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## Appendix B “Closing the Loop”

The most important aspect of assessment and Assurance of Learning (AoL) is to insure that what is learned from assessment is used to improve degree programs and individual courses; i.e., “closing the loop”. Examples from our programs are provided here to show how the AoL process was used to close the loop.

### Examples of Closing the Loop: BBA Program:

- *BBA Goal 3.0 Analytical Process.* ECON 2300 and ECON 3300 faculty continue to emphasize and focus on the relevance of concepts and parameters such as p-value, hypothesis statements, degrees of freedom, etc., more so than application of mathematical formulas. For instance in after the fall of 2011, it was discussed that students should be made to focus more on the relevance of the p-value in hypothesis testing and its relation to the main problem objective, rather than merely stating “reject” or “do not reject null hypothesis”. Faculty decided the significance of the p-value should be better emphasized when conducting hypothesis tests. Assessment results improved in subsequent years.
- *BBA Goal 3.0 Analytical Process.* In 2010, faculty teaching ECON 3300 made a decision to increase the emphasis on the use of Excel for advanced statistical techniques. Student mastery of Excel tools for solving linear regression problems has improved significantly since.
- *BBA Goal 4.0 Communication and Collaboration.* To provide students with more real-world problem-solving opportunities, two new projects were added to the curriculum. The MGT 3200 faculty tried out new projects dealing with project assessment at the Red Cross in Fall 2011 and, IN IS 4880, a new multi-course information systems development project was introduced in Fall 2012. These projects worked reasonably well. Assessment results show significant improvement in student learning since the inception of this project.
- In Fall 2009, ACCT 2100 faculty adopted a new measurement method that allows them to pinpoint areas where student learning is weakest so faculty can better target areas where improvement is most needed. An enhanced study guide was provided with the intent to help focus study efforts and to reinforce topics related to key learning objectives.
- *Program Assessment.* All graduating BBA students are expected to participate in the BBA Program Assessment process, which is administered during their capstone course, MGT 4199. We use CompXM to assess the cumulative knowledge acquired by the completion of the BBA program. In the Foundation Simulation each student or student team runs a designated company for multiple rounds of play. Interspersed throughout the simulation, are CompXM questions and queries from their Board. After the revision of the BBA goals and objectives, faculty reviewed these questions, revising, deleting and adding as necessary. The resulting 200 questions are mapped to specific learning objectives. Student performance on this assessment improved just after these changes but has drifted downward a bit since then. This will be a topic of discussion at the next BBA course coordinator meeting. Trends in the assessment results, by goal, are presented in the 2014 BBA Program Assessment Report, which is provided in the BBA Report in Appendix 6.5.

### Examples of Closing the Loop: MBA Program

- *MBA Goal 1.0 Integrated Analysis and Application.* In ECON 8010, a new assignment on regression and lecture slides were improved to enhance student learning. The number of questions

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per learning outcome was increased from 5 to 7 in order to accommodate the cutoffs of 90% and 70% for exceeding and meeting expectations, respectively. Also, there was a change in the assignment on linear programming. This change was designed to provide students a better opportunity to learn the programming aspects of linear programming. The combination of satisfactory results, the use of the same textbook and 3+ years of experience preclude any substantive changes.

- *MBA Goal 2.0 Global Perspective.* The *rich feedback* test evaluation IN MGT 8999 provided a good external perspective of student performance. In the Fall 2011, two globally focused cases were added to the assessment. Student performance during the second case write up improved in comparison to the first case write up. It was noted that differences in performance might be due to differences in weights of the assignments. The faculty continues to develop the curriculum and the assessment vehicles.

#### Examples of Closing the Loop: EMBA Program

- *EMBA Goal 3.0 Global Environment.* As a result of the AOL process, two specific international courses, GBA 7241/341: Experiencing Business in a Global Environment and GBA 7242/342: International Leadership and Collaboration have been added to the curriculum. These courses have significantly increased the amount of international curriculum in the program to meet our global AOL goal as well as meet the University's global QEP initiative. The Program has been able to further integrate the curriculum as the directive toward the addition of these two global courses has allowed many of the Program's units to be co-taught. The faculty has taken greater interest in compiling information from each other's units and integrating that information into their units to "close the loop".
- *EMBA Goal 3.0 Global Environment.* As part of the AOL process and continuous improvement of student learning, the EMBA program has implemented an international residency with a consulting project (fall 2013) in which students work with a chosen company in a foreign country over a 4-month period. These individuals work closely with the students to ensure that the project is executed within the company itself. Not only does this approach provide the EMBA students with a real world business experience, it is also an innovative and engaging approach to the study abroad type residency which allows students a first-hand knowledge of the cultural, business, economic, political, and legal issues that companies operating on foreign soil face.
- *EMBA Goal 1.0 Collaboration and Goal 2.0 Ethics.* In an effort to further innovate and differentiate our Coles' Program, we entered into a partnership with the CEO Netweavers group of Metro Atlanta and began a mentoring program, which is similar to the individual coaching program. Both mentor and mentee meet once a month to discuss professional growth however, the mentor (as opposed to the coach) provides advice on career progression and overall goal achievement. This allows our students to have a much richer MBA experience and experience achievement of career goals at a much faster rate than students in the past.
- *EMBA Goal 1.0 Collaboration.* Since 2009, the EMBA program has changed the way it measures its collaboration goal by concentrating on a program-wide assessment known as the Iliad assessment center which measures not only their ability to collaborate but also their skills in the areas of organization, delegation, time management, teamwork, oral communication, written communication, and decision-making to evaluate their own managerial abilities. The review process divulged an issue that we choose to address even though students are meeting or exceeding expectations. The first was the overall teaming issue as well as ability to collaborate outside of the classroom in a coaching type of relationship. The first step was to add 5 new units of teaming

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throughout the program including one that specifically addresses conflict management as well as resolving teaming issues. We also expanded our coaching program to include a mentorship relationship to further increase the collaboration curriculum as we feel this is a vital component of our Program and one that we want the students to gain the greatest amount of experience from. The results above are truly indicative of the improvements we have made in the Program and that will continue based on our continuous improvement pattern and re-evaluation every fall and spring to determine if the improvement continues.

#### Examples of Closing the Loop: FEMBA

- The first major curriculum revision occurred in 2010. The original major assignment for each semester was to examine a family business agreed upon by student and faculty from one of three texts (Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't, Managing for the Long Run: Lessons in Competitive Advantage from Great Family Businesses, and Hidden Value: How Great Companies Achieve Extraordinary Results with Ordinary People). We noticed that students were not getting as much from the assignments as we had hoped (for example, see Summer 2010 Goal 1, 7030, and Fall 2010, 7040 percent above expectations). After reflection and consultation with students, we changed the major assignment from companies not known to the students' own family companies. You may compare these with Summer 2011 and Fall 2012 7030 and Spring 2011, 2012 and 2013 7040.
- The second major curriculum revision happened in 2011. Prior to that point we did not have individual feedback sessions with students to monitor their progress and provide guidance. We also received feedback from students about the manner in which we were teaching strategy and made radical changes including faculty teaching assignments (less Chet Richards and more Joe Astrachan), more application of concepts to students' own businesses and less to military examples, and more sessions on the topic. This can be seen in the 7020 Goal 2 achievements (Spring 2010 and Spring 2011 compared with Summer 2012 and Summer 2013).
- A third example of a curriculum change is that in 2011, we started having students discuss, in class, their family and business and applying (Genogram, Governance and Communication and Conflict patterns), allowing them to receive feedback from faculty and fellow students. We did this because students requested more feedback and we were trying to improve their learning as evidenced in Goal 3 (see 2011-2013). While the students expressed appreciation, it did not seem to make a large difference in the percentage of students exceeding expectations, though admittedly a difficult task given the already high results.
- A fourth change we made is in the way we used the Capsim Foundation game to enhance learning about financial concepts. Initially we had students work individually on their Foundation simulated company, as reflected in Goal 1, 7005, 2009 with 100% above completion. In 2010, we changed that to group activities, our reason being that we thought that by making decisions in groups there would be sharing of knowledge among students and thus enhance learning. However, this did not have the desired result (see Goal 1 7005 Fall 2010 and 2011). We reverted back to individually based work and changed the faculty leading the exercises (Frank Adams left and was replaced by George Manners). Fall 2012's increase in the percentage of students exceeding expectations reflects these changes.

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### Examples of Closing the Loop: WebMBA

We know course-embedded and program level assessment is taking place and being documented within the WebMBA. However, this data is stored on another campus and minutes of AoL discussions at faculty retreats are not readily available. We get very good reports from our faculty who teach in the program. The Coles AoL Council Director is currently working with administrators of the WebMBA to develop a better process for storing and communicating data and information related to AoL. Some of the revisions to curriculum and process that have been reported are as follows:

- *WMBA 6010: Managerial Accounting*: Increased coverage and included detailed logic associated with questions. Additional practice question were also utilized. Improvements were seen and pedagogy changes were continued.
- *WMBA 6100: Production Operations*: Essay-style questions and Excel spreadsheet-based problems were added to cross-validate learning. Also, added were discussion questions for case studies to assess learning objectives.
- *WMBA 6040: Managerial Decision Analysis*: Extended time on Sampling, Sampling Distribution and Estimation of Population Parameters due to students not having adequate exposure to probability and probability distribution. Additional time will also be spent on Linear Programming topics to help students use logical thinking to transform word problems to math models. Bolstering of the Frequently Asked Questions sections with a detailed discussion of intuition that goes into play when deriving confidence interval of proportion and sample size.
- The most notable improvements in the WebMBA® program can be seen in the assurance of learning process through the establishment of a standard mechanism for collecting data across all courses and institutions involved. The course coordinators assure that changes to the pedagogy are course wide regardless of the faculty teaching the course. Also, the fall 2013 faculty retreat focused on the Learning Goals for the program and the Learning Objectives for each class. The retreats allow all faculty teaching a course to meet and assure that changes indicated by assessment are made and that there is consistency in material covered.

### Examples of Closing the Loop: MSIS

As mentioned earlier, the MSIS program was not part of the Coles College until July 2011. An AoL process was developed and implemented in 2011. Several curriculum changes were then made in 2012 and 2013, as described below. More time is needed to determine the effectiveness of these changes.

- *MSIS Goal 1.0*: The case project in IS8300 was substantially revised. The comprehensive final exam revised and split into both multiple choice and short answer whereas previously pure multiple choice.
- *MSIS Goal 4.0*:
  - The case project in IS8300 was substantially revised. The comprehensive final exam revised and split into both multiple choice and short answer whereas previously pure multiple choice.
  - The exam was improved through the introduction of additional grading criteria and a review of the exam questions by the students.
  - Changes in Fall 2012: A research project was introduced and used as an assessment for MSIS LO 4.4
  - Changes in Spring 2013: The project and exam were changed to provide a better assessment of MSIS LO 4.4 than does the project alone.

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### Examples of Closing the Loop: DBA

Based on the performance and feedback of the previous cohorts, the decision was made to redesign parts of the DBA course sequence as follows:

- Starting in spring of 2012, the Dissertation Design I (DBA 9901) and Career Transitions (DBA 9005) classes have been taught jointly by two lead faculty members to ensure greater skill building in preparation for the dissertation experience as well as subsequent preparation for a career change.
- Discipline-specific breakout sessions have been added for several courses to allow students more opportunity to work with doctoral faculty in specialized sections.
- Dissertation Design I (DBA 9901) and II (DBA 9902) classes were supplemented with specific and tailored research methods seminars to enhance students' methodological and analytical skills and adequately prepare them for data handling and processing in the dissertation phase.
- The importance of the literature review assignments for Dissertation Design I (DBA 9901) was increased as an assessment tool to ensure students are well-versed in their chosen area of interest and prepared to successfully complete the second part of the DBA program.

As initial evidence of improvements, DBA faculty and dissertation supervisors have observed an improvement in student writing skills based on the proposals that have been submitted and defended in Cohort 3 and Cohort 4. We will be better able to judge whether these changes lead to student performance improvements as current cohorts complete the dissertation process in 2014 and 2015.