

The University of Southern Mississippi

Detailed Assessment Report

As of: 9/30/2013 10:13 AM EST

2012-2013 Accounting BSBA*

(Includes those Action Plans with Budget Amounts marked One-Time, Recurring, No Request.)

Mission / Purpose

Supporting the missions of the University of Southern Mississippi and the College of Business, the School of Accountancy has its own unique mission.

The School of Accountancy's mission is to provide a quality educational experience for accounting students in the Gulf South region enrolled in the Bachelor's and Master's degree level programs. This educational experience includes mastering technical skills and professional competencies, and extends beyond the classroom to include interacting with the accounting and business community. An integral part of this mission is to prepare students for launching a successful career in the accounting profession.

To accomplish this mission, the School of Accountancy strives to produce BSBA graduates who are competent in entry-level business and accounting positions, and have the educational background necessary for advancement in public, corporate, and governmental accounting organizations. The curriculum includes the breadth and depth of business and accounting knowledge as well as the professional skills needed to ensure that graduates of the program possess the competencies necessary to succeed in these organizations.

As the knowledge required to practice accounting is expanding rapidly, qualified students are encouraged to pursue a fifth year of study leading to a Master of Professional Accountancy (MPA). The BSBA accounting curriculum is integrated with the MPA program. MPA graduates are especially prepared for careers in public accounting, and meet the course and credit hour requirements to sit for the nationally administered Certified Public Accountant examination. See the *Graduate Bulletin* for MPA admission and curriculum requirements.

The accounting program also provides quality accounting education to non-accounting students who choose to increase their knowledge of accounting.

School of Accountancy faculty are actively engaged in academic, professional and pedagogical research to advance the accounting discipline, the accounting profession, and accounting education. Through research and professional development, accounting faculty continuously hone their professional skills while ensuring curricular material is both current and relevant. Faculty also fulfill institutional and professional service

responsibilities, establishing and maintaining close ties with accounting firms located within the Gulf South region, thereby enabling the School of Accountancy to better serve this important constituency.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Communicate Effectively in Writing

Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively in writing.

Related Measures:

M 1: Writing skills on case solutions

Writing skills on case solutions are evaluated using rubrics in the following financial accounting courses: ACC 325 (one case), ACC 327 (two cases), and ACC 401 (two cases).

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

The rubrics used to assess writing skills will measure key traits such as problem identification, grammar usage, depth of analysis, writing style, etc. Assessment of students' performances will be made within each financial accounting course. For courses with more than one case assignment, the assessment rubric will be applied to the final case of the semester.

For **ACC 325 in Hattiesburg**, the rubric assessing writing skills will evaluate the students' performances along four attributes considered important for effective written communication. For each trait, a student's performance will be scored in one of three levels (i.e., needs improvement=1, proficient=2, or exceeds expectations=3). The **coast ACC 325** class is taught by a different instructor than in Hattiesburg. The coast instructor administered a different case and rubric for evaluating writing skills than the ones used in Hattiesburg. The coast rubric will measure a single trait reflecting writing skills. This trait will capture a student's "ability to communicate the response succinctly and effectively in written form." Individual students will be assessed on this trait as follows: did not meet expectations=1 met expectations=2 exceeded expectations=3. Because writing skills progress across the accounting curriculum and because it is anticipated that students entering the accounting major (i.e., ACC 325) will not demonstrate proficient writing skills, the assessment of writing skills in ACC 325 will be used as a baseline for measuring subsequent improvement. Therefore, no achievement target will be assigned to ACC 325.

ACC 327 is taught by the same instructor on both campuses, and he uses the same cases and rubrics to evaluate writing skills at both locations. ACC 327 follows ACC 325 in the sequence of accounting courses. In ACC 327 the instructor will provide

students with a summary of basic grammar rules and will instruct them on how to prepare appropriate written solutions to accounting cases. On the second and final case in ACC 327, students will be evaluated along four traits (i.e., problem identification, grammar, professional presentation, and writing style). Each trait will be assessed as follows: needs improvement=1 proficient=2 exceeds expectations=3. The achievement target will have been met if the mean score for all traits assessed equals or exceeds 2.0 (proficient).

ACC 401 (which follows ACC 327 in the financial accounting sequence) is taught by the same instructor on both campuses, and he will use a rubric for evaluating writing skills similar to the one used by the ACC 327 instructor and Hattiesburg ACC 325 instructor. The achievement target will have been met if the mean score for all traits assessed equals or exceeds 2.0 (proficient)

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Introduction - ACC 325, 327, 401

ACC 325, 327, and 401 are sequential financial accounting courses, and the research in these courses involves a common online database, the Accounting Standards Codification. The ACC 325 and 327 instructors used a common rubric; the ACC 401 instructor used a different rubric for assessment.

ACC 325

The ACC 325 Assessment is conducted only to provide a longitudinal baseline for student performance in subsequent courses (i.e., ACC 327 and 401). This is the students' initial exposure to accessing the FASB database; we anticipate a significant percentage of them will routinely score below expectations. Different instructors taught ACC 325 on the Hattiesburg and Coast campuses; however, the assigned instructor did not vary from one year to the next, as each instructor taught on his/her respective campus in both the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 academic years. In ACC 325, a single case assigned was evaluated for baseline assessment purposes; Each student was scored on four key traits (problem identification, grammar usage, professional presentation, and writing style). ACC 325 assessment results appear below:

2011 - 2012				
ACC 325	Hattiesburg n = 45		Coast n = 15	
Attribute	Mean	% Below Expectations	Mean	% Below Expectations
Problem identification	1.64	28.9	1.87	13.3
Grammar	1.80	28.9	1.73	26.7
Professional presentation	1.62	46.7	1.60	40.0
Writing style	1.65	42.2	1.67	33.3

2012 - 2013				
	Hattiesburg n = 32		Coast n = 22	
Attribute	Mean	% Below Expectations	Mean	% Below Expectations
Problem identification	1.96	37.5	1.82	18.18
Grammar	2.03	25.0	1.64	36.36
Professional presentation	1.91	43.7	1.73	27.27
Writing style	2.06	25.0	1.77	22.72

Use of Results & Recommendations - ACC 325

As anticipated and observed in prior years, students in the ACC 325 current year underperformed - relative to their ACC 327 and ACC 401 counterparts - on the writing attributes assessed in ACC 325. This ACC 325 assessment was first added to ACC 325 in 2009-2010 as a result of an AOL 2007-2008 report recommendation, and was added specifically to facilitate a longitudinal assessment of student performance during their undergraduate careers for significant improvement across courses. The reported results in the intervening years support the conclusion that the students' research writing abilities improve dramatically in the sequence of financial accounting courses: a large portion of the students performed *Below Expectations* in ACC 325 (i.e., mean of 2.00), but a majority of them performed at *Met or Exceeded Expectations* levels on their final case in ACC 401.

That ACC 325 expectation of below an acceptable score is born out in the results reported above for the 2011-2012 and current year; the mean scores reported in both years are below the *Met Expectations* level (2.00) across years, campuses and traits, with the exception of the 2012-2013 Hattiesburg result grammar (2.03) and writing style (2.06) attributes. Assuming the longitudinal data across the ACC 325, 327 and 401 courses continues to show that students are competent in this skill set by the time they graduate from the program, the reported results in ACC

325 are consistent with the overall objective, and are no cause for alarm. The coast sections of ACC 325 will be taught by a new instructor in 2013-2014. ***The AOL team recommends continued monitoring and comparison of these results over time for changes in trend data that may dictate a modified approach in ACC 325.***

ACC 327

The same instructor taught all sections of ACC 327 (sequentially following ACC 325) on both campuses in 2011-2012, and also taught on the Hattiesburg campus (instructor A) during the spring 2013 semester. He used the same cases and rubrics to evaluate writing skills at both locations, though different cases were used from one year to the next. A second instructor (instructor B) also taught ACC 327 in Hattiesburg during the 2013 term. Different cases were used in these various courses for assessment, but all instructors used the same rubric for assessing these skills. On the second and final case in ACC 327, students are evaluated along the same four traits using the same scaling, as follows:

ACC 327	2011 - 2012		2012 - 2013		
Attribute	Hattiesburg Instructor A n = 39	Coast n = 37	Hattiesburg Instructor A n = 25	Hattiesburg Instructor B n = 14	Coast n = 23
Problem identification	2.08	2.05	2.08	2.43	2.04
Grammar	1.95	2.00	1.96	2.5	1.96
Professional presentation	2.00	2.00	2.04	2.71	2.00
Writing style	1.92	2.03	2.00	2.71	2.00

ACC 325 is taken by accounting students in the first semester of their junior year, and they are not necessarily expected to have good writing skills at this point. Indeed, on both campuses, the students in ACC 325 demonstrated relatively weak writing skills with mean scores on all four traits below a 2.00 (i.e., the *meets expectations* level). In addition, significant percentages of the students received *below expectations* ratings of 1 on these writing traits.

By the time of the second case in ACC 327 students had made significant improvement in their writing skills, relative to their efforts demonstrated in ACC 325. For example, on each of the four writing traits on both campuses, the mean scores in ACC 327 were around 2.00. On all four traits combined, 94.9% and 97.3% of the Hattiesburg (Instructor A) and coast students, respectively, scored at the *meets expectations* level or above; this reported percentage for Instructor B was 100%. ***The AOL team recommends continued monitoring and comparison of these results over time for changes in trend data that may dictate modified approaches in ACC 327.***

ACC 401

ACC 401 (which sequentially follows ACC 327) was taught by the same instructor on both campuses in both years. Not surprisingly, since the students had already performed writing assignments in ACC 325 and ACC 327, they demonstrated good writing skills in ACC 401 on both campuses. The same instructor taught ACC 401 on both campuses in both years for which data is presented. She utilized a different rubric from the one employed in ACC 325 and 327, and her results are as follows:

ACC 401	2011 - 2012		2012 - 2013	
	Hattiesburg n = 8 students	Coast n =x students	Hattiesburg n = 25	Coast n = 14
Attribute	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Problem identification	2.20	2.40	2.8	2.6
Grammar & Mechanics	2.20	2.40	2.2	2.4
Organization	1.90	2.20	2.2	2.2
Clarity	1.90	2.20	2.4	2.4

Excepting the 2012 organization and clarity attributes in Hattiesburg, the mean scores on all attributes on both campuses were at or above the *meets expectations* level (2.00). Although the 2011-2012 scores on the writing assignments in ACC 401 on both campuses suggest the students have achieved adequate writing skills by their final case in this course, the Hattiesburg 2012 results are unreliable, given the relatively low *n* reported. Only 8 out of 19 students completed and submitted an assessment project. Most students in this section were also enrolled in two other compressed format (latter 8 weeks of spring semester) courses, ACC 407 and ACC 409, during the spring 2012 term. Their ACC 401 course assessments (exam scores, project) suffered during the latter half of the term, when these compressed format courses were ongoing. Although the differences between the coast and Hattiesburg 2012 results are not extremely large, they are telling from a directional standpoint in that the Hattiesburg students underperformed relative to the coast students on all four traits during the spring 2012 term. It appears likely that the few Hattiesburg students who submitted the assignment may not have performed at their best, given the circumstances.

ACC 401 was slated to be taught in compressed format during spring 2013, but the instructor taught the section of ACC 401 as a full term course for those students not interning during the first 8 weeks of the term, and as a compressed course for the interns who completed the course during the latter 8 weeks of the spring 2013 term. Allowing those students who were not interning to take the course over the full term period improved their performance on the end-of-semester project, and other measures (exams) during the latter 8 weeks of the term. More students (85% of the class, as opposed to 42% in spring 2012) completed and submitted a project, and their collective performance was improved over the spring 2012 assessment group.

Over this period, the School of Accountancy initiated an internship program during the first half of the spring semester of a given student's senior year. Students returning from internships are enrolled in two compressed courses to maintain full time eligibility. Assessments in these compressed courses may not be representative of the accounting student population. ***The AOL team recommends continued monitoring and comparison of these results over time for changes in trend data that may dictate modified approaches in ACC 401.***

M 2:ACC 407 Writing Assessment

Writing skills are evaluated using rubrics for required case studies in ACC 407 (Governmental Accounting).

Source of Evidence: Project, either individual or group

Target:

Although two assignments will be made, only the last assignment will be evaluated in **ACC 407**. This course (Governmental Accounting) is taught by different faculty between the two campuses who used different cases and evaluation rubrics. For the **coast ACC 407** class, the evaluation rubric for the case assignment will contain multiple questions dealing with various issues in the case. One particular trait evaluated by the rubric pertained to writing (i.e., "the student demonstrates the ability to communicate the response succinctly and effectively in written form"). A student's performance will be evaluated as follows: did not meet expectations=1 met expectations=2 exceeded expectations=3. The coast ACC 407 achievement target will have been

met if the mean score for the single trait assessed equals or exceeds 2.0 (met expectations) For **ACC 407 in Hattiesburg**, the rubric assessing writing skills will assess students' performances along multiple attributes that will then be translated into scores of one (lowest) to four (highest). The achievement target will have been met if 80 percent or greater receive a score of 3 (out of 4) or greater.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Partially Met

ACC 407

ACC 407 assesses research and writing skills utilizing a case involving the GASB standards, available in codified print form in 2011-2012, and first available online in 2012-2013. This course was taught by different instructors on the Hattiesburg and coast campuses during spring 2013, and was previously taught by a third instructor (on both campuses, now retired) during the 2011-2012 and prior years.

On the final of two writing assignments in the Hattiesburg ACC 407 spring 2012 class, however, 29 (80.6%) of the 36 students completing the assignment received four out of four points available on the assessment rubric related to writing skills. In the independent study course for the coast, both students scored four out of four points available on the writing rubric. The ACC 407 instructor, accordingly, concluded that the students' writing skills by the end of this course clearly met his expectations.

The spring 2013 term Hattiesburg instructor assessed the students on four attributes as follows:

ACC 407	2012 - 2013		
	Hattiesburg n = 19	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations
Attribute	Mean		
Problem identification	2.62	15	4
Grammar	2.14	5	14
Professional presentation	2.19	6	13
Writing style	2.43	11	8

In the Hattiesburg assessment, no students performed *below expectations* on any of the four attributes. Given the written assessments in prior accounting courses, it's no surprise that students performed well along the four dimensions measured in a senior level spring semester course.

The spring 2013 coast instructor utilized a different assessment that jointly assessed students on their observed performance researching the GASB standards and submitting written conclusions supported by appropriate authority. As reported in the measure "ACC 407 Data Base Research" and in the associated action plan, "Researching Governmental Accounting Data Bases," the reported performance by the coast students is lower than expected and/or desirable. Because the reported deficiency and coresponding action plan address this are reported elsewhere, it is only referenced in this measure.

The AOL team concurs with the coast instructor's recommendations to improve student performance by: 1) expanding the class time devoted to the case assignment process - increasing explanation and illustrating what is expected of the students in successful completion of the assignment, and 2) offering the students a review or feedback process to improve their results prior to final submission of the case for a grade.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Researching Governmental Accounting Standards

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013

As a result of recommendations in the 2009-2010 AOL report designed to strengthen the students' research exposure and skills r...

SLO 2: Demonstrate competency in current technology.

Students will be able to demonstrate competency in current technology.

Related Measures:

M 3: Information Systems Case

A primary venue for assessing technology competence is a comprehensive case assigned in ACC 309, the accounting systems course. The rubric applied measures primary spreadsheet (i.e., Excel) skills, including traits such as formula auditing, IF statements, complex calculations, and worksheet linkages.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

The rubric will measure primary spreadsheet (i.e., Excel) skills, including formula auditing, complex IF statements, and complex calculations using VLOOKUP and range means. The assessment rubric will evaluate the following four traits related to spreadsheet skills: (1) Format spreadsheet to facilitate understanding of the content, including grouping and filtering; (2) accurately audit formulas; (3) use of complex IF statements.; and (4), accurately perform complex calculations, using VLOOKUP and range names.

For each assessment evaluation will be made according to the following scale:

1	Below Expectations
2	Met Expectations
3	Exceeded Expectations

The achievement target will have been met if 70 percent of students assessed demonstrate "met expectations" or greater spreadsheet skills for all four traits assessed.

In addition to assessing spreadsheet skills, the ACC 309 instructor will assess a student's basic understanding of **XBRL** and its capabilities. The XBRL project will be assessed using a rubric evaluating a student's performance in several areas:

- a) Basic XBRL instance document design, formatting, and printing.
- b) Location of corporate annual report.
- c) Use of official coding taxonomies to tag accounting items.
- d) Use of visual models to check accuracy of tagging taxonomies.
- e) Use of SEC and FASB websites to locate tagging taxonomies.
- f) Use of browser to verify financial statements are tagged.
- g) Saving and uploading files.
- h) Written report describing activities.

A student's performance on this trait will be assessed using a scale similar to that used in assessing their Excel skills. The achievement target will have been met if 70 percent of students assessed demonstrate "acceptable" or greater understanding of XBRL.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

The same instructor taught ACC 309 on both campuses and used a similar assignment for evaluating spreadsheet skills at both locations during the spring 2012 semester. The Excel project used for assessment purposes in ACC 309 was a detailed and lengthy assignment that required students to submit two Excel files (i.e., the assignment had two parts). The project covered many basic spreadsheet skills (e.g., creating and naming worksheets, formatting worksheets, and printing worksheets), as well as advanced skills such as statistical analysis, using functions for complicated calculations, nested IF statements, linking worksheets, horizontal and vertical lookup tables, graphical presentation of data, and extensive data manipulation, filtering and sorting.

Two different instructors taught ACC 309 on the coast and Hattiesburg campuses during the spring 2013 semester; their assignments were somewhat similar to the one the spring 2012 instructor used during that term on both campuses. The coast instructor required student to set up an accounting system including a purchases journal, general ledger, and accounts payable subsidiary ledger. The students were required to program the cells and post one month of transactions.

The Hattiesburg instructor required students to complete a project simulating being budget director for USM that included 51 separate and distinct activities. The project covered beginning skills such as creating files, formatting worksheets, inserting rows/columns, as well as coloring and copying cells. Basic formulas were used throughout the project as well as more advanced formulas used in statistical evaluations such as pivot tables, "IF" statements, "What IF" analysis and "lookup" tables.

Students' performance was assessed as follows:

ACC 309	2011-2012		2012-2013	
	Hattiesburg n = 32	Coast n = 16	Hattiesburg n = 32	Coast n = 11
Exceeded expectations > 85%	31	15	31	8
Met expectations 70% = 85%	0	0	0	1
Below expectations < 70%	1	2	1	2
Mean Correct Response	95.2%	92.8%	94.4%	89%

Use of Results and Recommendations - ACC 309

It appears that students completing ACC 309 are competent in spreadsheet usage overall, and this portion of the technology learning objective is met. ACC 309 instructors in both academic years noted, however, that one area where performance could be improved is the students' skill with the advanced Excel functions (like IF statements and linking formulas). The instructors indicated that most points lost on the Excel projects were in these areas, and attribute this to a lack of exposure to these complex Excel functions prior to ACC 309. ***The ACC 309 instructors***

recommend, and the AOL team concurs, that instructors of this course spend more class time in the future with modeling and demonstrating the more advanced functions within Excel. The AOL team also recommends that the major Excel project in ACC 309 be maintained in the future, with appropriate assessment testing to determine if the students' abilities in the more difficult-to-apply Excel functions improve and to ascertain that the students' overall spreadsheet skills continue to be adequate.

XBRL

Pursuant to the 2010-2011 AOL report recommendation that ACC 309 include a hands-on XBRL assignment, ACC 309 instructors first implemented an application-based XBRL assignment in 2011-2012. The same instructor taught ACC 309 on both campuses and used a similar assignment for evaluating XBRL skills at both locations during the spring 2012 semester. Upon his departure, two different instructors taught ACC 309 on the coast and Hattiesburg campuses during the spring 2013 semester.

The spring 2012 XBRL project consisted of the preparation of four XBRL coded financial statements (i.e., balance sheet, income statement, financial statement disclosure, and an IFRS balance sheet), and a 1,000-word report on the student's XBRL activity. Students were required to locate an annual report of a publicly traded company and then locate the XBRL codes and tagging taxonomies on the SEC and FASB websites. They then used this information to run an XBRL file through their browser to prepare the financial statements and then uploaded this file into Blackboard. The spring semester 2013 instructors on the Hattiesburg and coast campuses required and assessed similar XBRL projects addressing these areas in their courses.

ACC 309	2011-2012		2012-2013	
	Hattiesburg n = 32	Coast n = 15	Hattiesburg n = 32	Coast n = 9
Exceeded expectations > 85%	22	9	31	9
Met expectations 70% - 85%	5	5	0	0
Below expectations < 70%	5	1	1	0
Mean Correct Response	93.75%	93.46%	93.56%	98.8%

Use of Results and Recommendations - ACC 309 XBRL

The 2010-2011 AOL report specifically recommended that a hands-on assignment be made in ACC 309 that required students to demonstrate a working knowledge of the XBRL reporting format for financial statements. This was not an easy task because XBRL programs are not yet available in the academic environment; however, the AOL team felt it was important for the students to have more than just book knowledge of XBRL, as it is the reporting format currently required of publicly traded companies submitting their reports to the SEC. The results reported above show that the vast majority of ACC 309 students on both campuses performed well on their XBRL projects during each of the years.

The ACC 309 instructors have noted that the XBRL taxonomy is quite technical and difficult for students to comprehend, especially since there is no demo version or student coding software available and the commercial tagging software is cost prohibitive for the classroom. For the actual hands-on project, the students had to create instance documents using a word processor and then use cut-and-paste operations and run the completed files through a browser. The process was inefficient at best; **however, the ACC 309 instructors feel, and the AOL team concurs, that the XBRL project provided value to our students and exposed them to skills needed to stay at the forefront of accounting knowledge. The AOL team recommends that the XBRL project be continued in ACC 309 in the future, with appropriate assessment testing as well.**

M 4:ACC 320 Data Analysis

One measure of technology competence of accounting majors is performed in ACC 320 via a project(s) requiring use of spreadsheet (i.e., Excel) skills. ACC 320 is typically taken by accounting students in the first semester of their junior year; thus, this course provides a baseline for evaluating the spreadsheet skills of students entering the program. The students' skills demonstrated on this project are evaluated using rubrics measuring key traits associated with the preparation of spreadsheets and the communication of results using this form of technology.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

ACC 320 (Cost Accounting) is taught by different instructors on the coast and Hattiesburg campuses, and they use different assignments and rubrics for evaluating spreadsheet skills. In the **coast** ACC 320 class, students will be required to use the WRDS database to collect data related to revenue and selling, general and administrative expenses and use that data to perform a regression analysis using Excel and make recommendations to management. The students will be required to present all results using Excel. The assessment rubric for this project will be evaluated using the following three traits:

1. Ability to use technology to access financial information
2. Ability to organize the financial information in an Excel format that provides the information necessary to answer the case questions
3. Ability to answer questions of interest based on the financial information analyzed

In the **Hattiesburg** ACC 320 class, the instructor will give four/three assignments involving technology and spreadsheet skills. These exercises covered a range of cost accounting topics and each assignment was assessed independently. Students will be assessed on both (1) demonstrating the ability to produce an acceptable Excel spreadsheet of their own design, and (2) communicating the information in the spreadsheet in an organized and readable manner. A student's performance was rated as either "exceeds expectations," "meets expectations," or "below expectations."

The assessment target for both Coast and Hattiesburg assessments will have been met if 70 percent or greater of the students assessed in every trait "meets" or "exceeds" expectations.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

The ACC 320 instructors differ between the coast and Hattiesburg campuses, and they use different assignments and rubrics for evaluating spreadsheet skills. The same instructor taught ACC 320 on the coast in the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013

academic years, and the Hattiesburg instructor differed across those years. In the 2010-2011 AOL report, it was noted that students in ACC 320 are not yet expected to have acquired significant expertise in Excel skills at the beginning of the program (i.e., students in ACC 320 are typically first semester juniors). Thus, elaborate Excel assignments are not made in this course, but rather moderately challenging assignments are given to enhance the students' spreadsheet skills.

In the **coast** ACC 320 class in the spring 2012, students were assigned a case in which they had to access data from an online database (i.e., WRDS), import that data into an Excel spreadsheet, formulate the data in Excel to compute the Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA), and examine the sensitivity of the DJIA to movements in individual stock prices. The students also had to compute other stock related ratios in Excel (e.g., price-earnings ratio). Students' performance was assessed using a rubric evaluating the three traits indicated below.

ACC 320 - Coast	2011 - 2012 n = 18		2012 - 2013 n = 26	
	Mean Score	% ≥ Met expectations	Mean Score	% ≥ Met expectations
1. Ability to use technology to access financial information	2.41	88.9	2.42	88%
2. Ability to organize the financial information in an Excel format that provides the information necessary to answer the case questions	2.35	88.9	2.38	88%
3. Ability to answer questions of interest based on the financial information analyzed	2.24	94.4	2.19	85%

In the spring 2012 ACC 320 class in Hattiesburg, the instructor gave four assignments involving technology and spreadsheet skills that were evaluated for assessment purposes. The first assignment required students to construct an Excel spreadsheet that computed the DJIA. The second assignment required students to prepare simple and multiple regression models using Excel. The third exercise required students to download audit fees and total fees for 23 companies from WRDS and then provide a longitudinal and industry analysis of changes in these fees across 2001-2008. The purpose was to measure the impact on audit fees of the Sarbanes-Oxley legislation. The fourth assignment required students to compare two computer manufacturers by downloading data from WRDS and computing basic management and financial

performance ratios. The primary trait evaluated for assessment purposes on each of the four assignments was the students' understanding of accessing data and Excel spreadsheet analysis.

In the spring 2013 ACC 320 Hattiesburg class, a different instructor made three technology related assignments. The first required downloading COMPUSTAT data into an Excel spreadsheet, and performing related ratio calculations and analysis. The second and third assignments paralleled the third and fourth assignments made during the 2012 course administration.

ACC 320 Hattiesburg	2011-2012 n = 41 Percentage of Students Scoring			2012-2013 n = 23 Percentage of Students Scoring		
	Did not meet expectations (< 70% correct)	Met expectations (70% - 85% correct)	Exceeded expectations (> 85% correct)	Did not meet expectations (< 70% correct)	Met expectations (70% - 85% correct)	Exceeded expectations (> 85% correct)
Assignment 1	28.6	31.4	40.0	17.4	21.7	60.9
Assignment 2	20.0	22.9	57.1	8.7	34.8	56.5
Assignment 3	20.0	34.3	45.7	26.1	34.8	39.1
Assignment 4	17.7	11.8	70.6			

During the 2011-2012 assessment, there was a general upward trend in the performance of the students during the semester, with the percentage of students who did not meet expectations decreasing from assignment 1 to assignment 4, and the percentage of students who exceeded expectations increasing. The 2012-2013 instructor noted improvement from assignment 1 to assignment 2, with approximately 82% meeting or exceeding expectations on assignment 1 and 91% at or above expectations on assignment 2. She noted the increased complexity of assignment 3, together with its due date during finals week, as contributing to the students' performance on the final assignment assessed. Nonetheless, the lowest percentage on exam 3 was higher than the lowest percentage score on either of the two prior assignments, and the instructor observed better overall performance, in terms of basic proficiency, by the students in comparison to her last administration of these assessments two years ago.

Through the assignments, students were exposed to several facets of spreadsheet analysis via Excel (e.g., downloading and analyzing data from WRDS, ratio computations, constructing charts and graphs from data sets, and performing basic regression analysis). Overall, the majority of the students appears to have a basic proficiency in Excel and demonstrated data collection skills in WRDS.

Use of Results and Recommendations - ACC 320

For this measure, the assessment target was achieved. Based on the reported assessment results in this course, the Hattiesburg and coast students appear to possess adequate spreadsheet skills appropriate at this point in their academic careers. ***The AOL team believes students have developed the skills needed in this area and recommends no changes to the curriculum. Assessment testing will continue in ACC 320 in the future to ensure these positive results remain constant.***

M 5: Internship Evaluations

Upon completion of an internship, the student's supervisor completes a detailed assessment of the student's performance.

Assessments are made across multiple learning objectives including competency in current technology, ethical decision-making, and basic accounting knowledge and skills.

Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation

Target:

On the intern evaluation rubric, an intern's supervisor will rate the student's competency in current technology as follows: below expectations=1 met expectations=2 exceeded expectations=3. The achievement target will have been met if the mean score equals or exceeds 2.0 and no student receives a score of "below expectations."

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Given the relatively few students performing internships, the data presented below is, at best, an adjunctive measure regarding their technological skills; ample alternative assessment procedures are used to enable the AOL team to draw conclusions concerning whether the learning objectives for technology competency are otherwise met for students. The interns' competency in current technology was rated by their supervisors as follows:

<i>Internship Data</i>	2011-2012		2012-2013	
	Hattiesburg n = 11	Coast n = 1	Hattiesburg n = 4	Coast n = 6
Exceeded expectations	8	1	3	6
Met expectations	3	0	1	0
Below expectations	0	0	0	0
Mean Response	2.7	3	2.75	3

All interns were rated as meeting or exceeding expectations, with a mean response across campuses and years well above 2.00. These are strong scores and demonstrate that the interns' supervisors believed the students displayed competency in current technological skills.

Use of Results and Recommendations - Internships

Although the number of interns evaluated was relatively small in the years reported, the particular students assessed across both years are fairly representative of the students in the program. The relatively high ratings given these interns by their supervisors in the area of competence in technology suggest these practitioners believe the students possess the skills needed in technology to function in entry level accounting positions.

Because of the importance of having adequate spreadsheet skills in the internship setting, the AOL team continues to recommend (as did the 2011-2012 AOL report) that ACC 309 be made a prerequisite for performing a formal internship with immediate implementation, and that all accounting students be encouraged to take ACC 309 early in their program of study (e.g., perhaps in the second semester of the junior year or even earlier).

The AOL team recommends that the assessment procedure of having interns' supervisors complete a survey concerning the performance of our students be continued in the future, with continued emphasis on the supervisors' responses to the question relating to the interns' competency in current technology. The team will monitor assessment procedures relative to this learning objective closely in the future to ensure that our students continue to be prepared for the ever changing environment of technology in the workplace.

SLO 3: Demonstrate competency in ethical decision making

Students will be able to demonstrate competency in ethical decision making.

Related Measures:

M 5: Internship Evaluations

Upon completion of an internship, the student's supervisor completes a detailed assessment of the student's performance. Assessments are made across multiple learning objectives including competency in current technology, ethical decision-making, and basic accounting knowledge and skills.

Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation

Target:

On the intern evaluation rubric, an intern's supervisor will rate the student's competency in ethical decision-making as follows:

below expectations=1

met expectations=2

exceeded expectations=3

The achievement target will have been met if the mean score equals or exceeds 2.0 and no student receives a score of "below expectations."

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Given the relatively few students performing internships, the data presented below is, at best, an adjunctive measure regarding their ethical decision making; ample alternative assessment procedures are used to enable the AOL team to draw

conclusions concerning whether the learning objectives for ethical decision making are otherwise met. Supervisors rated the interns' performance in ethical decision making as follows:

	2012-2013		2011 - 2012	
<i>Internship Data</i>	Hattiesburg n = 4	Coast n = 6	Hattiesburg n = 10	Coast n = 1
Exceeded Expectations	3	6	3	1
Met Expectations	1	0	7	0

No student was rated *below expectations* in 2011-2012 or 2012-2013. On the trait measuring competency in ethical decision making, the interns evaluated by their supervisors during 2012 were all rated at or above the *Met expectations* level. All the procedures performed in assessing ethical decision making traits indicate that USM's accounting majors overall are competent in making ethical decisions.

M 6: Auditing course requirement

Competency in ethical decision making in accounting is evaluated using a rubric applied to a case in ACC 409 (auditing). The AOL team recommended additionally in the 2010-2011 AOL report that ethical decision making also be evaluated in this course by examining the students' performance on exam embedded ethics-related questions.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

The scale on the rubric for evaluating students' performances on the two ethical decision-making traits in ACC 409 will be as follows: did not meet expectations=1 met expectations=2 exceeded expectations=3. The achievement target will have been met if mean student responses assessing both traits equal or exceed 2.0.

For assessed questions embedded in regular examinations, the assessment target will have been met if 75 percent or more of student answers are correct.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

The same instructor taught the ACC 409 course on the Hattiesburg and Coast campuses in 2012 and 2013. She used the second of two assigned ethics cases during the spring 2012 and 2013 for assessment purposes, and used the same assignments and procedures on both campuses for 2013 and 2012 for evaluating ethical decision making. The instructor devoted class time to teaching specific techniques useful in structuring solutions to ethical dilemmas and provided students with examples of the critical points to consider in responding to an ethics issue. Additionally, she presented students with a step-by-step outline approach to resolving an ethical dilemma. The rubric applied to the ACC 409 case measured two primary traits associated with ethical decision making: the ability to identify an ethical issue and the ability to integrate ethical considerations into the response. Mean responses are as follows:

ACC 409	Trait 1 Ability to identify an ethical issue		Trait 2 Ability to integrate ethical considerations into the response	
	Hattiesburg	Coast	Hattiesburg	Coast
2013	2.39	2.37	2.32	2.28
2012	2.36	2.36	2.31	2.28

The instructor used the same case assignment on both campuses in both years for the ethics evaluation, so the assessment process was highly consistent between campuses and across years. The students perform at a consistently high level across both years and campuses in the recent two administrations (2012, 2013) as shown above. These results represent a slight increase in performance observed over prior years on the Hattiesburg campus, and a slight decline in performance on the coast from prior years (the latter of which is attributable to instructor differences in evaluation in those prior years).

In the spring 2012 and 2013 semesters, the ACC 409 instructor embedded nine multiple-choice questions relating to ethics on an exam. The same nine questions were used on both the Hattiesburg and coast campuses. The mean correct responses on these nine questions are:

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	2012 - 2013		2011-2012	
	Hattiesburg	Coast	Hattiesburg	Coast
Mean % Correct	85%	83%	88%	84%

Use of Results and Recommendations - ACC 409

In both years reported above, ACC 409 students on both campuses performed well on the rubrics measuring the two ethical decision making traits in that the mean scores for cases in both locations far exceeded 2.00 (*Met expectations*). The mean correct response rates on these ethics questions of 83% - 85% in both years across campuses were quite good and provide corroborating evidence for the strong results observed in the ethics cases noted above. ***The AOL team believes students have developed the skills needed in this area and recommends no changes to the curriculum. Assessment testing will continue in ACC 409 in the future to ensure these positive results continue.***

M 8:ETS major field tests

The performance of USM's senior accounting majors on the accounting portion of the ETS Major Field Tests will be monitored to ensure that USM's accounting majors have acquired functional knowledge of basic accounting concepts and procedures. Results on the ETS exam allow a comparison of USM's accounting graduates with a national cohort of students. Additionally, as a measure of baseline knowledge of the social and legal basis for ethical decision making, the performance of USM's accounting majors on the Legal and Social Environment section of the ETS exam will be compared to the national cohort of all business students taking this portion of the ETS exam.

Source of Evidence: Standardized test of subject matter knowledge

Target:

The assessment target will be achieved if assessed students score at the 70th percentile or above on the Legal & Environmental Section of the ETS major field exam.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

The final assessment procedure performed for evaluating ethical decision making skills was the performance of USM's senior accounting majors on the Legal and Social Environment section of the ETS exam. Ethical decision making includes knowledge of the law as it relates to business; a person who has a better grasp of the law and how it relates to society has a wider base of knowledge from which to draw in making decisions involving ethical dilemmas. At USM, the ETS exam is given as part of MGT 400, which is a capstone course taken in the final semester of course work by all College of Business majors. Thus, the ETS exam scores reflect knowledge possessed by our students as they exit the program.

On the Legal and Social Environment section of the ETS exam in the spring 2012, the Hattiesburg and coast accounting majors scored at the 93rd and 99th percentiles, respectively. In the spring 2013, the Hattiesburg students scored at 72nd percentile, and the coast students scored at the 91st percentile. These percentiles are nationally normed based on all students in the U.S. taking the ETS exam in the spring 2013. Thus, the results show that USM's accounting majors scored extremely high on this portion of the exam relative to other students, both at USM and nationally.

While knowledge of the law and its role in society certainly does not guarantee an individual will make ethical decisions, it does provide a baseline or an understanding of what is expected of someone to function in society. For example, copying software borrowed from a friend might appear to be an ethical activity if the software is copied with the friend's permission. However, knowledge of the law in this area and how software piracy affects the livelihood of the owners of the copyrighted software helps an individual understand that, indeed, this is an unethical activity and is detrimental to both business and society at large. Thus, having a strong understanding of the law as evidenced in the ETS scores noted earlier gives USM's accounting majors a good background or base from which to draw as they rationalize or deliberate in making decisions involving ethical dilemmas.

The AOL team makes no recommendations for changes to the curriculum in this area. All procedures should be continued with appropriate assessment testing to ensure that this learning objective is met in the future as well.

M 14: Business Law Exam Ethics Questions

In an effort to expand the coverage of ethics in the curriculum and the assessment of the students' competency in ethical decision making, the 2010-2011 AOL report recommended that the ACC 480 (advanced business law) instructor add a section to this course on ethical decision making and assess the students' prowess in this area by evaluating their performance on embedded test questions dealing with ethics.

Source of Evidence: Standardized test of subject matter knowledge

Target:

ACC 480 (advanced business law) examinations will include embedded questions on ethical decision making. The assessment target will be achieved if 80 percent of the students assessed score 80 percent or higher on the embedded ethics questions.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

The 2010-2011 AOL report recommended that the ACC 480 (advanced business law) course include a section on ethical decision making, and assess the students' performance in this area by evaluating their performance on embedded test questions. Thus, the current report reflects the second academic year in which this assessment has been made (i.e., 2011-2012, and 2012-2013). The same instructor taught ACC 480 on both the Hattiesburg and coast campuses in 2011-2012, and continued instructing students on the coast in 2012-2013, while a different instructor taught ACC 480 on the Hattiesburg campus in 2012-2013. In 2012-2013, the Hattiesburg and coast instructors each included 8 ethics questions on the 4th exam administered in their respective course sections, and the students performed as follows:

ACC 480	Hattiesburg n = 29	Coast n = 15
Exceeded Expectations > 85%	20 (69%)	8 (53%)
Met Expectations 70% - 85%	7 (24%)	4 (27%)
Below Expectations < 70%	2 (7%)	3 (20%)
2012-2013 Mean % of Ethics Questions Correct	84.9%	80.8%
2011-2012 Mean % of Ethics Questions Correct	81.8%	80.8%

Use of Results and Recommendations - ACC 480

On the eight ethics related questions embedded in the final exam in ACC 480, the students on both campuses scored well and virtually the same as they scored on the non-ethics related questions on this exam. The prior year AOL report documented an observed low correct response rate (below 50%) on a single ethics question on the embedded questions used during spring 2012, and suggested that the same question be used in spring 2013 after additional class time devoted to the topic by the instructor. As a follow-up, no question utilized in 2013 on the coast campus by this same instructor had a correct response rate of less than 50%: the increased class coverage of this topic appears to have remedied the deficiency noted with respect to this question last year. ***The AOL team recommends continued assessment via embedded test questions in ACC 480 and monitoring of trend data associated with their use.***

SLO 4: Demonstrate functional knowledge of basic accounting skills

Students will be able to demonstrate functional knowledge of basic accounting skills.

Related Measures:

M 5: Internship Evaluations

Upon completion of an internship, the student's supervisor completes a detailed assessment of the student's performance. Assessments are made across multiple learning objectives including competency in current technology, ethical decision-making, and basic accounting knowledge and skills.

Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation

Target:

The evaluation rubric completed by an intern's supervisor considered several attributes of the intern. An important trait for assessment purposes was as follows: "The intern was able to demonstrate functional knowledge of basic accounting skills." The rating for this attribute fell into one of the following categories:

Below expectations = 1

Meets expectations = 2

Exceeds expectations = 3

The achievement target will have been met if the mean score equals or exceeds 2.0 and no student receives a score of "below expectations."

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Given the relatively few students performing internships, the data presented below is, at best, an adjunctive measure regarding their functional knowledge of basic accounting skills; ample alternative assessment procedures are used to enable the AOL team to draw conclusions concerning whether these learning objectives are otherwise met. The evaluation rubric completed by an intern's supervisor requested ratings on several attributes of the intern including "The intern was able to demonstrate functional knowledge of basic accounting skills." Supervisors rated the interns as follows:

<i>Internship Data</i>	2012-2013		2011 - 2012	
	Hattiesburg n = 4	Coast n = 6	Hattiesburg n = 11	Coast n = 1
Exceeded Expectations	3	6	2	1
Met Expectations	1	0	9	0

No student was rated *below expectations* in 2011-2012 or 2012-2013.

Use of Results and Recommendations - Internships

Despite the low n in each of the years above, the AOL team places heavy weight on this assessment because the evaluators are independent, objective employers who are extremely knowledgeable of the accounting skills needed to be successful in the workplace. The interns being evaluated are senior-level students, and so this procedure captures assessment information near the end of their undergraduate academic careers (i.e., it provides a good assessment of accounting knowledge and skills learned in the program). As our internship program grows in the future, the number of students being evaluated using this procedure will increase (at least in Hattiesburg), and the reliability of this assessment procedure will be enhanced as a result. ***The AOL team believes the intern assessments in the spring 2013 and 2012 provide externally validated evidence that our students possess functional knowledge of basic accounting and have the skills needed to apply that knowledge in practice, and no specific actions are recommended as a result of this measure.***

M 7:Transactions cycle case

In ACC 409, students are assigned a case to determine their understanding of transactions cycles. Two traits are evaluated: the ability to identify the need for a cutoff test (to determine if transactions are recorded in the proper period), and the ability to identify transactions that are not recorded in the proper period.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

Two traits will be evaluated using rubrics applied to the case. The first trait will represent the ability to identify the need for a cutoff test to determine if transactions are recorded in the proper period. The second trait will be the ability to identify transactions that are not recorded in the proper period. The scale on the rubric in ACC 409 for evaluating students' performances on the two transactions cycle traits will be as follows: did not meet expectations=1 met expectations=2 exceeded expectations=3. The achievement target will have been met if the student mean score for each trait assessed is equal to or exceeds 2.0 ("met expectations").

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

The same instructor taught ACC 409 on both campuses in the spring 2012 and spring 2013, and she used the same assignment on each campus during spring 2012 and spring 2013 for evaluating the students' understanding of transactions cycles.

ACC 409	2011-2012				2012-2013			
	Trait 1		Trait 2		Trait 1		Trait 2	
	Hburg n = 36	Coast n = 25	Hburg n = 36	Coast n = 25	Hburg n = 31	Coast n = 32	Hburg n = 31	Coast n = 32
Mean Response	2.25	2.24	2.22	2.20	2.29	2.22	2.26	2.22

Use of Results and Recommendations - ACC 409

The reported results indicate the students are well above the *Met Expectations* mark (2.00). These results add to the incremental improvement shown over several years in students' understanding of transactions cycles. In addition to the improved scores in the transactions cycle traits measured in the evaluation rubrics in the last few years, no students having performed internships (nor their supervisors) have noted the students were ill prepared in this area since we began emphasizing transactions cycles in ACC 409 (and ACC 610 as well) in 2009-2010. ***The AOL team believes students have developed the skills needed in this area and recommends no changes to the curriculum. Assessment testing will continue in ACC 320 in the future to ensure these positive results remain constant.***

M 8:ETS major field tests

The performance of USM's senior accounting majors on the accounting portion of the ETS Major Field Tests will be monitored to ensure that USM's accounting majors have acquired functional knowledge of basic accounting concepts and procedures. Results on the ETS exam allow a comparison of USM's accounting graduates with a national cohort of students. Additionally, as a measure of baseline knowledge of the social and legal basis for ethical decision making, the performance of USM's accounting majors on the Legal and Social Environment section of the ETS exam will be compared to the national cohort of all business students taking this portion of the ETS exam.

Source of Evidence: Standardized test of subject matter knowledge

Target:

The achievement target will be met if mean student scores equal or exceed the 70th percentile in a national ETS Major Field Test.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

In the spring 2013, USM's senior accounting majors on the Hattiesburg and coast campuses scored at the 98th and 97th percentiles, respectively, on the portion of the ETS exam evaluating accounting knowledge and skills. Similar data for fall 2012, spring 2012 and fall 2011 semesters is shown below. Note that these percentiles are for a national cohort of students.

<i>ETS Data</i>	Spring 2013		Fall 2012		Spring 2012		Fall 2011	
	Hattiesburg	Coast	Hattiesburg	Coast	Hattiesburg	Coast	Hattiesburg	Coast
ETS Percentile	98	97	97	Data not available	98	89	97	98

Use of Results and Recommendations - ETS Data

On the accounting portion of the ETS Major Field Tests, USM's senior accounting majors performed well on both campuses in the current year, and trend data on this assessment is strongly positive. The above scores represent national percentiles based on all students taking the accounting portion of the ETS exam. The strong performance of USM's accounting students on the accounting portion of the ETS exams suggests that USM's BSBA graduates in accounting possess functional knowledge of basic accounting skills.

One caveat in interpretation of these results: note that USM's accounting students are compared not just to other accounting students but to all business students taking the ETS exam. One would expect accounting students to outperform other business majors on an accounting exam; however, the cohort of business students includes accounting majors at other universities as well, and scoring in these high percentiles clearly shows that USM's accounting students performed well. ***Based on the results of the ETS exam, the assessment team makes no recommendations for curriculum changes relative to this learning objective.***

M 9:ACC 325 Accounting Cycle Project

Students' performances on a comprehensive Accounting Cycle Project (ACP) in ACC 325 will be evaluated to determine their basic knowledge of the accounting cycle (i.e., recording and posting journal entries, including adjusting and closing entries, and financial statement presentation).

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

The assessment on the ACP will be an overall rating on the project for each student. A student's performance will be rated as follows: Exceeded expectations = 3 (very few problems or none at all) Met expectations= 2 (some minor problems) Below expectations= 1 (major problems). The achievement target will have met if the overall mean assessment equals or exceeds 2.50, and 80 percent or more student performances "met expectations" or better.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Partially Met

The historical trend in the assessment of this particular measure appears below:

ACC 325	2010-2011		2011-2012		2012-2013	
	Hattiesburg	Coast	Hattiesburg n = 48	Coast n = 18	Hattiesburg n = 34	Coast n = 22
Exceeded expectations			22 (46%)	9 (50%)	23 (67%)	4 (18%)
Met expectations			20 (42%)	6 (33%)	6 (18%)	9 (41%)
Below expectations			6 (12%)	1 (17%)	5 (15%)	9 (41%)
Mean Response	2.69	2.68	2.33	2.22	2.53	1.77

Although they used the same overall scoring procedure and evaluation process for the ACP, ACC 325 was taught by different instructors on the Hattiesburg and coast campuses during the spring 2012 and spring 2013 semesters, although the same instructor taught on his/her respective campus during those two years. In 2010-2011, different instructors taught on both the Hattiesburg and coast campuses. The coast campus is transitioning to a new instructor during the upcoming 2013-2014 academic year.

This assessment resulted from a 2008-2009 AOL report recommendation, and was first implemented in 2009-2010. The students are provided an Excel template as part of their assignment for a single business. The general, adjusting and closing entries are entered into the Excel template, a worksheet is completed, and simple financial statements are prepared from the worksheet. The Excel skills utilized are low-level: addition & subtraction of rows and columns of numbers.

Use of Results and Recommendations - ACC 325

Only a relatively small portion of the students on either campus scored at the *Below Expectations* level in any of the three years' results reported above, excepting the coast campus in the current year. The coast instructor attributes this decline to a lack of readiness by students entering ACC 325 due to a lack of preparation in the principles course on this topic. The coast students are primarily nontraditional working students whose Principles background may be from a community college in the distant past, thus their preparation on these principles topics upon entering ACC 325 is highly variable. Given that class time in ACC 325 is a premium with respect to all the topical coverage that must take

place in the course, spending additional class time and instruction on the Principles topic of the accounting cycle in ACC 325 does not appear to be the optimal course of action. Though the use of the PACE (Principles of Accounting Competency Exam) is, in theory, supposed to prevent students lacking the basic Accounting Cycle knowledge from entering ACC 325, he recommends a review of the PACE as it is currently utilized to determine its efficacy in achieving this objective. (The PACE was last extensively reviewed for changes in 2010-2011, and the instructor's recommendation coincides with a 3 year cycle review of the PACE exam for changes).

The Hattiesburg instructor observes a different phenomenon regarding the ACP among her traditional age students: the stronger, better students in the classes opt not to complete the ACP, due to its relatively low cost/benefit tradeoff. The ACP takes considerable time and effort to complete, relative to its ascribed point value. The point value ascribed is relatively low, in part, as a response to widespread suspected copying/cheating on the project by students observed by the current and former Hattiesburg instructors. Thus the ACP thus contributes little to the students' learning. In addition to the PACE review suggested above, she recommends the use of online comprehensive algorithmic homework assignments to strengthen the students' skills and thwart student cheating efforts, and as a possible alternative assessment for the ACP.

Based on these observations, ***the ACC 325 instructors recommend, and the AOL team concurs, the following: 1) an examination of PACE results over the past several semesters for indicated changes in its composition, administration, use, etc. and 2) replacement of the ACP in ACC 325 for assessment with either a) comprehensive algorithmic problem(s), or b) embedded exam measures.***

Because the assessment target was achieved only on the Hattiesburg campus, and need to reconsider this particular assessment tool, an action plan is required.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Reconsidering Assessment of Basic Accounting Skills in ACC 325

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013

During the 2012-2013 assessment period, the coast students failed to achieve the assessment target of 80 percent students meetin...

M 10:Principles of Accounting Competency Exam (ACC 325)

The Principles of Accounting Competency Examination for ACC 325 Intermediate Accounting I allows students to understand their level of preparedness for upper-level accounting work.

Source of Evidence: Faculty pre-test / post-test of knowledge mastery

Target:

Beginning in the fall 2010, successful completion of the Principles of Accounting Competency Exam (PACE) was added as a prerequisite for entrance into ACC 325. Prior years' assessment procedures had revealed an unacceptably low success rate in ACC 325 (i.e., first intermediate), which indicated too many students were entering this course ill prepared for the rigors they would face in this difficult class and in the accounting program in general. PACE was implemented as a means of improving the likelihood that students entering ACC 325 could successfully complete the course by ensuring that the students possessed at least base level knowledge of the accounting cycle prior to taking the course. Students who fail PACE are encouraged to obtain these basic skills and retake PACE or choose a major other than accounting.

The assessment target will have been achieved if a meaningful number of students who are not suitably prepared to enter the account major, are redirected to a more suitable academic major.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Approximately 20% of those students applying to take the PACE were redirected to other academic majors; therefore the assessment target was achieved.

Notwithstanding this outcome, a number of low-performing students were enrolled in ACC 325 who should have been redirected to other academic majors. In 2011-2012, the PACE committee attributed the high overall pass rate (80%, as compared to an expected/desired 75%) on the PACE to the use of only one version of the PACE with repeated attempts (3 allowed) by the students and use of the single version (without changes) over the prior two years. Those repeating the exam were seeing an unchanged version each time they attempted the exam. Even though the exam was non-disclosed, students repeating the exam could remember what was on the exam from an earlier attempt. Thus, the PACE committee recommended and the AOL team concurred that three versions of the PACE should be developed to eliminate repeat candidates seeing the same literal exam upon multiple attempts. The PACE overall pass rate continued at a relatively high rate (80% - 90%, depending on the semester) during the 2012-2013 year, despite the implemented use of three versions of PACE for each of the three attempts available for students. After further review, ***the PACE committee recommends raising the pass rate on the PACE from 70% to 75% to correspond with the pass rate on the CPA exam, and reevaluating of the effect of this change on the overall pass rate after observation of the spring 2014 results.***

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Increase Academic Rigor in Coast ACC 325

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

ACC 325, ACC327, ACC 401 (Financial Accounting) In the assessment report for the 2007-2008 academic year, the assessment team ...

Reconsidering Assessment of Basic Accounting Skills in ACC 325

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013

During the 2012-2013 assessment period, the coast students failed to achieve the assessment target of 80 percent students meetin...

M 11:Implementation of IFRS in Financial Accounting Courses

Beginning in the spring 2010, coverage of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) was added to the course content in ACC 325, 327, and 401 to keep the curriculum current and reflective of practice. The 2009-2010 AOL report recommended that the students' understanding of IFRS be evaluated for assessment purposes in at least one of these courses as an added measure of the program's ability to provide students with functional knowledge of basic accounting skills. Thus, in ACC 327, embedded exam questions on IFRS are used for assessing the students' knowledge of international accounting standards.

Source of Evidence: Standardized test of subject matter knowledge

Target:

In ACC 327 (intermediate Accounting II) the instructor will embed exam questions on IFRS that will be used for assessing the students' knowledge of international accounting standards. On each of four exams, two (of 20) multiple-choice questions (i.e., 4% of exam points) will assess the students' knowledge of IFRS. The achievement target will have been met if mean correct responses equal or exceed 70 percent.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

In all sections of the spring 2012 and spring 2013 ACC 327 course, four exams contained 20 to 25 multiple-choice questions (40 - 50% of exam points) and three to five problems (50 - 60% of exam points). On each exam, 2 - 3 of the multiple-choice questions (approximately 4% of exam points) tested the students' knowledge of IFRS. The same instructor taught ACC 327 on both campuses in spring 2012, and used the same IFRS multiple-choice questions between campuses during spring 2012 and

spring 2013 (instructor A). And additional offering of ACC 327 on the Hattiesburg campus was taught by instructor B during the spring 2013 semester. Their reported results are depicted along with responses to questions on U.S. GAAP (used as a control variable) are as follows:

ACC 327	2011 - 2012		2012 - 2013		
	Hattiesburg Instructor A n = 39*	Coast n = 37*	Hattiesburg Instructor A n = 25*	Hattiesburg Instructor B n = 14*	Coast n = 23*
Mean correct response on IFRS multiple choice questions	76.4%	70.6%	56%	70.9%	
Mean correct response on U.S. GAAP multiple choice questions	74.5%	71.4%	71%	69.4%	

* n's are approximate; not all students in each course section took all exams each semester.

Use of Results and Recommendations - ACC 327

Overall, the students performed well on the IFRS questions. There were only small differences between campuses and across years in the correct response rates on the IFRS questions. The correct response rates on the IFRS questions compares favorably with the students' mean correct response rate on the U.S. GAAP multiple-choice questions. Instructor B will devote more in-class lecture time to IFRS content, or alternatively stress the importance of a higher level of independent study over those focus areas in the context of exam study in future course administrations to improve the results reported above. ***The team recommends no changes to the curriculum relative to teaching international accounting standards but suggests that students' knowledge of IFRS continue to be evaluated as part of the annual assessment process to ensure this objective is met in the future as well.***

SLO 5: Research databases

Students will be able to research databases and formulate appropriate solutions based on this research and logical reasoning.

Related Measures:

M 12: ACC 407 Data Base Research

Students are required to solve cases in which they are required to research the governmental accounting standards in ACC 407 and then provide a written reports. Students' research skills are assessed using a rubric that measure their ability to research published

data bases; student writing skills are included in this assessment as written research assignments are required. The assessment rubric used is similar to that used in ACC 325 and ACC 327.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Target:

ACC 407 will include two case assignments requiring research of the GASB standards; the second case will be evaluated for assessment purposes. That is, only one research case with a single research trait will be assessed. On this trait, students' performances will be evaluated as follows:

below expectations=1

met expectations=2

exceeded expectations=3

The achievement target will be met if 70% or greater of students assessed perform at "met expectations" or above.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Not Met

ACC 407 utilizes the GASB standards, available in codified in print form in 2011-2012, and first available online in 2012-2013. This course is taught by different instructors on the Hattiesburg and coast campuses, and was previously taught by a third instructor (on both campuses, now retired) during the 2011-2012 and prior years. This course was taught in compressed format (latter 8 weeks of the spring term) on the Hattiesburg campus during spring 2012.

During the 2011-2012 year, reported assessment results by the now-retired instructor for 36 students on the Hattiesburg campus and 2 students on the coast campus utilized differential scaling & assessment measures than shown above for 2012-2013. Consequently, his reported results are not directly comparable across campuses (given low *n* on the coast campus), or to those of the 2012-2013 instructors shown below. The use of a single case or the final of two cases assigned, for assessment varies with the year presented below. Different cases were used in these courses for assessment, but all instructors used the same rubric for assessing these skills for AOL purposes.

ACC 407	2012-2013			
	Trait 1 Locate Authority		Trait 2 Apply & Conclude	
	Hattiesburg n = 19	Coast n = 17	Hattiesburg n = 19	Coast n = 17
Mean	2.19	2.43	2.43	2.29
Exceeded Expectations	6	13	11	11
Met Expectations	13	8		
Below Expectations	0	4 (23%)	0	6 (35%)

Use of Results and Recommendations - ACC 407

The reported results indicate that students performed well (vast majority meeting and/or exceeding expectations) on both traits assessed on the Hattiesburg campus. Reported performance by the coast students is lower than expected and/or desirable and below the assessment target of 70 percent of the students performing at "met expectations" or above. ***The AOL team concurs with the coast instructor's recommendations to improve student performance by: 1) expanding the class time devoted to the case assignment process - increasing explanation and illustrating what is expected of the students in successful completion of the assignment, and 2) offering the students a review or feedback process to improve their results prior to final submission of the case for a grade. An action plan is thereby implemented.***

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Researching Governmental Accounting Standards

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013

As a result of recommendations in the 2009-2010 AOL report designed to strengthen the students' research exposure and skills r...

M 13: Accessing/downloading/analyzing data in ACC 327

In the 2008-2009 assessment report, the AOL team recommended that in addition to researching professional standards students should be able to research online databases containing empirical data and download selected data from these databases for analysis. This is now a requirement in most upper-level accounting courses, and it is evaluated for assessment purposes using an assignment in ACC 327.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

To evaluate the students' ability to research an online database containing empirical data, extract data from that database, and formulate appropriate solutions based on research and logical reasoning, the ACC 327 instructor will apply a rubric to evaluate the following traits:

- **Accessing WRDS** - student was able to access the WRDS/COMPUSTAT database and extract the appropriate data.
- **Manipulation of WRDS data** - student was able to import the WRDS data into an Excel spreadsheet and compute the proper ratios to solve the case.
- **Report preparation** - based on the data collected and ratios computed, the student was able to prepare a well-reasoned and logical report with the conclusions supported by the student's findings.

A student's performance on each of the above traits will be rated as either

1 = unacceptable

2 = acceptable

3 = exceptional

The assessment target will be met if the mean for each trait equals or exceeds 2.0.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

The results of this assessment for the prior two academic years appears below:

ACC 327	2011-2012					
	Trait 1 Access WRDS		Trait 2 Manipulation of WRDS data		Trait 3 Report preparation	
	Hattiesburg n = 36	Coast n = 31	Hattiesburg n = 36	Coast n = 31	Hattiesburg n = 36	Coast n = 31
Mean	2.00	2.00	1.97	2.03	2.14	2.06

ACC 327	2012-2013								
	Trait 1 Access WRDS			Trait 2 Manipulation of WRDS data			Trait 3 Report Preparation		
	Hburg Instructor A n = 25	Hburg Instructor B n = 11	Coast n = 20	Hburg Instructor A n = 25	Hburg Instructor B n = 11	Coast n = 20	Hburg Instructor A n = 25	Hburg Instructor B n = 11	Coast n = 20
Mean	2.00	2.91	2.00	2.04	2.45	2.00	1.90	2.36	1.92

The School of Accountancy began requiring students to access the WRDS database in most of the upper-level accounting courses beginning with the spring 2010 semester, consistent with an AOL team recommendation to hone our students' ability to utilize online research and empirical databases, and to extract and present data that is useful information for decision making purposes. Although these online database assignments are made in almost all upper-level accounting classes, ACC 327 is the designated course in which official assessment of the students' skills in this area occurs. The results column of this report shows that the ACC 327 students on both campuses generally met or exceeded expectations on all three traits involving research of the WRDS online empirical database in both years.

Overall, the students seemed very capable of researching this empirical database and using the data from their research to perform appropriate analyses. More specifically, for each of the three traits evaluated, the mean score on both campuses was at a *Met Expectations* level (i.e., mean of approximately 2.00). The only *Below Expectations* scores on any trait were noted in Report Preparation. In spring 2012, twelve students (seven in Hattiesburg and five on the coast) performed at a *Below Expectations* level and in spring 2013, six students (3 each on the two campuses) performed below expectations. Uniformly these *Below Expectations* scores have been observed due to students' failure to address all the issues in their report they were asked to address, rather than a demonstrated lack of research skills. Therefore the assessment target for accessing research data bases was achieved. ***The AOL team believes students have developed the skills needed in this area and recommends no changes to the curriculum. Assessment testing will continue in ACC 327 in the future to ensure these positive results remain constant.***

M 15: Solve cases requiring research of the professional accounting standards

Students are required to solve cases in which they research the professional accounting standards [in ACC 325 (one case), ACC 327 (two cases), and ACC 401 (two cases)], and then write a report. Students' research skills are assessed using rubrics that measure their ability to research online data bases; student writing skills are included in this assessment as a written research assignment is required.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:

On the cases assigned in ACC 325 and ACC 327, **two primary research traits will be assessed**. The first one will measure a student's ability to locate the appropriate standard in the online Accounting Standards Codification (ASC) needed to solve the case. The second trait will measure a student's ability to apply the standard to the facts of the case and through logical reasoning draw the appropriate conclusion. On each of these two traits, students' performances will be evaluated as follows:

performed below expectations=1

met expectations=2

exceeded expectations=3

The ACC 401 instructor will use a different form of evaluation rubric than was applied in ACC 325 and ACC 327, yet the rubric will measure the same **two traits** (e.g., **first trait** = the ability to research the professional standards, and **second trait** = the ability to draw an appropriate conclusion). ACC 325, 327, and 401 are financial accounting courses, and the research in these courses involved a common database (i.e., the ASC).

Multiple courses will be required to assess this learning objective because the student's ability to successfully perform professional standards research should improve as he/she progresses through the accounting curriculum. It is assumed that most students beginning the accounting curriculum will perform research of the professional accounting standards poorly/unsatisfactorily. Therefore, assessment of **ACC 325 will not be assigned an achievement target, but rather will be used as a baseline for measuring improvement across the financial accounting course progression.**

In ACC 327 the achievement target will be met if 70% or greater of students assessed perform at "met expectation" or above. For ACC 401, the assessment target will be realized if a mean score of 2.2 or above is realized.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

Introduction - ACC 325, 327, 401

ACC 325, 327, and 401 are sequential financial accounting courses, and the research in these courses involves a common online database, the Accounting Standards Codification (ASC). On the cases assigned in the financial accounting courses ACC 325 and 327, two primary research traits were evaluated. The first one (Trait 1) assessed a student's **ability to locate the appropriate standard (authority)** in the ASC, and the second (Trait 2) evaluated a student's ability to **apply the**

standard to the facts of the case and through logical reasoning to **draw the appropriate conclusion**. The ACC 401 instructor used a different rubric for assessment.

ACC 325

The ACC 325 Assessment is conducted only to provide a longitudinal baseline for student performance in subsequent courses (i.e., ACC 327 and 401). This is the students' initial exposure to accessing the Accounting Standards Codification database; we anticipate a significant percentage of them will routinely score below expectations.

Different instructors taught ACC 325 on the Hattiesburg and Coast campuses; however, the assigned instructor did not vary from one year to the next, as each instructor taught on his/her respective campus in both the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 academic years. In ACC 325, the sole case assigned was evaluated for assessment purposes; in ACC 327, the final of two cases assigned was evaluated for assessment.

ACC 325	2011-2012				2012-2013			
	Trait 1 Locate Authority		Trait 2 Apply & Conclude		Trait 1 Locate Authority		Trait 2 Apply & Conclude	
	Hattiesburg n = 45	Coast n = 15	Hattiesburg n = 45	Coast n = 15	Hattiesburg n = 32	Coast n = 22	Hattiesburg n = 32	Coast n = 22
Mean	1.33	1.67	1.36	1.53	2.18	1.95	1.9	1.53
Students scoring Below Expectations	33 (73%)	7 (47%)	33 (73%)	7 (47%)	7 (22%)	7 (32%)	13 (41%)	15 (68%)

Use of Results & Recommendations - ACC 325

As anticipated and observed in prior years, students in the ACC 325 current year underperformed - relative to their ACC 327 and ACC 401 counterparts - on the research skills requirement. This ACC 325 assessment was first added to ACC 325 in 2009-2010 as a result of an AOL 2007-2008 report recommendation, and was added specifically to facilitate a longitudinal assessment of student performance during their

undergraduate careers for significant improvement across courses. The reported results in the intervening years support the conclusion that the students' ability to research databases and draw proper conclusions based on their research improve dramatically in the sequence of financial accounting courses: a large portion of the students performed *Below Expectations* in ACC 325, but a majority of them performed at *Met or Exceeded Expectations* on their final case in ACC 401.

That ACC 325 expectation of below an acceptable score is born out in the results reported above for the 2011-2012 and current year; the mean scores reported in both years are below the *Met Expectations* level (2.00) across years, campuses and traits, with the exception of the 2012-2013 Trait 1 Hattiesburg result (2.18). Substantial numbers of students scored *Below Expectations*, although the number of students doing so on the Hattiesburg campus in 2012-2013 dropped from the prior year on both traits. The Hattiesburg instructor attributes this drop to 1) more explicit classroom instruction on use of the ASC database and the proper approach to the research case, 2) timing of the assignment (earlier in the term), and 3) difficulty level of the case assigned (easier) relative to the one used in the spring 2012 semester.

Assuming the longitudinal data across the ACC 325, 327 and 401 courses continues to show that students are competent in this skill set by the time they graduate from the program, the reported results in ACC 325 are consistent with the overall objective, and are no cause for alarm. The coast sections of ACC 325 will be taught by a new instructor in 2013-2014. ***The AOL team recommends continued monitoring and comparison of these results over time for changes in trend data that may dictate a modified approach in ACC 325.***

ACC 327

The students' first exposure to the Accounting Standards Codification occurs in ACC 325, as well as their first writing assignment in the accounting (major) course work. Upon their completion of ACC 327 and ACC 401, they have typically improved their research skills previously assessed in ACC 325. The students have also experienced the generalized educational maturation process that typically occurs in most Intermediate I students: overall improved study skills, greater focus and effort on success in the course work within the major, etc., all of which contribute to their success on the research skills measures in ACC 327 and ACC 401.

The same instructor taught all sections of ACC 327 on both campuses in 2011-2012, and also taught on the Hattiesburg campus (instructor A) during the spring 2013 semester. A second instructor (instructor B) also taught ACC 327 in Hattiesburg during the 2013 term. The ACC 327 results are as follows:

ACC 327	2011-2012			
	Trait 1 Locate Authority		Trait 2 Apply & Conclude	
	Hattiesburg n = 39	Coast n = 37	Hattiesburg n = 39	Coast n = 37
Mean	2.13	2.01	2.00	2.11
Students scoring Below Expectations	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	5 (13%)	0 (0%)

ACC 327	2012-2013					
	Trait 1 Locate Authority			Trait 2 Apply & Conclude		
	Hattiesburg Instructor A n = 25	Hattiesburg Instructor B n = 14	Coast Instructor A n = 23	Hattiesburg Instructor A n = 25	Hattiesburg Instructor B n = 14	Coast Instructor A n = 23
Mean	2.2	2.64	2.09	2.12	2.29	1.96
Students scoring Below Expectations	1 (4%)	0	1 (4.3%)	2 (8%)	0	5 (17.4%)

Use of Results & Recommendations - ACC 327

Their first exposure to the ASC and research tasks in ACC 325 generally results in their lowest performance across these courses on the evaluated traits, with marked improvement in ACC 327 and ACC 401. The results reported above document significant improvement on both traits in each of the years presented when compared to the ACC 325 results reported above. Overall, it appears that, by the final case in ACC 327, most students on both campuses have developed adequate skills in locating the appropriate standard in the ASC and applying those standards to solve the issues at hand. ***Though the Coast result on Trait 2 is noted, the AOL team recommends reevaluation next year, rather than specific changes, to determine if the reported result is in isolation, or indicative of trend data prompting specific need for change. More generally, the AOL team recommends continued monitoring and comparison of all of these results over time for changes in trend data that may dictate modified approaches in ACC 327.***

ACC 401

The improvement in research skills noted in ACC 327 continued in ACC 401. The same instructor taught ACC 401 on both campuses in the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 academic years, and she utilizes a different rubric for assessment. On the key research trait (i.e., ability to locate authority and identify sources), the mean score for the Hattiesburg and coast classes in 2011-2012 was 2.20, and for 2012-2013 the mean score was 2.6 (n=25) and 2.5 (n=14), respectively. The instructor did not formally evaluate the second trait (i.e., draw an appropriate conclusion). These means exceed the achievement target.

Use of Results and Recommendations - ACC 401

The students demonstrate an improvement in research skills across the financial accounting sequence of courses - ACC 325, 327, and 401. A significant portion of the students performed *Below Expectations* in ACC 325, but a majority of them perform at *Met or Exceeded Expectations* on their ACC 327 assessment and on their final case in ACC 401. These skills are honed further by those students pursuing an MPA degree. ***The AOL team recommends continued monitoring and comparison of these results over time for changes in trend data that may dictate modified approaches in ACC 401.***

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Increase Academic Rigor in Coast ACC 325

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011

ACC 325, ACC327, ACC 401 (Financial Accounting) In the assessment report for the 2007-2008 academic year, the assessment team ...

M 16: Tax Research Case (ACC 330)

In the 2010-2011 assessment report, the AOL team recommended that a tax research case be included in the assignments evaluated for determining the students' ability to research databases. This addition was made to broaden the research skills of our students in the spirit of continuous improvement. Accordingly, beginning in the 2011-2012, students were evaluated on their ability to research the RIA Online tax research database and formulate opinions based on this research. Assessment of these skills will occur via a rubric applied to a case in ACC 330.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Target:

The students' solutions to a tax research case will receive a preliminary observation, after which the instructor will conduct a review. The final assessment of student performance will be made after this review. The assessment for ACC 330 will use a rubric rating student performance relative to the following four traits:

- Overall effort
- Form/procedure
- Content
- Communication skills

Assessment evaluation was made according to the following scale:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | Below Expectations |
| 2 | Met Expectations |
| 3 | Exceeded Expectations |

The assessment target will be met if at least 70% of the assessed students perform at a "met expectations" level or better.

Findings (2012-2013) - Target: Met

In the spring 2012 and 2013 ACC 330 classes in Hattiesburg, students were required to use the RIA Checkpoint database to prepare a formal research document presenting relevant facts, issues, conclusions, and the reasoning for their conclusions. The case was an intricate tax dilemma and somewhat demanding for students at this level (novice tax researchers). In addition to classroom discussion about access and use of the database, the instructor discusses early drafts of their research memos with the students and reviews their first effort (Preliminary Observation) before accepting the final research memos (Final Assessment).

Information on the performance of the spring 2013 students is summarized as follows:

ACC 330 - Hattiesburg	Preliminary Observation (Before Review) n = 37	Final Assessment (After Review) n = 37
Below Expectations	27 (73%)	4 (11%)
Met Expectations	8 (22%)	27 (73%)
Exceeded Expectations	2 (5%)	6 (16%)
Mean Score	1.3	2.1

The coast instructor differed from the Hattiesburg instructor; he also required an assignment in which the students were required to use the RIA Checkpoint database to provide substantiation for advice given to a taxpayer concerning a specific tax issue. The students prepared a tax memo detailing the research issue and substantiating with tax law their advice to the taxpayer. In evaluating a student's tax memo, the instructor rated the students on the following four traits:

ACC 330 - Coast Trait	2011-2012 n = 35		2012-2013 n = 9	
	Mean Score	% of Students scoring at or above <i>Met expectations</i>	Mean Score	% of Students scoring at or above <i>Met expectations</i>
1. Ability to identify and refine the tax issue	2.32	80	2.33	78
2. Ability to research the tax sources to determine the tax law applicable to the issue	2.35	91	2.44	89
3. Ability to interpret the results of the research and arrive at the correct solution	2.29	89	2.33	78
4. Ability to communicate the solution to the taxpayer succinctly and effectively in written form	2.42	94	2.44	89

The achievement target of at least 70 percent of students performing at the "met expectations" level or above was clearly exceeded.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, the 2010-2011 AOL report recommended the addition of a tax research database to the cadre of databases with which our students become familiar throughout their course work. Thus, this curriculum change was first implemented in the 2011-2012 academic year, and the reported results above indicate that ACC 330 students on both campuses performed well in both academic years. In both the Hattiesburg and coast ACC 330 classes, the students appear to have acquired adequate skills in both researching tax databases and in drawing appropriate conclusions based on their research. ***The AOL team makes no recommendations for curriculum***

changes relative to this research skill, but instead suggests continued assessment of the students' abilities to perform tax research in ACC 330 to ensure this important skill set is maintained.

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Introduce students to XBRL technology

The assessment team recommends that the current assessment procedure in MIS 309 be continued but that the content of this course be broadened to include coverage of XBRL as a financial reporting format. Currently, this technology is not addressed in the curriculum but will soon be the primary reporting format for publicly traded companies. A project or assignment should be given in MIS 309 allowing the students' knowledge of XBRL to be evaluated both for grading and assessment purposes. This change is facilitated by a change in ownership of this course; beginning in academic year 2010-1011 the course will be taught by accounting faculty as a core requirement (Accounting Information Systems).

Established in Cycle: 2008-2009

Implementation Status: Finished

Priority: High

Implementation Description: Fall semester 2010

Projected Completion Date: 09/29/2012

Responsible Person/Group: Director

Additional Resources Requested: This plan is prefaced on the current plan for the School of Accountancy to acquire (either hire or gain by transfer) an instructor capable of teaching Accounting Information Systems.

Increase Academic Rigor in Coast ACC 325

ACC 325, ACC327, ACC 401 (Financial Accounting)

In the assessment report for the 2007-2008 academic year, the assessment team recommended adding a case research requirement in ACC 325 so that changes in the students' ability could be evaluated longitudinally during their undergraduate careers (i.e., from ACC 325 through ACC 327 and finally in ACC 401) to determine if their research skills improved significantly during the program. Indeed, the results in the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 assessment reports (as well as the results for the current year) indicate the students' ability to research databases (i.e., professional standards) and draw proper conclusions based on their research appeared to improve dramatically in the sequence of financial accounting courses, as a large portion of the students performed at an "unacceptable" level in ACC 325, but by the final case in ACC 401 the majority of students could research the standards at an "acceptable" level.

Yet, the assessment results indicate that many students continue to struggle somewhat even in ACC 401 with being able to apply the standard they've located to the case and make the most optimal decision or conclusion. This is not from lack of exposure to these cases as students have had five unstructured financial accounting cases, assigned to them by the end of this three course financial accounting sequence (i.e., ACC 325, 327, and 401). Being able to make these in-depth type of analytical/logical decisions is a main reason accounting students need a fifth year of study, primarily in the graduate program. The assessment team does not recommend adding more financial accounting cases at the undergraduate level but believes the current number is appropriate. Instead, the assessment team recommends that the faculty strongly encourage our qualified undergraduate students, and especially those who intend to enter public accounting, to obtain the MPA degree, where their critical thinking skills will be honed dramatically.

Although the results overall show a strong improvement in research skills over the financial sequence of courses (i.e., from ACC 325 to ACC 327 and finally to ACC 401), the instructors in ACC 327 and ACC 401 noticed some significant differences between the performance of students on the coast versus those in Hattiesburg. The ACC 327 instructor teaches this course on both campuses as does the ACC 401 instructor. This provides these instructors a unique view into comparisons in student performance between the two campuses. For example in ACC 327, on the research case evaluated for assessment purposes in the spring 2011, it was noticed that 81.6% of the Hattiesburg students were able to identify the appropriate authoritative source in the ASC at an "acceptable" level or above, while on the coast only 66.6% of the students did so. In Hattiesburg, 78.1% of the students were able to draw an appropriate conclusion to the case based on their research and logical reasoning at an "acceptable" level or above while on the coast only 60% did so. It should be noted that the same research case was assigned and evaluated on both campuses. In ACC 401 in the fall 2010 when the coast students' research skills were evaluated via their performance on the ASC case, the instructor noted that their ability to locate the appropriate standard in the ASC was good and on par with the Hattiesburg students, who were assigned the same case. However, relative to the Hattiesburg class, a much larger percentage of the students in the coast section had difficulty in applying the standard to the case and drawing an appropriate conclusion. The difficulty stemmed from the fact that many of the coast students did not appear to understand that the recognition of an expense and a liability occurs concurrently in an adjusting journal entry for an accrued expense. That is, there was **an apparent lack of understanding by coast students concerning the concept and application of an accrual based adjusting entry, which is a topic taught and learned in ACC 325.**

The information above provides corroborating evidence of what the ACC 327 and ACC 401 instructors have observed over the past several semesters. In particular, relative to Hattiesburg students in ACC 327 and ACC 401 (and especially in ACC 327), the coast ACC 327 and ACC 401 students exhibit a much higher variance in their performances on both exams and out-of-class assignments. For example in the research case evaluated for assessment purposes in ACC 327 in the spring 2011, a slightly higher percentage of the coast students performed at the "exceptional" level relative to the Hattiesburg students. However, much more alarming is that a significantly larger percentage of coast students (relative to Hattiesburg students) performed at the "unacceptable" level on this case. The assessment team has determined that the coast ACC 325 class lacks the rigor needed to prepare students for the challenges they will face in their subsequent financial accounting courses (i.e., ACC 327 and 401). Beginning in the fall 2011, the teaching and primarily the testing and

grading in ACC 325 on the coast will be changed to make it more similar to ACC 325 in Hattiesburg. In particular, currently, a heavy portion (approximately 55%-60%) of a student's grade in ACC 325 on the coast is based on work performed outside of class, where a student can get help from other students or additional sources. Thus, it appears that many students have successfully completed ACC 325 on the coast without truly understanding the material covered, which leaves them disadvantaged when trying to handle the difficult topics addressed in ACC 327 and 401. The new format in ACC 325 on the coast will eliminate the heavy use of out-of-class assignments (including take-home exams) in grade determination and instead will largely use in-class exams to gauge students' individual knowledge. Outside assignments will still be given but will count a much lower percentage of a student's final grade than is presently occurring. The new ACC 325 format on the coast will parallel the teaching and testing style not only of ACC 325 in Hattiesburg but of the other upper-level accounting courses as well. The performance of coast students in courses subsequent to ACC 325 (i.e., ACC 327 and ACC 401) will be evaluated in the future to determine if the proposed changes in ACC 325 produce the desired results. In addition, a change in the coast ACC 325 instructor was made with the full support of the two faculty members involved (the switch in teaching responsibilities was suggested by these faculty members).

2012-2013 Assessment Update

The AOL team previously concluded that the coast students were underperforming, relative to the Hattiesburg students, on exams in ACC 327 because the exam format in the coast administration varied greatly from that employed in other administrations of ACC 325 and ACC 327. Spring 2012 ACC 327 exam scores revealed the Hattiesburg students scored a mean of 75.13 (out of 100), while the coast students scored a mean of only 63.25. There were 46 and 37 students who took ACC 327 on the Hattiesburg and coast campuses, respectively, during the spring 2012 semester. In response, the AOL team recommended in the 2011-2012 AOL report that all intermediate instructors (i.e., both ACC 325 and ACC 327) give exams in a similar format. (i.e., approximately 40%-50% multiple-choice questions and 50%-60% problems).

In the spring 2013 semester, the same conditions (instructor, pedagogy, exam content/format, etc.) held as in the spring 2012 semester. The coast students in ACC 327 earned an average score of 75.1 on their first exam (i.e., compared to an average score of only 63.25 by the coast students on their first ACC 327 exam in spring 2012). In addition, the coast students' average score on the first exam in spring 2013 of 75.1 was actually slightly better than the Hattiesburg ACC 327 students' first exam score average of 73.2. The problems that had been noticed in the coast students' test taking abilities in prior semesters in ACC 327 (e.g., poor time management) did not exist in the spring 2013 administration of the course. In addition, none of the coast ACC 327 students in the spring 2013 indicated to the ACC 327 instructor that they felt ill prepared for the exam format in ACC 327 (a common comment in the past). The improved performance of the coast students on their first ACC 327 exam in the spring of 2013 is likely attributable to the fact that they had been exposed to the revised exam format in ACC 325 in the fall 2012 (i.e., exams containing both multiple choice questions and problems rather than simply all multiple-choice questions).

Therefore, the AOL team recommends continued use of the format recommended in the 2011-2012 AOL report (approximately 40%-50% multiple-choice questions and 50%-60% problems) in ACC 325 and ACC 327 course administrations.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Principles of Accounting Competency Exam (ACC 325) | **Outcome/Objective:** Demonstrate functional knowledge of basic accounting skills

Measure: Solve cases requiring research of the professional accounting standards | **Outcome/Objective:** Research databases

Projected Completion Date: 09/29/2012

Responsible Person/Group: Director Coast ACC 325 Instructor ACC 327 Instructor ACC 327 Instructor

Scheduling of Compressed Courses Related to Internship Programs

For USM to maintain a viable accounting program in terms of placing its graduates with quality firms, continuing two compressed courses (currently ACC 401 and ACC 407) during the second half of the spring semester is required. Last spring, compressed courses were scheduled for all students requiring the course - both those returning from internships, and those not participating in the internship program. The majority of our students enrolled in the two compressed courses were not involved in the internship program. The result was that the non-intern students for the spring semester took a very light load the first half of the semester and then an extremely heavy load in the second half (i.e., for a senior-level non-intern student taking 15 hours in the spring, it results in the equivalent of a 9-hour load in the first half of the semester and a 21-hour load in the second half). This problem is exacerbated by the fact that many of the non-intern students are average students academically (i.e., a number of the better students land internships).

Next spring (i.e., spring 2013), ACC 401 is slated to be one of the two senior-level accounting courses offered as a second-half course. The ACC 401 instructor has offered to teach this course in Hattiesburg the full semester so that the non-intern students do not have to take it on a compressed basis in the second half of the semester. For the students performing spring internships in the first half of the semester, the ACC 401 instructor will teach the course to them on a compressed basis in the second half of the semester by providing extra class periods and/or using a hybrid instructional format. By doing this, the non-intern students would only need to take one compressed course in the second half of the semester, thus leveling out their course load considerably compared to the spring 2012. Obviously, this would be extra work with little additional pay for the ACC 401 instructor, and she is to be commended for the sacrifice she is willing to make for our program and its students. The AOL team believes that a change is needed to improve the quality of education for our senior-level non-intern students in the spring semester, and it endorses the ACC 401 instructor's proposal. Assessment procedures next year will determine if the suggested curriculum change levels out the workload for the non-intern students so that it is more manageable for them. Additionally, two ACC 407 courses will be scheduled in the spring - one compressed, and one for the full semester.

2012-2013 Update

The AOL Team has found that requiring multiple assessments during the two compressed accounting courses (ACC 401 and ACC 407) to be problematic, given the intensity with which these courses are delivered during the last half of the Spring semester of the senior year. These compressed-course assessment outcomes do not accurately represent the learning outcomes experienced by the general student population over the course of the normal 15-week semester. Therefore the AOL team has recommended elimination of assessments during compressed courses and where possible, moving the assessment period to the Fall semester when such courses are taught over the traditional 15-week semester.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High

Projected Completion Date: 08/31/2013
Responsible Person/Group: SoA Director

Reconsidering Assessment of Basic Accounting Skills in ACC 325

During the 2012-2013 assessment period, the coast students failed to achieve the assessment target of 80 percent students meeting or exceeding expectations. The reason provided for this decline in coast student performance was that the PACE process that students must successfully complete prior to enrolling in ACC 325 was not sufficiently rigorous to redirect marginally prepared students for the course rigor of the first Intermediate Accounting course. Similar anecdotal evidence regarding the PACE has been raised by faculty on the Hattiesburg campus. In addition, the Hattiesburg instructor has raised the point that this assessment project demands a lot of student time and their incentive to successfully complete it is minimal (with respect to the course grade). Because this assessment captures basic accounting skills, an alternative to requiring this project is to use embedded questions in regular examinations. This alternative would also free up additional student time to master the course material. Another alternative would be to use algorithmic problems made available through the textbook publisher as an assessment tool. Therefore the AOL recommends the implementation of the following plan:

- (1) A thorough analysis of PACE results over the past several semesters for indicated changes in its composition, administration, use, etc., with recommendations as to changes in the structure and rigor of the PACE.
- (2) Replacement of the accounting cycle project in ACC 325 for assessment in Spring 2014 with either a) comprehensive algorithmic problem(s), or b) embedded exam measures.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: ACC 325 Accounting Cycle Project | **Outcome/Objective:** Demonstrate functional knowledge of basic accounting skills

Measure: Principles of Accounting Competency Exam (ACC 325) | **Outcome/Objective:** Demonstrate functional knowledge of basic accounting skills

Projected Completion Date: 09/01/2015

Responsible Person/Group: ACC 325 instructors PACE instructors Director

Researching Governmental Accounting Standards

As a result of recommendations in the 2009-2010 AOL report designed to strengthen the students' research exposure and skills regarding the GASB standards, assessments during the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 academic years were conducted on the second of two research cases using the GASB standards. The reported results in these two academic years indicate improvement in the students' reported performance on the GASB research cases, presumably because of the feedback on the first case to the students, and the increased exposure to the GASB standards of two case assignments. However, student and instructor anecdotal feedback regarding the assignment of two GASB cases over these years has indicated that students feel overwhelmed by the number/timing of the GASB cases and other outside-of-class assignments (nonprofit research case, WRDS research case) in ACC 407 - especially within the compressed format of the class during which the reported assessments above were conducted - and their value as an assessment tool may have been negatively impacted. The 2012-2013 assessment results included in this report are based on a single research case during the spring 2013 semester.

As a result of this feedback and prior reported assessment results, the AOL team recommends that the WRDS research requirement (not assessed in this course) be omitted from ACC 407, and that two cases, one of which is an assessed GASB research case, be required in ACC 407. Additionally, the ACC 407 instructors, at their option, may assess during the fall term, in which the course is taught in full semester format (rather than compressed format as in the spring term). The AOL team advises careful implementation of this recommendation, given the history of disparate student performance when varying numbers of cases (first three, then one, now two) of cases have been employed in the past (see closing of the loop discussion). The AOL team believes that this assignment/assessment mix would better serve the students' pedagogical needs and also adequately meet assessment goals. Because this action plan applies to all sections of ACC 407 (Hattiesburg and Coast), an improvement in student performance should occur a both campuses.

In addition to the above required action, ***the Coast instructor should also: 1) expand the class time devoted to the case assignment process - increasing explanation and illustration of what is expected of the students in successful completion of the assignment, 2) offer the students a review or feedback process to improve their results prior to final submission of the case for a grade, 3) provide additional instruction on acceptable report writing including the referral of students to those on campus who might improve their writing skills, and 4) together with the Hattiesburg instructor, adopt a common rubric that allows the assessment of accessing data bases and written communication to be conducted independently.***

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: ACC 407 Data Base Research | **Outcome/Objective:** Research databases

Measure: ACC 407 Writing Assessment | **Outcome/Objective:** Communicate Effectively in Writing

Projected Completion Date: 09/01/2015
Responsible Person/Group: ACC 407 Instructors

Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives?

Assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress in improving MPA program quality and student success as documented by the following:

1. Teaching:

Since 2009, seven of our faculty (past and current) have been honored to receive the College's and State's most prestigious Teaching Awards:

2013 - Patty Munn: MSCPA Accounting Educator of the Year

2012 - Mike Dugan: BAC Teaching Award

2012 - Steve Jackson: Greene Teaching Award

2011 - Patty Munn: Greene Teaching Award Finalist

2011 - Valerie Simmons: BAC Teaching Award

2010 - Charles Jordan: Greene Teaching Award

2010 - Stan Clark: MSCPA Accounting Educator of the Year

2009 - Rod Posey: MSCPA Accounting Educator of the Year

2009 - Mike Dugan: Alabama Society of CPAs Accounting Educator of the Year

Our faculty is focused on student success, and this entails rigorous preparation for careers in the accounting profession.

2. Accreditation:

The University of Southern Mississippi's College of Business is accredited by the Board of Directors of AACSB - The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. This designation places Southern Miss in exclusive company as one of only 643 AACSB accredited schools in the world and just 475 in the United States. More impressively, Southern Miss is one of only 167 schools in the U.S. that are separately accredited in business and accounting. Fewer than five percent of business schools worldwide have earned AACSB accreditation and less than one percent has achieved both business and accounting accreditation. To realize separate accounting accreditation, an institution must first earn or maintain AACSB Business Accreditation, which requires an institution to undergo a meticulous internal review and evaluation process. In addition to developing and implementing a mission-driven plan to satisfy the 21 business quality standards, accounting accreditation requires the satisfaction of an additional set of 9 standards that are specific to the discipline and profession of accounting.

In November, 2011, USM's School of Accountancy underwent an Accounting Maintenance of Accreditation Review by the AACSB. Accounting received an outstandingly "clean" review. Not only was accounting accreditation extended another five years (next review is scheduled for 2016-2017), but no items were identified that require corrective action prior to our next review. Accounting faculty celebrated this unqualified success with colleagues in the College of Business, who also received an outstanding maintenance of accreditation review. The accounting accreditation report formally commended the USM accounting program for "strengths, innovations, and unique features." Those qualities specifically applicable to the BSBA program included in the AACSB report are:

"Continuity and Consistency of School Leadership The School has benefited greatly from the vision and administrative leadership of its Director, the academic leadership of the recently hired endowed chair, and commitment and contributions of other faculty leaders, who are all to be commended."

"Principles of Accounting Competency Examination (PACE): all students enrolling in Intermediate Accounting I must pass with a score of 70 percent or greater. PACE is designed to allow students to understand their level of preparedness for upper-level accounting work. PACE is about retention and student success. If students can be directed into academic areas in which they can do well within the university, then they probably will stay at the University."

"Integration of WRDS and ASC Research Data Bases into Required Coursework: the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) acquired a site license for the Wharton Research Data Services (WRDS) along with several financial data bases including Standard & Poors' COMPUSTAT. All upper level accounting courses (300 level and above with the exception of BLaw) have WRDS assignments required as coursework. Similarly to WRDS integration in accounting coursework, requirements to access the Accounting Standards Codification (ASC) website have been incorporated into both Intermediate Accounting courses (I and II) and Advanced Accounting by requiring students to research the ASC to solve cases."

"British Studies Abroad Program: Annually, the school sponsors a study abroad program primarily in London, Amsterdam and Brussels. For many of the students, this is their first trip outside Mississippi. Thus, this program provides some much needed cultural diversity."

"College Computerized Testing Center: The School faculty fully embrace using this computerized testing center to free up class time for additional instruction. Additionally, the preparation materials and content of the PACE exam is handled by this facility."

"Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes: As demonstrated in the Assurance of Learning Reports and University Awards of Commendation included in the Appendix to their report, the School has championed the assessment of student learning outcomes for both the AACSB and SACS accrediting bodies. The faculty approach to achieve continuous improvement in student learning can be described as a "bottoms-up" approach to assessment. The School's AoL program was formally commended by the University both in 2010 and in 2011, not only for assessing student learning outcomes, but also for developing action plans to ensure continuous improvement in future student learning."

This accreditation review represents a major achievement in that it provides the USM accounting program with much-deserved recognition. This recognition is a major determinant of how other accounting programs nationwide view us, and in how accounting firms nationwide view our employment-seeking graduates.

3. University Ranking of Academic Programs:

The BSBA program is designed to prepare today's accounting graduates for both the challenges and opportunities that await them in graduate accounting education and in an accounting career. To assist the University administration in weathering the budgetary reductions of the not-too-distant past, a 2010 report by the University Priorities Committee ranked 257 USM academic programs in priority order. The following rankings of the School of Accountancy BSBA programs are noteworthy:

- **BSBA in Accounting (Hattiesburg) - 2 of 257 ranked programs**
- **BSBA in Accounting (Gulf Park) - 5 of 257 ranked programs**

We are extremely proud of these rankings, as they reflect the focus of these programs is firmly fixed on student success. The following rankings was received by the School of Accountancy's MPA program:

4. PACE

PACE is the Principles of Accounting Competency Examination which all students enrolling in Intermediate Accounting I (ACC 325) must pass with a score of 70 percent or greater. PACE is designed to allow students to understand their level of preparedness for upper-level accounting work. It is important for students to understand the motivation for the PACE. The School of Accountancy's faculty members are dedicated to the individual success of our students. We want to maximize their probability of successfully completing our program in accounting and having a successful career upon leaving The University of Southern Mississippi.

Students repeating the same class multiple times face costly penalties added to their tuition. Retention (the ability to complete a program of study) and matriculation (the ability to complete a program in a timely manner) have become major issues. Further, as the level of rigor continues to grow in ACC 325 Intermediate Accounting I, more students are finding themselves unprepared. While the reasons are many and varied, the outcome for many students is the same, paying tuition for a course where the student missed the opportunity for a tuition refund and enrollment in an alternate course.

PACE is about retention and student success. If students can be directed into academic areas in which they can do well at USM, then they probably will stay at USM. If students who are ill-prepared or not suited for the accounting major are permitted to languish in accounting's demanding upper level courses, they will eventually become discouraged at their lack of academic progress and probably leave USM. PACE is a form of "tough love" that accounting faculty can appreciate from their own upbringing. Also, PACE allows the accounting faculty to increase the academic rigor in the BSBA program and better prepare our BSBA graduates for future employment or graduate school. Again, this outcome is focused on student success.

What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?

Determining the level of academic rigor required to successfully complete the PACE

PACE is the Principles of Accounting Competency Examination which all students enrolling in Intermediate Accounting I (ACC 325) must pass with a score of 70 percent or greater. PACE is designed to allow students to understand their level of preparedness for upper-level accounting work. It is important for students to understand the motivation for the PACE. The School of Accountancy's faculty members are dedicated to the individual success of our students. We want to maximize their probability of successfully completing our program in accounting and having a successful career upon leaving The University of Southern Mississippi.

Recently, a number of low-performing students were enrolled in ACC 325 who should have been redirected to other academic majors. In 2011-2012, the PACE committee attributed the high overall PACE pass rate (80%) to the use of only one version of the PACE with repeated attempts (3 allowed) by the students and use of the single version (without changes) over the prior two years. Those repeating the exam were seeing an unchanged version each time they attempted the exam. Even though the exam was non-disclosed, students repeating the exam could remember what was on the exam from an earlier attempt. Thus, the PACE committee recommended and the AOL team concurred that three versions of the PACE should be developed to eliminate repeat candidates seeing the same literal exam upon multiple attempts. The PACE overall pass rate continued at a relatively high rate (80% - 90%, depending on the semester) during the 2012-2013 year, despite the implemented use of three versions of PACE for each of the three attempts available for students. After further review, the PACE committee recommends raising the pass rate on the PACE from 70% to 75% to correspond with the pass rate on the CPA exam, and reevaluating of the effect of this change on the overall pass rate after observation of the spring 2014 results.

Setting the level of academic rigor required to pass the PACE is critical to both student retention and to establishing the flow rate of instruction through the upper level accounting courses.

Study Abroad Electives

The University fields some excellent study abroad programs that greatly enhance a student's education experience. These programs vary both in duration and in price. The best known of the study abroad programs is the British Studies Program (BSP), in which students spend the month of July in London and its environs. The problem with the BSP is that costs have risen to a level (approximately \$7,500 per student) that few students can afford to enroll. Increased airfare and housing costs in central London are one factor driving costs higher, but another is that study abroad programs are subsidized to different degrees by the University. For example, in some courses, a faculty salary is paid by the University (the faculty member then draws a per diem supplement while abroad). In others (including the BSP), a faculty member's salary is paid out of revenues generated from student enrollment. In addition, the University has positioned the support staff for the studies abroad programs as an "auxiliary unit," with all of its costs required to be covered by revenue generated by student enrollment.

The above situation has resulted in low-cost subsidized programs competing with higher-cost, non-subsidized programs. The playing field needs to be leveled to provide students a wider choice of study abroad options. Additionally, University financial support should be increased in order to bring down the overall costs of these valuable programs, that are currently largely borne by students.

Lack of Accounting Internship Opportunities

Most large public accounting firms conduct paid internship programs in the early spring of each year. Students interview, and receive offer letters for a half semester (Jan-Mar) internship in which they work full time under the supervision of a CPA. Those completing internships are frequently offered employment, starting after they complete the MPA program. The School of Accountancy has established an internship program in which students leave the University for the first half of the Spring semester of their senior year, and return the last half of the semester to finish their course work. In order to maintain their status as fulltime students, students earn 6 credit hours for their internships, and must take an additional 6 credit hours during the last half of the semester. In order to accommodate this, the SoA has "compressed" two required senior level accounting courses (ACC 401 and ACC 407) which are taught in the second 8-weeks of the Spring semester. The problem is that the student demand for internships greatly exceeds the supply made available by accounting firms that traditionally hire our graduates. Each office may accept 1-2 USM interns, but frequently will take zero. USM students are competing with students from Ole Miss, State, Millsaps, and out-of-state universities for internship positions.

Two compressed accounting core courses must be offered to maintain the viability of the internship program, but the student enrollment in these courses (based on actually receiving and completing an internship) are extremely low (less than 10 students per section in the two classes). This results in an inefficient use of faculty resources, especially given other teaching demands. We have made efforts to increase our visibility with accounting offices in other states in order to address this problem, but it will most probably not be resolved in the short term.

Annual Report Section Responses

Program Summary

Accounting is frequently described as the "language of business," and all business majors are required to complete ACC 200, Principles of Financial Accounting, and ACC 220, Principles of Managerial Accounting. In addition to ACC 220, students majoring in Business Administration often elect to enroll in ACC 330, Individual Income Tax. Finally, students majoring in Finance (Banking area of interest) must complete ACC 325, Intermediate Accounting I. These accounting courses are also open to all USM students, with the caveat that beginning in Fall 2010, all students enrolling in ACC 325 (Intermediate Accounting I) must first pass the Principles of Accounting Competency Examination (PACE). There is currently no Accounting minor; the SoA is working with the College of Business to offer certificate programs, which will include a Foundations of Accounting component.

The School of Accountancy has recently been recognized for the following achievements:

1. Achieved an outstandingly "clean" accreditation review. Not only was accounting accreditation extended another five years (next review is scheduled for 2016-2017), but no items were identified that require corrective action prior to our next review and five initiatives were specifically commended by the accreditation team. The School of Accountancy is unique in that it is separately accredited by the AACSB in addition to being accredited as part of the College of Business. Within the state, only Mississippi State and Ole Miss share this distinction.
2. The School of Accountancy's (SoA's) BSBA in Accounting (Hattiesburg) was ranked #2 of 257 academic initiatives prioritized by the University Priorities Committee in 2010; the SoA's BSBA in Accounting (Gulf Coast) was ranked #5 of 257.
3. The SoA has a growing regional reputation for teaching excellence. Seven SoA teaching faculty members have received prestigious teaching awards over the past five years.
4. The SoA has been commended for excellence in assessing student learning outcomes in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013.
5. The SCHs for accounting courses, driven by increased BSBA student demand, increased by 6% in Fall 2013 (3,545) over that of Fall 2012 (3,354).
6. The BSBA in Accounting program has historically been ranked as USM's 6th largest degree-granting program. Approximately 25 percent of all degrees in accounting awarded by all four-year public universities in the state of Mississippi are from USM's SoA.
7. First implemented in Fall 2010, PACE is the Principles of Accounting Competency Examination, which all students enrolling in Intermediate Accounting I (ACC 325) must pass. PACE is about retention and student success. If students can be directed into academic areas in which they can do well at USM, then they probably will stay at USM. If students who are ill-prepared or not suited for the accounting major are permitted to languish in accounting's demanding upper level courses, they may decide to leave the University.
8. Average class sizes: Principles of Financial/Managerial Accounting average < 46 students per section (this number increases with the inclusion of the number of students enrolling in online sections); upper level accounting courses average < 30 students per section.
9. Another unique aspect of the SoA is the growing external demand that students complete internships in accounting as part of their academic program. The School has a long-standing program for students to intern with regional accounting firms.

The School of Accountancy's initiatives to increase student retention have focused on increasing faculty-student interaction out of the classroom. At the beginning of the 2009-2010 academic year, faculty were challenged to double their out-of-classroom contact with students. One manifestation of this has been heavy faculty attendance at the weekly meeting of the accounting student organization, Beta Alpha Psi. Also, the Director has encouraged faculty to adopt his program of requiring his students to schedule an office visit during the first three weeks of the semester, so that the faculty member can get to know and develop a rapport with each student. Most faculty members have embraced this program. Accounting students are recognized at the College's annual awards dinners; the SoA leads the College in the number of student awards presented. Faculty are also engaged in counseling graduating students as to their career choices, and actively involved in student placement.

In summary, the SoA has had a significant impact in providing qualified entry-level accountants throughout the South and especially within Mississippi. Our special relationship with those in the accounting profession has enabled our students to commence successful careers in accounting, while providing the profession with qualified entry-level accountants. Our alumni have been generous in giving back to the University and to the SoA, enabling us to continue to meet the challenges of state-funded higher education

Continuous Improvement Initiatives/Additional Action Plans

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

The underlying principle of assessment is to discover what potentially can and should be done to improve student learning. That is, Assurance of Learning (AoL) is an instructional responsibility to evaluate the learning process, and to take the necessary action to ensure that it is both effective and efficient. This faculty view of seeking continuous improvement in student learning can be described as a "bottoms-up" approach to assessment. At the same time, we recognize that as public servants and accounting educators we are held accountable for student learning, and therefore acknowledge the "top-down" push for assessment by administrators and accrediting bodies. While acknowledging this tension, *we practice the bottom s-up approach* to satisfy the top-down accountability requirements. The danger in the latter is that faculty may only "go through the motions" in meeting the assessment requirements that accompany the accreditation process. If so, there is no pay-off in improving student learning. Conversely, the School's AoL program was formally commended by the University in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 not only for assessing student learning outcomes, but also for developing action plans to ensure continuous improvement in future student learning.

The faculty's continued commitment to assessment-driven curriculum management enables continuous improvement. This is documented in this report's sections describing Action Plans - both Finished and In-Progress, and in the many examples provided in the section titled "Closing the Loop." In addition, the specific examples below reflect ongoing changes to both pedagogy and assessment in the spirit of continuous improvement.

Incorporating Service Learning in Income Tax Course

Beginning in 2012-2013, the instructors teaching ACC 330 (Income Tax) attempted to incorporate a service learning component to their course. This initiative was to require the participation of enrolled students in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. This program is sponsored by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and provides for filers below a stated income level (the poor and underprivileged), one-on-one assistance in filing income tax returns. This assistance is provided by accounting students who must attend IRS training in order to participate. One problem encountered in implementation is that the training is generally offered prior to the commencement of the Spring semester, and often during the Christmas semester break. Nevertheless, the Coast instructor was successful in implementing the VITA program during Spring 2013 and will continue this service learning in 2014. The Hattiesburg instructor was successful in making the necessary contacts needed to affect implementation, but found insufficient time to fully implement VITA on in the Hattiesburg area. This implementation is a goal for 2014.

Course Change in Assessing Technology

In 2011-2012, ACC 402 was subsumed by ACC 401, along with its assessment demands. The addition of a major spreadsheet project in ACC 401 for assessment purposes, as previously conducted in ACC 402, created a significant assessment burden on this class, as it is already scheduled for assessment in relation to research and writing skills (i.e., two assignments) as well assessment of research skills associated with online databases such as WRDS (i.e., one assignment). In the past, the assessment of research skills associated with WRDS occurred in ACC 402. However, beginning in the fall 2011, the requirement for assessing research of online databases (i.e., WRDS) shifted to ACC 327 (Intermediate II). This change in assessment responsibility was incorporated in the School's Assurance of Learning plan, and is documented in this report.

Closing the Loop/Action Plan Tracking

Accessing Data Bases

In the years prior to 2010-2011, the ACC 327 and ACC 401 instructors, who taught on both the Hattiesburg and coast campuses, noted significant differences between campuses in the students' research skills on both the *Locate Authority* trait and the *Apply and Conclude* trait, as indicated in the reported results of AOL reports prior to 2010-2011, when the same research case was assigned and assessed on both campuses. Relative to Hattiesburg students in ACC 327 (especially) and ACC 401, the coast ACC 327 and ACC 401 students exhibited a much higher variance in their performances on both exams and out-of-class assignments. A significantly larger percentage of coast students performed *Below Expectations* on their cases. In the fall 2010 ACC 401 class, many of the coast students displayed a lack of understanding concerning the concept and application of an accrual based adjusting entry, a topic taught and learned in ACC 325 and prior course work. This observation, coupled with anecdotal evidence from prior semesters, corroborated a subsequent AOL team finding that that the coast ACC 325 class lacked the rigor needed to prepare students for the challenges they would face in their subsequent financial accounting courses. Based on recommendations in the 2010-2011 AOL report, the ACC 325 coast course administration was changed beginning in fall 2011 to

increase the rigor and increase the consistency between the Hattiesburg and coast ACC 325 administrations, and between ACC 325 and other upper-level accounting courses. The recommended changes to the coast ACC 325 class were implemented in the fall 2011 as prescribed; coast ACC 327 students in the spring 2012 showed significant improvement in their research skills and case analyses compared to the prior year and performed on an even par in this area with the Hattiesburg ACC 327 students. Thus, problem identification, the resulting curriculum changes, and documented subsequent results support this illustration of "closing the loop" in our AOL process.

Current Technology - XBRL

The 2010-2011 AOL report specifically recommended that a hands-on assignment be made in ACC 309 that required students to demonstrate a working knowledge of the XBRL reporting format for financial statements. This was not an easy task because XBRL programs are not readily available in the academic environment; however, the AOL team felt it was important for the students to have more than just book knowledge of XBRL, as it is the reporting format currently required of publicly traded companies submitting their reports to the SEC. In the 2011-2012 academic year, the ACC 309 instructor located a textbook/manual for XBRL and assigned a project requiring students to prepare a set of financial statements using the XBRL taxonomies, which has been continued during the 2012-2013 year by new instructors. The reported results show that the vast majority of ACC 309 students on both campuses performed well on their XBRL projects. This represents a clear "closing of the loop" in our AOL process as a recommendation for a curriculum modification was made in a prior year's AOL report to keep our program current with changes in the accounting profession. That recommendation was acted upon in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, and the results from assessment testing demonstrate that students have acquired a working knowledge of XBRL, as well as a basic ability to apply the XBRL process in financial statement preparation.

Auditing - Increased Emphasis on Ethics

Results from ACC 409 assessments over time have indicated a gradual improvement each year for the seven years ethics have been assessed in this course in Hattiesburg. The work of our ACC 409 instructors demonstrates a clear "closing of the loop" in our assessment process that has transcended several cycles. For example, when assessment of ethical decision making was first implemented several years ago in ACC 409, the students scored well below the 2.00 *Met expectations* mark. However, through the work of the ACC 409 instructors and the attention they devoted to ethical decision making skills in the classroom and in their assignments, the students have for several years now scored well on their rubrics measuring ethical decision making skills.

Auditing - Accounting Transactions Cycle

In an attempt to improve the ACC 409 (auditing) course, a transactions cycle chapter was added to the Hattiesburg undergraduate auditing course in the spring 2009. The transactions cycle chapter was added because comments in exit interviews in the 2007-2008 assessment cycle from students who had performed internships with CPA firms indicated these students felt ill-prepared in this area when they performed their internships. Thus, 2008-2009 was the first year this particular assessment procedure was performed in Hattiesburg. In the next year (i.e., 2009-

2010), the procedure was continued in the Hattiesburg auditing class and added to the coast auditing class. The procedure is now an integral part of ACC 409 and performed every year on both campuses. The two traits measured for evaluating a student's understanding of transactions cycles are (1) "ability to identify the need for a cutoff test in order to determine whether transactions are recorded in the proper period" and (2) "ability to identify transactions that are not recorded in the proper period."

In the first year (2008-2009), the mean ratings on these two traits in the Hattiesburg auditing class were at or slightly above the *Met Expectations* mark of 2.0, but the AOL team felt these results could be improved by the instructor making two transactions cycles assignments in the next year (instead of one). In the 2009-2010 academic year, the auditing professor made the two assignments as recommended and performed assessment evaluations on the second one. As expected, the results improved, and the instructor continues this practice today on both campuses. In spring 2012 and spring 2013, the Hattiesburg students' mean scores on the two transactions cycle traits were well above *Met Expectations* on the two traits on both campuses. In addition to these improved scores, no students having performed internships (nor their supervisors) have noted the students were ill prepared in this area since we began emphasizing transactions cycles in ACC 409. The actions taken in relation to transactions cycles demonstrate a clear "closing of the loop" in our assessment process as a problem was identified through assessment procedures one year, the curriculum was changed the subsequent year, and assessment results for the following cycles (years) suggest the deficiency has been corrected.

Integration of International Financial Reporting Standards in the Accounting Curriculum

Two years ago, as an additional measure of determining whether students possess functional knowledge of basic accounting skills, the AOL team recommended that their understanding of IFRS be evaluated in one of the three courses where this information is taught. Accordingly, in the 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 academic years, the students' performance on embedded IFRS questions on the multiple-choice portions of the ACC 327 exams were evaluated, and it was found that the students' correct response rates on the IFRS questions were favorable on both campuses relative to the correct response rates on questions dealing with U.S. GAAP. Thus, the AOL team believes that our BSBA students possess the basic skills and understanding of international accounting standards needed to function in entry level accounting positions. This finding demonstrates a positive "closing of the loop" in our assessment process as a prior year's assessment report identified a change needed to keep the curriculum current with practice (i.e., coverage of IFRS), the change was implemented, and subsequent assessment testing in the last two cycles shows the change produced the desired results (i.e., students possess basic knowledge of international accounting standards).

Reformatting/Standardization of Intermediate Accounting Examinations

In conjunction with results discussed in point 6 above, the AOL team previously concluded that the coast students were under-performing, relative to the Hattiesburg students, on exams in ACC 327 because the exam format in the coast administration varied greatly from that employed in other administrations of ACC 325 and ACC 327. Higher spring 2012 ACC 327 Hattiesburg exam scores (mean of 75.13), relative to the coast student exam scores (mean of 63.25), were observed, holding many course attributes constant: identical instructor, pedagogy,

exam content/format, and class format between the two campuses. Coast students were observed struggling with appropriate time management on exams. For the ACC 327 instructor, the most common comment on his student evaluations for the coast section in the spring 2012 was that the students felt unprepared for the exam format in ACC 327, even though they were told the exact exam format well in advance of the first exam. No similar comments were received from the Hattiesburg ACC 327 students. By the fourth and final exam in ACC 327 in the spring 2012, though, this discrepancy in exam performance between the campuses disappeared. On that exam (the most difficult of the four exams), the mean scores between campuses were virtually identical (i.e., coast mean = 71.03 and Hattiesburg mean = 70.78), after the coast students had learned proper preparation for a traditional intermediate exam. However, their poor performance on the earlier course exam(s) put many of them at a disadvantage relative to the Hattiesburg students, who were already familiar with the exam format from ACC 325.

Accordingly, the AOL team recommended in 2011-2012 that all intermediate instructors (i.e., both ACC 325 and ACC 327) give similar format exams (i.e., approximately 40%-50% multiple-choice questions and 50%-60% problems). This format was recommended for two reasons: 1) it is the format used in most problem-solving accounting courses because it assesses the students' ability to address involved processes (through in-depth problems) and also students' broad spectrum knowledge (via multiple choice questions), and 2) it is consistent with the CPA exam format. This format also represents the traditional format for intermediate accounting exams, and all intermediate instructors in Hattiesburg (both intermediate one and intermediate two instructors) use some variation of it.

In the spring 2013 semester, coast students in ACC 327 earned a first exam average score of 75.1 (in contrast to a mean of 63.25 by the spring 2012 coast students). Additionally, the coast students' average score of 75.1 was slightly better than the Hattiesburg ACC 327 students' first exam score average of 73.2. Poor time management skills were not observed in the spring 2013 coast students and none of them indicated that they felt ill prepared for the exam format in ACC 327 (a common comment in the past). This improved performance is likely attributable to the fact that they had been exposed to the revised exam format in ACC 325 in the fall 2012 (i.e., exams containing multiple choice questions and problems, rather than simply all multiple-choice questions). These results indicate a "closing of the loop" in our AOL process, as a problem was documented in a prior year's report (i.e., poor test taking ability of coast students in ACC 327 exams given early in the semester), the recommended changes was implemented in the current year (i.e., testing format in ACC 325 on the coast was revised to test students over both problems and multiple choice questions), and results in the current year demonstrate that the changes produced the desired results (i.e., improved testing performance by coast students in ACC 327).