

June 1, 2009

Dr. Alex DeNoble, Chair
Dr. Beth Chung-Herrera, Assessment Coordinator
Dr. John Francis and Dr. Amy Randel, Assessment Committee Members
Department of Management
College of Business Administration

Dear Professors DeNoble, Chung-Herrera, Francis and Randel,

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

(The committee did not review your MSBA programs as we understand that they are being phased out and the department reported only cursory results.)

The committee applauds the comprehensive nature of the reports and the diligence they reflect. We particularly note the department’s response to last year’s committee recommendations in the development of the Management Assessment Test (MAT). The substantial efforts to link assessment items in the MAT to specific goals will provide a useful tool for identifying areas for curricular improvement across all specializations within the BSBA. We also note the use of

matrices to clarify *assignment* of SLOs to specific courses that will serve as venues for SLO development, as well as the use of embedded assessments that attempt to directly measure these capacities.

Reviewer Suggestions

1. Consider taking a strategic approach to sustainable implementation of assessment mechanics, for example, by using online assessment surveys and/or creating a broad pool of test items that can be drawn upon randomly for the MAT.
2. Consider using more specific phrases than “Demonstrate knowledge of...” for goal statements, such as “apply”, “synthesize”, “use”, “employ.” Broadly descriptive action verbs suggest that the essential purpose of the programs is to empower students with capacities rather than treat them as storehouses of content.

This year’s work appears foundational to further integration of the curriculum: you are revitalizing your undergraduate curriculum, and you are a leader in organizational management. For these reasons, we look forward to seeing where you all choose to go with your student learning assessment processes. We commend you on your commitment to student learning, and we look forward to next year’s report.

Highest regards,

Chris Frost

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