

## **PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT REPORT - 2013-14 ACADEMIC YEAR**

Notre Dame de Namur University School of Business and Management

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### **MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MANAGEMENT (MSSM) PROGRAM**

#### **OVERVIEW**

This report summarizes our assessment activities in the School of Business and Management's Masters of Science in Management (MSSM) graduate program for the academic year 2013-14. The report is based on assessment data gathered during the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 semesters.

Please note that we have recently modified our assessment processes in all graduate programs in order to make them more rigorous and comprehensive and to optimize the statistical accuracy and representativeness of the findings that emerge from analysis of the assessment data. 2013-14 constitutes our second year of using the new evaluation methodology.

The process we used for the academic years 2011-12, 2010-11 and 2009-10 consisted of evaluating capstone projects assigned within the MSSM Capstone courses for achievement of all six Program Learning Outcomes. The process we have switched to as of 2012-13 and which we plan to continue using for the foreseeable future consists of assessing the appropriate and relevant Program Learning Outcomes in each of the "core" Common Professional Component (CPC) classes every time the core course is taught (with occasional exceptions). We feel this approach is superior to the capstone-only method used previously since it provides a greater number of data points using a more diverse set of assessment methods and faculty evaluators as a gauge of our progress toward achieving the PLOs.

#### **GENERAL PROCESS**

The process described below was followed in order to assess our achievement of the Program Learning Outcomes in the MBA program:

1. Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for each of the graduate programs were created and vetted with faculty and administration within the School of Business and Management. Our PLOs were most recently revamped and renewed in 2010.
2. Instructors teaching core (CPC) courses in the graduate programs are asked to identify the set of Program Learning Outcomes relevant to their course(s).
3. Instructors teaching core (CPC) courses are then asked to identify provisional methods to assess each of the relevant learning outcomes identified in 2.
4. The provisional methods are vetted with the School of Business and Management's Director of Graduate Programs for appropriateness and feasibility. In some cases, instructors are asked to revise their initial assessment methods so that they more closely align to a proper assessment of the relevant Program Learning Outcomes and/or allow for a more feasible and practical assessment and data collection process. In other cases, instructors are advised to modify their

selection of Program Learning Outcomes to assess in order to arrive at the same beneficial outcomes mentioned above.

5. Once approved, instructors are asked to assess according to their approved assessment plans.
6. The Director of Graduate Programs obtains data from each of the assessing instructors, and then compiles and analyzes the data, noting trends and issues (reported here). See “Program Assessment Rubric” for a description of our assessment benchmarks.
7. The Director of Graduate Programs shares the findings with SBM and NDNU faculty, staff and administration at the beginning of the academic year. The group jointly brainstorms how to improve upon any problematic areas demonstrated by the findings and identifies action steps needed “close the loop” on program learning outcome achievement deficiencies. Suitable ideas emerging from the discussions are then implemented as early in the academic year as possible.
8. The next academic year’s results are examined to see if improvement has occurred in the areas of deficiency.

## **DATA SOURCES**

As mentioned above, our assessment data comes from assessments made in the “core” (Common Professional Component or “CPC”) courses within each graduate program. Each time a “core” course is run during the fall or spring semesters, we ask instructors to provide assessment data for that course. New faculty members teaching core courses may initially be exempt from providing assessment data since they are less familiar with the course structures and pedagogy in the courses they are teaching. We compensate for such “CPC” deficiencies by simply collecting more data in other simultaneously running CPC courses.

For the MSSM program, we include assessment data from both the on-ground and online programs, with the majority of the data cases coming from the on-ground program. Given the current teach-out of the online MSSM program, we do not compare PLO assessments of the online vs. on-ground MSSM programs.

Data for the assessments are collected in the fall and spring semesters of each academic year. We do not collect assessment data for summer courses given the diminished number and more “elective” nature of the courses taught in this timeframe.

The “core” CPC courses for the MSSM program that provide data for our assessments are:

<b>MSSM Core Courses</b>
Organization Management & Theory
Enterprise Information Management Systems
Decision Support
Enterprise Performance Management
Systems Management
Systems Modeling
Project Systems Analysis (MSSM Capstone)

## PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

### MSSM Program Level Learning Outcomes

The Program Learning Outcomes for our MSM Program are as follows:

1. Students will be able to develop their abilities to analyze the creation of **value** through the integrated production and distribution of goods, services, and information.
2. Students will learn the stages of group development, communicate the role systems serve in an organization, and use **systematic** problem solving to best achieve the goals of the organization.
3. Students will learn essential issues of sustainability, systems theory, and organization behavior to be able make **decisions** that achieve organizational efficiency and social responsibility.
4. Students will be able to present management **leadership** concepts and techniques with reference to general management and management specialties clearly, concisely, and professionally through written, oral, and visual means.
5. Students will develop information literacy (**info literacy**) and technological competency by utilizing electronic media to research management issues, properly communicating management decisions, and learning how to optimally manage work teams and work flow with reference to general management and management specialties.
6. Students apply the NDNU **mission** (community engagement and social justice) to course curriculum.

### PRIOR ACADEMIC YEAR - FINDINGS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

The two outcomes that were not achieved to our satisfaction during the last measurement cycle (2012-13) were: (1) Leadership and (2) Hallmarks. It should be noted that such findings were based on only one academic cycle's worth of data and therefore are somewhat tentative in nature. Data from another 2-3 cycles (including the current cycle) are needed to confirm the presence of deficiencies in these two PLO areas. In the meantime, however, we assumed that the two areas were deficient and took actions consistent with generating performance improvements in these areas.

A brainstorming session was held in October 2013 with faculty and the Dean to discuss the findings from the 2012-13 PLO assessment analysis.

The following suggestions were made by faculty relative to the 'Leadership' Outcome:

1. Have students get more involved in leading class activities such as lectures, discussions and case studies. \*
2. Take a closer look at group work dynamics and pinpoint why groupwork is often dysfunctional and lacks proper leadership.
3. Have students conduct peer evaluations of their classmates. \*
4. Establish learning contracts that set guideline for dealing with conflict and its resolution.

It should be noted that the starred (\*) items #1 and #3 above are already being implemented in several areas throughout the graduate programs. Item #2 is discussed at graduate curriculum task force meetings, program director meetings and SBM meetings.

One suggestion was made by faculty relative to the 'Communication' outcome was that we make greater use of Kate Mills (a writing tutor) and the Writing Center. Kate received a grant to investigate the causes of students' writing weaknesses. Faculty have repeatedly cited students' struggles with composing well-written, scholarly term papers that adhere to APA-style conventions.

According to our prior year academic report, actions were planned for the 2013-14 assessment cycle relative to the '**Leadership**' outcome. Below, we list the planned action and the accompanying action taken (or not taken) relative to the plan.

<b>Planned Action Resulting from 2012-13 Assessment Cycle</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
We currently offer a 'Leadership Concepts' course as part of our Masters in Public Administration (MPA) program. Our Graduate Curriculum and Admissions Task Force will look at the possibility of requiring this course in the MSSM curriculum as well. The committee will also discuss how content from this course can be embedded in other MSSM courses throughout the curriculum.	Course is still not required in the MSSM, however the task force has focused specifically on the issue of group work and how to structure teams so that a bona-fide leadership structure is in place.  Faculty that have not been using peer evaluation systems for group work have been encouraged to use peer evaluation systems.
Faculty will be asked to brainstorm and implement ways to improve their teaching of 'Leadership' skills for each of their classes. Best practices will be documented and shared amongst faculty.	Brainstorming session held with faculty in October 2013. See above for results.
Our ACBSP and WASC assessment processes for Program Learning Outcomes and Institutional Learning Outcomes assessment will serve to focus our efforts on continually assessing and improving students 'Leadership' skills.	In process.
Our revamped MSSM program proposal will directly address the concern of embedding more leadership content into our MSSM curriculum. Right now, we believe there might be an opportunity to leverage students' work in groups as a Leadership learning tool. We will explore this option further.	We are in the midst of formulating a revamped MSSM program that will include a distinct 'Leadership' component.

According to our prior year academic report, actions were planned for the 2013-14 assessment cycle relative to the **'Hallmarks'** outcome. Below, we list the planned action and the accompanying action taken (or not taken) relative to the plan.

<b>Planned Action Resulting from 2012-13 Assessment Cycle</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
Have students brainstorm ways to include applications of the Hallmarks into MSSM courses.	Students were exposed to the Hallmarks in their classes and encouraged to complete project work that applied the NDNU Hallmarks.
<p>Ask faculty to incorporate applications of Hallmarks into their courses, especially the Capstone course which focuses on solving a real-life problem.</p> <p>Have our MSSM Task Force (a sub-group of our Graduate Curriculum and Admissions Task Force) will look at ways to better integrate 'Hallmarks' content and pedagogy into the MSM curriculum.</p>	Brainstorming session held with faculty in October 2013. Faculty were made aware of the need to incorporate the Hallmarks into their courses and information was shared on how instructors in other programs are currently doing so.
Our ACBSP and WASC assessment processes for Program Learning Outcomes and Institutional Learning Outcomes assessment will serve to focus our efforts on continually assessing and improving students 'Hallmarks' qualities.	In process.

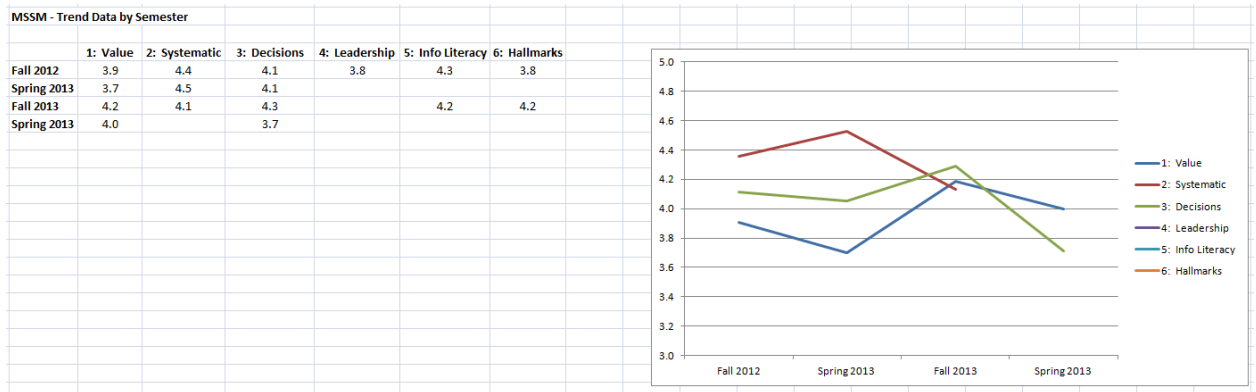
It should be noted that the 'Hallmarks' outcome assessment did appear to improve from the prior to the current assessment cycle (rose from 3.8 to 4.2).

### **CURRENT ASSESSMENT DATA**

Below are our PLO assessment data summaries for the academic year 2013-14. Note: Because the MSSM is a smaller program, courses in this program are cycled less frequently than those in our other graduate programs (MBA and MPA). Sample sizes of student work for the data cases are also smaller due to the typically lower enrollments in MSSM classes (i.e. 6-10 students). Thus, PLOs have been measured with somewhat less than the ideal amount of data.

MSSM Course PLO Summary Data 2013-14 Academic Year				Program Learning Outcomes Assessments (scale is 2-5)					
Semester	Course	Instructor	Metric	1: Value	2: Systematic	3: Decisions	4: Leadership	5: Info Literacy	6: Hallmarks
Fall 2013	Decision Support	Fogal	Average (Mean)		4.1		4.4		
			Standard Deviation		0.8		0.8		
Fall 2013	Sustainability	Martin	Average (Mean)	4.2	4.2	4.2		4.2	4.2
			Standard Deviation	0.3	0.3	0.3		0.3	0.3
Fall 2013	FALL 2013 OVERALL	All Instructors	Average (Mean)	4.2	4.1	4.3	-	4.2	4.2
			Standard Deviation (by class avg)	-	0.1	0.1	-	-	-
			Standard Deviation (all data)	0.3	0.6	0.6	-	0.3	0.3
Spring 2014	Systems Modeling	Fogal	Average (Mean)	4.0			3.7		
			Standard Deviation	0.8			1.0		
Spring 2014	SPRING 2014 OVERALL	All Instructors	Average (Mean)	4.0			3.7		
			Standard Deviation (by class avg)	-			-		
			Standard Deviation (all data)	-			-		
OVERALL 2013-14 ACADEMIC YEAR	All Courses	All Instructors	Average (Mean)	4.1	4.1	4.1	-	4.2	4.2
			Standard Deviation (by class avg)	0.1	0.1	0.3	-	-	-
			Standard Deviation (all data)	0.6	0.6	0.8	-	0.3	0.3

Master of Science in Management (MSSM) Course PLO Summary Data 2013-14 Academic Year		Program Learning Outcomes Assessments (scale is 2-5)					
		1: Value	2: Systematic	3: Decisions	4: Leadership	5: Info Literacy	6: Hallmarks
Fall 2013	Average (Mean)	4.2	4.1	4.3	-	4.2	4.2
	Standard Deviation (by class avg)	-	0.1	0.1	-	-	-
	Standard Deviation (all data)	0.3	0.6	0.6	-	0.3	0.3
Spring 2014	Average (Mean)	4.0	0.0	3.7	-	-	-
	Standard Deviation (by class avg)	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Standard Deviation (all data)	-	0.0	-	-	-	-
OVERALL 2013-14	Average (Mean)	4.1	4.1	4.1	-	4.2	4.2
	Standard Deviation (by class avg)	0.1	0.1	0.3	-	-	-
	Standard Deviation (all data)	0.6	0.6	0.8	-	0.3	0.3



## DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The current year and trend PLO assessment data lead us to the following conclusions:

1. All Program Learning Outcomes within the MSSM program appear to have been achieved satisfactorily in the academic year 2013-14 (an overall average of 4.1 out of 5), though students performed better in some areas than others.
2. Our highest achievements for the year were in the “Info Literacy” and “Hallmarks” PLOs, though only by a small (.10) margin. These were followed closely by adequate (i.e. above 4.0) achievement levels in the “Value”, “Systematic” and “Decisions” PLOs.
3. The ‘Leadership’ outcome was not assessed in this cycle, however it was assessed in the prior cycle and presented the lowest average of all the PLOs. Accordingly, we will take a prudent approach here and assume the results would have been similar for this PLO in the current assessment cycle.
4. The “Hallmarks” PLO assessment appears to be trending upwards, though this is only based on two semesters worth of data collected over two assessment cycles.
5. The “Value” and “Decisions” PLO assessments jump around a bit over the last two assessment cycles, but essentially appear to be flat over the last year and are both above 4.0.
6. It should be noted that another full-year cycle of data collection and analysis will be beneficial in helping us affirm, revise or negate any conclusions reached within this report, especially in the data-poor areas of “Leadership” and less severely in “Info Literacy” and “Hallmarks”. The above conclusions are based on two academic cycles worth of data using a system that was newly established only two years ago.

#### **ACTION STEPS FOR THE 2014-15 ACADEMIC YEAR**

Given the list of findings above, we will concentrate on improving what appear to be our two weakest areas within the MSSM: ‘Leadership’ and ‘Systematic’. We are simultaneously keeping a watchful eye on ‘Leadership’ given that it maintained the lowest average of any PLO assessment in the prior cycle (though it was based on a small sample size of data) and was not assessed in the current cycle.

##### *‘Leadership’ Analysis*

To reiterate, the ‘Leadership’ outcome is as follows:

Students will be able to present management *leadership* concepts and techniques with reference to general management and management specialties clearly, concisely, and professionally through written, oral, and visual means.

In discussing students’ performance on the leadership measure, several faculty comments speak to the general consensus of our efforts to teach and instill ‘Leadership’ in our graduates:

“Technical managers, like the ones we’re training in our MSSM program need to have the leadership and communication skills in order to successfully convey and see implemented their technical ideas for business improvement. Knowledge is not enough.”

“I feel we teach too much technical material and not enough on the people-skills-building side.”

“Our students need work expressing their technical ideas per se and how they can make business function better.”

“Leadership can and should be taught and perhaps we could do a better job of teaching it.”

Note: Some of these comments were also made for the MBA program as there is some course overlap between the two programs.

Two factors that may help explain the assessment outcome in ‘Leadership’ are as follows:

1. We do not currently offer a ‘Leadership’ course per se as part of our MSSM program, though we do weave material on leadership into the required Organization Management and Theory course as well as the MSSM Capstone course. In the final analysis, it seems that students may be lacking an adequate amount of exposure to leadership content under our current curricular structure.
2. Note that the ‘Leadership’ measure includes a component on written and oral communication. No distinct coursework is offered in the areas of written and oral communication within the MSSM degree. Instead, it is (like leadership) woven into the core MSSM curriculum at various points.
3. The MSSM has traditionally been a highly technical degree. Students learn how to manage businesses from a systems perspective and the focus on people skills, while certainly present at various points in the curriculum, is somewhat less emphasized relative to systems and decisions models.

Next Steps – Closing the Loop on ‘Leadership’

1. We currently offer a ‘Leadership Concepts’ course as part of our Masters in Public Administration (MPA) program. Our MSSM Task Force (a sub-division of the Graduate Curriculum and Admissions Task Force) will look at the possibility of requiring this course in the MSSM curriculum as well. The committee will also discuss how content from this course can be embedded in other MSSM courses throughout the curriculum.
2. Faculty will be asked to once again brainstorm and implement ways to improve their teaching of ‘Leadership’ skills for each of their MSSM classes. Best practices will be documented and shared amongst faculty.
3. Our ACBSP and WASC assessment processes for Program Learning Outcomes and Institutional Learning Outcomes assessment will serve to focus our efforts on continually assessing and improving students ‘Leadership’ skills.

*‘Systematic’ Analysis*

To reiterate, the ‘Systematic’ outcome is as follows:



Students will learn the stages of group development, communicate the role systems serve in an organization, and use *systematic* problem solving to best achieve the goals of the organization.

A few aspects about the 'Systematic' outcome assessment should be noted:

1. The outcome was assessed in three out of four possible assessment semesters over the last two assessment cycles, but was not assessed in the most recent Spring 2014 semester.
2. All three assessments were above 4.0, with both of the prior cycle assessments being well over 4.0. The downward trend was caused by the sole data case occurring in Fall 2013. As such, it is difficult to discern whether the downward trend is truly materializing in this outcome.
3. The 'Systematic' PLO is multi-dimensional and includes several sub-outcomes, including: (1) learning about group development, (2) communicating the roles systems serve, and (3) using systematic problem solving to achieve organizational goals. If we eventually conclude that this PLO is, in fact, deficient, we will need to identify which particular sub-outcomes are in fact causing the deficiency.
4. The best course of action given the uncertainty around the validity of the assessment outcome is to accumulate another cycle worth of data and re-assess our findings at the conclusion of that cycle. Accordingly, no improvement actions are planned for the 'Systematic' PLO at this time.

#### **NEXT STEPS – GENERAL ASSESSMENT PROCESSES**

The following next steps will be implemented during our 2014-15 academic year:

1. 2013-14 assessment results will be discussed broadly with faculty as well as SBM and SBM administration. Feedback from faculty and administration will be used to suggest and implement further refinements to our pedagogy and curriculum in order to close the loop on above-mentioned issues.
2. MSSM faculty and the Graduate Business Program Director will jointly develop a detailed set of rubrics for each of the six Program Learning Outcomes for the MSSM program. Our initial two years of assessment using the multiple-course method purposely kept assessment at a more general level so that faculty could (1) best adapt to the new system, and (2) discover the important elements of assessing each of the learning outcomes which will feed into our development of the more detailed rubrics in 2014-15.
3. We will endeavor to reflect upon and assess our own assessment processes. Faculty will be asked to provide feedback about ease of conducting assessments, whether they believe assessments are helping to improve learning outcomes, whether our rubrics adequately address the PLOs and about the quality and usefulness of the PLOs themselves.