Example of Use of Assessment in Curriculum Modification

Since 2009, the School of Business has used the Educational Testing Service’s MBA Major Field Test as a direct assessment of student learning in the LEC MBA program. The MFT reports student scores relative to national norms, not only for the test overall, but also provides sub-scores in the disciplines of accounting, finance, marketing, management, and strategic integration.

An analysis of MFT results for 2009-2010 showed that LEC MBA students were scoring consistently lower in the accounting and finance sections of the MFT compared to the other three fields. The MBA faculty explored possible reasons for this by reviewing the MFT questions and also areas of accounting and finance course-level assessments. The Business Dean also began to debrief students immediately after they took the MFT to gather student input on which areas of the MFT they struggled with.

The faculty concluded that two factors could account for weak student performance on accounting and finance learning assessments:

(1) Problematic areas in finance were often those that assumed a good working knowledge of college-level algebra such as polynomial equations and exponential functions. This made sense in that the LEC MBA program serves mostly mid-career professionals, who, even though they may have strong undergraduate records in relevant quantitative subjects, have not used this type of math in a number of years.

(2) Problematic areas in accounting were found to be related to financial statement analysis and some specific areas in cost accounting, such as process-costing.

In 2011, the School of Business took the following steps to address this:

(1) A one-credit “Foundations of Quantitative Analysis” course was developed and implemented. A quantitative skills assessment tool was also developed. Incoming students with weak records in quantitative courses, or who perform poorly on the assessment tool, or who simply want to take a refresher in this area, are able to take this course.

(2) A professional tutor was made available to MBA students needing help in these subject areas.

(3) The Managerial Accounting class was modified to afford more hands-on work with financial statement analysis and to provide more-in-depth coverage in certain aspects of cost accounting.

We are monitoring the current and future results of the MFT assessment to see if these steps have led to improved MBA student performance in accounting and finance.