

# **INSTITUTIONALIZING AND STANDARDIZING ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY FOR MULTIPLE ACCREDITATION AGENCIES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*After successfully maintaining ACBSP accreditation and subsequently adding the attainment of AACSB accreditation as an important objective, the College of Business Administration at Texas A & M University–Kingsville is institutionalizing and standardizing student learning outcome assessment. The business education accrediting bodies place great emphasis on student learning outcomes assessment and on using the results of assessment activities to fuel continuous improvement; however, the administration of these assessment activities varies widely. The purpose of this investigation is to discuss the implementation of institutionalizing an assessment methodology and standardizing the assessment process for multiple assessment agencies at College of Business Administration at Texas A & M University–Kingsville.*

**JEL:** I20, I21

**KEYWORDS:** Assessment Culture, Business Education Accreditation, Multiple Accreditors, Standardizing Assessment, Assessment Continuous Improvement

## **INTRODUCTION**

Accreditation plays an extensive role in higher education as the primary means by which institutions of higher education in the United States assure and improve quality (Eaton, 2003). Accreditation agencies require higher educational institutions to verify their effectiveness across a number of dimensions; one of the most important measures of institutional effectiveness is student learning outcomes. As Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, Margaret Spellings commissioned a study that concluded, “Accreditation agencies should make performance outcomes, including completion rates and student learning, the core of their assessment as a priority over inputs or processes (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). While accrediting agencies clearly require assessment and assessment is, appropriately, an important component of academic institution culture (Sujitparapitaya, 2014), there is no single set of guidelines for implementing an assessment culture. Many higher education institutions are finding their own best practices for institutionalizing assessment thereby prioritizing student learning outcomes (Garrett et al, 2012)

This study describes the approach taken by the College of Business Administration at Texas A & M University–Kingsville (The College) to institutionalize and standardize assessment of student learning outcomes. The paper first reviews literature pertinent to use of and methodology of assessment. The literature review is followed by a discussion of the institutionalizing process at The College. In covering the institutionalizing process, the institutional setting and assessment history are presented to provide context for the discussion of the new assessment approach. Following the new approach explication, possible future additional components are discussed along with ongoing evaluation of the standardization.

The paper concludes with a discussion of important lessons learned to date and sample assessment rubrics are appended.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditionally, accreditation has been the primary means of defining and measuring quality in higher education functioning as the check that protected consumers from fraud and assured institutions were eligible to receive a portion of the almost \$100 billion in federal and state loans and grants. Although accreditation has been in place for over 100 years, the role of accreditation is changing (Schray, n.d.a.). In the two decades since researchers declared that a shift had occurred in higher education from an instructional paradigm to a learning paradigm (Barr & Tagg, 1995), the emphasis on assessment has grown dramatically. Concern about the mounting cost and sometimes questionable value of higher education has led to increased scrutiny and mounting pressure on accrediting agencies and thus on institutions of higher education (Basken, 2007). In 1995 the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) criticized some accrediting bodies for failing to require institutions to show sufficient data demonstrating student achievement. This incident illustrated a shift in focus by NACIQI after the membership had recently become dominated by Department of Education appointees. Central to the dispute was the question of the power of government to control an agency that could mandate what colleges measure, define the metrics by which to measure and determine what accreditors should be doing to monitor the quality of institutions and programs (Basken, 2007).

Students at institutions without the endorsement of a federally approved accreditor are ineligible for federally subsidized loans, grants or federal work-study programs. The percentage of students receiving federal financial aid through these programs was 57% in 2012 and the average amount of annual support exceeded \$10,000 (Marklein, 2013). A total of \$112 billion was disbursed for student loans alone in 2012 (Delisle, 2013). This is but one source of federal funding upon which institutions depend. It does not include additional funding from the Department of Defense or Veterans Affairs, from research grants nor the \$6.6 billion in tax credits awarded in 2012. In addition, there were approximately \$33.2 billion of other tax credits and incentives claimed for educational purposes in 2012. Economists disagree on how to calculate the impact of federal spending and subsidies on higher education (Delisle, 2013). However, by any measure, whether direct or indirect, federal funds are a considerable source of revenue. Institutions, increasingly starved for state and local support, can ill afford to ignore federal support. Judith S. Eaton (2013) president of the Council for Higher Education (CHEA) contends that accreditation is rapidly changing to become “an instrument of government policy.”

In addition to the dependence of measurable tuition revenue on accreditation, evidence suggests that accreditation plays a part in student's choice of college. As delivery modes change to include online education that provides an opportunity for students to choose from institutions worldwide, students are less likely to depend on personal knowledge in making the choice of an institution in which to matriculate. Accreditation becomes a more significant factor in that decision under these circumstances (Colleges and Degrees, n.d.a.). The role of accreditation has become more important as it becomes more visible to this public scrutiny (Eaton, 2013). Much of the pressure imposed on educational institutions by accrediting agencies originates in the pressures the accrediting agencies themselves feel from governmental entities including the Department of Education, and Congress. The George W. Bush administration was marked by contentious battles over the measurement of quality in education. Far from abating, the transition into the Obama administration brought new criticisms and pressures from the white house to institute stricter controls and charges that the current system with six regional and seven national accrediting agencies is working (Kelderman, 2010). The College of Business Administration at Texas A & M-Kingsville is accredited by or seeks accreditation from three agencies: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS), Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), and The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). Each accrediting authority

provides its own guidance for assessment of student learning outcomes. This variation across accrediting entities increases resources required for compliance with assessment requirements.

SACS is the accrediting body for institutions of higher learning in the southern United States. As such, it does not accredit The College or its programs specifically; it accredits Texas A & M University – Kingsville (TAMU-K) and The College must comply with SACS principles. A principle of SACS accreditation is that institutions must demonstrate institutional effectiveness; in order to comply with this principle accredited an institution seeking accreditation “identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results (of)... educational programs, to include student learning outcomes” (SACS 2010). SACS does not strictly define the assessment methodologies institutions must employ; SACS Comprehensive Standards for Institutional Effectiveness require an institution to identify and assess student learning outcomes (SACS, 2010). Because SACS is concerned with assessment across multiple disciplines, it does not specifically enumerate business education expected outcomes. SACS is a member of The Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (CRAC), which did promulgate a framework providing guidance to institutions on five principles for focusing on student learning (CRAC, 2004). The five principles outlined by CRAC (2004) and to which SACS refers institutions are:

1. The institution defines educational quality—one of its core purposes—by how well it fulfills its declared mission on student learning.
2. The institution demonstrates that student learning is appropriate for the certificate or degree awarded and is consistent with the institution’s own standards of academic performance.
3. The institution derives evidence of student learning from multiple sources, such as courses, curricula, and co-curricular programming, and includes effects of both intentional and unintentional learning experiences. Evidence collected from these sources is complementary and demonstrates the impact of the institution as a whole on the student.
4. The collection, interpretation, and use of student learning evidence are a collective endeavor, and are not viewed as the sole responsibility of a single office or position. Those in the institution with a stake in decisions of educational quality participate in the process.
5. The institution uses broad participation in reflecting about student learning outcomes as a means of building a commitment to educational improvement

While SACS accreditation is partially dependent on institutions being able to demonstrate a focus on the above principles, the implementation of procedures that foster an environment with a focus on student learning is left up to the intuitions. Additionally, SACS does not specify program content at the college level (CRAC, 2004). The ACBSP accredits business schools and programs globally. As part of its guidance, the ACBSP provides information to institutions in its Standards and Criteria for Excellence (2014). Because ACBSP accredits business programs, it does require certain specific areas be taught to students in an institution’s programs. Standard 6 provides guidance for institutions on appropriate curriculum in business programs and suggests the curriculum at ACBSP accredited institutions contain a Common Professional Component (CPC) as well as areas of specialization within degree programs. The CPC requirements for all students regardless of specific business degree include ethics, global business, information technology and an integrating experience. Additionally, the ACBSP requires curricula be designed to include what is referred to as general education in communication and critical thinking skills (ACBSP, 2014). In order for institutions to confirm they adhere to ACBSP curriculum guidance in Standard 6, the institutions must assess and document student outcomes for the CPC, the general education and the

degree specific curriculum areas. ACBSP guidance on assessment is found in Standard 4, which relates to measuring student learning outcomes. Standard 4 requires each accredited business school to document student outcomes and to use the information gathered in the outcome assessment to improve the programs. Outcome assessment programs must meet the four criteria of the standard, which are paraphrased as follows:

1. Have an assessment program,
2. Identify trends over a minimum of three periods,
3. Collect assessment data to allow data comparison over time and to benchmarks, and
4. Demonstrate assessment data was used to improve the program (ACBSP, 2014)

The AACSB also accredits business schools and provides authoritative information for assessment in its Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation (2015). Standard 8 as promulgated by the AACSB provides more latitude to institutions than ACBSP in the area of curriculum. The AACSB suggests general skill areas appropriate to business degrees; however, the AACSB states the skills are suggestions and not an exhaustive listing. The AACSB suggested curricula overlaps with ACBSP in several area including ethics, communication, and information technology. Additionally, Standard 8 recommends curricula incorporate analytical and reflective thinking as well as teamwork and multicultural instruction (AACSB, 2015). The AACSB discusses specifically how an institution might implement and provide assurance of learning with respect to a curriculum conforming to Standard 8 in its white paper titled AACSB Assurance of Learning Standards: An Interpretation (2013). Guidance for assurance of student learning outcomes is outlined in Standard 8 from the AACSB. All AACSB accredited institutions conduct a process, which ascertains how well student learning outcomes align with the curriculum based goals. In order to assure student learning outcomes, AACSB accredited institutions will perform and document the following processes:

1. Define student learning goals and objectives
2. Align curricula with the adopted goals
3. Identify instruments and measures to assess learning
4. Collect, analyze, and disseminate assessment information
5. Use assessment information for continuous improvement including documentation that the assessment process is being carried out in a systematic, ongoing basis (AACSB, 2013).

A comparison of some of the aforementioned critical elements of assessment for the three accrediting agencies is in the following Table 1.

With the increased emphasis on accreditation, the stakes have been raised for institutions seeking to establish accreditation and maintain it. This is evidenced by the value of resources devoted to accreditation by institutions. The direct costs associated with attaining and maintaining accreditation include fees paid to the accrediting agency. The AACSB charges an eligibility application fee of \$1,000 USD, an initial accreditation fee of \$5,400 USD and an initial accreditation visit fee of \$14,000 USD. Once accredited, AACSB charges an annual fee of \$5,400 USD (AACSB, n.d.a.). In attaining initial accreditation, institutions frequently incur additional expenditures for consultants, peer reviews teams, mock reviews, and infrastructure upgrades, which averaged around \$54,700 in Heriot, Franklin and Austin's study (2009).

Of far greater significance than agency fees and are increased recurring annual expenditures associated with accreditation. Heriot et al (2009) surveyed institutions and find AACSB institutions incur increased expenditures for faculty salaries, professional development, and conference participation among other items. Additionally, embedded within total cost of achieving and maintaining accreditation are costs associated with assessment of student learning. Kelley et al (2010) surveyed deans of AACSB accredited institutions and found over 47% of the institutions budgeted \$15,000 annually for assessment of learning.

Brink and Smith (2012) compared institutional costs to institutional resources for institutions affiliated with AACSB, ACBSP and a third accreditor, International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE). As part of their study, they found institutions do appear to select accreditation agencies based on institutional resources available. When substantial costs are involved, it is logical to infer accredited institutions and those seeking accreditation will endeavor to conserve financial resources through consolidating and streamlining the activities required by multiple accrediting agencies.

Table 1: Comparison of Assessment Critical Elements for SACS, ACBSP, and AACSB

Agency	TAMU-K Accreditation Date	Curricula Guidance for Areas to Be Assessed	Student Outcome Assessment Requirements	Use of Assessment Data for Improvement
SACS	1933	Does not provide program level guidance on curricula	Must derive evidence of learning from multiple sources.	Reflect on student learning to build commitment for improvement
ACBSP	1988	Curricula must include ACBSP specific Common Professional Core	Must assess to be able to identify trends over a minimum of 3 periods	Demonstrate assessment was actually used to improve the program
AACSB	N/A	Program must incorporate General Skills in curricula with specific skills at program discretion	Must identify measures for assessment and collect, analyze and disseminate information collected	Document the assessment is systematic and used for continuous improvement

*This table summarizes the differences between critical elements of assessment for SACS, ACBSP, and AACSB, which are discussed in the preceding paragraphs.*

## **INSTITUTIONALIZING ASSESSMENT**

### Institutional Setting and Assessment History

Texas A & M University–Kingsville (TAMU-K) is located in south Texas around 100 miles north of the U.S. –Mexico border. Established in 1925 as South Texas State Teacher’s College, TAMU-K draws its student population primarily from south Texas and the students reflect the demographics of the area. Of the total population of 8,700 students, 62% of TAMU-K students are Hispanic, 24% are non-Hispanic white, 5% and about 4% are international students. TAMU-K has five colleges: Agriculture, Natural Resources and Human Sciences, Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education and Human Performance, Engineering and Graduate Studies offering 56 undergraduate degree programs. The Graduate Studies programs offer 61 Master’s programs and six doctoral programs. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS) originally accredited TAMU-K in 1933 with the most recent affirmation being in 2005. TAMU-K offered its first business courses in 1925 and established the College of Business (The College) in 1929 (TAMU-K, n.d.a.)

The Texas A & M University-Kingsville College of Business granted its first baccalaureate degree in business in 1929. In 1988, The College was among the first to be granted accreditation by the ACBSP when the accrediting organization was established. The college has a Department of Accounting and Finance and a Department of Management, Marketing and Information systems. Each department has its own department chair; the MBA program has a director who is also the Assistant Dean. The College faculty consists of six professors, three associate professors, four full time lectures, eight tenure-track assistant professors, and one professor of practice for a total of 22 full time faculty. Additionally, The College has five adjunct faculty members. Four out of 22 faculty members carry administrative responsibilities. Standing faculty committees, through their representative nature and through the work in which they engage, embody essential components of healthy shared governance at TAMU-K College of Business Administration. These four standing committees are Assessment Committee; Curriculum and Standards Committee; Faculty Development Committee; and Strategic Planning Committee.

In addition to the previously discussed SACS and ACBSP accreditation, The College is in the process of aligning itself with AACSB standards with the expectation of achieving AACSB accreditation. Aligning The College with the accreditation standards of three accreditors is not without cost. Some direct expenses are born solely by The College and include the previously discussed annual accreditation agency membership fees along with expenses associated with participation in accreditation workshops and conferences and accreditation consultants fees. Other expenses for accreditation are indirect and are difficult to disaggregate from expenses incurred for changes made as opportunities to improve arose from the ongoing desire to improve The College. Additional indirect expenses for The College include: faculty record database fees, resources for faculty to maintain their academic and professional credentials (e.g., Thompson Financial, SNL Financial, Capital IQ, etc.), hiring additional faculty/staff or/and faculty release time. In addition, there are direct and indirect costs of the assessments providing assurance of learning. Assessment at The College requires both financial and human resources expenditures associated with training, faculty release time, assessment committee meetings, and assessment software. Some of the accreditation expenses (e.g., undergraduate advising, career counseling, library databases, etc.) are shared with other units across campus. All accreditation entities require faculty engagement in teaching, scholarly, professional and service activities. College leadership and faculty carefully assessed its alignment with AACSB standards using gap analysis and built on the existing accreditation infrastructure in order to attain its goal of dual accreditation.

At The College, the Assessment Committee is charged with the development of and implementation of a systematic assessment program. The Assessment Committee is responsible for the assessment of the College-wide learning goals adopted by the faculty. It oversees the collection of data relating to each learning goal, interprets the results of the data, communicates results to appropriate policy-making committees and administrators, proposes changes in curricula and pedagogy based on the results, and reviews the effectiveness of such changes. The College's Curriculum and Standards Committee assists and supports faculty in development and oversight of the curricula. It facilitates fair and transparent curricula processes and practices that embody the faculty's roles and responsibilities for developing and overseeing The College curricula in service to the College mission.

The Assessment Committee and the Curriculum Committee work closely together although they remain separate committees. The two committees work together to ensure that "closing of the loop" takes place and monitor that proposed changes in curriculum and pedagogy based on assessment results are carried out. The two committees make sure data is collected, analyzed, and reviewed by faculty to determine the effectiveness of such changes. The chair of the Curriculum Committee is an ex-Officio member of the Assessment Committee and vice versa. Before the new assessment approach, faculty relied heavily on course-embedded questions to assess students learning. Very few faculty used integrated cases in classes. Results for the Major Field Test (MFT) demonstrated a downward trend for The College's students. Assessment results were less than satisfactory especially among accounting and finance majors. Over the years, faculty struggled with improving student's learning outcomes specific to the major for accounting, finance, information systems, and marketing. Additionally, for these majors, critical thinking, integration and communication skills did not show signs of significant improvement either. Before the new approach, the Capstone class curriculum did not call for simulation, group or individual project, case presentation, or any other assignments, which would require student to apply and demonstrate competency in ways other than exams. The College did hold regular faculty retreats to discuss assessment results and brainstorm about "closing the loop" initiatives. However, when faculty implemented these initiatives in the classrooms, the desired results were not achieved at the major level and improvements would be only marginal at the College level. At the same time, faculty would be overwhelmed with assessment demands and workload. Overall, The College climate was one of complacency and the faculty was disengaged. "Closing the loop" initiatives were made in silos, which may have contributed to ineffectiveness of changes. Quite often, it was difficult to understand whether a major-specific "closing of the loop" initiative was successful. College faculty no longer carried out two embedded faculty responsibilities – development and oversight of the

College curricula in service to the College mission – effectively. The situation became even more challenging when, in fall 2013, College faculty and University administration decided to pursue AACSB accreditation.

### New Assessment Approach

In spring 2014, The College adopted a new mission statement, a new vision, and new core values. The mission statement was developed through a systematic process involving faculty and other College stakeholders who included students, staff, Advisory Board, and Advisory Councils with controls to ensure the new mission was compatible with the University mission.

In spring/fall 2014 The College administered an Educational Benchmarking Inc. (EBI) survey to its stakeholders, which included alumni, employers, Advisory Board members and Advisory Councils members. One of the main goals of the EBI survey was to gather information regarding specific skills, abilities, knowledge, competencies and behaviors that are essential for The College's BBA graduates to possess in order to capitalize on their college degree become employable and develop successful careers over time. In addition to the EBI survey, The College gathered information from in-house instruments consisting of the Senior Survey, the Advisory Board survey, and the Faculty survey. In fall 2014, based on information gathered from the EBI survey and the additional surveys, The College faculty revised learning goals and objectives for the BBA program and consecutively for all undergraduate majors. Faculty also engaged in curricula mapping and developed an assessment plan for each of six majors.

All six majors have at least one (e.g., "communicate effectively" ) in some me cases two common (e.g., "communicate effectively," "demonstrate ethical consciousness") learning goals and as many as five common learning objectives (e.g., "critically evaluate options and their implications," "formulate alternative solutions," "oral communication," "written communication," "ethical consciousness"). Overlapping of learning goals and objectives across business majors is not surprising due to business discipline integration. Of course, each business major has major specific learning goals as well. For example: students graduating with a BBA in Information Systems are expected to possess programming skills; students graduating with a BBA in accounting must recognize impact of cost vs. equity method used to report the investment and use the results in decision-making; students graduating with a BBA in marketing are expected to prepare a marketing plan; students graduating with a BBA in management are expected to put together resources allocation plan and make recommendation to a company management about optimal resources allocation.

After the AACSB Initial Accreditation Committee (IAC) approved The College's AACSB Eligibility Application in summer 2014, and College started developing initial Self-Evaluation Report (iSER) in fall 2014, it became evident that College should streamline its ACBSP and AACSB assessment efforts. In order to facilitate direct assessment, The College invested in Student Tracking Evaluation & Portfolio System (STEPS), a web-based assessment software application used to collect, analyze, document, store and distribute direct assessment data. STEPS stores all process documentation including course assessment matrices, minutes, interventions, reports in its repository; organizes documentations for each program/major; retrieves assessment history by individual program/major; tracks and records progress on assessment activity and program/major improvements; prepares reports. Accreditation bodies place increasing emphasis on program/major assessment using direct measures (e.g., course-embedded assessment rather than surveys and constituent satisfaction measures). There is an increasing pressure to track individual student progress. Web-based software application allowed our College to support implementation and collection of direct assessments efficiently and cost-effectively.

Prior to the 2014–2015 academic year, The College’s faculty used course embedded quiz and test questions for direct ACBSP assessment. The results of students’ learning outcomes were inconsistent: student learning outcomes measured on a major level would demonstrate improvements; however, students’ performance on the Major Field Test (MFT), which was taken during their last semester before graduation, would continue to decline compared to the peer institutions. “Closing the loop” initiatives did not prove themselves as effective as faculty have anticipated. Because all BBA majors had overlapping learning goals, for example, students in all business majors were expected to be effective communicators, it was important to assess similar learning goals in a consistent way across majors. Prior to the new assessment approach, grades on presentations or scores on the assignments seldom provided such consistency across assignments and majors. Therefore, in spring 2015, faculty decided to switch to standardized rubric assessment. Faculty developed rubrics to assess ethical consciousness, global consciousness, discipline specific skills, written communication skills, and oral communication skills because these were common ACBSP learning goals across BBA majors. Switching to rubric assessment allowed The College to standardize assessment of student learning outcomes and perform evaluation based on desired traits using uniform six-point grading scale (“1...2” deficient; “3...4” competent; “5...6” exemplary) rather than a subjective grading or scoring (Appendix A).

Based on the previous assessment experience, faculty learned that lower-level major classes should be used to introduce and emphasize concepts rather than actually assess the concepts. The faculty decided to administer assessments in 400-level (senior) major classes, if possible, after the learning goals and objectives have been introduced and emphasized, preferably in more than one major class. During the same semester, faculty developed a "curricula map" for each major (Appendix B). This map guides faculty where a concept is introduced, emphasized, and assessed. The Assessment Committee created “Assessment Corner” in the Dean’s Office – an interactive bulletin where assessment information is displayed (e.g., major and program learning goals and objectives, assessment map, assessment schedule, etc.). This bulletin is updated on as needed basis but no less frequent than once a semester.

Once rubrics were developed and prior to deployment, faculty went through "calibration" exercises to ensure consistency in assessment. The practice assessments using the rubrics helped with reliability in assessment and minimized "outliers." In fact, there were no extreme (too high or too low) cases in spring assessment across all majors. The calibration exercises helped faculty to develop a standardized assessment approach. In addition, each STEPS student record had room for faculty to write down notes if needed. These notes were used later by Assessment Committee and College faculty at fall 2015 retreat in analyzing assessment results. For example, finance majors demonstrated exceptionally low scores on oral communication "engaging audience" trait. In response, the Assessment Committee generated a STEPS report with faculty notes and suggested additional "closing the loop" initiatives to finance faculty to help finance majors with this learning deficiency.

Most importantly, rubric assessment demonstrated that students across majors share common deficiencies. For example, a common deficiency in oral communication exhibited by all business majors was low competency in "engaging audience" trait. Faculty found students across all majors read information from slides instead of presenting it. In the past, faculty recognized their major specific students' deficiency in oral communication and addressed it. Applying rubric assessment provided a systematic way of assessing all students, regardless of major in a systematic way. This rubric-based assessment gave faculty a broader and uniform picture. Employing the same rubric across all majors allowed faculty to develop a systematic plan to address students' learning deficiencies in a methodical way. They hope to increase effectiveness in "closing the loop" outcomes in future semesters. Faculty also learned that assignments used for assessment purposes must be meaningful in terms of overall class grade and agreed that most evaluations should be conducted 50%-75% into the semester. Using end-of-the-semester assignments for assessment purposes should be minimized with exception of timing of MFT deployment and Capstone class.



Overall, The College's faculty became much more proactive in "closing the loop" initiatives. During spring 2015, a brainstorming session was dedicated to ACBSP assessment results and "closing the loop initiatives." In the past, initiatives were "flat," redundant, repetitive (e.g. "additional attempts on each test were utilized to increase the student's retention on these topics," "students were made aware of how important is to take assessment seriously in order to be competitive in business world," "incorporate discussion questions at the end of the lecture during class"). Rubrics assessment allowed faculty to see a "bigger" picture in student's learning processes and started changing The College's assurance of learning culture. Faculty agreed to minimize using multiple-choice; true/false questions in class as graded deliverables used for assessment purposes. Instead, faculty began to utilize integrated cases with questions for assessments. The undergraduate business curriculum is undergoing vast changes based on the indirect (e.g. EBI survey of alumni, employers, students' exit survey results, Dean's Advisory Board survey, etc.) and direct assessment. All undergraduate courses are in the process of being reviewed and redesigned by College faculty when necessary.

### Summary of Changes to College Process Influencing Assessment Culture

The College's assessment plan is a work in progress. Activities of the Assessment Committee and the overall assessment process continue to have a positive impact on the College of Business Administration. Direct assessment activities have produced several modifications in College practices. The undergraduate business curriculum is undergoing vast changes based on the indirect (e.g. EBI survey of alumni, employers, students' exit survey results, Dean's Advisory Board survey, etc.) and direct assessment. All undergraduate courses are in the process of been reviewed and redesigned by College faculty when necessary. This process will continue in fall 2015. The capstone course was already revised substantially. It is now required that all students taking this course prepare a presentation for the end-of-semester case competition event. External judges measure the performance of groups in the case competition event.

The college adopted a standardized syllabus template. A course description master copy, which includes course description, goals and objectives addressed by the course is now associated with each course. The rules of APA Style®, detailed in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, which offers sound guidance for writing with simplicity, power, and concision was adopted as the standard for courses requiring writing. Revised BBA advising forms ensure an on time completion of mandatory Student Professional Development Program (SPDP) and an immersion experience (e.g., students can choose a study abroad, faculty-student research collaboration, or an internship). Several academic and nonacademic processes have been modified in response to assessment results. As an example, a mid-semester "Scavenge Hunt" assignment was added to the University Success course to familiarize freshmen with the College faculty, staff, students' associations, and administration. Utilization of ExamMatrix – CPA review software – in upper level accounting classes helps prepare students and encourage more accounting majors to sit for the CPA exam. Utilization of CapitalIQ.com in business classes enhances students' critical thinking and financial statement analysis skills. Management faculty now leads student Professional Development Program (SPDP). SPDP workshops were redesigned (e.g., networking element was added to one of the workshops). All business students are required to register with Career Services and attend University Career Fair. Faculty developed an MFT study guide for BBA students and conduct review sessions to help students to prepare for MFT. The college developed closer ties with Center for Student Success. To better serve undergraduate students, meetings were held with the Vice President for Student Success to add another full-time undergraduate advisor. An accounting lab was created to assist sophomore students with the fundamentals of financial and managerial accounting.

The chair of the Assessment Committee is an Ex-Officio member on the Curriculum and Standards Committee and vs. versa to ensure that two committees work together seamlessly on "closing the loop." The undergraduate Advisor is a member of the Curriculum and Standards Committee to ensure more effective curricula management process. The Assessment Committee met together with the Curriculum and

Standards Committee at the end of spring 2015 semester to discuss the results of the first round of assessment. Their recommendation to faculty: 1. Assessment Committee will continue to rely on teams of faculty volunteers to conduct AACSB assessment; 2. assessment Committee recommends faculty volunteers to go thru “calibration exercise” prior to assessment; 3. the best time to deploy assessment is midterm or ¾ after the beginning of the semester (assessment conducted in capstone class is an exception); 4. faculty should rely less on test-bank true/false and multiple choice questions. Assessment committee recommends using integrated and discussion questions. 5. Finally, faculty are encouraged to experiment with “flipped” classrooms and other innovative pedagogies.

### Culture Changes Subsequent to the Process Changes

The changes in processes discussed in the preceding section quickly led to changes in The College’s assessment culture. Faculty embraced the idea of continuous improvement and became eager to assist students in addressing deficiencies in the area identified through the assessment of learning. During the August 2015 Faculty Retreat, the faculty brainstormed closing the loop initiatives and made the following recommendations for the following, which are being implemented: In an effort to improve writing, faculty encourage students to visit the University Undergraduate Writing Center located on the second floor of Jernigan Library for help with the structure of their written assignments, grammar, and spelling. Traits and rubrics for written communication have been given to students as guidelines on how to prepare written documents using the rubrics; faculty will provide students with feedback on all written assignments. Faculty will discuss the most common writing errors in class, as well as the most common techniques for improvement writing assignments. In addition to changing their writing pedagogy, faculty attended Writing Center workshops and invited the University Writing Center Director to the first fall 2015 faculty meeting.

In an effort to improve oral communication, faculty require student to “dry run” their presentations, utilize College Media Lab, PowerPoint media or other tools to record their presentation and submit recordings to instructor for feedback prior to graded class deliverable. Faculty now provides verbal and written feedback to student teams regarding their strengths, weaknesses and areas of improvement throughout their teamwork. Faculty now incorporates team projects in classes throughout the BBA program and encourages team diversity. When students are working in teams, faculty emphasize the importance of team cohesion, communication, accountability and professionalism. To be more effective at development of critical thinking skills and their application in the field of study, faculty give students multiple opportunities to analyze problems, evaluate data, solve problems and reflect on the solution and process. Using cooperative learning strategies (i.e., teams representing different majors) – group learning situations foster active, critical thinking with continuous support and feedback from other team members and faculty. The addition of Case Study/Discussion/Conference method now augments traditional lectures.

### **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

This paper presents a case study of a small business school pursuing two goals: maintaining ACBSP accreditation and pursuing AACSB accreditation. The College of Business Administration is surrounded by competitors who are AACSB accredited and operates in the unique market where students often choose college based on its proximity to their family along with many other factors. Institutions of Higher Education are facing many challenges and one of them is the decrease of state funding. Maintenance of accreditation and pursue of additional accreditation(s) could be viewed as capital investment. Recruits and their parents regularly inquire about College accreditation status at recruiting events. College stakeholders expect accreditation information to be easily accessible, available, and current. Mounting attention to assessment has raised pressure on business education to be accountable. Each business school and college has to develop their own assessment program and at the same time reach a realistic balance between faculty load, staff support, and resources availability. A viable assessment program can significantly improve

student learning, contribute to betterment of the college or school perception by its stakeholders and the community; further solidify relations between college and the university administration.

In this paper, we discuss the implementation of institutionalizing an assessment methodology and standardizing the assessment process for multiple assessment agencies at College of Business at Texas A & M University–Kingsville. The major lesson learned from this case College success in maintaining accreditation and attaining additional accreditation(s) is a faculty driven process. There is no one single "right" way to do assessment. Depending on local conditions, a variety of approaches may satisfy major/program/college needs. Using a variety of assessment methods driven and developed by individual faculty members or by a group of faculty can lead to a stronger "bottom-up" approach to quality assurance and tangible continuous improvements. Because this paper represents a single case study, it has some limitations. This research was conducted in a small College of Business Administration. Our findings may not be generalized to a larges schools or different majors. Future research will address the outcomes of curricula changes and the results of loop closing initiatives.

**APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Example of Assessment Rubric

<b>Learning Goal 3: Graduates Will Demonstrate Ethical, Sustainable, Cultural, and Global Consciousness</b>					
<b>Objective 2: Students Will Define Key Components of Sustainable, Cultural, and Global Issues in a Business Context.</b>					
<b>Traits and Rubric For Sustainable, Cultural, and Global Consciousness, Undergraduate</b>					
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Trait</b>	<b>Deficient (1... 2)</b>	<b>Competent (3... 4)</b>	<b>Exemplary (5...6)</b>	<b>Score</b>
Students will define key component of sustainable, cultural and global issues	Identification of global economic trends	Students cannot identify any trends or distinguish between economic and other trends.	Students will correctly identify the main economic trends pertaining to a specific national/regional market.	Students will correctly identify the main economic trends pertaining to a specific national/regional market, along with their impact on businesses.	
	Identification of socio-cultural factors	Students cannot identify any trends or distinguish between socio-cultural and other trends.	Students will correctly identify the main socio-cultural trends pertaining to a specific national/regional market.	Student will show a deep understanding of the impact of socio-cultural factors on businesses.	
	Identification of sustainability issues	Students cannot identify any trends or distinguish between sustainability trends and other trends.	Students will correctly identify the main communication/ technological trends pertaining to a specific national/regional market.	Student will show a deep understanding of the impact of communication/ technological factors on businesses.	
	Link global economic, socio-cultural and sustainability opportunities to threats in business context	Students can't make the link.	Students can correctly identify how various trends in the business environment produce opportunities or threats.	Students can correctly identify how various trends in the business environment produce opportunities or threats, and explain the nature of these opportunities or threats.	

Appendix B: Example Curriculum Mapping of Assessments

I=Introduced E=Emphasized A=Assessed P=Post		Principles of Accounting I	Principles of Accounting II	International Business	Business Communication	Business Finance	Organizational Theory and Human Behavior	Principles of Marketing	Business Law	Strategic Management in a Global Business Environment
Learning Goal 3: Ethical, Sustain, Cultural, Global	Ethical	I	E	I	E	E	E	A	P	P
	Sustainability			I		E	E	A		P
	Cultural			I		E	E	A	P	P
	Global			I		E	E	A		P

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