

MBA Program Assessment Report
University of Wisconsin – La Crosse
Summer 2009

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The College of Business Administration at UW-L introduced a completely new MBA core curriculum in Fall 2002. At the heart of our revision was the explicit recognition that narrowly defined, discipline-specific courses could not address the complexity of the challenges confronting managers in the 21st century. The business world is not a departmental world. Our revised core curriculum is intended to challenge students with problems that require them to address all relevant dimensions of key decisions in a new way. At the heart of the new model is an approach that requires students to integrate knowledge across functional disciplines. In short, our graduates have to respond to cluttered, complex, poorly-structured problems on a routine basis and the revised MBA program reflects this reality.

Redesigned MBA Core Curriculum

The redesigned core curriculum provides students with more fully integrated knowledge of effective management within those contexts regarded as most critical to their professional development. Approaching problem solving from a strategic perspective, students apply the concepts and tools as they are developing them. The core courses require them to analyze opportunities and problems from a cross-functional or integrative perspective, making decisions that enhance the competitiveness of the firm. This forum also provides the opportunity to develop and apply analysis and problem-solving skills within diverse contexts. Students are also challenged to address larger issues of concern, including the impact of managerial decisions on the environment, ethics and globalization. The MBA core curriculum is presented below.

BUS 730 Decision Framing and Decision Making in Complex Environments I

BUS 731 Decision Framing and Decision Making in Complex Environments II

BUS 735 Business Decision-Making Methodology and Research

BUS 750 Managing in an Environmentally and Socially Conscious World

BUS 755 Managing in a changing Technological Environment

BUS 760 Managing in a Global Environment

BUS 790 MBA Program Assessment

Included within the new MBA curriculum is an assessment module (BUS790). This one-credit course consists of a comprehensive assessment survey and capstone case activity which gives students an opportunity to reflect on their MBA experience as a whole. MBA Program Assessment (BUS 790) provides one final learning experience that will bestow a perspective of the MBA Program as a whole while allowing the MBA faculty and administration an assessment opportunity for evaluating and improving the program.

MBA Learning Outcomes

The seven learning outcomes originally identified by the CBA and repeatedly reviewed and ratified by the CBA Graduate Committee, with the most recent ratification being May 2008, are listed below.

I. Comprehensive knowledge of the functional areas

Graduates shall have a comprehensive knowledge of the functional areas. Comprehensive knowledge shall embody an understanding of the theoretical foundations and quantitative tools of each functional area, as well as the ability to apply this knowledge to actual problems.

II. Problem solving capabilities

Graduates shall be able to think laterally, critically, innovatively, creatively, and to make connections among diverse fields of study in analyzing problems.

III. Global perspective

Graduates shall have a global perspective based on an understanding of both the domestic and global environments of the organizations.

IV. Communication competency

Graduates shall be able to communicate effectively in writing and orally in ways appropriate for a variety of objectives and audiences.

V. Ability to manage information

Graduates shall have an understanding of the progress in information technology and be able to effectively integrate this change in their decision-making processes.

VI. Social Responsibility

Graduates shall understand the ethical and environmental ramifications of their decisions.

VII. Behavioral Skills

Graduates shall understand human behavior in organizations. They should have the ability to utilize leadership skills effectively, interact effectively in group situations, manage in culturally

diverse environments, help others develop their skills, resolve conflict effectively and act independently in low feedback environments.

Students enrolled in BUS790 are required to complete a comprehensive assessment questionnaire. Mean responses to Questions 1 through 25 for all students enrolled in BUS790 from Fall 2006 through Fall 2008 are included in Appendix 1.

Observations from the Assessment Survey

The questionnaire requires four responses to each of 25 questions. One pair of responses to each item required students to indicate their pre- and post- MBA Program *Competence* on a wide range of factors. Topics include critical thinking skills, the application of models to problem solving, social responsibility, globalization and effective communication. In addition to the self-assessment measures on competence, each student was also required to indicate any change in the perceived *Importance* attached to each of these topics on a pair of pre- and post- program measures. A summary of the mean responses to each item is provided in Appendix 1.

Responses to both the competence and importance measures are scored by students on a one-to-five scale. For the competence measures, a response of one indicated no significant competence and five indicated substantial competence. For the importance measures, a response of one indicated that the student attached no “real world” importance to the item and a response of five indicated substantial real world importance.

The most encouraging outcome from the analysis of these responses is that post- MBA Program measures were higher on both Competence and Importance measures for all 25 items.

The three items which demonstrated the greatest pre- and post-program difference in terms of *Competence* were:

6. Understand the ethical issues associated with the social responsibility of a business operating in a global environment (1.680 difference in pre- and post-measures)
10. Recommend and implement a choice of strategy for an organization (1.647)
16. Develop a comprehensive business plan (1.686).

The three items which demonstrated the least change in terms of *Competence* were:

12. Engage in lifelong learning to remain current in your chosen profession (.725)
17. Be comfortable using all the tools at your disposal including the Web (.863)
20. Understand the impact that different cultures have on international enterprise (.725)

The items which demonstrated the greatest self-reported change in terms of *Importance* were:

1. Apply abstract theories to practical business issues using critical thinking skills (1.490)
11. Explain the advantages, disadvantages and implementation problems of your recommendation (1.490)
19. Analyze firms based on subjective criteria such as ethics and human rights data (1.510)
25. Explain the interdependence between quality and innovation and the integration of the other functional areas of a business organization (1.490)

The three items which demonstrated the least change in terms of *Importance* were:

12. Engage in lifelong learning to remain current in your chosen profession (.314)
17. Be comfortable using all the tools at your disposal including the Web (.588)
23. Effectively communicate your positions using both oral and written presentations (.510)

Items 12 and 17 show relatively little change in terms of students' self-assessment on both the Competence and Importance measures. However, students' assessment of their competence prior to the MBA was initially higher on these two items at the outset than on any other items (3.725). The same effect holds for measures of importance where these two items were initially scored among the top three. Consequently, the apparent lack of substantive improvement on these two factors may be due in large part to a ceiling effect. That is, having been initially assessed at a relatively high level on the rating scale, there is simply less room at the top to indicate significant improvement. This "ceiling effect" may also account for the presence of Item 23 in the category of least change in terms of perceived importance.

In examining the means for all 25 of the measures assessed in this questionnaire, one item stands out as a potential problem area. Item 20 relates to understanding the impact that different cultures have on international enterprise. This is a critical issue and one that is closely related to the Global Perspective goals of the program. Students indicate that they initially have substantial competence on this topic prior to enrolling in the MBA program. However, the completion of the program does not seem to provide as much value-added on this issue as it contributes to others. This is especially concerning in light of the increase in the corresponding assessment of importance. This contrast is most obvious when looking at the results for Item 21 which addresses the impact of globalization on the firm.

Although the results for Item 20 indicate that the MBA program adds significant value to our students' understanding of the impact that cultures have on international business, there seems to be room for improvement. However, the reliability of this finding may be substantially biased by the structure of the program. Although the program website indicates that MBA Program Assessment (BUS790) is to be taken as the last course before graduation, the official course prerequisite is: "Completion, or in the final stages, of all other MBA program requirements." An estimate provided by the senior program administrator indicated that as many as 20% of all MBA students will complete BUS790 *before* taking the core international business class: Managing in a Global Environment (BUS760). Consequently, one recommendation that can be definitely made is to require that students complete 100% of the MBA core curriculum before being admitted to the assessment course.

Section II of the questionnaire asks only question: "How do you overall rate your satisfaction with the MBA program (Scale of 1-5, 1 = Poor, 5= Outstanding)." The mean response to this item was 3.97 over the period from Fall 2006 to Fall 2008. As with the other items using response scales, we regard these results as positive and very encouraging. Although student responses to the open-ended questions at the close of the survey have generally been positive as well, there are no clearly discernable patterns or trends in the specific content of the comments.

Observations from the Case-Based Capstone Activity

In addition to the questionnaire described above, students complete one case project in MBA 790. A variety of business strategy cases are used in this analysis, with random student assignment to one of 12 case studies and no more than two students in any semester given the same case. Harvard University's Harvard Business Publishing is the source of the cases.

Students are asked to evaluate the case in terms of the MBA Learning Outcomes. A copy of the assignment is provided in Appendix 2. The primary advantage of this process is that it provides the opportunity for both a direct analysis of student performance and indirect measures of the program. The direct measure consists of assessing whether students taking MBA 790 can apply the identified learning outcomes in a real world setting. The indirect aspect of this process is that students are asked to assess the extent to which the MBA curriculum has helped them complete this component of the case assignment. In contrast to the questionnaire which requires a numeric rating response, students completing the case-based assessment can describe how their task-specific performance was impacted by their experience in the MBA Program. Some illustrative examples of the student comments are presented in Appendix 3.

The case solutions submitted by students from Fall 2008 through Spring 2009 were evaluated in light of the MBA Learning Outcomes. The first step in the process was to create an MBA Outcome Assessment Rubric, which is furnished in Appendix 4. In the rubric, three levels of achievement for each learning outcome are identified. Ratings at the top of the range, Rank "3," required complete attainment of the desired outcome. Student responses graded as a "3" successfully applied the identified program learning outcome within the case context to the greatest extent possible. The bottom of the range, earning a score of "1," were instances wherein the student did not apply the knowledge identified in a learning outcome to answer the case. The middle-level grade, Rank "2," was assigned in instances where students demonstrated some knowledge and understanding commensurate with the

corresponding learning outcome, though the rater did not regard the student’s performance to be sufficient to earn the top rank.

Both direct and indirect measures assessing student attainment of desired learning outcomes were made. As shown in Appendix 4, the direct measures correspond to each of the seven MBA Program Learning Outcomes. Indirect measures were subjective, self-report assessments of the value of the MBA Program to each student in helping them complete the specific components of the case. If the student explicitly identified a specific aspect of the curriculum in response to the question, a score of “3” was assigned. If the student discussed the value of the curriculum in a general sense when completing their program-related commentary on a given measure, a rank of “2” was assigned. If a student failed to mention the MBA Program’s contribution or was critical of their education relative to a given outcome, a rank of “1” was assigned. Within the context of this report, scores of “1” are reported as failures.

Twenty-four student responses were evaluated by two raters on all seven learning outcomes, including both direct and indirect measures for all. The raters are James Finch, Ph.D., the MBA 790 professor and an evaluator of the MBA Consortium Program, and Thomas Krueger, D.B.A., MBA 731 co-instructor and chair of the CBA Graduate Committee. Both raters participated in the 2002 revision of the MBA program and have taught multiple courses in the program annually.

The raters made their initial judgments on the case write-ups independently. There were four instances in which the raters scores were differed significantly. That is, there were four instances where one rated an answer “1” and the other “3”. These were reconciled through a joint review of the students’ work.

Each rater submitted 336 ratings (24 students x 7 MBA Learning Outcomes x 2 types of measures for each outcome). Absolute inter-rater agreement for each rating was not required as part of the task. Table 1, found below, reports the mean rating score and the number of times each rater concluded that a response for one of the measures was insufficient relative to the assigned task (Rank = 1).

Table 1. Rater Assessment					
	Direct Assessment		Indirect Assessment		Overall Average
	Jim Finch	Tom Krueger	Jim Finch	Tom Krueger	
Average Outcome Rating	2.27	2.41	2.06	2.21	2.23
Frequency of a Rating of 1	9	25	33	44	27.75

In general, there was measurement consistency between the faculty members charged with rating the case write-ups. Average rating scores are within 0.14 points and 0.15 for direct and indirect assessment

measures respectively. The second rater (Tom Krueger) provided a higher average rating, but felt there were more instances where the case solution failed to meet the standard necessary for a rating of “2.” Direct measures of MBA Learning Outcomes garnered higher ratings and fewer instances of failure than indirect ratings. Stated another way, both raters felt that students were more capable of fulfilling the desired learning outcomes than they were able or willing to cite corresponding features of the curriculum. This discrepancy may be due, in part, to a lack of clarity in the task instructions.

Case-based results on an individual student basis are presented in Appendix 5. A summary of those findings is presented in Table 2. Two types of ratings are provided. Outcome Scores are the combined mean ratings assigned to each of the seven Learning Outcomes. Success Ratings reflect the percentage of students who successfully scored at the Rank 2 or Rank 3 level of competency on the specified Learning Outcome.

Table 2. Results of UW-La Crosse Learning Outcomes Assessment Based on Cases								
Learning Outcomes	Functional Tools	Problem Solving Skill	Global Perspective	Communication Competency	Information Management	Social Responsibility	Interpersonal Behavior	Average
Direct Measures								
Outcome Score	2.50	2.50	2.44	2.00	2.29	2.31	2.17	2.32
Success Rating	91.7	91.7	100.0	79.2	83.3	95.8	91.7	90.5
Indirect Measures								
Outcome Score	2.04	1.96	2.19	2.21	2.19	2.23	1.94	2.14
Success Rating	72.9	72.9	81.2	83.3	81.2	83.3	75.0	78.4

Learning Outcome Scores

The average outcome score for all 24 students in the sample is shown in the first two lines of the table above. A rating of “3” would be an indication that all students effectively used the knowledge identified in the MBA Learning Outcome to answer this problem. Some significant strengths and potential problems with the MBA Program are indicated by this analysis. The average direct measure outcome score across all seven measures was 2.32. The lowest average value is 2.00, for communication

competency. The learning outcomes with the three highest direct outcome scores were Functional Tools (2.50), Problem Solving (2.50) and Global Perspective (2.44).

When asking students for their *perceptions* of our program (indirect measures), the average score falls to 2.14. Some of this decline, however, may simply be due to students neglecting to indicate how their participation in the program enhanced their understanding in a given area. The lowest indirect score was on interpersonal behavior (i.e., leadership, management) with a 1.94 score. The highest indirect outcome scores were for Social Responsibility (2.23), Communication Competency (2.21) and Global Perspective (2.19).

Success Ratings

Success ratings identify the percentage of students that earned at least “2” on a given Learning Outcome measure. For instance, the success rating of 91.7 indicates that 91.7 percent (22 of 24) earned a rating of 2 or 3 for their ability to use functional skills to solve their assigned case.

The greatest range in UW-L’s graduate students is observed in terms of direct measures of MBA Learning Outcome knowledge. All of the students in the sample demonstrated a high level of Global Awareness, resulting in a success rating of 100.0%. By contrast, the success rating for Communication Competency was below 80%.

The indirect success rating of the MBA Learning Outcomes is lower, but values here should be considered with caution. In order to be rated above 1.0, students had to at least imply that their education helped them achieve the desired learning outcome. Some students provided much less input related to their coursework than others. For example, some only reflect on their UW-L graduate education in a couple paragraphs at the end of their case report, even though such summarization is not requested in the instructions. To the extent possible, the raters attempted to assign credit to the MBA Program where credit is stated, or implied by the students. However, as evident from Table 1, such assignment is not a precise science.

The MBA Program’s highest success rating was assigned to the delivery of programming tied to communication competency and social responsibility. Both outcomes had a success rating of 83.3. At the other extreme, a rating of 72.9 was obtained for the Functional Tools and Problem Solving outcomes. The former may be low because the current MBA Program does not have a discipline-based structure. It is also noteworthy that these two learning objectives exhibit the highest success rating scores using direct measures.

The one learning outcome which was the source of the widest and most far-reaching criticism was behavior skills. Students indicated that there was a pervasive lack of attention paid to issues related to leadership or the management of group dynamics. One possible explanation for this finding is that the faculty of the Management Department was not involved in the teaching of the Decision-Making classes prior to Spring 2008. As noted above, the behavioral skills outcome also had one of the lowest ratings when considering the direct measure’s outcome score.

Proposed Revisions

With the large number of MBA Programs available, and growth of online MBA programs, the only way for UW-La Crosse's MBA program to stand out is to make the optimal use of its available resources. In order to assess the meaning of the term "optimal," continued analysis of the learning objectives, program, and assessment process is necessary. Listed below are our suggestions in each one of these areas.

Proposed Re-Organization of the MBA Learning Outcomes and Assessment Procedures

Proposal 1. Re-Organize the current MBA Learning Outcomes in terms of the program's primary objective, corresponding thought processes and related action processes.

Primary Objective

Problem Solving Capabilities

Thought Processes

1. Comprehensive knowledge of functional areas
2. Global Perspective
3. Social Responsibility

Action Processes

1. Communication Competency
2. Ability to manage Information
3. Behavior skills

Although this revision does not alter the aggregate set of objectives, it clarifies the nature of the relationships between goals. Consequently, this new view of the program's intent and priorities should be useful in shaping subsequent revisions to the curriculum.

Proposal 2. Systematically review and revise, as needed, the BUS 790 assessment process.

The CBA Graduate Committee should periodically review the processes employed in BUS790. Issues to be addressed by the Committee should include the articulation of program learning outcomes, the priority assigned to specific outcomes and the appropriateness of the assessment rubric. Current students, recent graduates and members of the business community should be consulted for their feedback and potentially valuable contributions to the process. In addition, part of the review process should include the opportunity for Graduate faculty within the CBA to comment on the Learning Outcomes and assessment processes.

Proposal 3. Periodically map the MBA Learning Outcomes against the curriculum.

The CBA Graduate Committee should work with all faculty who have recently taught in the MBA program to map the programmatic learning objectives against the current curriculum. Of concern is how each of the core classes are designed to deliver content related to the program's objectives (direct assessment) and faculty perceptions of how their instruction complies with the MBA Learning Objectives (indirect assessment).

Proposal 4. Clarify the operationalization of "acceptable performance" within the context of the Case-Based Capstone Activity.

The CBA Graduate Committee needs to identify acceptable performance thresholds for each of the direct and indirect assessment measures used in BUS790. Several other accredited universities use a cutoff level of 80% performance. In terms of the Success ratings presented here, it is proposed that a value of at least 80% would be required to conclude that UW-L's MBA Program meets a specific learning outcome.

Proposal 5. Formalize the process such that a regular assessment of the MBA questionnaire responses and case solutions is performed each summer. The results would be sent to the CBA Associate Dean and distributed at the first meeting of the CBA Graduate Committee in the fall.

Proposal 6. Require that students complete a pre-program questionnaire regarding their ability and the perceived importance of various skills in BUS730 ... the first MBA class taken by most students. The same 25 items used in the BUS790 survey would be used for this task. This is intended to correct for any lapse in memory that may bias the results of the pre- and post- program BUS790 questionnaire.

Proposed Revision of the MBA Curriculum/Program

Proposal 7. Incorporate more explicit teaching and training in interpersonal behavioral skills – specifically topics in leadership.

This was the primary area identified as a programmatic weakness by the results of this assessment. The CBA Graduate Committee should be charged with developing the plan to remedy this deficiency.

Proposal 8. Increase the use of outside speakers to address behavioral skills and leadership topics.

The existing CBA Dean's Speakers program could be used to enhance the coverage of these areas through the selection of appropriate guests. The CBA could also consider the development of a modest Executive-in-Residence or guest lecturer program with a specific focus on these issues. The development of effective leaders is a noteworthy attribute of Viterbo University's MBA program. A collaborative arrangement with that institution may also be beneficial in this regard.

Proposal 9. Revision of the title of BUS 790

Both the original instructor of BUS 790, Professor Tom Kuffel, and current instructor, Professor Jim Finch, report that there is some dissention among students who feel that they are paying a tuition fee for the CBA to assess its program. This disenchantment may be impacting student performance on the assessment case. It is proposed that the title of BUS 790 be changed to Integrated Case Analysis. Furthermore, so that students get some feedback on their performance, it is expected that the BUS 790 instructor review the graded case with the students.

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 2

APPENDIX 3

APPENDIX 4

APPENDIX 5

APPENDIX 1

Assessment Survey: MBA Program at UW-L
Assessing The Integrated Business Knowledge of Graduating MBA's
Spring 2009

It is the intent of this survey to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to and of the MBA program. To this extent, these data will only be reported to the proper authorities in an aggregate format. No individual responses will be identified.

I. Each item in this section deals with a general, integrated business knowledge skill or knowledge area. For each item, make four judgments:

1. Your level of competence for that item prior to starting your MBA (Scale of 1-5, 1=none, 5=substantial).
2. Your level of competence for that item after completing your MBA (Scale of 1-5, 1=none, 5=substantial).
3. The level of importance in the "Real World" you would attach to each item prior to starting your MBA (Scale of 1-5, 1=none, 5=substantial).
4. The level of importance in the "Real World" you would attach to each item after completing your MBA (Scale of 1-5, 1=none, 5=substantial).

FOR EACH ITEM BELOW, DELETE EACH OF THE RESPONSE-SCALE NUMBERS EXCEPT THE ONES WHICH CORRESPOND TO YOUR RESPONSES.

The ability to:	Competence Prior to MBA	Competence After MBA	Importance Prior to MBA	Importance After MBA
1. Apply abstract theories to practical business issues using critical thinking skills.	2.882	4.373	3.412	4.510
2. Design/conduct research of a business issue employing quantitative analytical skills.	2.784	4.255	3.549	4.490
3. Apply contemporary business models in solving problems.	2.588	4.157	3.059	4.353
4. Be productive in multi-functional teams.	3.549	4.569	3.941	4.667
5. Analyze the environment, the industry and the competitors of the organization.	2.941	4.353	3.745	4.588
6. Understand the ethical issues associated with the social responsibility of a business operating in a global environment.	2.780	4.460	3.520	4.500
7. Effectively communicate from a multiple-functional and global perspective.	2.765	4.255	3.569	4.510
8. Understand how the social and economic aspects of public policy impact on a business.	2.824	4.078	3.608	4.431
9. Develop alternative strategies for a business from multiple sources.	2.627	4.235	3.373	4.490

The ability to:	Competence Prior to MBA	Competence After MBA	Importance Prior to MBA	Importance After MBA
10. Recommend and implement a choice of strategy for an organization.	2.608	4.255	3.490	4.588
11. Explain the advantages, disadvantages and implementation problems of your recommendation.	2.922	4.412	3.725	4.627
12. Engage in lifelong learning to remain current in your chosen profession.	3.725	4.451	4.157	4.471
13. Effectively use decision making tools, in the operation of your organization.	2.804	4.137	3.647	4.471
14. Interpret business issues from stakeholders perspective.	2.725	4.196	3.353	4.431
15. Plan and execute complex projects using project management tools.	2.412	3.784	3.353	4.294
16. Develop a comprehensive business plan.	2.216	3.902	3.529	4.471
17. Be comfortable using all the tools at your disposal including the Web.	3.725	4.588	4.059	4.647
18. Analyze firms based on objective criteria such as accounting or finance data.	2.588	4.118	3.647	4.588
19. Analyze firms based on subjective criteria such as ethics and human rights data.	2.451	3.961	3.157	4.392
20. Understand the impact that different cultures have on international enterprise.	3.490	4.216	3.412	4.392
21. Explain the impacts of different aspects of globalization on the organization.	2.529	4.118	3.333	4.392
22. Differentiate between policy and strategy decisions both domestically and internationally.	2.333	3.765	2.961	4.078
23. Effectively communicate your positions using both oral and written presentations.	3.431	4.529	4.255	4.765
24. Know when to develop effective solutions versus efficient solutions to problems.	2.725	3.902	3.902	4.196
25. Explain the interdependence between quality and innovation and the integration of the other functional areas of a business organization.	2.412	3.902	3.118	3.970

II. How do you overall rate your satisfaction with the MBA program (Scale of 1-5, 1=Poor, 5=Outstanding): _____

Please explain:

III. What is your rating of each of the individual MBA courses that you have completed (Scale of 1-5, 1=Poor, 5=Outstanding).

Course Rating Explanation (Please create additional lines/spaces as necessary)

IV. Demographics: (delete all of the response options that do not apply)

1. Gender M F

2. Age 20-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 Over 50

3. Primary functional work area: (indicate only one) Accounting, economics, finance, international business, information systems, management, marketing, other_____

4. Work out of the home during MBA Full time_____ Part time_____ Not working outside of home_____

Please provide the UWL College of Business Graduate Committee some input on this particular class.

1. How can this goal of assessment of you and the program be more efficiently achieved?

2. What would you suggest in lieu of this particular class?

3. Any additional comments you would like to make.

APPENDIX 2

BUS 790
MBA Program Assessment
Spring 2009

1. You will be assigned a case study to analyze.
2. The MBA program has seven programmatic learning outcomes
 - A. Comprehensive knowledge of the functional areas of business
 - B. Problem framing and solving capabilities
 - C. Global perspective
 - D. Communication competency
 - E. Ability to manage information
 - F. Social responsibility
 - G. Behavioral skills
3. Using the case study you've been assigned, supplemented by experiences you have had in the MBA program, demonstrate your competence in each of the seven areas listed above and identify how each of these outcomes have been addressed within the MBA program. You should be aware that your responses to these assessment tasks must meet the following criteria.
 - A. They must be realistic and honest
 - B. They will require judgment and creative/innovate thinking
 - C. They require that you do something or recommend action
 - D. They replicate or simulate real world contexts
 - E. They assess your ability to use a wide variety of skills and knowledge
 - F. They allow opportunities to perform, be evaluated and refine performances or products
4. As part of this exercise, you will also have the opportunity to indicate if any of the learning outcomes have not been addressed. Please be candid in your assessments.
5. This is a pass/fail class, but your ability and willingness to address each of the above concerns will impact heavily on this evaluation.
6. Case Analysis Format. In the first paragraph of your paper, identify the case you've been assigned and provide a brief abstract of the company and the situation it is confronting within the context of the case. The format of your responses to the case should be organized according to the seven program goals listed in #2 above. Each goal should be used as a separate section heading. Your paper should conclude with a summary evaluation of the MBA Program and your experiences relative to the program's objectives.

A general outline of the required paper is provided on the next page.

Sample Outline of BUS790 Case Analysis

Shanghai Volkswagen: Time for a Radical Shift of Gears
(Your Name Here)
BUS790

Shanghai Volkswagen (SVW) finds itself caught in swiftly changing external and internal environments. Factors that have been critical to its past success are either no longer relevant or quickly vanishing from the competitive marketplace. Although taking first-mover risks has rewarded Volkswagen with a dominant market position and high profitability, such dominance and profitability might not be sustainable in the long run as the competitive landscape is transformed. The central strategic issue confronting SVW is the value of first-mover advantages and disadvantages in global expansion, especially into emerging markets. This issue will shape the strategic positioning of the brand for many years to come. In addition, the case examines several other globalization issues including: localization vs. technology transfer, local partnership and governmental relations, and the effect of local industry policies on corporate performance and strategies.

Comprehensive knowledge of the functional areas of business.

Using the assigned case as a frame of reference, provide a thorough analysis which illustrates how the comprehensive knowledge of the functional areas of business that you've acquired in the MBA program enhances your understanding of the problems facing SVW and provides the means to identify a solution.

Problem framing and solving capabilities.

Using the assigned case as a frame of reference, provide a thorough analysis which illustrates how the problem framing and solving capabilities that you've acquired in the MBA program can be used to diagnose the problem(s) facing SVW and provide the means to identify a solution.

Global perspective.

How has the MBA program enhanced your perspective on global business and how does this relate to the challenges facing SVW?

Communication competency.

Explain how your professional communications skills have been enhanced in the MBA program and illustrate how this relates to your written analysis of this case.

Ability to manage information.

Explain how your ability to manage information has improved as the result of your involvement in the program and use the case to provide a concrete example, if possible.

Social responsibility.

What elements of social responsibility are relevant to this case? How do these issues relate to your experience with comparable issues within the context of the MBA curriculum?

Behavioral skills.

Examine the behavioral dimensions of this case. How do these issues relate to your experience with comparable issues within the context of the MBA curriculum?

Conclusion.

Provide a summary evaluation of the MBA Program and your experiences relative to the program's objectives.

As you develop your responses to this task, please keep our objectives in mind. We want to *see* the linkages between goals and outcomes. We want to be able to discern how the curriculum has enhanced your analytical and decision making abilities. So ... PLEASE be very transparent in explaining specifically how your experiences within the program have informed the analysis of the case study that you've been assigned.

This exercise is unlike any other you've encountered within the program. It is asking you to synthesize your unique evaluation of the MBA program with your analysis of a specific case study. We realize that this is not an easy task. At times, you'll rely on what you've learned within the program to inform your analysis of the case. At other times, you will need to utilize the case study to illustrate what you've learned in the program. There will certainly be times when the case has no obvious linkages that are directly related to one or more of the program goals we've asked you to address. This is intentional. This type of challenging, loosely defined problem is characteristic of those you will encounter most frequently throughout your professional lives.

It is very unlikely that the case you've been assigned *explicitly* addresses each of the seven programmatic learning outcomes that provide the centerpiece for the MBA curriculum. Consequently, you will need to extend your thinking and your analysis beyond the domain of the case per se. This represents the most frustrating and potentially the most valuable dimension of this assessment exercise. The way in which you're able to adapt and extend the range of your abilities to accomplish this type of task is another dimension of your abilities that we're endeavoring to measure. Problem solving is the heart of the MBA program. As stated above, this type of ambiguously defined problem is typical of those you will encounter most frequently throughout your professional lives.

And ... there may be times where you feel that you have not learned anything within the MBA program that has direct relevance to one of the MBA program's seven programmatic learning outcomes. Be honest and thorough in providing an explanation, if you feel that this is the case.

Paper Guidelines

Papers should be submitted electronically as Word documents. Submit them via email to: finch.jame@uwlax.edu. Please use 12-point type and single space each paragraph, double-spacing between paragraphs. Your name should appear on the first page of the paper only. Use your own judgment when formatting tables, graphs, references, etc.

There isn't a preferred page length for this task. Thorough responses to the seven goal sections can typically be confined to two pages each.

Grading

This is a pass/fail class, but your ability and willingness to address each of the above concerns will impact heavily on this evaluation. Your paper may be judged by more than one member of the faculty. All papers receiving a failing grade will be reviewed by two or more faculty before a failing grade is officially recorded.

APPENDIX 3

Student Assessment of Program

The students made a variety of worthy comments about the program. However, those comments did not appear to fit well into the body of this report. Hence, each rater chose several comments which we feel best describe students observations about the program.

Overall Value of MBA Education

Before the MBA program the knowledge that I would have based the majority of my decisions on, and the train of thought I would have used would have been management based. This program broadened my horizons. With each class I took I grew stronger at being able to apply what I Learned to actually solving a problem. Every time I read the case I tried to think about it from a different perspective....management....finance...until I had all the problems down I thought relevant.

Spring 2008

Every course I took involved writing papers, from analyzing case studies, to reviewing articles on business ethics, to researching and explaining radio frequency identification, to writing a proposal for an international market research project, to writing a project management plan, to writing a situation analysis of my company in the Capstone simulation. These courses stressed being thorough but concise when writing and recommending specific action when analyzing case studies. If I had not gone through the MBA program I would not have known where to begin analyzing the Starbucks case. Now I am quickly able to outline what needs to go into my paper and then fill in the outline with the important points.

Summer 2008

The flexibility in the program was also a big help to me completing my degree in two years while working full time. I know there are many programs at other Universities that would make this degree much harder to complete within this time frame.

Spring 2009

Beyond the Foundation classes, almost every core MBA class further built upon the fundamentals in the area of finance and accounting. In BUS730, a significant portion of the class was spent analyzing and learning about financial statements. In BUS731, the CAPSTONE business simulation was a practical way to learn about how business decisions affect financials. The simulation allowed the opportunity to make decisions regarding marketing, operations, inventory, target markets, and financing business operations. Several of my other classes, both core and elective, also required some elements of finance or accounting at some point in the class.

Fall 2008

Another aspect of the CBA program that is a great asset is the two-teacher setting. This conveys not only the sense of cross-functionality of different business areas, but it also allows students to be critiqued from two different perspectives....Even in classes with only one teacher, this variety of perspectives could be achieved by having outside speakers frequently come and speak to the class.

Spring 2008

UW-L MBA Learning Outcomes

Comprehensive knowledge of the Functional Areas

I think a little more could have been done around the functional areas of business, but just in the area of accounting and management. I appreciated the experience I had with the finance, the simulations for marketing and investing and the global business aspects but would have liked to see more done around accounting. Perhaps a class that breaks down financial statements and how to make decisions based on those statements would be helpful.

Spring 2009

The MBA program has also given me the ability to determine the financial strength and viability of a company. The program has given me the tools to quickly and effectively evaluate a company's stock price and make informed investment decisions. It has also afforded me the ability to determine the viability of a company. I find myself using the tools given to me through this program to evaluate potential vendors and potential business partners. For example, the current economic conditions have made it especially important to find financially viable suppliers. If the company's debt load is too high and there is a chance the company cannot service the debt, it may not be wise to purchase equipment from them. Warranties and continued customer service can be more important than price alone.

Spring 2009

Problems Solving Capabilities

One of the most useful tools I obtain from the MBA program is the decision-making procedure. I learn that one perspective may be good but not good enough. To make a thorough decision, I need to consider several dimensions of the problem, especially marketing, finance, and economy.

Summer 2008

For problem framing and solving, I thought the MBA program was very strong. I found the use of real-world cases to be the most effective.

Spring 2009

Global Perspectives

Working with diverse individuals in the various teams provided very valuable experience.

Summer 2008

The MBA program introduced me to the unique challenges of each of the world's marketplaces. It has made me aware of the differences of each market which include differences in the legal, technological, political, cultural, and ethical environments. The MBA program has given me the ability to not only recognize the differences in an international market, but has given me the ability to develop strategies to take advantage of the inherent differences.

Spring 2009

Communication Competencies

One of the greatest benefits that I have received is the ability to quickly analyze an issue, and then to effectively communicate my thoughts to anyone in my company.

Summer 2008

I feel the MBA program did an outstanding job in this area. The presentation of cases in front of classrooms challenges one to create relevant and interesting material to present to the class, as well as making one more comfortable speaking in front of groups. As leaders in the business world, it should be expected that we should be able to develop and communicate our ideas to groups and then defend those ideas. The amount of writing that is done by students, although staggering at times, was effective in improving writing skills.

Spring 2009

Ability to Manage Information

My project planning and communication skills are much improved and my clients have noticed. My proposals are better organized and more thorough; my methodologies better fit the business problem being researched; my reports are much more actionable and include helpful recommendations for clients; and my presentations better crystallize what top management needs to hear. Most of all, I have gained the confidence to really communicate with my clients and the knowledge to really understand their business problems.

Summer 2008

After taking the MBA program, I realized that if I continued searching, using and managing information the way I used to, I would not have enough time to complete my assignment, and I would not complete my assignment well either. My processes have been changed largely due to the fact that papers and cases in the MBA program require a better organization and deeper understanding level of the information presenting, especially after taking BUS 755. This class did not only help me to understand business applications of information system, but also help me to understand the important role of information management in MNCs.

Fall 2008

The MBA program has shown me just how powerful IT can be for a company. Information needs to be moved as fast as possible but also accurate and for the right reasons.

Spring 2009

The hardest part of finding the problem is eliminating the excess information to get to the real problem at hand.

Spring 2008

Social Responsibility

Before the MBA program I had never heard of corporate social responsibility, nor did I know that "business" was considered a profession of questionable morals.

Summer 2008

One area I had very little understanding of was the area of social responsibility. My experience with this program objective was exceptional. Having a class dedicated to social responsibility was invaluable.

Spring 202009

Behavioral Skills

One area that I felt could be addressed more thoroughly is the behavioral skills learning outcome. I just don't feel as though this topic was addressed throughout the program and as mentioned above I think it is an important topic. Another area that was lacking in the program is the topic of managing people. Much time is spent on marketing, finance and information systems which are all important topics but little consideration is given to the concept of how to manage people.

Summer 2008

An additional area that I believe should be addressed is leadership.

Spring 2009

Based on the program's stated learning outcome, this particular area is left to be learned experientially rather than instructionally. Certainly the program provides plenty of opportunity for interacting in group situations, utilizing leadership skills, and managing in culturally diverse environments (one of my favorite aspects of the program). However, we are left to our own devices to evolve those skills, and some people are unwilling to take an active role in developing their own management skills without a specific program requirement to meet. As a non-traditional student, I was routinely the de facto group leader on team projects when others in the group could have benefited more from taking on that role.

Spring 2008

One thing I am concerned about the MBA program is teamwork. I believe that every student in the MBA program is capable of solving educational matters. But some of them lack the ability to manage emotion and respect the other opinions. Thus, having a guideline to work as a team would be great to all MBA students. Actually, I even think that an official class that teaches the management of teamwork is the best solution.

Summer 2008

The concept of behavioral skills does not seem to me related to what I have learned through my MBA, at least not directly. What I mean is that this expression has not been mentioned once in any of the classes I attended, from what I remember, and I have not taken any classes in organizational behavior. I do not think my professors explained how behavioral skills could be key to a company's success. Literally, we haven't talked about behavioral skills in the MBA program but in reality, we have been using those on a daily basis. The need for technical skills was only marginal. A person's behavior is a person's actions and they are (usually) controlled by a thinking process as well as beliefs or feelings. It appears that behavior is the root of any successful or unsuccessful development. As opposed to technical skills, behavioral skills are learned through life experiences and not through education or on the job training. Behavioral skills are the "processes or control laws that use the technical competencies to achieve and maintain goals".

Summer 2008

I learned from the MBA program that a successful leader should see the opportunities presented by changes in the business environment to strengthen his company. I strongly believe that my experience in the MBA program made me a more effective leader.

Summer 2008

Case Study Method

The case study (method) may not be as useful as the real experience because it is a simulation-based model. Rather, I would like to see more realistic coursework in the MBA program. In addition, I observe that many courses do not encourage a student to take systematic approach to solve a problem. I particularly admire BUS760 because the professors identify the students' weaknesses and directly inform the students. I think that it would be great if all courses are more enthusiastic about notifying and encouraging the students to use systematic thinking.

Summer 2008

The learning techniques that I feel have enhanced these skills the most were the use of the Harvard Business Cases.

Summer 2008

The classes I enjoyed the most were classes with discussions and debates. I love to hear other peoples' opinions and experiences and how they handled certain situations. These discussions have helped me out a great deal in my current position and will most likely benefit me in future situations as well.

Spring 2009

Value of MBA 731 Simulation

During the MBA program a good example of experienced gained that is similar to the Starbucks case of continued and sustained growth while answering to shareholders was the business simulation used in BUS 731. The simulation provided valuable experience in the areas of market positioning, financial decision making, resource allocation, and growth strategies. Our team chose a similar path as Starbucks with a balanced approach in several different areas with one base product or brand.
Spring 2008

The case study (method) may not be as useful as the real experience. Rather, I would like to see more realistic coursework in the MBA program.
Summer 2008

I felt that the simulations used in the program were some of the best learning tools. These allowed groups to make decisions, see results from these decisions and act accordingly.
Spring 2009

I did struggle at times to find value in some of the simulations we did but I do understand their significance.
Spring 2009

The CAPSTONE project used in BUS731 was a great example of how teams have to work together to collectively make decisions and manage an organization.
Fall 2008

Consortium-based Electives

I feel that the use of the consortium for offering additional courses is a wise choice for the program. I would like to see this expanded to include additional classes and give more diversity to the program.
Spring 2009

Suggestions for Improvement

Emphasis

It would be nice if the MBA program would include an emphasis. Although we are given the opportunity to take electives, it would be nice for me to be able to say that I have an emphasis in Human Resource Management.
Spring 2009

I think the MBA program has a good strong focus on marketing, finance, and information technology but for some areas, like operational management, accounting, and human resource management, I think it falls short. I also would have liked to see some coursework dedicated to leadership development. While there were some online courses available for these areas as electives, I often found the offerings to be limited.
Spring 2009

New Course Suggestion: Economics

If I had to make a recommendation for the program, it would be to make a graduate level economics course a requirement, instead of an elective. Although it is a requirement to have undergraduate economics to get into the program, a deeper understanding of micro and macroeconomic principles can be applied to business decisions to simplify seemingly complicated problems. Many business problems can be broken down into fundamental economic issues of supply and demand, opportunity cost, production advantage, etc. I feel strongly that I gained significant benefit from the elective graduate economics class that I took in the MBA program and think that others would see this benefit as well.
Summer 2008

The law of supply and demand was fascinating. I am so glad I learned that. Also the concepts of macro and micro economics, and how smaller regional areas could be semi-independent in their economies and yet intertwined with larger economies. When leading a business it is important to know that a “rising tide” floats all boats. General economic conditions can not be ignored; they can be as powerful as your own marketing, product and sales programs.

Summer 2008

I would like the program to incorporate economics into the core MBA program. When I played the stock simulation, the economic and financial pieces are almost equally important in determining the buying or selling. Economies are also important to top managers because they are helpful in understanding the big picture of the situation.

Summer 2008

Appendix 4 Assessment Rubric

DIRECT MEASURES

Measures of ability to solve case-posed problems/dilemmas

(Indirect Measures Rubric at bottom of Rubric)

Learning Outcomes	Rating Criteria
Comprehensive Knowledge of Functional Area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Demonstrates a knowledge of the theoretical foundations and quantitative tools in the case's relevant functional areas 2. Refers to either theoretical foundations or quantitative tools in the case's relevant functional areas 1. Inappropriately uses the theoretical foundations and quantitative tools in the case's relevant functional areas
Problem Solving Capability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Case problems will be solved using deductive reasoning and critical analysis of the key issues in a case, bringing together aspects from a variety of functional areas 2. Case problems are solved through deductive reasoning or critical analysis bringing together some of the necessary aspects of the underlying functional areas 1. Case problems are not effectively solved
Global Perspective	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Students are able to identify, compare and contrast domestic and international aspects of the case as they exist 2. Students are able to note the existence of a domestic and international aspect, though the analysis does not include any detailed analysis thereof 1. Students do not have a global perspective
Communication Competency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Students are able to effectively communicate objective facts and subjective opinions in both written and oral form 2. Students are able to effectively communicate facts, without the ability to think beyond the facts to the implications thereof or postulate an results 1. Students are unable to communicate competently
Ability to Manage Information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Students are able to acquire data from a variety of sources using up-to-date technology that consists of both original data and secondary opinions regarding the case 2. Students are able to use the case-based information to come up with an appropriate case response and augment the information there with a limited amount of information from secondary sources 1. Students are unable to obtain data external to the original case itself to solve the problem posed by the case.

<p>Social Responsibility</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Students demonstrate an awareness of the ethical and environmental ramifications of case-related business decisions and articulate a social responsibility 2. Students note that an ethical or environmental ramification exists for a case-related business decision. 1. Students do not observe an ethical or environmental ramification for a case-related business decision.
<p>Behavioral (Leadership, Management) Skills</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Students will describe how leadership skills are necessary to solve a case related business problem, that could deal with issues such as group dynamics, culturally-diverse environments, conflict resolution, training, and gathering feedback. 2. Students will mention the importance of leadership without specifying how managers can take leadership roles to solve a case problem. 1. Students to not report on the importance of effective leadership as a key to solving the case problem.
<p>Indirect Measures</p> <p>Given that there the BUS 790 cases ask students to assess the extent to which UW-La Crosse’s MBA Program provides each learning outcome, the indirect assessment measure is a subjective assessment of how the program meets the learning objectives.</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Identifies the MBA Program as significant resource and method of reaching the specified learning objective. 2. Provides only enough coverage to the MBA Program to adequately answer the item in the BUS 790 Case Analysis Project, reflecting on the MBA Program in a positive light. 1. Does not mention ways in which the MBA Program assisted in reaching the learning objective, or reports that participation in the MBA Program did not help reach the intended goal. 	