



NEWS

From Harcourt Assessment, Inc.

Contact:
Mark Slitt
210.339.5399

FOR RELEASE: Wednesday, March 2, 2005

**BARRY TOPOL JOINS HARCOURT ASSESSMENT, INC.
AS CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

SAN ANTONIO – Leading test publisher Harcourt Assessment, Inc., today announced that Barry Topol has joined the company as chief financial officer, replacing Ed Dickinson, who recently took the top financial post at another Harcourt publishing unit.

Topol has held a number of senior financial positions, most recently as CFO at Altierre Corp. in Los Gatos, Calif., where he directed all finance and administrative functions for this start-up semiconductor and software company.

“Barry Topol has had an impressive career as a finance executive in the technology and telecommunications industries,” said Jeff Galt, Harcourt Assessment’s president and chief executive officer. “His experience directing financial activities at large, complex companies like SBC and TRW will enable him to make significant contributions to Harcourt Assessment, particularly as we streamline and strengthen our internal performance measurement systems.”

Topol held a number of positions over more than a decade at TRW, Inc., including director of financial control and administration for TRW Appraisal Services. In that position he negotiated the acquisition and integration of five companies into the unit. As vice president of administration and the national customer service center, he managed two customer call centers and all financial functions, management information systems, purchasing and real estate.

Topol left TRW to join real estate information company Strategic Mortgages Services, Inc., in Costa Mesa, Calif. As vice president and controller, he directed all finance, accounting, credit, treasury and risk management functions for this \$120 million business that included five divisions, a subsidiary and offices in 35 states.

-- more --

Barry Topol Joins Harcourt Assessment as Chief Financial Officer

March 2, 2005

Page 2

Following that, Topol served as chief financial officer of ESS Ventures, LLC, a start-up Internet information and shopping business, where he successfully secured funding for the new company.

Topol then joined SBC Communications, Inc., where he held chief financial officer responsibilities for several of the company's Pacific Bell business units. Topol left SBC to become CFO at Veregy Networks, Inc., a start-up telephone company, before joining Altierre Corp. in 2003.

Topol holds a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of California-Los Angeles, where he graduated summa cum laude and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He earned a master's degree in business administration, also from UCLA, and he is a certified public accountant.

Based in San Antonio, Harcourt Assessment is a leading provider of high-quality assessment instruments and testing programs used by educators, psychologists, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, human resource professionals, admissions and credentialing professionals, and businesses. Through the development of custom statewide educational testing programs, Harcourt is helping more than 20 states meet the accountability requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The company is affiliated with the Harcourt book publishing companies, and together they form the global education brand of Reed Elsevier Group plc (NYSE: RUK and ENL) -- a world-leading publisher and information provider operating in the science and medical, legal, education and business-to-business industry sectors.

###