IU South Bend Assessment Grant Final Report

Name of Grant: "Assessing Student Learning Outcomes in the Principles of Economics Courses."
Department: Economics, School of Business and Economics
Principal Faculty: Douglas Agbetiafa, Chair.

A. What are the results of the assessment project?

During the Fall semester 2008 the Economics department administered the pretest of the nationally normed test -Test in Understanding of College Economics- to 319 students in ten sections of Microeconomics and 97 students in four sections of Macroeconomics. During the last week of the semester, we administered the posttest examination to 209 students in ten sections of the microeconomics, and 65 students in four sections of macroeconomics course. Analysis of the data (Table 1.A) shows that our principles students' performance ranks them at par with students in the national sample. IUSB students rank in the 56 percentile in the pre-test of the microeconomics examination, and at 63 percentile in the macroeconomics examination compared to 56 and 63 percentile respectively of the students in the national sample. Results of the post-test administered to students in the last week of the semesters show that our students rank in the 61 percentile in the microeconomics examination, and in the 69 percentile in the macroeconomics examination compared to 61 and 57 percentile ranking respectively of the students in the national sample.

We administered the tests again during the Spring semester 2009, to 227 in macroeconomics and 122 students in microeconomics. According to the results (Table 1.B), our students performed better than their national peers on both tests- 67 and 69 percentile ranking compared to the national sample of 67 and 61 percentile rankings in the pre-, and post tests respectively of the microeconomics examination. In the macroeconomics test our students' performance ranks them at the 63 and 63 percentiles compared to the national rankings of 63 and 57 percentiles in the pre- and posttests of the macroeconomics test.

Overall, the fall 2008 and spring 2009 results showed that our students performed better than their national peers on both the microeconomics and the macroeconomics tests. They also performed better than the national peers in many categories of the cognitive skills. They lead their national peers in the content areas of explicit and implicit application of economic theories but lag them in the content area of recognition and understanding.

The department has reason to be pleased with these results, first, because our Economics Program
offers the principles courses at the freshman level while most peer institutions in the national sample offer them at the sophomore level, and secondly, because a larger proportion of our Principles of Economics students are coming directly after graduating from high school. We plan to remedy those areas of weaknesses revealed by the test results by increasing students’ awareness of the abundant learning resources provided by the campus Learning Resource Center as well as using teaching pedagogies that emphasize experiential and interactive activities directed at improving student-learning outcomes in these courses.

B. How will the results be used to improve your programs’ assessment of student learning outcomes

We will use the data provided by TUCE results in measuring whether the department is meeting its educational goals and learning outcomes. Appropriate course of action will be taken to improve the principles of economics courses in particular, and the Economics Program as a whole. Examination of the percentile ranking of the department’s mean to the national ranking will provide a useful benchmark for curricular and/or program improvement in our principles courses. The department aims at having students perform in each of the tests at the 60 percentile ranking or higher. If the criterion is met, the department will continue to administer the test and monitor results, or consider whether the threshold should be raised.

C. Will the work started with this assessment project be continued? If so, how?

As an AACSB accredited institution, the School of Business and Economics holds all of its departments accountable for ensuring the highest quality of its graduates and for meeting AACSB standards. The department will continue this assessment tool in technique to measure the content knowledge of our students. As the department enrolls large number of students from all disciplines, colleges, schools and departments on the IU South Bend campus, improvements in learning outcomes of students taking the principles of economics courses will have a significant value to other IU South Bend programs.

D. How are the results of your assessment being shared with departmental faculty, students, IUSB faculty and other appropriate groups?

We have shared results of this project to students, faculty and staff individually through e-mails, at faculty meetings, School committees, and on the School’s shared “H” drive. We also shared and discussed project goals and objectives, and assessment data with the School’s Assessment and Planning Committee. Economics alumni are informed through departmental newsletter.
### Table 1.A - TUCE Results: Fall 2008

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<th>Pre-Test Micro</th>
<th>Post-Test Micro</th>
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<td># of Std.</td>
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Weighted Average-IUSB 9.85
National Mean 9.39

### Table 1.B - TUCE Results: Spring 2009

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Weighted Average-IUSB 11.65
National Mean 9.80

### Table 1.C - TUCE Results: Spring 2009

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### Table 2.A Microeconomics - Mean % Correct Responses

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<th>Posttests</th>
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<td>IUSB</td>
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<td>Recognition and Understanding</td>
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### Table 2.B Macroeconomics- Mean % Correct Responses

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<tbody>
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