

**Montana State University**  
**College of Business**  
**Assessment Plan**

### **Assessment Scope**

The College of Business is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The AACSB standards are rigorous and the College is one of only 10% of schools nationally and internationally which are accredited by the association. In order to maintain accredited status, the College performs ongoing and regular assessment and is committed to continuous improvement. In compliance with AACSB standards, assessment is performed at the College level.

### **Assessment Contact**

Name: **Renee Wachter**, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Phone: 406-994-1776

E-mail: [rwachter@montana.edu](mailto:rwachter@montana.edu)

### **Assessment Management Structure**

The primary coordination and dissemination forum for assessment in the College of Business is the Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee. The Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee was voted into existence in Spring 2004. The committee revisits the mission statement and assessment plan and identifies and benchmarks against peer, aspirant, and competitive institutions as required in the new AACSB standards passed in April 2003.

### **Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee**

The College of Business (CoB) articulates its mission and action items as a guide to its: view of the future, planned evolution, infrastructure, and use of resources. The mission guides the choices which are made in regard to these alternatives. The Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee is the body which develops, directs, coordinates, and oversees the ongoing strategic planning process and initiatives in support of the CoB mission, vision, and goals.

### **Committee Mission Statement**

The Strategic Initiatives Committee will develop, direct, coordinate, and oversee the ongoing strategic planning process and initiatives in support of the CoB Mission, Vision, and Core Values.

The Committee:

- serves as the steward of the Mission, Vision, and Core Values of the CoB by conducting periodic reviews of those statements and by making recommendations to the faculty for needed changes.
- meets on a regular basis to assess the degree to which the Mission, Vision, and Core Values of the CoB are being met.
- makes recommendations and provides assistance to administrators, other committees, faculty, and staff in regard to the strategic aims of the CoB.

- assesses environmental and organizational factors which affect the strategy and management of the CoB.

### Committee Membership

- Chair - Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
- Four (4) tenure-track faculty members – elected by the CoB faculty
- One (1) adjunct faculty member – appointed by the Dean
- One (1) staff member – elected by CoB staff
- Assistant Dean
- Ex-Officio – Dean
- Ex-Officio – Associate Dean for Finance and Administration



### Deliverables

- Meeting Minutes to Members  
After each meeting
- Annual Maintenance Reports  
Annually
- Continuous Improvement Action Items  
Annually

### External Assessment of Mission Accomplishment:

The Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee oversees a number of required assessments targeted at measuring the achievement of the College mission and long-term goals. The assessments conducted by the Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee include a periodic assessment of the College alumni and a periodic assessment of the employers of College graduates.

### Annual Internal Assessment of Mission Accomplishment:

On an annual basis, the Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee will participate in and support an analysis and review of efforts made to move the college forward. This analysis and review is a mandatory part of the strategic planning process.

The annual planning cycle begins with individuals and groups creating short-term strategies for achieving the long-term goals of the college. Individual and group efforts are made to implement the strategies, after which information is collected regarding the actions taken. The Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee will collect the reports from these groups, summarize, analyze and review the information and submit an internal annual report for the College to the Dean and the Associate Deans. The Dean and Associate Deans will use the annual report to measure college-wide progress in accomplishing the mission and long-term goals, and to set direction for the next annual cycle.

The College Annual Report will be prepared by the Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee in May of each academic year. This annual report will summarize the activities of the college, the

accomplishment of the college mission within the previous year, and continuous improvement items for the upcoming year. The annual report of the previous academic year will provide the basis for goal setting and continuous improvement for each year. The annual report will be made available to AACSB, and forms the basis of the annual faculty retreats which are designed, lead by and discussed by the administration in conjunction with the Strategic Initiatives Committee.

## Definitions

Mission - a Statement of the specific purpose of the College of Business, our *raison d'etre*. The mission is established and approved by members of the faculty.

Vision - an ideal and unique image of a desired future state, different from the current situation or status quo, which the college aspires to achieve. The Vision is a synthesis of input from internal and external constituents and stakeholders and receives approval from the members of the faculty.

Core Values - the ultimate, long-run open-ended attributes which we seek to achieve as an organization. These are embodied in the Code of Excellence. The Core Values apply to the entire college and receive approval from the members of the faculty. The Core Values are:

- directly connected to and supportive of our shared vision and mission.
- enduring – a trait which is unlikely ever to be completely formulated.
- not time-bound – *i.e.*, we will always care about this, not just for the next period or operational cycle.
- stated in a relatively simple and inspirational fashion so as to be easily understood and recalled and readily championed by constituents and stakeholders of the CoB.

Continuous Improvement Action Items - To supplement the mission statement with those achievements anticipated to be of shorter time perspective, the college will list action items that state efforts for the near-term. These action items should define the achievements for the next one to three years which move the college toward greater fulfillment of the mission statement.

For example, the mission statement might contain the aim to “...expose all students to a practical experience ... .” This aim in the mission statement could give rise to an action item of “...adding twelve new practicum sites for junior-year projects”

While the mission statement is stable and undergoes relatively infrequent changes, the action items should be reviewed at least annually to assess how the college is progressing and to focus efforts on the most important issues at hand. The mission statement provides a framework within which the action items operate. Stakeholders can look to the mission statement to see the overall long-term goals of the college. They look to the action items to see what the school is doing presently in order to align itself with the mission.

Annual Reports - the set of progress reports specifying action items which have been identified in the strategic management plan along with an explanation of new programs or objectives and supporting resources.

Aspirant Groups - a list of schools who represent desirable developmental goals to the applicant, embody management education programs or features which the applicant hopes to emulate, and provide a contest for the vision and strategy of the applicant. This list contains any number of

institutions. These schools are candidates for consideration to serve on an AACSB Peer Review Team

Comparable Peers – a list of schools who are considered to be similar in mission and assumed to be appropriate for performance comparison. A minimum of six comparable schools must be provided. These schools are candidates for consideration to serve on the an AACSB Peer Review Team

Competitive Groups– a list of schools who are so directly competitive that considerations for conflict of interest exclude their personnel from the review of the CoB during AACSB review visits. The list may be of any number. Only those schools should be included where the direct competition for students, faculty, or resources is so compelling that the appearance of a conflict of interest is present.

## **Degree Objectives**

The mission of the College of Business is to provide excellence in undergraduate and select graduate business education.

To accomplish this, the College:

- Fosters an integrated, experiential, and personalized learning environment
- Encourages critical thinking, effective communication, life-long learning, ethical decision-making, and social responsibility

The College is committed to the teacher-scholar model in which faculty members are simultaneously engaged in teaching and research\*. The College provides service and outreach to its stakeholders in keeping with this aspect of University's land-grant mission.

\* See Promotion and Tenure document for research definition

## **Expected Outcomes**

The College mission deliberately identifies five primary skill and qualitative areas for student learning.

1. Critical Thinking
2. Communication
3. Life-long Learning
4. Ethics and Social Responsibility

Four additional skill and qualitative areas are emphasized:

5. Knowledge Of Current Business Practices And Theory
6. Information Technology
7. Quantitative Analysis
8. Diversity

The operational definition of each skill or qualitative learning objective is listed below.

- *Critical Thinking*

Definition:

A conceptualization of critical thinking has been articulated in the Expert Consensus Statement on College Level Critical Thinking (1990) known as *The Delphi Report*. This concept was supported by an independent replication research study of policy-makers, employers, and academics which was conducted at Penn State University, sponsored by US Department of Education.

Critical thinking involves the ability to make reflective, reasoned judgments about what to believe or what to do. It encompasses:

- Inductive reasoning – reasoning process of generalizing from facts, instances, or examples
- Deductive reasoning – reasoning process of logical reasoning from stated propositions.
- Analysis – separating the premises and the assumptions a person is using from the claim or the conclusion that the person is reaching.
- Inference – drawing conclusions based on reasons and evidence
- Evaluation – decide how strong or how weak a person’s arguments are, or when we determine the believability of a given statement

References:

Expert Consensus Statement on College Level Critical Thinking - Delphi Research Report (1990), American Philosophical Association, ERIC Document Number: ED 315 423. The California Academic Press, 217 La Cruz Ave., Millbrae, CA 94030.

Measurement:

The California Critical Thinking Skills Test is a nationally normed test which evaluates students’ skill at performing inductive and deductive reasoning processes as well as analysis, evaluation, and inference.

- *Communication*

Definition:

Effective communication by students emphasizes both written and oral communication skills. The primary requirement of business ready writing is clarity. Employers require their employees’ written communications to be direct, grammatically correct, and easy to read. In business, errors in written work may lead the reader to believe there are also errors in the facts. The writer loses credibility and trustworthiness.

The College of Business defines effective written communication as writing which demonstrates the use of standard business English. Such writing is direct, courteous, grammatically correct, and not overly casual. Written communication skill is reinforced throughout the curriculum by project assignments similar to those encountered in business practice, including a legal brief, outline, memo, letter, financial plan, business plan, research proposal/report and legal contract. A student’s writing must demonstrate appropriate sentence structure, mechanics, grammar, word usage, tone and word choice, organization and focus, and development of ideas.

Effective oral communication is defined as facility with standard oral presentational forms including impromptu, extemporaneous, informational, and persuasive speaking.

Standards and techniques for effective oral communication are formally introduced early in the student's matriculation.

Measurement:

The WorkKeys *Business Writing* Test was given. This nationally normed test requires standard business English, defined as writing that is direct, courteous, grammatically correct, and not overly casual. It measures the skill individuals use when they write an original response to a work-related situation. Components of the Business Writing skill include sentence structure, mechanics, grammar, word usage, tone and word choice, organization and focus, and development of ideas.

- *Ethical Decision Making and Social Responsibility*

Definition:

Ethical decision-making and social responsibility encompass honesty, fairness, and justice towards all relevant stakeholders. A graduate of the COB will be encouraged to consider ethical and social implications when assessing decisions and behaviors.

Measurement:

Course-embedded measures across the curriculum are used to assess ethical decision-making and social responsibility awareness.

- *Lifelong Learning*

Definition:

The literature indicates that preparation for lifelong learning includes some multifaceted, deep learning issues. Work by primary researchers in the field such as Brockett, Candy and Knowles suggests that information-gathering traits alone are not a sufficient definition of either lifelong learning or self-directed learning. Instead a range of behaviors, goals, and attitudes must be considered.

The work of Brookfield indicates that in the case of self-directed learning, specific learning goals may not be clear at any one time either to the educator or to the learner. While the process is deliberate in that the person may be seeking to acquire some knowledge, skills, or attitudes, it is the ultimate purpose and intent which may not be visibly linked to specified goals. The conclusion tends to be that what educators do is contribute to the development of the context and conditions which allow the desired 'internal' change we know as learning to occur.

Much like the assessment of ethics, assessment of lifelong learning and self-directed learning curriculum outcomes may be, at best, only indirectly measurable because they relate to the *future* behavior of students.

Contemporary thought on the subject is perhaps summed up best by Smith (2005): "We are left with some problems around the notion (...) This is not to say that there it has some use in exploring education and learning - but it does need treating with care. In a very real sense all learning is, by definition self-directed - it is, as Collins has said, purposeful. The problem we have with the notion becomes most strong when it is reduced to technique."

At the College of Business, students are presented with an instructional environment and curriculum which creates the context and conditions for self-directed and life-long

learning by emphasizing teamwork, expression, self-reflection, research, and critical thinking.

References:

- Brookfield, S. D. (1986) *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning. A comprehensive analysis of principles and effective practices*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Brockett, R. G. and Hiemstra, R. (1991) *Self-Direction in Adult Learning. Perspectives on theory, research and practice*, London: Routledge.
- Candy, P. C. (1991) *Self-direction for Lifelong Learning. A comprehensive guide to theory and practice*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- DiBaisio, D. and Justio, S. (2005), "Nontraditional Learning Environments: Do They Prepare Our Students for Life-Long Learning," Proceedings of the 2005 American Society for Engineering Education Annual Conference & Exposition,
- Knowles, M. (1975) *Self-Directed Learning. A guide for learners and teachers*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall/Cambridge.
- Smith, Mark (2005), Self Direction@ the informal education homepage
- <http://www.infed.org/biblio/>

Measurement:

Course-embedded measures across the curriculum are used to address experiences which foster lifelong learning.

- *Knowledge Of Current Business Practices And Theory*

Definition:

Prior to formal admission in the College, students will successfully complete courses requiring basic skills in oral and written communication, mathematical and statistical concepts, economic theory, computer technology, and accounting systems and preparation of financial statements. This prerequisite course work serves as the foundation for upper-division business courses by focusing on the acquisition of a common body of knowledge and vocabulary of the discipline and the development of professional competencies in communication, quantitative problem solving, and critical thinking.

COB students are expected to build on these competencies and basic knowledge as they progress through the junior-level business core courses from which they gain knowledge of the theory and practices used in management of organizations, operations, and human resources; corporate finance; law; information systems and technology; and marketing. As they progress and specialize further, students must demonstrate their ability to integrate these competencies and knowledge in solving business problems. They must be able to articulate, defend, and/or critically evaluate current business practices in a manner which facilitates effective communication with a variety of audiences, *e.g.* business professionals, clients, laypersons, and other parties.

Measurement:

The Major Field Test (MFT) in Business, a nationally normed examination which is developed and scored by Educational Testing Services (ETS). ETS is the publisher of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). The MFT in business is designed to measure the basic knowledge and understanding achieved by senior undergraduates matriculating in business curricula. The areas the test measures

include: accounting, economics, management, quantitative business analysis, finance, marketing, legal and social environment, and international issues.

- *Information Technology*

Definition:

Effective use of information technology includes students' ability to use digital technology, communication tools and networks to solve information problems. Important is not only knowledge of technology, but the ability to use critical thinking to define, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, create and communicate information in a technological environment.

Measurement:

The *ICT Literacy Assessment* tests students' ability to use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information. It also tests whether students have a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information.

- *Quantitative Analysis*

Definition:

Quantitative analysis involves the utilization of mathematics to make better business decisions. It extends beyond the ability to simply calculate numerical results, necessarily requiring a mastery of the various mathematical relationships that exist in business. It includes evaluation, manipulation, and interpretation of data. Quantitative analysis is relevant to a variety of business applications, including accounting, operations research, financial analysis, statistical analysis, supply and demand, logistics, and market research, among others.

Measurement:

A subset of questions from the MFT which address quantitative reasoning are used.

## **Student Learning Assessment**

Assessment of specific competencies will include the following steps:

- 1) Identify competencies in business core courses

Specific competencies have been identified in CoB core courses. A matrix has been developed by the CoB faculty which identifies activities in each of the BUS courses which address the required competencies.

- 2) Establish performance levels

In order to assess each of the competencies and to develop continuous improvement feedback loops, performance criteria for each competency are developed by the faculty and revisited on a regular basis.

- 3) Identify formal assessment points and tools

Students are assessed on each competency through a variety of measures. Data gathered in BUS 474, the Capstone course, will be integrative and summative in nature; all other data will be formative and used for continuous improvement.

Students will be expected to perform at least an 'average' level. This will be monitored through both the College of Business 'C' policy as well as 3.0 cumulative GPA requirement for admission to the College of Business.

4) Check assessment data for trends

Data from assessment activities are fed back to CoB stakeholders through means such as but not limited to faculty meetings, annual retreats, and advisory board meetings. Trends relative to performance expectations and benchmarks are discerned.

5) Take action on results compared to performance objectives.

Based on the results found during the “check” phase of the continuous improvement cycle, actions plans are developed to address deficiencies or enhance performance.

# Core Curriculum Matrix

# Skill-Related Objectives

	Written Communication	Oral Communication	Quantitative Analysis	Information Technology	Critical Thinking
101: Freshman Seminar	Memo format, position memos, team reports, Gregg worksheets, strategic plan	Major focus! Several short presentations, innovator presentation, formal presentation of strategic plan	Financial ratios, analyze income statements, cash analysis forecasts, demand forecasts	Word processing, E-mail	Problem solving within project context: personal plan, business plan
201: Managerial Communication	Letters, memos, résumés, quizzes, and formal reports	Impromptu, team reports, team discussions, class discussions	Analysis of text material in mid-term exam	Word processing, E-mail, presentation software	Audience analysis for written and oral delivery; research on appropriate technique
221: Principles of Accounting I	Financial ratios project, short answers & essays on exams	Class discussion Q&A; assignments	Problem solving, accounting cycle project	Individual assignments	Financial ratio analysis project; exercises
222: Principles of Accounting II	Homework problems that emphasize the compilation and synthesis of both quantitative and non-quantitative information	Classroom discussion; professor initiated question and answer	Homework problems, problem sets, in class demonstrations of math and concepts	Use of Excel spreadsheets for problems	Decision-making regarding pricing, outsourcing, resource allocation; recognize and apply appropriate methods
301: Management & Organizations	Three papers, essay questions on exams	Executive team briefing, individual and team discussions	Project requires compensation analysis, industry comparisons, financial analysis; in-class exercises	Require on-line research for papers and executive briefings; presentation and word processing software, Excel	Papers require research and analysis to answer specific questions; essay questions on exams, critical recommendations during team briefings
302: Career Perspectives	Written assignments such as interviews and self-assessments	Mock interviews and negotiations	Personal benefits and finance analysis	Use of internet for company and career research, email, personal productivity technology	Not applicable
311: Information Systems	Chapter Analysis papers, essay exam questions	Class discussions	Excel-based business modeling of problems, analytic tools, pivot tables and "what if" technique	50% or more of course is technology based including, Access, Excel, Word, Powerpoint, Internet explorer	Mini-case applications require critical thinking component
331: Operations Management	Some written responses to questions but writing style not component of grading	Group projects and in-class questions used to explore material	Each module has series of quantitative tools that use Excel files and paper exercises; practice problems, exam questions	Excel used heavily; Web CT used for class management	Group projects, chapter quizzes, quantitative exams, must solve ambiguous business situations
341: Marketing	Group and individual written assignments, essays on exams.	Class discussion and presentation of individual and group projects	Marketing math problems and analysis of quantitative market research data	On-line research and application of specialized and general software	Real-life application of marketing principles, case analysis, proposal and plan defense
351: Finance	Written descriptions of problem solving approach on cases, problems, and exams	Oral defense of problem solving approach on problems and cases	Major focus of the course. All course objectives involve the development of quantitative skills. Problems, cases, and exams	Excel spreadsheets for problem solving. Internet databases for firm analyses	Case studies and problem exercises
361: Introduction to Law	Individual and team written assignments – graded on both content and style and grammar	Team oral advocacy, in-class discussion, moot court, mock hearing	None	None	RAT, integrated written assignments, in-class discussion, in-class exercises
474: Senior Seminar	Several industry and company level analyses and Business Strategy Game report	Small group discussion, TLEs, case analyses and BSG decisions are defended orally in class	Case analyses and BSG reports require specific components of financial and quantitative analyses	Spreadsheet analyses; computer-based simulation, PowerPoint, word processing, email	Focus of course. Must make well-reasoned actionable recommendations based on analyses of complex and ambiguous information; assumption, rationales, and conclusions challenged in class

Core Curriculum Matrix (page 2)

Qualitative Objectives

	Lifelong Learning	Ethics	Multicultural Diversity	
101: Freshman Seminar	Personal strategic plan; professional development log	Students engage in a team community service project, evaluate corporate citizenship		
201: Managerial Communication	Team projects, participation, cooperation, effective communication	Article analysis of ethics violations; Ethics framework for decision making		
221: Principles of Accounting I	Financial ratio analysis project	Discussion of recent events, discussion of motivation and ethics relative to other accounting methods, potential motivation for asset impairments and other accounting judgement		
222: Principles of Accounting II	Collaborative in-class problem solving	Requirement to follow MSU code of conduct; social and ethical implications; identification of multiple stakeholder objectives and differentiate competing interests		
301: Mgmt & Organizations	Opportunities to work in teams and learn about teams; written expressions of thoughts and ideas; research	Ethics integrated into most chapters, class exercises that focus on ethical issues, executive team briefing involves business environment and stakeholders		
302: Career Perspectives	Self assessments and discernment are encouraged; projects develop research and planning skills	Ethics within a personal negotiation and interview context are examined		
311: Info-Systems	Teamwork, expression, research, and critical thinking to pull it all together	Course model on ethical issues involving information systems: privacy, accuracy, property and access		
331: Operations Management	The course is designed for individual learning done outside the class; class time used for clarification and extension of material	Most material has an ethical dimension which must be considered; questions on group projects have ethical ethics element		
341: Marketing	Class discussions to understand real-life events, understanding cross functional coordination of market to students' career	Class discussion and case studies of ethical marketing		
351: Finance	Introduction to topics such as portfolio theory and rates of return which are important for future	Discussed in the context of current events		

361: Introduction to Law	Team based learning; Class objectives include - identification and development of personal value system; ability to see all sides of an issue before judging others, Respect those who disagree with you, Accept that the world is ambiguous and become comfortable with (and perhaps even enjoy) making decisions in uncertain environments , Improve your intellectual discipline – you should be your own harshest critic, enjoy rigorous thinking	One and a half week module on ethics and social responsibility, including a RAT and case discussion, on-going discussions throughout the semester		
474: Senior Seminar	Teamwork – course structure on team-based learning; expression required, research is required for projects, students must engage in critical thinking	Ethics and social responsibility issues are discussed in context of current events, company strategies for the BGS require students to confront real issues		

## **Program Assessment**

### **Feedback from Outside Constituencies**

Alumni Assessment is conducted every four to five years by the Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee. The assessment dates will include 1997, 2001, 2006, *etc.* The alumni surveyed will include a random sample of five years of graduates, beginning with graduates who have been out of school for three years. The contents of the survey will include, but not be limited to accomplishment of the major aspects of the college mission and long term goals. The size and details of the survey will be determined by the standing Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee. The most recent survey was completed in 2001.

Employer Assessment is conducted every four to five years by the Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee. These assessment dates will include 1998-1999, 2003-2004, 2007, *etc.* The contents of the survey will include, but not be limited to accomplishment of the major aspects of the college mission and long term goals. The size and details of the survey will be determined by the standing Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee. The most recent survey was completed in Fall, 2003.

The assessments examined and collected by the Strategic Initiatives Advisory Committee do include a number of other required assessments conducted by others. These other assessments which contribute to measurement of mission accomplishment include, but are not limited to:

- Exit surveys conducted by the MSU Office of Institutional Research
- AACSB peer comparison surveys
- Placement surveys performed annually by Career Services
- Interview surveys performed annually by Career Services
- Internship Evaluations performed annually by Employers, Faculty, Student

Faculty, Staff and Administration will submit personal annual goals indicating their anticipated activities supporting the accomplishment of the college mission and long term goals. In the individual annual review, the Dean and Associate Dean will review activities supporting accomplishment of the college mission and set specific personal annual goals for the coming year. The Dean's office will provide a summary of individual accomplishments for inclusion in the college annual report.

College of Business National Board of Advisors meets twice annually and provides feedback on the direction of the College of Business, accomplishment of the major aspects of the college mission and curriculum, and long term-goals

## **Feedback From Current Students**

Bracken Student Advisory Board – The board provides a forum through which feedback from current students about their needs and issues are obtained.

Master of Professional Accountancy students complete a program exit survey upon graduation.

## **Evaluation of Teaching**

Knapp forms for all COB courses

Teaching Portfolio reviews for Promotion and tenure

## **Curriculum Review**

Required on bi-annual basis as part of catalog review cycle.

National Board of Advisors reviews curriculum.