ASSESSMENT, A HIGH PRIORITY PROCESS

The Business Division meets monthly for departmental meetings with frequent general discussions regarding assessment. The high level of dean, chair, faculty and staff participation in assessment planning, data collection and analysis and continuous improvement actions is noteworthy. Typically, the week following a monthly departmental meeting, there will be a departmental assessment meeting to work out specific assessment issues and tasks. It has been found to be most effective to divide assessment work, such as survey development, data analysis or topic research, into tasks for small faculty workgroups. The workgroups will then make recommendations to the whole department. The summative assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) has been divided among faculty teaching mostly senior courses. Data gathering and initial analysis of SLO data is conducted by the supervising faculty member, who turns it over to the department assessment coordinator, who organizes the data and distributes it to the department members, who meet to further analyze and determine actions.

For each student learning outcome (SLO), measures and analysis of indicators are conducted according to a timeline. Interpretation of data leads to a determination of SLO benchmarks as “unmet”, “met” or “exceeded”. The threshold for program mission fulfillment is that all SLOs achieve “met” or “exceeded” benchmark status. Faculty gather to discuss findings and identify actions needed for improvement. Actions will be determined for all “unmet” benchmark outcomes and possibly additional actions for continuous improvement may be recommended for “met” and “exceeded” benchmark outcomes. Findings which serve institutional objectives will be communicated to the Institutional Strategic Assessment and Accreditation Committee (ISAAC). (Vision, Mission, Outcomes, Strategic Planning 2015)

Assessment itself is a continuous improvement process. In the initial stages of setting up assessment according to core themes, student learning outcomes (SLOs), indicators, measures, and benchmarks were being tested and developed, so data was collected every semester. Second reader/grader validation of all assessments, except for SLOs 3C, Teamwork, and SLO 4, analysis with recommended action for an ethical situation, has been conducted over the last two years and appropriate adjustments to assessment made. SLO 4 second reader/grader assessment will take place in 2015-2016. With more established SLOs, the frequency of assessment of each SLO has been reduced to gathering data in the fall and conducting analysis in the Spring. Eventually, perhaps in another year, assessment for each SLO will be conducted every other year.

Need for Improvement in Assessment and Strategic Planning

There are specific actions taken for improving the results of student learning outcomes to assure mission fulfillment, but there are also general actions to improve assessment. Examples of these from this year are: to continue to research and develop meaningful formative assessment at the lower division level; and to be more specific in the recommended annual action plan with responsible parties identified and impact evaluated.

Division strategic planning also encompasses goals and assessment that indirectly impact student learning outcomes. It includes responses to our other major stakeholders, such as faculty, staff, employers, and alumni. For example, in response to assessment regarding faculty, the division...
has an action plan to increase the depth of faculty in each program according to areas of expertise, academic qualifications and sheer numbers. This assessment and action plan are not included in this document, but are held separately in a general strategic planning document.

Key Performance Measures

The following performance measures have been trended for at least three years and are conducted on a regular basis and reviewed typically by the assessment coordinator, a supervising faculty member or a workgroup who summarizes the results and makes recommendations to the business faculty as a whole. Some assessments or surveys were found to need revision and that was accomplished, as noted, by workgroups in 2014-2015.

1. The key performance measures that are regularly assessed are first and foremost the student learning outcomes. Since 2009, the UHSB has focused on strengthening and refining the effectiveness of its mission fulfillment as defined by its student learning outcomes. Data has been gathered on all student learning outcomes at least every fall semester and for some outcomes every semester. There is a plan to reduce this assessment load, with a less frequent, but regular, assessment schedule. But, so far the faculty has been intent on gathering enough data to clearly understand and improve the significance and results of its assessment. It appears that the faculty is almost there and will then only assess most SLOs every other year. Individual faculty members are responsible for gathering standardized, summative data relevant to one or two SLOs. The results with recommendations for action are brought before all the division faculty for discussion and final determination of action both in the designated course, but often also in other relevant courses. (SLO files).

2. One of the assessments for Student Learning Outcomes is the Business Major Field Test (MFT) by Education Testing Services (ETS). This test is simple to administer and gives useful, nationally normed data. (Major fields Test Results)

3. Enrollment and graduation data must be tracked and managed, they are indirect measures of student satisfaction and educational mission fulfillment. It is necessary to see this data as providing only a superficial level of information on what is happening. The reason for the data are uncertain, the why and the direction for improvement require further investigation. (Bus Div Enrollment & Grad Trends)

4. DSU has conducted the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) four times since 2009. There is, therefore, sufficient data to identify trends and areas of strengths and weaknesses regarding engagement indicators. The particular usefulness of the NSSE is its national comparison data, as well as its institutional division comparison data. DSU has determined to conduct the NSSE every three years as of 2013. (NSSE Recommendations & NSSE Trend Comparison of Responses)

5. The Business Department created and has administered a Senior Survey since 2009. There is, therefore, four years of trended data that is most useful in its strengths/weaknesses/suggestions for improvement qualitative responses. This data is used to identify strengths, concerns and opportunities as perceived by the number one stakeholders, the students. With the use of email as
a means of obtaining Senior Survey responses, the response rate has declined significantly over
the past couple of years. A revised SWOT analysis student focus group was formed Spring 2015
to update student perspectives on Business Department programs Spring 2015 SWOT w
Students. During 2014-2015, a faculty workgroup was formed to study the situation and
recommend ways to improve survey content and response rates. The workgroup rewrote what is
now called the Graduate Survey and had it piloted with 2015 graduates on iPads during their
graduation application interviews with an adviser. Except for a need to shorten the survey, the
content and response rate were greatly improved. The workgroup also wrote an Alumni Survey,
to obtain the perspective of graduates who have worked in their profession for at least one year
on their preparation for their careers. (Senior Survey(Bus) Recommendations & Senior Survey
Statement Agreement by Year & Senior Survey Weaknesses)

6. Gathering data from another key stakeholder, the Employers, has been a challenge. The UHSB
has gathered general concerns and recommendations from local employers, especially by means
of the limited number who participate in Advisory Councils. But, obtaining reactions from actual
employers who hire UHSB graduates has proven much more difficult. The division does have
Employer Internship Survey data from internships, but find this information is limited by
reduced level of career preparation of students and the sparsity of internships until the 2014-2015
year. The employer survey for internships also was not designed for feedback to the institution
on how it is doing in preparing students, but for feedback to the students in ways they could
improve, a significant perspective change for the responding employer. It also appears from the
results and from employer comments that the employers are hesitant to provide negative
feedback to students for fear it will hurt their grades. Until this year, faculty supervision of
internships has been limited to faculty availability for additional workload. In 2014-2015, a
faculty workgroup was formed to write an Employer Survey. It will be piloted in 2015-2016 to
employers of Alumni who have worked one year in their profession and have given permission
to contact their supervisors. (2012-14 Employer Internship Evaluations & Employer
Recommendations 2012-2014)

7. DSU’s ACBSP mentor recommended that a program Formative Assessment be
conducted. This started significant research and discussion on what could be assessed at the
lower division level. Currently at DSU, the only courses required at the lower division level are
two in Accounting and two in Economics. This is regionally common in order to articulate with
other Utah Business schools. After piloting a Peregrine nationally normed test provided for the
purpose of assessing these courses, it was determined to be too limiting in its scope for useful
formative assessment. The bigger question of issue that came to the forefront was that the
UHSB does not require a lower division, foundational course which introduces students to the
breadth of study areas and careers in the business world. It was determined to resolve this issue
before settling on a practical, lower division, formative assessment.