

Student Learning Outcomes Committee Report 2011

Department/Program Assessment Results Report

Department/Program: Business Administration

Degree/Program: MBA

Date Submitted: 10/01/11

The purpose of this report is to communicate the assessment activities that have taken place during the 2010/2011 academic year and convey how the results will be used to improve student learning in the MBA program at the College of Business Administration.

I. Working from your assessment report of last year, please discuss some changes made or strategies implemented in response to last year's results.

Results from the Goal 1 Assessment Exam administered during the previous assessment cycle indicated that overall students in the MBA program are meeting expectations in terms of learning relative to *Goal 1: Develop the solid foundation in theoretical concepts and managerial skills needed to lead business organizations*. The three performance benchmarks the Graduate Committee set for the exam were: (1) students are judged to have met expectations if 50% of the items or greater were answered correctly, (2) students are judged to have marginally met expectations if 45-49% of the questions were answered correctly, and (3) students were judged not to have met expectations if 44% or fewer questions were answered correctly. The benchmarks were set under the assumption that several semesters had passed since the students had completed the core courses, they did not have access to reference materials during the exam, and students were not asked to prepare for the exam. To confirm this was the case, some of the faculty members teaching the core courses embedded questions from the assessment exam in their course examinations. Student performance on the assessment exam questions upon completion of the core courses versus completion of the program indicates that there is some deterioration of knowledge as students move through the program.

Recommendations in the University's response to the 2009/2010 Assessment Report suggested the Graduate Committee consider increasing the performance levels required to meet or exceed expectations. The Graduate Committee still feels the benchmarks mentioned above are appropriate. However, the Committee determined that there may be opportunities to improve learning by offering multiple points of review or integration opportunities throughout the program that place particular emphasis on the aforementioned areas. These conclusions factored into decisions for program enhancements this year.

The 2009/2010 report identified the following areas to improve learning relative to Goal 1:

- Financial Reporting and Analysis I: could provide greater emphasis on or a review of analyzing and classifying cash flows consistent with professional accounting standards.
- Organizational Behavior: could integrate a review of specific terminology toward the end of the program.
- Statistical Analysis: could provide more practice on the selection of an appropriate graph for the particular type of data being analyzed and on the use of dummy variables

in multiple regression, further elaborate on the concepts of skewness, confidence intervals, and Tchebycheff's theorem.

- **Managerial Economics:** could introduce additional exercises or a review of strategies for evaluating pricing and other competitive strategies in the context of the structure of a firm's market.
- **Marketing:** could provide a review of strategy and the marketing mix as well as additional emphasis on research methods during the MBA program.
- **Operations Management:** could provide additional exercises relevant to completing calculations and a review of certain terminology.
- **Financial Management I:** could provide additional exercises on relevant cash flows for capital budgeting projects and identifying long-term sources of funds.

The Graduate Committee worked to identify review and integration opportunities that could be introduced into the MBA curriculum in order to improve student learning relative to Goal 1. In particular, we sought to identify mechanisms to improve learning relative to specific topics in core courses for which performance was weakest on the assessment exam indicated above.

The following improvements to the program have or will be implemented.

Orientation. Assessment data collected during 2010/2011 informed content incorporated into orientation. In Fall 2011 a new student orientation was implemented for MBA program. Prior to orientation, graduate students admitted in the Fall 2011 admission cycle were asked to complete online modules in statistics and financial economics to review program prerequisite material. At orientation, the applicability of foundation material covered in the online modules was demonstrated through a series of exercises. The expectation is that these preparatory steps will improve students' learning and retention during the program, and therefore further their achievement of Goal 1.

Mid-program. As part of the next curriculum revision the Committee will include an integrative strategy course (MGT 626) as part of the required curriculum for MBA students.

Culmination. The Committee developed a tutorial that is provided at the beginning of the culminating experience course (BA 795) to review key material for Goals 1, 2, and 3. The tutorial is currently being revised.

II. 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?

Program Structure Analysis

The Committee re-administered the Goal 1 Assessment Exam in Summer 2010 to collect additional data. This additional data allowed the Committee to extend the original analysis in several ways. First, the impact of switching from 2 to 3-unit core classes was explored. The evaluation helped determine whether the additional time for review and integration in the 3-unit version of a course helps students perform better than those who took the 2-unit course. It appears that the additional time devoted in 3-unit courses does not significantly impact performance. However in some cases students' performance on core material was statistically related to whether the core course in the functional area was completed as part of the MBA experience at SDSU. The results indicate that there is a general benefit to students receiving critical material in the program as part of their required curriculum so setting stricter limitations relative to waiving courses could improve student learning. Moreover, students may be best served by review and integration of material throughout the program. A potential structure to accomplish such integration might take the form of reduced unit courses (e.g., 2 or 1.5 units) that are more focused in terms of content and are complemented with integrative coursework later in the program.

Learning Outcome Refinement

The Graduate Committee refined the learning outcomes for the graduate program and the learning outcome for Goals 2 and 3. These goals were collapsed and streamlined. *Goal 2: Develop an awareness of environments in which managers make and implement ethical or global business decisions.* The student learning outcomes generated are:

SLO #2.1: Evaluate the impact that changes in the environment have on the business climate.

SLO #2.2: Analyze the impact that environmental factors have on the functional areas of organizations and organizational activities.

SLO #2.3: Identify and critically analyze salient responsibilities of organizations to all stakeholders.

The previous goals and learning outcomes can be found in Appendix 1a and a revised set of the goals and learning outcomes can be found in Appendix 1b.

The Graduate Committee explored additional student learning goals that might be appropriate for the MBA program. A review of AACSB standards for Masters level degrees in general management, the material presented in the 2010 MBA Roundtable Curricular Innovation Symposium at the Darden School of Business, and discussions in Datar, Garvin, and Cullen (2010) *Rethinking the MBA* suggest the following goals for learning: understanding of the challenges of implementation and organizational dynamics, the development of analytical, creative, and innovative thinking to address ambiguity and facilitate the capacity to synthesize relevant information, capacity for leadership, and an understanding of the limits of marketing models by MBA graduates. These possibilities were explored at the College of Business

Administration Assessment Day to identify the most critical goals to add as learning outcomes for the MBA program. Leadership and challenges of implementation (e.g., teamwork, interpersonal influence, mobilizing others), analytical reasoning and thinking to address ambiguity, and creative and innovative thinking emerged as key goals for learning that are not expressed in current learning outcomes for the MBA program.

Loop-Closing: Tutorials and Workshops

The Committee reviewed potential material for the new student orientation that may serve to facilitate learning relative to Goal 1. A statistics and an economics tutorial and workshop are being included in the new student MBA orientation.

The Committee developed a pilot review tutorial that is provided at the beginning of the culminating experience course (BA 795). The tutorial covers theoretical concepts (Goal 1) relevant to identifying and critically analyzing salient responsibilities of organizations to all stakeholders (Goal 2-SLO#2.3), analyzing the impact environmental factors have on the functional areas of an organization and its activities (Goal 2-SLO#2.2) and evaluating the impact that changes in environment have on the business climate (Goal 2-SLO#2.1) to provide a structure for analyzing business problems and formulating business strategies (Goal 3). In the tutorial particular emphasis is placed on topics in marketing, operations, organizational behavior, and finance that were identified as performance issues on the Goal 1 Assessment Exam. During the Fall 2011 term the Committee will confer with faculty across the college in order to revise and improve this tutorial.

New Assessment

Client Memo. In cooperation with BA795 faculty an activity in the culminating experience was transitioned from a group based exercise to an individual exercise. In Spring 2010 the Committee piloted an assessment exercise with a group of BA 795 students. To assess Goal 3 (Acquire a Capacity to formulate and communicate strategies to solve business problems and pursue opportunities) students completed a “Letter of Re-Engagement” for their 795 client in addition to completing their client project. The lead faculty and co-advisor for the project evaluated student performance as well as the appropriateness of the assessment exercise for evaluation of Goal 3. The exercise was appropriate for assessment of Goal 3 and required minimal time investment for the co-advisor. One issue with the exercise is that if implemented for all 795 students there would be variance in the context of the assessment exercise based on differences across 795 projects. More importantly, a letter of Re-Engagement requires additional student work at the end of the term and may therefore impede the completion of the final project.

To address the issue of context variance for the assignment and workload issues the Committee piloted an individual client background memo produced by each BA 795 team member before their client meeting. The client background memo required each group member on the

consulting team to develop a 2-3 page memo that analyzed the business problem for their assigned client project and suggested relevant research strategies for the project. The client background memo was used to assess each individual team member's ability to write clear and effective formal reports. It also offered co-advising faculty an opportunity to provide feedback on individual thinking while at the same time providing valuable feedback for the project as a whole. Ultimately, it was determined the best mechanism for individual assessment was to provide clear guidelines for the individual Client Background Memo and have students submit their write-ups after their first client meeting (to eliminate variance in this individual assignment in terms of requirements).

Case Assessment Exam. The Graduate Committee developed a Case Assessment Exam that is being administered in the fourth week of the semester during the MBA culminating experience. Students review case information regarding a company outside of class and then during a two hour exam answer questions intended to assess whether they are able to: identify and critically analyze salient responsibilities of organizations to all stakeholders (Goal 2-SLO#2.3), analyze the impact environmental factors have on the functional areas of an organization and its activities (Goal 2-SLO#2.2), evaluate the impact that changes in environment have on the business climate (Goal 2-SLO#2.1) and to solve business problems and formulate business strategies (Goal 3). A pilot version of this Case Assessment Exam was administered Fall 2010 and a revised version of the exam was administered Spring 2011. This exam will be administered every semester in the culminating experience course.

Professional Oral Presentations. The Committee interviewed individual faculty regarding students' strengths and weaknesses in making professional oral presentations. The Committee also reviewed primary faculty evaluations of individual students' ability to make professional oral presentations. Faculty rated students' oral presentation skills during a presentation to the client for the BA 795 culminating experience. This data was used to evaluate whether MBA students are able to make professional oral presentations (Goal 3-SLO #3.3).

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

As part of assessment activity for the 2010/ 2011 academic year, the Graduate Committee gathered data to identify additional learning goals for the MBA program and assessed learning outcomes for Goals 2 and 3. To assess Goals 2 and 3 the Committee developed and administered an in-class case exam (Case Assessment Exam), determined an out-of-class activity that could be completed individually (Client Memo), and reviewed faculty evaluations of students' oral presentation skills.

Client Background Memo. Faculty co-advisors evaluated individual student performance on the client background memo. The set of evaluations provided to the Committee were used to evaluate Goal 3 : *Acquire the capacity to formulate and communicate strategies to solve business problems and pursue opportunities, SLO #3.4: Write clear and effective formal reports.* The rubric provided to faculty evaluating the Client Background Memo can be found in Appendix II. Results of this evaluation (n=16) indicate that the majority of students can write

clear and effective formal reports . Forty-four percent of students exceeded expectations in terms of performance, an additional 50% met expectations, and 6% were below expectations. Faculty comments reveal that for students performing below expectations their writing has grammatical errors and lacks clarity.

Oral Presentation Interviews. The Committee interviewed faculty regarding MBA students' professional oral presentation skills. Faculty feel students have reasonable presentations skills but need to work on the flow of group presentations in terms of transitions, timing, and coordination. Faculty believe that students need to work on creating one seamless group presentation as opposed to 3-4 separate presentation sections. Faculty also indicated that most issues would be resolved by additional practice and having a dry run where students could receive feedback before actually presenting to a client. The other issue that emerged was that on average international/ESL students do not exhibit the same confidence or clarity in their presentations as domestic students.

This information was used to inform the content of an oral presentation workshop provided to BA 795 students in preparation for their final presentations to their clients. The workshop follow-up provided individual coaching to students for their final presentations. Student feedback regarding the workshop was that it offered valuable preparation for their client presentation. However, students indicated it would have greater relevance if it were offered toward the beginning of the program.

Additional data was collected to more specifically evaluate professional oral presentation skills at the individual level. Faculty rated students' oral presentation skills during a presentation to their client for the BA 795 culminating experience. A review of faculty evaluations of individual student performance on their oral presentations provides direct evidence of students' oral presentation skills. The rubric provided to faculty can be found in Appendix III. Results of this evaluation (n=16) indicate that the majority of students can make professional oral presentations. Seventy-five percent of student exceeded expectations and 25% met expectations in their ability to make professional oral presentation skills.

Case Assessment Exam. The Case Assessment Exam developed by the Graduate Committee was administered Fall 2010. Students' performance on the exam provides direct evidence on their achievement of Goal 3 and learning outcomes 3.1 and 3.2. A score out of 9 points was assigned relative to learning outcome achievement (n=90). Seventeen percent of student exceeded expectations, an additional 61% met expectations, and 21% did not meet expectations. Although students generally met expectations relative to learning outcome achievement (are able to solve business problems in new and unfamiliar circumstances through the integration of relevant disciplines and to formulate strategies to solve business problems and pursue opportunities) the scope of ideas they bring to their analysis was somewhat limited. They tended to draw from a narrow set of theories and apply minimal levels of creative or innovative thinking in their solutions to business problems or discussions of business opportunities.

In Spring 2011 a review *Tutorial of Business and Market Feasibility Analysis* was included in the BA 795 material. Additionally, the exam was updated to more specifically address Goal 2 and Goal 3. The potential score for the exam was 18 (n=79). In general results indicate our students meet expectations in their learning of theoretical concepts and managerial skills needed to lead business organizations, have reasonable awareness of the environments in which managers make and implement decisions, and acquire the capacity to solve and communicate business problems. Nine percent of students completing the assessment exam exceeded expectations, an additional 85% met performance expectations, and 6% did not meet expectations. It appears that the tutorial review expanded the relevant theory or models they applied to the problems presented in the case. They were also able to outline relevant stakeholders, important environmental factors, and potential changes in the business climate. However, relative to the capacity to formulate strategies to solve business problems and pursue opportunities students have difficulty in identifying unique business solutions and articulating unique or creative strategies for pursuing opportunities that evolve from the information provided in the case. The capacity for innovative thinking to formulate strategies or to identify unique business opportunities that might emerge given the context of the case was lacking.

In Summer 2011 the exam was divided into two versions (reducing the question set) to assess how student performance varied when they had additional time to develop their responses. The Committee was particularly interested if additional time allowed students to display greater capacity for strategic and creative thinking. The potential score for the exam is 15 (n=22). Nine percent of students completing the assessment exam exceeded expectations and an additional 91% met performance expectations. Students are able to solve business problems in new and unfamiliar circumstances through the integration of relevant disciplines and to formulate strategies to solve business problems and pursue opportunities. The additional time allowed students to formulate better strategic ideas, however, creative thinking was still somewhat lacking in their approach.

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

There appears to be a need for reinforcement of core learning and evolving support for development of certain skills (e.g., oral presentation) at different stages of the program.

Orientation.

- Review of introductory material relevant to statistics and economics will be included as part of the new student orientation.
- An individual oral presentation skills and tactics workshop will be integrated into the MBA program at an early stage.

Mid-program.

- A workshop focused on improving team and individual presentation skills should be offered mid-program.

- The Goal 1 Assessment Exam that covers the theoretical concepts and managerial skills explored in the core should administered at the beginning of this integrative strategy course. In this way the exam will serve as a tool to highlight the areas that merit additional review in the strategy course or attention relative to synthesizing the different domains. A computer simulation (CapSim) may be used in MGT 626 as an additional assessment instrument or as a replacement for the assessment exam. The exam/simulation may offer a pre-post analysis of Goal 1 learning after the core versus after the integrative course.

Culmination Experience.

- The Committee will revise the tutorial that is provided at the beginning of the culminating experience course to include greater focus relative to for Goals 1, 2, and 3 (BA 795).
- Individual coaching for client interaction preceding client meetings.
- Individual coaching for student presentations may be offered as part of the preparation for the client final project presentation.

The aforementioned loop closing activities will be offered at different stages of the program (as specified) to continuously review and integrate key learning throughout the MBA program.

To assess additional opportunities to support a more integrative learning model a sub-committee of the Graduate Committee is benchmarking and evaluating opportunities for curriculum structure changes that would offer differential unit course or modules that could support additional learning opportunities and greater review/integration across the program.

Report completed by: Heather Honea for the CBA Graduate Committee
Date: 9/12/11

Appendix I.a

Previous MBA Program Goals and Learning Outcomes

MAJOR GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEGREE

- I. Develop the solid foundation in theoretical concepts and managerial skills needed to lead business organizations.

Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO #1.1: Apply concepts and decision models in financial accounting, statistics, organizational behavior, finance, economics, marketing, and production to make business decisions.

- II. Develop an awareness of the legal, ethical, and technological environment in which managers make and implement decisions.

Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO #2.1: Identify and critically analyze salient legal and ethical responsibilities of business issues.

SLO #2.2: Analyze the impact that information technologies have on the functional areas of organizations.

- III. Develop an awareness of economic and cultural environments in which managers make and implement decisions.

SLO #3.1: Evaluate the impact that changes in the domestic and global economic environment have on the business climate.

SLO #3.2: Identify similarities and differences among cultural environments that impact organizational activities.

- IV. Acquire the capacity to formulate and communicate strategies to solve business problems and pursue opportunities.

Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO #4.1: Analyze a business problem in new and unfamiliar circumstances through the integration of relevant disciplines.

SLO #4.2: Formulate strategies to solve business problems and pursue opportunities.

SLO #4.3: Make professional oral presentations.

SLO #4.4: Write clear and effective formal reports.

Appendix I.b

Revised MBA Program Goals and Learning Outcomes

MAJOR GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE MASTERS OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEGREE

Goal 1: I. Develop the solid foundation in theoretical concepts and managerial skills needed to lead business organizations.

SLO #1.1: Apply concepts and decision models in financial accounting, statistics, organizational behavior, finance, economics, marketing, and operations management to make business decisions.

Goal 2: Develop an awareness of environments in which managers make and implement ethical or global business decisions.

SLO #2.1: Evaluate the impact that changes in the environment have on the business climate.

SLO #2.2: Analyze the impact that environmental factors have on the functional areas of organizations and organizational activities.

SLO #2.3: Identify and critically analyze salient responsibilities of organizations to all stakeholders.

Goal 3: Acquire the capacity to formulate and communicate strategies to solve business problems and pursue opportunities.

SLO #3.1: Analyze a business problem in new and unfamiliar circumstances through the integration of relevant disciplines.

SLO #3.2: Formulate strategies to solve business problems and pursue opportunities.

SLO #3.3: Make professional oral presentations.

SLO #3.4: Write clear and effective formal reports.


Appendix II

Ability to Write Professional Reports Evaluation Rubric

SLO	Trait	Below Expectations 1	Meets Expectations 2	Exceeds Expectations 3	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	
					First	Last			
2.1	Develop alternative solutions based evidence and clear assumptions from prior analysis.	Only one solution considered, misinterpretation of prior analysis, assumptions inappropriate, insufficient evidence.	Multiple alternatives considered. Minor errors in interpretation of prior analysis, reasonable assumptions, appropriate evidence.	Multiple, clear feasible alternatives identified, correct interpretation of prior analysis and evidence, appropriate assumptions supported, and ample evidence used in evaluation.	1				
2.1-2.2	Identify relevant data evidence.	Limited or irrelevant data or evidence identified.	Reasonable amount of relevant data and/or evidence identified.	Appropriate amount of relevant data and/or evidence identified	2				
2.3	Consider alternative strategies/solutions and provide evidence to support pursuing these objectives.	Only one alternative/strategy considered that does not address key identified issues and is not supported with evidence.	Multiple alternatives/strategies considered that address identified issues and are generally supported with evidence.	Multiple feasible alternatives/strategies considered that address key identified issues and are well supported with evidence.	3				
3.2	Recommend appropriate methodology and analytical activities/tools.	Did not articulate a reasonable methodology or tools.	Proposed reasonable methodology and identified appropriate tools from different functional areas.	Articulated a compelling methodology and justified appropriate tools from different functional areas.	4				
3.4	Write clear and effective formal reports that are organized, include appropriate content, and address the intended audience.	Lacks logical sequencing of information, disorganized, and does not cover assigned task.	Follows logical sequencing of information, organization helps reader follow information, and covers assigned task.	Follows logical sequencing of information, structure contributes to flow and transitions, covers assigned task, and assertions are compelling and clearly supported.	5				
3.4	Write clear and effective formal reports that are mechanically and stylistically appropriate.	Overuse of simple sentences, misuse of words or idioms and sentence structure (run-ons, fragments), generally awkward writing style, and lacks business terminology.	Sentences vary in length. Strong action verbs used, relatively free of errors in word use and sentence structure (run-ons, fragments), mechanics do not distract from credibility of content, report uses business terms appropriately.	Demonstrates a sophisticated grasp of language in terms of both sentence structure and vocabulary. No errors in word use and sentence structure. Writing is fluid and concise, mechanics help establish credibility, report includes appropriate business terms.	6				

Appendix III

Ability to Make Professional Oral Presentations Evaluation Rubric

	<p>SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY</p> <hr/> <p>College of Business Administration <i>Leadership for the Global Marketplace</i></p>	<h2 style="margin: 0;">ORAL COMMUNICATION RUBRIC</h2>	
<p><i>If this rubric is used to assign grades, the instructor will:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decide how to weight the criteria (equal weight or otherwise). 2. Assign points to each of the three categories - this could be as simple as 1, 2, 3 for the categories or may allow for a range within categories (for example <i>Below Expectations</i> will be 0-1, <i>Meets Expectations</i> will be 2-3, <i>Exceeds Expectations</i> will be 4-5). Differing point ranges may be assigned in the categories. For example, a point system that translates directly to a 100% grade scale might give the <i>Below Expectations</i> a bigger range (0-6) with <i>Meets Expectations</i> a 7-8 and <i>Exceeds Expectations</i> a 9-10. 3. Complete a copy of the rubric for each student and compute the weighted score for the student. 			
	BELOW EXPECTATIONS	MEETS EXPECTATIONS	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS
ORGANIZATION			
Voice Quality & Pace			
Mannerisms & Body Language			
Professionalism & Appearance			
Rapport with Audience & Use of Media			