Student Learning Assurance Report

AY 2012

Report Date: October 8, 2012

School/College: School of Management

Department/Program: Executive MBA

Person completing the Report: Paul Ryder

1. Overview Statement:

During the academic year of 2011-2012 we changed academic program directors for the EMBA program. Based on the 2011-2014 SLA plan, we set out to assess the following learning outcomes.

	Direct Measures	Indirect Measures
1a. Articulate problem statements with clear scope, depth, direction, and deliverables	Student Capstone Project Presentations & Final Reflections	Student surveys, Feedback from project clients
1b. Create effective narratives about businesses, products, services, and recommended courses of action	Student Capstone Project Presentations & Final Reflections	Student surveys, Feedback from project clients
1c. Craft and deliver summaries, reports, and presentations that are clear, concise, cohesive, and persuasive	Student Capstone Project (Status Reports, Final Presentation & Final Reflections)	Student surveys, Feedback from project clients
2b. Conduct analysis in the context of classical operations management challenges and to effectively interpret results	Results of In-Class Supply Chain Management Simulation (Operations Management)	Student Surveys, Program's Final Mgmt Simulation Project
4b. Understand environmental factors affecting global business, which include political, regulatory, economic, technological and cultural factors, as well as competitive forces in global competition	Final Projects for Globalization Course	Student Surveys
4c. Understand key practices of managing a global company to gain competitive advantages	Final Projects for Globalization Course	Student Surveys

Vijay Mehrotra, Roger Chen and Paul Ryder were involved in the data collection and analysis for AY2012.

2. During the Capstone Course (spanning the 20 months of the EMBA program) we set the following learning goals:

1a. Articulate problem statements with clear scope, depth, direction, and deliverables

1b. Create effective narratives about businesses, products, services, and recommended courses of action

1c. Craft and deliver summaries, reports, and presentations that are clear, concise, cohesive, and persuasive

In gathering data for this portion of the work, students were asked to write reflective papers about their progress toward these goals. In addition, data was collected through a final presentation of the students to their peers and to their consulting partners. Additional data was gathered during a final business simulation to assess if students had made progress toward these goals.

In general, students were able to articulate problem statements for their consulting partners with clear scope, depth, direction and deliverables. Working with students in coaching sessions with live clients highlighted where problem statements were either missing depth, focus or deliverables. Since these are live consulting projects, professor Ryder worked with students to improve their statements where necessary so that all students could be successful. Thus, the emphasis was on serving the client need rather than evaluation so there was ample time for course correction. What we learned from this experience is where we can place more emphasis during the contracting phase and the design phase of a consulting partnership. This year we will be more specific about the form a problem statement should take and help students understand the nuance of knowing when a problem statement "fits" with the client need.

Students were all able by the end of the program to create an effective narrative about the business, products and services that a client offered. In some cases, students struggled with making recommendations. This challenge was two pronged, one that we can address as professors and one that we cannot. Again, with careful coaching all of the students were able to come up with some valuable recommendations for their clients and link them back to the basics of the clients business. In some cases, over the course of the consulting projects, substantial changes happened at the client precluding finishing the project as planned. This is something the students had no control over and was not factored as part of their evaluations. There was a small group of students (less the 20%) that had substantial trouble distilling their data into actionable step for their clients. Again, since the focus of the course is on client success rather than evaluation, additional coaching helped students make better narratives and recommendations.

With respect to the creation of deliver summaries, reports, and presentations that are clear, concise, cohesive, and persuasive, again students performed well, in some cases, after substantial coaching. We have changed the curriculum to move presentation skills earlier in the program to give students more time in the program to practice this important business skill. We have also added more co-curricular sessions that focus on executive presence, presentation skills and storytelling.

In the business operations course, we set the following learning goals.

2b. Conduct analysis in the context of classical operations management challenges and to effectively interpret results

Unfortunately, the simulation that was supposed to assess these particular learning goals failed on the day that we were to conduct this assessment. There was no data collected for this item this year. We will be sure to have alternative measures available to assess this learning outcome the next time it is scheduled for assessment.

In the globalization course, we set the following learning goals.

4b. Environmental Factors: Understand environmental factors affecting global business, which include political, regulatory, economic, technological and cultural factors, as well as competitive forces in global competition.
4c. Firm Level Issues: Understand key practices of managing a global company or conducting global business, thus to help companies capture new business opportunities and to gain competitive advantages in global market.

Our assessment is based on an individual assignment after the globalization. We randomly selected a group of students' assignments for our assessment, that group represents about 60% of the entire student population. The rubric used in our AOL assessment is included at the end of the document. After careful evaluation, we have the following results.

Demonstration of required learning in environment factor=average score—3.638 out of 6

Demonstration of required learning in firm level issues =average score—2.833 out of 6

In general, we find that most students understand and are able to articulate key environment/market issues relating to globalization. Some did good analyses on the globalization environmental issues. On the other hand, many students are not able to link global business environmental issues to firm level practices and/or articulate the implications of global environmental factors to firm level. Some students even partially or entirely skipped firm level issues. This is the area we will try to improve. Another area for improvement is integration. Many students fail to integrate or discuss the connections of veracious globalization factors.

We will try to address these issues by allocating more time and efforts to firm level issues and to help students integrate the knowledge. We will also try to achieve this through modify our assignments.

Finally, on a programming note, much of what we learned this year had to do with the curriculum level and format concerns that students had expressed directly—rather than items that we discovered as a result of the SLA research. These included standardizing the academic coursework to a specific number of meeting sessions and credits, standardizing the program meeting times to three Saturdays and one Friday per month. In addition, there were concerns from the students that the courses were not well integrated (which is a challenge for any MBA curriculum that spans such a wide variety of disciplines). In order to address this concern, we have created "Synthesis Sessions" at the end of every academic coursework pair where the two professors and the students come together to discuss how the coursework fits together as well as how it fits with their real world jobs. Finally, we have standardized a "Faculty Participation Guide" for all full time and adjunct faculty to better understand what participation in the program as a whole means. Compensation has been moved from an hourly "in front of students" rate to a semester based "participation in the program" rate. This addresses a student concern that professors were too narrowly on their course and were not available nor had a vision for the balance of the program.

These changes are substantial changes to the format of program, the curriculum, and the faculty culture of the program. In addition, we are about to hire an administrative director for the program that will be more proactive in supporting student development outside of the classroom. With such a range of substantial changes, we will have to see if student satisfaction, faculty engagement, and learning outcomes improve over the coming year.

3. No changes have been made to the Student Learning Assurance Plan for the Executive MBA Program 2011-2012.