The School of Business assessment team reports to the dean. Each department within the School of Business administers its own assessment program, under the direction of the department chair, in the belief that the nearer to the mission of educating students, the more effective an assessment program can be. In further support of that belief, each faculty member has an active responsibility for administering and participating in the assessment program and reports assessment plans and results to his or her respective department chair.

The School of Business has two Assessment and Accreditation Co-Directors. These individuals are the chairs of the Department of Accounting and the Department of Marketing and Management. They facilitate assessment issues by coordinating activities and measurements between university-wide general assessment, international mission assessment, overall School of Business assessment, and departmental assessment. The Assessment and Accreditation Co-Directors receive a modest stipend as compensation. They are assisted by the dean's office by way of a dedicated Student Records and Assessment Coordinator. Other than these committed funds, assessment is not a budgeted line item within the School of Business, because it is viewed as an integral part of every faculty and staff member's function.

Each business department, under the direction of the chair, is free to organize and administer its own unique assessment plan incorporating balanced scorecard methodology. The Balanced Scorecard is an approach to measuring organizational performance developed by Robert Kaplan and David Norton (1992). The methodology is designed to overcome the limitations of managing only with financial measures. It seeks to convert management's strategy and vision into a plan that can be communicated and used as a performance level for all departments and stakeholders. With available support for travel and other related expenses, the departments use their resources to develop and maintain assessment measures that accurately reflect progress and developments with regard to their own objectives. Each department has access to data supplied by the dean's office, the university assessment office, the international assessment office, and individual faculty members, as well as to identify and develop additional

assessment measures. Frequently, the departments are encouraged to maintain assessment quality by supplemental programs administered by the university and the dean. For example, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs initiated a Continuous Quality Improvement initiative for 2005 by providing special funds for departments university-wide whose members wished to study and improve departmental assessment programs.

### **Best Practice**

In academic year 2001-2002, one of the school's perceived strengths was the lack of departmentalization. All business faculty members reported directly to the dean. General consensus was that the lack of a departmental-level administrative bureaucracy generated a flexible and dynamic organization that could adapt rapidly to change. The trade-off, however, was a dean who was subject to multiple responsibilities and priorities, sometimes at the cost of being unable to devote time to strategic planning. As a new dean assumed office, the school was successful as shown by a wide variety of assessment measures. Retention was good, student evaluations were strong related to nationally-normed results, and support of the business community was consistently generous. Nevertheless, the quality-oriented approach used by the business school dictated that its whole system was subject to continuous review. After exhaustive review by the dean and the long-range planning committee, it was found that the lack of departmentalization produced an inordinate strain on the dean in terms of day-to-day operational decision making. A consensus was reached that the assessment program could ultimately suffer if insufficiently supported in the dean's office and across all levels of management. Accordingly, a decision was made to fundamentally restructure the school's organizational structure and its outcomes assessment plan.

Counter intuitively, the school was able to improve its flexibility and effectiveness by departmentalizing, and replacing the Long Range Planning Committee with a School of Business Administrative Council. The Administrative Council is comprised of the dean and the three department chairs. The new Administrative Council, recognizing the pitfalls associated with the introduction of an additional level of management, began a comprehensive reappraisal of the school's activities and goals, with particular attention to the outcomes assessment plan.

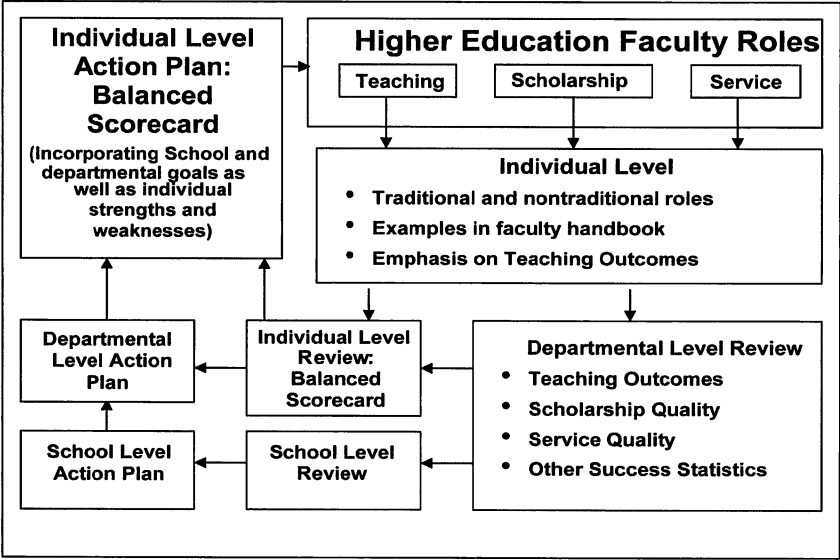
The extraordinary success of the School of Business Assessment Program had been and continues to be its roots in a systematic, quality-oriented approach to every step of the assessment plan. The faculty and administration are decisively committed to the notion that all stakeholders in its activities, particularly students, are customers and must be served on terms that best suit their long-term needs. Moreover, the quality approach incorporates an ongoing analysis of inputs, systems, and outputs with attention to seeking and strengthening comparative weaknesses, and

emphasizing strengths. With these principles in mind, the Administrative Council redesigned the outcomes assessment plan to incorporate a Balanced Scorecard approach to meaningfully and efficiently coordinate the three levels of responsibility: individuals, departments, and the dean. The launching of the Balanced Scorecard approach, which seeks to aggressively incorporate a linked set of objectives and measurements into a performance analysis system (Kaplan and Norton, 1997), was a combination of marketing to and consultation with the faculty by the Administrative Council. The Council was committed to the innovation before it was presented to the faculty, but open to ideas for improvement and individual adaptation.

Student outcomes assessment is viewed as a function of faculty, departmental, and overall School of Business assessment, as shown in Figure 2. In this paradigm, it makes little sense to consider outcomes without inputs and processes, since the faculty and administration have direct control only over inputs and processes. Specifically, the primary activities of the School of Business Administration are those executed by the faculty. Therefore, this process-oriented viewpoint takes it as a given that the role of the faculty member is a primary component of its assessment plan. The chief roles of the faculty fall into the traditional areas of teaching, service, and scholarship.

The faculty balanced scorecard designed and used in the School of Business is an integral part of the assessment plan for student outcomes,

**Figure 2**  
**A Graphic Representation of the Overall Assessment Plan**  
**from the Perspective of the Faculty Member**



as well as other results of the business unit's activities. The magic of the balanced scorecard lies in the fact that it works to actively link traditional faculty responsibilities and assessments to broader goals of the institution, with special emphasis on student outcomes. It seeks to overcome the detachment that can sometimes arise between measurement of inputs (e.g., faculty research productivity, faculty teaching evaluations) and outputs (e.g., student test scores, graduation and placement rates).

At the individual level, each faculty member, using a balanced scorecard format, annually designs and plans a combination of teaching, service, and scholarship consistent with his or her interests and the institution's needs. This critical input from the faculty at large promises to further improve the assessment process by spreading the successful balanced scorecard approach across additional levels of responsibility. This planning function is performed in the late spring for the coming academic year. The scorecard is extremely flexible and adaptable to the needs and strengths of each department and each faculty member. A faculty member, or a department, or even the business school as a whole, annually appraises and organizes his or her or its approach to mission fulfillment based on evidence-based outcomes measures. Thus, the integration of the individual faculty member's balanced scorecard with the overall assessment plan of the School of Business leads to a truly continuous quality improvement process. Throughout the planning phase, special attention is given to support of the institution's critical international mission.

After preliminary preparation of a planning scorecard for the coming academic year, the individual faculty member consults with the department chair to review and discuss the planning sheet. This review typically incorporates evidence-based feedback from the university assessment office, the International Studies Division office the School of Business, the department, and the individual's personal observations. Again, the primary focus is on adding value to the students' educational experience, as shown by appropriately selected measures.

Because of the flexibility of the balanced scorecard approach, each faculty member is able to select traits and measures that maximize his or her potential to contribute to the learning environment, consistent with the school and institutional missions and goals. One of the primary university goals, of course, is excellence in teaching. This is addressed by individual faculty members in diverse but appropriate ways. Individuals who excel at teaching in a distance learning environment, for example, may choose measures of improvements in students' written communication skills over the course of a semester. One instructor, for instance, tracks the number and length of student discussion board posts and is developing a measure of quality of posts. Individuals whose strengths are in more conventional classroom settings may choose traditional measurements such as test scores, or more creative measurements like those designed to reflect student

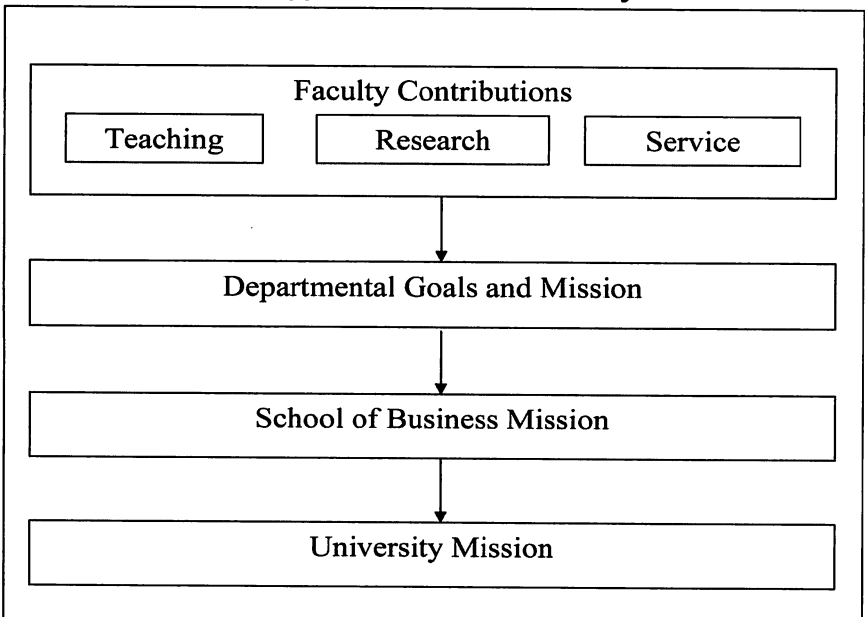
presentation skills, etc. Thus, the individual faculty member directly controls the contributions he or she plans for the School of Business and the department.

Input from the department chair insures that even while the individually-fashioned balanced scorecard reinforces faculty members' strengths, it simultaneously addresses weaknesses (see Figure 3). The faculty member accurately perceives that the process is literally balanced in the sense that a wide variety of inputs and processes are available to effectively optimize the planning function. This helps the faculty member avoid the counterproductive frustration of being held to standards to which he or she does not aspire. The methodology and processes of data collection are innovative to the extent that the individual, in coordination with the department, designs them.

The planning scorecard, having been completed in the spring, is subject to revision over the coming year, though this option is rarely invoked in practice. The depth and quality of the planning phase generally precludes the necessity for substantive revisions. Armed with the planning scorecard, each instructor has a clear blueprint for maximizing his or her contribution during the academic year.

Prior to the annual evaluation by the department chair, each faculty member converts his or her planning scorecard to a reporting scorecard.

**Figure 3**  
**Faculty members contributions support departmental goals,**  
**which in turn support school and university missions**





The reporting scorecard reflects goals and objectives that were met or unmet, planned activities that were completed or not, and any additional evidence of accomplishment or difficulty the individual wishes to bring to the annual review. Again, the emphasis is on student outcomes (of which assurance of learning is a key part), though any additional evidence may be included at the individual's option. For example, a faculty member who has shown unexpected strengths in service to community groups would include this as a measure for evaluation. In this way, the scorecard provides a relatively objective, evidence-based control and feedback mechanism for ensuring the quality of the evaluation, while allowing flexibility for individuality and situational change.

Based on the results of the departmental level review of the balanced scorecard, and his or her own evaluation, the employee begins the process anew for the next academic year. At the same time, the department chair compiles and assembles the scorecards for individual faculty members into useful data for review of overall departmental results of the prior academic year. With the completed departmental evaluation documentation, the chair is prepared to meet with the dean and the other department chairs. At this meeting, the dean and the departmental chairs evaluate results of the previous year and formulate goals and objectives in an action plan for the coming year. The results of this process are then conveyed back to the faculty member during the planning consultation with the department chair, completing the feedback loop and providing the faculty member with useful and timely information for preparation of the formal balanced scorecard, or action plan.

The Administrative Council reports selected aggregate balanced scorecard results to the School of Business Advisory Committee twice yearly. Although specific data are presented at the discretion of the Administrative Council, all aggregate balanced scorecard information is available upon request to members of the Advisory Committee. Although the school has not undergone accreditation reaffirmation since the balanced scorecard system was adopted, it is anticipated that the balanced scorecard will be an important part of the self-study. Under ACBSP accreditation standards (described earlier), student learning assessment is a critical part of the accreditation process.

While the balanced scorecard approach has only been in use for a relatively short time, it has already produced important results for the School of Business. Direct measures of student outcomes, such as test scores and retention, have shown promising initial movement. Moreover, there appears to be significant improvement in the quality of the process of outcomes assessment. In contrast to the weight of outcomes assessment falling primarily on one or two individuals, every faculty member and every department now shares a common platform for participating in and supporting the entire program. There is an ongoing awareness and appreciation for

the importance of documenting the activities and accomplishments of the program at multiple levels. By linking mission fulfillment (which includes, of course, student learning) directly to traditional faculty roles (and how they are assessed in pursuit of those roles), faculty are motivated to be mindful of the importance of constantly fulfilling their individual potential with the ultimate end of mission fulfillment.

### **Feedback and Reflection**

The balanced scorecard approach has been an overwhelmingly positive addition to the outcomes assessment program at the MSSU School of Business. It has impacted the Advisory Committee, the school's leadership, and every individual professor. Moreover, it appears likely that as its potential power as an assessment and motivational tool become clearer, the approach will be adapted to additional applications in the business school.

Three examples of the application of balanced scorecard methodology to individual professors illustrate the power of the concept. Professor A had published and presented a significant number of papers at international conferences, but her classroom evaluations showed that students rated her below national averages in stimulating student interest and establishing rapport. With the help of the chair, she included an objective on her planning scorecard to discuss her international experiences and/or research at least three times in each semester. Not only would this promote the student-faculty interaction that would make her a better teacher, but the discussion topics she chooses promote a specific school learning objective: student global awareness. She is following through on fulfilling the plan, and initial evaluation scores are encouraging.

Professor B's students were frequently scoring below the mean on common final exams. He addressed the issue by planning and executing a policy to systematically teach and document each competency the course was designed to address. Results are not yet available, but the improvement in the process and documentation are likely to help him diagnose topic areas that need additional emphasis, thereby leading to improved student knowledge in their discipline (another school learning objective).

Results of the balanced scorecard approach, while effective, are not always pleasant. Professor C came to the School of Business from another institution. Faced with the requirement for documenting plans and performance, he was not comfortable with the evidence-based assessment plan. As a result of his unwillingness to participate in an activity that the School's faculty and administration have deemed as consistent with its philosophy and essential to its mission, he is no longer with the school. Of course, candidates for faculty positions are made aware of the importance of assessment, feedback, and continuous quality improvement to the program, but it is sometimes hard to appreciate without actually functioning in the unique school environment.

At the administrative level, the scorecard has helped build cohesion and symmetry among and between the departments and the dean's office. It provides a common planning and measurement tool — and language! — that each stakeholder shares and understands. While not a topic or centerpiece of every meeting, balanced scorecard plans and results are always available for use when needed.

At the advisory committee level, the system has thus far served primarily in an indirect fashion. It provides a foundation or framework for reporting, and shows promise as a way of building consistency and continuity from meeting to meeting of the advisory committee. The advisory committee was supportive of the scorecard's adoption and follows its results and future adaptations with interest.

### **Conclusion**

Business schools and academics in general must always resist the temptation to view the latest innovation in thought or practice as the culmination of a process that has led to a final ideal approach to business education. Nevertheless, it seems that the balanced scorecard methodology is the right approach for this institution at the right time. Early student performance results are encouraging, and the entire business school has embraced the concept of assessing outcomes based on concrete measurements.

Application of the methodology is likely to be improved and extended. Departments currently report aggregate scorecard results to the dean, but are in the discussion stage of developing departmental planning scorecards. The dean, and potentially even the Advisory Committee, may follow. A greater number of parties participating in the paradigm are likely to lead to an improved commonality of direction and better communications throughout the institution.

One of the most interesting potential applications of the balanced scorecard methodology is the possibility of adapting it to the level of the individual student. At the time of adoption of balanced scorecard methodology for the business school, a policy of requiring each student to prepare an e-portfolio was also established, consistent with the intention of producing concrete and measurable results. Prior to graduation, each student is required to complete a one credit-hour class to ensure completion of his or her portfolio. It may be that the balanced scorecard approach can be adopted as an input to improve this process. There are complexities associated with the notion. For example, would a scorecard be used for each student for each course, or for each student for the program of study? Despite these logistical questions, adoption of the methodology at the student level is under discussion and likely to be the subject of a future pilot program, at a minimum.

The outcomes assessment program at the MSSU School of Business

is more effective and better-documented than it ever has been before, thanks largely to the use of balanced scorecard technology. It has already proven rewarding, and holds promise for a productive and successful future. The School of Business is committed to its refinement and improvement while being open to innovative ways of improving and documenting service to its diverse stakeholders. The balanced scorecard is an important tool in fulfilling that vision.

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### Author Bio

**Mark Comstock** chairs the Department of Accounting at Missouri Southern State University, where he teaches financial and managerial accounting and is the School's Accreditation Co-Coordinator. He is a regular site visitor for the ACBSP business accreditation agency. He publishes in the accounting field in the areas of accounting measurement, business ethics and history, and accounting education. In the spring of 2005, he led a group of 35 students and community leaders on a tour of Italy to study the Renaissance history of accounting and business.

*Effective data management is an essential prerequisite for closing the loop. Data and information need to be available to faculty and administrators at the time they are making a decision. Not having the data readily accessible implies that the capacity to make fact-based decisions will be diminished. With readily accessible data, faculty dialogue is much more centered on the critical issues, and speculation and conjecture become less of a concern. Also, faculty can focus very readily on specific problems and challenges identified by the data when data and information are within easy reach. This chapter shows how Berry College manages and uses its data to support a creative agenda for student learning and program improvement.*

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **CONTEXT, ACCESS, AND USE OF DATA FOR STUDENT LEARNING: THE CASE OF BERRY COLLEGE**

**Krishna S. Dhir**

**Berry College, Campbell School of Business**

#### **Background and Mission**

Two considerations have dictated the design and development of the data management system at Berry College's Campbell School of Business. One is the overall purpose for seeking the data, and the second is the accessibility requirements of the users. In face of rising expectations of our stakeholders, the Campbell School seeks to continuously enhance the value of its programs and activities to its stakeholders. The purpose for the development of our data management system is to provide our faculty members, administrators and staff with ready access to information that would facilitate ongoing improvement of our processes and outcomes. Our data management system includes a central repository of information, where we physically store various reports and documents. Additionally, to make data electronically accessible to the administrators, faculty members and staff, we have developed a Web site on the institution's own intranet system.

As a small school we envisaged the need for a small system. At the beginning, to explore what value and possibilities a data management system would afford us, we set out to develop a simple system as an experiment. We hoped to learn how such a system would integrate into the dynamics of our organization. We relied on resources developed and operated in-house, and did not seek assistance or systems from outside vendors, primarily because of the anticipated scale of our operation. Three years later, our intranet Web site now provides direct access to all documents, records, and reports of the school. Its use by our faculty members, administrators

and staff is increasing. It is possible that as the use of data in our everyday operations continues to evolve, we might consider acquisition of a more sophisticated data management system from a vendor. At that time we would have to consider our expertise, scale of the system, cost, lead times, quality and reliability, and our need to focus on student learning and other core competencies. Alternatively, we might attempt linking our system to the institutional data management system recently acquired from a vendor for college-wide application, assuming that the system is adaptable to our assessment needs.

But first, a brief description of the Campbell School's background, mission, and goals will convey the context of our data management efforts. Berry College is a private institution located in the hills of North Georgia, near Rome. Founded in 1902, it champions an integrated education of the *Head, the Heart and the Hands*, combining a challenging scholastic program with opportunities for spiritual and moral growth, worthwhile work and significant service to others. The education of the head refers to the development of intellectual capacity; that of the heart, a willingness to engage and bring the benefits of learning to the society; and that of the hands, acquisition of skills through which to apply the acquired knowledge. Berry College emphasizes teaching grounded in scholarship, relating faith with learning as an essential part of a sound education, and worthwhile work complementing knowledge and faith in building character. The vision of its faculty and staff is rooted in this philosophy. In academic year 2004-2005, the college enrolled 1,878 undergraduates and 130 graduate students, with 149 full-time faculty members. In the Fall semester of 2004, the Campbell School enrolled 236 undergraduate and 33 MBA students, taught by 20 full-time faculty members. The school seeks to be recognized as an integral part of North Georgia's social and economic fabric by providing excellent education for its students and exemplary services in the region and beyond. The school's mission is to provide an excellent liberal arts-based business education that engages the head, the heart, and the hands while serving the academic and business communities through appropriate research and services. The mission and vision are reviewed in light of stakeholder inputs and, if necessary, revised at the annual retreat at the beginning of the academic year and as needed throughout the year.

### **Goals and Strategies for Assessment of Student Learning**

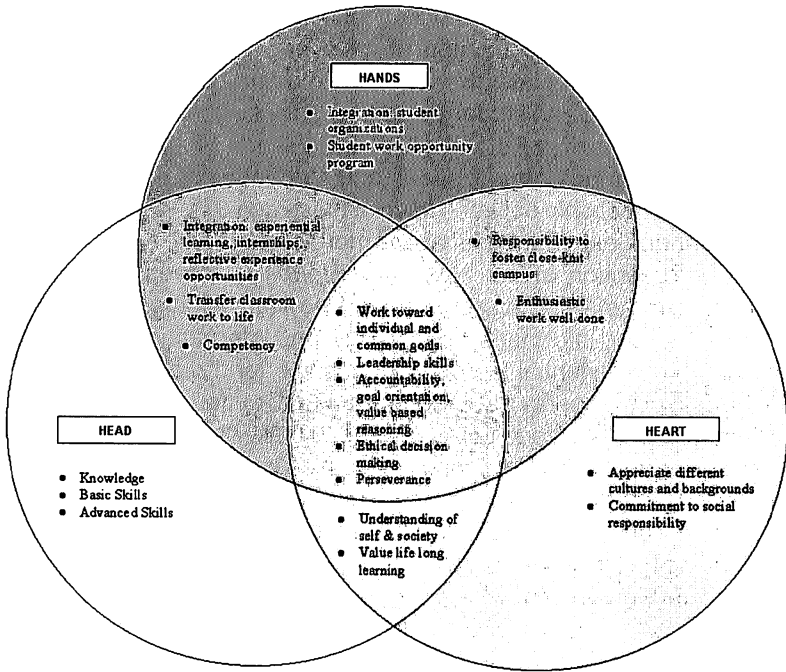
All undergraduate business majors offered by the Campbell School of Business, which are accounting, finance, management, and marketing, consist of three components: (1) a solid *foundation in the liberal arts*, (2) grounding in a common body of business skills and knowledge attained through the *shared business core*, and (3) *major specialization courses*. Through this curriculum, all students pursuing a business major develop critical thinking and communication skills, learn to integrate and synthesize

knowledge, and improve ethical decision making and leadership capabilities. The *education of the Head, the Heart and the Hands* is embedded in the shared business core. Three goals are associated with the education of the *Head*: knowledge (basic business information), basic skills (functional principles and communication skills), and advanced skills (critical and strategic thinking). The education of the *Heart* encourages students to acknowledge and appreciate diversity in the modern business environment. Team-based learning and student organization activities facilitate promotion of social responsibility. Education of the *Hands* is achieved through involvement in campus organizations and student work experiences. The resulting interrelationship between each of these goals fosters further student development and experiences that are more meaningful.

The intersection of the *Head and Hands* is represented by three components: transferring classroom work to life; gaining competency in communication and information technology; and integrating knowledge and action through experiential learning, internships, and reflective experience activities. Two components are associated with the intersection of the *Hands and Heart*. Worthwhile work provides value to stakeholders while work done well results in high standards, strong work ethic, academic excellence, ethical behavior and integrity, and a commitment to continuous improvement. The intersection of the *Head and Heart* is focused on developing students' understanding of self and society and fostering a love of lifelong learning. The final intersection includes the *Head, Heart and Hands*. Through this interaction, students gain balanced analytical, business, and ethical tools to develop and strengthen their leadership skills, moral reasoning, and ethical decision-making. See Figure 1 for graphic representation of these learning goals.

Assessment of the shared business core is conducted annually through a multi-method approach. The shared core goals are mapped into an assessment matrix that includes measurement identification, frequency of assessment and responsible party. Various strategies are deployed to generate data on performance and efficacy. These include student-rated evaluation of courses and instructors; arms-length assessment of outcomes by third parties, including practitioners and corporate leaders; assessment through studies, including those administered by the Educational Testing Service Major Field Exit Tests, and AACSB-Educational Benchmarking Undergraduate Business Exit Studies; and Defining Issues Test to assess ethical reasoning.<sup>42</sup> Various tests, ranging from those to assess writing and computing competencies, to those that test moral and ethical reasoning ability, are administered to incoming freshman and outgoing seniors to ascertain the value that has been added through student learning. Similarly, entering business sophomores and graduating seniors are tested for their competency in the major fields. Additional exit studies are conducted through our own institutional research unit to measure aspects of educational experiences of our students. Placement results are examined for evidence,

**Figure 1**  
**Graphic Representation of the Goals of the**  
**Shared Business Core**



which show that many Campbell School of Business graduates are able to find career-oriented jobs in their professional fields with selective employers. Through these, and additional stakeholder surveys that are administered periodically, the School generates data on its performance and effectiveness from a range of perspectives.

Faculty members, too, reflect on their teaching, research and service activities both collectively and by themselves. They report their findings in their annual Faculty Activity Report, which is then integrated into the annual faculty evaluation process. These Faculty Activity Reports are also used in the tenure and promotion process.

With these data obtained annually, the School's data management system captures the richness of experience gained over time. Through the Educational Testing Service and AACSB-Educational Benchmarking studies we are able to track, over years, how we benchmark against a national sample of participating schools and against a peer group of schools. The school's committees, especially the curriculum committee, review the results of these and other studies to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of student learning.



## **Making Data Accessible**

Prior to the development of the data management system, the information in the Campbell School largely flowed from bottom to the top. Aggregated data did not flow in the reverse direction as often or as easily and was not readily accessible to the various committees and organizational units. This state of affairs favored centralized management and control and hampered general empowerment of the organization. As a first step in our effort to improve information accessibility, a central repository was created in a dedicated, secure room where a wide range of documents and reports were physically stored. These included reports that profiled the institution and its programs, policies, curriculum, faculty and their activities, students and their experiences, and learning resources. Where useful, data were presented as function of time, and trends were displayed on the walls.

In the next stage of the development of our data management system, we designed a Campbell School Web site on the Berry College intranet system. This intranet system is available to the entire College and is accessible by members of the institution through a system of differentiated authorization. Through this site, members of the school can access a wide range of information pertaining to all aspects of the school and its operation, including the workings of the Executive Committee, various departments and school committees, various advisory councils, and activities of the faculty and staff members; and the charges, reports, supporting documents, and all minutes of the various committee, department and faculty meetings; and so on. Additionally, the Web site provides access to process maps of the various processes through which the school operates, white papers on the schools' programs of study, and plans. The organization of the data made accessible through this site is shown in Figure 2. With new reports generated, additional analyses performed, and new insights gained, the data management system continues to evolve with time and use.

With both the central repository where the data are physically stored, and the intranet Web site where the data are electronically stored, access to data is through differentiated authorization. Generally, if an individual needs access to perform a task or to support an activity, access by that individual is authorized. The aggregated assessment of learning data, within the Campbell School, however, is accessible by all faculty members and administrators. Of course, access to certain data are constrained by law, such as the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, along with its amendment of 1998 (Gorn, 1998). Authorization is often based on job duties and position in the organizational hierarchy. See Table 1 for an access control matrix, showing what data were accessible to whom. Note that controlled data are preferentially stored in the central repository, where access is controlled through a physical system of "lock and key."

## Best Practices as Aids to Reflection

In addition to facilitating storage, access, and use of data, the data management system provides the Campbell School many other benefits. These benefits are realized through reflection by faculty members, administrators, and staff. These reflections resulted in the development of *maps* of our operational processes (Jacka and Keller 2001; Sharp and McDermott 2001), analysis of our program attributes through *quality function deployment* (Hauser and Clausing, 1988), and systematic study of our curriculum leading to the development of white papers for each of our major fields of study. We describe these outcomes of faculty reflection below.

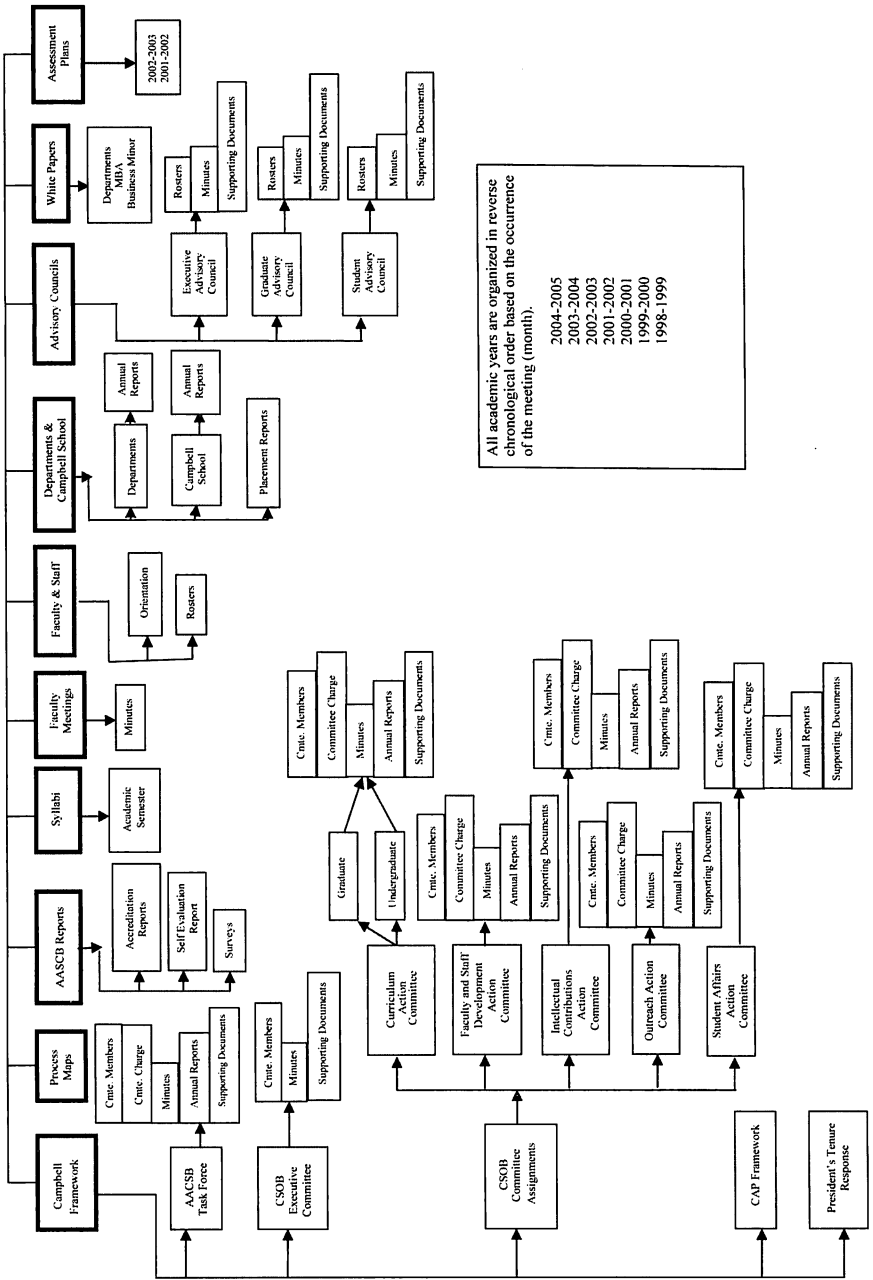
**Table 1**  
**Access Control Matrix**

	All Faculty & Staff	Relevant Department Chairs, or Committee Members	Relevant Faculty, Academic Advisors	Relevant Program Directors	Office of the Dean	Relevant Senior Administrators	Advisory Councils
A. Campbell School records accessible through the Intranet							
Campbell Framework Documents	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Process Maps	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reports to and from the AACSB	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Curricular Records, including content and design	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
White Papers for Majors	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Assessment Reports with Aggregated Data	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Minutes of Faculty Meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Minutes of Exec. Cmte. and Advisory Councils Meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Faculty and Staff Policies	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mid-Year and Annual Reports	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
B. Campbell School records accessible in the Central Repository							
Student Records with Individual Data		X	X	X	X	X	
Student-rated Faculty Evaluations		X		X	X	X	
Faculty Promotion and Tenure Dossiers and Records		X			X	X	
Annual Faculty and Staff Evaluations		X			X	X	

## Process Mapping

As a consequence of the development of the data management system, and its focus on data, the administrators, faculty members, and the various committees have acquired — and continue to gain — improved

**Figure 2**  
**Intranet-Based Data Organization at the**  
**Campbell School of Business**



insights into the processes through which we operate. As they encountered situations where data were lacking, they realized that the missing data reflected our lack of complete understanding of the processes. This realization led to implementation of an ongoing project of mapping our various processes. A process may be viewed as comprising of a series of value-added tasks that are linked together to turn inputs into a product or service output. Process mapping enables an organization to graphically represent the road map of its activities and communicate the deployment of its human, technological, and infrastructure resources for accomplishing their goals (Jacka and Keller, 2001; Sharp and McDermott, 2001). Process mapping is not an assessment tool. It is an approach to organize facts and activities pertaining to the processes through which learning takes place and provides a coherent description of what is required to improve these processes. It facilitates problem solving, decision making, and collaboration among related functions. It helps eliminate steps in the process that do not add value, thus simplifying it. It also provides opportunities for creating synergy.

Consider the following example of collaboration between our *internship development* program and the *employer development* efforts of the institutional Career Development unit. The purpose of our internship program is to provide a hands-on, career-related, practical learning opportunity through field work in an organizational setting. This program allows students to test, integrate, and apply concepts and methods formally introduced in the classrooms. The outcome of an internship is expected to be an experience that facilitates the student to assess and reflect on new knowledge learned, and new skills acquired. In examining the map of the internship development process, we discovered in it some similarities with the institutional process of developing employment opportunities for our students. The staff in our institutional Career Development unit engage in a number of employer development activities, including visiting companies on site. Each visit leads to a set of subsequent activities. Soon after the visit, each company is (1) invited to develop an internship program; (2) advised to develop internship opportunities; (3) requested information about their hiring plans over the next quarter and next year; (4) invited to visit our campus; and (5) subsequently, invited to participate in a number of programs such as career fairs, on campus interviewing programs, resumé referrals, and information sessions. The Campbell School personnel also visit and communicate with companies to develop internship opportunities. They, too, invite the company supervisors to visit our campus and participate in our curriculum delivery activities. To create synergy, we have begun collaborating with the Career Development unit to manage both the *context* and the *content* of the internship experience. Armed with the knowledge of our internship-related learning goals, the Career Development staff members assist companies in creating appropriate internship opportunities in contexts that demand progressively greater responsibility from the students. Conversely,

information acquired by the Career Development staff regarding the needs of a particular company provides specific content to the learning goals for individual internships. To have an internship proposal approved, students work with both their faculty advisor and company site supervisor to identify the learning objectives to be achieved, skills to be acquired, and plans for these accomplishments. With proper alignment of these components, we direct student learning from the internship experience to the specific needs of the company, increasing the rate of conversion of student internships to subsequent employment.

### **Quality Function Deployment**

While contemplating measures required for determination of whether our programs were meeting their respective learning goals, it became evident to the faculty members that the data sought should suggest interventions required. The data and reports should be attention-directing and action-oriented, even as they focus attention on key learning goals and objectives. It became important to the faculty that they indicate or else understand just where in the learning process the student acquired the various qualities specified by the learning goals. They used the Quality Function Deployment methodology (Hauser and Clausing, 1988) to analyze the programs of study.

Applied to the curriculum processes, the Quality Function Deployment methodology produces a matrix that aids cross-functional curricular planning and communications. The purpose of this matrix is to produce a snapshot representation of the curricular content being covered. It gives a clear picture of the information already being imparted and identifies areas that need improvement or attention. It also highlights the weak areas in each course and the program as a whole, and enables faculty and administrators to reflect on critical issues and key questions related to learning and program quality. Among those questions are: What qualities do the learning goals demand? Are all goals equally important? How can the curriculum be altered? How can the learning goals be achieved more effectively?

The Quality Function Deployment matrix facilitates reflection and debate, and draws attention to possible opportunities for program improvement. In one instance, our faculty members were reflecting on how students acquired leadership competencies through their Management curriculum. They developed the matrix for the Management curriculum, which showed that the ability to identify different theories of leadership, and ability to evaluate the leadership situation, were both being acquired by Management majors through four courses. These included two *core* courses taken by all majors, namely *Principles of Management* and *Global Business Strategy*, and two *required* courses taken by Management majors, namely *Organizational Behavior* and *Management of Human Resources*. Was it necessary for the Management majors to take both *Organizational Behavior* and *Management of Human Resources*, in addition to the core courses, to

New numbers	CORE			REQUIRED				ELECTIVES			
	Mgt 301	Mgt 453	Bus 499	Mgt 302	Mgt 345	Mgt 340	Mgt 353	Mgt 410	Mgt 415	Mkt 427	Psy 355
	Principles of Mgt	Operation Mgt	Global Bus Strategy	Org. Behavior	Mgt of Human Res.	Mgt Small Bus.	Org Change and Dev.	Int. Bus.	Cross-Cult. Mgt	E-commerce	Interpersonal Relations
<b>PLANNING</b>											
Short term orientation	x		x			x	x			x	
Goal setting	x		x			x				x	
Problem identification through SWOT analysis	x		x								
Long term orientation and balance between long term and short term	x		x			x	x			x	
Evaluation of problems - ability to differentiate between problems and symptoms	x	x	x				x	x			
Ability to create alternatives and solutions	x		x				x	x	x		
Implementation	x		x			x	x				
Ability to integrate different perspectives - see the big picture	x		x				x	x	x		
<b>ORGANIZING</b>											
Delegation of authority	x		x								
Identifying tasks and activities	x	x	x		x						
Facilitating working relationships	x		x	x		x		x	x		x
Assigning tasks and activities	x		x					x			
Creating an operational structure	x		x			x	x	x			
<b>STAFFING</b>											
Identifying the skills required for specific jobs					x		x		x		
Selection of candidates	x		x		x				x		
Motivation techniques	x			x			x		x		
Compensation and evaluation plans	x				x						
Labor laws					x						

Table 2  
Quality Function Deployment Matrix for Management Courses

Table 2  
Quality Function Deployment Matrix for Management Courses

	CORE			REQUIRED				ELECTIVES			
New numbers	Mgt 301	Mgt 453	Bus 499	Mgt 302	Mgt 345	Mgt 340	Mgt 353	Mgt 410	Mgt 415	Mkt 427	Psy 355
	Principles of Mgt	Operation Mgt	Global Bus Strategy	Org. Behavior	Mgt of Human Res.	Mgt Small Bus.	Org Change and Dev.	Int. Bus.	Cross-Cult. Mgt	E-commerce	Interpersonal Relations
<b>STAFFING</b>											
Identifying the skills required for specific jobs					x		x		x		
Selection of candidates	x		x		x				x		
Motivation techniques	x			x			x		x		
Compensation and evaluation plans	x				x						
Labor laws					x						
Human resource planning	x		x		x	x		x			
Training and development	x			x	x		x				
<b>CONTROLLING</b>											
Setting standards	x	x	x				x				
Recognizing deviations	x	x	x				x				
Putting systems in place to recognize deviations		x	x					x			
Solutions and preventative measures		x	x				x				
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>											
Identifying different theories of leadership											
Ability to evaluate the leadership situation using the following variables:											
a. Task/goal	x		x	x			x				
b. Group members	x		x	x			x				
c. Environment/situation	x		x	x			x				

acquire the leadership competencies in adequate measure? Could any of these two courses be elected? On reflection and subsequent discussion of the nuance of interactions between different competencies and their relative priorities, the faculty members concluded that, while it was essential that the Management majors take both *Organizational Behavior* and *Management of Human Resources* as required courses, the coverage of the leadership competencies in the *Management of Human Resources* course could be eliminated, allowing for greater emphasis on acquisition of the staffing competencies through that course. Further emphasis on the leadership competencies was available to those who desired it through the elective *Organizational Development and Change* course. The matrix developed by them was revised accordingly, and is shown in Table 2.

### **White Papers**

A 10-year strategic plan recently adopted by our institutional board of trustees calls for strengthening of our academic resources and enhancing teaching and learning through general education, and major and minor programs. Armed with our data management system, including the process maps and the Quality Function Deployment matrices, we engaged in a systematic study of our programs of study. With comparable data, gathered over time, now made accessible together in one place, we were able to discern and discuss the evolving trends in competencies and attitudes being acquired and demonstrated by our students. We were able to identify alternative interventions for the appropriate alignment of our curriculum in terms of desired student competencies, attitudes, and behavior outcomes. The data management system enabled our faculty members to reflect on these issues, consider the alternatives, communicate their thoughts, and develop white papers for each of our majors and minors, documenting areas of strengths and weaknesses. Thus, an agenda for ongoing improvement of the curriculum took shape.

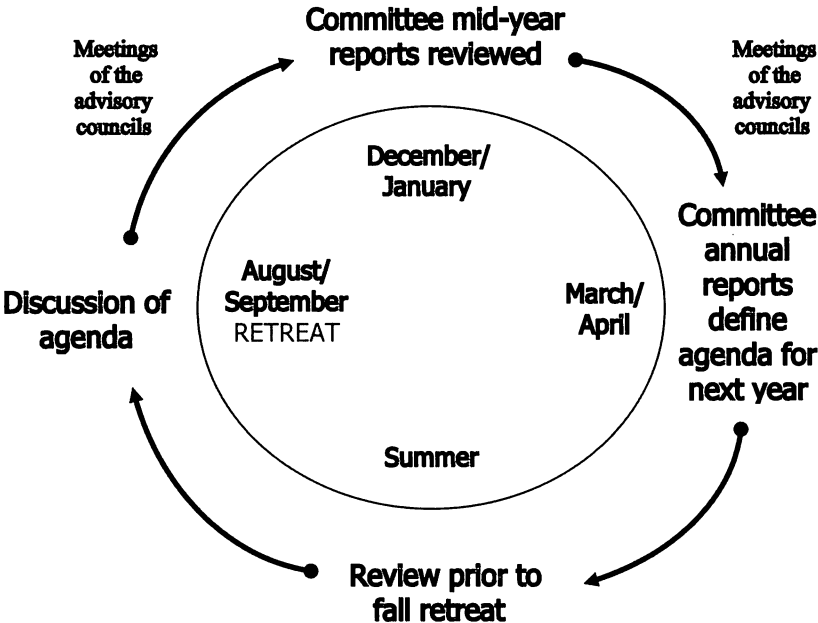
### **Dialogue to Identify Improvement Opportunities**

Various departments and committees, implementing their agenda through Campbell School's operational processes, report on their work to the entire faculty twice a year, in accordance with the annual "Work Products Review Process," shown in Figure 3. The review process begins with a fall semester retreat in the first week of each academic year. At this retreat the faculty members review the school's vision, mission, and goals, and conduct a strategic analysis of the school. Taking the lead from these, and the reports of the various committees developed during the previous academic year, the faculty develop the agenda for the new academic year. As the work progresses through the fall semester, the faculty members benefit from advice of the various advisory councils. At the end of the fall semester, the departments and committees report to the entire faculty of the school.



On discussing and reflecting on the performance of the processes and their outcomes, faculty members advise the respective departments and committees on corrective actions to be included in their agenda. During the spring semester, additional input is obtained from the various advisory councils. At the end of the academic year a final report is produced by all departments and committees; these inform the agenda to be developed as the cycle repeats itself during the next academic year.

**Figure 3  
Annual Work Product Review Process**



**Closing the Loop**

Effective data management will not, in itself, close the loop. Data will only be as effective as their use in the closing of the loop. However, effective data management is an essential prerequisite for closing the loop. Data and information need to be available to faculty and administrators at the time they are making a decision. Not having the data readily accessible implies that the capacity to make fact-based decisions will be diminished. With readily accessible data, faculty dialogue is much more centered on the critical issues, and speculation and conjecture become less of a concern. Also, faculty can focus very readily on specific problems and challenges identified by the data when data and information are within easy reach.

The development of the data management system at the Campbell School was initiated three years ago. It continues to evolve. However, within this short period we have already benefited from insights acquired into our processes through observation of trends in our assessment measures. Good data management has led us to better assessment and opportunities to find solutions to challenges that affect student learning. For instance, a recently administered Educational Testing Service Major Field Exit Tests revealed to us the following challenge: For some of our majors, the scholastic achievements of our students had improved continually and steadily over time, and had remained consistently above the national averages. Yet, for some other majors, the scholastic achievements had mixed results over time, rising in one year, and declining in another year, even as they remained above the national averages. With these patterns revealed, we examined our curriculum for differences in both the content and the context of the learning pathways experienced by the students. What and where were the differences in student experiences with respect to the different majors? Organized processing of data enabled us to reflect and deliberate on the curricular content and design and intervene with appropriate revisions in them. This was possible because we gather the data regularly through periodic administration of the Exit Tests, store the data in a coherent manner that is readily accessible to the faculty decision makers, and present the data in a dynamic format by plotting them as a function of time. Faculty members were able to discern the trends in student achievement precisely because the data were readily available. Once sensitized to the problem, it became easier for the faculty to be convinced that action needed to be taken. Improvements, once realized through such interventions, provide additional motivation to access and use data. Our faculty members have moved on from intervening for improvement in curriculum content and design to improvement in the mode of curricular delivery as well, with marked success in developing student skills in dealing with ethical issues, social responsibility, and global issues. Improvements have also been realized in the skills of our students in oral and written communication, teamwork, and use of technology, placing them well above the national averages with respect to such measures.

Similar monitoring of student activity in extracurricular areas is noteworthy. For instance, we have extended our assessment strategies to attainment of learning goals through student experiences outside the classroom, as through our student work program, activities in student clubs, and other social interactions. Consider the example of how we manage the achievement of certain learning goals pertaining to the intersection of the *Head and Heart* (see Figure 1). To assess student understanding of self and society, we deployed the *Defining Issues Test* described earlier. The students are asked to read cases or stories that present an ethical dilemma. They are then asked to make decisions about resolutions. Numerous studies

have shown that moral reasoning is developmental (Gibbs, 2003; Reimer, Paolitto and Hersh, 1990; Rest 1986). Therefore, this test is administered in two phases. The pre-test is given to incoming freshmen, and the post-test is given to graduating seniors. As discussed before, good data management, including consistent data acquisition, facilitates access to comparable performance and achievement data over time. Results from use of such data facilitate our efforts to align the content and the context of the curriculum and target the learning process to the specific learning goals. Faculty and administrators become sensitized to actions required, easing the task of promoting change. For change to happen, good data management is a prerequisite condition. While validating our curricular and non-curricular interventions for improved moral reasoning and ethical decision-making by our students, our two-phased data acquisition has also revealed room for further improvement.

Our approach to closing the loop has helped yield outstanding student competencies as assessed through Educational Testing Service Major Field Exit Tests. The Campbell School's ranking in student performance in recent years has improved dramatically, attesting to the impact of the data management system. The AACSB-Educational Benchmarking Undergraduate Business Exit Studies reveal that within the past four years the Campbell School has joined the very select set of business schools with superior ranking in perceived quality of faculty and instruction, faculty responsiveness, grades and student effort (major courses), student organizations and extracurricular activities, placement and career services, effective communication and teamwork, use and management of technology, effective management and leadership skills, and critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Additionally, the Campbell School ranked nationally among the best in faculty responsiveness, grades, and student effort in required courses; facilities and computing resources; characteristics of fellow classmates (camaraderie, academic quality, teamwork); advising; and overall satisfaction with program. Effective placement of graduates in the regional economy is evidenced by the employers returning to our campus repeatedly to recruit our graduates in increasing numbers.

### **Conclusion**

Much of the learning acquired by our faculty members, administrators, and staff—through the experience of developing our data management system—has little to do with the technical aspects of designing the system. We have, in many respects, discovered our strengths and weaknesses. We have discovered aspects of our own culture and modes of operations. We acquired new insights into aspects of our culture that need adjustment and strengths of our culture that we had not previously exploited. For instance, setting of a central repository, in itself, did not call for any change in our collective behavior. Yet, that very simple act set into motion an

evolutionary process which has resulted into an attitude of seeking information, innovations, and possibilities. Data are sought and expected, "here and now." This change of attitude resulted in the development of a Web site on the institutional intranet system. But data reveal challenges. How will we respond when our data reveals to us that the assurances we seek in specific areas are not available? How will we adapt if the process interventions call for alters culture, behavior, motivations, or modes of operation? With information accessible, questions become obvious and answers demand attention.

#### Endnotes

42 The *Defining Issues Test*, developed by Rest (1986), consists of a multiple-choice questionnaire that assesses recognition, comprehension and preference of options as indicators of moral development of an individual's concept of social justice. At Berry College, this test has been used to benchmark the student's moral and ethical reasoning ability through responses to short cases that present an ethical dilemma.

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**Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the faculty, staff, and students of the Campbell School of Business at Berry College to the development and adaptation of concepts presented here, and the leadership provided by Julie Bumpus, Paula Danskin, John Grout Robert Nehmer and Katherine Peacock in the development of our data management system.

*Primarily through embedded course assessment, Rockhurst University, a small college with a Jesuit tradition, is transforming itself into an institution that pursues program assessment as a learning imperative. The university provides outstanding support for faculty training and use of course embedded assessment. Thus, a culture of continuous focus on course and program learning goals is emerging. University sponsored course-embedded training workshops for faculty have become a key vehicle for engaging faculty and initiating the cultural change.*

## **CHAPTER 11 UNIVERSITY SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS SCHOOL ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY**

**William E. Bassett, James M. Daley,  
and William F. Haefele**

**Rockhurst University, Helzberg School of Management**

### **Background, Mission, and Goals**

Rockhurst is a Catholic Jesuit university located in Kansas City, Missouri. It is a learning community of 130 full-time faculty and 2800 students committed to “learning, leadership and service in the Jesuit tradition.” As reflected in its November 2002 strategic plan, Rockhurst seeks “to become nationally recognized for leadership formation through engaged learning which leads to committed service.”

The Helzberg School of Management exists to educate leaders of competence and conscience prepared to make a positive difference in the world. Thirty full-time business faculty pursue this mission by creating a learning environment that emphasizes reality-based, action learning focused on identified outcomes. Following a five-semester curricula review begun in Fall 2002, Helzberg School faculty adopted six school learning goals in October 2004:

- **Leadership** — demonstrate the pursuit of personal excellence while helping others develop to their full potential;
- **Ethical Behavior and Corporate Social Responsibility** — analyze ethical and corporate social responsibility issues in context and implement appropriate action(s);
- **Business Skills and Knowledge** — explain, integrate and apply foundational business knowledge and skills to effectively lead and manage organizations;
- **International / Global** — demonstrate the achievement of a global perspective that views business activity within a complex and changing world context;

- **Information Analysis and Application** — identify, access, analyze and synthesize appropriate business information;
- **Communication** — communicate effectively, and create an environment where effective communication can occur.

Before formally approving these school-level learning goals, the Helzberg School’s three curriculum assessment committees (Undergraduate Assessment, MBA Assessment, and Executive MBA Assessment Committees) developed separate program-level learning goals for the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration [BSBA], Master in Business Administration [MBA], and Executive Fellows MBA. Then, faculty committees worked for the better part of three semesters analyzing, refining, and mapping common body course objectives to program-level learning goals. While committees completed core course learning objectives and curricula mapping, the School used online surveys to receive external stakeholder input on final draft school learning goals. From beginning to end, the annual program assessment cycle discussed in Section 2 informed this two-year curricula review. The result has been three curricula where mission and core values are demonstrably linked to what should occur day-to-day in Rockhurst business classrooms. Establishing the goals, objectives, and desired outcomes within three “rationalized” curricula has been a crucial first step toward effective assessment and continuous improvement in the Helzberg School.

### **Defining Assessment**

Rockhurst University and the Helzberg School of Management (HSOM) view assessment as integral to scholarly teaching oriented on student learning. Assessment enables professors and faculty committees to know that students are achieving course objectives and program goals. Good assessment collects, analyzes, and uses evidence of students’ learning to inform effective teaching and curricula improvement.

Three mutually-supporting processes shape and support assessment activity in the Helzberg School of Management. The first process—a two-year mission-driven, outcomes-oriented curricula review—was addressed in Section 1. A second process, discussed immediately below, outlines a curricula committee structure and annual assessment cycle to ensure that useful assessment data are collected, analyzed, and applied. Also addressed below is a third process called Teaching, Scholarship and Service (TS2) that clarifies faculty roles and informs faculty development. The teaching peer review component of TS2 requires faculty to document how they use assessment evidence to improve teaching and learning in their respective classrooms. This ensures that assessment becomes a topic for professional dialogue among peers and a topic for faculty development discussions between professors and their division chairs. It also enables division chairs

to inform deans' allocation of resources for faculty development in the area of assessment.

In Fall 2002, faculty approved HSOM Process B.1 entitled, "Assessment and Continuous Improvement in the Helzberg School of Management." This policy established an Assurance of Learning Committee [AoLC] as the school-level academic affairs committee chaired by an Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs. The Assurance of Learning Committee is responsible for overseeing curricula revisions and academic program improvement; synchronization of Curriculum Assessment Committees' activities and *ad hoc* subcommittee work; curricula integration across academic programs; academic policy development; and catalog review and revision. Members of the AoLC include chairs from each of three Curriculum Assessment Committees (discussed below), both division chairs, and the Assistant Dean for Assessment and Strategic Planning. As necessary, the dean and faculty coordinators for each business discipline join the AoLC for discussion of—and votes on—important changes in curricula, process, or academic policy.

Curriculum Assessment Committees (CACs) are standing subcommittees of the AoLC focused on assurance of student learning and program review. Undergraduate, MBA and Executive Fellows CACs determine how, when, and whom to assess within their respective programs. The three Curriculum Assessment Committees collect, analyze and evaluate the assessment data that drive curricula and academic program improvement in the Helzberg School. All full-time faculty serve on at least one Curriculum Assessment Committee. This is important, as it creates opportunity for faculty involvement in and support for assessment.

HSOM Process B.1 also establishes an annual assessment and continuous improvement cycle. During the fall, all three Curriculum Assessment Committees complete the analysis and evaluation of assessment data gathered during the previous spring and summer. This includes completion of any program-level analysis of course-embedded assessment activities begun the previous year. Each CAC prepares a brief written report to the Assurance of Learning Committee that includes: (1) a summary of assessment materials reviewed; (2) analysis and evaluation of available data; and (3) recommendations for program improvement. After receiving each CAC's report and considering other academic affairs issues, the Assurance of Learning Committee orchestrates program-improvement activities among business discipline faculty committees, *ad hoc* committees, CACs, and the "committee as a whole."

Early each spring, Curriculum Assessment Committees submit a second brief report to the AoLC establishing program-level assessment priorities for the coming year. These two-page, annual assessment plans outline specific means and methods for gathering assessment data from among the options outlined in Figure 1. Discussion and approval of each



CAC assessment plan by the Assurance of Learning Committee helps synchronize and identify resources needed to support assessment activities during the upcoming year. It also ensures that assessment and continuous improvement activity is consistent with the Helzberg School's strategic focus and the dean's academic year priorities. An excellent recent example of this has been the purposeful shift from a dependence on indirect assessment and student satisfaction surveys to more direct assessment with particular emphasis on course-embedded assessment and student portfolios.

**Figure 1**

**Assessment Means and Methods Employed by the Helzberg School**

<b>Assessment Instrument</b>	<b>Who Is Assessed</b>	<b>What Is Assessed</b>
Course-embedded assessment	Students in any course, each semester	- Student learning in a course/program
Portfolio analysis	Students in selected programs, over the course of their studies	- Student learning
Capstone project analysis	Students upon completion of their academic program.	- Student learning
ETS Major Field Tests	Undergraduate students	- Student learning
Learning skills, personality, and leadership style inventories	Students (to enhance self-awareness oriented on personal growth)	- Students' personal traits, strengths & potential areas for growth
National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE]	Seniors and juniors	- Student engagement in activities representing effective ed. practice
National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE]	Faculty teaching undergraduate freshmen and / or seniors	- Faculty perceptions of student engagement in education process
Focus groups	Students, alumni, client firm leaders	- Student & stakeholder perceptions
AACSB-EBI Student Exit Survey [Nationally Normed]	UG and MBA students in a capstone course during final semester of study	- Student satisfaction with- and perceptions of-HSOM experience
HSOM Advisory Board feedback	HSOM Advisory Board members	- External stakeholder perceptions (programs' relevance to community)
Student Advisory Board feedback	XF, MBA, and UG students	- Internal stakeholder perceptions (programs' relevance to students)
AACSB-EBI Alumni Survey	Rockhurst UG, MBA, and EXF Alumni	- External stakeholder perceptions (curricula relevance to practitioners)
AACSB-EBI Faculty Survey	HSOM faculty	- Internal stakeholder perceptions
Benchmarking Studies	HSOM academic programs relative to other programs at other schools	- Curriculum design & course content

Although the two-year curricula review described in Section 1 was conceived in Fall 2002 as one of three major initiatives to improve assessment practice in the Helzberg School, it could not have occurred without establishing the committee infrastructure and procedures outlined in HSOM Process B.2. Said another way, “curricula alignment” (major initiative #1) has been an important two-year consequence of the Helzberg School’s new program assessment and continuous improvement process (major initiative #2). Although we plan to use a similar but accelerated series of steps to revalidate vision, mission, and school-level learning goals every four years, the maintenance of curricula alignment with the school’s current vision, mission, and learning goals is a continuous annual responsibility of the Assurance of Learning Committee and its three Curriculum Assessment Committees.

The third of the three initiatives undertaken in Fall 2002 recognized the importance of creating and sustaining a faculty culture that understands, values and employs course-embedded assessment. In Spring 2003, a vote of the full faculty adopted HSOM Process Document A.0 entitled, “Teaching, Scholarship and Service (TS2).” TS2 clarifies expectations of faculty in the traditional areas of teaching, scholarship, and service consistent with the school’s mission, academic program requirements, and individual faculty qualifications. It drives both faculty evaluation and individual faculty development processes. Although the “Scholarship” component of TS2 had the most immediate impact on Helzberg School faculty, the peer evaluation of a professor’s “Teaching” activities promises to have the most profound influence on faculty culture, and the quality of a Rockhurst business education. Each fall, each full-time professor provides a three-member teaching, peer-review committee with a portfolio of selected course and course preparation materials from the previous year. Peer committee members may visit their colleague’s classroom(s), and evaluate her/his teaching portfolio in two required, and three-of-six selected areas. One of the two required areas for peer committee review is “Assessment of Achievement of Learning Outcomes.” Each peer committee member evaluates whether one course “meets expectations,” “exceeds expectations,” or “fails to meet expectations” in the area of classroom assessment, using three specific criteria:

- Assignments, projects, and exams are appropriate for the learning objectives identified for the course;
- Learning artifacts are gathered and reviewed to assess whether students are achieving desired outcomes; and
- If desired outcomes are not met, appropriate consideration is given to potential causes or modifications needed.

Although annual peer review of faculty teaching is being phased into the Helzberg School for the first time this academic year (AY) 2004-2005, we are already experiencing its influence in several important areas. TS2 encourages each professor to reflect upon and share assessment practice in at least one course every year. Participation on several teaching peer committees exposes faculty to colleagues' assessment practices and informs each faculty member's annual discussions with chairs focused on development. Chairs now bring a much clearer sense of their divisions' faculty development needs into resource allocation discussions with the deans. So, as TS2 helps foster a community understanding of classroom assessment in a business context, it also helps identify faculty development needs and focuses necessary resources.

### **Resources and Responsibilities for Assessment**

Faculty members exercise responsibility for program-level assessment and curricula revision within the committees discussed in Section II. Chairing the AoLC is the School's Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs, a tenured professor invited to serve a three-year hitch as part-time administrator while continuing to teach a half-load. The remaining two members of the Helzberg School assistant deans' team are the Assistant Dean for Operations and an Assistant Dean for Assessment and Strategic Planning. This third position is a direct response to the new AACSB-I standards and their emphasis on assessment and strategic planning for accreditation maintenance. Although it was originally conceived as a part-time administrative billet with half-load teaching responsibilities, this changed even before implementation when the individual occupying the chair was also named director of a new Office for University Assessment. Having one person perform similar program assessment and strategic planning responsibilities for both business school and parent university has afforded unique opportunities for synergies, efficiencies, and cross-campus collaboration. It also complemented the fact that in AY 2003-2004, two other business school faculty served as part-time director and assistant director for the university's Center for Teaching Excellence. In 2003-2004, at the very time the Helzberg School came to see faculty development as crucial to more effective course-embedded assessment, it was able to draw upon university-level resources who possessed both assessment expertise and a business frame of reference. It is the collaboration between business school and university, to help develop business faculty capacity in the area of course-embedded assessment, that constitutes the "best practice" discussed in Section 4.

### **Best Practice**

Rockhurst shares its "best practice" with humility born of two facts: we are in our self-study year for initial accreditation, and much of what we share

has been made possible by a North Central Association of Colleges and Schools wake-up call in 2003 that revealed university assessment practices needed work. The new AACSB-I Assurance of Learning Standards encouraged the Helzberg School to create the position of Assistant Dean for Strategic Planning and Assessment in 2003-2004. So, too, did North Central's March 2003 request for an April 2005 progress report serve as catalyst for Rockhurst to: (1) create a new Office for University Assessment comprised of a half-time director, full-time analyst, and part-time Faculty-in-Residence for Assessment; (2) implement Rockhurst Assessment Plan 2004 with its emphasis on course-embedded assessment; and (3) increase university funds allocated to assessment from \$1 in AY 2002-2003, to over \$115,000 in AY 2004-2005. This institutional commitment to assessment could not have come at a better time for the Helzberg School of Management.

### **Course-Embedded Assessment**

Course-embedded assessments are program-assessment activities that take place in a specific course and not in an out-of-class environment as a stand-alone activity. The goal of course-embedded assessment is to use existing resources and the classroom infrastructure to support assessment. Course-embedded assessment will normally increase the likelihood that both students and faculty will support assessment, because the evidence is collected in the classroom as part of a planned course activity. The challenge is to make this activity as close as possible to a regular part of the course where students perceive it as such, and faculty view it as an important element of the course. An example of a course-embedded assessment is a case presentation that the faculty agree to use to assess oral communication skills. Students would present the case as part of their normal course activities, but would be assessed based on a rubric that the faculty approved. Normally, faculty would identify specific criteria (or traits) based on their collective values and use those traits to build the rubric.

A "rubric" is a grading scheme that consists of behavior-oriented criteria (traits) and various performance standards. (See Figure 3). The professor employs the rubric to provide individualized feedback to her students while, at the same time, aggregating results to measure students' achievement of an important oral communication learning objective. This course-embedded assessment activity influences what the professor does in future lessons during that semester, as well as how she structures learning activities within that course during future semesters. Even more importantly from a program assessment perspective, results are shared with the Undergraduate Curriculum Assessment Committee for use in assessing BSBA students' written communication skills. Two specific examples of recent course-embedded assessments used for MBA and BSBA program-level assessment will be shared later in this chapter.

## **Genesis of Course Embedded Assessments**

Rockhurst University's strategic emphasis on course-embedded assessment was adopted as a result of experiences with a prior university assessment plan that stressed pre- /post-quantitative testing at the beginning and the end of a student's educational experience. The results of such efforts provided little to no information that was of any significant utility to individual faculty working to improve learning outcomes in specific courses. In other words, the post learning assessment occurred at a time that was too "distant" from the teaching-learning experience. This distance provided little motivation for faculty to engage in course redesign, because the information was typically reported in a manner that was not sufficiently specific to be diagnostic. For example, faculty might receive feedback on student learning from a course that was delivered 3-4 or more semesters prior to the actual assessment. A further problem was the diffusion of responsibility for assessment outcomes. Especially in areas where there were multiple sections, it was sometimes the response of faculty that the learning deficits were the result of other faculty efforts, not their own.

A course-embedded approach attempts to address these problems by more tightly linking (in time) the teaching-learning process with the assessment process. This tighter linkage increases the immediacy and relevancy of assessment data and weakens the contention that the individual faculty member is not responsible for the assessed outcome. An added benefit of the course-embedded approach is the central role of the faculty member in determining the learning objective, the pedagogical strategy used to achieve the objective, and the appropriate assessment method. Respecting faculty prerogative in these areas increases the likelihood that assessment will become a constitutive element of the faculty role with respect to teaching and learning.

## **Faculty Development to Support Course-Embedded Assessment**

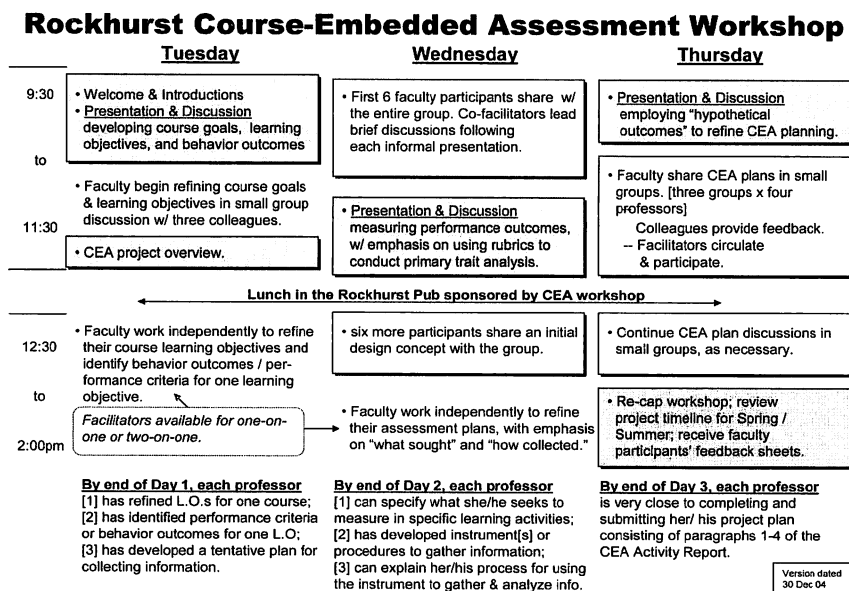
If these were university and Helzberg School rationale for placing strategic emphasis on course-embedded assessment, no faculty development activity has proven more important to implementation and practice than Rockhurst's three-day Course-Embedded Assessment Workshops. Since July 2003, 30% of university full-time faculty and 38% of business faculty have participated in a three-day workshop. Running at least two sessions per year for the next two years, 60% of university and 70% of Helzberg School faculty will have participated in at least one workshop by the end of AY 2006-2007.

Workshops are co-facilitated by the university's Faculty-in-Residence for Assessment and by the Director of Rockhurst's Center for Teaching Excellence who, for the first three workshops, was an associate professor of Accounting. Although anywhere from six to 12 faculty members have participated in a workshop, the optimal size appears to be nine because of

the amount of small group and one-on-one work. The university's Academic Affairs Council allocates seats for future workshops across schools and colleges, and the Committee on Rockhurst Assessment establishes selection criteria as needed. After collecting responses to a campus-wide invitation, deans select final participants using university and their own criteria. Participants receive a \$400 stipend for attending the workshop and submitting a project proposal and a second \$400 stipend upon submission of a final project report. Both faculty facilitators receive \$750 per workshop. The Director, Office for University Assessment, serves as a third small group facilitator and, with help from the OUA's Assessment Analyst, ensures that all workshop administration goes smoothly. (Readers can receive more information about workshop preparation and resource requirements using the contact information provided at chapter's end.)

Workshops blend brief presentations with group discussion, individual work, and one-on-one mentoring. Faculty develop at least one course-embedded assessment activity that they will conduct and analyze during the upcoming term. To the degree that professors come to see course-embedded assessment as a useful tool in teaching focused on student learning, the workshop achieves its intended purpose. Each workshop unfolds differently depending upon multiple factors, the most important of which is group size and professors' interests. Figure 2 is drawn from our January 2005 workshop and provides a flavor for activities flow and daily outcomes.

**Figure 2**  
**January 2005 CEA Workshop Activities and Outcomes**



What makes a Rockhurst CEA workshop most effective is that the facilitator/participant interaction continues well into the next academic term. A facilitator and the OUA's assessment analyst try to meet with each participant at least once during the semester to discuss project progress. In many cases, this turns into several sessions, at times requested by the professor. These conversations bring the workshop forward into the context of an actual course, making projects even more meaningful. Post workshop interaction is also helping reinforce that university-level resources can help with other course-embedded assessment activities in other courses in the months ahead.

Both the Helzberg School and the Office for University Assessment seek to leverage three-day workshops to reach faculty unfamiliar with course-embedded assessment. Examples of these efforts include:

- During Spring 2004, professors in Theology, Physical Therapy, English, and Accounting shared their CEA workshop project results with colleagues during department meetings. These sessions were particularly helpful as they addressed course-embedded assessment in a context relevant to that department's discipline and teaching focus.
- In August 2004 during the university fall faculty workshop, the Committee on Rockhurst Assessment and Center for Teaching Excellence co-sponsored a two-hour CEA poster session. Five professors from the first two workshops presented projects and results to over thirty colleagues. Most of the January 2005 workshop participants were present at this August poster session.
- In October 2004, the Center for Teaching Excellence sponsored a lunch-time workshop on course-embedded assessment for eleven faculty. Co-facilitated by the Faculty-in-Residence for Assessment and an English professor from Workshop II, participants discussed the results a CEA project on qualitative assessment of student writing.
- In November 2004, a management professor shared his oral communication project with the Helzberg School faculty at an all-faculty meeting. What is particularly powerful about this project is how it represents one of two instances where a CEA workshop activity is being used for AY2004-2005 program-level assessment in the Helzberg School of Management.

### **Illustrating the Value of Workshops**

One project from the July 2003 CEA workshop focused on developing performance criteria for students' written and oral communication products. A management professor was interested in improving rubrics for his own course, Effective Communication for Leaders. More importantly, as a

member of the MBA Curriculum Assessment Committee, he was also interested in developing criteria and standards for potential use across the whole program. After using it himself in Fall 2003, this professor asked four colleagues from different disciplines to employ his rubric (Figure 3) to evaluate a series of videotaped BUS 6020 presentations gathered in Spring 2004. After analyzing colleagues' feedback and submitting a report to the MBA Curriculum Assessment Committee, this management professor facilitated two Fall 2004 discussions within the MBA Curriculum Assessment Committee which resulted in agreement on a set of criteria for use in two non-Management courses during Spring 2005. By AY 2005-2006, the MBA CAC seeks a common set of oral presentation criteria and standards in rubric form that professors in a variety of MBA courses over multiple semesters can employ to assess a crucial element of MBA Learning Goal #6: "communicate effectively (speak, listen, read, write), and create an environment where effective communication can occur."

In January 2004 during CEA Workshop II, a second management professor developed a course-embedded assessment of students' recall of foundational business concepts for use during the first class meeting of BUS 4940, the capstone for Rockhurst's Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. This assessment allowed the professor to suggest remediation and focused self-study to individual students, and to shape lesson activities during the first two weeks of this important course. A project by yet another management professor who attended the January 2005 CEA Workshop IV assesses students' ability to "define stakeholders, and explain how groups of stakeholders can affect business decision-making" in the BSBA introductory course. With the enthusiastic endorsement of the Helzberg School's Undergraduate Curriculum Assessment Committee, both management professors are working together to synchronize their course-embedded assessments around students' understanding of stakeholders' role and influence. By coordinating course-embedded assessment in the sophomore-level BSBA introduction course and senior-level capstone course around a single common body course objective, the Undergraduate Curriculum Assessment Committee gains important program-level insight into student learning oriented toward BSBA Program Learning Goal #3, "explain, integrate, and apply foundational business knowledge and skills to effectively lead and manage organizations."

### **Feedback and Reflection**

No two CEA workshop experiences have been the same, but all participants report learning something new about how assessment might inform their teaching. Some have been more enthusiastic than others, and not one leapt from zero to 70 in three days. But progress is being made, and a professional dialogue around effective classroom assessment is gaining momentum and participants.



**Figure 3**  
**Oral Communication Rubric Designed in CEA**  
**Workshop I for BUS 6020<sup>43</sup>**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Article: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>1. Context, Scope, &amp; Focus</b>				
Criteria	Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet	Comments
<p>Introduction</p> <p>Sets the context for the presentation by clarifying purpose, identifying the speaker, giving background information, and previewing the report. Includes final conclusions/ recommendations. Also, introduces topic by tapping into audience's prior knowledge.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Focus</p> <p>The presentation is focused on just one or a few main points. It develops ideas and information pertinent to these points.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>2. Substance</b>				
<p>Organization</p> <p>Sequence is logical. There is logical linkage between parts. The main points are clear, precise, and meaningful.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Development</p> <p>Claims made are supported with data (qualitative and/or quantitative); ideas are explained appropriately (e.g., examples or descriptions).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Visual Aids</p> <p>Graphics and visual aids are integrated so as to support main ideas; they are coherent and easy to process.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>3. Delivery</b>				
<p>Vocal Delivery</p> <p>Voice projects clearly and with enough expression so as to 1) avoid monotone, and 2) verbal fillers. Pace is neither halting and uneven nor is it too fast. Language is articulate and clear.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Physical Delivery</p> <p>Gains and maintains audience attention by 1) using direct eye contact; 2) moving to engage audience (movement of hands and body are engaging rather than distracting); and 3) effectively transitioning between major sections of the message.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Using Visual Aids</p> <p>Manages visual aids so that they are 1) in sync with the verbal points; and 2) a seamless part of the physical delivery.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Time Allocation</p> <p>Delivers within allotted time range.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

The “essential element” of Rockhurst three-day, course-embedded workshops appears to be follow-up, one-on-one mentoring provided by workshop co-facilitators during the academic term following a workshop. This follow-up is possible due to a Faculty-in-Residence for Assessment, the assessment analyst, and two teaching faculty serving part-time in the Center for Teaching Excellence. These “subject matter experts” — four of whom receive course release time to make them accessible to colleagues— help facilitate a process of professional self-development that we hope extends into new courses over future semesters.

Looking at a particular assessment practice within a professor’s own discipline and teaching context helps. This realization led us to encourage workshop participants to share CEA project results with department or discipline colleagues over free lunches or at department meetings.

### **Conclusion**

In AY 2002-2003 the Helzberg School of Management embarked upon a three-part initiative to improve assessment in Rockhurst business education. After analyzing final drafts of AACSB-I’s new Assurance of Learning standards, the Helzberg School revised its curricula review and assessment committee structure, then implemented an annual continuous improvement cycle. This enabled a two-year effort to develop school and program learning goals linked to mission and core values, and to ensure that common core learning objectives effectively address the new learning goals. A third important piece of the school’s assessment and continuous improvement work has been to develop faculty understanding and practice of course-embedded assessment.

We are increasingly confident that course-embedded assessment is the appropriate cornerstone upon which to build Helzberg School and Rockhurst University assurance of student learning programs. While harder to aggregate and analyze at program and school levels, course-embedded assessment offers the most insightful glimpse of whether students are really learning what we say they should. Our twin challenges remain developing faculty capacity in classroom assessment and building program and school-level process by which course embedded assessment data is collected, analyzed, and applied.

As a university community, we are coming to understand that assessment must not be divorced in the minds of faculty from the practice of effective teaching oriented on student learning. Effective classroom assessment cannot be directed by administrators, ensured by process, or mandated by policy. Effective program and school assessment will always contain faculty development and faculty incentives components. Creating process is important; positively influencing professional culture is essential.

We are pleased to share more information about our course-embedded assessment workshops and Helzberg School assessment processes.

Should a reader have feedback or suggestions for improvement, please contact the Helzberg School's Assistant Dean for Assessment and Strategic Planning at [bill.bassett@rockhurst.edu](mailto:bill.bassett@rockhurst.edu), 816-501-4122. We are eager to hear what you have to say.

#### Endnotes

43 *Editor's note:* This instrument could be made even stronger by specifying for each trait a description of the performance/behaviors that "do not meet," "meet," or "exceed" expectations.

#### Authors Bios

**William E. Bassett, M.A.**, is Director of Rockhurst University's Office for University Assessment. He also serves as Assistant Dean of the Helzberg School of Management.

**James M. Daley, Ph.D.**, is Dean of the Helzberg School of Management at Rockhurst University.

**William F. Haefele, Ph.D.**, is Vice President for Academic Affairs at Rockhurst University. He has been instrumental in creating an environment that encourage faculty to focus on their course and program learning goals through embedded course assessments.

*Faculty members, as a general rule, take very seriously and guard very zealously their autonomy in developing, delivering, and evaluating their courses and gauging student learning. Moreover, many faculty members misunderstand the concept of “academic freedom,” and some revolt openly against the kind of collaborative decision-making that assurance of learning requires. This chapter examines and clarifies the concept of academic freedom as it relates to assurance of student learning.*

## **CHAPTER 12 ACADEMIC FREEDOM — IS IT AT ODDS WITH ASSESSMENT?**

**H. James Williams**

**Grand Valley State University, Seidman College of Business**

### **Context**

As noted in chapter 1 (Vol. 1, No. 1), assurance of learning focuses on program-level goals and assessments. This implies that faculty will collaborate in developing learning goals; in determining where in the curricula important learning goals will be introduced, discussed, and practiced; and in delivering course content consistently across different sections of the same course. Moreover, the development of appropriate rubrics and their implementation also require faculty cooperation and collaboration. In many instances, the most cost-effective (both monetarily and in terms of time) assessments are embedded in existing, individual courses. Since course-embedded assessments often provide student incentives to apply maximum effort (through grades), they often prove to be more effective. On the other hand, in these circumstances faculty must be willing to subject some of their individual preferences for assignments, use of student results and classroom time to that of the collective faculty. Finally, effective “closing of the loop” demands faculty collaboration and determination of curricula and course refinements to support effective student learning.

Faculty members, as a general rule, take very seriously and guard very zealously their autonomy in developing, delivering, and evaluating their courses and gauging student learning. Moreover, many faculty members misunderstand the concept of academic freedom. As a result, some faculty revolt openly against the kind of collaborative decision-making implied by the best practices and recommendations for implementing effective assurance of learning programs. Those faculty who fail to revolt openly often suffer their concerns and discontentment silently, feeling no less impinged upon. Both results fly in the face of desirable faculty cooperation and buy-in.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the dimensions of the principles of academic freedom germane to the faculty and administration in the context of developing programs for the assurance of student learning.

## **Definition of “Academic Freedom”**

### **Two Dimensions of Academic Freedom**

“Academic freedom” is perhaps one of the most important principles of higher education. It strikes at the very core of **who we are** and the value we profess to bring to society: unfettered intellectual investigation, expansion, and discourse. Unfortunately, it is also perhaps one of the least understood principles, by both higher education and the public.

One level of confusion arises from the fact that academic freedom includes two different dimensions — “institutional” and “individual.” *Institutional academic freedom* protects the higher education institution from interference by the government (and, by extension, the courts); this right protects the community of scholars and their profession, rather than individual faculty.<sup>44</sup> *Individual academic freedom*, on the other hand, protects an individual faculty member. As a practical matter, these two dimensions of academic freedom involve three separate sets of rights relationships that may conflict: (1) the academic rights of the institution versus the government’s rights; (2) the academic rights of the individual versus the government’s rights; and (3) the academic rights of the individual versus the academic institution’s rights. The imperatives of the assessment of learning implicate the third of these potential conflicts.

### **American Association of University Professors**

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) provides the only generally accepted definition in its “1940 Statement of Academic Freedom and Tenure.”<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the dismissals of faculty for expressing their political opinions led to the formation of the AAUP and prompted its promulgation of this statement:<sup>46</sup>

- a. Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
- b. Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.<sup>47</sup>

- c. College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

Most colleges and universities have adopted some form of this statement, which they reflect in their faculty handbooks.

Although the AAUP publicly censures colleges and universities it believes are guilty of violating academic freedom principles, it is neither a governmental nor judicial entity. Accordingly, its definition of academic freedom, generally, has no legal effect. The definition carries legal significance (in terms of contract or employment law) only to the extent institutions of higher education adopt it either explicitly or implicitly as a part of the employment contract. While Congress has not addressed the concept of academic freedom through legislation the courts, through judicial opinions and dicta, have been very active.

### **Constitutional Perspective**

According to *Keyishian v. Board of Regents* 385 UD 589, 603 (1967), the basis for the freedom accorded both academic institutions and individuals is that the classroom is the “marketplace of ideas” and is critical to a democratic society. The conventional wisdom, including some statements by the U.S. Supreme Court, interprets the principle of academic freedom as a legal right, derived from the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Indeed, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Keyishian v. Board of Regents*, 385 U.S. 589 (1967), proclaimed that “Our Nation is deeply committed to safeguarding academic freedom, which is of transcendent value to all of us and not merely to the teachers concerned. That freedom is therefore a *special concern of the First Amendment*, which does not tolerate laws that cast a pall of orthodoxy over the classroom.” [Emphases added.] Unfortunately, no concrete, logical analysis or exposition of any “special” protection the Constitution provides exists.

Interestingly, the courts, in their zeal to support the basic notion of academic freedom, have created confusion. The evoking of the First Amendment as providing special protection to those in higher education, in particular, causes much of the confusion. “Academic freedom is an amorphous quasi-legal concept that is neither precisely defined nor convincingly justified from legal principles. These two defects make the law

of academic freedom difficult to understand.”<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, as a result, higher education faculty in the United States may “... believe that academic freedom is a valid legal doctrine with power and vitality, when — in fact — it is often only empty rhetoric by professors and judges.”<sup>49</sup> Professor J. Peter Byrne, of Georgetown University Law Center agrees:

The First Amendment protects academic freedom. This simple proposition stands explicit or implicit in numerous judicial opinions, often proclaimed in fervid rhetoric. Attempts to understand the scope and foundation of a constitutional guarantee of academic freedom, however, generally result in paradox or confusion. The cases, shorn of panegyrics, are inconclusive, the promise of rhetoric reproached by the ambiguous realities of academic life.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, the case law supports these propositions that academic freedom is more imagined than real, at least with respect to the potential conflict of the academic rights of the individual faculty member with the academic rights of the academic institution.

### **Institutional Academic Freedom**

Institutional academic freedom reserves to the university itself selection of faculty and students, as well as issues in curriculum, such as the content of the syllabus in each class.<sup>51</sup> Institutional academic freedom does *not* protect individual professors with unorthodox views from dismissal by the university administration, although institutional academic freedom does protect professors from dismissal by legislators or politicians.

The clearest definition of institutional academic freedom in the United States appears first in a 1957 concurring opinion in *Sweezy v. State of New Hampshire*, 354 US 234, 262-63 (1957), a U.S. Supreme Court case, stating that institutional academic freedom requires that the university may determine for itself: (1) who may teach; (2) what may be taught; (3) how it shall be taught; and (4) who may be admitted to study. The Court, in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 US 265, 311-13 (1978), proffered the first legally effective, precedent-setting statement of this fundamental university right in the majority opinion. In *Bakke*, the Court was expounding on the university’s “four essential freedoms,” including the right to decide who may be admitted to study (as long as it does not violate individual constitutional rights). The University’s use of a quota system for admissions violated the respondent’s constitutional rights. The Court, in *Regents of the University of Michigan v. Ewing*, 474 US 214, 226-27 (1985) reiterated universities’ “four essential freedoms” in upholding the University’s decision to dismiss a student from a medical program.

This and related cases, primarily decided during the 1950s and 1960s, support the principle of academic freedom for the entire university community, that is, *institutional academic freedom*.

### **Individual Academic Freedom**

In large measure *individual academic freedom* is not so much a legal concept as it is a function of the internal culture of a particular academic institution; it is the relationship between individual faculty members and the university. Administrators and faculty committees (collectively, the “university”) establish the rules-based and tacit guidelines in which faculty perform their teaching, research, and service functions. Faculty members, then, are responsible for performing their duties in an environment that values and promotes the full range of intellectual inquiry and discourse — academic freedom.

Many faculty know (some first-hand, too many via the “grapevine”) the AAUP’s definition of academic freedom, especially the “freedom in the classroom” segment of section “b.” Moreover, many interpret this component to convey to them a right to determine the subject matter addressed and the pedagogy utilized in the courses they teach. Accordingly, in the eyes of some faculty — and administrators — assurance of learning fundamentals and best practices implicate this segment of the principle of academic freedom. However, as discussed below, these faculty and administrators infer too much from the section “b” language.

The U.S. Supreme Court mentioned academic freedom for the first time, in a concurring opinion (which is not law), in *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, (1957). However, in addition to addressing the issue of *institutional academic freedom*, the Court addressed the issue of *individual academic freedom* as it relates to government intervention and interference. The Court held that the contempt conviction of a college professor for his refusal to answer questions by the State’s Attorney General, concerning the content of his lectures and his knowledge of a particular political party and its adherents, was an invasion of the professor’s liberties in the areas of academic freedom and political expression. Chief Justice Warren expressed the following thoughts in the majority opinion:

We believe that there unquestionably was an invasion of petitioner’s liberties in the areas of academic freedom and political expression – areas in which government should be extremely reticent to tread. The essentiality of freedom in the community of American universities is almost self-evident. No one should underestimate the vital role in a democracy that is played by those who guide and train our youth. To impose any strait jacket upon the intellectual leaders in our colleges and universities would imperil the future of our Nation. No field of education is so thoroughly comprehended by man that new discoveries cannot yet be made. Particularly is that true in the social sciences, where few, if any, principles are accepted as absolutes. Scholarship cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. Teachers and students must



always remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding; otherwise our civilization will stagnate and die. <sup>52</sup>

Later Federal and Supreme Court cases establish a theme that *individual academic freedom* (in relation to government interference) while not an independent First Amendment right for individuals, is, as a type of speech, protected under the First Amendment. Thus, faculty members have a right to express themselves freely in the classroom — as faculty members. On the other hand, their comments must be germane to the course subject matter. In *Rubin v. Ikenberry*, 933 F. Supp. 1425, 1433-34 (C.D. Ill. 1996), two plaintiffs filed sexual harassment grievances against Rubin on account of his sexual commentary, inquiries, and jokes during class. Rubin, a tenured faculty member, did not deny making the offending comments; rather, he maintained that when evaluated in the proper context, they are pedagogically appropriate. (Rubin was teaching “Methods of Teaching Social Studies in the Elementary Schools.”) The court ruled that the university’s subsequent dismissal of Rubin violated neither the First Amendment nor the professor’s academic freedom. Thus, in addition to expressing themselves freely as private citizens (especially on a matters of public concern), faculty may express themselves freely in the classroom, as long as that speech is relevant to the course subject matter. The other “message” is that the university may decide what is pedagogically appropriate, regardless of the faculty member’s judgment.

### **Academic Freedom in Research and Institutional Affairs**

Of course, faculty responsibilities extend beyond work in the classroom. Both research and publication and service in other institutional affairs are standard faculty expectations. Generally, courts have upheld stringently faculty academic freedom rights in the context of their research and publication roles and in their roles outside the classroom. In deciding these cases, the courts have relied primarily on the *Pickering v. Board of Education* “balancing test.” The *Pickering* test requires a balancing of the First Amendment rights of faculty (as citizens) with the interests of the university, to determine whether the employee’s interest in self-expression outweighs the university’s interest (as government employer). On the other hand, the courts have been reluctant to interfere with the university’s right to determine teaching methods, course content, and grading policies in cases involving classroom conduct. Indeed, the courts have been loathed to intervene when the faculty member’s *individual academic freedom*, at least ostensibly, conflicts with the university’s *institutional academic freedom*.

### **Academic Freedom in the Classroom**

As noted above, academic freedom concerns, in the context of

assurance of learning, revolves around faculty members' often perceived right to determine the subject matter, pedagogy, and student assessment methodologies in the classes they teach. Much to the contrary, the courts have fairly well established the university's right to determine teaching methods, course content, grading and other policies, and academic standards, and to create and foster a cooperative work environment. Moreover, the courts, in recognition of *institutional academic freedom*, are reluctant to supplant their judgments for those of the university's in these areas (see *Sweezy, Bakke*, and *Ewing*, above).

The rights of faculty members within the institution, including in the classroom, except as specifically protected, are primarily those of an employee. Moreover, *Sweezy, Bakke*, and *Ewing* (see above) have established the "four essential freedoms" of the academic institution. Finally, a number of other courts have expounded on "the freedoms," including the university's right to establish the curriculum, regulate teaching methods, and specify teacher evaluations (see "Potential Areas of Perceived Conflict," below). Therefore, the university may dismiss from employment a non-tenured faculty member for a good reason, a bad reason, or for no reason (except, for constitutionally prohibited reasons, such as discrimination). On the other hand, it may dismiss a tenured faculty member only in accordance with due-process. Of course, the university may not dismiss either tenured or non-tenured faculty members for exercising their First Amendment rights. The court, in *Parate v. Isibor*, 868 F.2d 821 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1989), ruled that the university may not compel a faculty member to change a grade; that violates the faculty member's free speech right to assign a grade to the student based on his or her personal judgment. However, the court noted that the university's administration may change the student's grade, because the faculty member has no First Amendment interest in the grade the student ultimately receives.

### **Academic Freedom in Private Colleges and Universities**

In public institutions of higher education, academic freedom encompasses contract law, as well as constitutional concepts and, in some instances, state statutes and administrative regulations. In private institutions, on the other hand, the faculty contract may be the only viable legal restriction on the university's authority to limit academic freedom. Of course, as noted above, most institutions of higher education, including private institutions, adopt some version of the AAUP's definition of academic freedom. Still, since the Constitution of the United States was designed to curtail the exercise of governmental power, the putative constitutional protections of academic freedom fail to apply to private institutions, *per se*. It does not prohibit private institutions from impinging on such freedoms as free speech and, by extension, academic freedom.

On the other hand, courts can apply the “state action” doctrine as a basis for applying Federal Constitutional protections to those affiliated with private institutions. Indeed, in some cases, the courts have found that the private institution, by virtue of its significant contacts with the government, is engaged in “state action,” especially in cases of racial discrimination. For example, the court in *Williams v. Howard University*, 528 F.2d 658 (D.C. Cir. 1976), distinguished the plaintiff’s claims, finding that while the university’s receipt of substantial federal funding was not sufficient to characterize its conduct as “state action” for a due process claim, it was a sufficient nexus to characterize the conduct as “state action” for purposes of a racial discrimination claim. The court ruled similarly in *Weise v. Syracuse University*, 522 F.2d 397 (2d Cir. 1975), upholding the “state action” doctrine in considering the sex discrimination charges of one female faculty applicant and one terminated female faculty member.

Still, in the majority of the cases, and presumably in the cases of academic freedom claims, courts are apparently reluctant to find sufficient nexus to convert private university activity into “state action” for purposes of applying Constitutional law principles.

### **Potential Areas of Perceived Conflict**

This section addresses potential areas of perceived conflict in the assurance of the learning process. The process includes: (1) identifying learning goals and measurable objectives for a program; (2) aligning the curriculum to incorporate the learning goals; (3) selecting assessment methods; (4) analyzing and discussing the results; and (5) improving the curriculum. A potential conflict in each sub-process is identified and analyzed.

#### **Scenario #1**

*A faculty member resists collaborating with colleagues to develop appropriate learning goals, on the grounds that her expertise and the tradition of the Academy give her the right to determine the appropriate learning goals for her students.*

In *Riggin v. Board of Trustees of Ball State University*, 489 NE 2d 616, 629-30 (Ind. Ct. App. 1986), Ball State University dismissed a tenured business faculty member with 22 years of seniority for failure, among other things, to cover the basic course materials which students are expected to learn from his classes, as described in the catalog and course syllabi. Very importantly, and germane to this scenario, the court held that “... governing bodies of colleges, universities and other schools acting through their deans, department heads, and duly constituted faculty committees, have a right to develop curriculum, determine course content and impose methods of instruction. A teacher is obligated to comply with their directions in this regard.” Moreover, in reaching its conclusion, the Court noted that a litany of previous

cases hold that “a teacher has no right to override the wishes and judgment of his superiors and fellow faculty members ...” [489 N.E.2d 616, at 629] regarding curriculum, course content and methods of instruction.

Consequently, in this scenario, if the faculty member wishes to influence the adoption of the learning goals that will guide the curriculum, she must participate with her colleagues. If she decides not to participate she must, nonetheless, adhere to the decisions of her faculty colleagues.

### **Scenario #2**

*A faculty member refuses to participate in aligning the curriculum because his colleagues, he claims, do not understand his field and they are intruding on his freedom to teach the class in the best interest of his students.*

In *Bishop v. Aronov*, 926 F.2d 1066 (11<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1991), the court upheld the university’s restricting course content, despite the contrary desires of the faculty member teaching the course. The court concluded that “In short, Dr. Bishop and the University disagree about a matter of content in the course he teaches. The University must have the final say in such a dispute. Though Dr. Bishop’s sincerity cannot be doubted, his educational judgment can be questioned and redirected by the University when he is acting under its auspices as a course instructor, ... The University’s conclusions about course content must be allowed to hold sway over an individual professor’s judgments.” As the *Riggin* court notes, the “university” includes duly constituted faculty committees.

In a case that strikes at the heart of the faculty member’s academic purpose and ostensible “best interest of the student,” the court, in *Lovelace v. Southeastern Massachusetts University*, 793 F.2d 419 (1<sup>st</sup> cir. 1986), rejected free speech and academic freedom claims of a faculty member not rehired because he refused to lower the academic standards he applied to his students’ work. The court ruled that the university has the right to set standards on matters such as “...course content, homework load, and grading policy.” According to the Court, “Whether a school sets itself up to attract and serve only the best and the brightest students or whether it instead gears its standard to a broader, more average population is a policy decision which, we think, universities must be allowed to set. And matters such as course content, homework load, and grading policy are core university concerns, integral to implementation of this policy decision.” Thus, the university decides what is in the best interest of its students.

### **Scenario #3**

*A faculty member objects to the selected assessment methods, because he is being asked to award 5 percentage points to students who complete a course-embedded activity in the course he teaches. He was not given the freedom to employ the most appropriate assessment method for his particular field.*

Again, *Bishop v. Aronov*, 926 F.2d 1066 (11th Cir. 1991), applies. The course-embedded activity constitutes a matter of course content, which the court in *Bishop* clearly establishes is the prerogative of the university. Moreover, *Lovelace* holds that the university has the right to determine grading policy, including, then, the components of students' grades. Obviously, the faculty member has the right to express his judgment as to the most appropriate measure to use. However, according to the court, in *Hetrick v. Martin*, 480 F.2d 705 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1973), the university may overrule his judgment.

In *Hetrick* the court ruled that the university did not violate the faculty member's First Amendment or academic freedom rights by not re-hiring her based on the fact that her "pedagogical attitude" was at odds with that of the university's. Importantly, the court noted the following: "We do not accept plaintiff's assertion that the school administration abridged her First Amendment rights when it refused to rehire her because it considered her teaching philosophy to be incompatible with the pedagogical aims of the university. Whatever may be the ultimate scope of the amorphous 'academic freedom' ... it does not encompass the right of a non-tenured teacher to have her teaching style insulated from review by her superiors."

Note that while the court refers specifically to the non-tenured faculty member involved in this case, in *Perry v. Sindermann*, 408 US 593 (1972), the U.S. Supreme Court established that a faculty member's contractual or other claim (presumably, even tenure) to a job is irrelevant in a case of constitutionally protected speech. Thus presumably, the Court would reach the same conclusion if the plaintiff had been a tenured faculty member.

#### **Scenario #4**

*In reviewing evidence that suggests weakness in a specific course, the faculty member who teaches the course argues that, based on her expertise, there is nothing wrong with the class and that the focus of the dialogue is inappropriate.*

Again, according to the court, in *Hetrick v. Martin*, 480 F.2d 705 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1973), the university may review his teaching and overrule the judgment of an individual faculty member. Moreover, the *Lovelace* case stands for the proposition, as noted by the court, that this process is one of the "... core university concerns..." integral to the implementation of its policy regarding its decision as to the particular group of students it will serve.

Again, the faculty member has a right to express her opinion, even lobby for it. However, she must comport her behavior with the ultimate decision the university reaches. The court, in *Wirsing v. Board of Regents of University of Colorado*, 739 F. Supp. 551 552-54 (D. Colo. 1990) (affirmed, 945 F.2d 412 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1991)), upheld a dean's decision to deny a tenured faculty member a pay increase because she refused to administer the

university's teaching evaluation form. In doing so, the court emphasized "... although Dr. Wirsing may have a constitutionally protected right under the First Amendment to disagree with the University's policies, she has no right to evidence her disagreement by failing to perform the duty imposed upon her as a condition of employment [739 F. Supp. 551 (D. Colo. 1990)]. Also, the court, in *Riggin* held that "... teachers are obligated to comply with ... [the university's] directions ..." regarding pedagogy.

### **Scenario #5**

*In identifying opportunities for course improvement, and in closing the loop, a faculty member claims that he is the only one with the knowledge and background to determine if the course should be modified.*

If, indeed, the faculty member is the only one with the knowledge and background to determine if the course should be modified, he must find a way to convince his colleagues. Ultimately, as the *Riggin* court held, the university, through its deans, department heads, and duly constituted faculty committees, has a right to develop curriculum, determine course content, and impose methods of instruction. Thus, the faculty member must comply with the university's directions in this regard. The *Riggin* court noted that the teacher has no right to override the wishes and judgment of his superiors and fellow faculty members regarding the university's exercise of its "four essential freedoms."

### **Conclusion**

Academic freedom is a critical principal for the effective discharging of higher education's intellectual pursuits. Unfortunately, this concept is fraught with confusion, for a myriad of reasons. One of the most important points for business schools and their faculty to understand is that both the individual and the university have academic freedom rights. Moreover, faculty have legitimate *individual academic freedom* rights in the classroom, including those specified in the AAUP's 1940 Statement of Academic Freedom and Tenure, and their constitutional rights as citizens. On the other hand, the school also has academic freedom rights — *institutional academic freedom rights* — including the "four essential freedoms" enunciated by the Court in *Sweezy*, *Bakke*, and *Ewing*. Especially germane in the context of assurance of learning, the school gets to decide who may teach, what may be taught, and how it shall be taught (including the rights to develop curriculum, determine course content, and impose methods of instruction). Deans, department chairpersons, and other academic leaders must be able to help faculty understand the legitimate parameters of the two dimensions of academic freedom. Indeed, academic freedom should promote, rather than impede, the school's successful implementation of efficient, effective assurance of learning programs.

## Endnotes

- 44 Standler, Ronald B. (1999, 2000). Academic freedom in the USA. Retrieved <http://www.rbs2.com/afree.htm>, Copyright 1999, 2000, p. 3.
- 45 "1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure," *Policy Documents and Reports 3* (AAUP, 1984).
- 46 Its general acceptance and longevity probably derives from the fact that the AAUP developed the statement in collaboration with the Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities), an organization of college and university presidents
- 47 (More recently, the AAUP appended the following statement: "Most church-related institutions no longer need or desire the departure from the principle of academic freedom implied in the 1940 Statement, and we do not now endorse such a departure.")
- 48 Standler, Ronald B. (1999, 2000). Retrieved Academic Freedom in the USA <http://www.rbs2.com/afree.htm>, Copyright 1999, 2000, p. 1.
- 49 Ibid, p. 1.
- 50 Byrne, J. Peter. Academic Freedom, 99 Yale Law Journal 251, 252-253 (1989).
- 51 Ibid, p. 4
- 52 Sweezy v. New Hampshire, 354 U.S. 234, 250 (1957).

## Author Bio

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*“How do we overcome faculty resistance?” is the number one concern expressed by participants at the AACSB assessment seminar. Sometimes the focus of this question is on an individual — “We have this faculty member...” (Don’t we all?) Others are concerned about the faculty (plural): “How can we get the faculty buy-in we need to implement an assessment plan?” The assumption is – and it’s not unfounded – that faculty will react to the call for assessment with something less than enthusiasm. This can pose a real problem because assessment of student learning, as has been stated elsewhere in this volume, must be faculty driven. This chapter provides some insight about the causes of faculty resistance and some proposed remedies. Assessment cannot be an “unfunded mandate” — leadership, education, rewards, and support systems are crucial to its success. Only after these necessary elements are in place will a culture of assessment have the chance to take root and grow.*

## **CHAPTER 13 OVERCOMING FACULTY RESISTANCE TO ASSESSMENT**

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### **Why Do Faculty Resist Assessment?**

In a thoughtful little piece entitled “Lessons Learned in the Assessment School of Hard Knocks,” authors Carolyn Haessig and Armand La Potin (2000) characterize most faculty’s initial response to assessment as one of the following:

- I can’t
- I’ve already done that
- I shouldn’t have to

And my personal favorite:

- I won’t

While these responses should not be allowed to derail the assessment train (to quote Doug Eder in Vol. 1: no. 1, chapter 4, “Faculty (should) have permission to fail but not to stall”), taking a moment to consider the root



cause of these complaints may provide a better understanding of how to counter them. For while it is easy to dismiss faculty resistance to new initiatives (assessment included) as stubborn opposition to change or protection of their self interest, some apprehension about assessment is entirely reasonable.

For example, consider the first response: “*I can’t.*” In fact, most business faculty have no formal training in education methods, including assessment. Thus, when faculty are exposed to assessment for the first time, most have either no idea of what is entailed, or have misconceptions — and those misconceptions rarely take the form of “this is easy” or “this is worthwhile.” And the motivated self-starter who decides to take the initiative and wander into the assessment literature may become all the more convinced that “*I can’t.*” “Assessment,” says University of Houston’s Elizabeth Anderson-Fletcher, “really is a foreign language.” (Vol 1: No. 2, Chapter 4). Martell and Calderon (Vol 1: No. 1, Chapter 1) agree:

“For the most part, assessment practitioners are developing their own language that consists of many seemingly ordinary words that few understand. While these words have specific meaning to assessment experts, they do not always mean the same thing to others.”

When it comes to assessment, it takes a while to “talk the talk.”

Two more considerations contribute to faculty’s lack of understanding of, and anxiety about, assessment. Faculty are told that the model they are most comfortable with when becoming engaged with new material — scholarly inquiry — is not an appropriate framework for pursuing assessment. There is no large body of scientific research to wander through, no well-developed theories of cause and effect, and a paucity of established, tested measures. Rather, faculty are told to choose their own questions (i.e., learning goals), create their own measures, gather data, and then inductively develop a theory to explain what they found out about their students’ learning. Assessment scholar Peter Ewell assures us that “...the assessment culture is less about engaging in ‘scientific measurement’ and more about determining the right questions to ask.” Furthermore, “institutions can ... make the mistake of being overly precise with their measurement, looking only for ‘statistically significant’ differences.”<sup>53</sup> Scholarly rigor is not the appropriate benchmark to design or evaluate work in assessment — without this familiar rudder, it is difficult to step up to the helm.

Second, as faculty begin to hear about assessment, the realization dawns that these activities may take place in their own classrooms. This realization may be met with a variety of responses (some of which we will discuss later), but for now consider that it is a rare faculty member who is enthusiastic about doing something in the classroom in which she/he does

not appear to be an expert. No one wants to look like he/she does not know what she/he is doing in front of his/her students. Thus, the inexperience that underlies “*I can’t*” may quickly become “*I won’t*.” Yet, before addressing “*I won’t*,” let’s consider how to remedy “*I can’t*.”

The “*I can’t*” reaction is not only the easiest to understand, it is the most easily remedied. “*I can’t*” can become an “*I can*” with education. There is no reason to expect that faculty will know anything about assessment, yet good assessment practice (not to mention AACSB standards) calls for active faculty involvement in the assessment process — at least during the early (goal setting) and later (“closing the loop”) stages. According to the late, great Donald Farmer, “The learning style of most faculty members requires information and a rationale in order to understand and accept the proposed change.”<sup>54</sup> In order to be engaged in discussion of assessment, faculty must know:

- Why assessment has become a mandate
- How to *do* assessment: The steps in the process
- Assessment terminology and methods
- What will happen as a result of the assessment.

The instruction on terminology/process is quite straightforward, but it does take time and, because of the unfamiliar territory, requires lots of examples and reinforcement by “doing.” Making the investment in training faculty (count on a minimum of one day) often yields dividends. Evaluations from the AACSB assessment seminars regularly include testimonials from faculty who have become confident (even enthusiastic) about their ability to contribute to assessment as a result of a day or two of training. A number of the schools included in this volume (e.g., University of Houston, SIUE, TCCU, Merrimack College) discuss the in-house training seminars they developed for faculty — often after their developers had attended AACSB Assessment training. The most extensive training example is provided by Rockhurst (Vol. 1: No. 2, Chapter 11) which has developed a three-day assessment workshop, and provides faculty with a modest stipend to attend the workshop and follow up with a classroom-embedded assessment proposal. The University of Houston developed two workshops for their faculty which, they concluded in retrospect, wasn’t enough.

In addition to allowing enough time for training (in the AACSB Assessment seminars, it often takes five or six hours before assessment novices are reasonably comfortable with the language), it is important to keep the assessment process very simple. When training faculty on assessment, do not allow discussions of multiple or exotic measures, sampling strategies, database management, or validity to dominate — it can quickly overwhelm (and discourage) the uninitiated. Just as we do not expose our freshmen to a senior seminar, we do not move on to “Assessment

495” before we’ve completed “Assessment 101.” Assessment processes will evolve and expand as a result of our experience. Consider these wise words from Carolyn Haessig and Armand La Potin:

“Don’t think that the perfect assessment model can be fully implemented during its first year of use. With every year, the model and the resulting work will become more refined. Improvement is the essence of assessment; each improvement is supporting evidence that your work is sound. This is not the time to be a perfectionist, nor is it the time to procrastinate...Just hop right on it.”<sup>55</sup>

“Keep it simple” should be the assessment mantra, especially at the early stages, and training should reflect this approach. Voltaire’s words can help keep us moving, and on track: “The enemy of the good is the perfect.” “Don’t be deterred,” Haessig and La Potin remind us, “by those who believe ‘*you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.*’...Old dogs must adapt or institutions certainly will suffer.” Training is the first step...and don’t forget to tuck some treats in your pocket! (More about that later.)

**Response:** You can’t “walk the walk” until you “talk the talk.” The answer to “*I can’t...I don’t know how*” is “we’ll teach you and support you.”

### **Whine (oops! Did I say that?) #2: “I’ve already done that.”**

First, consider that they may, indeed, already *have* “done that.” Just as we must steel ourselves to listen to the 1000<sup>th</sup> students’ rendition of their “special circumstances” on the unlikely chance that those circumstances truly are “special,” so we should ask the faculty member to explain what they mean by “done that.” Every once in a while there is a pleasant surprise...a faculty member who may have had prior experience in assessment at another university, or in industry or government, or may have had some formal training in education about which you were not aware. After all, the emergence of the public policy discussion on assessment in the 1980s *did* result in some university assessment programs. In fact, on my own campus — Montclair State University — there was a thriving assessment community, including the publishing of an assessment journal and active faculty development, in the 1980s. Some of the faculty who participated then are still on campus and remain enthusiastic about the topic. If this is the case with the claimants, you’re speaking to, tell them how glad you are to hear that, ask for their thoughts, experiences, and involvement, and — if necessary — gently remind them that a 20-year-old effort will not satisfy accreditors today.

**Response:** “You’ve done it? Great! We look forward to applying your knowledge and experience to our new mandate.”

Yes, every once in awhile that happens. Usually, however, what faculty

members mean when they say “*I’ve already done (or I do) that*” is “I do assessment all the time: I give grades, don’t I?” When it comes to faculty responses to demands for their involvement in program assessment, this certainly is among the top three.

Of course faculty give grades — a not insignificant part of our job as teachers is to give students feedback on their mastery of course material. Course grades, however, are both too aggregate, and too specific, to be appropriately used for program assessment. As a reminder to the reader, the focus in this series is assessment of student learning across a program or curriculum (i.e., program assessment). What skills and knowledge do we expect our graduates to have as a result of completing our degree programs? To answer this question, we assess our students’ learning on the goals we have established for our entire curriculum. Each course we offer should (arguably) encompass at least one program learning goal, and some might include several. As a result, a course grade will normally include assessments related to program learning goals (such as a paper that reflects a student’s written communication skills), and some that are specific to the course (exams on course material, for example). One student can receive a “B” in the course while failing the written assignment, while another “B” student may have produced a superior written assignment. Comparing B’s does not provide us the feedback we need on specific program learning goals — the course grades are too aggregate a measure.

What about just comparing the grades on the papers — can’t those grades serve to assess the program’s “effective written communication” learning goals? Simply by themselves — that is, plucking the grades for the assignment out a course — the answer is “no,” because those paper grades typically do not provide uniform, explicit feedback that can be used to strengthen the curriculum. This example, provided by Peter Ewell, helps illustrate the problem with using paper grades for program assessment purposes:

“I was once a professor of political science, and I’ve spent hours grading papers. After reading a paper, I would sometimes recognize that the student had a good argument but that he had gotten many of his facts wrong. I’d write my feedback on the paper and assign it with a B-minus. Then, I would pick up the next paper, read it over, and give it a B-minus for a completely different set of reasons. But what data went into my grade book? Two B-minuses. After collecting and recording a wealth of data on how the students had responded to the assignment, I threw it all away when I handed the papers back. I had no record of where, in general, learning was going right and where it wasn’t — or what I could do about it.”<sup>56</sup>

Not only are the grades on the paper too aggregate to tell us what we need to know about our students writing skills, but they are typically specific to the course (paper grades, outside of writing courses, are often heavily weighted towards content) and to the professor's own grading mechanism. In order to transform that writing assignment into a valid program assessment measure, the performance criteria ("traits") and standards need to be determined by the faculty, not just by the assigning professor.<sup>57</sup>

**Response:** Thus, the answer to "*I do that...I grade students in my classes*" is: "The grades you give in your class are your evaluation of students' learning of your course material. Program assessment evaluates their cumulative learning across the business curriculum. Of course the two are related — each of our courses contributes to our program's learning goals. Program assessment, though, is different than grading for a course, although some times grading can be modified to address both tasks. Come to our training seminar and learn more about it."

### **Whine #3: "I shouldn't have to do that".**

Some believe (or hope) that assessment is an administrative rather than faculty task. We do not expect faculty to count the numbers of graduates, investigate the number of students who return after their freshman year, or survey the students on their racial background or where they were born — why should we expect them to be gathering assessment data? First, pause to consider that this might be a misunderstanding due to language — the complainant may be confusing "assessment of institutional effectiveness" with "assessment of student learning (AOL)." As Robert Mundenk from the AAHE discusses in his chapter on regional accreditation (Vol 1: No.1, Chapter 2), AOL has only recently been adopted as a standard for regional accreditation and, even today, just represents a fraction of the standards that universities and colleges must satisfy. A quick "Google" search of "university" and "assessment" will yield many, many university sites, often maintained by their offices of Institutional Research, that are limited to "actuarial" data.

"These data include graduation rates, racial/ethnic composition of the student body, level of endowment, student/faculty ratio, highest degree earned by faculty members, breadth and depth of academic course offerings, selectivity ratio, admissions test scores of entering students, and levels of external research funding...(These data are used to assess institutional effectiveness based on the) central assumption (that) a better quality educational institution...is necessarily associated with more and better resources – in this case, better funding, better faculty (as defined as a higher percentage of any given cadre holding Ph.D.s), and better students (which is operationalized as resulting from higher admissions selectivity)." <sup>58</sup>

Furthermore, as has been stated elsewhere in this book, until recently assessments of learning focused on survey data and other indirect measures not often involving faculty. Thus, this reaction — isn't this somebody else's job? — might simply be an indicator that training on what assessment of student learning *is* might be needed.

**Response:** “What we're talking about is assessment of student learning (followed, perhaps, by curricular adjustments), and no one is better qualified to do that than the faculty.” Reassurance (if this is true!) that their role will be focused on the design and use of the assessment — and not administrivia — will also help counter this complaint, as it did at the Bauer College of Business at the University of Houston:

“Our consistent message to faculty has been that they must be involved in the creation of learning goals, setting the standards for measurement of those goals, and making any curriculum changes based on the outcomes. However, faculty do not need to collect or analyze data, nor do they need to write extensive reports.” (Anderson-Fletcher, Vol. 1: No. 2, Chapter 4).

Lessons learned at SIUE also echo this theme:

**“Lesson:** Faculty members assessed the things that mattered most, unhampered by interference from the things that mattered least.

**Lesson:** Responsibility for assessment success was assigned to a visible, identified individual with direct access to university administrators and a clear chain of accountability to the faculty.” (Eder, Vol. 1: No.1, Chapter 3)

There are a number of examples in this book (including Houston, TCCU, Seton Hall, Valparaiso and Merrimack) of schools that provide a relatively large amount of staff support for program assessment in order to minimize requirements of faculty. At these institutions, “*I shouldn't have to do that*” can be countered with “*you don't have to do a lot of it.*”

Other examples are provided in this book of a different approach — maximizing faculty's involvement by appealing to their values as educators:

“Although the College of Business was AACSB accredited at the time (1996), the motivation for (our assessment efforts) was not related to accreditation. Rather, it was part of a package of curriculum initiatives aimed at improving the learning process for the students.” (Valparaiso)

“From a faculty member's perspective, assessment ...is inherently designed to improve teaching and learning. Any attempt to assess

a specific skill or learning outcome increases understanding for both students and faculty. Used diagnostically, assessment also helps faculty members to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. This information can then be used to design appropriate teaching/learning strategies. An additional diagnostic use of assessment is to help faculty members monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum and to provide the basis for its further refinement." (King's College)

At these institutions, the response "*this is what we do here...this is what we value*" — especially when supported by an appropriate evaluation and reward system — should quiet the "it's not my job" complaint, if it ever is voiced in the first place.

### **The Worst Whine: "I won't!" (...and you can't make me!)**

You've told them "why," you've shown them "how," and you're still being met by resistance, reluctance, or outright refusal. Before talking about remedies, let's pause to consider the possible sources of this reaction. The reason that is easiest to sympathize with is fear. Ed Popper, from Merrimack College, muses in his chapter (Vol. 1: No. 2, Chapter 1): "(g)etting faculty involvement (in assessment) is not easy, as faculty are required to reconsider what they do and how they do it. Shifting to an outcome-driven curriculum requires faculty members to consider the possibility that the teaching they've done for many years may not have resulted in student learning. When teaching defines a faculty member's life, this is not something easily considered." It might not only be uncomfortable, it may lead to concern over one's job. Peter Ewell (2003) terms this "Paranoia No. 1":

"Faculty worry about their jobs...(If) performance is measured to reward the good and punish the bad, employees not only become resentful and anxious, they also learn very quickly to tell administrators what they want to hear. Allowing learning assessment to become punitive defeats its very purpose....The main challenge in the early stages of implementing an assessment program is to reassure faculty...that the data collected through assessment will not be used for promotion and tenure decisions, but rather are tools for the collective improvement of the business school's offerings."<sup>59</sup>

The University of Houston took these words to heart: "Our mantra has been '*assessment is the monitoring of student learning, it is not the evaluation of faculty teaching*'."<sup>60</sup> Cal State Fullerton also was careful to make this distinction: "(The assessment committee) met with the College Senate, department chairs, and faculty to explain the purpose and processes involved in assessment, making it clear that assessment of student learning

is separate from the evaluation of teaching.” Using program assessment data to evaluate an individual faculty’s members performance is not only unfair (since its purpose is to evaluate learning across the curriculum, not in one specific class) but, for the reasons outlined by Ewell in the passage above, this approach will also lead to assessment data that is highly suspect.

**Response:** Thus, the only answer to “*I won’t because I may lose my job over what we might find*” is “no, you won’t”. Empathetically. The credibility of this reassurance is a function of the conditions of trust within the school. How to establish a campus culture of trust, if it is absent, is beyond the scope of this paper. The reader is directed to the works of the respected Donald Farmer on this topic who observes that, along with committed leadership and effective planning, trust is a necessary precondition if efforts to implement a campus change (like assessment programs) are to succeed.

Fear is not the only — or the most common — root of the “*I won’t*” sentiment, however. Change is not often viewed favorably in higher education where it is often seen as a threat to a great, centuries-old academic tradition:

“Centuries of social tradition accord colleges and universities great regard ... as the primary provider of advanced learning in the realms of general and specialized knowledge, and as the principal educational means toward a better life for citizens. So regarded, higher education occupies a special place in our society’s definitions of truth, value, and worth. The distinctive regard in which academia is held confers special status on it, and reinforces the influence of the customary values with which it is associated.” <sup>61</sup>

According to Farmer, it is a commitment to traditional academe that leads its members to be “instinctively hyperconservative” about educational matters. Timothy Fogarty, in his discussion of “why faculty resist assessment,”<sup>62</sup> is less generous in his interpretation of faculty’s fierce protection of the status quo. Fogarty argues that the professorate is most interested in preserving its professional prerogatives which are, in fact, at odds with assessment. These prerogatives are based on deeply embedded norms of the academy including:

1. Tenure and promotion. “Tenure conveys a certain license to ‘do as thou wilt.’...The award of tenure is seen as the granting of full professional autonomy to practice education as one sees fit...Once tenure is in place, it .. deprives any assessment program the chance of providing a meaningful reward to those that choose not to believe that they have *carte blanche*.” (Fogarty, p. 57)
2. Faculty as independent contractors relative to their institutions. This “ethos of the profession” which places priority on what matters to



the individual (the faculty member) over what matters to the institution (the university), leads to a “strong ideology of independence of college faculty.” Fogarty notes that even inexperienced graduate students who find themselves in front of a classroom are typically given full autonomy. The accountability implied by assessment — not to mention the possible demands to incorporate specific assessment activities in their classes, or change their course or teaching style to address learning deficiencies revealed through assessment — is anathema to this belief.

Other prevalent faculty attitudes that Fogarty identifies that are at odds with assessment include (trained) skepticism that demands documented support before acting, perceived tradeoffs between teaching quality and research productivity, faculty self-perception that they are already overworked, and concern that assessment/accountability smacks of the “corporatization” of academe (not a good thing even in a business school). It is no surprise, Fogarty concludes, that assessment programs often find few allies.

### **Remedies for Faculty Resistance**

Faculty resistance to assessment must be overcome because their participation – indeed their *ownership* – of assessment is crucial. The temptation to avoid the necessity of winning over faculty by either imposing the assessment goals and methods on them, or (more benignly) making assessment purely an administrative function, must be resisted. How to get faculty to “own” an initiative that they may initially reject? The discussion below proposes some remedies to address the negative responses faculty often have about assessment. The reader should also take heart from a number of the best practice authors who have successfully brought faculty on board. For example, at the Bauer College of Business:

“We set out believing that faculty buy-in would be almost insurmountable, and we were proven wrong. Through fostering faculty awareness of the assessment program, by communicating the parameters on required faculty participation, and by providing substantial staff support, we have found that we have been able to gain faculty buy-in and support of our assurance of learning assessment program. Our faculty, in general, believe that it is the right thing to do, regardless of accreditation standards.” (Fletcher-Anderson, Vol. 1, No. 2, Chapter 4)

### **Commitment from The Leadership**

We know from the management literature that leadership support is critical to the successful implementation of an organizational change. This

is certainly true for an initiative like assessment that is viewed by many to fall somewhere along a spectrum with “waste of time” on one end and “dangerous” on the other. The dean must be an active participant early in the assessment process and convey the urgency (or, using a term from the organizational change literature, *crisis*) that underlies the need for assessment: without doing something substantially different than the school is doing now in assessing student learning, the school’s accreditation is in jeopardy. The dean should also pledge support, and offer reassurances that the results will not be used to evaluate faculty; they will, in fact, be used (*really* used) to improve the curriculum. Finally, the dean should set out the timetable and announce the champion who will lead the assessment charge.

The dean’s first public announcement of the assessment initiative should not be the first time s/he discusses it, however. According to Farmer, “change agents must win over faculty leaders and opinion makers before attempting to initiate new undertakings.”<sup>63</sup> Fogarty (2003) suggests that it is wise to assume that faculty leaders will not be on board initially. Fogarty argues that the most powerful group in university settings often are the productive scholars — a group that will probably view time spent on assessment as competing with their research. Many university evaluation systems are biased towards scholarly productivity; thus, the status quo is in the best interest of this group. The mediocre teachers/scholars also will also favor the status quo, argues Fogarty, since they will fear losing the apparent “free pass” that a less rigorous evaluation of teaching has provided to them.

“This leaves the good teachers who do little research as the only advocates of assessment... This group tends to be one of the least powerful coalitions in the school.”<sup>64</sup>

This power structure suggests that the issue of leadership of the assessment process may present challenges.

### **Anointing a Champion**

The dean will get the assessment ball rolling but will typically not lead the implementation effort. S/he will choose, instead, to assign someone to be change agent II (the dean is change agent I) or champion. Farmer warns that “the effective change agent needs to command the respect and confidence of the faculty” (1998, p. 95). Fogarty’s arguments suggest that respected faculty leaders may need some enticement. Thus, most deans should avoid relying on volunteers to lead the assessment charge, since the “right” people may not step forward...at least initially.

What is the role of the champion? Farmer identifies five different roles for the change agent: catalyst (help understand the need for change), solution giver (substance plus the ability to communicate the solution),

process helper (how can we make those solutions work here?), resource linker (obtaining resources, build relationships), and confidence builder. The dean, as chief change agent, will take on the role of catalyst, and contribute to the other roles. The champion (or what I have called change agent II) will take on a preeminent position in the other four roles. She/he will need to become educated (expert!) in order to propose solutions, set up processes, and know what resources are needed. (“While the associate dean in title alone has some degree of credibility with faculty, it is much better to be as knowledgeable as possible when discussing something as foreign as assessment.” (Anderson-Fletcher, Vol. 1: no. 2, chapter 10). In addition to being respected and trained, the champion should have strong interpersonal skills — given faculty’s apprehension and inexperience with program assessment, the role of confidence builder is crucial. Consider this remark from the assessment champion at TCCU: “The dean was probably on-target when he began referring to me as the ‘assessment cheerleader’ and to our assessment meetings as ‘pep rallies.’” (Vol 1: no. 2, chapter 10). Assessment can be very uncomfortable — encouragement, even cajoling, may be required. Periodic reinforcement from the dean can lend further psychological support to the assessment team.

Many of the schools in this series chose to have the associate or assistant dean take on the champion role in assessment (e.g., University of Houston, Eastern Kentucky), while others relied on committees (e.g., Rockhurst) or respected staff (e.g., Valparaiso, Texas Christian) to drive the process. There are arguments for all three approaches — the right faculty leadership tends to reduce concern over a hidden administrative agenda, thus fostering acceptance and participation; leadership from the dean’s office reinforces the importance of the task and may reduce faculty workload; and qualified staff leadership can bring to bear the experience and the focus that a faculty leadership model (unless supported with considerable release time) may not.

### **Secure a Critical Mass**

Designing an implementing an assessment process is not a one-person job, nor should it be. As noted above, faculty buy-in is crucial to the success of assessment, and active faculty involvement — particularly at the early (goal setting) and later (closing the loop) stages — is highly desirable. But everyone doesn’t need to be on board, and this should not even necessarily be a goal. Farmer observes that “many attempts at innovation in higher education have failed because change agents have invested too much energy in efforts to win support from a majority, rather than a critical mass.”<sup>65</sup> This critical mass, according to Farmer, are the opinion leaders who are respected by the innovators and the early adopters (he estimates that two-thirds of the faculty fall into these two groups), as well as by the resisters (the other one- third) and can talk to both groups. Gay Wakefield, author of

the TCCU example in this volume, found this to be true at her school: “When committee members are faculty who believe in assessment and are committed to its success, there is the added benefit of knowledgeable advocates on each program’s faculty to help counter potential blockers.” The assessment process should not be held hostage to the resisters or curmudgeons, and if a critical mass is secured it won’t be.

### **Provide Necessary Support**

Assessment takes time: designing measures, building data and maintaining data bases, coordinating and documenting corrective action. As such, it must be supported. Assessment initiatives that are not properly supported will be resented and are doomed to fail. “Providing administrative support for the faculty-dominated choice-making group is (an) essential step to securing change. Members of the faculty group need to know that administrators think that what they are doing is important, and they need to have the time to do it well” (Wood, 1990, p. 55).

With the accreditation clock ticking (see the discussion of transition to AACSB AOL standards in Vol. 1: No. 1, Chapter 1) time is of essence — and for some schools this urgency will require that time be “bought” either through release time for champions, providing staff support, or “outsourcing” some of the assessment data collection tasks. The trade-off between faculty resources and monetary resources is a real one. For example, in the chapter on assessing business knowledge (Vol. 1: No. 1, Chapter 6), Denise Rotondo discusses the popularity of “outsourcing” knowledge assessment by purchasing standardized tests (e.g., ETS Major Field exams). She also provides examples of other schools that, often for budgetary reasons, have had their faculty develop original knowledge assessments. As another example of outsourcing, some schools are utilizing the Microsoft Office exam as an assessment of technology competence. The chapter on assessing managerial skills by Bommer *et al.* (Vol. 1, No. 1, Chapter 7) provides examples of assessment center activities which some schools outsource. Units within the university can be an “outsourcing” provider as well, as illustrated by the example of University of Houston outsourcing the written communication assessment to the college’s writing center (“Outsourcing much of the labor has been key in the our success with faculty buy-in”) and TCCU’s use of the Communication Diagnostic developed by the school’s Communication Center (“The use of the CDC Communication Diagnostic...keeps faculty out of the business of having to gather data.”)

Once assessment plans are in place, they still need to be maintained. In recounting SIUE’s experience, Doug Eder makes the distinction between champions and stewards. “Stewards take care of things, but champions, given permission and encouragement, make things happen.” (Vol. 1: No. 1, Chapter 4). In time, champions may find their work done as assessment becomes routine and accepted, but there will still be a need for stewards.

## **Developing Reward and Evaluation Systems that Support Assessment**

It has been stated elsewhere in this series that assessment causes change, because that which is measured is valued. By articulating learning goals, and then measuring our progress in meeting those goals, we are shining a light upon them — communicating to our stakeholders that these are our educational values for which we will be held accountable. Faculty evaluation and reward systems serve the same purpose — they state: this is what we value, this is what faculty will be held accountable for, this is what we will reward. In the long-run, organizational change cannot be sustained without these important signals. Participation in assessment, particularly in the early stages, entails a not-insignificant time commitment and some risk. Rational people will expect such effort to be rewarded.

Issues involving faculty evaluation and rewards are sensitive, and efforts to modify these processes are, on most campuses, complicated and slow moving. Thus, initially the dean may rely on rewards that are more *'ad hoc'* in nature: faculty development funds to support assessment projects, travel funds to attend conferences or seminars with assessment themes, summer stipends or release time during the year to support the champions. (The Rockhurst chapter includes many examples of faculty incentives for assessment). In time, if a school is serious about assessment, the faculty's involvement will become part of how their performance is evaluated, including — but not limited to — tenure and promotion evaluation.

“Persons seeking to change institutions of higher education are well advised to make effective use of the all important realities of roles and statuses. They can do this by providing...a system of rewards that is articulated with and reflects the hierarchy of desirable roles and statuses on a campus.” (Kashner, 1990, p. 21)

Examples in this volume illustrate how this might be done:

- Helzberg School of Business, Rockhurst. The annual review of faculty performance includes a section that requires faculty to “document how they use assessment evidence to improve teaching and learning in their classrooms.” Every full-time professor is also required to develop a teaching portfolio for review by a peer-review committee with a required section on “Assessment of Achievement of Learning Outcomes.”
- Missouri Southern State University (MSSU) uses the balanced score card approach to directly define assessment of student learning as a faculty responsibility. Each faculty member must annually define his or her role in the school's assessment efforts.

- Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville (SIUE) adopted a Scholarship of Teaching model as the basis for tenure and promotion. Applicants develop a dossier of their teaching that must include evidence that their students have learned in their courses. “A large fraction of such evidence arrives through the results of assessment.” (Vol. 1: No. 1, Chapter 4)

Incorporating assessment into faculty evaluation is the clearest signal a school can send that this work is crucial to the institution.

### **Hiring and Socialization of New Faculty**

While education, evaluation and rewards are tools that can be used to “unfreeze” resistance to assessment among existent faculty, new hires can play an important role in promoting assessment on campus.

“(O)ne must always remember that higher education is an intensely human enterprise. Individual human beings espouse and perpetuate the attitudes and practices comprising an institution’s culture. To the extent that it is possible to inject into the system new personnel selected in part because they hold values consistent with the new directions contemplated for the institutions, change managers can tip the balance towards innovation.” (Kashner, p. 26).

New hires offer an exceptional opportunity to reconstitute expectations of faculty, especially if reinforced during orientation. At SIUE, for example, the university’s priority on teaching is discussed during faculty interviews. An extensive, two-week paid orientation period with a significant emphasis on teaching and assessment, on-going faculty development training opportunities on topics related to assessment, and a tenure and promotion policy that requires evidence of student learning clearly communicate the message: this is what is important here. The TCCU chapter also illustrates the importance of new faculty: “The hiring of several new faculty members committed to assessment processes laid the groundwork for more dynamic BBA core assessment.”

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Assessment of student learning has been around for decades but, for the most part, has not been enthusiastically received by faculty for a variety of reasons. Thus, new accreditation standards by the AACSB and others requiring rigorous assessment of student learning have caught most schools unprepared. Although faculty resistance has its roots in centuries-long traditions of autonomy, which are reinforced by evaluation and reward systems, it must be overcome...and quickly. AACSB’s timetable for the

transition to the new AOL standards calls for full assessment systems to be in place by 2007; furthermore, active faculty participation is desirable and expected. The train is out of the station and is gathering steam — faculty must be on board.

## Endnotes

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- 56 Ewell, *ibid*, p. 29
- 57 These volumes are filled with examples of how to use rubrics to transform grading for a class- to classroom-based program assessment.
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