College of Social Sciences
Department of Economics
University of Hawai'i at Manoa

2009 Assessment Experience
UHM Department of Economics
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Introduction
The mission of our undergraduate program is to provide a high-quality educational experience that enables students to understand the range of economic challenges facing Hawai'i, the United States, and the Asia-Pacific region. To reach these goals, the Department has set out the following student learning outcomes (SLOs):

BA Student Learning Outcomes
1. Economic literacy: Be able to clearly explain core economic terms, concepts and theories
2. Critical thinking: Demonstrate the ability to apply economic reasoning to contemporary social issues and policy problems
3. Quantitative reasoning: Apply appropriate quantitative and statistical techniques to economic analysis. Conduct economic analysis using equations and graphs
4. Reporting: Develop expertise needed to effectively communicate results of economic research and analysis to colleagues and decision-makers through written reports and oral presentations.

BA Curriculum Map
The department offers four types of courses
- Introductory courses, which are open to all students (Econ 130 and 131, Principles of Macroeconomics and Microeconomics)
- Core courses required of all majors (Econ 300 and 301, Intermediate Macroeconomics and Microeconomics, and Econ 321, Introduction to Statistics)
- Upper Division I courses which have minimum prerequisites so are readily accessible to non-majors
- Upper Division II courses with more advanced prerequisites

In addition to core courses, all majors must complete 15 credit hours of Upper Division including at least 6 Upper Division II courses.

BA SLOs Assessed in 2009
Implementation of a course-embedded assessment program
- All core courses, two Econ 300 courses, four Econ 301 course, and two Econ 321 courses were assessed in early 2009.
- All SLO stated were assessed.
- We will continue to do that in early 2010.
- We collected evidence from 124 students in seven courses.

Assessment Methods
The department UG program wanted to find out how students perform in the following areas
- Understand and apply economic concepts and theories in a clear and effective manner
- Think critically and solve problems
- Demonstrate quantitative skills
- Communicate findings both orally and in writing

While grading the final exams for their section, instructors scored at least 50 percent of randomly selected students using the department's scoring rubric (on 1-3 scale).

We used the aggregated rubric score to evaluate the evidence. Instructors reported the results to the Assessment Committee and they were analyzed by the Assessment Committee.

Findings
We focus on the results from intermediate microeconomics and macroeconomics courses
Although the prerequisites are same for our two core courses, students showed different strengths and weaknesses in different areas.

In intermediate microeconomics course, our students did a relatively good job for presenting economic arguments, summarizing the arguments in a written form, or discussing economic concepts in an articulate manner in a classroom. However, they showed weakness in conducting economic analysis using equations and graphs, calculating numbers, and presenting descriptive statistics.

This is in stark contrast with intermediate macroeconomics course, in which our students performed better than average for quantitative reasoning while lower than average for writing and reporting skills.

Use of Results
We informed the instructors about the results of the assessment and indicated the strong and weak areas for each course.

Providing this information allows the individual instructors to fine-tune their classes and focus more on the weak sides while taking advantages of the strong areas for each course.

We plan to revisit course offering every three years based on our annual assessment results. Thus, we will revisit course offerings in 2010 based on our assessment results.

Action Plan
We expanded the assessment in 2008/09 and would like to keep the expanded format.

By conducting the assessment consistently for a number of years, we will be able to trace whether the feedback from the assessment will help our instructors to improve student learning.

Further, in the future we may consider expanding the assessment techniques, by including such elements as collecting statistics on our graduates job placements, or getting the feedback from our graduating students and alumni on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of our program.