

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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## Interoffice Communication

Date: January 31, 2002

To: College of Business Curriculum Committee  
College of Business DEOs

From: James C. McElroy  
Associate Dean

Re. Results of Alumni Assessment Surveys

Fall semester, 2001, I sent out an assessment survey to a stratified random sample of approximately 900 alumni who graduated with a B.S. degree in business (approximately 150 from each major) three to five years ago. This time frame was selected to allow respondents some time for reflection on the role of their education on their career. Similarly, surveys were sent to a random sample of 300 graduates of the MBA program from this same (3-5 year since graduation) timeframe. In this initial survey, the graduate survey was limited to the MBA program due to the few numbers of graduates in the MS in Business and the newness of the MAcc and MS-IS programs. Response rates were 26% (232 of 893) for the undergraduate alumni and 20% (59 out of 300) for the MBA alumni. While higher response rates might have been obtained with follow-up techniques, a 20% response rate is not uncommon in traditional survey research.

This represents the first such outcome assessment of our alumni and was called for by the College Task Force on Student Outcomes Assessment (spring, 2000). Conducting such surveys every three years, using the same time frame will allow us to monitor how our graduates assess their educational experience in the College of Business. Future surveys of our graduate program alumni will need to be revised to include our new graduate programs.

Attached are two reports, one for the undergraduate alumni and one for the alumni of our graduate program. These reports contain quantitative data as well as respondent written comments. You are urged to share these with your faculty. (To save paper, you may want to distribute the quantitative data and retain the written comments for those who are interested.)

c: Labh Hira  
Gary Koppenhaver  
Ann Farni  
Graduate Programs Office

## Undergraduate Alumni Survey Fall 2001

### Summary of Results

Given the rating scale used in the survey (4-point scale), a goal of the college should be to achieve an average rating of "3" (good or somewhat satisfied) on each rated item. Using this as a criterion, results of the survey (See Table 1.) of our undergraduate program alumni suggests that we do a particularly good job at developing teamwork skills and an appreciation of the role of technology. Moreover, alumni reported being satisfied with their overall education, job preparation and the impact of their education on their career. Items with average ratings below "3" include the role of ethics, global issues, the role of external forces, and diversity.

Results (Table 1) are also presented by major, although the sample sizes for Management (Entrepreneurship & Strategy and Human Resources) and POM are too small to place much confidence in the results for those majors. What is interesting is that the pattern of results for each major is consistent with those for the college as a whole.

Finally, included in the alumni survey was a set of questions designed to assess alumni perceptions of their major coursework. These items, developed by each major, are identical to the items included in the annual survey of graduating seniors. Assuming our goal is to achieve an average rating of "3" on these items, faculty are encouraged to examine the results for each major (See Table 2) and determine (a) whether the items used are representative of the outcomes desired for their majors and, if so, (b) the implications of low ratings for a given curriculum. As noted above, results for majors with small sample sizes should be viewed with caution.

### Comparison of Alumni Results with Graduating Senior and Recruiter Results

To put the results of this initial alumni survey into context, this section compares the alumni results with other assessment efforts; namely, the annual surveys of graduating seniors and recruiters. While these data have been distributed under separate cover, a summary table is included here. As shown in Table 3, alumni tend to rate their skill development more consistently at or above "3" than do graduating seniors, although the areas of ethics, global, and diversity are consistently rated below "3" for both groups. In addition, alumni reported higher levels of satisfaction with their overall education and job preparation than do graduating seniors. Finally, recruiters tend to report more favorable ratings for our students than students do for themselves. This is particularly true in the areas of ethics and computer proficiency.

Departments are encouraged to compare the results for the items that assess outcomes per major between the alumni survey included in Table 2 and major data distributed earlier. (See the graduating senior survey results report, distributed September 4, 2001.)

Table 1  
College of Business Outcome Assessment  
Undergraduate Alumni Survey, Fall 2001  
Overall Assessment of Program  
(N=232)

Assessment Dimension	Total (n=232)	Acct (n=44)	Finance (n=30)	Mgmt (n=14)	HRM (n=7)	MIS (n=40)	MKT (n=45)	POM (n=14)	TrLog (n=38)	
<b>The COB helped you understand...</b>										
Role of Ethics	<b>2.83</b>	2.88	2.80	2.64	2.71	2.85	2.73	2.64	3.03	
Global Issues	<b>2.67</b>	2.64	2.57	2.71	3.00	2.73	2.58	2.79	2.70	
Role of Technology	<b>3.21</b>	3.37	3.10	3.36	3.57	3.35	2.96	3.21	3.18	
Role of External forces	<b>2.90</b>	2.90	3.03	2.71	2.86	2.87	2.91	3.00	2.88	
Role of Diversity	<b>2.71</b>	2.71	2.93	2.57	2.86	2.68	2.64	2.71	2.70	
Teamwork	<b>3.44</b>	3.51	3.40	3.07	3.43	3.50	3.33	3.50	3.55	
Oral Communication	<b>3.09</b>	3.12	2.97	2.93	3.43	3.10	2.96	3.43	3.20	
Written Comm.	<b>3.10</b>	3.10	2.93	2.94	3.43	3.08	3.18	3.36	3.10	
Computer Proficiency	<b>3.15</b>	3.24	3.10	3.07	3.29	3.23	2.98	3.14	3.23	
Analytical Skills	<b>3.19</b>	3.37	3.17	3.07	3.00	3.35	3.00	3.14	3.15	
1-4 Scale: 1= poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=excellent										
<b>Satisfaction with...</b>										
Overall Education	<b>3.46</b>	3.51	3.37	3.36	3.14	3.50	3.44	3.50	3.55	
Job Preparation	<b>3.21</b>	3.22	3.13	3.00	3.14	3.23	3.29	3.29	3.23	
Impact on Career		<b>3.30</b>	3.32	3.70	3.07	2.86	3.33	3.20	3.21	3.25
1-4 Scale: 1=very dissatisfied, 2=somewhat dissatisfied, 3=somewhat satisfied, 4=very satisfied										

Table 2  
College of Business Outcome Assessment  
Undergraduate Alumni Survey, Fall 2001  
Assessment of Major

How well has your coursework in \_\_\_\_\_ helped in your understanding of:  
(1-4 scale: 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=excellent)

**Accounting (N=44)**

	How accounting information is used in the decision making process?	
<b>2.91</b>	Basic tax concepts.	<b>2.89</b>
	Basic auditing concepts.	<b>3.09</b>
	Accounting information systems.	<b>2.52</b>
	Cost concepts and analysis.	<b>2.93</b>
	Preparation & interpretation of financial statements.	<b>3.02</b>

**Finance (N=30)**

	How to apply tools & techniques for financial analysis.	<b>2.90</b>
	Investments and portfolio analysis.	<b>2.67</b>
	The operation of financial markets.	<b>2.87</b>
	The role of financial institutions in the economic system.	<b>3.07</b>

**Management (Entrepreneurship & Strategy) (N=14)**

	Identifying and assessing new business opportunities.	<b>2.36</b>
	Developing a business plan.	<b>2.07</b>
	Determining a company's competitive strategy.	<b>2.50</b>
	Growing & managing new businesses.	<b>2.43</b>
	Assessing & solving entrepreneurial & management problems.	<b>2.79</b>

**Management (Human Resources) (N=7)**

	People as employees, how they are different & how they should be managed.	<b>2.57</b>
	Issues involved in attracting the right people.	<b>2.71</b>
	Developing an organization's human resources.	<b>2.14</b>
	The role of leadership & motivation in managing employees.	
<b>2.43</b>	The legal environment surrounding the HR function.	<b>2.71</b>
	Compensation & benefit packages/practices.	<b>2.14</b>

**MIS (N=41)**

	Existing & emerging information technologies.	<b>2.78</b>
	How to analyze business processes & their information needs.	<b>3.17</b>
	Develop technical specifications & project plans for IS solutions.	<b>2.90</b>
	Develop IS applications using modern programming languages.	<b>2.63</b>
	Data base systems for business applications.	<b>2.83</b>
	Data communications & networking technologies.	<b>2.29</b>

Table 2  
Assessment of Major: continued

How well has your coursework in \_\_\_\_\_ helped in your understanding of:  
(1-4 scale: 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=excellent)

**Marketing (N=45)**

Consumer needs, attitudes and behaviors.	3.27
Market segmentation and targeting.	3.09
Market positioning.	3.07
Brand management.	2.96
Role of the sales force.	2.98
Customer satisfaction.	3.13
Marketing research tools & methods.	2.98

**Production Operations Management (N=14)**

2.36	Implementation & evaluation of manufacturing information software.	
	Forecasting, planning & forecast control.	3.21
	Capacity planning (e.g., RRP, CRP)	3.07
	Bills of material structures, bar coding, & EDI	2.86
	Manufacturing and enterprise resource planning.	3.07
	Lean manufacturing (e.g., JIT production)	3.43
	Theory of constraints.	3.07
	Inventory management.	3.43

**Transportation and Logistics (N=38)**

Transportation management.	3.18
Inventory management.	3.18
Warehousing management.	3.00
Purchasing & materials management.	2.85
Cost concepts & analysis.	2.93
International logistics.	2.70

Table 1  
College of Business Outcome Assessment  
Graduate Alumni Survey, Fall 2001  
(N=59)

Assessment Dimension	Total	Full-time Program	Part-Time Program	Specializ-	General ation in
MBA Degree	(N=59)	(N=22)	(N=37)	(N=36)	(N=23)
<b>The COB helped you Acquire skills in ...</b>					
Leadership	<b>3.81</b>	3.68	3.89	3.61	4.13
Teamwork	<b>3.92</b>	3.91	3.92	3.86	4.00
Oral Communication	<b>3.83</b>	3.73	3.89	3.81	3.87
Written Comm.	<b>3.75</b>	3.50	3.89	3.64	3.91
Computer Proficiency	<b>3.32</b>	3.55	3.19	3.19	3.52
Analytical Skills	<b>3.98</b>	3.95	4.11	3.86	4.17
<b>Satisfaction with...</b>					
Overall Education	<b>4.03</b>	3.77	4.19	3.92	4.22
Impact on Career	<b>3.83</b>	3.68	3.92	3.75	
Use of Teams	<b>3.86</b>	3.55	4.05	3.86	3.87
Lock-step	<b>4.02</b>	3.91	4.08	3.94	4.13
Quality of Instruction	<b>3.90</b>	3.64	4.05	3.81	4.04
<b>Importance of coursework To your career...</b>					
Business Strategy	<b>3.90</b>	3.59	4.08	3.89	3.91
Accounting	<b>3.22</b>	3.14	3.27	3.06	3.48
Finance	<b>3.53</b>	3.45	3.57	3.42	3.70
Org. Behavior	<b>3.64</b>	3.36	3.81	3.47	3.91
Operations Mgmt	<b>3.36</b>	2.86	3.65	3.28	3.48
MIS	<b>3.33</b>	3.50	3.22	3.39	3.23
Marketing	<b>3.68</b>	3.64	3.70	3.67	3.70
International Business	<b>2.59</b>	2.59	2.59	2.61	2.57
Ethics/Soc. Responsibility	<b>3.46</b>	3.50	3.43	3.44	
Economics	<b>3.49</b>	3.36	3.57	3.50	3.48
Statistics	<b>3.31</b>	3.50	3.19	3.33	3.26

1-5 Scale: 1=not effective; 2=somewhat ineffective; 3=neutral; 4=somewhat effective; 5=very effective  
 very dissatisfied    dissatisfied    neutral    satisfied    very satisfied  
 not important    slightly important    moderately important    important    very important

**Table 3**  
**Comparison of Undergraduate Alumni Results Fall 2001**  
**With Graduating Senior and Recruiter Survey Results**

Assessment Dimension	Alumni Survey (n=232)	Graduating Senior Surveys			Recruiter Surveys		
		2001 (N=95)	2000 (N=294)	1999 (N=278)	2001 (N=30)	2000 (N=74)	1999 (N=30)
<b>The COB helped you understand...</b>							
Role of Ethics	<b>2.83</b>	2.87	2.82	2.97	3.54	3.36	3.29
Global Issues	<b>2.67</b>	2.88	2.91	2.96	2.77	2.97	3.00
Role of Technology	<b>3.21</b>	3.34	3.26	3.19	3.26	3.41	3.34
Role of External forces	<b>2.90</b>	3.04	3.00	3.02	2.88	3.00	2.95
Role of Diversity	<b>2.71</b>	2.89	2.69	2.82	2.92	3.14	3.05
Teamwork	<b>3.44</b>	3.18	3.32	3.46	3.56	3.37	3.45
Oral Communication	<b>3.09</b>	2.98	3.01	3.16	3.22	3.11	3.27
Written Comm.	<b>3.10</b>	2.97	2.95	3.10	3.13	3.12	2.98
Computer Proficiency	<b>3.15</b>	2.96	2.96	3.06	3.29	3.41	3.40
Analytical Skills	<b>3.19</b>	3.06	3.01	3.00	2.96	3.23	3.23

1-4 Scale: 1= poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=excellent

<b>Satisfaction with...</b>							
Overall Education	<b>3.46</b>	3.19	3.27	3.17			
Job Preparation	<b>3.21</b>	2.96	2.96	3.05			
Impact on Career		<b>3.30</b>					

1-4 Scale: 1=very dissatisfied, 2=somewhat dissatisfied, 3=somewhat satisfied, 4=very satisfied

## Graduate Alumni Survey Fall 2001

### Summary of Results

Table 1 shows the results of the initial survey of alumni of our MBA program who have been out of school 3-5 years. Results are shown for the total sample of 59 responses plus a breakdown of responses by whether the alumni were enrolled in the full or part time program (in this case the Saturday MBA) and whether they completed a "specialization" as part of their degree program or opted for a general MBA. Three general observations stand out. (Please note that these data are on a 1-5 scale as opposed to the undergraduate survey's 1-4 scale.)

First, while only one average response for the total sample falls below the neutral rating of "3" (the importance of international business to their career), only two ratings surpassed a "4" on the five point scale. The two items receiving the highest marks were satisfaction with their overall education and satisfaction with the lock-step, cohort nature of the program.

Second, those graduating from the Saturday MBA program were more positive about the program and their experiences in it than were those graduating from the full-time program. Some of these differences were more dramatic than others. For example, part-time program alumni were more satisfied with their overall education, the use of teams, and the quality of instruction than were full-time program alumni. Part-time alumni also reported a greater acquisition of written communication skills as a result of the program and experienced greater value from the business strategy, organizational behavior, and operations management than did full-time program alumni. There were some notable exceptions to this trend, however. For example, full-time program alumni reported greater skill development in computer proficiency and a greater importance of MIS and statistics to their careers than did part-time program alumni.

Third, students pursuing the general MBA, as opposed to obtaining a specialization, reported greater skill acquisition, greater satisfaction and found the coursework more important to their careers. This trend was most notable for the acquisition of leadership skills and written communication and their perceptions of the value of accounting, finance and organizational behavior to their careers.

### Comparison of Graduate Alumni Results with Yearly Exit Survey Data

Table 2 provides a comparison of the average responses of the 59 alumni of our MBA program with data collected from students as they graduate from our program (exit surveys). While the yearly exit surveys include data from all graduate programs (e.g., MS in Business), the vast majority of these responses will be from graduates of our MBA programs. In reflecting back on their education after 3-5 years, alumni reported higher levels of leadership skills learned in the program and were more satisfied with their overall education, with the lock-step nature of the program, and with the quality of instruction than were students responding to the same issues as they completed the graduate program. As one might expect, alumni had differing opinions on the

importance of courses to their career (some more favorable, some less favorable) than did graduate students completing the exit surveys.

Table 2  
Comparison of Graduate Alumni with Yearly Exit Surveys

Assessment Dimension	Graduate Alumni Fall 2001 (N=59)	Exit '00-01 (N=59)	Exit Survey '99-00 (N=63)	Exit Survey
<b>The COB helped you</b>				
<b>Acquire skills in ...</b>				
Leadership	3.81	3.00	3.53	
Teamwork	3.92	3.96	3.65	
Oral Communication	3.83	4.00	3.73	
Written Comm.	3.75	3.88	3.77	
Computer Proficiency	3.32	3.73	3.45	
Analytical Skills	3.98	na	na	
<b>Satisfaction with...</b>				
Overall Education	4.03	3.38	3.32	
Impact on Career	3.83		na	na
Use of Teams	3.86	3.55	3.70	
Lock-step	4.02	3.72	2.98 <sup>1</sup>	
Quality of Instruction	3.90	3.50	3.34	
<b>Importance of coursework</b>				
<b>To your career...</b>				
Business Strategy	3.90	3.88	4.16	
Accounting	3.22	3.65	3.63	
Finance	3.53	4.13	4.14	
Org. Behavior	3.64	3.53	3.24	
Operations Mgmt	3.36	3.33	3.19	
MIS	3.33	3.73	3.87	
Marketing	3.68	3.64	3.77	
International Business	2.59	3.07	na	
Ethics/Soc. Responsibility	3.46		3.31	3.19
Economics	3.49	3.73	3.71	
Statistics	3.31	3.44	3.41	

1-5 Scale: 1=not effective; very dissatisfied not important; 2=somewhat ineffective; dissatisfied slightly important; 3=neutral; neutral moderately important; 4=somewhat effective; satisfied important; 5=very effective; very satisfied very important

<sup>1</sup> Graduates completing the exit surveys in 1999-00 took the 1 credit core modules.