Chapter 3
Assurance of Learning and Accreditations Through Assessment in Business Schools

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ABSTRACT

The use of web-based technologies in academic institutions for their diverse practices has been widespread in colleges and universities for several decades. These applications include surveying stakeholders, assessing classes, reporting on faculty development, and assurance of learning data to mention a few. Further advances have led to the integration of applications that not only enable the sharing of knowledge, but which also support the reporting requirements necessary to obtain and retain accreditation; likewise satisfy the supply of intellectual capital to the employment marketplace. In this chapter, the authors aim to portray relationship between assurance of learning and assessment at large with real life examples and approaches.

INTRODUCTION

Many articles related to the assurance of learning (AoL) standards of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International have appeared in contemporary issues of *Journal of Education for Business* (e.g., Barnett, Dasher, & Nicholson, 2004; Black & Duhon, 2003; Marshall, 2007; Martell, 2007; Pringle & Michel, 2007; Pritchard, Potter, & Saccucci, 2004). These articles promote the importance of the matter to business educators. Active engagement in a program of assessing student learning assists business educators in assuring that purported knowledge is taught and that essential skills are resulting from the business curriculum. In addition, school assessment programs designed to assess student learning are needed to satisfy the standards of various accrediting bodies, such as the AACSB. The organizational aim for accountability in higher education has been building over the past many decades (Black & Duhon, 2003). Attempts by governments and university governing boards in the 1970s to hold higher education accountable for the output of their programs often took the form of budgets and

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program reviews (Folger, 1977). These early efforts to assess learning focused on the structure of the curriculum and resource allocation rather than on actual student performance. Subsequently, critics of higher education in the 1980s pressed regional accrediting bodies into requiring accredited programs to demonstrate predefined learning outcomes or also referred to as learning goals. Numerous studies, such as the "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform" (National Commission on Excellent in Education, 1983), pointed to the worsening of higher education and eventually led the U.S. Department of Education in 1988 to require federally approved accrediting bodies to include assessment as part of their postsecondary accreditation standards (Apostolou, 1999). In addition, state public university systems in Tennessee, California, and Georgia require their institutions to prepare assessment plans for major degree programs that measure student performance rather than the allocation of resources (Herring & Izard, 1992; Stivers, Campbell, & Hermanson, 2000). The AACSB had recently proposed a business school framework, as outlined in figure 1 below.

The accrediting bodies of higher education institutions, such as engineering and medicine, have a long history of including standards that measure learning outcomes (Volkwein, Lattuca, Harper, & Domingo, 2006). In business education, AACSB revised its resource-based standards to include standards emphasizing continuous improvement in 1992. In 2002, AACSB drafted a new set of standards that established outcome-based assessment as one of the requirements for accreditation. In 2005 (and with regular updated standards till 2017), the AACSB incorporated the AoL standards that include defining outcome goals and designing assessment methods for having students demonstrate what they have learned (Shaftel & Shaftel, 2007). According to the AACSB, Communities are collectives of individuals and organizations. These may be defined by geography, national boundaries, and even language or ethnicity. Communities may also be oriented towards specific industries (e.g. supply chain, healthcare, financial engineering) or special interests (e.g. a community of academics in the field of management). Numerous communities combine and overlap to create a society. Communities may wield impact on

Figure 1. Business School framework, as proposed by AACSB International