

**Accounting Department
Assessment Report
Fall 2000**

Discussion of Results

This report includes assessment data gathered through Summer 2000. To conform with the biennial departmental reporting cycle, this report includes information appearing in the Fall 1999 report.

Indirect Measures

Senior Assessment Survey

Students' self-assessments of their knowledge of accounting (survey items A through D) are very high. They were higher in Spring 2000 than in previous years. This appears to confirm last year's speculation that previous period's scores were depressed. Earlier surveys were administered at the same time students took the Accounting Major Comprehensive Exam. The difficulty of that exam (average score below 50%) may have reduced some students' agreement that they understand the fundamentals of accounting. Beginning in Spring 2000, the survey was mailed to graduating seniors before they took the exam.

Based on Spring 1998 assessment feedback from the Senior Survey and from Internship Supervisor Questionnaires, the Accounting Systems course was revised to increase usage of Microsoft Office software. The course was given a lower number (from Acct 370 to Acct 315) and made prerequisite to Intermediate I. Students affected by the revision began to graduate in Spring 2000, and Senior Survey results for technology-related items (J, K and L) are collectively higher. The most notable improvement was in students' agreement that they can effectively organize and present financial information.

Alumni Survey

The Alumni Survey was first used Spring 1998. Some of its items have since been revised to better reflect desired student learning outcomes. It will be administered during 2000-01.

Direct Measures

Internship Supervisor Evaluation

The most important conclusion is that employers gave interns high ratings. This may be the only valid result. The scores seem to rise and fall as a group. No trends are evident. Differences between scores are generally smaller than the standard deviations. It is perplexing that Summer interns were rated lower than Spring interns in 1998, but higher in 1999 and 2000.

Accounting Major Comprehensive Exam

Scores are quite volatile and it is difficult to perceive any trends over time. Except for business law, scores in each content area of the exam were lower in 1999 than in 1998, and higher in 2000 than in 1999.

Business Law scores were highest in 1999 and sharply lower in 2000. This is explained by a curriculum change effective for students entering Fall 1999 where the required law course was changed from Acct 305 to Acct 306. Some students graduating in Spring 2000 took business law during their last year, and elected to meet only the new requirement. Exam questions relate to the content of Acct 305; the Spring 2000 score for Business Law should therefore be ignored.

ETS Major Field Test in Business

Unlike the other assessment measures, the ETS exam does not measure learning outcomes of accounting majors. It is used to assess effectiveness of the business core coursework. Two of the exam's eight areas are delivered by the Accounting Department. The Accounting indicator measures learning in the Principles of Accounting sequence, and the Legal & Social Environment indicator applies to Acct 205: Legal Environment of Business. The exam was administered to 100 last-semester seniors in Business Policy classes in Spring and Summer 2000. The population included accounting and business majors. Answer sheets were not coded as to major, so the performance of accounting majors cannot be separated.

Accounting indicator scores were slightly above the national comparison score (48.8% v. 48.1%). In 1998, when the exam was last used, MSUM scores were well above the comparison (58.3% v. 48.9%). A new approach to teaching Principles of Accounting was adopted Fall 98, where financial and managerial accounting are integrated in both semesters. The decline in scores may be related to this change in pedagogy. If the ETS exam anticipates a traditional course it may not accurately reflect our students' learning. This issue will be investigated. Furthermore, a decline in scores can be expected because some students graduating in 1998 took a four-credit sequence of courses (pre-1995), while more recent grads took a three-credit sequence.

Legal and Social Environment scores are also lower in 2000 than in 1998. Again, this bears further prompt investigation. Some 1998 graduates took the required law courses before 1995. In the fall of 1995, two Legal Environment courses offered at the 200 and 300 level, respectively, were combined and offered as one course at the 200 level. Some 1998 graduates may have scored higher because part of their Legal Environment course was taken at the junior level. In addition, the Legal Environment content was changed to include five weeks' coverage of common law contracts. We believe it to be unlikely that the ETS exam includes contracts. With less time spent on tested material, scores can be expected to drop.

Conclusions

The Senior Assessment Survey and the Internship Supervisor Evaluation show high levels of success with respect to each goal and objective. No areas of weakness are evident. The Accounting Major Comprehensive Examination provides low percentage scores due to the difficulty of the exam. No trends in scores are apparent. At this time, analysis of assessment data does not indicate a direction for curricular improvement.

Several improvements in the department's assessment process will be made for implementation in Spring 2001.

1. The Internship Supervisor Evaluation form will be revised to include an item for each accounting knowledge area instead of only one item. A response for No Observation will be included. An item for problem-solving skills will also be added.
2. The Accounting Major Comprehensive Exam will be extensively revised due to curriculum changes in required courses in the major. Questions will be added for Advanced and Not-for-Profit accounting, and content will be revised in Law and Systems.
3. Comprehensive Exam scores will be correlated with student's course grades in an effort to set target scores for the exam. When this project is completed, the assessment plan will be revised accordingly.
4. More detailed information is needed about how the ETS exam topics relate to course content in accounting principles and legal environment courses. If the exam coverage does not correspond well to the MSUM curriculum, then revising the assessment plan to eliminate its use can save resources. Alternatively, the topic coverage of accounting principles and legal environment courses will be revisited.

Accounting Department Senior Assessment Survey - Summary of Results

Item		Percentage in Agreement			
		Spring 98 n = 26	Fall 98 n = 14	Spring 99 n = 21	Spring 00 n = 26
A.	I understand the fundamentals of financial accounting .	92	86	86	100
B.	I understand the fundamentals of managerial and cost accounting .	81	100	76	92
C.	I understand the fundamentals of accounting systems and auditing .	89	93	91	96
D.	I understand the fundamentals of tax accounting .	89	86	71	85
E.	I have an overall understanding of the fundamentals of accounting.	96	100	91	100
F.	I understand the economic, financial, social, legal, and cultural forces affecting the business environment.	85	93	95	100
G.	I understand how business organizations operate and how they are managed.	89	100	95	100
H.	I can effectively present information and views in writing.	92	93	100	96
I.	I can effectively present information and views orally in a group setting.	88	86	95	96
J.	I can effectively use communications technology (e-mail, PowerPoint, etc.).	92	100	95	100
K.	I can effectively organize and present financial information (working papers, graphs, etc.).	85	79	71	96
L.	I can effectively use technology to solve problems (spreadsheets, information search, etc.).	96	93	100	100
M.	I can identify ethical issues in a professional context.	96	100	100	96
N.	I am motivated and prepared to continue life-long learning.	92	93	95	96
O.	I can work effectively in diverse groups.	96	100	100	96
P.	I can think critically and deal with uncertainty and ambiguity in professional tasks.	92	93	95	89
Mean:		90.6	93.4	91.0	96.1

Accounting Department Internship Evaluations Summary of Results

1: Outstanding 2: Above average 3: Satisfactory 4: Needs improvement 5: Unsatisfactory

	Mean Responses					
	Spring 98 n = 8	Summer 98 n = 9	Spring 99 n = 10	Summer 99 n = 13	Spring 00 n = 18	Summer 00 n = 6
Accounting Knowledge						
Knowledge	2.00	2.22	2.10	1.85	1.89	1.50
Communication						
Written	2.00	2.00	2.63	1.73	2.24	1.67
Oral	1.88	2.22	2.30	1.77	1.94	1.83
Technology						
Communication	1.75	2.13	1.88	1.50	2.11	1.50
Spreadsheets	1.40	1.83	2.11	1.50	1.88	1.60
Accounting software	1.60	2.13	2.44	1.54	2.06	1.40
Work Ethic, Cooperation & General Performance						
Work ethic	1.38	2.00	1.90	1.46	1.50	1.50
Presence	1.50	2.00	2.10	1.62	1.78	2.00
Attendance	1.50	2.22	1.90	1.46	1.83	1.83
Instructions	1.63	1.89	1.90	1.54	1.72	1.33
Quality	1.63	2.22	2.20	1.54	2.00	1.67
Quantity	1.75	2.11	2.10	1.54	1.94	1.50
Teamwork	1.50	1.67	1.78	1.38	1.78	1.50
Planning	1.88	2.22	2.56	1.62	1.94	1.83
Resourcefulness	1.75	2.22	2.20	1.54	1.94	1.50
Motivation	1.88	2.22	2.00	1.46	1.78	1.50
Overall:	1.70	2.08	2.12	1.57	1.91	1.62

No employer rated any intern as Unsatisfactory. Among the 64 internships reported above, 5 included at least one rating of Needs improvement. In all, there were 9 ratings of Needs improvement, and they were reported for 9 different items.

Accounting Major Comprehensive Examination

Administered to graduating seniors

		<u>Percentage Correct</u>			
		Spring 98	Fall 98	Spring 99	Spring 00
		n = 26	n = 15	n = 19	n = 28
Cost & Managerial	6 items	46.8	55.6	42.1	52.2
Tax	6 items	50.0	56.7	45.6	48.2
Financial	10 items	38.5	44.7	34.7	41.7
Business Law	6 items	42.3	36.7	43.0	32.0
Auditing	6 items	52.6	55.6	38.6	43.5
Systems	6 items	71.1	66.7	51.8	54.0
Overall	40 items	49.0	51.9	41.8	44.0

Note: The Spring 2000 ETS Exam scores are no longer displayed in this report because the results have been shown to be spurious. Answer sheets were miscoded because instructions were inaccurate. The ETS exam was administered again Spring 2001 and the scores were high, consistent with those for 1996 and 1998. The most recent ETS scores will be included in the department's next assessment report.