

June 1, 2009

Dr. Massoud Saghafi, Chair  
International Programs Committee  
College of Business Administration

Dear Professor Saghafi:

If your department is typical, it is likely you have heard such comments as the following during recent weeks and months: *“Given the budget crisis, we’ll probably be teaching more students with fewer faculty members. So, it’s time we just forgot this whole assessment business – who can afford the time, or the resources?”* Indeed, it does appear more than justified to approach our financial crisis by “circling the wagons,” steadfastly agreeing to continue only with the most essential aspects of the program.

One problem, of course, is how to decide where to make cuts. Which classes can effectively be taught in large theater classrooms? Which classes can be taught using distance technology, or infused with a distance component (a hybrid course)? Which parts of our curriculum are working effectively, and which parts could be ordered differently—for greater effectiveness? To answer such questions requires a perception of the whole, an understanding of the overall architecture of the curriculum, and then data—evidence—in order to answer questions of effectiveness, and value. Put another way, making important curricular and pedagogical decisions in the absence of evidence is akin to confirming a research hypothesis—without ever conducting the inquiry.

For these reasons, the goal of the Student Learning Outcomes Committee is to assist departments and programs in the process of making tough decisions, by helping them to focus on questions of value. Because we understand the issue of time and resources, we are also trying to improve our own processes as well, to find ways to help departments assess student learning more effectively. To this end, we will introduce a simplified assessment manual by summer, and we will continue to explore possible software applications that might lead us to more parsimonious approaches. In it our sincere hope that you will see us an ally in the process of making difficult choices.

### **Committee Response to Your 2008-2009 Annual Assessment Report**

The committee recognizes the efforts to begin implementation of the MSBA International Business assessment plan and can appreciate the challenges associated with carrying out assessment in such a small program. Actually it was not clear to the committee exactly how many students are in this program. Since MGT 710 is a required course and there were only three MSBA IB students in the course, does that mean that the program has that few students? Perhaps not all students in the program take MGT 710 during the same semester? Would it make sense to consider assessing this program in MGT 790, the culminating experience course? Does MGT 790 lend itself to the assessment of the various goals and student learning outcomes identified for the program?

We understand that the MSBA International Business program also has participants who complete their degree as part of the College of Business Taiwan program. These students should be included in the assessment efforts for the program.

Thank you for your efforts. The Student Learning Outcomes committee looks forward to reading about the assessment of additional student learning outcomes in the coming year. We also expect to see some report of the assessment efforts underway in the Taiwan program.

Highest regards,

*Chris Frost*

Christopher Frost, Ph.D.  
Chair, Student Learning Outcomes Committee