

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION ASSESSMENT REPORT 2005-2006
Student Learning Outcomes Committee
Department/Program Assessment Results Report

Department/Program: Business Administration
Date Submitted: March 26, 2007

Degree: B.S.B.A

I. Drawing upon the goals and objectives contained in the department/program student learning assessment plan, what was the focus of the department's student learning assessment for the past academic year?

The College of Business Administration (CBA) has a set of common goals for all undergraduate students (since all students are in the B.S.B.A. program). Additionally, each major and specialization within the college has a set of goals specific to that major or specialization. This report focuses on the set of common goals. Assessment of goals specific to the major or specialization is reported separately.

There are four goals (each with corresponding student learning outcomes) that are common to the B.S.B.A program. They are:

Goal 1: Written and Oral Communication - Communicate effectively with individuals, teams, and large groups, both in writing and orally.

Learning Outcomes:

- Write well-organized and grammatically correct papers including letters, memos, case analyses, and research reports.
- Make effective oral presentations that are informative as well as persuasive, as appropriate.

Goal 2: Analytical and Critical Thinking Skills - Demonstrate effective analytical and critical thinking skills to make an appropriate decision in a complex situation.

Learning Outcomes:

- Collect and organize critical data and information to solve a problem.
- Find appropriate models and frameworks to analyze information and follow logical steps to reach an effective decision.

Goal 3: Ethical Reasoning - Distinguish and analyze ethical problems that occur in business and society, and choose and defend resolutions for practical solutions.

Learning Outcomes:

- Explain the various ethical dimensions of business decision making and the role of various stakeholders in this decision making.
- Assess the ethics of decision alternatives using different approaches and philosophies.
- Apply an integrative ethical decision model to cases drawn from various business sub-disciplines.

Goal 4: Essential Business Principles - Demonstrate an understanding of the major functional areas of Business.

Learning Outcomes:

- Describe basic concepts in each major functional area of business.
- Apply techniques and theories from various areas of Business to business situations.

The following table explains the timeline for assessment of these goals:

GOAL	ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY
Goal #1 (Oral Communication Component Only)	2004-2005 (Discussed in Assessment Report dated 10/2005)
Goal #1 (Written Communication Component Only)	2005-2006 (Discussed in the current report)
Goal #2 (Analytic and Critical Thinking Skills)	2006-2007 (To be discussed in 4-1-08 Assessment Report)
Goal #3 (Ethical Reasoning)	2007-2008 (To be discussed in 4-1-09 Assessment Report)
Goal #4 (Essential Business Principles)	Assessed Annually (Latest results discussed in current report)

The highlighted items in the table form the focus of B.S.B.A.'s common goal student learning assessment for the past academic year.

II. What information was collected, how much, and by whom?

Goal #1: Oral and Written Communication (Written Communication Component Only)

To assess our students' written communication skills, samples of individual student writing were collected from capstone courses in each of the five departments in the college (Accounting, Finance, Information Systems, Management, Marketing).

(The following section is extracted from a report on the Written Communication Assessment authored by Dr. Gretchen Vik of the Information & Decision Systems Department in the College of Business Administration.)

The assignments varied: a white paper requiring five pages of instruction, including a grading rubric, references, and further information on Blackboard (Accounting); a description of how to give an oral presentation (Finance); short (one-two pages) papers on various topics including technological innovations (Information Systems); a portion of a narrative case analysis (Management); and discussion of a specific company's strengths and weaknesses as discussed in an article (Marketing).

The Process

The topics and types of papers varied widely, as did the sample size. To balance the different samples, the assessment raters (three CBA faculty members experienced in holistic reading of writing) randomly chose 19 papers from each of the five areas so that four areas had 19 papers and one area had 16. In the future, we should attempt to balance the assignment difficulty among the five areas, as they were very diverse.

Since the assignments were so different, scores were normed within each department to help show different expectations. Thus it may be more useful to look at the range of scores within each course rather than compare among departments. The chosen rubric is [found in Appendix I of this report]. Planning (10 points maximum), Development (10 points maximum) and Mechanics (5 points maximum) were evaluated by at least two readers, and a third reader read all papers to provide consistency and resolve discrepancies in the first two scores.

In two performance areas, planning and development, the rubric gives 8-10 for meeting/exceeding standards, 6-7 for approaching standards, 4-5 for less than adequate, and 0-3 for limited. In the mechanics area, 4-5 meets/exceeds, 3 approaches standards, 2 is less than adequate, and 0-1 is limited.

Goal #4: Essential Business Principles

The College of Business Administration participated in the CSU Business Assessment Test (BAT) during Spring semester 2006. This is the third time the CBA has participated in the exam. The BAT exam consists of 80 multiple choice questions drawn from a pool of questions developed by a consortium of CSU business schools and administered through CSU Long Beach. The exam covers eight content areas deemed to represent the essential business principles that all undergraduate business majors should have mastered. The areas are: Accounting, Economics, Finance, Information Systems, Management, Marketing, and Statistics. The exam was administered during Spring 2006 in all MGT 405 sections. MGT 405 is the capstone strategy course required of all students in the B.S.B.A. program. A total of 472 seniors took the exam. This represents 89.4% of the students enrolled in the capstone course in the Spring and 44.1% of the annual enrollment in the capstone course in 2005-2006. Exams were graded by the BAT Test Administration at CSU Long Beach and results were sent to SDSU.

III. What conclusions were drawn on the basis of the information collected?

Goal #1 (Written Communication)

Students in four departments were found to approach standards in planning and development, with Accounting students meeting the standard. In mechanics, students in three departments approach standards, with two slightly less than adequate. The following table reports the results of the assessment.

	Accounting	Finance	Information and Decision Systems	Management	Marketing
Averages					
Planning	8.7	5.6	7.7	6.8	6.4
Development	8.1	5.7	7.7	6.7	6.0
Mechanics	3.5	3.1	2.9	3.1	2.9
Total	20.1	14.4	18.3	16.8	15.3
Standard Deviations					
Planning	1.23	1.67	1.06	0.94	1.92
Development	0.99	1.60	1.55	0.87	1.45
Mechanics	0.80	0.73	1.04	0.55	0.82
Total	2.50	3.64	3.26	1.56	3.58

(The following section is extracted from a report on the Written Communication Assessment authored by Dr. Gretchen Vik of the Information & Decision Systems Department in the College of Business Administration.)

Comments on the Results and Process

Only the Accounting and IDS assignments were given to the readers; the other three sets of papers had to be judged based on what appeared to be the goal of the assignment. Of course, good business writing should clearly state what the purpose of the document is and imply the intended audience, but it would have been helpful to know the requirements of the assignment.

In the Finance assignment, “How to Prepare an Effective Presentation,” the assignment lacked audience. It may have been just for the professor, although a few writers seemed to be giving advice to fellow students. These papers also had significant problems identifying sources and giving credit for borrowed material. This assignment needs more focus and detail to help students learn to use research well. It might be better to assign discussion of financial results, so students could practice writing and thinking about numbers. The assignment seems far too simple for upper division students who should have learned research and analysis skills.

Marketing’s relatively low score in development probably relates to the limited material assigned: summarize an article about a corporation. Some articles did not give the students much to work with, so it would help to know if the articles were student-chosen or not. The Marketing assignment seems like a good written assignment idea but may need fine-tuning to use the analysis skills students are learning in their upper division classes.

For example, the Marketing papers sometimes covered strengths and weaknesses of a corporation, sometimes just strengths or weaknesses. The readers did not

know if certain articles were assigned (and lacked one topic or the other) or if they had been poorly chosen by the student and did not include the two required topics. Some papers included references to sources, but only one also listed the source in a conventional format. Many used borrowed ideas without giving credit to the writer of the idea, which is contrary to university expectations.

We were pleasantly surprised that the mechanics scores were overall 2.9-3.5, since most of these students are a couple of years away from any writing courses that would remind them to proofread and revise their work.

The Accounting and IDS assignments give some ideas on how upper division writing assignments can be developed. In addition to being given a clear task, students need to be reminded about documentation format, document design (length, font, spacing), and writing style. Writing and then giving students a rubric for each assignment requires time-consuming development, but makes clear what will be graded and what standards apply.

Suggestions for Possible Course Adjustments

We found that many of our students would benefit from more detailed instruction (some via rubrics for papers) and would be able to produce clearer writing. One common writing problem is attention to audience, and two or three of the assignments seemed to be written only for the instructor. Research citations and source listing are a problem that could be solved with consistent handouts; plagiarism is a larger issue that needs to be addressed with a statement in the syllabus for each course

Goal #4: Essential Business Principles

The average score earned by SDSU students on the BAT exam was 50.25% (40.2 of 80 questions). This represents a slight dip from average performance when the exam was administered in Spring 2005 (mean: 52%). Average performance did place SDSU students third in campus rankings across eight CSU schools that administered the test in Spring 2006.

There were no significant differences in performance between SDSU native students and transfer students, between full- and part-time students, between men and women or between sub-groups across a variety of other factors (Appendix II). Sub-test scores were reported across the eight content areas covered by the BAT. This information is provided in Appendix III to this report. Predictably, students majoring in a particular field did better in that sub-test than non-majors. Overall, students performed strongest in the content areas of Marketing and Information Systems and weakest in the content areas of Statistics and Finance. This is consistent with results of the Spring 2005 administration of the exam. Since students are not allowed to use a calculator on the exam and since Statistics and Finance questions frequently involve some form of computation, the weak performance in these two subjects may arguably be attributable to factors other

than student mastery of the concepts. Of significant note however was a 10.39 percentage point drop from Spring 2005 to Spring 2006 on the Statistics sub-test. The test questions were identical for both administrations of the test and calculators were banned in both cases. Based on this limited comparison it may be speculated that our students' mastery of Statistics is worsening. Three departments in the CBA require their students to take two statistics courses (one lower division and one upper division) while two departments require only one lower division statistics course. Students who take more statistics (two courses rather than one) performed significantly better on the Statistics sub-test of the BAT than students who take less statistics (39.02% versus 33.35%).

IV. How will the information be used to inform decision-making, planning, and improvement?

Goal #1: Written Communication

The Undergraduate Committee of the College of Business discussed the results of the Written Communication assessment effort at some length. Based on the suggestions for possible course adjustments provided by Dr. Vik (who led the assessment team for this goal), it was decided that a memo would be sent to all faculty in the CBA urging them to develop more detailed instructions for their written assignments and also urging them to provide students with grading rubrics. The memo that was sent to the faculty is found in Appendix IV to this report.

Goal #2: Essential Business Principles

The Undergraduate Committee, during two meetings in September 2006, discussed the results of the BAT exam. Statistics is clearly a weak area for our students. The recent results suggest it is becoming even more problematic. Students whose programs require two rather than one course in statistics perform significantly better. The UG Committee discussed the idea of having all students in the college take IDS 301 (the upper division statistics course currently required of students in three of the five CBA departments). Unfortunately the UG Committee does not have the power to require this curriculum change of all majors across the five departments nor, even should we, do majors in the two departments have room to their programs to add an additional three units. The UG Committee decided to disseminate the results of the BAT to CBA faculty with special emphasis on the weak performance in Statistics. The hope is that this information might spur the Finance and Information & Decision Systems departments to consider making room in their programs for a second Statistics course. Whether this occurs or not, the UG Committee remains deeply concerned about overall performance across the college in this content area. The strongest students (from the three departments requiring two statistics courses) scored less than 40%. It may be

speculated that when students are required to make significant use of the statistical tools they have been taught, that they retain the material better and perform better on tests of the material. Of the three departments in the college that require the upper-division statistics course (IDS 301), Marketing follows that course with a required Marketing Research course that makes use of the statistics material. Further, marketing students are required to earn a minimum grade of a C in IDS 301 before they can move on to the Marketing Research course. Marketing students performed at the highest level on the Statistics portion of the BAT exam across all students in the CBA (42.8%). It appears that in addition to encouraging departments that do not require IDS 301 to do so, all departments in the college should be encouraged to consider setting minimum performance levels in the course and perhaps most importantly, to strongly encourage their faculty to set expectations for students' use of statistical tools in advanced classes.

The other content area that appears to be problematic for our students is Finance. Even among Finance majors, the average score was only 49.26%. Although some portion of this low performance may be attributable to the nature of the BAT exam itself (no use of calculators), the college needs to be more aggressive in determining what the problem is. The BAT test is designed to test knowledge supposedly mastered in the introductory Finance course, which all B.S.B.A. majors take (FIN 323). Further study may determine that this basic course is not covering all of the necessary material but other explanations are possible. The Undergraduate Committee has asked the Finance department to include consideration of the issue of coverage in FIN 323 in its departmental assessment.

Report Completed by: Kathy Krentler

Date: March 26, 2007

APPENDIX I
SCORING RUBRIC FOR WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

	Poor (1)	Developing (2)	Marginal (3)	Good (4)
Responsive to assignment/ coherently express complex situation	The paper did not address the assignment	The paper suggests that the author may have misunderstood aspects of the assignment.	The paper is generally responsive to the assignment but did not adequately treat some important aspects of the topic.	The paper reflects an adequate understanding of the assignment and evidences a good job coherently expressing a complex situation.
Purpose/Thesis	The writing lacks a central idea or purpose. The writing is characterized by ideas that are extremely limited or simply unclear. The paper lacks focus.	Main ideas and purpose are somewhat unclear. The writing is characterized by a purpose and main idea(s) that may require extensive inferences by the reader.	The reader can understand the main ideas and purpose, although they may be overly broad, simplistic, overly- or simply seem to echo observations heard elsewhere.	The writing is clear, focused and interesting. It is characterized by clarity of purpose and by main ideas that stand out.
Completeness/ Well developed	The writing is characterized by attempts at development that are minimal or non-existent; the paper may be too short to demonstrate the development of an idea.	The writing is characterized by an inadequate attempt at development of the main idea; the paper relies on insufficient details, irrelevant details that clutter the text, extensive repetition of detail, or details lacking credible sources	Attempts to develop the main idea are not entirely successful. The paper is characterized by the use of supporting details that are generally relevant, but may be overly general or limited in places. Occasionally the supporting details may be out of balance with the main idea(s) or not adequately supported by credible resources	Main ideas are developed by supporting details suitable to audience and purpose. The writing is characterized by clarity and focus, the use of supporting, relevant and carefully selected details, the use of resources that provide credible support, and thorough, balanced exploration of the topic. The writing makes appropriate connections and insights.
Organization/ Structure	The writing lacks coherence; organization seems haphazard and disjointed. Even after rereading, the reader remains confused. The writing is characterized by a lack of effective sequencing, a failure to provide an identifiable beginning, body, and/or ending, a lack of transitions, a lack of organization, which ultimately obscures or	The writing lacks a clear organizational structure. An occasional organizational device is discernible; however, the writing is either difficult to follow and the reader has to reread substantial portions, or the piece is simply too short to demonstrate organizational skills. The writing may be characterized by sequencing where the	An attempt has been made to organize the writing; however, the overall structure is inconsistent or skeletal. The writing may be characterized by sequencing where the order or relationship among ideas is occasionally unclear, a beginning and an ending, which, although present, are either undeveloped or too	The organization enhances the central idea(s) and its development. The organization and structure are strong and move the reader through the text. The writing is generally characterized by effective sequencing of organizational structure that fits the topic, an inviting beginning that draws the reader in and a satisfying sense of

	Poor (1)	Developing (2)	Marginal (3)	Good (4)
	distorts the main point.	order of the relationship among ideas is frequently unclear, a missing or extremely undeveloped beginning, body, and/or ending, inadequate transitions, or details that seem to be randomly placed.	obvious, transitional devices that are overused or occasionally inadequate, and a structure that is skeletal or too rigid.	resolution or closure in most cases, a smooth effective transition among all elements (sentences, paragraphs, ideas) and details that are clearly placed.
Economy/ Diction	The writing is excessively wordy, rambles and evidences no efforts to tighten the text through editing. The reader cannot glean the principal ideas and recommendations from a quick read. Word choices reflect imprecise or inappropriate selection.		The writing evidences some attention to brevity although could be edited further to enhance communication efficiency substantially. The paper is not excessively wordy or repetitive but still requires a careful read to discern key concepts.	
Mechanics	Numerous errors in usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. The severity and frequency of errors are so overwhelming that the reader finds it difficult to focus on the message and must reread for meaning. The writing may be characterized by very limited skill in using conventions, repeated, severe and frequent errors in basic punctuation and spelling, paragraph breaks that are highly irregular or so frequent that they bear no relation to the organization of the text, and capitalization that appears to be random. In general, the paper evidences a need for extensive editing.	The writing demonstrates limited control of standard writing conventions. Errors impede readability. The writing may be characterized by less than full control over basic conventions, end-of-sentence punctuation that is usually correct but internal punctuation that contains frequent errors, spelling errors that distract the reader, paragraphs that sometimes run together or begin at ineffective places, capitalization errors, and other errors in grammar and usage that do not block meaning but that do distract the reader. In general, the paper evidences a significant need for editing.	The writing demonstrates control of standard writing conventions. Minor errors, while perhaps noticeable, are not enough to distort meaning or confuse the reader. The writing is characterized by control over conventions used, (although a wide range is not demonstrated), correct end-of-sentence punctuation (although occasionally internal punctuation may be incorrect), spelling that is usually correct, basically sound paragraph breaks that reinforce the organizational structure, correct capitalization, but with occasional lapses in correct grammar and usage. The paper evidences a moderate need for editing.	The writing demonstrates strong control of standard writing conventions (e.g., punctuation, spelling, capitalization, paragraph breaks, grammar and usage) and uses them effectively to enhance communication. Errors are so few and so minor that they do not impede readability. The writing is characterized by strong control of conventions, effective use of punctuation, correct spelling, even more difficult words, paragraph breaks that reinforce the organizational structure, and correct capitalization. The paper evidences correct grammar and usage that contribute to clarity and style with little need for editing.

**APPENDIX II -- BAT COMPARISONS ON
VARIOUS DIMENSIONS**

BAT Scores by Enrollment	
Full-time	40.13
Part-time	40.79
BAT Scores by Hours Worked Per Week	
0-10 hours per week	41.37
11-20 hours per week	39.59
21-30 hours per week	40.11
31-40 hours per week	39.22
> 40 hours per week	40.41
BAT Scores by Language	
Communicate best in English	40.73
Communicate better in another language	37.14
Communicate equally in English & another language	38.86
BAT Scores by Transfer Status	
Transfer students	39.31
Native Students	41.13
Ethnicity	
Asian/Asian American	40.03
Black or African-American	33.88
Mexican-American, Latin-American, other Hispanic	37.62
Middle Eastern	39
Native American	53
White	41.48
Other	38.19
Decline to specify	42.74
Gender & Age	
Females	
20-25 years of age	39.23
26-30 years of age	38.33
31-35 years of age	33.43
36-40 years of age	33.5
More than 40 years of age	32.2
Males	
20-25 years of age	41.04
26-30 years of age	43.86
31-35 years of age	47.83
36-40 years of age	36
More than 40 years of age	44
Gender	
Females	38.41
Males	40.57

APPENDIX III - BAT COMPARISONS BY SUB-TEST

OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS BY SUB-TEST

Subject Area (Subtests)	
Management	54.66%
Accountancy	49.45%
Business Law	49.61%
Statistics	36.25%
Finance	41.46%
Economics	48.61%
Marketing	63.04%
Management Information Systems	60.30%

Performance by Accounting Students

Subject Area (Subtests)	
Management	50.00%
Accountancy	67.30%
Business Law	50.15%
Statistics	39.32%
Finance	43.58%
Economics	51.35%
Marketing	60.41%
Information Systems	64.41%

Performance by Info Systems Students

Subject Area (Subtests)	
Management	54.94%
Accountancy	43.91%
Business Law	48.79%
Statistics	31.30%
Finance	38.77%
Economics	50.24%
Marketing	56.52%
Information Systems	77.78%

Performance by Finance Students

Subject Area (Subtests)	
Management	55.60%
Accountancy	52.77%
Business Law	53.47%
Statistics	34.46%
Finance	49.26%
Economics	55.06%
Marketing	63.66%
Information Systems	59.13%

Performance by Management Students

Subject Area (Subtests)	
Management	57.49%
Accountancy	44.80%
Business Law	49.24%
Statistics	35.49%
Finance	37.83%
Economics	44.55%
Marketing	60.98%
Information Systems	58.28%

Performance by Marketing Students

Subject Area (Subtests)	
Management	57.48%
Accountancy	42%
Business Law	46.36%
Statistics	42.80%
Finance	39.34%
Economics	45.04%
Marketing	69%
Information Systems	59.62%

APPENDIX IV
MEMO TO FACULTY REGARDING STUDENT WRITING

September 29, 2006

Memorandum

To: CBA Faculty
From: Undergraduate Committee
Subject: Student Writing

During Spring semester 2006 an assessment of the writing skills of the college's undergraduate students was undertaken. The purpose of this memo is to share with you a brief description of the results of that effort and to offer some ideas that you may wish to consider incorporating in your classes as means of improving the written assignments you receive from your undergraduate students.

Student writing samples (drawn from capstone courses across the five CBA departments) were assessed on three criteria: planning, development, and mechanics. Results indicated that students were "Approaching Standards" in each of these areas. Specifically, this interpretation translates to the following:

- Planning: Written work has adequate beginning, development, and conclusion. Paragraphing and transitions are also adequate. Headings show writing plan.
- Development: The length of the written work is sufficient to cover the topic, and assertions are supported by evidence, cited by references and a conventional source list. No apparent plagiarism.
- Mechanics: Written work is relatively free of errors in word selection and use, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

It is interesting to note, however, that the range of performance across the samples provided from the departments was significant.

Based on the variation in performance and a careful consideration of the assignments the students were responding to, the Undergraduate Committee urges you to consider the following suggestions. Students write better when they are provided with a clear and detailed set of instructions for the assignment. Stronger and clearer student writing will result when instructions discuss expected writing style and specify the audience for the assignment so that students can tailor their document to that specific audience. It may also help if you specify documentation format and design (length, font, spacing).

Further, the assessment literature supports what was noted in this assessment of student writing: higher levels of writing are produced when students are provided (as part of the assignment) with a rubric that clearly defines the grading standards and expectations of the instructor. Such a rubric should identify the criteria on which an assignment will be evaluated and the expectations for the range of possible grades for each criterion. The Undergraduate Committee would be happy to provide examples of complete grading rubrics to anyone interested (contact Kathy Krentler).

