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Edward Ranelli, Ph.D.
Dean
College of Business
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11000 University Parkway
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Dear Dean Ranelli:

It is with great professional enthusiasm that I write this letter summarizing responses to my review of the Assessment of Learning Portfolio of the College of Business, University of West Florida. From the integrity of your work to integrate the University's General Studies Learning Outcomes into the curricula of your business programs, to your School's chronological commitment to analyze, interpret, and use results of your assessment of students' learning of the General Studies learning outcomes as well as the outcomes of its business programs, the College of Business demonstrates an exemplary commitment to using results of its assessment process to improve student learning.

Specifically, I applaud the College's commitment to thoroughly, as opposed to superficially, integrate the five domains of the University's General Studies Program into the curricula of its Business programs. Though other programs may assert they have worked to achieve such integration, many simply do not make the effort to thoughtfully achieve that integration so that it is meaningful to their students. The depth and breadth of this integration achieves the goals of the institution, as well as those of regional and specialized accreditors who also desire that students demonstrate intellectual flexibility as a result of their general education and their education in a major program of study.

Following the system established by the University, the College of Business annually reviews its assessment data of students' General Studies domains as well as its data of students' business programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, the College follows a framework, described in B-1, draft 12/02/06, that assures that results of assessment are used to improve student learning. In addition, to assure that the business programs' outcomes are aligned with the needs of the business community, the College includes input from external constituencies to assure that the business outcomes for each program reflect current external expectations.

The College uses a balance of direct and indirect methods to assess its students' learning at the program and course levels—from capstones at the end of programs and ETS scores, to case studies, embedded questions and game simulations in courses. In addition, the College uses graduating student and alumni surveys, including One-Year-After Surveys, and employer surveys to learn about the efficacy of program practices. Not only is there a commitment to learn from all of these methods, but also a commitment to chronologically refine or revise methods. Members of the College have worked well together to develop agreed upon scoring rubrics for major assessment methods, demonstrating to students the importance of their being able to integrate knowledge, abilities, habits of mind, and ways of problem solving in business programs. The Assessment of Learning Portfolio includes a plethora of scoring rubrics that are used and refined.

What I find most professionally refreshing is both faculty and administrative commitment to using results of assessment to improve student learning. Many business programs have collected data but are unable to articulate specific ways they use their results to improve educational practices or assert that results show everything is just fine. You are an exception to this pattern in the wealth of examples you provide that show time spent interpreting and using results to make improvements in pedagogy and curricular design or sequencing. For example, recommended changes, such as the following, demonstrate to me that you are clearly focused on discussing your interpretations and using them immediately to improve practices:

- revising initial scoring rubrics to focus on area knowledge weaknesses under financial topics
- achieving consensus among faculty to use a master syllabus to assure that students in all sections of a course are achieving the same agreed upon outcomes, based on faculty differences in how much time they devote to balance sheet ratios.
- using early assessment of student abilities to identify patterns of weakness in learning that students need to improve before they take upper level courses
- working with the English Department at the University to help business majors write business documents according to the conventions of grammar, punctuation, and spelling

The diligence faculty and administrators have dedicated to assessment of student learning is clearly exemplary—from systematic articulation and review of learning outcomes to using results to improve student learning. During each of the tasks that altogether constitute a program-level commitment to assessment, the College of Business has developed policies, procedures, and systems that all faculty follow. I am, indeed, impressed by how the tasks work together and bring colleagues together to engage in dialogue about necessary changes to improve student learning.

An example of a mature system that has taken time to refine or revise its practices, such as improving scoring rubrics, program content, or pedagogy, I congratulate you and your colleagues for not only establishing but also carrying through on this important development in higher education.

Sincerely,

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