

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT FOR UNDERGRADUATE MARKETING PROGRAMS

by

William R. Wynd, David Eagle, and Pam Weigand,
College of Business Administration
Eastern Washington University
Cheney, Washington
509-359-2802

ABSTRACT

As a result of concern that higher education may not be meeting its intended objectives, political pressure at the national, state and local levels has brought about a focus on measuring the intended outcomes of higher education. The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), an accrediting agency for many of the nation's business schools, recently issued standard C.2.2 which states: *Each degree program should be systematically monitored to assess its effectiveness and should be revised to reflect new objectives and to incorporate improvements based on contemporary theory and practice.* This paper reports the results of a study of AACSB schools to determine how these business schools are meeting the standard.

Specific objectives of our survey of all 271 AACSB-accredited schools were to determine: 1) how many have outcomes assessment programs in operation, 2) what alternatives they are using to assess outcomes, and 3) what problems and successes they have had in planning and implementing programs and using results.

Eighty percent of the schools responded. Thirty six percent had formal outcomes assessment programs in place as of October 1992, 43 percent were currently formulating a plan and 21 percent did not have a plan. Schools of Business received mandates to develop outcomes assessment programs from four sources; state government, university administrations, the AACSB and regional university accreditation associations.

Surveys of alumni are by far the most popular vehicle for assessing outcomes both for those schools who have plans in place and for those who are working on an assessment plan. Other popular vehicles include employer

surveys, input from a business advisory committee and formal skills assessment examinations, such as the Educational Testing Service exam or those devised by the school. Employer focus groups and student exit interviews were also mentioned.

Most of the successes of outcomes assessment programs revolved around using assessment methods that identified weaknesses in existing programs. Most of the difficulties revolved around the cost of measurement and the time needed for planning and administration.

Respondents who had a program in place were asked to give advice to those who were in the planning stage. Formulating realistic and measurable program objectives is an obvious prerequisite to success. Most respondents also advised that both faculty and administration must "buy into" the process from the beginning. If this is not accomplished, the exercise is doomed from the start.

RECOMMENDATION

Developing a workable outcomes assessment plan begins with a statement of what you expect to do in terms of measurable behavioral objectives. How these outcomes are actually measured must fit your unique situation. The AACSB standard is sufficiently flexible for any business school or marketing program. What you do with the results is what counts. The emphasis on outcomes assessment provides an opportunity to improve the content and delivery of your marketing program. Use the results to coordinate with those who use your product (the business community) and to monitor your program to insure it is meeting its stated objectives.