The Assessment Imperative: A Work in Progress **by Dr Ricky W. Griffin**

Mays Business School is one of ten colleges within the Texas A&M university. Our enrollment is over 5,000 students. Mays Business School provides comprehensive Undergraduate, Masters, MBA/Executive MBA and Doctoral programs.

Four steps are essential elements of the assessment process – Identifying competencies, identifying assessment priorities, gathering evidence and evaluating results. The result of this process yielded Mays Business School Core Competencies.

As part of the assessment process, external advisory councils were asked to tell us what Mays School is doing well or not-so-well. The overwhelming response was that all departments are doing an outstanding job in the discipline-specific competencies. They suggested that our assessment efforts should be concentrated in other areas, particularly the "soft skills."

Initial Conclusions yielded that Mays Business School is doing a very good job in the majors, and students are learning the technical and disciplinary skills employers want but that we needed to emphasize the so-called "soft skills" more and that students need an integrative framework early in their business.

To address these conclusions several decisions were made. Faculty would be engaged in developing course learning outcomes and mapping them to the competencies. We would formally assess writing skills and ethical decision-making skills as well as design an integrative four-year learning community experience based on the competencies that are essential in every business discipline.

The communication findings showed that 88% of our juniors and seniors were meeting or exceeding expectations. The ethics assessment findings showed that freshmen were scoring below national norms on the *Defining Issues Test* of ethical decision-making maturity. Our seniors in a 1 credit hour required business ethics course are scoring lower than the freshmen and a survey of seniors indicated that too many don't recall having any discussion of ethics in those classes where ethics is taught. Curriculum impacts were identified and action plans were developed and put in place. Next steps have been identified to refine and assess learning outcomes. Assessment is not about evaluating teaching…it is about evaluating learning.