Introduction

This report reviews the progress and the continuous improvements successes of the Richards College of Business (RCOB) through the 2005-2006 academic year. Section I provides the mission statement and strategic goals of the RCOB. It also reviews the progress on strategic actions-items related to each of these strategic goals. Section II reviews the strategic goals and introduces the actions-items aligned with each goal for the 2006-2007 academic year.

Section I: Strategic Action-Item Updates 2005-2006

“The mission of the Richards College of Business is to educate and prepare students for positions of responsibility and ethical leadership in society.

The RCOB provides quality business and professional education in a personal environment, built upon a common body of knowledge, and prepares students primarily from the West Georgia and Atlanta areas for positions of responsibility and ethical leadership in organizations by…”

Strategic Goal 1: Admitting quality local, regional, national, and international students and providing them with an educational experience that will prepare them to achieve future career excellence.

Action Item 1: During the 2005-2006 academic year, the faculty committees charged with reviewing our compliance with AACSB-I standards completed their work. Each committee reported the results of their findings to the RCOB. This thorough and systematic evaluation helped us hone our strategic planning and assurance of learning processes. This evaluation process was a critical element in our ability to provide our students a high quality educational experience. Findings from these committees have been integrated in our college processes and are discussed throughout this report.

Strategic Goal 2: Providing students with dynamic and up-to-date bachelor and master level curricula that are supported by an innovative technological base.

Action Item 1: In our efforts to improve our curriculum within the BBA, MBA and MPAcc programs, the faculty undergraduate and graduate programs committees completed the implementation of our systematic assurance of learning process. Our assurance of learning process relies heavily on course embedded objectives. The curriculum evaluation process is led by faculty programs committees working with the Associate Dean. Data have been collected on all learning goals in all degree programs. The assurance of learning process is implemented and guides our curriculum improvements.

Based on data collected thus far, we have identified specific examples of curriculum improvements and implemented changes in our degree programs. For example, we administered
the ETS Business Exam to a sample of senior business majors. The results suggested that students did not have the command of international management they need. To correct this deficiency, we revised our BBA program to include a required international business course.

The exam results also revealed a slight deficiency in our student’s knowledge of ethics. As a result, we changed the title of our “Legal Environment of Business” course to the “Legal and Ethical Environment of Business.” Professors teaching this course now include ethics instruction. Additionally, a new text was adopted in this course to reflect the curriculum adjustment and course inclusion. This course is required of all BBA majors.

A course embedded assessment in our business statistics course showed that our students perform well in the area of statistics, but struggle somewhat working with data in spreadsheet format. Further analysis suggested that the rubric used to evaluate student performance may not have provided an accurate assessment. At the recommendation of the committee, the rubric was adjusted and prepared for use in evaluating this assignment in the fall of 2006.

In an introduction to information systems course, we analyzed the completed workbooks of all students in one semester. The results showed that students are largely performing well in most areas, but struggled in spreadsheets and databases. The instructors responsible for designing this course are currently integrating two software packages to improve the instruction in this area.

We also analyzed all of the prior years exit examinations in the MBA program. All students in the MBA are required to complete an extensive four-hour written exam prior to graduation. The analysis of exams and evaluator comments suggests that students need to improve their ability to integrate and analyze business information. To improve our student’s ability in this area, we restructured the exit exam question and revised some of the content taught in the strategy capstone seminar. This targets improving students’ ability to integrate analysis in a case study. Similar changes have been implemented in our Master of Public Accountancy program.

The above items are a sample of this integrated assurance of learning process. Each learning goal within each degree program is directly assessed. Faculty program committees oversee the curriculum outcomes of each program. As noted above, curriculum and pedagogical changes are made when the assessment results demonstrate a need. Implementing this program has enhanced our curriculum and the outcomes of each of our degree programs.

**Action Items for Strategic Goal 3: Providing a solid business foundation for our students to compete successfully in a work environment, engage in lifelong learning opportunities, and apply high standards of ethical conduct.**

No specific strategic action-items were identified for this strategic goal this year. However, we continued our efforts to teach ethical behavior and prepare students for the work environment. One item that arose this year in this area is the mentoring program that is an action-item for next year. Toward the end of this year a graduate of our program approached the RCOB about establishing a mentoring program for current students. The idea is to create an online portal that we will use to link interested students with experienced alumni who would be willing to provide career guidance, contacts, and internships.
Although we do a great deal of this informally, a formal process for managing and encouraging these contacts would be a great benefit to current students. It would also strengthen the link between the alumni and the college. Planning for this action-item started this year. The bulk of the planning and implementation will take place in the coming academic year.

**Action Items for Strategic Goal 4: Recruiting high quality faculty and staff and providing them with sufficient resources to support excellence in teaching, primarily applied and pedagogical research, and service.**

**Action Item 1:** Through an involved faculty-driven process, we completed the revision of our faculty development policies contained in our faculty handbook. The revised document contains our definition of academic and professional qualifications for faculty as well as minimum criteria for promotion and tenure. The faculty committee completed its draft of the revised handbook and it was accepted by unanimous vote in a December, 2005 faculty meeting.

**Action Item 2:** This year the RCOB received applications for its first RCOB Scholar. This award is given to a nominee with a strong research record and detailed future research program. This scholar will receive a $5,000 grant from the RCOB to support future research in the scholar’s discipline. Through a competitive selection process, two RCOB Scholar awards are available annually. The first RCOB Scholar will be announced in the fall 2006 faculty meeting.

**Action Items for Strategic Goal 5: Building internal and external partnerships that will create value for all parties**

**Action Item 1:** During this year we established the RCOB Visionary Endowment. This ambitious fund raising campaign will increase our total endowments by more than 25%. To date we have received funding or commitment of funds totaling more than $115,000. We have received commitments from alumni, supporters and students. This ambitious campaign will be an ongoing effort over the next five years and will provide the RCOB with more operating capital for generations to come. We are on track to meet our objective of $500,000 in five years.

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**Section II: Strategic Action Items for 2006-2007**

During the 2006-2007 academic year, we will focus on achieving the following action-items for our strategic goals.

**Strategic Goal 1: Admitting quality local, regional, national, and international students and providing them with an educational experience that will prepare them to achieve future career excellence.**

**Action Item 1:** Recently an alumnus approached the RCOB to suggest that we should formalize our mentoring program for students. The suggestion included a systematic way to match students with alumni who are working in their area of study. This suggestion fit well with our strategic goal to provide an educational experience that will help students prepare for future career excellence. In the coming year we will complete this suggestion and formalize a mentorship
program for students. This program will use technology to link a student’s area of interest to alumni who are willing to mentor a student through a job shadow experience, site visit, phone conversation, internship, or other career-directed experience. This process has started and the technology development is underway.

Strategic Goal 2: Providing students with dynamic and up-to-date bachelor and master level curricula that are supported by an innovative technological base.

Action Item 1: Over the last several years, faculty committees in the RCOB have reviewed our undergraduate and graduate curriculum in all degree programs. Adjustments have been implemented as this process progressed. However, during this review it was recognized that the competitive landscape for the MBA program has changed drastically in the last several years. With an increase in online, night, weekend, executive, and distance programs, our MBA program needs a fresh approach to be competitive.

This year the Graduate Programs Committee will complete a thorough review of the curriculum of the MBA program. The committee will also review how we package and market the program to a variety of audiences. The intent of this review is to increase student outcomes (including employment), increase enrollments, and increase access. Our current program’s strengths are course scheduling (night classes), affordability, and flexibility (full-time and part-time options). This review will be accomplished by the Graduate Programs Committee. This committee includes representatives from each department within the RCOB.

Action Items for Strategic Goal 3: Providing a solid business foundation for our students to compete successfully in a work environment, engage in lifelong learning opportunities, and apply high standards of ethical conduct.

Action Item 1: The RCOB values practical experience as well as classroom instruction. For many years students have been encouraged to participate in internships with local businesses. To date the RCOB has used an informal process of matching perspective interns with local companies. However, the informal process of matching students with local businesses needs support and increased efficiency. For this reason, the RCOB intends to adopt a more formal method of encouraging and managing student internships. This should lead to more contact between the RCOB, local businesses and students. We will study, analyze and implement an internship process during the 2006-2007 academic year.

Action Items for Strategic Goal 4: Recruiting high quality faculty and staff and providing them with sufficient resources to support excellence in teaching, primarily applied and pedagogical research, and service.

Action Item 1: As part of the orientation to the University of West Georgia, new members of the faculty are introduced to the university-wide support available to them. Additionally, the RCOB has had an online orientation for new faculty. In this online orientation, new faculty members view a PowerPoint presentation that outlines who people are and what resources are available to them. This year the RCOB will schedule a formal orientation for new faculty members. We will also test a new faculty mentoring program in the Department of Management. This program will
assign two experienced faculty to each new member of the faculty. The experienced faculty will be responsible for regularly meeting with the new faculty member and helping them integrate into our cohesive and congenial culture. Informal orientation will continue. Additionally, the Dean will begin the tradition of a regularly scheduled lunch with each department each semester.

**Action Items for Strategic Goal 5: Building internal and external partnerships that will create value for all parties**

**Action Item 1:** The Department of Economics has served as the host for the Economic Forecasting Breakfast since 1997. This business-oriented event has grown to host more than 350 people annually. Each year one speaker presents information on the economy in the West Georgia area and a second speaker, a well known economist, addresses the state of the nation’s economy. This event is well recognized and respected throughout the region. In addition to the breakfast, the Department of Economics publishes an annual West Georgia Regional Outlook which contains information on the regional economy.

In order to further develop the impact of this highly acclaimed program, this year we will create a Center for Business and Economic Research. The Center will serve as the unit responsible for the forecasting breakfast and the West Georgia Regional Outlook and will serve as a catalyst for economic forecasting in the area. The Center will be self-funded with the proceeds from the forecasting breakfast and publications.

**Action Item 2:** Since 1972, the Department of Economics has had a Center for Economic Education. The director of this Center has served the area by helping public school teachers improve the methods used to deliver instruction in economics. The center has been a medium for economic thought and pedagogical improvement for the RCOB, the College of Education, and public schools in the region.

This work is largely driven by the outstanding devotion and commitment of one professor who serves as the Center Director. This year we will enhance the ability of the director to conduct outreach and institutionalize the center into the processes of the RCOB. This will be accomplished by providing the director with a reduced teaching load and matching funding for a grant received through the Georgia Council on Economic Education.