FCBE Assurance of Learning "Closing the Loop" Committee Report EMBA Program

Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Fogelman College of Business and Economics
University of Memphis

Committee Members:

John Amis
Gregory Boller
Brian Janz
Gensheng Liu
Ron Spahr
Tina Wakolbinger
Robert Wiggins

Christine Jiang – Chair

Submitted to:
Lloyd Brooks, FCBE Director of Assessment
Jasbir Dhaliwal, FCBE Associate Dean of Academic Programs

Spring 2011

This report consists of a summary of the experiences gained, lessons learned, and recommendations for future improvement. In addition, this report details specific findings, conclusions, recommendations, and comments. All data used by this committee can be found on the FCBE Assessment website: http://www.fcbeassessment.net. The committee was given a general charge as well as additional charges as follows:

General Charge to FCBE "Close the Loop" Committees

1. Review the assessment rubrics carefully for the degree program to assure a thorough knowledge of the goals and objectives established by faculty for the degree program.
2. Review data analysis and graphic representation for each objective to determine the degree that reasonable expectations were met. State the reason for your finding. If not met, what is needed to increase the likelihood that the objective will be met during a subsequent assessment—delete the objective, revise the objective wording, add specific assignments in courses, change in prerequisites, suggest a support activity, and so forth?
3. Include an appropriate statement for each objective to reflect findings that support your review comments so that a third reader can understand your reasoning and intentions.
4. Include specific review recommendations and/or comments for each learning goal for the rubric.
5. After all assessment data for the degree program have been reviewed. The committee should develop a team report in narrative form to summarize findings and conclusions. Be specific and relate conclusions and recommendations to specific findings.
6. Discuss the entire process with appropriate faculty in the EMBA faculty to assure input and that your recommendations represent EMBA faculty.

General Recommendations:

The general findings of the committee were that the EMBA program, based on the analysis, is largely successful in accomplishing its goals and objectives. Students demonstrated effectiveness in the areas assessed, generally at the exemplary level.

Specific Recommendations:

1. To further broaden leadership development, consider the use of temporary rather than fixed teams for some in-class assignments.
2. Improve existing instruction and provide more instruction in how to prepare executive summaries and make effective presentations.
3. Recommend EMBA faculty to use a similar set of rubrics to evaluate presentations.
4. Increase the use of cases studies.
5. Add projects that promote critical thinking, problem solving, and solution implementation skills in the EMBA curriculum.
6. Change the formulation of objectives.
7. Further emphasize the multifunctional view of technology implications.
8. Make adjustments (additions) to the list of courses used for assessment of various goals of the EMBA program.

Conclusions:

The Committee benefited considerably from involvement in the assessment process. It is clear that most of the students are developing the required skills to be successful graduates of the EMBA program. It is also clear that there is room for improvement going forward. It is hoped that the recommendations above will benefit the program and will further enhance the development of student skills.

Degree Program: EMBA

Goal 1: **Graduates will be effective leaders.**

Objective 1: **The graduate will assess and support** the learning and development of others. **(MGMT 7421).**
Mean: **8.07**
Rubric: **100% Exemplary**

Findings: 37% of the EMBA students were assessed to be at level 9 (on a 9-point scale), 40% were assessed at level 8, and the remaining (23%) were assessed to be at level 7, all within the "Exemplary" range. These statistics, while promising, are not surprising, given the general maturity of EMBA students, as well as the lock-step, cohort nature of the program that allows students to learn modeled behavior from their peers as they interact in class and during their team assignments.

Objective 2: Organize and lead a team to collective group accomplishment. **(MGMT 7421).**
Mean: **7.93**
Rubric: **95% Exemplary**

Findings: Graduates have the necessary skills and opportunities to lead their teams in the EMBA program. Again, the high level of assessment here (30% at level 9, 47% at level 8, 18% at level 7, with only 5% at the "Good" level 6) can be attributed, at least in part, to the nature of the typical EMBA student, as well as to the lock-step, cohort design of the program.

Conclusions: EMBA students have ample opportunities to develop their leadership skills, and most, if not all, are doing well in this goal area. The strong bonds that form among members of the cohort have several benefits, including, at a minimum, the opportunity for students to learn positive executive behaviors from their colleagues. The newly instigated executive speaker series also helps in this respect, with a great focus in these talks – sometimes implicit, often explicit – being the development of leadership skills as individuals ascend to senior managerial positions. While these skills are developed across several courses, and

in settings external to formal classes, MGMT 7421 appears to be an acceptable and sufficient course within which to assess students in this goal area.

Recommendations: Continue efforts to derive the benefits inherent in the lock-step, cohort nature of this program. While several strategies are clearly proving effective in helping students to develop in this area (e.g., the use of teams, overseas study experience, executive speaker series), we should continue to look for ways to further refine and enhance them (e.g., explore the possibility of an industry mentorship program, consider the use of temporary rather than fixed teams for some in-class assignments, selection of visiting speakers). As efforts increase to shift some instruction to the online environment, more attention may need to be focused on whether these important leadership skills translate successfully within this context. This will likely place further emphases on the auxiliary program elements that have been highlighted above.

Goal 2: Graduates will be good communicators.

Objective 1: Prepare an executive summary in an appropriate structure. **(MKTG 7140).**
Mean: **7.27**
Rubric: **78% Exemplary**

Findings: With no students assessed at exemplary level 9 (59% assessed at level 8, 19% assessed at level 7, and 22% assessed at the "Good" level 6), there is some room for improvement with this objective.

Objective 2: Organize an effective presentation. **(MGMT 7160, MKTG 7140).**
Mean: **6.79**
Rubric: **65% Exemplary**

Findings: Similarly, with only 65% of students being assessed at "Exemplary" levels (5% at level 9, 34% at level 8, and 26% at level 7) and the remaining 35% of students being assessed at "Good" levels (25% at level 6 and 10% at level 5), there is room for improvement with this objective.

Conclusions: While assessment levels are close to the 70% Exemplary threshold (Objective 1 slightly above the 70% Exemplary threshold, while Objective 2 is slightly below the threshold), more attention should be focused on explicitly developing these

fundamentally important, yet easy to achieve skills. In addition to MGMT 7421, both MKTG 7555 and MKTG 7421can be used for the purpose of assessment of Objective 2.

Recommendations: Consideration should be given to providing more explicit instruction and guidelines in how to prepare executive summaries and make effective presentations early in MKTG 7140 and MGMT 7160. In addition, it may be advisable to coordinate these efforts between the instructors of these courses in order that students receive consistent instruction relating to these skill areas. If there is a course that is offered earlier in the EMBA program than MKTG 7140 or MGMT 7160 with opportunities to prepare executive summaries and presentations, it may be advisable to include this instruction there as well. Recommend EMBA faculty to use a similar set of rubric to evaluate presentations. Further, in order to reinforce the characteristics of effective executive presentations, we should consider inviting in local executives to one or more courses (e.g., MKTG 7140, MGMT 7160) to provide initial summary guidance for, and subsequent feedback on, the students' presentations. At a minimum though, we recommend that program leadership and faculty provide ongoing monitoring, guidance/coaching with frequent feedback, and ancillary, dedicated instruction about executive communication skills.

Goal 3: Graduates will be critical thinkers and problem solvers.

Objective 1:   Develop an effective strategy for solving business problems.
(BA 7717, ISDS 7110, MGMT 7160)

Mean: 6.68

Rubric: 76 % Exemplary

Findings: While a high percentage of students can be found in the exemplary group, the results of the analysis show a small percentage of students in Exemplary 9 (5 % Exemplary 9, 26 % Exemplary 8, 45 % Exemplary 7, 6 % Good 6, 16 % Good 5, and 2 % Good 4). These results warrant further improvements.

Objective 2: Implement a strategy to create an effective solution to business problems.
(BA 7717, ISDS 7110, MGMT 7160)

Mean: 6.82

Rubric: 66 % Exemplary; Improvements are needed

Findings: The strong variation in results achieved (42 % Exemplary 9, 13 % Exemplary 8, 11% Exemplary 7, 19 % Good 6, 8 % Good 5, 6 % Good 4, 1 % Fair 2) indicates that some improvement in this objective is warranted.

Objective 3: **Effectively evaluate potential solutions to business problems.**
(BA 7717, ISDS 7110, MGMT 7160)

Mean: 6.86

Rubric: 67 % Exemplary

Findings: With only 67% of students being assessed at Exemplary levels (47% at level 9, 13% at level 8, and 7% at level 7), 31% of students being assessed at Good levels (19% at level 6 and 10% at level 5, 2% at level 4), and 2 % of students being assessed at Fair level 2, there is room for improvement with this objective.

Conclusions:

The results indicate that improvements in this objective are warranted. Results of the analysis of objective 2 and 3 indicate that student achievements related to these objectives vary widely. While a large percentage of students achieve Exemplary level 9, some students are assessed at Good and Fair levels. We suggest that a stronger emphasis is placed on practicing critical thinking and problem solving techniques in the EMBA program. Cases and projects that emphasize critical thinking skills should be used more heavily. We also recommend a mix of individual and group work. Individual work ensures that all students practice these important skills. Furthermore, we recommend that objectives used to assess this objective be rewritten.

Recommendations:

A stronger focus on case analysis is recommended for courses throughout the program, especially ISDS 7110, although other courses might also benefit (MGMT 7160 is already exclusively case-based). Case studies allow students to practice critical analysis and problem solution techniques. To allow for discussion of possible solution approaches, cases should be presented in class. Case studies should be a mix of individual and group work. While group work ensures that students can learn from each other, individual work ensures that each student practices these important skills.

We recommend that instructors add projects that promote critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making skills in the EMBA curriculum.

We also recommend rewording the objectives. The existing wording of the objectives is confusing and unclear. Also, overlaps exist between the current individual objectives. Our recommended new objectives are:

Objective 1: Demonstrate ability to frame a decision problem. Students are expected to be able to identify and formulate objectives, decisions to be made, possible alternatives as well as associated risks and constraints.

Objective 2: Demonstrate proficiency in using quantitative tools and/or conceptual models to evaluate potential decision alternatives.

Objective 3: Demonstrate ability to develop suggestions for an effective solution to the business problem.

Goal 4:   **Graduates will be knowledgeable about the strategic role that technology plays in the global environment.**

Objective 1: **Illustrate how current and emerging technologies can be applied to achieve organizational strategic goals. (MIS 7650)**
Mean: **6.00**
Rubric: **36% Exemplary**

Findings: The average student rating in this category was 6.00, with 36% of the students in the exemplary range (7-9) and 64% in the good range (4-6). Another observation is that no student fall in the highest category (9). Clearly this is an area where improvements should be made. The students seem to lack a comprehensive understanding of the role that technologies play in achieving an organization's strategic goals.

Objective 2: **Demonstrate proficiency while adapting to and managing changes brought about by evolving and emerging technologies. (BA 7719)**
Mean: **8.69**
Rubric: **100% Exemplary**

Findings: The average student rating for this objective was 8.69, with 72% being rated as 9 and 28% being rated as 8 – a combined 100% in the top two exemplary

categories. Students obviously need little extra training or skill development in this particular area.

Conclusions: Overall students appear to have a fairly high degree of proficiency in adapting to and managing changes brought about by evolving and emerging technologies. However, their understanding of the strategic importance of technologies needs to be further strengthened.

Recommendations: The multifunctional view should be further emphasized in courses that involve technologies, especially information technologies. In addition to the functionalities of various technologies, these courses should also emphasize how these technologies could affect other business functions, as well as how these technologies could be used to support or even reshape a company's business strategies. Real world examples would help a lot for the students to understand this point. In addition, inviting CIOs to interact with EMBA students or organizing visits to technology firms might also help with this goal.

We also recommend rewording Objective 1:

Objective1: Illustrate how information and business technology can help achieve organizational strategic goals.

The committee also recommends that we add FIR 7160 to be used for assessment of Goal 4 in the future.

Goal 5: **Graduates will be knowledgeable about the implications of ethical and multicultural issues in the global business environment.**

Objective 1: **Synthesize and analyze the implications of Globalization for the functional areas. (ACCT 7050)**

Mean: **7.46**
Rubric: **88% Exemplary**

Findings: The average assessment score for this objective was 7.46, which suggests that most of the students (88%) were able to achieve this objective at the lower end of the exemplary scale (7-9). While highly satisfactory, these students could still be further challenged to sharpen their focus on how globalization could impact various functional areas within an organization.

9

Objective 2:   Apply ethical decision frameworks to business problems. (ACCT 7050)
Mean: 8.15
Rubric: 100% Exemplary

Findings: The average assessment score for this objective was 8.15. All students (100%)
achieved this objective in an exemplary manner (7-9), suggesting that this
objective was met in more than satisfactory manner. Because of their executive
or management work experiences, the students are able to apply ethical decision
frameworks to various business problem decision makings.

Conclusions: Both of the two objectives of goal 5 were achieved in a highly satisfactory
manner. Graduates are sensitive to social, ethical, and multi-cultural issues in the
business management environment.

Recommendations: Collectively, the measures indicate that goal 5 has been achieved to a great
extent. Since both goals are met in a more than satisfactory manner, no further
improvement is necessary at this point in time.