Overview of Assurance of Learning Activities

The Department of Economics has worked diligently in the past several years to develop learning objectives to increase the assurance of learning activities. The department has worked hard in maintaining a competitive environment for its majors which can be seen in an increase in student internships, broader development of the capstone research component, and an increase in course offerings in financial economics, health economics at the 300 and 400 level, as well as industrial organization and game theory. The growth in student internships that our majors are pursuing is particularly dramatic, having more than tripled over the past 2-3 years. This is in part a reaction to the tight economy since 2008 in which employers are seeking entry-level students with more on the job experience.

The Undergraduate Committee in our department oversees assessment planning. Overall suggestions are forwarded to the department at annual meetings. Changes were made to expand offerings in the department’s topics classes. Also suggestions were made for improvement in the Capstone Research Course which now contains a resume component.

The department uses direct assessment data from course-embedded measures and employer evaluations of our interns. In addition the department uses indirect assessment data (surveys of students, alumni surveys, assessment of capstone classes) in our deliberations.

1. Learning Objectives

The NIU Bachelor of Science in Economics provides the background necessary to prepare students at a level appropriate for entrance into the private or public employment or graduate study. This is demonstrated by the following learning outcomes:

1. Program graduates will have the knowledge and ability to identify the main components of contemporary societal problems of an economic nature. The skills they acquire will contribute to their employment success in business, government, or the foreign service, as well as prepare them for advanced study in economics or in a professional school such as law school or business school.

2. Program graduates will demonstrate the ability to use models of the aggregate economy to make predictions about the effect of government policies and external shocks on economic variables.

3. Program graduates will demonstrate the ability to use models of economic behavior to make predictions about the economic behavior of individuals and firms in order to understand the decision-making process.
4. Program graduates will have the ability to write a paper demonstrating their understanding of the underlying economic principles of an economic situation, issue, or policy.


At the current time the department uses assessments in the following manner:

1. Learning outcomes are built into syllabi of economics classes and are part of overall assessments. Exam questions from Econ 300, 310, 360 and 361 give evidence of the meeting of learning objectives 1-3 (earlier data). Using student evaluations from 2008-2010, results from 310 and 360 have been reported here covering learning objectives 1-3.

2. Capstone component has both oral and written assessment components and the results from a sample from 2008-2010 are compiled.


4. Internship Assessment from 2003 (needs to be updated given growth in program).