

The ETS® Major Field Tests

Assessing Learning.
Demonstrating Effectiveness.



David Ferrell, Ed.D.

Chair of the Business Department
and Chair of the Strategic
Planning/Oversight Committee,
Central Christian College of Kansas

David Ferrell, Ed.D., is Chair of the Business Department, a senior faculty member and Chair of the Strategic Planning/Oversight Committee at Central Christian College of Kansas. Pursuing his desire to teach and serve students, Ferrell returned to his alma mater in 1982.

Challenges in assessing student learning outcomes and program effectiveness

“Our departmental goal is to tie our class activities to course objectives, which are tied to every level of objectives all the way up to the institutional mission,” explains Ferrell. “Our challenge is to make sure our class activities are mission oriented. As the course objective is ‘audited,’ we find ‘weak links’ that are subsequently corrected and updated.”

Using test results to improve curricula

“We have used our data to enhance our strengths in courses in management, economics and finance. We also have identified strategies in quantitative analysis and international issues that should be implemented to further enhance student preparedness,” Ferrell says.

“In economics and finance, we have initiated homework strategies that empower the student to better apply the concepts. We are also discussing how we utilize research strategies to further enhance student understanding of quantitative analysis by offering more research opportunities in our courses.”

Ferrell continues, “As the professor in Strategic Management, the senior capstone course, I am much more cognizant of incorporating in the course discussion nearly every subject matter area such as economics, accounting, marketing, management, finance, organizational behavior and global issues.”

“We are a better department because of our association with ETS via the Major Field Test.”

How Major Field Tests help students and institutions succeed

Ferrell highlights some of the reasons the Business Department chose the Major Field Test and how it supports student and institutional success:

“The reputation of the MFT is very strong because of its reliable and valid data as a nationally normed assessment tool. We continue to use it because of the subject matter breakdowns and the way we are able to track improvement in each area. We also use it because of the ease of administering the exam and the low relative cost. We appreciate the immediate feedback, both individually and as a cohort.

“With the ability to compare nationally, we can illustrate the academic rigor of our program and the academic prowess of our students. After five years, we have some longitudinal data that allows us to track our growth and compare our performance with other institutions.

“The score reports are practical and beneficial,” he says. Individual scores show that “departmental academic rigor compares favorably with other institutions,” while the cohort scores “show improvement in knowledge retention

in all subject-matter categories.” The department also uses subject-matter comparisons to direct faculty in developing new assignments and approaches.

Ferrell highlights the benefits for students: “For those students who performed better than they expected or performed well relative to the national norm, their results seemed to give them additional confidence in themselves and in the education they received at Central Christian College of Kansas. These students know that they can compete with anyone in the country.”

He sums up his experience, saying, “I would recommend this assessment tool to other colleges and universities because of the ability to compare student academic abilities with other students from across the country. I have found that the use of the MFT has provided valuable feedback, empowering our departmental faculty with valid data to inform curricular oversight and improvements. We are a better department because of our association with ETS via the MFT.”

Demonstrate the effectiveness of your program and evaluate students' mastery of their major field of study.

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