

College of Business

Assessment Plan 2010-2012

Summary of College Assessment

The College of Business has two primary assessment imperatives, namely the satisfaction of SACS and of AACSB accreditation standards. In fulfillment of both mandates, the College has a comprehensive assessment system to ensure program quality and the achievement of student learning outcomes across all degree programs [the focus of AACSB accreditation] and majors [the focus of SACS accreditation]. Program quality is assessed using evaluations of faculty performance, instruction quality, curricular adequacy, student satisfaction, and retention. The achievement of student learning outcomes is assessed using holistic direct assessment tools such as course-embedded rubrics and end-of-program comprehensive assessment exams, as well as external review of presentations and an evaluation by each student intern's supervisor.

Description of Assessment Methods

The sections below describe assessment processes and evaluation tools used in the College.

Assessment of Program Quality

Faculty Performance Review

Faculty are evaluated annually based on a self-prepared annual activity report. The report lists all academic output [research papers, presentations, etc], instructional responsibilities with course evaluation rating scores, advising loads, institutional and community service, awards and honors, and any other professional development activities engaged in during the prior year. The Dean of the College of Business reviews each faculty member's annual report and provides a summary rating of the faculty member's performance in the areas of Teaching, Research, and Service, as well as an overall score. This evaluation is part of the faculty member's file and is the basis, in part, of such decisions as merit raises and tenure. Each faculty performance review concludes with a plan for the upcoming year to address deficiencies or continue achievements.

Student Evaluation of Instruction

Every course section taught in the College of Business is evaluated by students using a common "student evaluation of instruction" form. The form provides feedback to the course instructor on the students' satisfaction with important elements of the course delivery, including the organization of the course, the level of rigor, the professionalism of the instructor, the amount of coursework relative to the sequencing of the course in the curriculum, and the overall quality of the course and of the instructor. Space is also provided for students to write in comments on the strengths, weaknesses, and suggested improvements for both the course and instructor. The results of these course evaluations are part of each faculty member's annual report and file, and are used to plan curricula and teaching schedules as well as evaluate faculty quality.

Curricular Mapping and Review

In 2008 and 2009, the faculty of the College of Business completed a “mapping” exercise for each major, matching the expected inputs [knowledge, skills, abilities] of a student entering a given course with the value-adding processes [assignments, lectures, topics, projects] included in the course and the eventual outputs [new or refined K/S/A] of those processes. In turn, the outputs of earlier courses and inputs of higher-level courses were analyzed to see which inputs required by students entering upper-division courses in each major were being adequately produced as outputs of earlier courses in the program and which needed further instruction. The resulting maps from this exercise are available on the college’s website, while the process itself has led to improved pedagogy within majors / courses and the addition of complementary or substitute courses to some majors to address shortcomings in expected student preparation.

Follow-up from this mapping process will take place as the faculty in each major area review the course evaluation, student satisfaction, student retention, and achievement of student learning outcomes data for their respective areas in the context of the curricular maps. This review will take place during the first faculty meeting of each academic year, beginning in the 2011-12 academic year. This review of assessment data will serve to monitor performance of the stated learning outcomes, as well as to drive curricular improvements toward the idealized model set forth in the curriculum map. The expected outcome of this review process includes new course proposals to address poor student achievement, curricular improvement to address poor sequencing of courses and insufficient or overbearing prerequisites, program-wide review of faculty sufficiency and quality including any recommended new hires or teaching schedule adjustments, and a better understanding by faculty of student experience in their program.

Curricular Benchmarking with Peers

The College of Business frequently compares the curricula of its majors and degree programs in business to that of similar programs at peer and aspirant schools. This benchmarking process serves to ensure that College of Business course and program offerings are up-to-date with current practice in the field and are competitive offerings in the diffuse and diverse liberal-arts-based business education environment. The College has also undertaken benchmarking efforts using the EBI undergraduate exit survey for business majors, which allows comparison to user-defined peer and aspirant groups as well as to Carnegie-classification schools. This process has led to curricular change before and helps to drive future development of innovative courses.

Since the content of business curricula is no longer mandated at the course- or subject-level by accrediting agencies such as AACSB, it is the responsibility of individual business schools to develop their own curricula and course sequences in order to provide a comprehensive and competitive set of skills and competencies to students. The basic content of a curriculum in business is reasonably standardized across AACSB-accredited schools, but distinctive elements of the College of Business’ approach include an emphasis on freshman education, as well as the internalization of courses such as statistics or ethics that are typically taught outside of the business department. This approach suits the Jesuit ideal of educating the “whole person”.

Student Satisfaction and Retention

In addition to the statistics reported and tracked by the Office of Institutional Research, the College of Business performs internal assessment and analysis of retention rates and student intention to continue in the College of Business. The College also administers regular surveys of student satisfaction and academic development, in order to ensure that the programs being offered are meeting student expectations and assisting them in fulfilling their academic and career goals. Typically, a freshman retention survey is administered after each fall semester to measure the success of the first year experiences such as the portfolio program and freshman-level first-semester business courses [BA 100 and ECON 100] in creating a connection between students and the business school. Additionally, the EBI survey has been administered each year to graduating seniors of the College of Business. This survey is being discontinued and the sense of its questions and factor analysis will be rolled into an internally-developed instrument to be administered along with the University's campus-wide exit survey [to avoid redundant surveys].

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Student Achievement of Learning Goals

At the degree program level [B.Acc., B.B.A., and M.B.A.], student achievement of learning goals is assessed over the broad concepts appropriate to an entire degree program in business. The goals of the College's degree programs include such topics as critical thinking, communication, ethical decision-making, knowledge of business disciplines, use of information technology, and comprehension of the value-chain model of business. To assess these learning goals, a variety of direct assessment tools are used, including checklist-style communication rubrics for written reports and presentations, assessment examinations for critical thinking skills and disciplinary knowledge, and course-embedded rubrics [usually applied to case studies] for ethical decision-making and other learning goals. The College administers these instruments on a roughly bi-annual basis, with one year focused on measurement and analysis and the second year focused on review of results by faculty / administrators and subsequent planning of improvements.

At the major level [Accounting, Economics, Finance, International Business, Management, and Marketing], student achievement of learning goals is assessed within very specific discipline-linked goals that encompass knowledge, skills, and abilities appropriate to each major program. The goals are tied to the final outputs of the curricular mapping process described earlier, and the statement of each major's learning goals is the responsibility of the faculty in that major area. The goals are assessed using comprehensive exams administered in upper-level classes required in the scope of each major program [e.g. MKT 450, Advanced Marketing Strategy, in the Marketing major]. Indirect methods of assessment by major are also administered, which include first-destination surveys of post-graduation plans [administered by the University], internship evaluations completed by each student's supervisor at their required internship, and voluntary exit interviews conducted by the Associate Dean each semester, which focus on the student's best and worst experiences within their major program over their college tenure.

Schedule of Assessment Activities

Fall Semester

At the beginning of each fall semester, the faculty in each major area will meet to review all relevant assessment data collected the prior academic year in their area. This will include summaries of course evaluations [as appropriate and only when able to be distinguished from faculty ratings provided on the same evaluation sheets], direct assessment data from exams or rubrics, and indirect assessments from internship evaluations, mock interview feedback, post-graduation plans, student satisfaction, and any other data as available. The faculty will review these data in the context of stated learning outcomes for their major in order to determine the adequacy of curricula in preparing students for success and to propose any necessary changes.

Additionally, a series of assessment examinations at both the degree program and major level will be administered at the beginning of each fall semester. At the degree program level, the critical thinking and comprehensive business disciplines examinations will be administered in upper-division business core courses such as BA 415 Business Ethics or BA 445 Business Policy. At the major level, each area will administer its own comprehensive assessment examination in an upper-division required or elective course in the major curricula, such as MKT 450 Advanced Marketing Strategy or INTB 435 Multinational Business Strategy. These examinations will not be graded nor be a required portion of any particular course. The examinations will be proctored by the Assessment Coordinator of the College of Business during the first week of class, so as not to interfere with academic progress, and are the most significant assessment of the year.

Spring Semester

In the spring semester, faculty will review the results of the assessment examinations given in the previous fall semester. Additionally, indirect assessments such as the exit interviews, exit surveys, and retention surveys will be administered in the spring semester of each year. Faculty activity reports for each year are typically due at the beginning of each spring semester, with faculty evaluations taking place near the same time. University assessments such as the post-graduation survey and student engagement survey also take place during the spring semester.

Summer Semester

During the summer semester, the Dean, Associate Dean, and Assessment Coordinator will review all assessment data for the previously completed academic year in order to prepare for the review by faculty of assessment data and major curricula at the start of the fall semester of the upcoming academic year. Significant revisions, as necessary, to the assessment instruments or university bulletin [updates to learning goals or major curricula structure] are implemented during the end of the spring semester and into the summer period. Enrollment and retention is also analyzed during the summer to plan faculty schedules adequately for the next academic year. Annual reports for the College of Business are also written during the summer semester.