

**Quality Enhancement Plan
College of Business Exploratory Project
Summary of Planned Project**

Project Title: Exploratory Project on Assessment in College of Business Capstone Course

College/Division: College of Business (COB)

Contact Person: Dr. Brian Peach

Telephone: 474-2312

E-mail: bpeach@uwf.edu

List of Individuals Involved:

Dr. E. Brian Peach

Dr. Martin J. Hornyak

Dr. Stephen Snyder

Brief Description of Project:

This is an exploratory project in the COB to develop a means to assess recently developed student learning objectives in the COB curriculum. The Capstone course will be utilized to administer a standardized and coordinated instrument to assess COB student learning objectives.

Rationale:

SACS and AACSB are mandating the use and assessment of student learning outcomes. The University and the COB have embarked on a comprehensive approach to develop and implement assessment plans for their programs. The COB currently does not have an effective and standardized device to assess the achievement level of graduating business students that is effectively linked to the newly developed student learning objectives. The pilot study will provide a standardized assessment mechanism for all business students completing the COB capstone course. The expected benefits of the pilot study are that it will help the COB better understand the challenges of assessment, generate preliminary data that will help the College refine its assessment efforts, and support the development of a device that effectively assesses COB student learning objectives.

Project Student Learning Outcomes:

Specific learning outcomes for the project include:

- given a balance sheet and income statement, calculate and interpret appropriate ratios summarizing an organization's profitability, liquidity, growth potential, & overall prospects.

- describe complexities and components in a changing external environment affecting relationships of industry performance; identify & explain models to analyze the external environment (five forces model, dominant economic characteristics, drivers of change, strategic group map, & key success factors)
- perform analysis of an organization's resources and competitive positions using financial analysis and models for such as SWOT analysis, value chain analysis, competitive strength analysis, & identifying strategic issues
- define basic competitive strategy options such as overall low cost, broad differentiation, best-cost, focused differentiation, & focused low-cost; discern strategy options within varied scenarios; explain complimentary strategic options available: merger, alliances, backward/forward integration, outsource value chain activities, & offensive/defensive strategic moves
- identify when to diversify and strategies for diversification (related/unrelated; how to enter new businesses, strategic fits)
- define the eight components of strategy execution (build organization, allocate resources, facilitating policies/procedures, best practices, install systems, rewards & incentives, corporate culture, & leadership); apply components to analyze various organization scenarios

Relationship to Quality Enhancement Plan Goals:

Through accurate, standardized assessment of student learning, the curriculum can be adjusted to ensure achievement of all SLOs.

Relationship to Academic Learning Compact Domains:

The academic learning compact domains are content, critical thinking, communication, project management, and ethics. The assessment device will be constructed such that it assesses all of these domains.

Specifically:

- Content - Demonstrate expertise at tools and techniques of strategic analysis such as Competitive Force analysis, SWOT analysis, financial analysis.
- Critical Thinking - Demonstrate ability to apply course concepts, use strategic models, and integrate disciplinary concepts in the development and implementation of strategic solutions to business issues.
- Communication - Demonstrate written communication skills, including knowledge of technical terms, grammatical structure and spelling.
- Project Management - Demonstrate ability to manage complex projects through effective planning and timely delivery of a comprehensive case analysis and recommended solution.
- Ethics - Demonstrate understanding of ethical issues and responsibilities facing business managers through their choice of recommended policy actions.

Desired Student Learning Gains:

Integrated understanding of business disciplines and ability to apply concepts to common business situations.

Outcomes Assessment Procedures:

Development of a standardized written case analysis assignment to be used by all COB capstone instructors.

Development of a standardized set of case analysis grading criteria.

Instructional Strategy Enhancements (focusing on active learning/student engagement):

Provides students opportunity for problem based learning through integration of previously learned disciplinary concepts and active application of concepts to situations beyond those in which they were learned.

Assessment Plan:

Baseline: Dissemination and discussion of expected student learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Formative: Use of weekly case written assignments will be used as measures of progress in learning concepts and application of models.

Summative: Assignment of comprehensive written case analysis due at end of semester.

Information Dissemination Plan:

Results of pilot study including identification of what worked, problems encountered and proposed improvements will be made available to COB and university constituencies. In addition, presentations at conferences and journal articles will be developed.

Institutionalization Plan:

Based on the results and findings of the pilot study, a standardized assessment instrument will be incorporated into the COB capstone course on a continuing basis.

Resources to Be Used:

The development and administration of the pilot study will require significant time and effort by capstone instructors beyond normal course preparation. In addition, there are conferences available addressing assessment issues which the instructors should

attend. Administrative and student support will be required for data entry, case development and assessment support.

Timeline for Project Activities and Events:

- A. Select common case for written case analysis. [Fall 2004]
- B. Develop written case analysis instructions. [Fall 2004].
- C. Develop written case grading criteria. [Fall 2004].
- D. Implement pilot study using written case analysis criteria and grading [Spring 2005].
- E. Collect data on common case analysis [Spring 2005].
- F. Evaluate data on common case analysis [Summer/Fall 2005].
- G. Attend conferences to learn about pitfalls and challenges of assessment [Spring 2005 and/or Fall 2005].

Attachment: Project Plan

Project Plan for Exploratory Project for Assessment in the College of Business Capstone Course

Background

The University of West Florida has undertaken a major project of developing and implementing an assessment plan for its programs. On one hand, this is a requirement of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). On the other hand, the University considers it an opportunity to learn more about the effectiveness of its academic programs and then devise strategies to improve these programs. The University has developed a comprehensive Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to be the broad umbrella for assessing and improving the quality of its program offerings.

Further, the College of Business is also developing a plan to meet the Assurance of Learning standard of AACSB the international accreditation agency for colleges of business. The College of Business plan is expected to be broad enough to meet the requirements of both the above mentioned accreditation agencies. The College is developing a set of learning goals for the undergraduate business degree, to be followed by a tentative plan for assessment.

All undergraduate students in business complete a capstone course in Business Policy. The policy course is designed to integrate the various business disciplines and provide students with skills in identifying issues facing a firm and developing an appropriate strategy to address those issues and achieve the firm's objectives. A number of pedagogical approaches are utilized in the policy course to help students achieve course goals. One pedagogical approach is the use of a computer simulation where student groups develop strategies to compete against other student teams or computer simulated firms in a business market place.

Another pedagogical approach is a series of case analyses culminating in an individually written case analysis. For the written case analysis, students are required to work independently in analyzing the competitive position of a firm, identifying the strategic issues facing the organization, and the development of an appropriate strategy and implementation plan. This case analysis gives students an opportunity to independently demonstrate their understanding of the business disciplines through their analysis and recommendations. Because the capstone course written case analysis is accomplished by all graduating business students, it is a natural setting for developing an assessment device for capturing the level of success of the COB for achieving its learning objectives. Specifically, this individual case analysis provides an opportunity to assess student use of business concepts, integration of knowledge across disciplines, and ability to communicate findings in writing.

Pilot Study

Although it is straightforward to envisage use of the capstone course for assessment, the implementation is currently confounded because there are three instructors who teach the course. At the present time they use different cases, a different set of instructions, and have different content requirements. Hence, the first tasks are to develop a common case description, a common set of instructions, and common grading criteria. In subsequent step the nature and type of data to be collected would be defined, and the pilot assessment device developed and administered.

In an initial review of similar efforts at other institutions, it was found that only a few institutions had promulgated assessment standards. It was also clear that none of these schools had assessment devices or approaches that would be suitable for adoption at UWF or for the COB. However, there are conferences where discussions and early research findings specific to learning assessment are available. It would be extremely beneficial to the quality of our pilot study and subsequent assessment development to have the investigators attend such conferences and network with the leaders in this field. Attendance at these conferences would enable us to learn more about assessment from professionals in the field and colleagues at other universities who have already implemented assessment plans or are conducting research in this area.

Proposed Activities

- A. Select common case for written case analysis. [Fall 2004]
- B. Develop written case analysis instructions. [Fall 2004].
- C. Develop written case grading criteria. [Fall 2004].
- D. Implement pilot study using written case analysis criteria and grading [Spring 2005].
- E. Collect data on common case analysis [Spring 2005].
- F. Evaluate data on common case analysis [Summer/Fall 2005].
- G. Attend conferences to learn about pitfalls and challenges of assessment [Spring 2005 and/or Fall 2005].

Proposed Budget

<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
1. Student assistants	600.00
2. Data entry and data analysis	500.00
3. Books and videos on assessment	400.00
4. Professional development B attend conferences to learn about assessment	4500.00
Total	<u>6000.00</u>

Benefits

We believe that this pilot study will benefit UWF and the College of Business in many ways as detailed below:

- A. The University will be able to provide documentation to SACS about implementation of its assessment plan.
- B. The College will be able to meet its obligations to AACSB about implementing the first phase of its assessment plan.
- C. The College will gain experience and expertise in developing and field testing its assessment plans.
- D. The College will capture data to act as the baseline for initiating additional assessment measures.
- E. The College faculty will be able to learn from the experience of the pilot study in the capstone course about the process of assessment.
- F. The University will be able to share the experience of the pilot study in the COB capstone course about the process of assessment with other colleges.