

COMPREHENSIVE MARKETING DEPARTMENT UNDERGRADUATE LEARNING ASSURANCE PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Learning assurance programs are now being required at numerous levels. Universities, and the publics they serve, are increasingly demanding measures of accountability. AACSB accreditation calls for some documentation showing that an institution is meeting its stated goals. Too often, the response to these demands has been a push to create appropriate paper trails rather than legitimate measures of performance. How can a learning assurance program be created that will satisfy these demands, be agreeable to both faculty and students, *and* produce meaningful information? This special session is a case study of a working and successful undergraduate marketing learning assurance program.

FOCUS AND RATIONALE

The special session focused on the history and development of University of Northern Iowa's Department of Marketing Learning Assurance Program (LAP). An in-depth explanation of the program's five components was reviewed: 1) Department of Marketing Assessment Philosophy and Program Goals, 2) College of Business Administration and Marketing Educational Goals and Competencies, 3) Frequency of Assessment Measurements, 4) Three Learning Assurance Assessment Methodologies, and 5) Method of Evaluation. Problems and successes were discussed in light of what other schools can expect when creating a comprehensive LAP. Participants received a copy of the eight page summative LAP and may request a copy of the assessments for any of the 17 undergraduate Marketing classes, the alumni survey, and marketing senior focus-group reports.

INTRODUCTION

While Marketing courses have been offered to the University of Northern Iowa student population since the 1930s, the Marketing major, *per se*, was established in 1969. During the 1930 to 1990 time period, any form of assessing students' learning was conducted by each faculty member within his or her course design and execution. Anecdotal evidence of

student learning was periodically shared by faculty with their peers for curricula changes. The first formal student outcomes assessment for the department occurred in 1991. Initially, that assessment was centered on seniors' perception of the quality of their undergraduate marketing education. A few years later an alumni survey was added to determine their perceived value of the marketing education received. Assessments remained relatively the same until 2001 when a common comprehensive examination for the introductory Principles of Marketing course (sophomore-junior level) was introduced. Today the department has evolved to a point where there is a formal learning assurance program for each of the 17 undergraduate Marketing classes offered by the department.

SPECIAL SESSION FORMAT

The theory and background of the assessment process were outlined. The problems that are inherent in all evaluation procedures were discussed along with an outline of possible pitfalls.

Dr. K.N. Rajendran, who has been involved with the Marketing Department's Learning Assurance Program from its inception, traced the history and content of the program. He explained how the program evolved and the practical challenges of implementing a successful program.

Dr. Steven Corbin, the Department Head, identified the five components of the current program and shared suggestions about procedural implementation. Methods of evaluating the assessment, interpreting the results, and how the results are shared with the faculty, Marketing Advisory Board, and Dean for curricula change purposes were reviewed and discussed.

Copies of in-class assessments from a sample of 17 undergraduate Marketing classes were made available to interested session participants. A copy of the alumni survey and details of the marketing senior focus group were also made available to attendees.