

July 14, 2008

Dr. Massoud Saghafi, Chair
International Programs Committee

Dear Dr. Saghafi:

The American Association for Higher Education developed a number of “Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning.” With apology to David Letterman, I have adapted the list slightly, to structure those principles as a “Top Ten” list:

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values; it begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for our students.
2. Learning is a complex process that entails not only what students know, but what they can do with what they know. It involves not only knowledge and abilities, but also values, attitudes and habits of mind that require thoughtful (and diverse) approaches to measurement.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes. Assessment as a process leads a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes, but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes. To improve outcomes, faculty and administrators need to know about student experiences along the way—about the curricula, teaching and student effort that lead to particular outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic. Improvement comes when assessment entails a linked series of activities that occur over time, and assessment strategies must be continually evaluated and refined in order to ensure success.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved. Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Educational quality is a collective effort.
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of relevance and illuminates questions that people really care about. To be useful, information collected must be connected to issues or questions that people value.
8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change. Successful assessment is directed toward improvement, and its most important contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public; assessment provides a way to document outcomes and to inform constituents of the ways in which campus programs and services positively affect students, community and society.
10. Assessment is less about oversight and more about improving student learning. All assessment efforts need to be handled in a mutually supportive environment. It is essential for faculty to understand the importance and benefits of assessment and to recognize its intrinsic value.

Within the context of these assessment principles, I thank you for submitting your annual report. Members of the Student Learning Outcomes Committee have reviewed the report, and I convey their specific comments, suggestions, and questions by way of this letter (next page). It is my hope that you will perceive this review process in the same manner as do we: as a collaborative process, with the goal of enhancing student learning.

Committee Response to Your 2007-2008 Annual Assessment Report

The Student Learning Outcomes Committee takes note of this first attempt to consider assessment for the MSBA International Business program. We thank you and the entire International Programs Committee of the CBA for the effort associated with the development of a programmatic assessment plan and look forward to hearing, in the coming years, about the results of the plan's implementation. In an effort to help you fine tune the plan, we offer the following thoughts and recommendations:

- The student learning outcomes on which the plan is based are generally well written and clear. We recommend, however, that you reconsider the wording of SLO 2.3 (Acquire the knowledge to market products and services internationally) to include a more action-oriented verb. It is difficult to clearly assess whether a student has “acquired knowledge” unless they demonstrate that knowledge in a direct manner.
- The plan identifies a variety of well accepted assessment tools (embedded test questions, projects, and cases analyses); however, we encourage you to more clearly identify the specific tool or tools that will be used to assess each identified student learning outcome. This is particularly important for the first three SLOs (those associated with Goal #1) which you will be assessing in the upcoming academic year.
- While the plan clearly identifies the courses in which students will be acquiring the content needed to demonstrate their learning, it does not identify the places where the actual assessments will take place. For example, in the case of SLO 1.1 (Identify and analyze the cost and the market drivers of globalization), the plan indicates that students receive needed content in three courses – FIN 654, MKT 769, and MGT 790. Because MGT 790 is the capstone course in the program, we assume that this SLO cannot be assessed prior to student's completing that course. Is the assessment effort for the SLOs associated with Goal #1 (all of which include content delivered in MGT 790) to take place at the end of the MGT 790 course? We recommend clarifying the assessment plan to clearly state where each SLO will be assessed and with which tools.
- Your report indicates that the three SLOs associated with Goal #1 will be assessed during the 2008-2009 academic year. Are the needed test questions and/or rubrics in place to begin collecting this data during Fall semester 2008? Although some of your planned data collection may be occurring during the Spring 2009 semester (we were not clear on this from your report), we assume some data will be collected during Fall semester 2008. We look forward to the results of that fall semester effort being reported in your April 2009 report.

In closing, we commend you on your thoughtfulness and diligence regarding assessment of student learning. While it is clear that you have a strong start, the SLO Committee reviewers wish to leave you with a recommendation that underscores the overall effort. We caution you to always keep in mind the purpose of your assessment efforts, which is to use what you have found to drive change that will strengthen your programs. In the parlance of the AACSB, your professional accrediting organization, “closing the loop” is ultimately the most critical measure of a successful assessment effort. In the coming years reports we will look forward to reading about detailed efforts to institute programmatic change in response your assessment results.

Highest regards,

Chris Frost

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