ASSESSMENT PLAN
FOR THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN ECONOMICS
July 2009

A. LEARNING GOALS
The overall goal of the Doctoral Programs in Economics is to provide advanced education in economics to students of outstanding ability who plan to pursue academic careers at institutions of higher learning or research oriented careers in business or government. Specific learning goals are as follows:

(1) The ability to approach economics-related issues theoretically. Students should demonstrate a mastery of the relevant literature and have an appreciation for the usefulness and limitations of a given theory.

(2) The ability to undertake original research on economic issues. This should include the abilities to critically review previous research, to develop approaches to answering relevant questions, and to appropriately draw inferences from the outcomes of these research activities. The stress is on the ability to use data appropriately to answer research questions empirically.

(3) The ability to analyze data. Students should have the ability to construct, estimate, and interpret economic models.

(4) Students will be able to clearly and effectively communicate the results of their research in written and oral form.

(5) Students will develop the skills required to teach college-level classes in the area of economics.

B. ASSESSMENT METHODS
In order to graduate, all doctoral candidates must complete a series of requirements that have been put in place to assure that Learning Goals (1) through (5) have been satisfied. These requirements and their relationship to Learning Goals (1) through (5) are summarized below.

With respect to Learning Goal (1) Knowledge of the theories and underlying research in economics, assessment of the student's understanding of the underlying theories of research in economics include:

> Students' answers to questions about underlying theories contained within acceptable qualifiers
> Students' answers to questions regarding underlying theories in comprehensive exam
> Students' discussion of the underlying theories in the dissertation proposal and defense

To develop analytic ability, program Learning Goal (2), all doctoral students are required to complete research-tools coursework for the purposes of demonstrating competency in

a computer programming language or statistics. The research-tools courses appropriate to economics are determined by the student's Ph.D. advisory committee. Students are given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of relevant research tools through the following methods:

      Answers to questions testing analytical skills on qualifying exams

      Answers to questions testing analytical skills on comprehensive exams

      Analysis presented within the dissertation proposal and dissertation defense

Upon completion of all required courses, every doctoral student must be assessed in order to determine whether he or she has acquired the level of knowledge required to conduct competent research the area of economics. Successful completion of the dissertation proposal and defense will be used to assess Learning Goal (3).

To assure that a doctoral candidate is able to communicate the results of his or her research effectively, all doctoral students must write a dissertation. The quality of the written dissertation serves to assess written communication skills, a component of Learning Goal (4). Opportunities for students to demonstrate effective oral communication skills include:

      Assessment of the oral communication abilities of incoming doctoral students done by the school's Center for Business Communication.

      Assessment of exiting students' oral communication abilities by faculty in the Economics Department during brown bag sessions and job talks.

With respect to Learning Goal (5), during the course of their program of study, each doctoral student is required to teach at least one course. In order to assure that each student is developing the skills required to become an effective instructor, the doctoral student will be evaluated by a faculty member from the Economics Department who observes the student's performance in the classroom. The performance criteria for Learning Goals (1) through (5)will be evaluated through the utilization of four scoring rubrics that will be used to evaluate qualifying and comprehensive exams, student teaching, communication skills and the dissertation proposal and defense. The rating scale for all rubrics is as follows:

Excellent – Exceptional performance characterized by noteworthy rigor, clarity, creativity, skill, knowledge, or contribution; performance worthy of commendation

Good – Better than average performance; few, if any, deficiencies noted

Adequate – Average performance; some deficiencies noted that must be corrected

Fair – Below average performance; suggests inadequate skill, knowledge, or motivation

Poor – Performance is clearly unacceptable; suggests a failure to make adequate progress toward the degree

The aforementioned requirements assure that individual students satisfy the learning goals established for the Doctoral Program in Economics. For an overall assessment of this program, it is necessary to obtain aggregate data which monitors how the students are advancing through the program. Therefore, the Managing Director of the Doctoral Programs will provide a report that summarizes the rate of progression through the Doctoral Program in Economics. This report will include the following items:

(a) Number of doctoral candidates currently enrolled in the program.
(b) Number of degrees awarded during the reporting year.
(c) A summary of the jobs accepted by candidates during the reporting year.
(d) Number of students passing/failing qualifying exams during the reporting year.
(e) Number of students passing/failing comprehensive exams during the reporting year.
(f) Number of "ABD students" in the program (arranged by number of years since the completion of comprehensive exams).
(g) The average length of time since entering the program required to complete the comprehensive exam process (based on students who have completed the process within the last 3 years).
(h) The average time since entering the program required to graduate (based on students graduating within the last 3 years).

To facilitate comparisons over time, data on the above items from the previous three reports should be attached to the current report.
Finally, to monitor the professional progress of our graduates, the Managing Director of the Doctoral Programs will survey alumni of the doctoral programs on a regular basis. The Managing Director of the Doctoral Programs will coordinate the development of the instrument to be used in this survey with the Executive Director of Ph.D. programs and the Ph.D. Faculty Executive Committee. The survey should include data covering the employment histories and research records of the alumni surveyed. In addition, the survey should encourage the respondents to suggest how, based on their experience, the doctoral programs might be improved.

C. EVALUATION OF ASSESSMENT DATA
The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment is responsible for summarizing the results of assessment items and preparing a report and action plans to be forwarded to the Ph. D. Program Faculty Committee. These assessment results and action plans and the status of the doctoral program and majors will be reviewed annually at a meeting of this committee. As a result of this review, the committee will make any recommendations for programmatic improvement and/or for modifications in learning goals and assessment practices that it deems to be warranted.