

*California State University, Stanislaus*  
**Business Administration (MBA)**  
**ASSESSMENT REPORT 2008-09 and PLAN 2009-2010**

## **I. OVERVIEW**

The MBA Program in the College of Business Administration reaffirms its commitment to student learning and curriculum improvement. As a component in this process, the assessment of program goal attainment and student learning remains of utmost importance in the continuous improvement of our graduate curriculum.

The following report addresses annual assessment of the MBA Program of the College of Business Administration.

## **II. MISSION, GOALS, AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The College of Business Administration mission states:

“Our mission is to deliver a professional business education that provides our students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in their business careers and in society”

Within this context, the MBA Program at CSU, Stanislaus strives to help prepare MBA candidates for management/leadership roles in organizations and career advancement in their chosen fields. The MBA program delivers an advanced, professional education for managers of business, non-profit, and government organizations. It provides students the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills essential to upper-level management and career advancement.

In accord with our mission, the MBA Director and faculty teaching MBA courses, annually assess the achievements and progress of the program in fulfilling its mission. The MBA Coordinator, the CBA Budget Analyst, and department staff assist in the process.

### **A. MBA PROGRAM GOALS**

1. To create and maintain an advanced educational environment focused on student learning that provides students with the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for success in their chosen career field.
2. To offer challenging, high quality courses in the essential disciplines of business management that help ensure the acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary for career success.
3. To provide high-quality instruction in the art of integrating business knowledge and skills from different disciplines, such that students mastering this art will be able to effectively address and resolve complex business situations and problems.
4. To foster an open exchange of ideas, among students and between students and professors, on topics related to the acquisition of knowledge and skills in business.
5. To provide students with the opportunity to work with faculty in the development of a specific area of

expertise by means of a project or thesis.

## B. MBA STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students graduating from the MBA Program will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the functional (core) areas of the MBA curriculum (management, marketing, operations management, management accounting and finance, and information systems management). Demonstrate an ability to apply such knowledge in making analytical judgements and decisions in these functional areas, and within the context of an entire organization.

The skills required to meet this objective are the ability to:

a. prepare a coherent and logical written analysis of a case (or business issue), pertaining to the functional area that is being addressed, in a manner that reflects comprehension of the issue in question and an ability to apply functional area knowledge in a recommendation or argument for resolving the issue.

b. successfully meet all course requirements of the required and elective courses related to each functional area of business in the MBA curriculum.

c. demonstrate understanding of each functional areas in a strategic management case (both in the business policy class and in the culminating experience requirement) in which all areas must be considered in relationship to one another and as a part of an integrated strategy.

2. Demonstrate an ability to communicate concisely and effectively both orally and in writing.

The skills required to meet this objective are the ability to:

a. Prepare a cohesive, well-written document that addresses a specific issue and clearly communicates to the reader the ideas and opinions of the writer related to the central topic or theme.

b. Prepare and deliver a coherent oral presentation to a class audience.

3. Be able to think critically with sufficient depth and agility (using information technology where appropriate) so as to be able to analyze complex business situations, integrating facts and information related to the business disciplines and making informed and defensible recommendations of a strategic business nature. .

The skills required to meet this objective are the ability to:

a. Prepare written analyses of business and/or strategic management cases (both in class and in a comprehensive exam or project) that reflects an ability to analyze the case situation, make reasonable judgments about the central issue or issues facing the organization, demonstrate comprehension and insight into relevant areas of analysis, and present a set of recommendations that are realistic, specific, and defensible.

b. Prepare and participate in an oral presentation of a business and/or strategic case analysis in a class situation and be able to logically defend the analysis and strategic decisions associated with it.

4. Demonstrate the ability to work effectively in small teams to solve problems, analyze business situations, and effectively present these analyses and findings.

The skills required to meet this objective are the ability to:

a. As a member of a small group, jointly prepare and present a business-related problem (or activity) to a class audience that clearly conveys to the audience the issue(s), analysis of the issue(s), alternative courses of action, and a well defended course of action to resolve the issue(s). Supplement the presentation with use of an electronic medium such as power-point.

b. Work as a member of a small group or team to analyze a variety of business related problems, be able to receive comments and feedback related to one's style of participation, and be able to modify or adjust one's style and degree of participation in response to feedback received.

## II. MBA ASSESSMENT METHODS

### A. ASSESSMENT MATRIX FOR STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

|                            | <b>Objective 1</b>                  | <b>Objective 2</b>               | <b>Objective 3</b>                                    | <b>Objective 4</b>            |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
|                            | demonstrate basic knowledge         | communication skills             | analysis and integration                              | effective teamwork            |
| <b>Core Courses:</b>       | cases, exams                        | papers, oral presentations       | case analyses   | team activities; team reports |
| <b>Elective Courses:</b>   | cases, exams                        | written work, oral presentations | analysis of issues & problems                         | team activities               |
| <b>Capstone Course:</b>    | functional area skill demonstration | team presentation                | individual case analyses                              | team project                  |
| <b>Comprehensive Exam:</b> | functional area analysis            | writing skill and quality        | quality of analyses, integration, and recommendations |                               |
| <b>MBA Project:</b>        | project content                     | project writing: skill & quality | project content and conclusions                       |                               |

## B. ASSESSMENT OF MBA PROGRAM GOALS

Program Goals and Learning Objectives are assessed using the following mechanisms:

1. Student performance in both core and elective courses.
2. Student performance (and pass rates) on the MBA Comprehensive Exam and Project: areas of strength and areas of improvement
3. Informal discussions with MBA students and faculty concerning program quality and effectiveness of courses, instruction within courses, advising, and administration.
4. The EBI Educational Bench marking Surveys.
5. The Graduate School Surveys (GSS) and Alumni Surveys (ALS).
6. Average GPAs of students applying for graduation each year.

## III. THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

A. The MBA program assessment proceeds as follows:

1. Review implementation and progress on the “continuous improvement plan” of the prior year Assessment Report including results of actions taken.
2. Determine which actions have been completed and which are to be continued.
3. Review results of the assessment plan (measurement, analysis and findings) for the current academic year.
4. Develop a “continuous improvement plan” for the current Assessment Report and upcoming academic year.
5. Review proposed plan with the MBA Faculty Advisory Committee.
6. Implement actions as recommended by the Committee.

B. Assessment methods used: (Data collected and how).

The MBA Program categorizes assessment into three groups for assessment purposes: (1) student learning (2) curriculum and faculty teaching (3) program administration and advising. The items listed below each category are assessed.

### 1. Student Learning

- a. Student performance in core and elective course work on all class grading measures, including: quizzes and exams, written submissions, individual participation within a team (and team performance), and individual participation and contribution, and individual projects.
- b. The culminating experience requirement (The MBA Comprehensive Exam and the MBA Project): performance (and pass rates) on the Comprehensive Exam and Project: areas of strength and areas needing improvement.
- c. Informal discussions with MBA students and faculty concerning program quality and effectiveness of courses, instruction within courses, advising, and administration.
- d. The EBI Educational Bench marking Surveys (administered to MBA students in a four year cycle)
- e. The Graduate School Surveys (GSS) and Alumni Surveys (ALS).
- f. Average GPAs of students applying for graduation each year.

### 2. Faculty Teaching and Curriculum category

- a. EBI Benchmarking survey results.

- b. Informal discussions with MBA students and faculty concerning program quality and effectiveness of courses and course work.
- c. The Graduate School Surveys (GSS) and Alumni Surveys (ALS)
- d. The MBA Stakeholders Conference in Feb.

3. Program Administration and Advising category

- a. EBI Bench marking survey results (4year cycle)
- b. The Graduate School Surveys (GSS) and Alumni Surveys (ALS)
- c. The MBA Stakeholders Conference in Feb.
- d. Informal discussions with MBA students and faculty concerning availability of advising, advising quality and effectiveness, and responsiveness of advisors to student needs.

C. Use of findings by the program Director, Coordinator, and MBA Faculty.

1. The Program Director reviews the data annually in Spring semester, and meets with the MBA faculty Advisory Committee in Fall to develop a plan for continuous improvement of weak areas of all three categories above.
2. The Plan is finalized and submitted to the Dean in October.
3. The Plan is disseminated to MBA Faculty and the MBA Coordinator in October.

**APPENDIX A: MBA ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR AY 2008-2009 AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR AY 2009-2010.**

**I. ASSESSMENT REPORT, AY 2008-2009**

1. Student Learning

- a. Student performance in core and elective course work: Student average grades in the five functional areas were as follows for AY 2006-2007 and 2007-2008.

|                 | AY 2006-2007 |           | AY 2007-2008 |           | 8 Year Average |           |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
|                 | grade avg.   | % passing | grade avg.   | % passing | grade avg.     | % passing |
| Accounting      | 3.4          | 93.2%     | 3.3          | 96.9%     | 3.2            | 96.1%     |
| Comp. Info. Sys | 2.8          | 95.5%     | 3.5          | 100%      | 3.5            | 95.9%     |
| Finance         | 3.5          | 100%      | 3.4          | 98.8%     | 3.3            | 96.7%     |
| Management      | 3.5          | 99.3%     | 3.4          | 97.0%     | 3.6            | 97.4%     |
| Marketing       | 3.5          | 100%      | 3.4          | 100%      | 3.5            | 97.0%     |
| Operations      | 3.4          | 100%      | 3.4          | 97.6%     | 3.6            | 95.7%     |

- b. The culminating experience requirement: a total of 35 students took the comprehensive exam in AY 2008-2009. The pass rate for the year was 26 out of 35 or 74%. The average score ratings for the 4 functional areas and for the writing category was as follows (on a likert scale of 1-7 with 7 being the high score). Finance: 4.80 Marketing: 4.91 Operations: 4.57 Strategy: 4.71 Writing 5.37.

The results of the comprehensive exam were taken to the MBA Faculty Advisory Committee in Sept '09 for discussion and determination of continuous improvement. The two areas considered to be greatest concern for improvement were: Operations and Strategy. The committee discussed these two areas and made suggestions as to how these could be improved in the coming academic year. These suggestions were incorporated into the AY '09-'10 Continuous Improvement Plan.

- c. Discussions with MBA students and faculty: Discussions on an informal basis were conducted throughout Spring 2009. Generally, students have expressed satisfaction with the MBA program over the past academic year. They felt that the quality of courses offered was good, and that instructors were knowledgeable and helpful. Areas of concern were: (1) the relative absence of elective courses, and the impact this had on maintaining schedules towards graduation. (2) the increasing cost of tuition and other expenses. (3) the relative absence or lack of job postings, and other help with career planning and job search.
- d. The EBI Educational Bench marking Surveys (2005-2006). The EBI indicated an average score of 4.31 (on a 6 point scale; down from 4.68 in the prior year) and placed us just below the level of our group of 6 comparison schools  
Specifically: Quality and content of required and elective MBA core classes. EBI data showed us to be at least 5% below the mean for our 6 school comparison group on this factor

e. The Graduate School Surveys (GSS) and Alumni Surveys (ALS).

f. Average GPAs of students applying for graduation in AY

2. Faculty Teaching and Curriculum

a. The quality and content of required and elective MBA core classes. EBI data showed us to be at least 5% below the mean for our 6 school comparison group on this factor. The GSS reported an average score of 3.65 in "teaching effectiveness" which was a slight improvement over the prior year. We need to continue to emphasize quality and rigor in the core courses of our program and implement quality improvement measures based on assessments in individual courses.

b. Faculty responsiveness/grading for both required and elective courses. On these two factors, the MBA program is rated slightly lower than its comparison schools in the 2005-2006 EBI Survey. A problem exists in this area, however, in interpreting the nature of the questions that make up the factor. Certainly faculty could be more responsive to student concerns both with the content of the course and with the grading. However, as students naturally seek higher grades and not necessarily more work, one wonders whether these measures are partially indicative of a course's (and program's) rigor to a certain extent, and that higher responses to the questions that make up the measure may reflect higher awarded grades and less rigorous assignments. On the other hand, being responsive to student concerns, directed either to the amount of work assigned or to the grading standards, is probably a reasonable expectation of a good instructor. And in that regard, this factor reflects issues which we may need to target as MBA instructors in order to improve the overall program

3. Program Administration and Advising:

The EBI Educational Bench marking Surveys (2005-2006). The EBI indicated an average score of 4.31 (on a 6 point scale; down from 4.68 in the prior year) and placed us just below the level of our group of 6 comparison schools.

Specifically: (1) Student Advising and Administration. Data from the EBI indicate that we are perceived to be 15% below the mean for our 6 school comparison group on this factor

## II. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN, AY 2009-2010

**Overview:** The results from this academic year indicate that students are generally satisfied with the program, although there appears to be definite areas to target for improvement. The results are generally consistent between the EBI surveys and the GSS surveys. The EBI indicated an average score of 4.31 (on a 6 point scale; down from 4.68 in the prior year) and placed us just below the level of our group of 6 comparison schools. The GSS indicated an average response of 3.8 (on a 5 point scale) for "overall program quality", and an average response of 3.47 for all 19 program indicators (down from 3.62 in 2000-2001). Significant changes from 2000-2002 in the GSS survey involved: (1) a slight drop in "program reputation" and "course availability" - our two weakest factors. (2) a slight drop in "graduate catalog" and "course schedules", (3) an increase in "faculty commitment", teaching effectiveness", "facilities" and "equipment".

### Findings and Proposed Actions:

#### 1. Student Learning.

- a. Core course grades: Student average grades in the five functional areas were as follows for AY 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 (data for AY '08-'09 was not available at the time of this plan but will be incorporated in the next year's plan).

|                 | AY 2006-2007 |           | AY 2007-2008 |           | 8 Year Average |           |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
|                 | grade avg.   | % passing | grade avg.   | % passing | grade avg.     | % passing |
| Accounting      | 3.4          | 93.2%     | 3.3          | 96.9%     | 3.2            | 96.1%     |
| Comp. Info. Sys | 2.8          | 95.5%     | 3.5          | 100%      | 3.5            | 95.9%     |
| Finance         | 3.5          | 100%      | 3.4          | 98.8%     | 3.3            | 96.7%     |
| Management      | 3.5          | 99.3%     | 3.4          | 97.0%     | 3.6            | 97.4%     |
| Marketing       | 3.5          | 100%      | 3.4          | 100%      | 3.5            | 97.0%     |
| Operations      | 3.4          | 100%      | 3.4          | 97.6%     | 3.6            | 95.7%     |

There were no significant "outliers" or observable trends in this category of assessment. The results indicate that, on average, students' grade performance was slightly above the 8 year average in both of the recent AY's. The only area that is slightly below the 8 year average is "management", which shows a 3.4 avg. grade in AY '07-'08 compared to the 8 year average grade of 3.6. These results confirm that the students are, as a whole, performing well on the various course measures and meeting the educational objectives of the functional area courses. To varying extent, the core, elective, and capstone business policy course address all four MBA program learning objectives.

**Actions:** In order to pursue continuous improvement, based on these findings, the faculty in the management area will be notified in Oct '09, by the MBA Director, that this area has been selected for targeted improvement. Specifically, instructors in this area will be given a list of the four MBA program objectives, and asked to come up with a short list of teaching activities that they can incorporate into their management classes, aimed at enhancing learning objectives in one or more of the four areas. The

comments and suggestions from the management faculty will be compiled and shared with all members of this group of faculty.

- b. The composite results of comprehensive exams of '08-'09 indicated that the areas of Operations Management and Business Strategy were the two that warranted priority attention in AY '09 - '10. Specific aspects, as noted by the graders of the comprehensive exams, were as follows:
  - i. Operations Management:
    - Plant capacity issues, and the implications of operating a plant either significantly under or significantly over capacity.
    - Start-up costs and issues with new plant operations. What to expect.
    - The relationship or connection between Operations Level decisions and Financial Management, specifically the cost or capacity of an organization to finance operation area expansions.
  - ii. Business Strategy:
    - Integration of issues specific to operations management, financial management, and marketing in developing overall strategic recommendations for a business in a case situation.
    - The distinction between a company's marketing strategy and its overall business strategy.
    - Conceptualizing the hierarchy of strategic planning (grand strategy, business strategy, functional-level strategy, and tactics) and describing case recommendation in a top down fashion accordingly.

Actions:

(1) The MBA Director met with the MBA Faculty Advisory Committee in Sept '09 to discuss assessment findings from AY 2008-2009. In the area of student learning, it was decided that the MBA Director would convey, in writing, the two areas of relative weakness as determined from the '08-'098 comprehensive exams to the faculty that teach Operations Management courses, and Business Policy.

(2) The MBA Director met with the two faculty who teach MGT 5900-02 and discussed the weaknesses and areas for improvement both in Operations Management and in Business Strategy. The MBA Director communicated with the Operations Management faculty who teach OM 5630 and OM 5650, and sent them, in writing, the comments developed by the graders of the comprehensive exam.

## 2. Faculty Teaching and Curriculum

- a. The quality and content of required and elective MBA core classes. EBI data showed us to be at least 5% below the mean for our 6 school comparison group on this factor. The GSS reported an average score of 3.65 in "teaching effectiveness" which was a slight improvement over the prior year. We need to continue to emphasize quality and rigor in the core courses of our program and implement quality improvement measures based on assessments in individual courses.

Initially, all faculty teaching MBA courses have been advised to maintain rigorous standards appropriate to an MBA course in any or all courses they teach. The Director has sent out, to all

faculty, a content coverage sheet asking each faculty to establish or confirm the content of the courses they teach as pertains to specific areas. This content information, then, must be listed in the course syllabus for every course.

We propose to convene a meeting of all faculty teaching MBA core classes specifically for the purpose of discussing means and tactics for improving the quality of the core required classes. The faculty group will present a list of general teaching strategies and techniques that they feel could be usefully applied in each core class in order to improve the course and help maintain a consistent level of rigor and standards. Individual faculty will be asked to keep track of strategies or tactics or techniques that they implement in their courses, and be prepared to report their experiences in a follow-up meeting in Feb. '10.

- b. Faculty responsiveness/grading for both required and elective courses. On these two factors, the MBA program is rated slightly lower than its comparison schools. A problem exists in this area, however, in interpreting the nature of the questions that make up the factor. Certainly faculty could be more responsive to student concerns both with the content of the course and with the grading. However, as students naturally seek higher grades and not necessarily more work, one wonders whether these measures are partially indicative of a course's (and program's) rigor to a certain extent, and that higher responses to the questions that make up the measure may reflect higher awarded grades and less rigorous assignments. On the other hand, being responsive to student concerns, directed either to the amount of work assigned or to the grading standards, is probably a reasonable expectation of a good instructor. And in that regard, this factor reflects issues which we may need to target as MBA instructors in order to improve the overall program

This factor, and the questions that make up the factor, should also be brought up at a meeting of core course instructors. Our proposal here is to list the questions that make up the factor, and get faculty input as to how to best address the concerns implied in the questions. Individual faculty will be asked to keep track of any techniques or tactics that they implement in their courses, and be prepared to report their experiences using these techniques in a follow-up meeting in Feb. '10.

### 3. Program Administration and Advising:

The EBI Educational Bench marking Surveys (2005-2006). The EBI indicated an average score of 4.31 (on a 6 point scale; down from 4.68 in the prior survey) and placed us just below the level of our group of 6 comparison schools.

Specifically: (1) Student Advising and Administration. Data from the EBI indicate that we are perceived to be 15% below the mean for our 6 school comparison group on this factor.

The MBA Director and the MBA Coordinator have implemented extended advising hours and have included, on the MBA web page, notification of advising services and a message encouraging students to take advantage of the Program's advising services. The web page was completely overhauled in the Spring of '09, making it considerably more user friendly. We have also notified all MBA course instructors of our survey findings in this area, and urged them, in a general meeting, to try to support the program efforts to increase availability to MBA students and responsiveness to their concerns.