

# Interdisciplinary Large-Scale Assessment: *A Balancing Act*

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# Communication Education Gap: Background

- The Gap
- Framing the Problem
  - Saying someone can't communicate is simple. But what does it mean?
  - Problem is persistent and likely more complex than first thought.
  - Unique Challenges
    - 1) Constellation of Skills (which do you prioritize?)
    - 2) Students' Needs Differ (Variance)
    - 3) Challenges are Unique (i.e. Apprehension)

# Finding Solutions

- Historically, common solution = communication course(s)
- Result:
  - Non-differentiated education for differently capable students
  - Lack of iterative feedback (spiral curriculum)
- One Solution – Individualized Instruction
- Our Initial Approach to Solving the Problem (Closing the Gap)
  - Focused instruction in prioritized competencies
  - Embedded in the larger picture for business faculty

# Finding Solutions

- There are many aspects ***beyond specific skills.***
  - **Categories:** *Oral & Written*
  - **W/in Oral:** *Speaking & Listening(Feedback)*
  - **W/in Written:** *Writing & Reading Comprehension*
  - **Contexts:** *Academic, Society, Workplace*
  - **Settings:** *PS, Interpersonal, Team/Group*
    - *(Formal/Informal & Internal/External )*
  - **Purposes:** *Disseminate, Persuade, Empower*
  - **Components:** *KSAs, Motivation/Effort, Tactics*
  - **Channels:** *Neutral to Rich*
  - **Technology:** *Mediated vs. Non-Mediated*
  - **Stakes:** *Low to High*

# Our Approach

- **1) In-Depth, Longitudinal Analysis of the Problem**

- Best picture of the constellation of skills (NCA)
- Feedback (industry, etc.) – prioritized skills
- Foundational skills
- Target Competencies - Dept. & Faculty Buy-In
- How do we currently assess & develop

- **2) Identify & Build Assessment tools**

- Where are our students on these targets? **(F-Sr)**
- How are they progressing? Upon graduation?

- **3) Development Plan (downstream)**

# Writing and Analytical Skills

- Employers place high value on communication and analytical skills.
  - Surveys of job listings on Monster and LinkedIn (1 million+)
  - “Generally, communication skills are considered to be the most important skills for graduates entering into the accounting career” (2016, Lim, et al, p. 186).
- Writing and analytical skills have been cornerstones of education held true over time
  - Yale Report of 1828: established the need to teach students to think critically via a thesis statement and empirical evidence in an academic essay.
  - Morrill Acts (1862 & 1890): prepare average citizen both intellectually and practically to participate in workforce (included writing proficiency)
  - Conant (1945): *General education in a Free Society: Report of the Harvard Committee*
  - Bullock, A. (1975). *A language for life. Report of the Committee of Enquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science*. London, England: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office.

# *In-Depth, Longitudinal Analysis*

- Pilot project
  - Establish some baseline data
  - Designed an assessment (2009, Broad, et al.; 2016, Debelius; 2009, Warnock; 1994, White)
    - Three, senior faculty who have each taught Business Communication for at least 10 years
    - Set up a process that is based upon best practices in writing assessment:
      - Met to discuss the project and the rubric
      - Evaluated 10 papers (2 per course); compare results
      - Came to a consensus about the quality of the 10 papers
      - Outlined a timeline/plan for remaining evaluation

# Long-term plan

- Submitted a grant for continuing the assessment
  - Spring 2020: Gather baseline data
    - Use a random sample of 120 papers from MGT 1104, a new course required for all incoming students
    - Assess those papers using the same rubric we used for seniors
    - Design and offer a revised rubric
    - Share data with Business School
    - Design a survey for B-School faculty



# Next Steps: *Fall 2020 and beyond*

- Fall 2020 to Fall 2024: Gather and assess a random sample of incoming first-year student papers (MGT 1104).
- Offer to work with faculty in select upper-division courses to design and evaluate writing assignments. Share strategies that might improve writing based on results from 2020 assessment.
  - If approved, collect sample of papers from students in these courses and follow them through their academic careers.
- 2024: Collect papers from students who were among those in the sample we evaluated in 2020. Rely on 4000-level MGT or Marketing courses.

# Further plan (cont.)

- Interview faculty and students whose papers we have evaluated.
- Follow a select number of these students beyond college graduation.
  - Interview, collect writing samples, etc.
- Consider value of different strategies (mindfulness)

# Business School Assessment

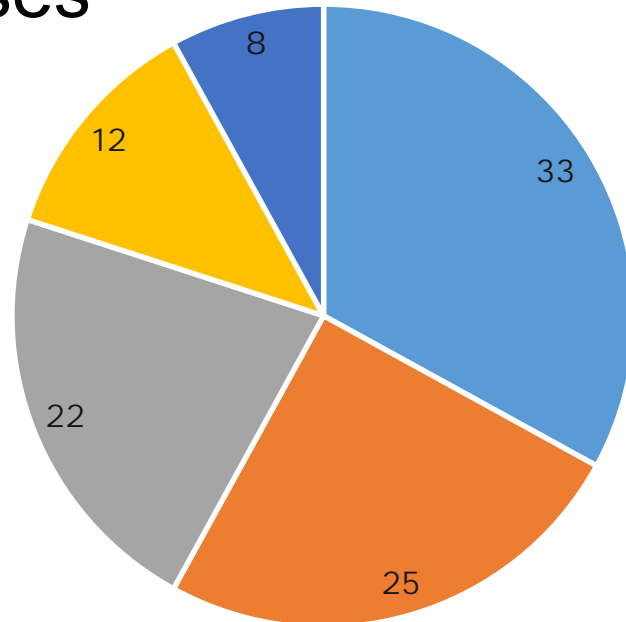
We began by studying the following documents for five senior-level, courses:

- Syllabi
- Assignments



# Sample Size

## Courses



■ BIT 3464 ■ BIT 4484 ■ ACIS 4414 ■ MKTG 4604 ■ MKTG 4754

- 5 Courses
- 100 Samples
- 3 Readers
- Each document has 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> reader

## Implementation

# Assessment Grading

- **Evaluation Process**

We created a .5  
to accommodate the  
relatively small  
grading scale  
of 0-3.

- “0” – The paper demonstrates a failure to demonstrate the specified skill. The paper is deficient in demonstrating a majority of the key attributes throughout the paper.
- “1” – The paper successfully demonstrates some aspects of the specified skill, but either does not do so consistently, or the paper is deficient in one or more of the key attributes on repeated occasions.

# Assessment Grading

Increasingly, we found fewer and fewer documents graded at 2 or 3

- “2” – The paper successfully demonstrates competence in each of the specified skills. The paper contains no more than minor deficiencies on key attributes and their presence does not materially negatively influence the effectiveness of the paper.
- “3” – The paper successfully demonstrates all key attributes in the dimension and does so with a very high level of proficiency and professionalism.

# Final Results

2018-2019 Seniors' Written Skills		% Meets or Exceeds	% Meets or Exceeds	% Meets or Exceeds	% Meets or Exceeds	English Dept. (N = 100)	PCOB - Same Sub- Sample (N = 100)
	Year	2014-2015	2015-2016	2017-2018	2018-2019	2018-2019	2019-2019
	<b>Thesis/Opening Statement</b>	77%	83%	85%	62%	55%	<b>63%</b>
	<b>Organization</b>	70%	89%	88%	78%	44%	<b>82%</b>
	<b>Conclusions</b>	63%	75%	80%	70%	46%	<b>65%</b>
	<b>Spelling and Word Choice</b>	93%	92%	85%	61%	51%	<b>66%</b>
	<b>Grammar</b>	85%	83%	76%	57%	49%	<b>57%</b>
	<b>Sentence Structure</b>	83%	84%	79%	66%	49%	<b>71%</b>
	<b>Referencing</b>	NA	41%	69%	50%	21%	<b>48%</b>
10/	<b>Exhibits, Tables, etc.</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>

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