

MBA Program Assurance of Learning Summary: 2015-2020

Significant changes to the MBA program were implemented effective Fall 2018. Led by the Sr. Associate Dean, all faculty participated in the MBA redesign project. Primary changes include adding an online version of the MBA program; six concentrations; two new required courses (“Creative and Innovative Management” and “Technologies for Business Decision Making”); collaborating with Academic Partnerships, an external services provider; and offering a one-year completion guarantee to students. These changes required a massive effort by the department to design and approve the revised curriculum and develop fully online versions of the elective courses. Student feedback, advisory board suggestions for desirable employee competencies, and faculty observations were significant inputs to the redesign effort. For example, the advisory board asked us to emphasize management of disruptive innovation and it is brought into the revised program competencies and curriculum. Similarly, students have long asked for concentrations such as finance, data analytics and supply chain, and these concentrations are part of the redesigned MBA. The program-level competencies were significantly revised and they guided the curriculum redesign process. The MBA program redesign also improved student services; for example, a senior CBEC advisor position was added to advise MBA students.

Discussion on MBA redesign effort started in late 2016, and the redesigned program was implemented in Fall 2018. During 2017-19, faculty’s focus was primarily on redesigning and developing online courses and learning from the first two years of offering the new program. The department embraced the assurance of learning effort with the new curriculum beginning 2018-19 and produced assurance of learning reports for all program level goals (PLLGs) during 2018-20. The 2015-19 period spanned the old curriculum and the new curriculum. To minimize confusion, the faculty opted to assess student learning with the previous PLLGs for 2015-20; beginning, 2020-21 AY, the revised MBA program competencies will be assessed.

In the following paragraphs, we highlight the assurance of learning work done for each PLLG.

PLLG1 - Ethics: In 2015-16, faculty moved the ethics assessment to a later point in the semester to provide more coverage of the ethical issues before students were assessed. This improved student performance. In 2016-17, the ethics case was updated and the coverage was increased to emphasize group discussions of ethical issues followed by an individual assignment that students need to submit. In 2017-18, similar ethics assignments were introduced in the online program. In 2019-20, this was assessed for the first time for online program students. Faculty recognized that a number of students did not provide an in-depth analysis of the implications related to the gray areas of ethical practice. To address this, faculty plan to add a requirement that students need to complete a multifaceted code of conduct or policy.

Coverage in the new curriculum: To emphasize the importance of ethical behavior in organizations, faculty increased the coverage of ethics and diversity from multiple perspectives in the revised MBA curriculum: MBA 700 (management); 702 (accounting); 732 (finance); 741 (organizational challenges); 742 (leadership); 746 (global management).

PLLG2 – Case Study: Case studies are part of many courses in the MBA program. During 2016-20, in MBA 715: operations management course, case studies have morphed into practical, hands-on projects with external organizations. For example, in 2019-20 MBA students participated in a live project with a regional healthcare provider and recommended improvements on various

operational aspects. In the last two years, there has been a significant infusion of international students in the MBA classroom. Due to this, students routinely brought their experiences in another country or multinational corporate work in different continents to enhance the classroom discussion and suggest improvements to operations related to community projects. This also contributed to increased cultural competency development for all students in the classroom. Because of this, in some of the courses that include case studies, case study weightage has been increased.

Coverage in the new curriculum: Since case studies are pervasive in our curriculum, in the revised MBA competencies (four program-level and 14 sub-competencies), the case study competency does not explicitly appear; however, case studies are used for the assessment of many other sub-competencies (e.g. Ethics and Diversity).

PLLG3 – Security Valuation Models, Risk/Reward, Cost of Capital : Several significant changes were implemented in the coverage of this topic beginning 2018. Several instructional videos related to these topics were developed and added to MBA 732. To improve student performance on this learning goal, faculty also added a “Course Readiness” module with Excel guides, math practice, and formula reviews to better prepare students who do not have a finance or accounting background. Faculty also added discussion assignments in modules 3 and 6 focused on evaluating risk and return concepts and business decision-making and provided additional online office hours. These changes resulted in significantly improved performance of students during 2019-20 as the unsatisfactory rates reduced significantly from the initial to the final assessment.

Coverage in the new curriculum: In the revised program, this competency is expanded to emphasize the accounting and financial tools and techniques rather than the three specific topics in finance the previous learning goal addressed. Rubric for assessment was also redesigned. Further, the new learning goal is covered in both MBA 702 and 732 online/F2F versions.

PLLG4 – Project Management: Beginning 2019-20, project management coverage in F2F sections of MBA 716 was changed significantly to emphasize real-world cases/projects and each playing the role of a key stakeholder and contributing team member of project team. While teams submitted and presented assignments conforming to phases in the project management lifecycle, students also worked on individual projects leveraging real-world project work. Instructors emphasized project deliverables and a revised rubric (Mastering of Concepts; Development of Deliverables; Team Collaboration) was used. In 2019-20, students performed consistently well (or improved) in the rubric dimensions from module 1 to module 7. There are currently differences in the way the F2F and online versions of project management are taught; online courses in future will require presentation of project deliverables just like the F2F versions.

Coverage in the new curriculum: In the revised program, this competency is revised to emphasize scope, risk, time and cost management. These topics are now covered in MBA 702 and 716.

PLLG5 – Quantitative Business Problem: Beginning 2018-19, this PLLG has been assessed in MBA 720. Recognizing that quantitative problems are often solved using technology tools, the faculty revised the rubric to emphasize technology design, using data, and making decisions based on analysis. In MBA 720 alone, more than 30 videos have been added to cover the technology aspects and this PLLG. This competency was assessed for all F2F and online students in both 2018-19 and 2019-20 (137 students). The unsatisfactory rates were around 20% in 2018-19. The

faculty instituted specific office hours in 2019-20 for MBA 720 to help students with this PLLG and allowed students to revise and resubmit their work for partial credit; this led to an improvement of technology competence for students as unsatisfactory rates reduced to below 10%. Statistical tests revealed there are statistically significant differences (significance level of 0.05) between F2F and online students for the technology design dimension, with F2F students performing better.

Coverage in the new curriculum: In the revised program, this competency is revised to emphasize data analytics and quantitative methods; rubric is revised. These topics are now covered in MBA 702, 715 and 720.

PLLG6 – Strategic Decision Making: In 2015-16, a case study approach was implemented to assess this PLLG, and electives related to integrated decision making were added to the MBA program. The unsatisfactory rates for this PLLG have been at or near 0% over the years. As new faculty members started teaching this PLLG beginning 2019-20, all faculty collaborated to review F2F and online coverage of strategic decision making. The faculty review during 2019-20 included a review of textbooks, syllabi etc. across sections and they plan to make these consistent/uniform in near future.

Coverage in the new curriculum: In the revised program, this competency is revised to emphasize change management and strategy implementation; these two topics were especially emphasized by the CBEC advisory board. The topics related to this PLLG are now covered in MBA 742, 793 and 796.

Future Plans: The new assurance of learning plan will be used beginning 2020-21; this plan has four program level competencies and fourteen sub-competencies. The fourteen sub-competencies expand on and enhance previous PLLGs, in in some cases, explicitly emphasized different functional areas and new curricular topics such as disruption and data analytics. The faculty approved a plan to assess each competency/sub-competency in a five-year cycle. The detailed plan and the schedule can be found in the MBA assessment plan.