PROGRAM REVIEW ASSESSMENT PLAN
ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS DEPARTMENT

The Economics and Business department submits this plan to develop and implement assessment of the major. We realize that assessment is an ongoing activity, and that assessment is not an end in itself, but a necessary means to improve the Economics and Business program. The measures implemented and results observed will be discussed in a report to the Program Review Committee currently scheduled for the Spring 2009 semester.

I. PREVIOUS SELF-STUDY AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
The self-study submitted in August 2000 provided evidence regarding student learning outcomes with respect to the six general standards approved by the Westminster faculty: Christian Orientation, Critical-Interdisciplinary Thinking, Written and Oral Communication, Technology, Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement, and Diversity. Our study identified and evaluated the ways in which these standards were being addressed in our program, that is, the document included means such as expressing a vision statement, discussing our current strategies, highlighting specific pedagogical elements which were relevant in particular courses, and discussing various assessment methods with respect to student performance that were being employed. We identified a weakness with respect to the Diversity standard. Over the past four years we have pursued a couple of strategies to address this standard, including an Irvine Grant for curriculum development on the economics of race and gender, offering a public policy course on the economics of gender and pursuing female candidates for a faculty position in Business.

II. DEPARTMENTAL GOALS
Our program pursues the following goals. We seek to develop
1. Graduates ready to serve others through economics and business skills
2. Majors who are seeking God’s call and understand the role of the Christian in our economic system.
3. Majors who participate as junior scholars in the activity of the academy.
4. Graduates who are flexible, independent, confident, broadly educated.
5. Graduates who have people skills, problem solving and analytical skills, and communication skills.
Through periodic department meetings, we will engage in an on-going discussion of these goals and other programmatic outcomes we wish to pursue for our majors. In regards to the communication of these goals, we explicitly identify them in several course syllabi. We plan to continue the practice of holding a meeting for our majors once a year to communicate our goals to our students and review the linkages of these goals to the curriculum in the major, including required courses and selected emphases.

III. PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES
We have been engaged in an ongoing dialogue with respect to the ways that we can foster habits of self-assessment in our students. We have required students to prepare and submit a journal of reflections in the Practicum, Senior Seminar and on the Westmont in Asia program. In other courses, we are beginning to implement required self-reflection with respect to the student learning outcomes. For example, students in Principles of Macroeconomics complete an initial feedback form regarding their desired learning objectives and an assignment at the end of the semester involving self-reflection about learning outcomes with respect to macroeconomics and how the Christian faith speaks to this field of economics.

We plan to implement several further measures. Across all the courses taught by full-time faculty we will require an ongoing electronic journal of self-reflection. The student will include this journal in a portfolio of their course work in the major which they will organize for the Senior Seminar. The Senior Seminar will also address particular competencies connected to our departmental goals by means of readings and class discussion on business as Christian calling and the social responsibility of the firm. In addition to lectures and student discussion groups, we are bringing in guest speakers and making use of field trips (e.g., World Vision). The course is also being more intentionally focused on “senior preparedness” by requiring that students submit resumes and participate in an explicit discussion of how a liberal arts education translates to a prospective employer.

We plan to develop an annual departmental portfolio that will showcase the work of individual students or groups of students. Included in this portfolio will be outstanding papers in particular courses, financial studies, business plans, and case studies of firms in the Santa Barbara area.

Each department member will conduct a one-on-one exit interview with three graduating senior during the Fall or Spring semesters. Students are given a copy of the six Student Learning Outcomes. Students then complete a ranking form and spend a 45 minutes to an hour with the faculty member discussing the content of the survey. Students are encouraged to elaborate orally on each of the six standards in turn. The faculty member records notes on the conversation.

IV. USE OF RESULTS AND CURRENT DISCUSSION POINTS

We plan to do an alumni survey during the 2004-2005 academic year. It will gather data from EB graduates on the type of work, latest job title, graduate degrees earned, academic areas in which the alum would desire more preparation, participation in Christian ministry/service, access to faculty in the department, and other areas. The survey results will be discussed at monthly departmental meetings with respect to strengths and weaknesses of the program and possible program changes. Along with the survey, the senior exit interview results should provide the basis for specific actions to improve the student learning experience. The senior exit interview results will be recorded in a report to be submitted to Bill Wright in mid-May.

Several points for changes in the program are under current discussion. One involves the practicum experience. We are discussing how we might best evaluate this experience with respect to student learning outcomes and find ways to make it more explicitly linked to achieving our department goals. Furthermore, we need to develop the field experiences which are tied to the general education requirement of coursework in competent and compassionate action.

Another point under discussion is one dimension of the quantitative requirements for the major, which may be a reason why the major has seen smaller enrollments in courses in recent years. Currently we require students to take either calculus or finite math, and we recommend calculus. We are finding that finite math is not tied into our current upper-division curriculum,
while calculus is better suited for this purpose. However, many of our students are not going on to MBA programs or doing graduate work in economics (and thus not needing calculus for graduate programs). Thus we are discussing dropping the finite math option, and then requiring an additional EB course to fulfill the requirements for the major for those students not taking calculus (in addition to EB 18). We plan to submit a catalog change to the Academic Review Committee pertaining to this matter.

Edd Noell  
Chair, Economics and Business Department