

CURRICULUM PLANNING AND EVALUATION –BSBA degree

Spring 2006

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Based on assessment data, we redesigned the BS in Business Administration degree program. The new program develops the skills, knowledge, and abilities of our students earlier in the program to better prepare them for upper division coursework. The flagship of our new program is the Gateway Experience, a team taught course that uses interdisciplinary cases written by our faculty and team-building assignments that develop the presentation, writing and ethical thinking skills of our students. We have established an embedded assessment program to provide students with better feedback on their achievement in meeting learning goals. The embedded measures are directly linked to our mission.

Overview

This report details our assessment program, data analysis, and feedback process. The report is organized in two parts. First, we describe the development of our assessment program under the old AACSB standards. We discuss findings from our employer, alumni, and EBI surveys and describe the creation of two business assessment tests. We then discuss how our assessment activities lead to the design of our flagship course.

Second, we describe our assessment program under the new AACSB standards. We show how the program learning goals are linked to the mission. Details are also offered to show the establishment of our embedded measures process and some results from a finance class. We also illustrate the feedback loop between assessment and curriculum planning.

Assessment Prior to Fall 2002

Our assessment program began in Fall 1998 under the old AACSB standards. Thus, our curriculum planning process was driven by results from indirect and stand alone measures of student learning. Our indirect measures consisted of three surveys --an employer and alumni survey and the EBI student satisfaction survey. These survey responses helped to establish new program goals and learning goals for the B.S. in Business Administration (BSBA). Our stand alone measures consisted of two exit tests – the Basic Concepts in Business Test and the Applications of Basic Concepts in Business Test.

In Spring 2001, the assessment data was used by an ad hoc Curriculum Review Committee (CRC) and an ad hoc Curriculum Design Committee (CDC) to develop the new BSBA program. The design of our BSBA program, learning goals, and curriculum is customer-driven since virtually every program change is

linked to feedback from employers, alumni, students, and faculty. Exhibit 1 illustrates how assessment data drove the development process and eventually the new curriculum.

Exhibit 1. Curriculum Design Process Prior to Fall 2002

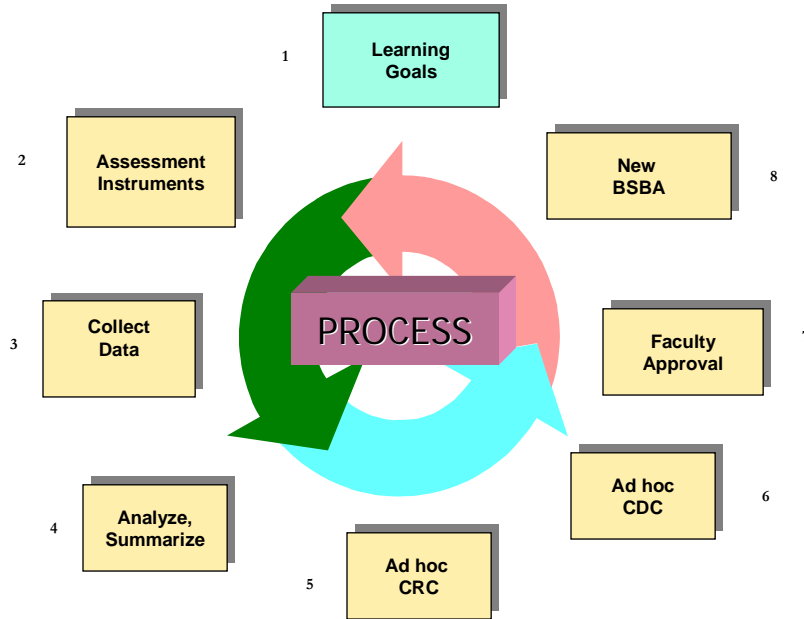


Exhibit 1 also indicates strong faculty involvement as the CRC was formed by 14 members of the faculty plus the associate dean and the assessment director as ex officio members. At each stage of the curriculum design process, a faculty vote was obtained to determine if the CDC should proceed to the next stage. The faculty had input at each stage and thereby developed a sense of ownership in the process.

The first stage in the curriculum design process was to synthesize the expectations of local employers, the experiences of our alumni and our students, and to analyze the results of our business assessment tests. We asked the following questions: What skills, knowledge, and abilities do local employers want? Did we provide alumni with the skills they need? What can we learn from our business test results? After going through this self-examination, the College realized that its customers wanted graduates with an interdisciplinary focus who have first-rate communication, problem solving, and teamwork skills.

Employer Surveys

Employer surveys were conducted in Spring 1998 and Fall 2001. The 1998 survey responses indicated that employers ranked oral communication in first place, with teamwork and problem solving tying for second place, and written communication, leadership, and the ability to apply business concepts in a three-way tie for third place. Exhibit 2 indicates how employer responses shaped the learning goals for the new BSBA program.

Exhibit 2 illustrates how skills are linked to a learning goal and identifies the course responsible for fulfilling each learning goal. For example, oral and written communication skills will be developed in the lower division core and in the Gateway course.

Exhibit 2. Linkage Between Employer Feedback and Program Learning Goals

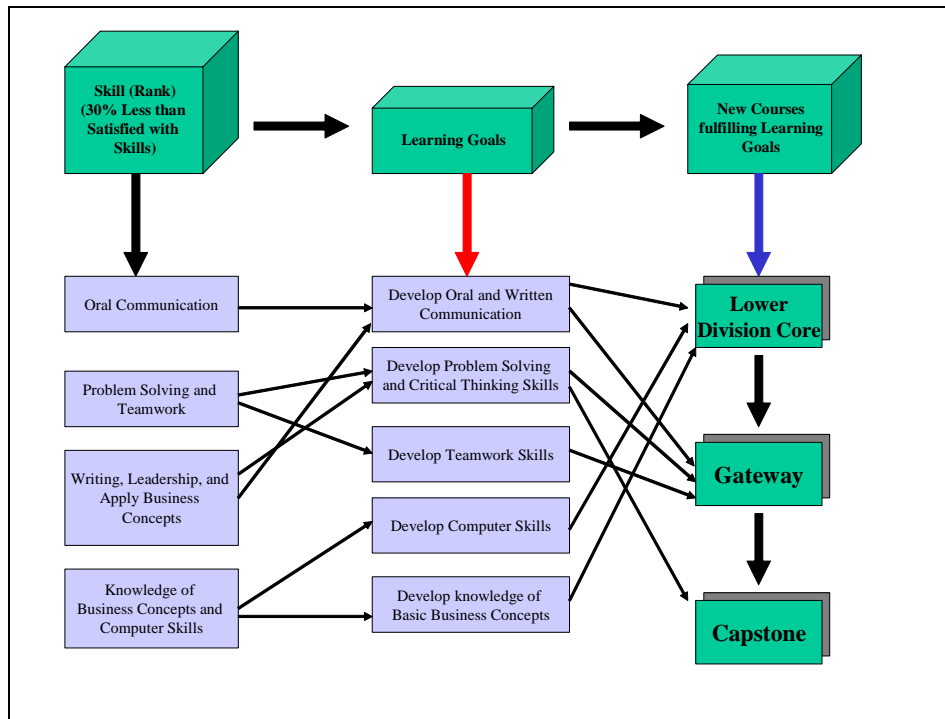
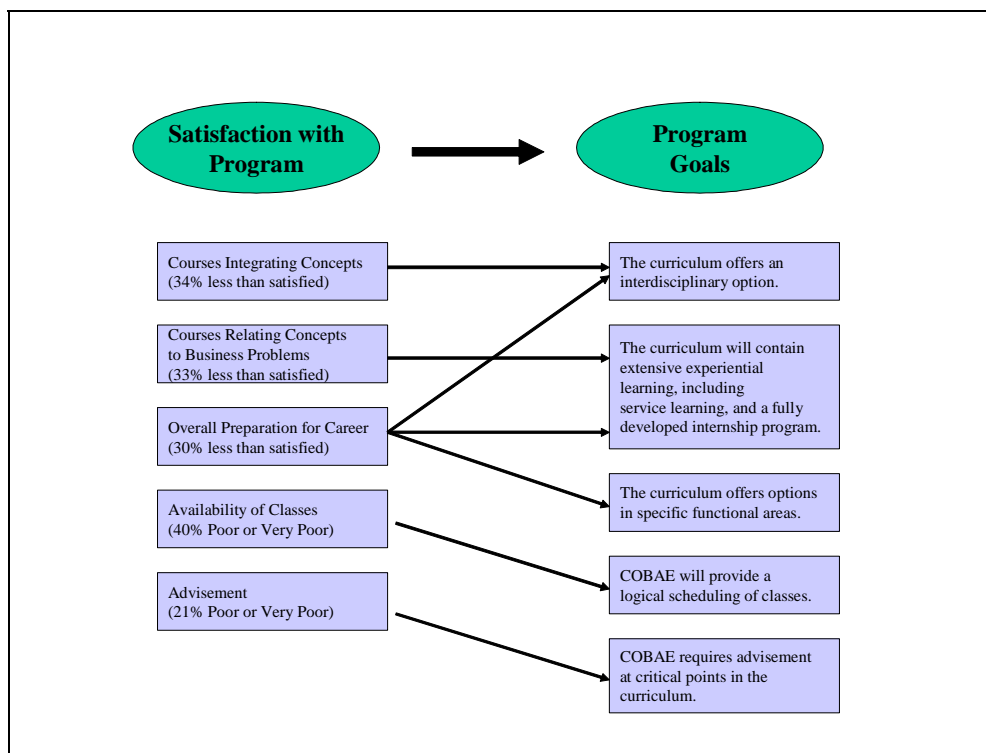


Exhibit 3. Linkage Between Alumni Feedback and Program Goals



Alumni Surveys

Alumni Surveys were conducted in Spring 1997 and Fall 2000. The survey asks about their experience as a College of Business and Economics (COBAE) student. The survey also asks alumni to rate the skills that are most important in their careers. Exhibit 3 shows some key findings from the survey and illustrates how alumni feedback shaped the program goals for the new BSBA.

For example, Exhibit 3 indicates that roughly one-third of alumni were “less than satisfied” with their courses integrating concepts from the different functional areas of business and in relating concepts to business problems. And 21 percent of alumni rated advisement services as “poor or very poor.”

The EBI Survey

The EBI Student Satisfaction Survey has been given to graduating seniors every Spring since 1998. We track the level of student satisfaction with our program over time and compare our scores to our “Select 6” comparison schools. Particular attention is given to questions that indicate the students’ viewpoint on how well prepared they are to achieve the program learning goals. Additionally, low scoring questions (i.e., 3 and 4 denote “slightly dissatisfied” and “neutral”) or questions where we show the least improvement indicate areas that need attention.

In the 1998 through 2001 surveys, students have indicated dissatisfaction with the quality of faculty advising, instructors relating concepts to the real world, and the value derived from team experiences. The first two areas mirror the findings from the alumni survey. This important feedback led to changes in our advisement office and in the creation of our flagship course, the Gateway experience.

Exhibit 4. EBI Questions Where Least Improvement is Shown, 1998-2001

Question	Means			
	1998	1999	2000	2001
Q50. How satisfied were you with the quality of faculty advising?	4.11	3.59	3.84	4.03
Q33. How satisfied were you with the required course instructors relating concepts to the real world?	4.94	4.62	4.94	4.96
Q41. What level of value did you derive from your team experiences?	4.60	4.31	4.84	4.50
Number	170	103	122	372

In response to alumni and student concerns about the quality of advisement, we require advisement at critical points in the new BSBA program. Additionally, our advisement office conducted a follow-up survey and found that students had difficulty in making appointments with advisors and that peer advisors often did not understand their problem. Based on these findings, the advisement office began using email more extensively and improved the website interface to answer student questions. A new training program for peer advisors was also implemented.

Basic Concepts Tests

Two business tests --Basic Concepts in Business Test and Application of Basic Concepts Test --were created at COBAE to measure our students' knowledge of basic business concepts and their ability to apply these concepts.

Each department (accounting, business law, etc.) within the College developed their own multiple-choice questions by identifying basic concepts in their area that every graduate with a business degree should know. In Fall 1997, a pilot test was first given to students in our senior-level capstone course to determine if the questions were clear and if the time allowed for students to complete the test (50 minutes) was reasonable.

Based on the pilot results, some questions were revised and others were omitted. The validity and reliability of the test was also assessed using statistical techniques. In Fall 1999, the revised test was approved and given to all senior-level students taking capstone.

The results of both tests have been tracked over time and scores have been compared across the functional areas (i.e., accounting, business law, economics, etc.). The overall mean on the Basic Concepts Test has remained fairly constant at 45 percent, while the Application of Basic Concepts has been roughly 41 percent. It is difficult to interpret these results without a proper benchmark. A good benchmark would be students in business colleges comparable to our own.

Fortunately our Basic Concepts in Business Test was the model for the creation of a California State University Business Assessment Test (CSU-BAT) that has been used system-wide since Fall 2004. We did participate in the Fall 2004 pilot and now have an appropriate benchmark to gauge our performance against the CSU average.

The 1999 and 2000 results of the Basic Concepts Tests were reviewed by the Curriculum Design Committee in Spring 2001 with the goal of improving the students' ability to understand and apply basic business concepts. Particular attention was given to students' ability to retain knowledge of these concepts when they enter upper division courses. One important result of this design effort is the flagship course of our new BSBA, the Gateway Experience.

Development of the Gateway Course

The creation of the Gateway course is an excellent example of how *all* of our assessment activities helped to improve the quality of our BSBA degree program. As mentioned previously, employer feedback stressed the need for graduates with excellent oral communication, teamwork, and problem solving skills. Alumni feedback indicated the need for courses to better integrate concepts from the different functional areas of business and to relate concepts to business problems. Student responses on the EBI survey suggested that improvements were needed in team experiences and for courses that relate concepts to the real world. Additionally, our test results demonstrated that improvement was needed in students' ability to retain and apply basic business concepts. The Gateway Experience seeks to address these needs.

Gateway is an innovative, team-taught, cross-functional course. It is designed to prepare students for upper division coursework. It is a required course for all business and accounting majors and must be taken prior to, or concurrently with, the student's first upper division business core classes. Gateway reviews and tests students' knowledge of the lower division business core (financial and managerial accounting, micro and macroeconomics, business law, and statistics) by integrating and applying concepts from these courses to solve business problems. While the course does not introduce new material from the lower division business core, it is designed to develop the ability of students to apply these disciplines in a complex business environment. In addition, students learn to work in teams, to analyze business cases, to make class presentations, and to write short business memorandums and letters.

The Gateway course also requires students to take an exam in each of the six lower division core business subjects. The purpose of the six exams is to have students demonstrate minimal proficiency in all lower division core areas. Faculty are thereby assured of a minimum level of competence when students enter upper division courses.

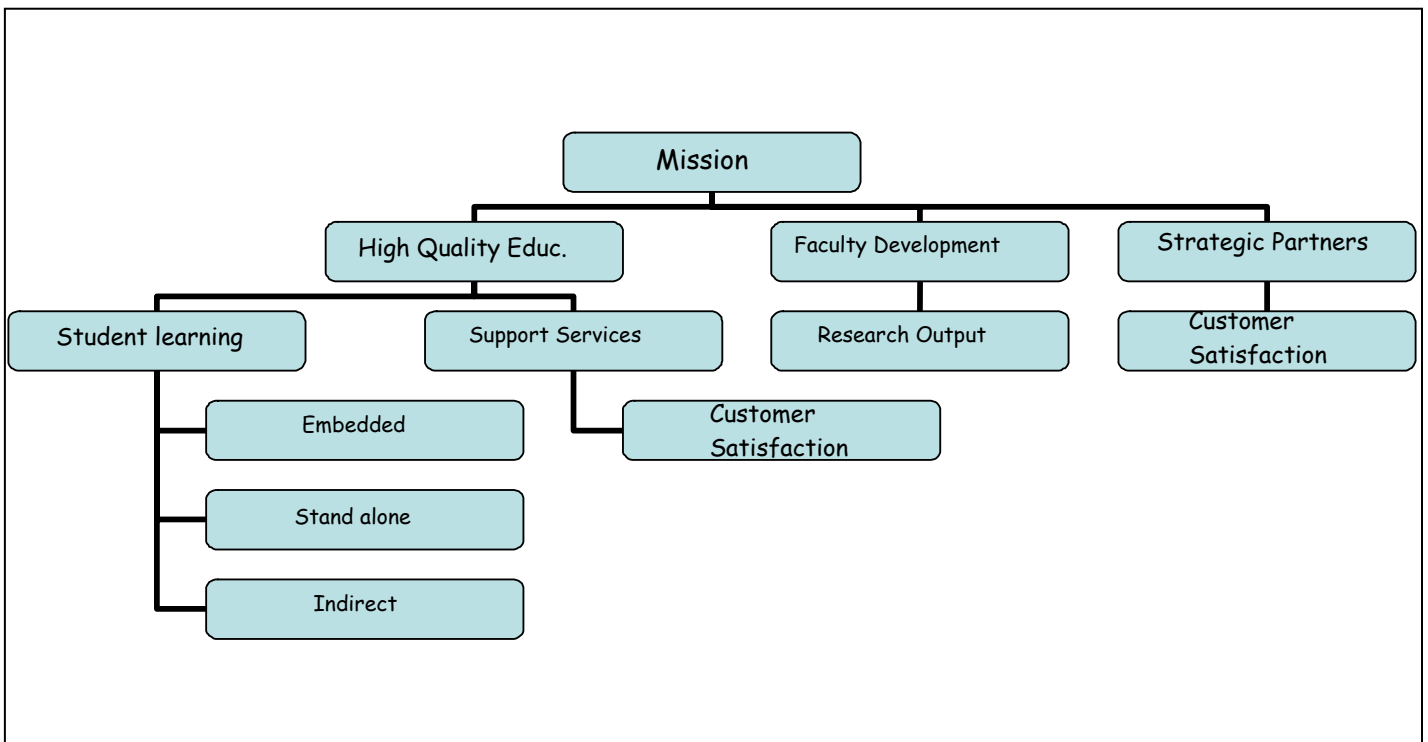
The Gateway course has five goals (in order of priority below) that are directly tied to our mission and program learning goals.

1. Build process skills valued by employers, including effective teamwork, written and oral communication, and time management skills
2. Review, integrate, and demonstrate competency of Lower Division Core material
3. Understand cross-functional and interdisciplinary nature of business problems
4. Use “strategic” and “ethical thinking” as a critical way to understand and solve business and personal problems
5. Create personal networks and a sense of belonging to the COBAE community

Assessment After Fall 2002

Our assessment efforts since Fall 2002 have been geared toward the new AACSB standards. The linkage between our mission and current assessment processes is shown in Exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5. Linkage Between Mission and Assessment



The College has three major goals outlined in the mission: (1) provide a high quality education, (2) promote faculty development, and (3) develop strategic partnerships. Each of these goals must be translated into measurable outcomes for assessment. We have defined two outcomes for the goal of high quality education: (1) student achievement in meeting the program learning goals, and (2) effectiveness of our student support activities (e.g., student advisement). Student achievement is assessed with embedded, stand alone, and indirect measures of student learning. The effectiveness of student support services is measured by satisfaction surveys.

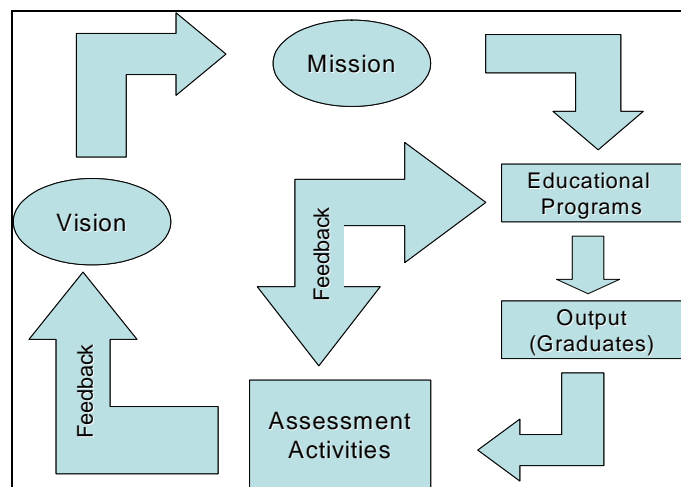
Successful faculty development will be measured by faculty research output. Individual faculty productivity will be measured by the number of intellectual contributions produced. If productivity is not increasing, then efforts will be made to improve the faculty development process. For example, we might need to improve the mentor selection process or the way research circles are formed and conducted. Assessment of faculty productivity resides with the department chairs.

Our strategic partnerships are formed largely through our centers. If we view these partnerships as a supplier-customer relationship, then one measure of success is the level of customer satisfaction. As part of the strategic planning process last year, the centers have declared measurable goals and objectives. We are now working to develop an assessment process to measure the centers' success in meeting their goals. The process is to first identify the customer of each center and then administer a customer satisfaction survey. Assessment of center activities resides with the center directors.

Process Improvement Model

Once the relevant outcomes (for students, faculty, or centers) are measured the results are fed back into the process and become the roadmap for improving the process (e.g., curriculum planning, faculty research circles, or center activities). This never-ending cycle is repeated to continuously improve the outcome. The cycle is similar to Deming's "Plan, Do, Check, Act" model, where a plan for improvement is designed, the plan is implemented, the results checked against the desired output and action is taken to close the gap between the actual and the desired output. This Process Improvement Model (PIM) – applied to our educational process --is shown in Exhibit 6.

Exhibit 6. Process Improvement Model



Our PIM is a closed-loop, data-driven feedback model, where the educational process is continually assessed and reassessed. The assessment of student learning requires that data be obtained from the process (degree programs) and the output (graduates) of the process. The data are analyzed and the results are fed back into the process in the form of corrective action aimed at improving any weakness.

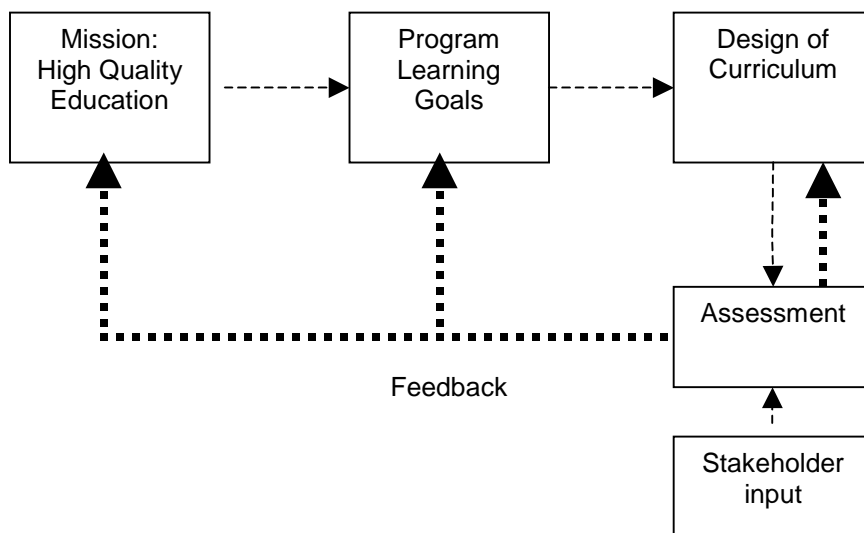
Once program changes are implemented, the process of assessing and reassessing is repeated in a never-ending cycle to improve the quality of our educational process. Thus, a PIM aligns perfectly with the purpose of assessment, which is to provide data-driven feedback that facilitates program improvement.

The PIM will ensure that we meet our goal of providing a high quality education. Our mission states that “COBAE will be the program of choice for students in the greater Los Angeles area who seek a bachelor’s degree in business and of employers who demand high quality graduates.” We define high quality graduates as effective communicators and ethical decision makers who are proficient in the theory and practice of business. These graduates can think critically, are aware of the ethical implications of their decisions, have effective teamwork skills, demonstrate a working knowledge of basic concepts in the functional areas of business and apply a cross functional approach to solving business problems. These characteristics help to determine the learning goals for our degree programs.

Learning Goals

Our learning goals were derived from faculty, employer, alumni, and student feedback. The process used to determine and assess our learning goals is shown in Exhibit 7.

Exhibit 7. Process to Determine Program Learning Goals



We define high quality education by the skills, knowledge, and abilities that a high quality graduate would possess. These skills, knowledge, and abilities are embodied in our program learning goals. Our curriculum has been designed to achieve these learning goals. The curriculum is monitored and assessed to determine if our students are attaining the program learning goals. The assessment effort involves both stakeholder (i.e., faculty, employers, alumni, and students) input and measuring student achievement. The assessment results are then fed back to the departments and the Curriculum Review and Policy Committee. The feedback may result in changes to the curriculum, the learning goals or the mission.

The linkage between the BSBA program learning goals and the mission are shown in Exhibit 8.

Exhibit 8. Learning Goals of the BSBA degree

	BSBA Degree Learning Goals	Linkage to Mission
General Learning Goals	1. Our graduates have strong written and oral communication skills.	Effective Communication
	2. Our graduates have strong problem solving skills.	Critical thinking
	3. Our graduates have strong critical thinking skills.	
	4. Our graduates have an understanding of ethics and social responsibility.	Ethical decision makers
	5. Our graduates have strong information technology skills.	Proficient in practice of business
	6. Our graduates can work effectively in teams.	Curriculum emphasizes teamwork
Management Specific Learning Goals	1. Our graduates understand the global context of business.	Prepare students for leadership in today's complex, global economy
	2. Our graduates understand the cross-functional and interdisciplinary nature of business problems.	Students are encouraged to apply discipline-based and cross functional knowledge
	3. Our graduates understand and can apply basic business concepts	Graduates are proficient in theory and practice of business

Continuous Improvement of Assessment

We continue to employ the indirect and stand alone measures of student learning that were used prior to Fall 2002. However, our current assessment efforts are targeted toward direct or embedded measures of student learning. Exhibit 9 lists the assessment measures that are currently being used by the College.

Exhibit 9. Assessment Measures of Student Learning

Embedded measures: Performance on Learning Goals

- Course embedded measures in BUS 302, BLAW 280, BLAW 307, FIN 303, FIN 435, SOM 306, SOM 307, MKT 304, and MGT 360 (CSUN)

Indirect measures: Satisfaction Surveys

- Employer Satisfaction Survey (CSUN)
- Alumni Satisfaction Survey (CSUN)
- Undergraduate Student Satisfaction Survey (EBI)

Stand-alone: Performance Evaluations

- Six Lower Division Core Exams (CSUN)
- CSU-Business Assessment Test (CSU System)

The College implemented an embedded assessment program in Fall 2003. The program was implemented on a small scale, with each department selecting one core course as a pilot project. The results of the pilot program have been used to improve and expand the program.

During the Fall 2003 semester, the College assessment director met with each department to help develop an embedded assessment program. The goal of these meetings was twofold: (1) obtain direct measures of student learning that would provide useful feedback for improving our curriculum and pedagogy, and (2) develop a program that would not be excessively time consuming.

After some concern, the benefits of the embedded measures emerged when grading was discussed. Most instructors give their students one, overall score when grading assignments. This aggregate grade provides no information on what the student must do to improve. Moreover, instructors do not always make their grading standards explicit. So students do not know what constitutes acceptable performance. With embedded measures, students are told what skills, knowledge, and abilities they must demonstrate to achieve the course learning goals and thereby earn a good grade.

Embedded measures also make course learning goals explicit and thereby provide students with a clear understanding of what they are expected to know and be able to do. Additionally, students receive scores on each skill, knowledge, and ability needed for an assignment thereby giving them specific feedback on where they need to improve. For example, an overall score of 75 percent on a business case reveals very little. But, if the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed on a business case are graded separately on four categories of (1) ability to define an issue or problem, (2) identify alternative courses of action, (3) state conclusion and recommendation, and (4) write in a clear, concise and grammatically correct manner, then students know where they must improve. Embedded measures also facilitate grading because it is easier to assign separate scores to smaller components of an assignment (e.g., a business case) than it is to give one overall score.

Each department was asked to implement course embedded measures by following five steps.

1. Establish learning goals for one upper division course.
2. Show the connection between the course learning goals and the program learning goals.
3. Identify the skills, knowledge, and abilities that students need to meet each course learning goal.
4. Give one assignment, test, or project that covers the course learning goals.
5. Measure student performance on each learning goal and set standards with three broad categories –“very good”, “good enough”, or “not good enough.”

The following discussion shows how course embedded measures were implemented in a Financial Management class (FIN 303). This course is required of all students in the BSBA program. The course learning goals, their linkage to the program learning goals, the skills, knowledge, and abilities, and the results of embedded measures obtained from 99 students in one section of Finance 303 are summarized in Exhibit 10.

Exhibit 10. Embedded Measures for Finance 303 (Fall 2003)

Course Learning Goal	Linkage to Program Learning Goals	Skill, Knowledge, or Ability	Not Good Enough	Good Enough	Very Good
Investment Decisions	-Problem Solving -Understand and apply basic business concepts	Time value of money concept		80%	
		Risk and return concept	66%		
		Financial calculation		80%	
<i>Weighted Mean</i>				75%	
Financing Decisions	-Problem Solving -Understand and apply basic business concepts	Financial Markets and Institutions		85%	
		Capital Structure		75%	
<i>Weighted Mean</i>				80%	
Using Financial Data	-Problem Solving -Understand and apply basic business concepts	Financial Statements		77%	
Financial Ethics and Regulatory Requirements	-Ethics and Social Responsibility	Ethics			95%
		Regulatory Requirements			93%
<i>Weighted Mean</i>					94%

The instrument used to produce the data is the final examination. One or more questions on the final covered each skill, knowledge, or ability that is associated with a particular learning goal. The percentage of correct answers on each question covering a given learning goal was computed. The scale in Exhibit 11 was used to classify student performance on each of the skills, knowledge, and abilities (SKA).

Exhibit 11. Scale for All Measures in Exhibit 10

Performance on SKA	Outcome
Less than 70%	Not good enough
More than 70% but less than 90%	Good enough
90% or more	Very good

The results represent the percentage of correct answers on the questions covering each skill, knowledge, or ability associated with a particular learning goal. For example, on average, 85 percent of the students correctly answered the questions on financial markets and institutions and 75 percent of the students correctly answered the questions on capital structure. Both of these scores fall into the “good enough” performance category.

Embedded measures are extremely helpful in flagging areas where a course is successful in helping students achieve the learning goals, and in highlighting problem areas where students are having difficulty. For example, only 66 percent of the students correctly answered the questions on risk and return concepts, one of the three skills, knowledge, and abilities associated with the learning goal of making investment decisions. This is the only skill, knowledge, and ability where student performance fell into the “not good enough” category. Depending on the relative importance of this knowledge, overall performance on the learning goal may be compromised. These results will be used by the Finance department to determine the underlying causes and take appropriate corrective action, which may involve changes in pedagogy or in course coverage.

Assessment Cycle

The embedded, indirect, and stand alone measures of student learning are maintained, administered, and revised when necessary by faculty and the College assessment director. The director provides analyses of the results to the department chairs who review the results with their faculty to determine whether changes are needed to improve student learning. The changes, depending on their nature, may be presented to the Curriculum Review and Policy Committee for approval by the college faculty. This process is outlined below and shown in Exhibit 12.

The feedback process is described below:

1. The Assessment Director (AD) collects, analyzes, and summarizes learning outcomes data at the end of each spring semester.
2. The summary identifies curriculum improvement opportunities.
3. The assessment director distributes the summary to the Department Chairs (DCs), associate dean, and the Curriculum Review and Policy Committee (CRPC) by July 1.
4. In September, the department chairs and the associate dean review the summary and, with the involvement of the respective departments, determine the implications for their programs or courses.

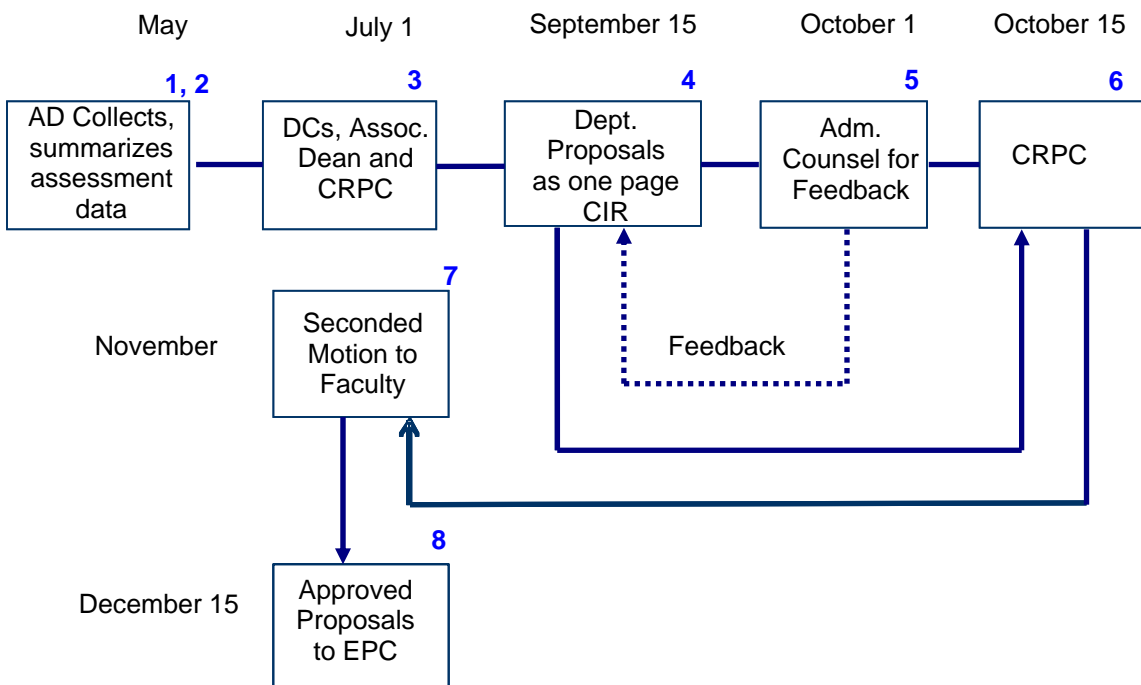
5. If the departments decide to propose curriculum changes, the department presents their proposals, along with a one-page curriculum improvement report, to the Administrative Council for comment by October 1.

The report should provide answers to the following questions:

- a. What is your departmental process for review and evaluation of your curriculum?
 - b. What changes are you proposing?
 - c. What learning outcomes data do you have to support your proposed changes?
 - d. Are the changes consistent with program learning goals?
6. After receiving feedback from the Administrative Council, the department chairs send their proposed curriculum changes to the Curriculum Review and Policy Committee for approval by October 15.
 7. The Curriculum Review and Policy Committee present the approved proposals to the faculty as seconded motions at the November faculty meeting.
 8. If needed, proposals that are passed by the faculty go to the Educational Policies Committee for approval.
 9. Approved proposals are implemented in the following academic year.
 10. Process repeats at the end of spring semester.

It may also be necessary for the Strategic Planning Committee to reexamine the program's vision and mission in light of the assessment results. For example, we may find that required skills have changed in response to new employer expectations. These reviews are conducted on a five-year cycle.

Exhibit 12. Curriculum Review Process



Eye on the Future

Local community colleges are an important part of our educational process because they supply us with the bulk of our students. Almost two-thirds of our students are transfers who complete their lower division coursework at community colleges. It is critical for us to provide feedback to them. If they improve, we improve.

We recently designed an extensive online survey that indicates where each student took her lower division core classes. This information will be merged with individual performance on the six lower division core exams. Survey and exam data will be collected during the Spring 2006 semester in *all* Gateway sections. Such information will allow us to provide important feedback to instructors that teach lower division courses at COBAE and at the local community colleges. For example, we may find that Santa Monica Community College students score well on questions that cover demand elasticity but do poorly on questions that cover linear regression. Timely feedback to lower division core instructors will allow them to change the topic coverage in their courses.

We also plan to implement embedded measures throughout our curriculum because every course has learning goals. The skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to achieve the course learning goals will be made explicit in each course so students understand exactly what is required of them. Moreover, providing grades on each skill, knowledge, and ability tells students what they must do to improve. This facilitates more consistent grading because it is easier to assign separate scores to smaller components of an assignment than it is to give one overall score.