

# Economics Program Assessment

2008-2009

Table of Contents	Page
I. Introduction to Two-layer Assessment in the Lewis College of Business.....	1
II. Fall 2009: Structure of the College-Wide BBA Degree AOL.....	3
a. The BBA AOL Program Update: 2008 – 09 .....	4
b. The BBA AOL Program Plans: 2009-2010.....	5
III. Economics Program Assessment .....	7
a. Summary of Economics Program Assessment Activities.....	7
b. Timeline.....	8

## I. Introduction: Two-layer Assessment in the Lewis College of Business

The Lewis College of Business (LCOB) operates a two-layer assessment program, in order to assess student learning at the college-wide level and within each major discipline. Each layer consists of its own “Measurable Learning Objectives” and mechanisms to assess those learning objectives.

**\*Note:** The phrase “Measurable Learning Objective” (which the LCOB uses because this is the language adopted by our accrediting body the AACSB), is identical in meaning to the phrase “Student Learning Outcome” (which is the preferred MU terminology).

### *What is assessed at each layer?*

**The BBA layer:** The LCOB has a very clear Mission Statement (consistent with the University mission) that identifies the competencies and capabilities all graduating students, regardless of major, should possess. On the basis of our Mission Statement, the LCOB faculty has specified a set of College-wide Learning Objectives.

**\*The purpose of the BBA layer of assessment** is to use appropriate mechanisms to *assess College Learning Objectives* and to use the feedback to continually *improve student learning in the College, across all major fields of study.*

**The Major Program-specific layer:** For each discipline in the LCOB, there is also a distinct set of attributes and skills that are necessary for success in that field. As a result, each LCOB major program has unique learning objectives that detail the characteristics that the discipline’s faculty deem necessary for the success of graduates of the program.

**\*The purpose of the Major Program-specific layer of assessment** is to use appropriate mechanisms to *assess Discipline-specific Learning Objectives* and to use the feedback to continually *improve student learning within the major.*

### *Who runs each layer of assessment?*

**The BBA layer** is managed by the LCOB-wide Assurance of Learning (AOL) Task Force, chaired by Dr. Harlan Smith, LCOB AOL Director. Representatives of each BBA-level major program, the college-wide BBA Capstone Course, and the MBA, MSHRM, and MSHCA degree programs sit on this Task Force.

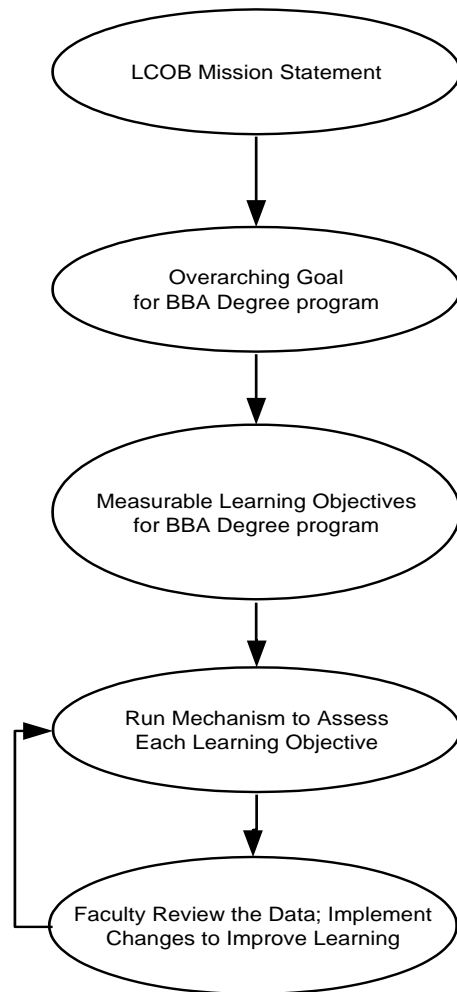
**The Major Program-specific layer** is managed by all the full-time faculty members who teach in that discipline.

Because assessment at each layer is faculty-driven, each layer utilizes overlap in personnel and resources to enhance the efficiency of the overall assessment effort. For example, faculty in each discipline participate in the BBA layer of assessment by assessing the written and oral presentation work of their students with Rubrics that have been approved for use across the BBA program as a whole. The college-wide AOL Task Force and its GA help individual faculty in their discipline-specific assessment efforts by providing expertise and technical assistance (e.g.,

providing examples of Rubrics that could be used, the videotaping of student oral presentations, and the archiving of data).

As the college's two-layer assessment effort develops over time, we anticipate creating even more overlap between the two layers, and tightening the connections between the two layers. For now, though, these two layers operate in many ways independently of each other.

# FALL 2009: THE STRUCTURE OF THE COLLEGE-WIDE BBA DEGREE AOL PROGRAM



The Mission of the LCOB is to be a leading state institution for the education of business students, and a contributor to the region’s economic development. The College is committed to an overall balance among teaching, scholarly activity, and service. The LCOB is dedicated to graduating individuals who possess the **communication**, **critical thinking**, and **problem solving** skills necessary to meet the Tri State area’s needs for the demands of the global marketplace.

To equip students with the knowledge and skills they will need to enter the world of business and meet the challenges they will face throughout their careers.

1. **General Core Knowledge**: The student will acquire the general/core knowledge required to understand the environment within which business operates.
2. **Written Communications**: The student will be able to communicate effectively in writing within a business environment.
3. **Oral Communications**: The student will be able to communicate orally in an effective and professional manner.
4. **Problem-Solving & Critical Thinking**: The student will be able to identify a problem, develop alternative solutions, and choose a course of action.

**General Core Knowledge** Assessment Mechanism: Integrative Themes Exam, administered in MGT460—the BBA Program Capstone Course  
**Written Communications** Assessment Mechanism: Writing Rubric, administered in a selection of courses covering all majors  
**Oral Communications** Assessment Mechanism: Rubric, currently under development  
**Problem-Solving & Critical Thinking** Assessment Mechanism: The Cornell Critical Thinking Test (Level Z), administered in MGT460—the BBA Program Capstone Course

## BBA AOL PROGRAM UPDATE: 2008-09

### 1. The General/Core Knowledge Learning Objective

- ! The *Integrative Themes Exam* is given as the Final Exam, each semester, in most sections of MGT460Bthe Capstone Course for the BBA Degree Program.
- ! The exam questions are written by the faculty who teach in the BBA Core Curriculum, so that the exam tests student attainment and retention of the basic knowledge emphasized in the BBA Core. The questions used during 2008-09 were last revised by the faculty during Fall 2006.
- ! During 2008-09:
  - ! This exam was administered in 10 sections of MGT460: 4 sections in Fall 2008, 5 sections in Spring 2009, and 2 sections in Summer 2009.
  - ! The student results were collected and summarized by the AOL GA during Summer 2009, in a series of reports for the LCOB AOL Task Force

### 2. The Written Communications Learning Objective:

- ! The Assessment Instrument is the *BBA Written Communications Rubric*. This Rubric was first developed in Summer 2006 by members of the AOL Task Force, in conjunction with Shirley Lumpkin (MU WAC Director). During 2006-07 a set of faculty volunteers used this Rubric on one assignment in each of their courses. In Summer 2007 the aggregate Rubric results were generated for the full sample.
- ! On Assessment Day 2009 the aggregate Rubric results were reviewed by the faculty in a Workshop run by Shirley Lumpkin and Harlan Smith (LCOB AOL Director). The faculty in attendance developed numerous suggestions for improving our students= writing, and these suggestions have informed the development of a new Technical Writing Course taught by ENG. This course is scheduled to become an LCOB General Education Requirement in the Fall of 2010, as per a vote of the LCOB faculty in Spring 2009.
- ! The title of this new course is AWriting for the Workplace.@ It was developed during Spring and Summer 2009 by Roxanne Kirkwood (Director of Technical Writing in ENG), on the basis of input from Shane Tomblin (LCOB Undergraduate Curriculum Committee Chair), Harlan Smith, and the LCOB faculty at the Assessment Day Workshop. Three LCOB faculty members who attended the Workshop (Jeff Archambault, ACC; Dick Drass; MGT, and Michael Newsome, ECN) have agreed to serve as Consultants to Roxanne as she continues to develop the course.

### 3. The Oral Communications Learning Objective:

- ! No specific action was taken during 2008-09 on developing a mechanism for assessing this Learning Objective.

#### 4. The Problem-Solving & Critical Thinking Learning Objective

- ! During 2008-09 the AOL Task Force considered several options for assessing this Learning Objective across LCOB programs. A decision was reached, in Spring 2009, to adopt the *Cornell Critical Thinking Test*, a well-known national standardized test, to assess student attainment of this Learning Objective in the BBA program.
- ! On Assessment Day 2009, Chris Cassidy (AOL Task Force member and MGT460 instructor) administered this test to a sample of students in two of his MGT460 sections. In May 2009, the rest of the students in these MGT460 sections took the test. The data were collected and organized by Chris and the AOL GA, and presented to the AOL Task Force at its final meeting of the year in May.
- ! The decision was made to continue administering this test, in MGT460, every semester.

### BBA AOL PROGRAM PLANS: 2009-10

#### 1. The General/Core Knowledge Learning Objective

- ! At the start of Fall 2009, the AOL GA organized and summarized the *Integrative Themes Exam* results for the three-year period during which the current version of the exam has been used: Fall 2006 - Summer 2009. In a separate report for each BBA Core Course, the AOL GA reported the results for Fall 2006 - Summer 2009 on a question-by-question basis, so that the faculty teaching each BBA Core Course could review the students results for the questions they wrote.
- ! At the October 16 AOL Task Force meeting, the aggregate results for 2006-09, and the question-by-question results for each Core Course, were distributed. Each member of the AOL Task Force will lead the faculty in his/her division in reviewing these results. The results of this review exercise will be a new Coverage Agreement for each BBA Core Course and a new set of Test Questions to be used for that course on the next version of the *Integrative Themes Exam*. Both of these documents will be created by the faculty who teach each course.
- ! In Spring 2010, the results of this review exercise will be presented to the AOL Task Force. The *Integrative Themes Exam* will be modified accordingly, and the new version of this exam will be administered in May 2010 and then during 2010-11 and 2011-12 as well.
- ! This effort marks the second data-review exercise undertaken during the assessment of this Learning Objective (the first exercise having taken place in Fall 2006). This means that by Spring 2010 the LCOB faculty will have closed one loop, fully and completely, for the General/Core Knowledge Learning Objective.
- ! The next faculty data-review exercise is tentatively scheduled for 2012.

## 2. The Written Communications Learning Objective:

- ! At the start of Fall 2009 the *BBA Written Communications Rubric* was modified and improved, based on the experiences of those who have used it since 2006-07. Participants in this exercise included members of the AOL Task Force and the AOL Coordinator for the Accounting Program—which also uses a Rubric to assess ACC student writing skills. The result was an improved BBA Rubric that will be used during the second run of the writing assessment cycle. (The Accounting program will include this Rubric as part of its own ACC-specific Rubric, so that assessment of student writing across all majors can be conducted.)
- ! During 2009-10 the second run of the writing assessment cycle will take place, with a set of faculty volunteers contributing assignments to the sample. The aggregate Rubric results will be generated and organized during Summer 2010, and reported back to the faculty during 2010-11. This second data-review exercise will mark the closing of one full, complete loop, on this Learning Objective.
- ! During Spring 2010 a Pilot Section of *Writing for the Workplace* will be taught by Roxanne Kirkwood, as a Special Topics course. LCOB students who take this course will receive WAC credit.
- ! As noted earlier, the current plan is to have *Writing for the Workplace* on the schedule for Fall 2010, as an LCOB General Education Requirement in the BBA Program. As the entire BBA student population begins to cycle through this course, future writing assessment cycles will focus primarily on student activities in this course.

## 3. The Oral Communications Learning Objective

- ! During Fall 2009 the AOL Task Force, led by Chris Cassidy, will do a pilot test of several Rubric options in MGT460. The goal of this pilot test is to finalize a BBA Oral Communications Rubric by the start of Spring 2010.
- ! This new Rubric will be used, during Spring 2010, to collect data on student oral communications skills in a selection of BBA courses—using faculty volunteers.
- ! During 2010-11, this assessment data will be presented to the faculty for review.

## 4. The Problem-Solving & Critical Thinking Learning Objective

- ! The *Cornell Critical Thinking Test* will continue to be administered each semester in MGT460, as part of the Final Exam.
- ! During Spring 2010 the data for Spring & Fall 2009 will be summarized and presented to the faculty at an Assessment Day Workshop. At this Workshop the faculty will also consider the results obtained by the Accounting Program, which began administering the *California Business Skills Critical Thinking Test* to its students in 2008-09. The goals of this Workshop will be to identify areas in which our students need improvement, and to evaluate the usefulness of these two standardized tests.

### III. Economics Program Assessment 2008-2009

#### A. Summary of Economics Program Assessment Activities 2008-2009

**Fall 2009:** The Economics Assessment Committee met on November 4<sup>th</sup>. At this meeting the faculty agreed on a set of Learning Objectives:

1. The **Economics Discipline-Specific Learning Objectives** (November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009): The student will acquire mastery of the fundamental principles and tools of microeconomic and macroeconomic analysis. These principles and tools include:
  - *Quantitative analysis*
  - *Graphical skills*
  - *Marginal decision making*
  - *Opportunity costs*
2. The faculty established a first phase of assessment: Assessing Economics Program Learning Objectives at different levels of Bloom's Taxonomy<sup>1</sup> as they apply to microeconomics. This first phase will provide us with a baseline measure of our students' level of knowledge and competency in the tools and principles of microeconomic analysis. This phase will entail:
  - a. Testing Knowledge and Comprehension levels (levels 1 and 2), for each Learning Objective, in Principles of Microeconomics (ECN 250).
  - b. A second assessment measure of knowledge and comprehension levels will occur in the Intermediate Microeconomic Analysis course (ECN 328). Particularly, one question on the ECN 328 final exam will have multiple parts, with the early parts testing knowledge and comprehension (levels 1 & 2) and the latter parts testing Application, Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation (levels 3, 4, 5 and 6), respectively.
3. The faculty devised a plan for the development of an Assessment Mechanism that will be used to assess the new Economics Learning Objectives.
4. The faculty decided that the assessment of the Economics Program Learning Objectives as they apply to macroeconomics will occur in a second phase.
5. The faculty agreed on a timeline for the implementation of assessment of the Economics Program Learning Objectives in microeconomics (phase 1) and macroeconomics (phase 2).

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<sup>1</sup> Bloom's Taxonomy levels are: 1. Knowledge, 2. Comprehension, 3. Application, 4. Analysis, 5. Synthesis and 6. Evaluation.

## **B. Timeline**

**Fall 2009:** (November) Faculty members who teach Principles of Microeconomics are developing a test bank of questions that focus on knowledge and comprehension of *Quantitative analysis, Graphical skills, Marginal decision making* and *Opportunity costs*. (Final exam of Principles of Microeconomics). Run baseline assessment mechanism in Principles of Microeconomics.

**Spring 2010:** 1. First run of assessment mechanism in Principles of Microeconomics course. 2. Develop Assessment Mechanism to be implemented in Intermediate Microeconomic Analysis.

**Summer 2010:** AOL graduate assistant compiles the results of Principles of Microeconomics Assessment.

**Fall Retreat 2010:** 1. Review results of the Spring 2010 assessment in Principles of Microeconomics. Use them to (a) Identify changes to improve the process and improve student learning, and (b) refine the Assessment Mechanism to be administered in Intermediate Microeconomic Analysis. 2. Audit the Intermediate Macroeconomics (ECN 326) course, in preparation for the creation of the macroeconomics assessment mechanism.

**Fall 2010:** First run of assessment mechanism in Intermediate Microeconomic Analysis.

Note: There are multiple sections of Principles of Microeconomics taught each fall and spring semester. Each year the Principles of Microeconomics Assessment Mechanism will be administered as the final exam in all sections in both semesters for a 25 percent sample of Principles of Microeconomics students. The data will be compiled the following summer. The Economics Assessment Committee will meet during the fall retreat of the subsequent academic year to review the results of the previous year's assessment exercises and to agree upon changes to the process, and to the curriculum, that will improve student learning.