

June 1, 2009

Dr. Heather Honea, Chair, CBA Graduate Committee
Dr. David Ely, Director
CBA Graduate Programs
College of Business Administration

Dear Professors Honea and Ely:

If your department is typical, it is likely you have heard such comments as the following during recent weeks and months: *“Given the budget crisis, we’ll probably be teaching more students with fewer faculty members. So, it’s time we just forgot this whole assessment business – who can afford the time, or the resources?”* Indeed, it does appear more than justified to approach our financial crisis by “circling the wagons,” steadfastly agreeing to continue only with the most essential aspects of the program.

One problem, of course, is how to decide where to make cuts. Which classes can effectively be taught in large theater classrooms? Which classes can be taught using distance technology, or infused with a distance component (a hybrid course)? Which parts of our curriculum are working effectively, and which parts could be ordered differently—for greater effectiveness? To answer such questions requires a perception of the whole, an understanding of the overall architecture of the curriculum, and then data—evidence—in order to answer questions of effectiveness, and value. Put another way, making important curricular and pedagogical decisions in the absence of evidence is akin to confirming a research hypothesis—without ever conducting the inquiry.

For these reasons, the goal of the Student Learning Outcomes Committee is to assist departments and programs in the process of making tough decisions, by helping them to focus on questions of value. Because we understand the issue of time and resources, we are also trying to improve our own processes as well, to find ways to help departments assess student learning more effectively. To this end, we will introduce a simplified assessment manual by summer, and we will continue to explore possible software applications that might lead us to more parsimonious approaches. In it our sincere hope that you will see us an ally in the process of making difficult choices.

Committee Response to Your 2008-2009 Annual Assessment Report

Committee reviewers commend the CBA Graduate Committee on completion of a newly revised assessment plan. We note especially the various frameworks for integrating descriptions of expected student learning outcomes with courses and other curricular elements, the coordinated use of multiple assessment measures, and use of assessment data to guide changes to the MBA program.

We see in this report realistic approaches to assessment planning and scheduling, and we are impressed with the effort to assign SLOs to courses using the “Introduce-Develop-Master” framework to indicate how multiple courses can promote and enrich SLOs. We think this approach would benefit CBA departments and programs that may have over compartmentalized SLOs to one or two courses, and it may serve as a basis for more refined measures of student progress in achieving learning goals.

Further, we believe both the reworking of the Sports MBA (SMBA) plan and the approach that will be used for its assessment make sense. We look forward to reading about the beginning of the implementation of the two revised assessment plans in the coming year.

Put simply, we thank you for the time and energy invested in activities designed to enhance student learning. Well done, indeed.

Highest regards,

Chris Frost

Christopher Frost, Ph.D.
Chair, Student Learning Outcomes Committee