Institutional Research for Assessment of the Culminating Projects for 3 Capstone Courses offered in the Craig School of Business

MKGT 188: Strategic Planning in Marketing
MGT 187: Seminar in Strategic Management
IS 187: IS Practicum

Report prepared by
Drs. William Rice, Jia Wang, and Ojoung Kwon
October, 2006

With Revisions by
Robert Harper
February, 2007

Assessment of Culminating Projects in the Craig School of Business

1. Introduction

The purpose of the project was to compare eight or more projects from three different culminating capstone courses within the Craig School of Business. These courses were Marketing 188, Management 187 and Information Systems 187. There were originally four goals to compare in these culminating courses: The goal was to evaluate each set of reports on the following focus areas.

1. **Analytical Skills:** Students, either as individuals or a member of a group, are able to analyze a business scenario using their knowledge of multiple areas of business.
2. **Technology Usage:** Students can use technology to gather information and apply it to solve a business problem.
3. **Report Writing:** Students are able to write an effective, concise executive summary of a major position paper.
4. **Real-World Project:** Students participated in a large-scale project involving an actual company or a "real world" case, where contributions were evaluated by others.

Assessment was made on a holistic basis for this initial assessment of the projects with an attempt to make some generalized judgments related to the overall usage of the projects. Thus, at this stage, there were no rubrics or checklists utilized to determine specific assessments of individual projects. A recommendation from this initial assessment effort, however, is to implement standardized assessment tools such as a rubric imbedded into course evaluation by the instructors.

2. Assessment

After reading and evaluating these reports it became obvious that the three courses were approached from three different viewpoints. The marketing class dealt more with a broader project solution mix with marketing planning as its core. The management course focused on a fixed case with a fixed length of analysis. The information system class focused on the micro issues of solving real world computer problems. It seemed that a fifth area of evaluation was needed and that was to measure the level of critical thinking and problem solving accomplished in the course. It seemed that each course required power point presentations, analytical thought, situational assessment and macro evaluation of issues which affect that discipline. It was found that even though all these critical factors of thought, presentation and writing skills were required during the course, not all of them were demanded for the final project report. As a follow-up to this assessment, faculty will consider curriculum revisions to determine if these factors should be in all final reports. A summary of our assessment for these courses are presented in the table below.

Goals	MKGT 188	MGT 187	IS 187	Over All
Facts	9 projects 3 students per group Average Pages: 36	16 projects 4 students per group Average Pages: 20	5 projects 4-6 students per group Average Pages: 41 +	30 projects total 115 students Average number of students per project: 4.2
Analytical Skills	1. Project Focus: Marketing with business analysis support 2. Power Point Presentations: Required with each report 3. Needs assessment done on each project 4. Financial Analysis: minimal	1. Case Focus: Each paper focused on a published case 2. Papers were limited to 25 pages 3. No power point presentations 4. Financial Analysis: minimal	1. Website and interface Technology Focus 2. High use of technology in visuals, designs and end product 3. Power Point Presentations: Required with each report 4. Executive summary required 5. Financial Analysis: minimal	1. Each group focused on their core emphasis. 2. For course requirements – the projects met the syllabus requirements 3. Consider a stated business macro-view (integrative) analytical protocols

Technology Usage	1. Use of statistical software by a majority of projects 2. Power point, digitalization of material, and in some cases streaming video 3. Electronic interaction and transfer of information	1. no required use of statistical software, power point presentations, interaction within the electronic arena	1. major use of technology to solve the problem and interact with client 2. the macro view of why to use the technology was not presented	1. Consider if there is a need for a stated protocol for use of technology in presentations, evaluation and research activities in doing case projects.
Report Writing	1. In-depth review of subject under study 2. Lack of thorough business evaluation 3. Good use of support visuals and appendixes	1. Focused in on the point by point review of published case. 2. Required format structure for paper	1. Highly technical and descriptive of project output 2. Very micro oriented in final project 3. Well written	1. Consider usage of the school's writing rubric for evaluation written reports.

Real-World Project	1.All projects required interaction with a real world client 2. All projects required direct observation of project environments and one-on-one dialogue with the client with a formal interactive power point presentation	1. All projects based on published real world case 2. No interaction with a real live client	1. Project was an interactive process with a real live client with an expected useful product as the outcome 2. All projects were evaluated by both the instructor and the sponsors	1. All projects had an emphasis on real-world problems or applications.
Critical Thinking & Problem Solving	1. Must do a real time needs assessment 2. Must state the "moving target" of what the real problem is 3. Must solve the problem in a creative way	1. Identify key features of a published case which does not require additional information gathering or investigative involvement with people	1. Real time problem solving and constant adjustment to solve the problem to the clients needs	1. All projects involve important critical thinking & problem solving components.

3. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Future Plans

The committee made the following conclusions with respect to four goals:

1) **Analytical Skills:** Students, either as individuals or a member of a group, are able to analyze a business scenario using their knowledge of multiple areas of business.

Students were generally able to analyze a business situation using their knowledge of multiple areas of business. All projects focus on the core emphasis of the course. All projects met the syllabus or course retirements. Subsequent curriculum review is planned to determine the extent that the projects, which have a focus on the business core, also incorporate analysis of other areas of business and is consistent with existing school policy for elements to be contained in such a culminating course.

2) **Technology Usage:** Students can use technology to gather information and apply it to solve a business problem.

All students were able to use technology to collect information required by the projects and to solve the business problems. Some projects (e.g., IS 187) used technology extensively to solve problems and interact with clients. Extensive use of statistical software was found in most projects of MKGT 188. All students were able to use power point to make presentations in the course, although presentation of the project itself was not necessarily required in MGT 187. Assessing presentation skills is an integral part of another core course within the school, so does not necessarily have to be part of the project requirements.

3) **Report Writing:** Students are able to write an effective, concise executive summary of a major position paper.

Students were generally able to write an effective and concise executive summary of a major position paper. Papers were generally well written and well structured, although there is no systematic framework or outline that covers all major areas of business. Subsequent curriculum analysis is planned to consider whether a standardized framework or outline should be implemented. In any event, usage of a writing rubric is recommended for assessing the writing skills of our graduates.

4) **Real-World Project:** Students participated in a large-scale project involving an actual company or a "real world" case, where contributions were evaluated by others.

All projects of IS 187 and MKGT 188 were large-scale projects involving actual local companies. All students participated in those projects. All projects were evaluated by both the instructors and the sponsors or clients. All MGT 187 projects were textbook cases.

The committee felt that a series of recommendations concerning a working checklist that would require each student to view their case or project through a set of defined analytical focus points was needed as part of the capstone project. This checklist might be used in future classes in order to orchestrate uniform exposure to all business disciplines taught at the Craig Business School and not just the specific skills demanded by that discipline, which would then be consistent with school policy for elements to be included in a culminating course. As elements to include in such a checklist, we unanimously decided to include in this report the "Ten Issues of Evaluation" borrowed from Dr. Bill Rice and to require each group to document the ten issues in their final report. The "Ten Issues of Evaluation" listed below is borrowed from Dr. Rice's class and modified by Dr. Kwon to fit to any Capstone class. Thus, we recommend a checklist including these ten issues be part of the requirements for the projects and therefore as part of any standardized assessment tool (e.g., rubric/checklist) use to assess the projects.

CAPSTONE PROJECTS: TEN ISSUES OF EVALUATION for REAL WORLD PROJECTS

1. Review the company's current **management style and organization chart**. Write a section in the final report on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats that are currently active in the company. Make any recommendations you feel might get them to think differently about their organization which might aid in their growth and/or success.

2. Review the company's current **information systems** and/or how they use computers in managing the business function. Write a section in the final report on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats that are currently active in the company in this area. Make any recommendations you feel might get them to be more creative in how they operate in order to improve their growth and/or success.

3. Review the company's current **accounting system** and/or how the accounting system affects business management or effectively understanding current customers. Write a section in the final report on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats that are currently active in the company in this area. Make any recommendations you feel might get them to be more effective in how they use accounting data in order to improve their growth and/or success.

4. Review the company's current **financial planning and monitoring systems** and/or how financial actions affect the business management function. Write a section in the final report on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats that are currently active in the company in this area. Make any recommendations you feel might get them to be more connected in using financial data or planning processes in order to improve their growth and/or success.

5. Review the company's current **legal framework and contractual systems** and/or how legal issues have or can affect the management of the business function. Write a section in the final report on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats that are currently active in the company in this area. Make any recommendations you feel might get them to build better connections with legal input and review in order to improve their growth and/or success.

6. Review the company's current **operations protocols** and/or how operation activities or procedures affect the management of the business function. Write a section in the final report on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats that are currently active in the company in this area. Make any recommendations you feel might get them to involve operations and/or production in better meeting marketing objectives in order to improve their growth and/or success.

7. Review the company's current **strategic planning process** and/or how the management is included in or helps drive the strategic planning process. Write a section in the final report on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats that are currently active in the company in this area. Make any recommendations you feel might get them to use marketing objectives, data or planning processes in the strategic planning activities in order to improve their growth and/or success.

8. Review the company's current **competitor monitoring/tracking activities** and/or how they use competitor formation in managing the business function. Write a section in the final report on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats that are currently active in the company in this area. Make any recommendations you feel might get them to collect and use information about their competitors in order to improve their ability to compete and surpass their competition.

9. Review the company's current search for and use of **"best practices"** of their industry and/or how they use "best practices" data or cases in managing the business function. Write a section in the final report on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats that are currently active in the company in this area. Make any recommendations you feel might get them to collect, analyze and use "best practices" information in the future in order to improve their growth and/or success.

10. Review the company's current **"needs analysis" protocols** and/or how they use "needs analysis" in managing the business function. Write a section in the final report on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats that are currently active in the company in this area. Make any recommendations you feel might get them to perform "needs analysis" in the future in order to improve their growth and/or success.

Several future plans have evolved as a result of this project. First, curriculum reviews will consider the issues raised, such as whether or not a presentation utilizing technology be part of the requirements for the project, whether a standardized format or outline for written reports be incorporated, and whether or not incorporation of the ten issues defined above is warranted. The school plans to incorporate imbedded assessment tools into the course utilizing writing rubrics for the written reports, presentation rubrics for presentations, and most importantly some assessment tool such as a rubric or checklist for the overall project itself.