

## **PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT 2006**

Program: **Masters of Labor Relations and Human Resources**  
Department: **Management & Labor Relations**  
Submitted by: Dr. Bryan Pesta, MLR Faculty Member  
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### **Introduction**

The principal objective of the Masters in Labor Relations and Human Resources (MLRHR) degree is to help graduates begin a career or advance their career in human resources and labor relations.

The program attracts three categories of students: 1) those with undergraduate labor relations or human resource coursework who are continuing their education to obtain a masters degree while they seek experience in the field, 2) students who currently have a human resource or labor relations position and are seeking to enhance their promotion potential, and 3) students with no previous academic coursework in the field, but who are in the midst of a career change.

Combining Summer 2005, Fall 2005, and Spring 2006 semesters, 40 of 50 newly admitted students actually registered to take classes (80% yield). This represents an 11.2 increase from the previous year's yield of 68.8% (33 of 48 students admitted registered for courses). Since last year's report, the program has graduated 21 students.

*All aspects of the assessment of learning program described in this report were designed and implemented in close consultation with the MLRHR faculty.*

### **Goals**

The following goals were originally developed by the MLRHR faculty, then discussed and approved by the MLR department faculty, with concurrence from the department chair. Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate and apply their knowledge of labor relations and human resources.
2. Demonstrate knowledge by passing the certification exam administered by the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI).
3. Utilize various skills and concepts taught in key classes within the program. Most of these skills relate to quantitative analyses appropriate in human resource management, or for understanding how labor markets work. We provide summary data below on the number of students who have achieved competence in each of these areas, as determined by the judgment of the faculty member who taught the skill.

## **Outcomes**

1. Students will take either the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) or Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) field practice test in their graduating semester. The target is three-fourths of the students taking the practice exam will actually pass it (the HRCI sets the rate at 67% of answers correct for an individual to pass).
2. Faculty have developed rubrics for specific human resource and labor relations skills to be assessed in the core courses MLR 602, MLR 640 and MLR 641. These skills were assessed in the Fall of 2005 and Spring of 2006.

## **Research Methods**

Direct evidence was gathered through results of the PHR/SPHR standardized test, and faculty judgments, using established rubrics on assignments in MLR 602, MLR 640 and MLR-641.

The PHR and SPHR online assessment exam is professionally developed and administered by the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI see [www.hrci.org](http://www.hrci.org)). The test consists of 75 multiple choice questions taken from previous professional certification exams. The exam covers six areas of knowledge in the field: strategic management, planning, human resource development, compensation and benefits, labor relations, plus occupational health, safety and security. The PHR exam is more focused on the technical/operational aspects while the SPHR exam is more focused on strategic and policy issues. The relative emphasis of each area is listed below for the PHR and SPHR exam.

	PHR exam	SPHR exam
Strategic Management	12%	26%
Workforce Planning and Employment	26%	16%
Human Resource Development	15%	13%
Compensation and Benefits	20%	16%
Employee and Labor Relations	21%	24%
Occupational Health, Safety and Security	6%	5%

The percentages reflected by the content emphasis listed above for each functional area remains consistent for both the actual certification exam and the practice assessment exam. Students choose either the PHR or SPHR test based on their background and years of experience in the field. The PHR exam is taken by those with two years of exempt experience or those students who do not yet have experience in the field; the SPHR exam is for professionals with at least ten years of experience.

Upon completing the practice exam, students receive an overall score consisting of the number of questions correctly answered and the percentage correctly answered in each of the six functional areas. This information is provided to the department and added to our assessment database. This exam is updated annually to reflect recent changes in legislation, knowledge and practice in the field.

## **Findings**

### *Assessment Exam*

As of May 30, 2006, and for the 2005-2006 academic year, 11 students have taken the assessment exam. In addition, a number of students will be taking the exam in Summer 2006, and their scores will be summarized with the next year's assessment report. We now have a procedure in place where all students must take the exam in their last semester before graduation. As such, we should get 100% of students taking the exam from here on in.

Listed below are the exam results for all students who have taken the exam since Spring Semester of 2005, and for all students who have taken the exam in the this academic year.

#### Percentage of Correct Answers on Practice Exam PHR and SPHR results combined

	2006	2004/2005
Overall	68	64
Strategic Management	72	57
Planning & Employment	70	58
HRD	72	80
Compensation & Benefits	72	69
Labor Relations	63	64
Health, Safety & Security	53	42
<i>% passing</i>	73%	39%

Key differences between this year and previous years, include: (1) All scores are nominally higher this year, with the exception of the HRD component. (2) The pass rate this year is almost twice as high as in the previous years, and is close to our program goal of 75% passing. (3) Though the sample sizes are still less than ideal (because of the relatively small size of our program), it appears we may need to address the relatively lower scores in the safety area, and perhaps also in the labor-relations component (alternatively, it might be the case that more of our students have professional experience in human resource management, versus in labor relations, which is driving the score difference here).

As more students take the exam, we hope to provide more quantitative analyses of these data (i.e., correlations,  $t$  tests, etc).

### *Assessment of Quantitative Skills:*

Instructors teaching MLR-602, MLR-640 and MLR-641 in this academic year identified a handful of key skills or competencies that they felt were critical to student success in

the classroom (and back at work). For each skill identified, faculty tallied the number of students who either met, exceeded, or were below minimum levels of competence for that skill.

Here are the results by each class:

**MLR-641:**

	% Exceeding	% Meeting	% Below
Adverse Impact Analyses:	50	50	00
Calculating Reliability:	40	57	03
Validity and Validity Generalization:	94	03	03

**MLR-640:**

	% Exceeding	% Meeting	% Below
FLSA Overtime Calculation	70	30	10
Pay Structure Design:	50	40	10
Compa-Ratios and Pay Admin:	60	40	00

**MLR-602:**

	% Exceeding	% Meeting	% Below
Multiple Regression	30	60	10
Simple Algebra	16	68	16
Economic Graphs	18	60	22

**Review**

The MLRHR Faculty met numerous times throughout the year informally and in formal MLRHR Committee meetings. These meetings included discussions and decisions concerning goals, inputs – admissions, curriculum, internships, jobs, program assessment, and alumni contacts.

The results of the PHR/SPHR practice test indicate nominally better performance compared with prior year data. We hope to address in meetings this coming year the relatively lower scores in the safety and labor relations areas. One possibility is to include more coverage of these topics in our survey course (MLR-601).

Faculty will continue to review the outline of the professional exam for comparison to the core content of the program. Faculty discussions indicate that the health, safety, and security content area covers topics that are either specific to employment sector (e.g., manufacturing safety) or are in a specialized area (those working in employee assistance programs). Faculty note that on the PHR exam, 6% reflects about 4 questions in this area. Therefore, one or two incorrect questions can dramatically influence the result for this area. Students with work experience tend to do significantly better than those without work experience.

Faculty are in the process of deciding whether to increase the minimum cutoff score for admission into our program (with the current formula for admission being:  $200 \times \text{GPA} + \text{GMAT score}$ ). We are currently collecting data on what impact higher standards would have, and if raising the cutoff scores would affect the diversity of our student body.

We also hope to do statistical analyses to see how well undergraduate GPA and GMAT scores predict success in our program, as measured by graduate GPA.

We continue to strictly enforce pre-requisite courses, which allows faculty to increase quality of instruction by ensuring all students are “up to speed” on information they need beforehand to successfully complete our upper level courses.

### **Actions**

Faculty have taken the following actions:

- 1) Continue to review the outline of the professional exam for comparison to the core content of the program, noting that the practice exam is but one indicator of professional knowledge.
- 2) Assess whether more coverage is needed for topics where students seem to be scoring lower.
- 3) Analyze data related to the effects of raising admission standards for our program, and then decide whether or not to raise those standards.
- 4) Continue assessing key skills in MLR-602, MLR-640 and MLR-641.

Sincerely,

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