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# **Proceedings of the Academy of Educational Leadership**

**October 12-15, 1999  
Las Vegas, Nevada**

**Jo Ann and Jim Carland  
Co-Editors  
Western Carolina University**

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# **SABBATICAL: A NECESSITY IN THE MILLENNIUM**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*A study was conducted to determine the sabbatical process used in educational institutions. Educators at 300 different universities received a survey, which sought to identify if the institution offered a sabbatical, and, if so, to give the requirements of the sabbatical experience. Further, respondents who had taken a sabbatical were asked to identify the goals of their experience.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Faculty development has never been more critical than it is today. With technological changes happening every second, full-time faculty are at a disadvantage when trying to keep up with technology. What opportunities exist for the faculty member willing to learn new technology?

A sabbatical can provide this opportunity. According to one university's handbook, the purpose of a sabbatical program is to provide faculty members with the time to undertake an activity that will enhance teaching, to develop curriculum, or to engage in research or scholarship that will allow them to make a significant scholarly contribution and improve instruction.

## **RELATED LITERATURE**

Most of the studies and articles related to sabbatical leaves were business oriented. However, it is common knowledge that sabbaticals have been used in academia for faculty to conduct research in their fields. But in recent years, other industries have begun offering sabbaticals as part of their benefits. According to the one study (US General Accounting Office, 1998), sabbaticals were granted to the career members of the Senior Executive Service with the purpose of contributing to their development and effectiveness through study or work experiences.

The basic activities that the participants did while on sabbatical included research, course development and instruction, studying, and writing. The sabbatical benefitted the agencies in terms of 1) broadening professional skills, 2) learning how to deal with stress and burnout, 3) providing opportunity for professional growth, and 4) the enhancing recruitment and retention.

Officials said that the sabbaticals benefitted the agencies. However, the program was not extensively used because the members could not be spared to participate in the program and the members had expressed little interest in the sabbatical program. The study mentioned that those who did participate returned from the sabbatical with improved performance, renewed enthusiasm, and an improved relationship with the academic community.

Sabbaticals can reward loyalty and recruit potential employees. For example, Microsoft Corporation (Barney, 1997) recruited Borland International Inc.'s developers in an attempt to eliminate the company as a competitor. A 3-month sabbatical leave was one of the incentives offered by Microsoft to one of Borland's developers. Even though Borland employees did not go to work with Microsoft solely because of the sabbatical offer, the sabbatical played a role in the defections.

Results of a survey conducted by the International Foundation of Employee Benefit plans suggested that a third of all companies worldwide will offer extended leave arrangements by the year 2000 (Anonymous, 1997). However, according to the article, the sabbatical will not always be a regular feature of British companies. The reason is because employees who take sabbaticals may lose

touch with the changing workplace. In addition, some sabbaticals can arouse suspicion (of unethical uses of the leave), especially if the participants are senior executives.

Some companies give their employees sabbaticals as a break. The employees' pay is continued in full or in portion depending on each company's policy and conditions upon granting the leave. These companies do not mind taking a risk of the employees' deciding not to return after sabbatical. One of the company executives argued that if that occurs, the reason might go beyond the sabbatical and if the employees were not happy with their job, they probably were not good at doing it.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the research study was to determine the procedures used by universities nationwide to administer faculty sabbaticals. A secondary problem was to determine if faculty are taking advantage of these sabbatical opportunities; and, if they are, what types of sabbatical experiences are they selecting.

The OSRA Executive Office provided a data base of current members of OSRA and the National Association for Business Teacher Education (NABTE). These groups were selected since the OSRA members are professionals dedicated to understanding the desktop-computing environment through the conduct of research and communication of results. And, NABTE members prepare secondary teachers to teach end-user computing. Many members belong to both groups and are very interested in keeping up with technology.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The author's university was contacted for sabbatical procedures. An interview with the Director of Research also contributed to the development of a survey. The survey was divided into five sections: demographic data, sabbatical availability, sabbatical eligibility, sabbatical experiences, and post-sabbatical requirements.

For those who had sabbatical leaves, the survey also asked them about their sabbatical experiences and the changes that had occurred as a result of their sabbaticals. The respondents who did not have the sabbatical experiences were asked to detail the procedures at their educational institution.

### **FINDINGS**

Of the 3 00 surveys sent, 1 10 were returned for a 3 7 percent response rate. The majority of the respondents was female, over 55 years of age, and had over 16 years of service. The profile of the respondents who had a sabbatical matched the profile of the majority of the respondents; i.e., female, older, and experienced.

The majority of the respondents held doctoral degrees, were professors, and were assigned to a department which specialized in office systems and business education. The latter finding may be biased as it is assumed that the majority of NABTE and OSRA members would be associated with a department of business education and office systems.

#### **Sabbatical availability.**

The next section of the survey asked the respondents about their sabbatical opportunities. Almost 95 percent of the respondents had a sabbatical program at their university, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
Percentage of institutions offering the sabbatical opportunity

| Total respondents = 110              |     |        |
|--------------------------------------|-----|--------|
| Institutions offer sabbatical        | 104 | 94.54% |
| Institutions do not have sabbaticals | 6   | 5.46%  |

The major reason institutions provide a sabbatical is for professional improvement. Although respondents could choose among reasons such as health, vacation, and research, 99 of the respondents indicated that their institution promoted the sabbatical as a means to improve their profession.

The division or department responsible for the application varied as did the unit responsible for the approval of the sabbatical. However, respondents agreed that the length of the sabbatical leaves was primarily for one semester--indicated by 91 respondents. Two semesters (one academic year) sabbaticals were also available as noted by 88 respondents.

Compensation during the sabbatical leave was also addressed. The majority of the respondents indicated that if the sabbatical was for one semester, 100% of the compensation was made. And, 66 of the respondents indicated that if the sabbatical was for two semesters or one academic year, only 50-67% of compensation was available. Eleven respondents indicated that sabbatical leaves at their institution were unpaid. Also, the majority of the respondents indicated that expenses related to the sabbatical were not reimbursable.

### **Sabbatical eligibility.**

In order to be eligible for a sabbatical leave, the majority of respondents indicated that the tenured, full-time status was necessary. Also the majority of the respondents indicated that at least six years of service were necessary before applications for a sabbatical would be considered. Similarly, another six years must past before applicants could apply for a subsequent sabbatical.

### **Sabbatical experiences.**

Of the 101 responses to this question, 53 respondents had taken a sabbatical, as shown in Table 2. The majority did not experience a position change upon their return to work. The majority indicated that they took the sabbatical primarily for professional improvement. However, professional improvement was closely followed with another reason for the sabbatical- to conduct research.

**Table 2**  
Percentages of the respondents who had sabbaticals

| Total respondents 101 |    |        |
|-----------------------|----|--------|
| Had sabbaticals       | 53 | 52.48% |
| Never had sabbaticals | 48 | 47.52% |

Note: Of the 48 who had no sabbaticals, three will have one in the year 1999-2000.

Similar to previously reported business and industry studies, the respondents indicated that they returned with new knowledge and enthusiasm. They also felt more self-confident and had increased their credibility with their colleagues.

### **Post-sabbatical experiences.**

The majority of the respondents indicated that they had to write a report within three months on their return. They also had to return to serve their institution at least two semesters or one academic year. If they did not return, they would be asked to compensate their institution.

### **SUMMARY**

The sabbatical leave is a common practice among educational institutions. According to this research study, some barriers for taking a sabbatical -such as the number of years of service--were revealed.

Sabbaticals in the business sector are quite different from those in academia. Sabbaticals are not commonplace for most of the companies. However, in tight labor market industry, companies of all sizes will keep looking for creative ways to lure and retain employees. When there is the rising demand for information technology workers in business and industry or in academia-the sabbatical may assist in bridging the gap between supply and demand.

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# DISCOUNTED CASH FLOW METHOD: ITS PROFILE IN INTRODUCTORY FINANCE TEXTBOOKS

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## ABSTRACT

*A common thread in current introductory finance textbooks and courses is the discounted cash flow method. Current introductory finance textbooks explain very well the topic and its application in various areas such as: bond and stock valuations, capital budgeting, weighted average cost of capital, and mergers and acquisitions. With a view to further improving the exposition in current introductory finance textbooks, this paper reflects on their treatments of the underlying assumptions of the discounted cash flow method, its many applications, and their relationship with some of the other crucial topics discussed in the same textbooks. It recommends a fuller discussion of the underlying assumptions and an explanation of the relationships between the topic and the other important topics discussed in the rest of the textbook. Following the recommendation would result in both a better understanding of the topic and a more comprehensive grasp of the subject matter.*

## INTRODUCTION

Current introductory finance textbooks and courses discuss the discounted cash flow (DCF) method which defines a unifying theme for most of the topics which are subsequently discussed. More specifically, first, current textbooks define the discounted cash flow (DCF) method. Second, the concept is applied to bond and stock valuations. Third, the concept is also applied to capital budgeting problems, with the net present value (NPV) recommended as the favorable rule. In capital budgeting problems, initially the cash flows and the discount rate are assumed as given and the net present value (NPV) is calculated. Fourth, in financial forecasting, the proper ways of forecasting and calculating cash flows for capital budgeting purposes are discussed. Fifth, in the discussion of the capital asset pricing model (CAPM) a method for calculating the cost of equity is provided. Sixth, in the discussion of the weighted average cost of capital (WACC) the discounted cash flow (DCF) method is used to calculate the cost of debt, the cost of preferred equity, and the cost of common equity, and their weighted average, which is the weighted average cost of capital (WACC). However, at this stage, the weights are assumed as given. In the discussion of the capital structure, the weights are determined and the weighted average cost of capital (WACC) can be totally calculated. This rate is used for discounting cash flows in capital budgeting problems. Seventh, in the discussion of more advanced topics in capital budgeting, the forecasted cash flows and the calculated weighted average cost of capital (WACC) are used to decide a major capital budgeting problem. Eighth, in the discussion of mergers and acquisitions, the discounted cash flow (DCF) method is applied to these strategic decisions.

Over the years, introductory finance textbooks have improved their exposition of the topics and are currently in good standing. This paper reflects on the current textbooks' treatments of the underlying assumptions of the discounted cash flow (DCF) method, its many applications, and their relationship with some of the other crucial topics discussed in the same textbooks. To further improve current introductory textbooks, it recommends a fuller discussion of the underlying assumptions and an explanation of the relationships between the topic and the other important topics discussed in the

rest of the textbook. Following the recommendation would result in both a better understanding of the topic and a more comprehensive grasp of the subject matter.

This study examines thirty-two current introductory finance textbooks published by major finance textbook publishers, i.e., those who were present at the last annual Financial Management Association meeting. The textbooks are: Besley-Brigham (1999), Block-Hirt (2000), Brealey-Myers (2000), Brealey-Myers-Marcus (1999), Brigham-Gapenski (1996), Brigham-Gapenski-Ehrhardt (1999), Brigham-Houston (1998), Chambers-Lacey (1999), Damodaran (1997), Dickerson-Campsey-Brigham (1995), Eakins (1999), Emery (1998), Emery-Finnerty (1997), Emery-Finnerty-Stowe (1998), Gallagher-Andrew (2000), Gitman (1995), Gitman (1997), Hickman-Hunter-Byrd (1996), Kaen (1995), Keown-Petty-Scott-Martin (1999), Kolb-Rodriguez (1996), Lee-Finnerty-Norton (1997), Levy (1998), Moyer-McGuigan-Kretlow (1998), Pinches (1996), Pinches (1994), Ross-Westerfield-Jaffe (1999), Ross-Westerfield-Jordan (1999), Scott-Martin-Petty-Keown (1996), Van Horne (1998), Van Horne-Wachowicz (1998), and Weston-Besley-Brigham (1996).

Section 2 examines the discounted cash flow (DCF) method chapters. Section 3 considers the bond chapters. Section 4 looks at the stock chapters. Section 5 discusses the capital budgeting chapters. Section 6 examines financial forecasting chapters and cash flow calculation.

### **THE DISCOUNTED CASH FLOW METHOD**

Current introductory finance textbooks use the same interest rate for both lending and borrowing. This is a strong assumption which is applicable only in perfect markets. This assumption is of crucial importance but is usually overlooked by introductory finance textbooks. A full discussion of the assumption might be too complex for an introductory textbook; however, a brief reference to the strict nature of the underlying assumption would prevent the student from generalizing the applicability of the discounted cash flow (DCF) method to any other situation.

Only two, among the thirty-two textbooks reviewed, discuss the perfect market assumption. They are: Emery (1998) and Ross-Westerfield-Jaffe (1999).

### **BOND VALUATION**

Current introductory finance textbooks discuss the maturity risk. That is, they show, by way of a numerical example, that the price of a bond with a longer maturity is more sensitive than a bond with shorter maturity to a given change in the market interest rate. However, current textbooks do not state that the exercise is performed under the assumption of a flat term structure of interest rate. Stating the underlying assumptions prevents students from undue generalization of the results. None of the thirty-two textbooks discusses the flat term structure assumption.

### **STOCK VALUATION**

In the bonds chapters, current textbooks place a great deal of emphasis on the inverse relationship between interest rates and bond prices. However, such an inverse relationship also holds true with respect to stocks and most other assets, which is not emphasized enough in introductory finance textbooks. None of the thirty-two textbooks discusses this relationship.

### **CAPITAL BUDGETING**

Current introductory finance textbooks discuss different capital budgeting decision rules and favor the net present value (NPV) rule. They favor it because the net present value (NPV) rule has desirable properties. One of the properties is that the value of the firm changes by the amount of net present value (NPV). Therefore, only those projects with positive net present value (NPV) should be undertaken. In other words, the net present value (NPV) rule is more compatible than other rules

with the firm value maximization as the goal of the firm. However, current finance textbooks in their introductory chapters start by defining the goal of the firm as shareholder wealth maximization, which translates into share value maximization. Since there is no one-to-one correspondence between firm value maximization and share value maximization, it would be necessary to explain the relationship between firm value maximization and share value maximization in order to avoid inconsistency.

In the capital budgeting chapters, all thirty-two textbooks favor the net present value (NPV) method. However, in their introductory chapters, twenty-five, of the thirty-two, textbooks define share value maximization as the goal of the firm. The textbooks are: Block-Hirt (2000), Brealey-Myers-Marcus (1999), Brigham-Gapenski (1996), Brigham-Gapenski-Ehrhardt (1999), Brigham-Houston (1998), Chambers-Lacey (1999), Dickerson-Campsey-Brigham (1995), Eakins (1999), Emery (1998), Emery-Finnerty (1997), Emery-Finnerty-Stowe (1998), Gallagher-Andrew (2000), Gitman (1995), Gitman (1997), Hickman-Hunter-Byrd (1996), Kaen (1995), Keown-Petty-Scott-Martin (1999), Kolb-Rodriguez (1996), Levy (1998), Moyer-McGuigan-Kretlow (1998), Ross-Westerfield-Jaffe (1999), Ross-Westerfield-Jordan (1999), Scott-Martin-Petty-Keown (1996), Van Horne (1998), and Van Horne-Wachowicz (1998).

Four of the textbooks define firm value maximization as the goal of the firm. The textbooks are: Besley-Brigham (1999), Damodaran (1997), Pinches (1996), and Pinches (1994).

The remaining three textbooks define firm value maximization and share value maximization as equivalents. The textbooks are: Brealey-Myers (2000), Lee-Finnerty-Norton (1997), and Weston-Besley-Brigham (1996).

This section also notes the relationship between the positive net present value (NPV) projects and another topic which is explained in current introductory finance textbooks, i.e., the efficient markets hypothesis (EMH). Essentially, the two concepts do not combine well. In efficient markets there are no positive NPV projects. Conversely, the existence of positive NPV projects imply that the markets are not efficient. This needs to be dealt with in order to avoid confusing students.

All textbooks reviewed discuss and favor the net present value (NPV) rule. Moreover, all textbooks but four discuss the efficient markets hypothesis. The textbooks are: Besley-Brigham (1999), Gallagher-Andrew (2000), Gitman (1995), and Van Horne-Wachowicz (1998).

This section also notes that the discounted cash flow (DCF) method is based on the assumption that the borrowing and lending rates are the same. As was noted in Section 1, this holds true in perfect markets. However, the NPV analysis, which uses the discounted cash flow method, is based on the existence of market imperfections, i.e., the existence of positive NPV projects. A discussion of this issue would also help students' understanding.

## CASH FLOW FORECASTING

In financial forecasting, financial statements are forecasted. These financial statements are based on accrual accounting rules, and they contain items which are, in general, partly cash and partly non-cash. For capital budgeting purposes, only the cash flow components matter. Therefore, there is a need to convert the accrual items in the forecasted financial statements into cash items for use in capital budgeting decisions.

In order to obtain the operating cash flows from the operating income for capital budgeting purposes, current introductory finance textbooks state that one should take net operating income and "add *back* depreciation." This is done to find the cash counterpart of the operating income, since depreciation is a non-cash tax-deductible expense. This practice leaves the student with the impression that since depreciation was deducted before taxes, and since it is a non-cash expense, it should be added *back*. However, this is not really the purpose of "adding depreciation." The depreciation is added to the net operating income only because it works as a construct to find the cash counterpart of the operating income. The depreciation is not added to the operating income to undo what was done before. That is, the reason depreciation is added to the operating income is not due to the fact that the same amount was deducted previously as an expense. The procedure is really a

construct to give the cash counterpart of operating income without too much trouble. This holds true regarding other non-cash expenses as well.

Thirteen of the thirty-two textbooks used the misleading phrase "add *back* depreciation." The textbooks are: Block-Hirt (2000), Brealey-Myers-Marcus (1999), Brigham-Gapenski-Ehrhardt (1999), Brigham-Houston (1998), Chambers-Lacey (1999), Damodaran (1997), Dickerson-Campsey-Brigham (1995), Emery-Finnerty (1997), Emery-Finnerty-Stowe (1998), Gallagher-Andrew (2000), Gitman (1995), Gitman (1997), and Ross-Westerfield-Jordan (1999).

Seventeen of the textbooks described the process constructively, rather than misleading the students. The textbooks are: Besley-Brigham (1999), Brealey-Myers (2000), Eakins (1999), Emery (1998), Hickman-Hunter-Byrd (1996), Kaen (1995), Keown-Petty-Scott-Martin (1999), Lee-Finnerty-Norton (1997), Levy (1998), Moyer-McGuigan-Kretlow (1998), Pinches (1996), Pinches (1994), Ross-Westerfield-Jaffe (1999), Scott-Martin-Petty-Keown (1996), Van Horne (1998), Van Horne-Wachowicz (1998), and Weston-Besley-Brigham (1996).

Two of the textbooks did not discuss the issue. The textbooks are: Brigham-Gapenski (1996) and Kolb-Rodriguez (1996).

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## **REFOCUSING DOCTORAL BUSINESS EDUCATION IN PREPARATION FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The 21<sup>st</sup> century will bring many new challenges for American businesses. It is essential that business professors adequately prepare students to face these challenges. Doctoral programs in business can play an important role in this process by ensuring that doctoral students receive the preparation and training they need to be particularly effective in the next century. This manuscript identifies specific ways doctoral business programs can help better prepare their students. These include requiring some work experience, showing doctoral students how to integrate technology in their classrooms, requiring a course in pedagogy, training students to be good researchers, emphasizing an international dimension in courses, encouraging student to be interdisciplinary in their teaching and research interests, and providing a realistic review of career paths and job opportunities for graduates. Specific suggestions will be presented as to how these can be implemented into curricula and doctoral programs.*

# ALIGNMENT OF EMPLOYER AND FACULTY EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO BUSINESS COMMUNICATION CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper discusses the use of a collaborative process using literature searches, market surveys and focus groups to develop business communication curriculum. Survey data collected prior to joint faculty-employer focus groups indicates that business communication faculty and employers perceive interpersonal skills as the most important business communication competency. Both groups ranked competence in the use of communication technology last. Placement of the five remaining competencies used in the study varied between the groups. Data provided by surveys completed by participants, after meeting in a joint focus group, indicates that both groups changed their first ranking to cross-cultural communication with communication technology remaining last. Post-focus group rankings by faculty placed oral communication competence second while the employer group ranked both writing mechanics and interpersonal second. The remaining four competencies were ranked the same by both groups. Data gathered during the process provided the faculty an externally validated basis for establishing course objectives; faculty input measurement, and methods to assess course outcomes. The collaborative process assisted the school in modeling continuous improvement and meeting AACSB accreditation requirements.*

## INTRODUCTION

Schools of Business Administration are being challenged to adopt curriculum that is continually improving while holding faculty accountable for graduating students who meet employer's needs. Schools are attempting to meet these demands by evaluating and validating the content of their undergraduate and graduate courses and continuing to involve faculty in the develop of courses. During the past three years California State University, Sacramento, College of Business Administration, a mid-sized regional institution, has attempted to meet the challenge by creating a collaborative problem solving orientation among stakeholders (faculty, students, administration, and with the local employer community). The framework for these changes has been a continuous process improvement(CPI) model adopted from business applications. The foundation for CPI is found in total quality management (TQM) and industry's continuous process improvement (CPI) literature and practices.

At the core of TQM and CPI is a change in how organizations view and manage ideas, concepts, and conflict. To help organizations change, collaborative problem solving models have been introduced and applied in a number of venues. This case study discusses how one faculty used elements of collaborative problem solving to bring together the unique perspectives of faculty and business community members. The result was the creation of a business communication curriculum that provides valued competencies to students.

From the academic literature, Waner (1995) reduced the number of quality principles applicable to the academic setting to (a) explicitly stating outcomes and (b) validation of these outcomes by organization customers. Ruben (1995) adds further refinement by presenting a view of quality in higher education, which integrates traditional *mission-driven* approaches to defining quality in education with the corporate *customer-driven* approach. This model maintains the best of both approaches by

underscoring the interdependence of institutional missions/ vision/ goals relative to instruction, scholarship, outreach, support, and operational services on the one hand, and the evolving needs and expectations of key constituencies for whom these services are being provided on the other (165). . . . *a university can contribute as is its tradition - an analytical, theoretical, and critical perspective to the quality in organization discussion* (171).

The integration of traditional academic approaches to curriculum development and a business approach with its expanded definition of customer (students, employers, graduates schools) provides an expanded framework to assist in focusing core course context. It is this framework which was used by faculty to create stakeholder-focused curriculum.

Business Communication is a core course in the School's undergraduate program. The course recently received increased attention when a survey of local employers indicated dissatisfaction with its recent graduate's communication skills. Given the high visibility of the course, the Organizational Behavior and Environment Department (OBE) faculty decided to develop and test a curriculum development model that would attempt to link employer expectations of student communication competencies with faculty perceptions of relevant curriculum content. From the onset, faculty was concerned that student apathy toward the course may hinder the development of market appropriate curriculum. McPherson (1998) supported this concern and indicated that students may not value business communication courses and therefore not take them seriously. Given the scope of potential student apathy, the Policies Commission (Policies, 1997) challenged business educators to develop student's business skills even if a student does not understand the important role business communication will play in their career development. Waner (1995) suggests even if agreement exists between employers, faculty, and students on the need for business communication skills there still may exist differing perceptions of which communication competencies should be have priority (Waner, 1995).

The purpose of this case study was to address the issue of criticality of subjects taught and skills developed by attempting to determine if business communication faculty and business professionals perceive selected business communication competencies with the same degree of importance. In addition, it was to assess if the data generated from the study could be used to determine course objectives, input metrics, and output assessments.

Kanungo and Misra's (1992) provided a distinction between skills and competence. Skills were defined as the ability to or capability to engage in specific behaviors, including covert behavior and cognitive activities to accomplish specific routine tasks. Skills could be learned through training or result from experience. Competence is the ability to engage in non-routine cognitive and intellectual activities, which could be used to cope in uncertain environment (Kanungo and Misra, 1992). This study defined competence in this manner and examined perceptions of communication competence (see table 1 for attributes associated with competence) in the following areas:

Cross Cultural Communication  
Writing Mechanics  
Interpersonal Communication



Oral Presentations  
Writing Style  
Managerial Skills  
Technology

Given the limited time available to teach a broad range of subjects, competence was determined to be the primary objective. It was assumed that if the student's were competent in given areas they would be able to develop and utilize skills related to the specific competence.

A process of bringing groups with possibly divergent views together requires establishing a common definition of critical competency and language to capture the essence of each critical element. Estenson (1997) conducted a study of nurse managers directing the work of a multi-lingual work force. The study found that effective cross-cultural managers established a common language and seeks agreement on behaviors critical to patient treatment. Waner (1995) and others provide a thoughtful perspective on previous research related to the needs for agreement between businesspersons, students, and business faculty on the criticality of certain communication skills (Adkins, 1982; Quible, 1991). Waner (1995) indicates that there is general agreement between faculty, students and employers on certain broadly defined skills but found business professionals placed greater importance to specific skills (55). Waner's conclusion was that faculty needed to regularly survey and collaborate with business professional to keep their curriculum both current and relevant. Waner's recommendations as well as other cited research on communication competence indicated the importance of agreement on critical terms used to define competence. Given the College's regional nature and the national/international scope local employer operations, it was agreed by the faculty that definition of critical terms was an important first step to develop and prioritized list of competencies. Once definitions were established the faculty would continue to use the collaborative process to operationalize terms and establish curriculum priorities

## **METHODOLOGY**

Fischer and Ury (1981) suggest that the use of external standards to determine the goodness of fit of an approach to a problem may help a diverse group sort through a number of value-laden ideas or problems. To start the process the parties create a climate in which a general dialogue can take place. The dialogue will allow for moving toward agreement on what external standards can be used to help determine the goodness of fit of options.

Problem solving and creating common commitment through dialogue is grounded in social psychology theory. This discipline's research into dialogue as problem solving provides several frameworks, which can be used to create solutions to sensitive subject matter (Harre and Gillett, 1994; Shotter, 1993; Turner, 1988). For the purpose of this study, faculty teaching business communication, were polled to provide an initial list of perceived business communication competencies. Faculty then checked their list against subject matter contained in highly used business communication texts. The text list included: Boone's Contemporary Business Communication (1994), Bovee's Business Communication Today (1997), Lahill's Business Communication Strategies and Skills (1997), and Lesikar's Basic Business Communication (1996). In an effort to narrow the lists developed from the literature search, faculty agreed to use Fisher and Ury's (1981) external objective standard. In this application, frequency of appearance in the above named texts was the agreed upon primary criteria for inclusion on the list.

The literature search, review of current business communication texts, and extensive faculty discussions resulted in establishing a set of competencies viewed as important. English's (1997) survey instrument used to determine the perceived value of selected communication competencies by AACSB College of Business Deans, Business Communications Instructors and local Human

Resource Managers was adopted to fit this use. Categories used in this study differed from English's survey with the addition of communication technologies and cross-cultural communications. The two additional competency categories (cross-cultural and use of technology) were added to reflect unique requirements of the local employment market. The final set of competencies agreed to by the faculty were:

Cross Cultural Communication  
 Writing Mechanics  
 Interpersonal Communication  
 Oral Presentations  
 Writing Style  
 Managerial Skills  
 Technology

For the purpose of this study, students exhibiting the following behaviors would demonstrate competency in each category.

| <i>Competency</i>            | <i>Behavior</i>   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Cross-Cultural Communication | Ability to understand other cultures and construct messages in ways that transcend culture.                         |
| Writing Mechanics            | Use of grammar rules.   |
| Interpersonal Communication  | Effective listening skills, use of appropriate non-verbal communication techniques.                                 |
| Oral Presentations           | Effective formal and informal presentation to large and small groups.   |
| Writing Style                | Choice of tone of message and communication channel.  |
| Managerial Skills            | Ability to make effective decisions, manage conflict, think critically, and use power in an appropriate manner.     |
| Technology                   | Use of traditional communications technologies such as e-mail, computer graphics, Internet, and desktop publishing. |

The instrument developed for the study utilized the above attributes or behaviors to create statements, which the respondent was asked to evaluate using a Likert-type scale with 4 = being extremely essential (competency is *absolutely* essential for employment and advancement), 3 = very essential (competency is *quite essential* for employment and advancement), 2 = essential (competency is *somewhat essential* but could be learned on the job), 1 = not essential (competency is *not essential* for employment or advancement) and 0 = undecided (*can't decide* if competency is essential).

It was determined that the instrument had face validity given the rigor of a literature search conducted by faculty specialized in teaching the subject and the intensity of faculty discussion regarding the inclusion or exclusion of certain competencies. Faculty also agreed the instrument has curricular validity (Croker and Algina, 1986), indicating that the items reflect objectives contained in business communication curriculum used in nationally recognized business schools.

Given the time pressures associated with re-accreditation, it was determined that surveys would be distributed to a limited group of local area companies and government agencies. The criteria for selection included organizations offering business school student internships, having a representative speak to school business clubs, and those actively recruiting on campus. To assist in acquiring a high rate of return, senior managers in each of these organizations were contacted and asked to support the study.

Surveys were sent to pre-selected individuals from each of the organizations and the data collected was used to create a set of descriptive statistics. The statistics allowed for ranking of respondent's perception of how critical each competence was to the hiring and promotion of a new college graduate. Data was displayed in tables constructed to facilitate understanding of the degree of alignment between faculty and employer perceptions. The tables were then sent to all participants for their review prior to attending a focus group discussion.

Quible (1998) discusses possible use of focus groups as means to collect qualitative information related to business communication courses. The article quotes O'Donnell's view on the popularity of technique:

*First they provide qualitatively different information from that obtained in individual interviews, thus yielding a broad range of information because the group setting encourages spontaneous and candid reactions; second for some topics, no other valid or reliable quantitative data-collection methods are available.*

(Quible, 1998, 29).

This study used survey data to develop a simple rank order of perceived value for each group (Group one - eight CSUS business communication faculty, Group two - seven large employers hiring program graduates). Two weeks after completion of the survey, a focus group of the same population was conducted to discuss the results of the survey and to provide an opportunity for dialogue between participants. Kolb (1993, 143) support this approach and indicates that dialogue can be used as a means to assist diverse groups in framing, considering, and resolving differences through communicant interaction.

Following the focus group discussion, the same survey instrument was administered to participants to determine if changes in perception occurred. Data from the second survey was placed in a matrix to determine the degree of alignment between faculty and employer perceptions. The rankings reflected in the second matrix was used to guide faculty in setting course goals, developing curriculum, establishing objectives, and creating metrics used to assess course outcomes. Faculty agreed to adjust both curriculum, method of content delivery, and assessment metrics to reflect priorities generated by the process.

## SAMPLE

Eight CSUS faculty members, teaching business communication, participated in the survey. Seven faculty members participated in focus group discussions and completed the second survey. A faculty member from the OBE Department contemplating teaching the business communication course replaced one member initial faculty participant. A search of college placement records indicated a significant number of graduates had been placed in a relatively small number of organizations. This short list of employers generated the names of seven organizations who chose to respond to the survey with six participating in the focus group. The employer group had maintained a high profile on campus by actively recruiting, sending representatives to speak to business club, and sponsoring internships. The group employed 10,275 in the region and hired 576 college graduates in the year preceding the study. Organizational participants included MCI, Lucent

Technologies, Packard-Bell, Vision Service Plan, 3M, The Money Store, and State of California Franchise Tax Board.

## FINDINGS

Pre-meeting data indicated that faculty and employers agreed that technology (as defined in Table 1.) was the least critical communication competency. There was no agreement on the placement of the remaining competencies. The greatest variance (8.5%) occurred in the ranking of public speaking skills where the employer group ranked the skill higher than faculty. Table 2 provides a comparison of pre-meeting rankings.

| <i>Competency</i> | <i>Mean Faculty Score</i> | <i>Faculty Rank</i> | <i>Mean Employer Score</i> | <i>Employer Rank</i> | <i># Difference</i> | <i>% Difference</i> |
|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Writing Mechanics | 3.27                      | 1                   | 3.11                       | 4                    | 0.16                | 4.8                 |
| Writing Style     | 3.12                      | 5                   | 3.07                       | 6                    | 0.05                | 1.6                 |
| Interpersonal     | 3.27                      | 1                   | 3.35                       | 1                    | 0.08                | 2.4                 |
| Cross-Cultural    | 3.24                      | 3                   | 3.17                       | 2                    | 0.07                | 3.1                 |
| Technology        | 2.57                      | 7                   | 2.42                       | 7                    | 0.15                | 5.8                 |
| Public Speaking   | 2.90                      | 6                   | 3.17                       | 2                    | 0.27                | 8.5                 |
| Managerial Skills | 3.17                      | 4                   | 3.08                       | 3                    | 0.09                | 2.8                 |

Post-focus group meeting data indicates that both groups ranked cross-cultural communication, writing mechanics, and public speaking in the top three competencies. The number one placement was given to cross-cultural communication by both the faculty and employers. Placement at the second and third position varied with faculty ranking speaking skills second and writing mechanics third while employers reversed the order. Technology remained least important. This finding is consistent with Maes, Weldy, and Icenogle (1997) and Rynes and Gerhard (1990). Focus group discussion notes indicate that employers assumed graduates had basic computer skills and that they would teach specific computer application in their own employee development programs. The most significant deviation in data during this iteration was 1.0 in value or 7.4% in the perceived value of technological competence. Table 3 provides comparisons.

The value of using dialogue to reach agreement is seen in the changes in the ranking assigned to each competency by both groups. In the first survey, faculty and employers were at least 1% apart in their perception of the importance of each competency. The highest degree of difference was 8.5% and closest was a difference of 1.6%. After the focus group discussion the greatest degree of difference was 7% and three items had a difference of less than 1%.

| <i>Competency</i> | <i>Mean Faculty Score</i> | <i>Faculty Rank</i> | <i>Mean Employer Score</i> | <i>Employer Rank</i> | <i># Difference</i> | <i>% Difference</i> |
|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Writing Mechanics | 3.41                      | 3                   | 3.39                       | 2                    | 0.02                | 0.5                 |
| Writing Style     | 3.18                      | 5                   | 3.15                       | 5                    | 0.03                | 0.9                 |
| Interpersonal     | 3.40                      | 4                   | 3.38                       | 3                    | 0.02                | 0.6                 |
| Cross-cultural    | 3.53                      | 1                   | 3.65                       | 1                    | 0.12                | 3.3                 |
| Technology        | 2.39                      | 7                   | 2.58                       | 7                    | 0.19                | 7.0                 |
| Public Speaking   | 3.50                      | 2                   | 3.38                       | 3                    | 0.12                | 3.5                 |
| Managerial Skills | 2.92                      | 6                   | 3.13                       | 6                    | 0.21                | 6.7                 |

### APPLICATION

As part of the re-accreditation process, AACSB provided guidelines to the College on areas, which would strengthen the college's business curriculum. Using this information the faculty developed subjects which would contribute to College's academic programs. These areas included:

1. Ethics
2. Global Aspects of Business Operation
3. Political Forces Impacting Business
4. Impact of Changes in Society on Business Operations
5. Legal Aspects of Business Operations
6. Regulatory Impact on Business Operations
7. Technology
8. Diversity in the Workplace

Utilizing Ruben's (1995) strategy to reduce education gaps, data collected from the survey and focus groups was integrated with AACSB guidance to develop objectives for the multi-section business communication course. Table 4 details the collaboratively determined objectives for the course.

| <b>Table 4</b><br><b><i>Business Communication Course Objectives</i></b>  |
|---|
| <b><i>Objectives For Business Communication Are To:</i></b>   |
| Develop students' understanding of international and intercultural barriers to business communication.  |
| Improve students' writing and editing abilities.  |
| Assist students in understanding the need to relate to individuals working in organizations in a human and ethical manner.  |
| Strengthen students' oral presentation skills.  |
| Teach students how to organize and present written and oral information in a manner consistent with the nature of the material and the needs of the audience.           |
| Add to the managerial skills of students and their ability to understand social, political, legal, and regulatory issues affecting business organizations.              |
| Introduce students to the communication technology available and to provide students the opportunity to apply this technology to their individual learning experiences. |

The objectives were translated into a set of input metrics, which could be used to assist in providing consistency between multiple sections. Degree of cross-section consistency would be determined using the data provided by these metrics. Examples of metrics include:

- Amount of time scheduled to develop competency.
- Number of assignment related to competency.
- Coverage of competencies in test material.
- Course weight given to demonstration of competency (points earned toward final grade).

Outcome measures were also linked specifically to data gathered during the collaborative process. Measurement was broken down into the seven competencies used in the initial data collection process. Samples of the outcome metrics are provided in Table 5.

| <b>Table 5</b><br><b>Assessment of Student Learning</b> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Competence To Be Acquired</b>                        | <b>Evidence Of Learning</b>  |
| Cross-Cultural Communication                            | Skill in case study analysis.<br>Behavior of students in a multi-cultural team.<br>Mastery of theory as reflected in test scores.  |
| Writing Mechanics                                       | Writing portfolios: Research projects, letters, memos, and Electronic mail.<br>Results of pre and post course writing diagnostic test.   |
| Interpersonal   | Behavior during in-class team meetings.<br>Presentations to class.<br>Inter-action with instructor.<br>Scores given by teammates on group projects.  |
| Public Speaking   | In-class presentation.<br>Participation in class discussions.  |
| Writing Style   | Writing portfolios: Research projects, letters, memos, and electronic mail.  |
| Managerial Skills                                       | Behavior during in-class team exercises.<br>Quality of work on research project.<br>Mastery of theory as reflected in test scores.   |
| Technology  | Use of electronic mail to communicate with instructor.<br>Use of computer graphics in class presentations.<br>Quality of written assignment (mastery of word processing Programs and computer graphics programs. |

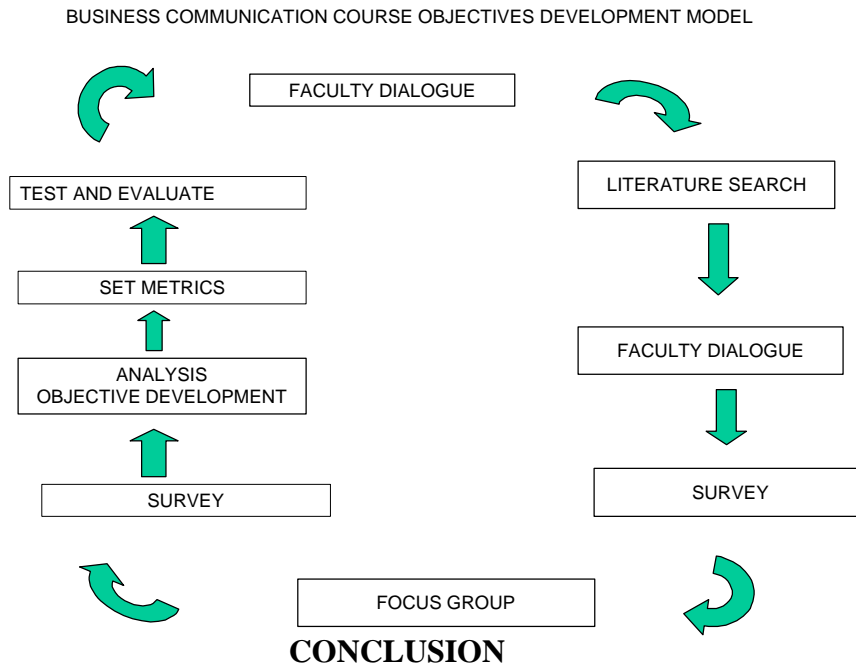
### SUMMARY

Initial feedback from individuals involved in the process indicates that a curriculum developed using a model which provides for double loop learning (Argyris, 89) assists in curriculum acceptance by many stakeholders. The process used in this case study started with an open dialogue between faculty teaching the course. Frequency of appearance of competency in nationally recognized text was used to resolve faculty differences regarding competency criticality. This use extensive literature searches as a moderating factor assisted instructors in moving the level of dialogue to an even higher level. The clarity provided by thoughtful discussion provided the foundation for creation of a survey, which was used to solicit business community input in the process. The data collected from the survey helped focus discussion between business leaders and teaching faculty. The compilation of data from surveys and a focus group assisted faculty in developing metrics to determine levels of competency relevant teaching activities and metrics to determine learning. (See figure 1 for a model of the process)

The process used by the faculty is based on the concept of continual improvement (CI). CI theory indicates that an effective way to address rapid change and maintenance of critical focus is to meet the needs of the marketplace. Change in this environment requires review of product (curriculum) and that these reviews be conducted in the spirit of CI. The essence of CI is the recognition that all data be viewed as valuable and that information not to be used to penalize individual efforts Senge (1990, 249 ), Argyris (1982, 274). Deming (1982, 59 ) and other writing on CI and learning organizations caution against the use of data a weapon to punish. Neutral use

of information appears to be difficult in an academic environment were there maybe a tendency to used data as a tool to achieve support for a personal agenda.

**Figure 1**  
**Curriculum Development Model**



Some business schools appear to be having a difficult time creating curriculum, which is responsive to employer, needs. This struggle for curriculum relevance coupled with a strong desire to be reaccredited by AACSB provided the impetus for this college used a collaborative model to focus faculty and community energy to create a relevant core course.

Collaborative models, such as the one used in this study, tend to help create environments, which contribute to learning by a broad spectrum of stakeholders. This was accomplished by creating multiple opportunities for dialogue, establishing meaningful objective standards, developing objectives and metrics, and encouraging modification and experimentation.

A further exploration of use collaborative models for problem solving in schools where there is not critical external pressure to change would assist in determining the ability to the approach to travel into other contexts. It may also be of value to know if the collaborative processed are used once this school has moved past a period of crisis.

This curriculum development model was viewed by those directly involved as challenging, time consuming, rigorous but rewarding. Rewards came from a sense the a curriculum had been developed that provided faculty confidence that class activities contributed to creation of competencies which were valued by the employing community. Employers were rewarded with a pool of potential employees who are qualified to work in a competitive global business environment. The utilization of multiple stakeholders to create curriculum appears to have generated a sense of community linkage to the school as seen by even greater employer participation in school programs.

This model's ability to travel to this academic setting may be its reliance on a human need for interaction coupled with the organization's requirement to become more responsive to their external environments. Whatever the impetus for action, the model appears to have moved the curriculum



development process from a somewhat inbred to an expanded worldview. The value of this expanded perspective will be told by the performance of students being taught using the new curriculum.

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# INTRODUCING THE CASE METHOD IN A BUSINESS COURSE: ENTERTAINING METAPHORS

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to show how business professors may use entertaining metaphors when introducing the case method in their courses. Students are often educated by the lecture method and, therefore, the use of the case method is new and frustrating to them. They require an introduction to the case method which is both foundational and friendly. The foundation of the case method is best introduced in simple terms and should be compared with the lecture method, with which they are most familiar. The friendly environment is best created with an approach which is most comforting to them. This paper shows how such a foundational and friendly introduction can be made by utilizing entertaining metaphors.*

## INTRODUCTION

Ardalan (1998) has discussed the role of entertainment and metaphor in education and has shown examples of the use of entertaining metaphors in the introductory finance course. This paper follows the same approach and shows how entertaining metaphors can be used to introduce the foundation of the case method, in a clear and friendly manner, to students who initially find the case method quite frustrating.

The entertaining metaphors approach is an audio-visual one. The audio component is performed by the professor. The visual component is covered by slides shown on an overhead screen. The slides consist of exhibits, which are used as metaphors, and quotations from well-known case method sources. This approach enhances visualization, motivation, and association in student learning.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE METHOD

What is a case? Professor Gragg's (1954) classic statement defines the case as follows:

. . . a case typically is a record of a business issue which *actually* has been faced by business executives, together with surrounding facts, opinions, and prejudices upon which executive decisions have to depend. These real and particularized cases are presented to students for considered analyses, open discussion, and final discussion as to the type of action which should be taken. (p. 6)

Exhibits 1 & 2: The case method places great emphasis on the role of the context. This plays a crucial role in what we see, in our interpretation of the case, and the issues under consideration. In exhibits 1 and 2, whether we see the same object as "a man washing his face" or "an embrace" reflects the important role of the context in which we interpret information.

The . . . major portions of the case normally deal with the background of the organization as a whole and, possibly, the industry as well.

This section provides the context for the issue and it is . . . one of the prime reasons for using cases in the first place. Given that there are a variety of potential options in a decision, the preferred one "depends on the circumstances." If standard universal solutions existed, there would be no need for cases. (Mauffette-Leenders, Erskine, & Leenders 1997, 38)

Exhibit 3: We have much in common. We have some similar interests, values, and behaviors.

Exhibit 4: Most importantly, we all like, and are interested in, business administration.

Exhibit 5: However, there are differences among us. We come to the class from different backgrounds and with different intentions.

Exhibit 6: Some of us may be interested in going into detail, while others may not be that patient. Or, some of us may be interested in and familiar with some aspects of an issue, while others may be interested in and familiar with other aspects of it. Or, some of us may see the case in a certain way, whereas others may see it in a different way. In the case method, we *discuss* cases. This is because each one of us interprets the case differently and looks at different aspects of it.

By sharing our observation with the rest, we come to a better understanding of the case. For case discussion, each of us first analyzes the case individually, then within a small group. Afterwards, we collectively discuss what each one saw, and how each one analyzed it and made a decision. Next, we exchange our ideas to get a better understanding of the case and make our own decision.

In order to enhance expression and exchange of ideas, participants should be well-prepared for small group discussion. Each participant uses his or her own understanding and experience to analyze the case.

Use the problem solving model which contains the following steps:

- a. What are the objectives of the organization?
- . What is the decision or the problem?
- c. What are the key relevant facts?
- d. What are the alternatives?
- e. What are the decision criteria?
- . What is your analysis of the alternatives in view of the decision criteria?
- g. Which alternative do you recommend?
- h. What is your plan of action for implementation and what results do you expect? (Erskine, Leenders, & Mauffette-Leenders 1981, 102)

Decision making is not always so simple, however, if you are faced with several issues combined with multiple objectives and decision criteria. There is rarely only one sensible course of action to a case. (Mauffette-Leenders, Erskine, & Leenders 1997, 52, 53)

The case method strives on "the give and take" involved in case discussions.

Small group discussion is an opportunity to check insights, assumptions, and preparation against those of others; clarify understanding; listen attentively and critically to others; and argue for positions based on convictions developed during the individual preparation stage. (Mauffette-Leenders, Erskine, & Leenders 1997, 22)

In the case method we learn by doing and by teaching others. What we learn becomes second nature and stays with us. By identifying, analyzing, and solving issues in a variety of cases we become prepared for our professional work.

### CONCLUSION

A review of the fundamental principles underlying case method teaching may help explain its extraordinary power to involve the student in a highly personal learning experience.

1. The primacy of situational analysis
  2. The imperative of relating analysis and action
  3. The necessity of student involvement
  4. A nontraditional instructor role
  5. A balance of substantive and process teaching objectives
- (Christensen & Hansen 1987, 30-32)

This paper demonstrated how entertaining metaphors can be used to introduce in simple terms and friendly manner some of the most fundamental views and principles which underlie the case method to students who have not been exposed to the case method at all and, therefore, find it new and frustrating.

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## **BOOKS-A-MILLION: USING “GREAT” BOOKS AS A LEARNING TOOL IN THE MANAGEMENT CURRICULUM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper examines how two management professors have used books as an integral part of the pedagogy of the business policy course. Contrary to the “established” methods of teaching business strategy principally through the case method, these two professors have adapted their classroom techniques to center upon the reading of books. This was done for three primary reasons:*

*The relevancy of case-based (historical) instruction in light of the fast pace of change in today’s technologically-oriented business world.*

*The widespread availability of financial and corporate information via the Internet.*

*The demographics (psychographic and educational) of the specific students in question at this regional university, whose student body predominantly consists of non-traditional, commuter students.*

*In this paper, the professors discuss their two differing strategies they have employed in changing the business strategy curriculum. One professor relies upon students gaining widespread exposure to contemporary ideas on management. To that end, his students choose books from amongst a list of the most innovative books published across all areas of business. This ever-expanding list of titles includes the works of well-known business thinkers such as James Collins, Stephen Covey, Bill Gates, and Tom Peters. Working individually on unique titles, his business policy sections end up hearing reports on upwards of thirty of the best books written on business and management in the past decade. The other professor takes a quite different approach. He has his students concentrate their attention to one classic book Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. Initially, his efforts often draw ire from his students, primarily because his approach to Machiavelli’s work requires more than a Cliff’s Notes overview of the material. Over the course of a semester, however, the professor integrates Machiavelli’s centuries-old concepts to today’s most pressing managerial issues, enlightening students and awakening a newfound perspective on business strategy.*

*In a concluding discussion, these two approaches are drawn together, providing implications for the teaching of business policy and strategy at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.*

# **STUDENTS AS CUSTOMERS AND HIGHER EDUCATION AS INDUSTRY: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*As universities worldwide are being required to be more responsive to the needs of their customers, the literature has focussed on identifying exactly who is the customer in the higher education industry. It is common to view the student as the customer but this notion is not universally accepted. This paper reviews the debate in the education and marketing literature about students as customers and reveals the difficulty in using the word customer to describe the student/university relationship. The author argues that the debate must move away from identifying the customer and focus on the university as a service provider. Universities are essentially competing with each other to provide research and education services nationally and internationally. In providing their services, universities should be subject to the same legal obligations as are other service providers. In most jurisdictions, legislation implies certain terms in consumer contracts and ensures certain standards of business behaviour by, for example, prohibiting misleading conduct and prohibiting certain anti-competitive conduct. This paper also outlines how university activities may be subject to various commercial laws that protect all industry participants whether they are customers or competitors or the general public.*

## **DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMING IN BUSINESS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper will describe the development of an integrated set of international opportunities for students based on the experiences of the authors' three universities. Each of the three universities serves a different type of student body, had a different resource base, serves a different geographic area, yet each was faced with the need to internationalize its curriculum. The differences and the similarities of the approaches these institutions have utilized helps identify the options that may be available to other universities just embarking on the road to internationalization. Providing multiple options for students and faculty will maximize participation in the various programs that are offered.*

### **DISCUSSION**

One of the highest priorities in the AACSB accreditation guidelines is the charge to "internationalize" the business curriculum. Even for business schools which are not currently, or will not in the future be seeking AACSB accreditation, this mandate does affect every business school as all attempt to equip students with the skills that they need to maximize their potential for success in the increasingly global workplace.

Perhaps the first step of "internationalization" is where a business school simply includes discussion of the international dimension into all classes. This can include the use of speakers from either the community or the business sector who have had business experiences abroad. Perhaps the best way of ensuring that this is achieved is to develop a number of overseas travel opportunities for faculty. Faculty who have had a positive overseas experience tend to automatically integrate global examples into class discussion.

Attendance at foreign conferences, overseas consulting experiences, conducting research with foreign faculty and encouraging sabbatical time overseas are all ways of providing faculty with short-term overseas experiences. Longer term options might include faculty exchanges with institutions abroad and the like. Although it is recognized that many faculty may be unable to spend a full semester overseas due to family obligations, split appointments and other innovative scheduling may still provide the opportunity to faculty. At one institution, several faculty "shared" a semester overseas, breaking the domestic and foreign course down into modules, and each teaching a four to eight week module in the foreign company, in kind of an extended "team teaching" approach.

At another institution, a foreign teaching seminar was arranged where faculty would be funded to go to a selected foreign country and share their teaching "tips" with faculty from other colleges within their university. In another case, faculty participated in economic development seminars with business and political leaders in a developing country. Both corporate and government funding may be available to help fund such innovative approaches to faculty internationalization.



Once opportunities for faculty are developed, similar opportunities for students must be organized. A first step may be something as simple as forcing exposure to foreign cultures in their local community. Students in classes such as Principles of Marketing or Introduction to Management or similar can be given an assignment of finding someone from a foreign country and interviewing them, finding out things about their culture and the business environment of their home country. In many cases, this may be the first time that a student has ever spoken to a “foreigner” and the written summaries of such interviews often reflect the learning experience that such an exercise involves.

Curricular revision may also encourage internationalization. As more college bound high school students have had some foreign language training, mandating or strongly recommending language study at the university level will increase the students’ exposure to foreign culture and thus increase their interest in foreign travel and study.

Progressing from just merely talking about “it” to providing these students with a “hands on” experience necessitates the development of study opportunities overseas. Perhaps the first step is the development of an exchange program. Under such programs, students from each country basically exchange roles, providing each student with the benefit of overseas study while paying “home” tuition. This involves “partnering-up” with a foreign institution. Here, co-operation with the Foreign Language department can be beneficial. Far more students come to the US to study business than would come to study a Foreign Language. Co-operation between the two academic areas is for mutual benefit as the Foreign Language department needs co-operation from other academic areas as foreign students do not often come to the US to study French or Spanish or German. Indeed, a great many come to study business.

Too often universities set lofty goals, then find it difficult to understand why an exchange program does not work. If the U.S. institution is a regional one located in a rural community, it would be difficult to approach a major university in London or Paris, for example, and have any chance of developing a successful exchange program. Major universities seek exchanges with major universities. Regional U.S. universities must seek similar universities overseas. The added benefit of being “equally yoked” is that the regional university in a smaller town may provide a lower cost and greater immersion experience for a student than would a major city. In a similar way, a university with a disciplinary specialty should seek similar institutions overseas.

The benefits of exchange programs are many. Incoming exchange students increase student enrolment of international students in your classes, thus enriching the classroom and campus environment. It also opens exchange possibilities for your students to study overseas. However, unless students have a strong foreign language skills, the selection of foreign exchange partners is limited to schools where programs are taught in English. Too often, it is assumed that this ties you to schools in English speaking countries. While much may be learned from a semester in England or Australia, it is possible that the student may find it more beneficial to go to a country where English is not the primary language, but where business classes are taught in English. This is most common at Scandinavian Universities - Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland. It is also common in the Netherlands, and to a lesser extent in Belgium and Germany.

An evolutionary progression from the single exchange partner model occurs when the success of the exchange program begins to exceed the capacity of the foreign partner to absorb students and when demand grows for experiences in more than one country. Developing multiple bi-lateral exchange programs is problematic. The question of institutional parity becomes difficult to administer in multiple bi-lateral agreements. Here a consortium may become attractive. There are several small consortium programs that provide the benefits of a variety of options for students, while eliminating the multiple parity problem. As well, there are several organizations that provide exchange options for students in virtually any country in the world. The Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE), for example, offers over 40 exchange universities in Australia alone.

A number of Institutions have also started engaging in cooperative degree offerings in recent years. Due to the fact that an American degree is valued and perceived as highly marketable and desirable in some countries, institutions have joined together in establishing “Dual Degree Programs”

whereby, at the end of their undergraduate educational tenure, students end up with two baccalaureate degrees. These programs mandate the students from one university to spend a year or two at a partner institution. Students enroll in prearranged set of courses. The contents of these courses are formulated, taught and evaluated by the faculty of the cooperating institutions.. Once the course requirements are completed the students are awarded degrees at both institutions.

All the student opportunities that have been discussed so far involve an overseas experience of a semester, or possible a full academic year, or even longer. However, as a greater number of non-traditional students enrol in university programs, ways of providing these students with an international opportunity must be developed.. Non traditional students may not be able to spend an extended time overseas due to work and/or family obligations. Even traditional students with a heavy reliance on part-time jobs to sustain themselves, can not participate in traditional exchange programs. Here the opportunity to develop short term experiences is essential. Two to four week programs provides the student with some exposure to international business at a very low program cost. As well, the opportunity cost of foregone income is minimized.

Such programs can be developed in a number of ways - commercial vendors, such as Casterbridge Tours and EF Tours offer package travel experiences for students. Large universities, such as Arizona State, offer program in which students from other universities can participate. Alternately, the school can develop their own program, perhaps even partnering up with other schools in the same general geographic area. Development of your own program allows greater customization to meet the specific needs of your students, and generally provides a much lower cost alternative.

Developing a customized program is more time consuming for the faculty member, but can allow the university to draw upon specific contacts it may have in overseas locations for a truly innovative program. Parents of current students, alumni, current and former foreign students are all possible contacts who might be able to provide some component of a successful overseas program. Through this approach, one short term program was offered with executive level presentations by global 500 corporations at various locations overseas. With e-mail and the World Wide Web, organizing the logistics of such a trip a greatly simplified compared to the effort and cost such a task involved just a few years ago.

At smaller universities, recruiting enough students to provide the economies of scale to make the program affordable may seem a daunting task. However, partnering up with another university in your general geographic area may provide a large enough pool of students to basically fill a bus. Such a consortium will also spread the work of contacting appropriate business contacts to provides factory tours and presentations in various overseas locations.

If one ties these together, even a small school with a relatively resource poor student body can internationalize their curriculum by developing:

- 1) discussion of international dimensions in every class discussion in virtually all courses
- 2) opportunities for faculty to spend time abroad
- 3) exchange program for semester long study for traditional students
- 4) short term programming to accommodate non-traditional students.

Such a multi-dimensional approach will help ensure that all student who graduate for your university will have a strong sense of the international business environment they will be facing in the job market of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

# IMPROVING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RETENTION

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## ABSTRACT

*Retention of undergraduate students is a major concern of universities today. This report will review major research findings regarding student retention and the factors that contribute to or deter a student's academic persistence and progress in higher education.*

## INTRODUCTION

Something seems to be very wrong on our college campuses. One in every three college students today will not graduate from the institution he/she entered; only one student in six completes a bachelor's degree in four years; only about 40% earn a degree in six years; the national freshmen dropout rate approaches 30 percent (Dennis, 1998).

An old adage claims it is easier to keep an old customer than to attract a new one. This maxim does not apply to colleges and universities. Although it seems foolish, higher education pays less attention to retention than to recruitment (Bean, 1990). One reason for this anomaly is that retention is everyone's responsibility while recruitment appears to be the responsibility of an identifiable group. Factors that affect retention can be easily identified, but since student withdrawal results from complex causes which develop over considerable time, the blame for student attrition and credit for retention cannot be easily assigned.

This report will review major research findings regarding student retention and the factors that contribute to or deter a student's academic persistence and progress in higher education. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find a universally agreed upon definition of retention; it is equally perplexing to find satisfactory and measurable goals and objectives for retention programs. Retention has different meanings at various institutions of higher education, and retention goals reflect these distinct interpretations. In one instance, retention may be defined as the maintenance of a student's satisfactory progress toward his or her pedagogical objective until it is attained (Dolence, 1991). For others, retention may reflect students returning to the institution for the second year, and at other institutions, retention may be reflected only in graduation rates. One factor is clear: whereas recruitment focuses on pre-enrollment decision processes, retention focuses on post-enrollment decision processes.

Student retention is a moral as well as an economic obligation for most colleges and universities (Bean, 1990). It is a moral obligation because if a student has decided that the education a college has to offer is worth pursuing, the institution has an obligation to provide the education it considers beneficial to the student. If this moral obligation exists, it is astonishing that university retention efforts pale in comparison to recruitment efforts.

## CAUSES OF STUDENT WITHDRAWAL

Withdrawal from a college or university is often an action taken as a result of a complex interplay of a myriad of factors. The factors that converge to support students' staying in college or drive them to leave take effect slowly; attrition is usually a longitudinal process rather than spontaneous (Bean, 1990). Further, there are different types of students leaving a wide variety of institutions for multiple reasons. It has been asserted that underprepared students have the highest attrition of any group on campus (Astin, 1981; Bean, 1990). Unprepared and underprepared students have long been a concern of American colleges and universities. As early as 1849, the University of Wisconsin initiated the first "preparatory department" and the first unofficial student retention effort. Today, more than 90 percent of all public colleges and universities offer at least one developmental course (National Center for Education Statistics, 1991).

At the same time, Tinto (1993) finds that only 30 to 35 percent of all college students withdrawing from school do so because of academic difficulty alone. He has identified seven major causes of student withdrawal:

- ◆ Academic difficulties
- ◆ Adjustment difficulties (social maturity)
- ◆ Unclear, narrow or constantly changing goals
- ◆ Weak and external commitment to higher education
- ◆ Financial inadequacies
- ◆ Lack of fit (socially or academically)
- ◆ Isolation (few friends or extracurricular activities, especially during the first year).

Background variables or characteristics of students most likely to remain in school also affect retention and withdrawal decisions. In addition to academic preparation (e.g., high school class rank and grade point average), Bean identified characteristics such as parental support for education, parents income and educational achievement, a college preparatory curriculum, and high educational plans and goals as significant factors. Furthermore, students who are committed to getting a college education and graduating from a particular institution are much more likely to persist in college than those who lack those commitments (Beal & Pascarella, 1982; Tinto, 1993;). Bean (1983, 1990) found that students' intentions were the strongest predictors of decisions to remain in or withdraw from school.

Retention programs are often seen as an example of the democratization of higher education, affording students not only access to higher education but also a reasonable chance of success. There are, however, conflicting objectives and values regarding retention programs. First, these programs reflect the institution's commitment to the success of all students versus the presumption that rigorous academic standards separate the more able from the less able. Second, there often is debate over open access policies and the value of what college can do for the student versus the traditions of higher education and the value of what the student brings to the college.

One of the few constants regarding student withdrawal is that students leave school because they do not "fit in" (e.g., academically, socially, or economically) or the school is simply not a good match for their needs. Many students are intellectually unchallenged or socially isolated. The bottom line is, for the majority of colleges and universities, retention is a serious and continuous problem.

## **A SYNOPSIS OF RETENTION RESEARCH**

The earliest theoretical models of student attrition consider dropouts to be people withdrawing from a social system (Spady, 1970). This theory suggests that students withdraw from college because of a lack of shared values (e.g., accepting the importance of academic work) or normative support (e.g., family, emotional or financial support). Tinto (1993) refined earlier theories and clearly distinguished academic and social factors. Tinto also emphasized the longitudinal nature of the attrition process and the importance of background factors and personal characteristics in affecting attrition decisions. He generally is not concerned with the types of programs needed to retain students, but rather with how the “learning setting” for the first year should be constructed to promote student learning and fit. Tinto also developed a theory based on “rites of passage”. Rites of passage in retention/attrition matters occur in three stages: (a) separation (from family support), (b) transition (new values and behaviors) and (c) incorporation (adapting to a new set of values and behaviors). Tinto believes that attrition occurs when a student’s rites of passage are incomplete.

Bean’s research (1990) indicates that students’ beliefs about their experience in school lead to attitudes toward the school (i.e., whether to stay or not). Bean also recognized that external or environmental factors often effect retention (e.g., not enough shopping in the community or boy/girl friend at another college) as causal factors. In more recent years, as the make-up of college constituencies have changed, Bean introduced an attrition model for non-traditional students. In this model, support to remain in school is mainly environmental: it comes from family, friends or people at work. This is in contrast to residential/traditional students, for whom faculty, retention programs, and peers are the most important support/retention support. In this theory, social integration is less important and environmental variables more important for adults and nontraditional students. Thomas (1988) uses the institution rather than the student as the unit of analysis. He explains how policies, programs and practices affect retention rates.

## **FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENT RETENTION**

Student attrition is a complex, longitudinal process that begins with the background characteristics of students as previously outlined. Other retention factors revolve around students’ interaction with the college or university. These factors and interventions are outlined in a “Longitudinal Model of the types of Factors That Affect Retention Decisions” which identifies organization factors, environmental conditions, academic integration, and social integration (Bean, 1990, 152-153).

Organizational variables include the need to have a variety of programs to meet the needs of different types of students and that provide meaningful involvement for faculty, staff, administrators, parents, and students. These program components should strive to strengthen student involvement and focus on enhancing student attitudes that are likely to increase retention. Organizational variables include the curriculum, academic policies, rules and regulations governing academic and social conduct, academic support and tutoring, social activities, and financial aid.

Environmental factors often cannot be controlled by the institution, but may include personal emergencies, financial problems and work responsibilities. These are common problems, especially for nontraditional students. A successful student needs both skills and attitudes appropriate for academic work. Academic integration includes helping students with time management, study skills, critical thinking and exam preparation. Another key area is academic focus, which involves ongoing discussions between students and their faculty and staff advisors. Academic focus reduces attrition by encouraging students to set a major at an appropriate time and to have a plan of study for completing college.

Social integration is typically viewed as central to keeping students enrolled in school. Simply stated, students who have close friends on campus are likely to feel satisfied and feel they fit in.

While school-sponsored programs do not make friendships, the absence of these opportunities may prevent valuable friendships from developing.

### **RETENTION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

Strategies to enhance student retention should, ideally, begin before student recruitment and admissions and continue through career planning and placement. Many theories attempt to explain how student characteristics and attitudes combine with institutional variables to affect a student's decision to stay in college. By illustrating the complex interactions that lead to withdrawal, the theories suggest many institutional practices that can promote persistence and retention. Admission, recruiting, and orientation activities are, therefore, critical to promoting student retention. The congruence between the needs, interests, and abilities of students and the expectations, rewards and values of the institutions they attend directly contributes to retention (Beal, 1980; Astin, 1981; King, 1993). Institutional research should be able to identify not only students who are likely to attend a university but also those who are most likely to persist there. For example, applicants should be given accurate information about the school and should be encouraged to attend classes and spend a weekend on campus before enrolling. Further, faculty advisors should be assigned to at-risk students prior to enrollment and communication should continue throughout the period before classes commence. Additionally, a survival course should be a part of orientation programs (i.e., time and stress management, note-taking skills, and use of library and computer resources).

Obviously, academic integration strategies are crucial to retention efforts. These efforts are vital during the critical first semester. For example, first year students having difficulty after mid-term should be given special and immediate assistance. Repeated absenteeism should be reported at once and effective interventions developed. A campus-wide tutoring program should be organized and adequately supported financially. Additionally, each academic department should develop and publicize its own retention goals and sets of retention activities for students in that major. Semester attrition lists by department should be compiled and distributed, and senior university administrators should see these lists. Finally, Regular communication about retention efforts should be maintained with all new students: freshmen, transfers and new adult learners.

Student-faculty relations also play a strategic role in promoting student academic integration (Spady, 1970; Beal & Pascarella, 1982; Tinto, 1993). This relationship can be as simple as classroom performance feedback, engaging students in classroom debates or providing opportunities for extra assistance to students having difficulty with course work. In other instances, faculty may involve students in research projects, employ them in the department, or involve them in a student advisory committee. Faculty may also advise student organizations, participate in new student orientation, or engage in student-faculty research partnerships (Nagda, Gregerman, Jonides, Von Hippel, & Lerner, 1998). Of course, institutions can promote these activities by rewarding faculty members who devote time to student contact. Clearly, institutional emphasis on teaching effectiveness can enhance instruction which will, in turn, promote academic integration and retention. Beal (1980) found that college and university officials identified effective teaching as the second most important institutional variable related to retention.

Institutional efforts that promote academic integration (e.g., reading, writing, study skills, etc.) also promote student persistence (Lenning, 1982; Beal & Noel, 1980). Such activities include diagnostic testing, developmental instruction, institutionally organized tutoring, and study skills programs. No student service, however, is mentioned in retention research more often than academic advising (Beal & Noel, 1980) and the extent of contact between advisers and their advisees is directly related to persistence. An early warning system based on institutional research should be developed to identify at-risk students, and personalized interventions should be planned. Further, a master list of students in academic difficulty, students not attending classes and students identified as high risk should be maintained and cross-referenced. Aggressive and intrusive counseling of these students should be coordinated.

Financial aid and other personal counseling, especially to freshmen and first-generation college students, are also vital. An individual staff member in the financial aid office should be assigned to assist first-year students with financial aid problems (Wilcox, 1991). Studies have also shown that students who receive personal counseling have higher retention rates (Wilson, Mason, & Ewing, 1997).

Researchers have also consistently found that students with career plans and goals are more likely to persist in college (Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1993). Beal & Pascarella (1982) found that students who believe education will lead to a better job (or graduate school) are more likely to stay in school. Institutions can provide career planning and placement assistance by offering career testing and counseling, career exploration, graduate school information, job placement workshops, internships or other experiential learning opportunities, and faculty contacts with employers and graduate schools. In addition, second-year students listed as undeclared majors should meet with career counselors to discuss and develop career plans.

Students with positive attitudes about the institution and their own futures are much more likely to stay in school. Institutional fit and loyalty are attitudes that can and must be carefully nurtured. When there is a positive emotional attachment to the school, a student will rarely leave by choice. Measures of student social integration into an institution are closely related to retention (King, 1993; Lenning, 1982). Institutional activities that can promote social integration include orientation, a broad array of extracurricular student organizations, special efforts to involve freshmen in organizations and activities, and weekend social activities. Older students should be utilized to involve freshmen in orientation programs. A strong sense of campus community and a tradition to which students feel loyalty helps in retaining students; Bean (1990) recommends that institutions use rituals, traditions and symbols to enhance a sense of community. Finally, students who have part-time jobs on campus are more likely to be socially integrated because they have more contact with faculty, administrators and peers (Astin, 1980; Beal & Noel, 1980) and institutions should do everything possible to provide opportunities for on-campus and regional employment (Wyman, 1997).

There are several institutional components that can improve retention efforts. First, students who must withdraw from school should know how to do so officially and legally. Exit interviews should be conducted and reasons for withdrawal should be noted and discussed by school officials. Second, an institution's retention goals and activities should be evaluated regularly. If goals are met, everyone should be informed; if not, reasons for failure should be analyzed and changes implemented. Goals and objectives should be revised annually. It is also important that an institution's retention success be shared with prospective students and their parents as part of a recruitment plan. Third, a comprehensive advising manual should be written and developed; input from the entire campus community should be utilized in this document. Fourth, complete retention statistics should be compiled and comparative data indicating progress, or lack of it, in reaching retention goals should be continued. Fifth, learning communities and cohorts of first-time college students should be utilized to increase retention (Alexander, 1998; Borden & Rooney, 1998). Finally, input from student-customers is essential to any retention management program (Thomas, 1990). Administrators, faculty and retention staff must listen to students. They know why their friends are leaving. No research can produce more important data than this source!

## CONCLUSION

Programs that succeed in increasing retention rates tend to share common characteristics. First, they are generally comprehensive and coordinated (Thomas, 1990). Retention results from a complex interaction of many student and institutional variables, and efforts to improve retention are not likely to work if they involve only one student or institutional variable.

One of the reasons it is so difficult to implement practical and effective retention management is that these efforts cut across campus lines and divisions. It is virtually impossible to have an efficient retention program without involving most campus personnel (Dennis, 1998). This multidimensional

approach of student interaction with an institution requires that faculty, administrators and retention personnel work cooperatively. Colleges and universities should establish coordinated groups for retention programs that include representatives from all areas that play a role in keeping students at the institution.

Second, it is imperative that faculty and administrators take the initiative to establish and maintain contact with students, especially students identified as at-risk of withdrawal. Retention leaders must be particularly responsive to freshmen and first generation college students. Faculty members must invite students to discuss issues with them, participate actively in orientation programs, and be available to students outside the classroom. Advisors and counselors should reach out to students they have not seen in a while or those having academic difficulty. Successful students should be recruited to encourage other students to become involved in extracurricular activities.

Third, successful retention programs almost always employ data and information management systems that help faculty and administrative staff understand more about students and attrition at their school (Lolli, 1991). To get any data not available, retention officials should involve students (i.e., listen to the customers). Students will talk about why they left and why they stay. Data must be available about current students, incoming freshmen, recent graduates, and about students' perceptions of the college's academic and advising programs. Data should be shared with personnel who are responsible for planning and implementing retention programs, and they should, in turn, use this data to improve teaching and advising as well as the institution's retention efforts.

A well-coordinated retention program can influence student success, satisfaction, and persistence. No two retention programs will, or should, look exactly alike; they should be tailored to the student population and the environment of the particular institution. After all, it is impossible for any institution to keep all of the students it enrolls. Colleges and universities, however, should be more successful at keeping their students. By treating students well, making students feel their academic success is important, and providing a multidimensional retention program, students will respond.

Retention management efforts can succeed if campus leaders support the program and the entire campus community, "considers keeping students more important than simply enrolling them" (Dennis, 1998, p. 95).

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# CLASSROOM USE OF COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY BY ACCOUNTING FACULTY

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to randomly survey accounting faculty in order to determine the extent of their use of computer technology in the classroom. A survey response of 70 usable returns from 205 questionnaires (34.1%) was obtained.*

*The respondents identified that they tended to use the computer in their classroom in the following ways: 1) communicate with students via e-mail, 2) supplement conceptual learning via computer assignments, 3) use the WEB as a research tool and source of additional materials, 4) present classroom materials, and 5) provide students with course material by having it stored on the WEB. They indicated the following more prevalent types of school support with regard to classroom computerization: 1) hardware and software in the classroom or available for use, 2) hardware and software for developing classroom materials, and 3) training for the professor.*

*Seventy-one percent of the respondents indicated that their schools were involved in distance learning, with about a 40% emphasis at the graduate level, a 24% emphasis at the undergraduate level, and a 34% emphasis at both levels. About 71% of the respondents indicated that, in selecting a textbook, computer-supported materials were a secondary factor or somewhat of a factor in that decision.*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper investigated the academic use of computer technology through survey questionnaires. Accounting faculty were surveyed. The continued prominence of computer usage in the classroom (Descriptions, 1991) suggested that further study of this area would be useful. An electronic classroom setup at Massachusetts Institute of Technology makes use of extensive online networked communications and writing approaches (Barrett, 1993). Extensive information is often available about computer hardware and software; however information about how to teach effectively with computers is lacking (Ryba and Anderson, 1993, p. 11). A New York community college has developed a model multimedia and networking classroom to allow professors to create and test instructional delivery strategies (Community, 1995). Also, with the developing national interest in distance learning, insight into its present use was also a consideration in the investigation.

## THE INVESTIGATION

Two different forms of data collection methods were selected for this study: the traditional mail survey and the electronic mail (e-mail) survey. These were chosen as part of a continued stream of research on response rate comparisons of the two methods in university and business settings (see Kiesler and Sproull, 1986; Parker, 1992; Schuldt and Totten, 1994; Opperman, 1995; Bachmann, Elfrink and Vazzana, 1996). Our survey questionnaire included questions on demographics, computer usage in the classroom, and distance learning.

We defined our population as all accounting faculty at United States colleges and universities. The sampling source was the *1997 Accounting Faculty Directory*, published by Prentice Hall, and then updated by the 1999 Prentice Hall On-Line Accounting Faculty Directory. A simple random sample was used to select 103 Accounting faculty to receive the mail survey. Another 102 professors were randomly selected to receive the electronic mail survey.

The surveys were mailed on March 31, 1999 and sent out electronically on April 2, 1999. A number (approximately 20 via e-mail and 2 via mail) of surveys were undeliverable, so other accounting professors were selected and sent the surveys. Respondents could return the e-mail survey in one of three ways: by mail, by fax, or by e-mail. Surveys were sent out again, by mail on April 14, 1999 and electronically on April 15, 1999.

## PROFILES OF RESPONDENTS

The overall response rate for the survey was 34.1 percent (70 usable surveys of 205 sent). The return sample was dominated by men (57 of 70 or 81%). Respondents were asked to indicate how many years of collegiate teaching and years of classroom computer usage they had. For the years of collegiate teaching, the low was 3 years, the high was 40 years, and the mean was 17.0 years. For the years of classroom computer usage, the low was 1 year, the high was 20 years, and the mean was 7.0 years.

Over two-thirds of the respondents were either associate professors (28 of 70 or 40.0%) or full professors (19 of 70 or 27.1%), while more than a fifth were assistant professors (16 of 70 or 22.9%). Just over three-fourths of those responding indicated their ages to be within one of two categories: 45 to 54 years (30 of 70 or 42.9%) or 35 to 44 years (23 of 70 or 32.9%). Thirteen professors (18.6%) were in the 55 to 64 age category.

Over 75 percent of the respondents taught at public colleges and universities (54 of 70 or 77.1%). The top two most frequently mentioned geographic locations (i.e., states) were: Texas (8 of 70 or 11.4%), and Pennsylvania (5 of 70 or 7.1%).

## DEMOGRAPHICS ANALYSIS

The demographic variables were compared with each other using crosstabulations and analysis of variance techniques. Those chi square and F test findings significant at the  $p < .20$  level are reported in the paragraphs that follow. This high level of error was chosen due to the exploratory nature of this study. Also, six age categories were recoded into three in an attempt to reduce cell size problems.

Women tended to be instructors or assistant professors, while men tended to be associate or full professors ( $p = .001$ ). Female respondents tended to be with private colleges, while males were with public institutions ( $p = .138$ ). Women tended to have taught a shorter period of time compared to men ( $p = .156$ ): women with an average of 11.9 years, as compared to 18.2 years for men. For the instructor ( $n = 7$ ) level, years teaching averaged 13.9, and years of computer usage averaged 7.1. For assistant professor ( $n = 16$ ), teaching years averaged 8.9 and computer usage years averaged 5.0. For associate professor ( $n = 28$ ), teaching years averaged 17.1 and computer usage years averaged 7.3. For full professor ( $n = 19$ ), teaching years averaged 25.0, computer usage years averaged 8.4.

## COMPUTER USAGE IN THE CLASSROOM

Questions were asked with regard to the respondents' use of computers in the classroom, and specifically the types of usage. In terms of current classroom usage, the respondents indicated the primary uses, in order: communicate with students via e-mail (63), supplement conceptual learning via computer assignments (54), use the WEB as a research tool and source of additional materials (47), present classroom materials (44), and provide students with course material by having it stored on the WEB (41).

With regard to classroom computerization support by schools, professors indicated the following types of support: hardware and software in the classroom or available for use (59), hardware and software for developing classroom materials (59), and training for the professor (49).

Professors were then asked about the consideration of computer supported materials in the textbook decision process. Over 70% of those responding did indicate consideration of materials in their decisions, either "Yes, somewhat" (23 of 70 or 32.9%) or "Yes, but as a secondary factor" (27 of 70 or 38.6%). One-fourth of the professors (19 of 70 or 27.1%) did not consider computer supported materials in their decision making.

## DISTANCE LEARNING

In order to obtain a more uniform response to questions on distance learning, a definition of distance learning was given. Over 70% (50 of 70) of the respondents indicated that their schools were utilizing distance learning in the business curriculum. Distance learning was being done for: both undergraduate and graduate programs (17 of 50 or 34%), for just graduate programs (20 of 50 or 40%), and for just undergraduate programs (12 of 50 or 24%).

## CONCLUSIONS

This study of computer technology use in the classroom produced a fairly reasonable response rate of 34% of 205 surveys sent out. There were more associate professors (about 40%) and full professors (about 27%) responding than assistant professors (about 23%). The average age of the respondent was about 44 years of age. Approximately 80% were men. The average years taught was about 17 years, with women having taught about 12 years and men 18 years. The average number of years of computer use in the classroom was about 7 years. In general, respondents who use computer technology in the classroom tend to be instructors or assistant professors, and younger with less teaching experience. Respondents tended to consider computer-supported materials as a secondary or tertiary factor in selecting textbooks.

The respondents identified that they presently used the computer in their classroom in the following ways:

- 1) communicate with students via e-mail (90%),
- 2) supplement conceptual learning via computer assignments (77%),
- 3) use the WEB as a research tool and source of additional materials (67%),
- 4) present classroom materials (63%), and
- 5) provide students with course material by having it stored on the WEB (59%).

Thus, the respondents tend to use computers in the classroom to a high degree and in a variety of ways.

The respondents indicated the following more prevalent types of school support with regard to classroom computerization:

- 1) hardware and software in the classroom or available for use (84%),
- 2) hardware and software for developing classroom materials (84%), and
- 3) training for the professor (70%).

Thus, the respondents tend to have good school support with regard to classroom computerization.

About 71% of the schools were involved in distance learning, with the usual involvement being only at the graduate level, or else at both the graduate level and undergraduate level. There is more public school involvement than private school involvement.

With only about a 34% response rate, the lack of information about the non-respondents provides limitations to this study. The possibility exists that the non-respondents are not using computer technology to anywhere near the extent as the respondents. If that is the case, then computer usage and distance learning may not be very extensive across the nation with regard to accounting faculty. Such a conclusion is, however, difficult to reach based on the individuals who did respond to this survey. Thus, additional queries and replications of this type of study need to be undertaken by others. Also, as time passes, the increase in the use of computer technology will change, and possibly dramatically, with regard to these areas.

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# ANALYSIS OF ABILITY, STUDY ASPECTS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN RELATION TO STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN BASIC FINANCE

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigates student performance in the basic finance course. It extends the research beyond the usual ability and aptitude factors into other ability areas, some study aspects, some psychological factors, and some environmental considerations. Data for the study of 54 students were derived from a basic finance course usually taken at the junior level, a survey of the students in the course, and student records. We used simple linear correlation analysis and stepwise multiple regression analysis from the SPSS-X statistical package to evaluate the data with regard to their performance in the course.*

*The analysis indicated that significant factors at the .01 level of probability in simple linear correlation analysis were: macro economics course grade (.57), micro economics course grade (.54), basic financial accounting course grade (.51), general education grade point average (.48), ACT Composite (.48), ACT Reading (.45), student's study approach worked well for him/her (.39), and an information processing skill question (.36).*

*Significant factors in multiple linear regression analysis were: macro economics course grade (positively), student's study approach worked well for him/her (positively), general education grade point average (positively), amount of internal control (positively), and ACT Science (positively). Overall, multiple regression had an R value of .82 and is significant at the .001 level.*

## INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Identification of what factors influence student performance in business subjects has been investigated numerous times in the literature. Most previous studies have been concerned with introductory level courses, with much of the evidence coming from the introductory accounting and economics courses. This study differs from previous efforts in that it investigates factors that influence student performance in an introductory finance course. It will analyze the usual ability and aptitude factors, as well as other ability aspects, some study aspects, some psychological factors, and some environmental considerations.

Previous studies have investigated variables which are correlated with academic performance in economics and accounting courses and, to a lesser degree, finance courses. Borde (1998), in studying academic performance in the introductory marketing course, referenced ten accounting course studies, thirteen economics course studies, and eight finance course studies. He found in these studies that their results have sometimes been conflicting. Some of the significant factors found in these studies include college grade point average (GPA), gender, aptitude scores, previous course grades, high school grades, entrance test scores, math scores, and age.

Three studies (Doran, Bouillon & Smith, 1991; Eskew and Faley, 1988; Eckel & Johnson, 1983) found that academic aptitude scores and ability based on past academic performance were indicators of success with regard to performance in accounting. One study (Turner, Holmes &

Wiggins, 1997) found that cumulative grade point average, accounting principles course grade, accounting major, and not repeating the course were significant factors in contributing to performance in the intermediate accounting course.

Borde, Byrd, and Modani (1998) found that cumulative GPA and previous accounting course grade were significant factors in student performance in the introductory finance course. They also found the number of hours of employment is inversely related to performance. Didia and Hasnat (1998) evaluated performance in the introductory finance course in terms of the standard ability/aptitude predictors used in economics and accounting studies. They found that cumulative college grade point average and previous course grades in accounting, economics, and math were important factors.

Researchers have attempted to discover other classification factors that might explain performance. Two studies (Mutchler, Turner & Williams, 1987; Tyson, 1989) concluded that female students perform better in accounting courses than male students but another study (Doran, Bouillon & Smith, 1991) found just the opposite. Didia and Hasnat (1998) also concluded that gender played no role in finance course performance.

## DATA

Fifty-four students enrolled in an introductory finance course at a regional midwestern university formed the sample for this study. The cumulative average numerical score for each student was used to identify student performance in the course.

Five ACT scores were obtained for each student as factors for identifying aptitude: ACT Composite, and the sub-scores of ACT English, ACT Math, ACT Reading, and ACT Science. High school graduation percentile ranking and general education cumulative grade point average at the beginning of the semester were also used as proxies for ability/aptitude. Other ability factors used were the letter grades in the three courses: beginning financial accounting, micro economics, and macro economics. As additional proxies for ability/aptitude, we noted whether or not the student had repeated any of these three courses.

Study aspects related to each student were obtained from a student survey. Four questions dealing with the student's ability to process information were used. These information processing questions originated from studies involving the relationship of students' information processing strategies and their academic performance (Schmeck, Ribich, and Ramanaiyah, 1977). They used a survey (Schmeck's survey) as a means to develop a measure of information processing ability. According to Tan and Choo (1990), the deep-elaborative information processors tend to perform better than the shallow-reiterative information processors when the survey subjects are divided into two groups. The deep-elaborative information processors will tend to achieve a deeper understanding of the course topics. Of the original 32 true-false questions on Schmeck's survey, four were selected for the present investigation. These four were selected based on their significance in previous studies by one of the authors. The information processing questions included:

- Processing 1 -- dealing with having difficulty handling inferences.
- Processing 2 -- dealing with having difficulty remembering material for an exam.
- Processing 3 -- dealing with having difficulty studying for a course.
- Processing 4 -- dealing with converting facts into 'rules of thumb.'
- Processing Composite -- the combination of questions 1, 2, and 3 by adding them together.

Other study aspects dealt with study approach, study environment, and pre-exam anxiety. These items were obtained from the survey.

For the psychological factors, the students were asked questions regarding their feelings about their own situations with regard to locus of control (internal as opposed to external control), self-esteem, stress/tension, and self-motivation. The questions were developed based on some of the traditional surveys used in psychological studies in the past. Each question in the survey was asking the student to identify the degree of control, stress, self-esteem, or self-motivation which they had in their lives. Each question was answered via a 5-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questions were coded so that the higher values were associated with internal (as opposed to external) locus of control, more stress, higher self-esteem, and higher self-motivation.

Environmental considerations were obtained, again, from the student survey. These included the following items:

- Commutes to school.
- Lives at home with parents' family.
- Shares living quarters with non-family people.
- Lives in a dormitory
- Has a job.
- Job work hours per week.
- Reads non-school books

Finally, we obtained for each student the aspects of gender, whether the student was married, age (as a proxy for maturity), and whether the student was a transfer student.

These ability/aptitude factors, study aspects, psychological factors, environmental considerations, and other factors were then used to examine the relationships to student performance in the basic finance course.

## RESULTS

Seventy-one students received grades in the course. There were 5 (7.0%) grades of A, 11 (15.5%) AB, 29 (40.8%) B's, 18 (25.4%) BC's, 4 (5.6%) C's, 2 (2.8%) CD's, 0 (0.0%) D's, and 2 F's (2.8%), which resulted in a grade point average of 2.84 on a 4.0 scale.

Statistical description of factors, simple linear correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression analysis were used in the study. There were seventeen students that did not answer the survey. They have been omitted from further analysis. Thus the data for 54 students have been analyzed. In multiple regression analysis, the mean values for the valid items were then substituted for missing observation values.

Simple linear correlation coefficients were calculated for the factors studied. Significant simple correlation coefficients at .01 level of probability were found for 8 factors:

- .57 Macro economics course grade
- .54 Micro economics course grade
- .51 Beginning financial accounting course grade
- .48 General education grade point average
- .48 ACT Composite
- .45 ACT Reading
- .39 Study approach works well
- .36 Processing question 2



Five factors were significant at the .05 level:

|     |                                  |
|-----|----------------------------------|
| .41 | ACT Science                      |
| .39 | ACT English                      |
| .34 | Information processing composite |
| .32 | Age                              |
| .27 | Married                          |

Factors which had correlation coefficients less than .20 or had probability levels of .40 or greater and thus were not even vaguely significant included: repeated any of the three courses, processing 1, processing 2, pre-exam anxiety, reads non-school books, gender, and transfer student.

For the multiple regression analysis, all factors were considered. Six factors entered into the multiple regression analysis in a stepwise approach. Five of the six factors had a significant T ratio at the .01 level or better. One factor had a significant T ratio at the .05 level. Overall, the six factors had a multiple R of .82 with an R-squared value of .67. The F ratio was significant at the .001 level. The significant factors, in entry order, were: macro economics course grade, study approach works well, general education GPA, age, amount of internal control, and ACT Science. Of these six factors, ACT Science was the least significant.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this study, past academic performance (macro economics course grade, micro economics course grade, beginning financial accounting course grade, and general education grade point average) and academic aptitude (ACT Composite, ACT Reading, ACT Science, and ACT English) were significant factors in predicting academic performance in an introductory finance course. These results corroborate earlier studies. Of the study aspects, study approach, information processing question 2, and information processing composite were significant. Of the psychological factors (locus of control, self-esteem, stress/tension, and self-motivation), only the locus of control factor was significant (and only then in the multiple regression analysis). The psychological factors of self-esteem, stress/tension, and self-motivation were not significant. None of the environment considerations were a significant factor. The other factors of age and married were significant factors. Gender and transfer student were not significant factors.

Further study of the study aspects, psychological factors, and environmental factors at other institutions or in other finance courses would seem to be useful for further confirmation or refutation of these factors as significant in contributing to or being correlated with academic performance in business or finance courses.

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## **DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMING IN BUSINESS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper will describe the development of an integrated set of international opportunities for students based on the experiences of the authors' three universities. Each of the three universities serves a different type of student body, had a different resource base, serves a different geographic area, yet each was faced with the need to internationalize its curriculum. The differences and the similarities of the approaches these institutions have utilized helps identify the options that may be available to other universities just embarking on the road to internationalization. Providing multiple options for students and faculty will maximize participation in the various programs that are offered.*

### **DISCUSSION**

One of the highest priorities in the AACSB accreditation guidelines is the charge to "internationalize" the business curriculum. Even for business schools which are not currently, or will not in the future be seeking AACSB accreditation, this mandate does affect every business school as all attempt to equip students with the skills that they need to maximize their potential for success in the increasingly global workplace.

Perhaps the first step of "internationalization" is where a business school simply includes discussion of the international dimension into all classes. This can include the use of speakers from either the community or the business sector who have had business experiences abroad. Perhaps the best way of ensuring that this is achieved is to develop a number of overseas travel opportunities for faculty. Faculty who have had a positive overseas experience tend to automatically integrate global examples into class discussion.

Attendance at foreign conferences, overseas consulting experiences, conducting research with foreign faculty and encouraging sabbatical time overseas are all ways of providing faculty with short-term overseas experiences. Longer term options might include faculty exchanges with institutions abroad and the like. Although it is recognized that many faculty may be unable to spend a full semester overseas due to family obligations, split appointments and other innovative scheduling may still provide the opportunity to faculty. At one institution, several faculty "shared" a semester overseas, breaking the domestic and foreign course down into modules, and each teaching a four to eight week module in the foreign company, in kind of an extended "team teaching" approach.

At another institution, a foreign teaching seminar was arranged where faculty would be funded to go to a selected foreign country and share their teaching "tips" with faculty from other colleges within their university. In another case, faculty participated in economic development seminars with business and political leaders in a developing country. Both corporate and government funding may be available to help fund such innovative approaches to faculty internationalization.

Once opportunities for faculty are developed, similar opportunities for students must be organized. A first step may be something as simple as forcing exposure to foreign cultures in their local community. Students in classes such as Principles of Marketing or Introduction to Management or similar can be given an assignment of finding someone from a foreign country and interviewing them, finding out things about their culture and the business environment of their home country. In many cases, this may be the first time that a student has ever spoken to a “foreigner” and the written summaries of such interviews often reflect the learning experience that such an exercise involves.

Curricular revision may also encourage internationalization. As more college bound high school students have had some foreign language training, mandating or strongly recommending language study at the university level will increase the students’ exposure to foreign culture and thus increase their interest in foreign travel and study.

Progressing from just merely talking about “it” to providing these students with a “hands on” experience necessitates the development of study opportunities overseas. Perhaps the first step is the development of an exchange program. Under such programs, students from each country basically exchange roles, providing each student with the benefit of overseas study while paying “home” tuition. This involves “partnering-up” with a foreign institution. Here, co-operation with the Foreign Language department can be beneficial. Far more students come to the US to study business than would come to study a Foreign Language. Co-operation between the two academic areas is for mutual benefit as the Foreign Language department needs co-operation from other academic areas as foreign students do not often come to the US to study French or Spanish or German. Indeed, a great many come to study business.

Too often universities set lofty goals, then find it difficult to understand why an exchange program does not work. If the U.S. institution is a regional one located in a rural community, it would be difficult to approach a major university in London or Paris, for example, and have any chance of developing a successful exchange program. Major universities seek exchanges with major universities. Regional U.S. universities must seek similar universities overseas. The added benefit of being “equally yoked” is that the regional university in a smaller town may provide a lower cost and greater immersion experience for a student than would a major city. In a similar way, a university with a disciplinary specialty should seek similar institutions overseas.

The benefits of exchange programs are many. Incoming exchange students increase student enrolment of international students in your classes, thus enriching the classroom and campus environment. It also opens exchange possibilities for your students to study overseas. However, unless students have a strong foreign language skills, the selection of foreign exchange partners is limited to schools where programs are taught in English. Too often, it is assumed that this ties you to schools in English speaking countries. While much may be learned from a semester in England or Australia, it is possible that the student may find it more beneficial to go to a country where English is not the primary language, but where business classes are taught in English. This is most common at Scandinavian Universities - Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland. It is also common in the Netherlands, and to a lesser extent in Belgium and Germany.

An evolutionary progression from the single exchange partner model occurs when the success of the exchange program begins to exceed the capacity of the foreign partner to absorb students and when demand grows for experiences in more than one country. Developing multiple bi-lateral exchange programs is problematic. The question of institutional parity becomes difficult to administer in multiple bi-lateral agreements. Here a consortium may become attractive. There are several small consortium programs that provide the benefits of a variety of options for students, while eliminating the multiple parity problem. As well, there are several organizations that provide exchange options for students in virtually any country in the world. The Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE), for example, offers over 40 exchange universities in Australia alone.

A number of Institutions have also started engaging in cooperative degree offerings in recent years. Due to the fact that an American degree is valued and perceived as highly marketable and desirable in some countries, institutions have joined together in establishing “Dual Degree Programs”

whereby, at the end of their undergraduate educational tenure, students end up with two baccalaureate degrees. These programs mandate the students from one university to spend a year or two at a partner institution. Students enroll in prearranged set of courses. The contents of these courses are formulated, taught and evaluated by the faculty of the cooperating institutions.. Once the course requirements are completed the students are awarded degrees at both institutions.

All the student opportunities that have been discussed so far involve an overseas experience of a semester, or possible a full academic year, or even longer. However, as a greater number of non-traditional students enrol in university programs, ways of providing these students with an international opportunity must be developed.. Non traditional students may not be able to spend an extended time overseas due to work and/or family obligations. Even traditional students with a heavy reliance on part-time jobs to sustain themselves, can not participate in traditional exchange programs. Here the opportunity to develop short term experiences is essential. Two to four week programs provides the student with some exposure to international business at a very low program cost. As well, the opportunity cost of foregone income is minimized.

Such programs can be developed in a number of ways - commercial vendors, such as Casterbridge Tours and EF Tours offer package travel experiences for students. Large universities, such as Arizona State, offer program in which students from other universities can participate. Alternately, the school can develop their own program, perhaps even partnering up with other schools in the same general geographic area. Development of your own program allows greater customization to meet the specific needs of your students, and generally provides a much lower cost alternative.

Developing a customized program is more time consuming for the faculty member, but can allow the university to draw upon specific contacts it may have in overseas locations for a truly innovative program. Parents of current students, alumni, current and former foreign students are all possible contacts who might be able to provide some component of a successful overseas program. Through this approach, one short term program was offered with executive level presentations by global 500 corporations at various locations overseas. With e-mail and the World Wide Web, organizing the logistics of such a trip a greatly simplified compared to the effort and cost such a task involved just a few years ago.

At smaller universities, recruiting enough students to provide the economies of scale to make the program affordable may seem a daunting task. However, partnering up with another university in your general geographic area may provide a large enough pool of students to basically fill a bus. Such a consortium will also spread the work of contacting appropriate business contacts to provides factory tours and presentations in various overseas locations.

If one ties these together, even a small school with a relatively resource poor student body can internationalize their curriculum by developing:

- 1) discussion of international dimensions in every class discussion in virtually all courses
- 2) opportunities for faculty to spend time abroad
- 3) exchange program for semester long study for traditional students
- 4) short term programming to accommodate non-traditional students.

Such a multi-dimensional approach will help ensure that all student who graduate for your university will have a strong sense of the international business environment they will be facing in the job market of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

# CONNECTING THE CLASSROOM TO THE RETAIL SHOWROOM

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## ABSTRACT

*In teaching information systems, we know that we can tell the students, we can show the students, but it is better to let the students experience designing and running a system themselves. If the students design a system, it will, by necessity, be relatively basic. If the students run a system by putting data into a typical off-the-self package, the exercise may be more about data entry, than understanding information design and usage.*

*This paper discusses one approach that alleviates some of the above obstacles in teaching an accounting information systems course. This approach uses an almost exclusive hands-on project development that takes advantage of today's ability to link systems together in the classroom and link the classroom to business systems in the workplace.*

## INTRODUCTION

Today, most small or medium size retail operations use industry specific software from vendors that have developed systems on *Unix* platforms using a database like *Oracle* and now are producing *Windows* versions. Even before the *Windows* versions, generally the systems used a standard interface, (ODBC), to transfer data from a database like *Oracle* to an application such as *Excel* or *Access*. Most of the new versions have a direct link to *Microsoft's Office 97 or 2000*. Most of the "back office" analysis by managers and accountants are done on PC's connected to the server database and manipulating the data with *Excel*, *Access* or similar software.

The project reported on here lets the students have a hands-on experience of both designing a small version of a complex system and then actually seeing the real system, running it and linking data from the system to *Excel* or *Access*. The approach discussed in the paper uses a classroom assignment of designing a sales and inventory system for a retail furniture store. The students design their system using *Microsoft's Access* database. They use actual SKU numbers from the retail store and receive hypothetical but realistic sales and inventory data. The assignment emphasizes the importance of getting effective management operating reports from their system.

## THE RETAIL INDUSTRY

Retailing provides a rich environment to use as an example of an information system for students. The students have all had extensive experience shopping for various consumer goods in a variety of retail stores. Many students have worked in retail stores and are familiar with some of the retail systems or at least with the point-of-sale register systems. The retail industry has lagged behind in some areas of information systems because of the many very small operations, but now even the small operations are computerizing their systems and using some of the larger retailers as guides in the development of these systems.

The retail industry provides virtually thousands of examples of actual systems to use as a classroom observation as each city has many retailers but may have only a few manufacturers. The retail systems must also provide detailed information on sales and inventories, expressed in familiar terms that students can understand and relate to.

## THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY

The retail furniture industry was chosen for this project because the high ticket sales requires limited transactions to see how a real system works, yet there is a diversity in transactions that offer examples of the many intricacies required in designing a simple but effective system. For example, the writing of the sale on one day and the delivery on another complicates the recognition of the sale in accounting and requires a system that can distinguish a "marketing" sale from an "accounting" sale. This has the same effect on the valuation of inventory and complicates the tracking of inventory on-hand and available for sale.

The furniture industry is also undergoing a dramatic change in the available information systems with a variety of vendors now marketing their products to furniture retailers of all sizes. And each city probably has at least a few local furniture retail operations as well as some national chains as there are over 20,000 independent furniture dealers nationwide.

## THE PROJECT

The students are given data in the same format as that used by a local retail furniture dealer. The structure of the data is important so that the students can see the importance of working the design around the client's existing data and reporting system. The assignment emphasizes the need to produce a system that will provide for the point-of-sale data entry and use that data to allow for an analysis of sales and control of inventory. The actual debit and credit of accounting data is ignored, as this an output from the system, not a function of the design. The reports from the system that will be used by management in running the business are used as a blueprint in determining the requirements for the system design.

The students design their system using Microsoft's *Access* database. They use the near actual data to test their system and to produce reports relating to one month's operations.

## THE LINK

Typically, most server systems today allow for data exporting to PC spreadsheets or databases. It is this aspect of systems that are the most useful to operations managers as it allows for flexibility in the reports that they actually use in running the business. Linking data from one system created by the students to another application that they are familiar with allows the students to see how the input data can be manipulated to produce reports for specific decisions even though their design did not anticipate this use of the data. It also forces the students to change their design to include much more detail in their data as the attempt to produce reports in the desired format may fail because their system collects the data at too high a level. This exercise shows the flaw of designing a system that follows the general ledger rather than the "business ledger".

Another possible connection between the classroom systems and the actual systems in the industry is also possible. The classroom can be linked to the actual system in a retail store and the students may experience running the large system and getting standard reports from the system as well as designing their own reports using data transferred to *Excel* or *Access*. This is made possible because a typical system used in the retail industry has one "live" database that the company is actually using, and another training database that has virtually "actual data" but is used only to train new employees. Many companies may cooperate with an accounting program by allowing specified access to this training database by simply dialing into it through the classroom computer modem.

## **CONCLUSION**

The paper discusses one industry specific retail program and how it can be used in adding realism to the accounting systems course. Other similar programs are on the market and contacts with the vendors can lead to various ways that will connect the students and the classroom to the actual stores and their systems.



# **ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR CONCEPTS AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE FILM *SISTER ACT*: A GUIDE FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*A major challenge professors encounter in trying to encourage students to apply course material is finding examples of such material that are both engaging and relevant. This manuscript presents suggestions on illustrating several topics typically taught in undergraduate Organizational Behavior courses using the film *Sister Act*. Although the dominant organizational behavior theme evident in this film is organizational change, other topic areas are applicable. In addition to noting these topic areas illustrated in the film, the author provides questions to guide student note-taking while watching the film. Additionally, suggested questions for class group discussions are included.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

A prevalent strategy used in teaching is to illustrate theoretical or abstract concepts with practical examples. To this end, professors draw on research, reading, and personal or vicarious experiences. A further way to foster learning is to encourage students to apply their knowledge of such concepts to actual or contrived situations. That is, students are presented with a situation and directed to identify salient aspects of course material illustrated therein.

Organizational behavior is an example of a course which can benefit greatly from extensive use of examples. There is certainly no shortage of situations which may be used as examples. One that I have used quite successfully for some time is the film *Sister Act*. As I will discuss, the film portrays several examples of material commonly included in organizational behavior classes.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**

From an organizational behavior standpoint, the primary topic illustrated in the film is organizational change. This is generally a major topic area included in organizational behavior courses. For 75-minute class periods, I structure coverage of this topic as follows: 1) day 1 - lecture on organizational change; 2) day 2 - view first 75 minutes of film; 3) day 3 - complete viewing film and discuss. I structure my lecture on this topic using primarily Kotter and Schlesinger's (1979) framework for analyzing reasons for resistance to change and methods for overcoming change. Additionally, I include Lewin's (1951) unfreezing - changing - refreezing process as well as consideration of various forces for change. However, it would be fairly easy to adapt this unit around other approaches to change.

Having provided students a basic structure for planning change, focusing on forces, reasons for resistance and overcoming resistance, I use this same structure in preparing students for post-film discussion. Prior to viewing the film, students receive a handout to guide their note-taking during the film. Specifically, I encourage them to jot brief notes both as they watch and retrospectively around these points: forces for change, reasons for resistance to change, and ways in which resistance was overcome. The topic is further stressed by asking them to consider these issues for both the main

character (Whoopi Goldberg as Delores/Sister Mary Clarence) and the organization (i.e., the convent).

After viewing the film, students form small groups (five to six is a good number) to discuss the film in terms of change. Groups generally become involved in the discussion and are able to address the major points exhibited. Once the groups finish, I conduct a point-by-point discussion with the whole class. In my experience, most classes touch on each issue or can be lead to it in discussion. Among the issues I feel are of primary importance are: 1) the main character as a change agent; 2) internal/organizational and external/environmental forces for change; 3) threatened self-interest and fear of the unknown as reasons for resistance to change; and 4) participation, co-optation, and coercion as ways to overcome resistance to change.

### OTHER TOPICS

Additional topics may surface in the course of discussing organizational change as mentioned above. Several individual difference variables (e.g., low tolerance for change, age, authoritarianism, competence) are portrayed by characters in the film. The importance of perceptions, and perceptual errors such as stereotypes can be discussed. Finally, the ideas of organizational adaptation and stakeholders are very relevant to the convent (organization) as portrayed in the film.

### CONCLUSION

Using examples that are both relevant and entertaining may help increase student involvement and interest in various topics. This paper provides suggestions for analyzing the film *Sister Act* relevant to organizational change and other organizational behavior topics. Hopefully, this example can be used by other professors. Additionally, the foregoing discussion may encourage similar efforts to use seemingly non-academic material for learning.

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## UTILIZING TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT AACSB ACCREDITATION

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### ABSTRACT

The amount of information that business schools maintain on their faculty has increased dramatically over the last fifteen years. Much of the need for faculty information results from the increased number of Schools and Colleges of Business that desire accreditation by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). Currently, there are 355 accredited programs in the United States.

However, faculty are often frustrated by the amount of information they must provide to their administrators each academic year. Faculty often must provide the same information in different forms. The amount of time spent on providing and managing this information no doubt takes away from faculty teaching and research activities.

Administrators are constantly in search of better, more efficient, and more affordable ways of maintaining information on their faculty. These administrators are particularly interested in maintaining information in formats useful for addressing AACSB accreditation issues. For example, schools must maintain accurate records of each faculty's intellectual activities to satisfy the academic qualification rule stressed by the AACSB. This rule states that faculty must be either professionally or academically qualified. Although interpretation of the rule can vary depending on the emphasis of the school on graduate education, generally the rule implies that, to be academically qualified, a faculty member must have published at least one or two articles in blind refereed journals in the past five years.

To be professionally qualified, a faculty member must possess professional experience that is relevant to the faculty member's teaching assignment, significant in duration and level of responsibility, and current at the time of hiring. The experience must also be current, within the past five years. Faculty members in the accounting department are held to a higher standard than are other business faculty in meeting the AACSB standard for professional qualification. For accounting faculty, the experience must be one in which they learn from the profession, rather than one in which they are imparting knowledge or providing a service. Thus, consulting will not necessarily qualify an accounting faculty member professionally, while internships and professionally run seminars (such as the Trueblood seminars) will satisfy the requirements for professional qualification. Generally, at least eighty percent of the department's faculty must be academically qualified, and ninety percent must be either professionally or academically qualified, to meet this AACSB standard.

Creating a current database of faculty information, such information as is required by AACSB, has many advantages. The advantage to the faculty is that they would need to provide the desired information only once. After the data is stored, it can be modified and updated easily. There are several advantages to administrators. First, having such a system in place would make the collecting of data for an AACSB visit more manageable. Second, such a system would allow reports to be quickly generated that cover any period desired (such as the five year period for AACSB review) and include any type of information considered important by the school, formatted in whatever way is most appropriate. Third, having such a database would give administrators access to the information

they need to manage and evaluate faculty. And fourth, just having a process in place for collecting faculty information might be looked on favorably by members of the AACSB accreditation team.

Although database applications like the one described above can provide school administrators the information they need in the form they desire, it can be very expensive to develop and maintain. For example, bids solicited recently by one of the author's College of Business to create such a customized database system ranged from \$6,500 to \$12,000. This price did not include maintenance of the system. Although the need may be apparent, many universities may not be able to restrict this amount of money for this purpose.

The solution to this problem is to allocate development and maintenance costs across several universities, so that each university bears only a part of the costs. There are two ways to accomplish this. One way is for interested universities to purchase a generic, standalone software package instead of developing their own. Software updates would be available to be purchased each year. The chief disadvantage of this option is the limited access it provides to its users. Assuming the software is installed on the university network, users would either have to be on campus to be able to populate and modify the database, or additional costs (including the cost of remote access software, installation, and maintenance) would have to be incurred to allow users to access the university system remotely.

A second, more appealing way to gain access to a common database is to utilize the Internet. The World Wide Web has quickly evolved from 1) infancy: a publishing medium of static information; to 2) adolescence: a simple two-way information exchange platform; to 3) its current state: a platform for dynamic distributed applications. The Web browser (i.e. Internet Explorer, Netscape) is quickly becoming a "universal client" -- it can be used as a front end interface to any ODBC data source (Access, Oracle, Sequel Server, etc.), providing users with a consistent "look and feel" across platforms and applications. Using the same browser interface makes it easier for users to switch between applications, because the only application one has to learn is the browser itself. With the Internet as the backbone, a web-enabled faculty activity database application could be accessed from school, from home, or from anywhere that has Internet access. Literally from anywhere in the world, data could be entered into a form in a web page and submitted to populate a local database. Likewise, local databases could be queried remotely according to search criteria specified by users located anywhere in the world.

Universities could lease a web application at a fraction of what it would cost to develop an application in-house or to purchase a generic software package from a third party. Any software updates to the web application would be immediately and seamlessly distributed to end users whenever the web pages were served. This technology has the potential to dramatically improve the process of collecting faculty research, teaching, and service information, especially for those universities having geographically disbursed campuses and/or faculty. The following sections describe a prototype of such a system.

Using any forms-compatible browser as the interface, faculty members can access the Faculty Activity Database by typing in the Internet address for this web application. After entering a valid ID and password, faculty and administrators are taken to the Main Menu screen. On this screen, faculty are presented with a menu that allows them to enter information into their profile, teaching, research, service, experience, or faculty development databases. They may also access the report menu from this screen.

On the profile screen, faculty can click on the Edit Profile button to input their department, rank, primary field of teaching, office, phone, email, and other information on their degrees, certifications, and tenure and promotion. The profile screen is displayed in Figure 2.

Clicking on the Teaching, Experience, or Development buttons allows the faculty member to view, edit, or add data in these databases. Selecting the Research, Service, or Reports buttons on the main menu brings up appropriate submenus. The submenu for Research allows the faculty member to view, edit, or add publication data in the books, articles, conference, software, and other databases.

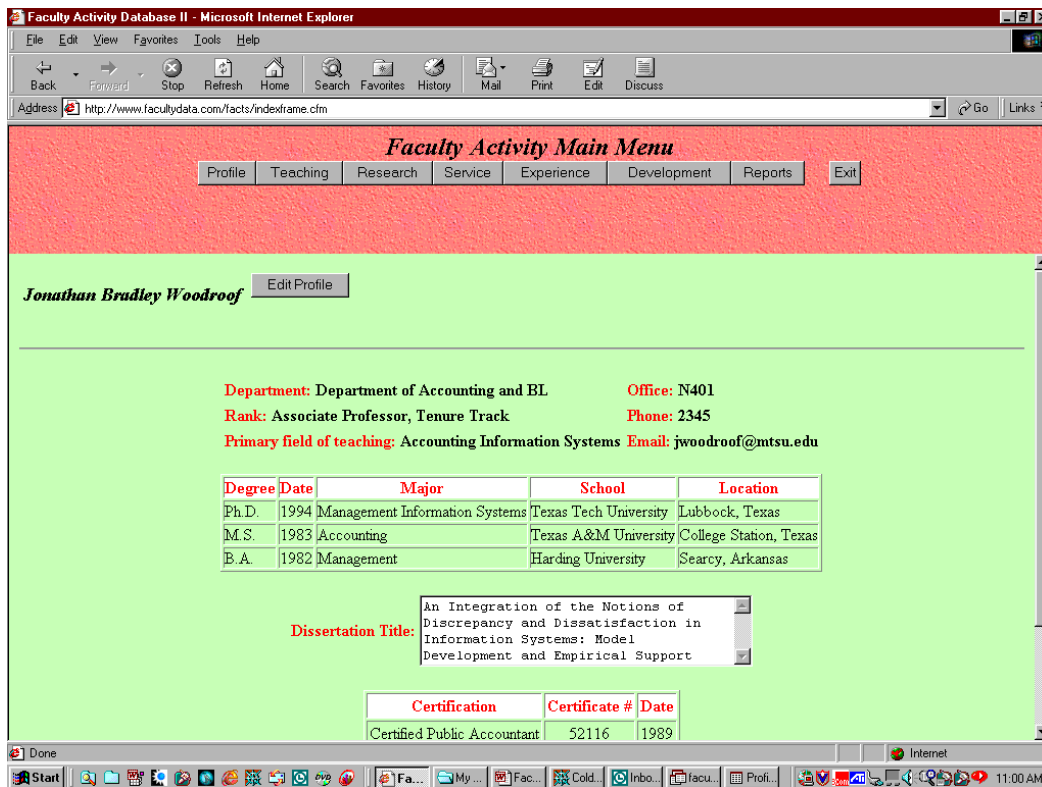


Figure 2

Figure 3 shows the input screen for entering information on an article publication. Here, faculty enter the title, status (submitted, accepted, published), review type (peer, non-peer, invited), research type (basic, applied, instructional development), mission code (determined by the university), periodical, reference information, and author information. On the periodical field there is a drop-down list of periodicals. This list is similar to the one prepared by Cabell (1999). By including such a list, the coding for articles in these journals as peer review or non-peer reviewed can be done automatically, providing consistency of data input. Also, top journals in a particular business area can be determined, and publications in these top journals can be tracked. Thus, the research history of a faculty member, a department, and the college as a whole can be weighted, ranked, and assessed. For example, Hasselback (1999) provides a ranked and weighted list of the top 40 journals in accounting. Similar lists have been compiled for the other business areas.

Figure 3

The Service submenu allows the faculty member to view, edit, or add service information in Public, University, and Professional service categories. The Reports submenu allows the faculty member to print various reports, including a resume dynamically generated from the database. In addition to the screens available to individual faculty members to support the documentation of faculty research, service, and teaching activities, there are two administrator levels that can be accessed with the proper ID and password at the login screen – department level and college level. With this access, information can be generated for groups of faculty. This capability is extremely useful for purposes of AACSB accreditation.

Internet technology is set to impact the way business schools collect and manage data on their faculty. The painful part of this process is getting the data into the database. With this technology, web-based applications can be developed that provide faculty with a user-friendly interface to a database, where faculty can document their research, service, and teaching activities. Once the data is stored, reports can be designed to pull out the data in whatever format is appropriate for the task at hand, and administrators will be able to better manage the vast amount of faculty information. This tool, used in concert with the mission of the school, will enable administrators to get a better feel for which areas need attention, thus maximizing the opportunity for successful AACSB accreditation.

# OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN COMPUTER-MEDIATED BUSINESS EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION OF ONLINE PROGRAMS

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigated some potential impacts of information technology on quality of business education by comparing student course performance between online and traditional on-campus classes involving 667 undergraduate students. Regression analyses revealed significant differential effects of college GPA on student course performance both within the online classes and between the online and on-campus classes. F-tests and t-tests found no difference in average course performance between the two types of classes, but grade distributions indicated that marginal performers might be better off by taking traditional on-campus classes. Students in the online classes appeared to be exposed to a higher level of outcome uncertainty than their campus-bound counterparts. Academic and administrative implications from the research findings were discussed and suggestions for future research provided.*

## INTRODUCTION

As globalization and technological revolution drive to reshape the external competitive landscapes (Bettis & Hitt, 1995), dramatic changes may occur in the world of higher education. Advances of information technology (IT) affect the content of education and even more so the process of knowledge dissemination. Approximately 70 million people are using the Internet at any given time and the number is expected to be ten times more by the year 2000 (Eng, 1997). Consequently, machine interfaces may replace a lot of face-to-face communication both at workplaces and in colleges and schools of business. Concurrent with the technological revolution has been an increased emphasis on online programs. Thus the competitive niche in higher education may shift over time, not only within domestic boundaries but also across national borders - with the delivery of education being global (Hitt, 1998), as well as the competition for students and faculty talent (Cannella & Paetzold, 1994). As a radical and perhaps more controversial step, a virtual university that offers its courses entirely over the Internet has become the first such institution to win a regional accreditation by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The accreditation has come under fire from the American Association of University Professors for an "apparent lack of quality of the university" and because of the AAUP's "major worries about the denigration of quality that could follow this apparently inexorable march towards online education" (McCollum, 1999). Clearly, the potential impacts of online programs on quality of higher education have formed an important issue pressing for rigorous research. It is under these circumstances that the present study takes an investigative step to compare student course performance between online and traditional on-campus classes.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

An online course is virtually a self-paced and self-motivated learning process. The online curriculum and course materials empower students for self-education and responsible learning. An obvious trade-off, however, is the reduction of face-to-face interaction between the teaching faculty and the students. Daft and Lengel (1986) proposed a hierarchy of medium richness, with face-to-face communication at the top, followed by telephone, e-mail, and print communications. In the medium richness theory, a rich medium conveys multiple verbal and nonverbal cues, provides immediate feedback, uses natural language, and allows for personal focus. Although the use of multimedia or Internet in distance education has not been the subject of enough research to rank on the richness hierarchy, researchers tend to place it below face-to-face instruction. Previous research has found that students interacted more passively with interactive video than they did with face-to-face instruction (Stock & Sproull, 1995), paid less than full attention to video presentations (Isaac, Morris, Rodriguez, & Tang, 1995), and perceived distant learning locations as distracting (Webster & Hackley, 1997). Limited by the lack of control groups and student course grades, however, previous research was unable to compare objective end results of student learning via different modes of instruction. To find out if there are any differences in student course performance between online and traditional on-campus classes, we framed two alternative hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1A: *On average, student performance is better in traditional on-campus classes than in online classes.*

Hypothesis 1B: *On average, there is no difference in student course performance between traditional on-campus classes and online classes.*

Schools and business employers by tradition assess student academic competence through college GPA records, assuming that course performance in the past predicts performance in future courses or potential job performance at the workplace (De Cenzo & Robbins, 1999). This assumption exemplifies a commonly used admission criterion in higher education, as well as a recruiting standard in the job market. Following the logic, this study is designed to investigate if college GPA has similar predictive validity for both traditional on-campus students and students who pursue IT-mediated virtual education. One of the research objectives is to find out if there is a college grade point average (GPA) criterion that can be used as an appropriate screening device for permitting students to register for an online course. Second, the study is aimed at comparing the end results of student course performance produced by online and traditional on-campus modes of teaching and learning. In order to achieve these objectives, we developed the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 2A: *All in all, there is a direct positive relationship between a student's college GPA and course performance regardless of the course format.*

Hypothesis 2B: *There are differential effects of college GPA on course performance between online and traditional on-campus classes.*

Hypothesis 3A: *All in all, college GPA is a course performance predictor for students in traditional on-campus classes.*

Hypothesis 3B: *There are differential effects of college GPA on course performance for students in online classes.*

Hypothesis 4A: *College GPA is a course performance predictor for students who have college GPA equal or above 2.0 while taking a course online.*



Hypothesis 4B: *College GPA is not a course performance predictor for students who have college GPA below 2.0 while taking the course online.*

The cutting point at 2.0 is based on the practice that a college GPA of 2.0 or above is commonly used as an institutional requirement for good standing academically, and for student eligibility for continuous registration administratively.

## METHOD

Data were collected from an undergraduate business program of a public university in the south of the United States. According to the School of Business guidelines for distance education, an online course is defined as one in which the majority of instruction (70% or more) is delivered through information technology and occurs with the instructor and students physically separated by time and geographic locations. The on-campus components of an online course include orientation, examinations, and other in-class exercises (e.g., a team project).

We sampled student performance records of 16 undergraduate business classes in the Fall Semester of 1998 using college GPA as the independent variable. Student course performance was measured through final scores using equal intervals between A (90 or above), B (80 or above), C (70 or above), D (60 or above) and F (below 60). Of the 16 sampled classes, eight were offered on campus and the other eight were identical course sessions offered online during the same semester. We paired up course sessions which were offered both online and on-campus (e.g., Accounting 2101 online versus Accounting 2101 on-campus) taught by the same instructor during the same semester. The course pairing allowed us to compare student performance outcomes stemmed from online versus on-campus modes of instruction with a control of potential rater effects. The online and on-campus classes covered an equivalent variety of disciplines within the business curriculum including Accounting, Business Statistics, Finance, Management, and Marketing, involving a total of 667 students, of which 311 were from online classes and 356 from traditional on-campus classes. After eliminating withdrawals from the total student sample, the remaining data contained 227 male and 303 female students. *T*-test results showed no significant differences in gender compositions between the two types of classes. While the number of student withdrawals varied across course subjects and between class sessions, there was no difference in student retention rates between online and on-campus classes at the group level. Table 1 presents the course categories, enrollments and withdrawal rates.

| Course Category |      |   | Enrollment | Withdrawals | % of Withdrawals |
|-----------------|------|---|------------|-------------|------------------|
| ACCT            | 2101 | C | 36         | 19          | 40%              |
|                 |      | O | 47         | 17          | 47%              |
| BUSA            | 3101 | C | 42         | 08          | 19%              |
|                 |      | O | 49         | 12          | 25%              |
| BUSA            | 3113 | C | 07         | 01          | 14%              |
|                 |      | O | 14         | 03          | 22%              |
| FINA            | 3101 | C | 34         | 09          | 27%              |
|                 |      | O | 51         | 09          | 18%              |
| MGMT            | 3101 | C | 45         | 04          | 09%              |
|                 |      | O | 53         | 09          | 17%              |

|              |      |   |     |    |     |
|--------------|------|---|-----|----|-----|
| MGMT         | 3102 | C | 55  | 15 | 27% |
|              |      | O | 50  | 12 | 24% |
| MGMT         | 3120 | C | 30  | 03 | 10% |
|              |      | O | 51  | 07 | 14% |
| MKTG         | 3101 | C | 51  | 05 | 10% |
|              |      | O | 52  | 04 | 08% |
| <b>Total</b> | 8    | C | 311 | 64 | 21% |
|              |      | O | 356 | 73 | 21% |

Notes: C = On-campus class, O = Online class.  
 Course Subjects: ACCT 2101-Principles of Accounting I, BUSA 3103-Business Statistics, BUSA 3113-Survey of Measurement & Analysis, FINA 3101-Managerial Finance, MGMT 3101-Principles of Management, MGMT 3102-Performance Quality Management, MGMT 3120-Managerial Communication, MKTG 3101-Principles of Marketing.

### ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

To determine if there was any difference in student course performance between online and traditional on-campus classes, we ran a grade distribution analysis between the two types of classes. As summarized in Table 2, we found no difference in the grade distribution from A to C. The percentage of students earning A to C was 74.9% in traditional on-campus classes ( $N = 247$ ) and 75.6% in online classes ( $N = 283$ ) respectively. To determine if the results from the group level comparison were consistent with grade distributions between the individual course sessions, we conducted eight  $t$ -tests between the paired-up course sessions. In other words, we contrasted student performance between online and on-campus class sessions of each course taught by the same professor during the same semester. Consistent with the group level comparison,  $t$ -tests did not find significant differences in mean scores between the eight pairs of class sessions. These findings were in keeping with Hypothesis 1b, rejecting Hypothesis 1a.

| Grade        | On-Campus Students | On-Campus Percentage | Online Students | Online Percentage |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| A            | 31                 | 12.6                 | 37              | 13.0              |
| B            | 61                 | 24.7                 | 82              | 29.0              |
| C            | 93                 | 37.7                 | 95              | 33.6              |
| D            | 36                 | 14.5                 | 35              | 12.6              |
| F            | 26                 | 10.5                 | 34              | 12.0              |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>247</i>         | <i>100</i>           | <i>283</i>      | <i>100</i>        |

Regression analyses indicated that in both online ( $R^2 = .36$ ,  $F = 159.77$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and traditional on-campus ( $R^2 = .40$ ,  $F = 165.71$ ,  $p < .05$ ) classes, there were significant linear relationships between college GPA and student course performance in the predicted direction. In order to compare if college GPA had a similar predictive pattern for student course performance in online versus on-campus classes, we conducted 14 within-group regression analyses using different cut scores of college GPA (Tables 3 and 4). Results showed that college GPA had a continuous linear relationship with student course performance in the traditional on-campus classes (Table 4),

but for the online classes, the relationship ended where a student's college GPA fell below 2.0. These findings supported our second set of hypotheses 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 4a, and 4b.

| CASE               | GPA         | N   | $R^2$ | $R$  | $F$    | $F_u$ | $H_0: b_1=0$ |
|--------------------|-------------|-----|-------|------|--------|-------|--------------|
| One                | All         | 283 | 0.36  | 0.60 | 159.77 | 3.84  | Reject $H_0$ |
| Two                | $\geq 2.0$  | 253 | 0.27  | 0.52 | 94.36  | 3.84  | Reject $H_0$ |
| Three <sup>a</sup> | $< 2.0$     | 30  | 0.11  | 0.33 | 3.30   | 4.20  | Accept $H_0$ |
| Four               | $\geq 2.25$ | 209 | 0.19  | 0.44 | 47.96  | 3.84  | Reject $H_0$ |
| Five               | $< 2.25$    | 74  | 0.17  | 0.41 | 14.41  | 3.92  | Reject $H_0$ |
| Six                | $\geq 2.5$  | 174 | 0.19  | 0.44 | 41.29  | 3.84  | Reject $H_0$ |
| Seven              | $< 2.5$     | 109 | 0.23  | 0.48 | 32.67  | 3.92  | Reject $H_0$ |
| Eight              | $\geq 2.75$ | 133 | 0.21  | 0.46 | 35.46  | 3.84  | Reject $H_0$ |
| Nine               | $< 2.75$    | 150 | 0.19  | 0.44 | 34.74  | 3.84  | Reject $H_0$ |
| Ten                | $\geq 3.0$  | 102 | 0.20  | 0.45 | 25.76  | 3.92  | Reject $H_0$ |
| Eleven             | $< 3.0$     | 181 | 0.21  | 0.46 | 47.66  | 3.84  | Reject $H_0$ |

In all of the above cases, except for Case Three where GPA  $< 2.0$ ,  $H_0$  is rejected - that the slope is not equal to zero, and student course performance is significantly related to the college GPA.

| CASE               | GPA        | n   | $R^2$ | $R$  | $F$    | $F_u$ | $H_0: b_1=0$ |
|--------------------|------------|-----|-------|------|--------|-------|--------------|
| One                | All        | 247 | 0.40  | 0.63 | 165.71 | 3.84  | Reject $H_0$ |
| Two                | $\geq 2.0$ | 209 | 0.26  | 0.51 | 72.83  | 3.84  | Reject $H_0$ |
| Three <sup>a</sup> | $< 2.0$    | 38  | 0.24  | 0.49 | 11.06  | 4.13  | Reject $H_0$ |

Comparing Case Three in Table 3 with Case Three in Table 4, students with college GPA  $< 2.0$  tend to do better in traditional on-campus classes than online.

After we had identified the differential effects of college GPA on student course performance, we further examined the course performance of the students whose college GPA were below 2.0 in both online and on-campus classes. The grade distributions among these students showed that the model grade for traditional on-campus classes was D over F (14.6% versus 10.5%,  $N = 247$ ), whereas the grade distribution among online students was random (12.4% versus 12%,  $N = 283$ ). These findings present some interesting implications for individual students who need to make a choice between online and traditional on-campus classes, as well as for college administrators who want to set up effective guidelines or course policies.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study identified a continuous positive linear relationship between college GPA and student course performance in the traditional on-campus classes, whereas for students in online classes, the linear relationship broke where college GPA fell below 2.0. Previous research posits that performance is a function of ability, motivation, and situational factors (e.g., Blumberg & Pringle, 1982; Schermerhorn, Gardner & Martin, 1990). If college GPA reflects academic ability but does

not predict course performance for online students whose GPA records are below 2.0, it stands to reason that motivation and situational factors may count more for student performance in online classes than in on-campus classes. One can draw from those implications that students in online classes tend to face a higher level of outcome uncertainty than their campus-bound counterparts. Although this study found no significant difference in average course performance between the two types of classes, the model grade for students with a college GPA below 2.0 was D in on-campus classes but a random distribution between D and F in online classes. Since a college GPA of 2.0 or above is commonly used as an institutional requirement for good standing, it appears that marginal students may be better off by taking on-campus classes. These implications may help students weigh the trade-off between flexibility and academic uncertainty when considering taking a course online versus on campus.

This study has taken a major step in examining some potential impacts of information technology on business education. Findings and implications discussed above provide meaningful information for academic and administrative decision making in the new paradigm of an IT-oriented learning environment. However, the study is exploratory, and the findings from the hypotheses testing call for replicates. Two broad issues that this study speculated but did not operate are the IT-related uncertainty and reduction of face-to-face interaction between the teaching faculty and the students in online classes. Future research that measures these two important factors would be the first and an instructive step towards investigating these speculations.

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# REFOCUSING DOCTORAL BUSINESS EDUCATION IN PREPARATION FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM

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## ABSTRACT

*The 21<sup>st</sup> century will bring many new challenges for American businesses. It is essential that business professors adequately prepare students to face these challenges. Doctoral programs in business can play an important role in this process by ensuring that doctoral students receive the preparation and training they need to be particularly effective in the next century. This manuscript identifies specific ways doctoral business programs can help better prepare their students. These include requiring some work experience, requiring a course in pedagogy, showing doctoral students how to integrate technology in their classrooms, training students to be good researchers, emphasizing an international dimension in courses, underscoring the importance of interaction with the community, encouraging students to be interdisciplinary in their teaching and research interests, and providing a realistic preview of career paths and job opportunities for graduates. Specific suggestions will be presented as to how these can be implemented into curricula and doctoral programs.*

## INTRODUCTION

The 21<sup>st</sup> century will bring many new challenges for American businesses. Business education at all levels must be refocused to help students be better prepared to face and successfully deal with these new challenges. In a recent article Phillips and Phillips (1999) addressed the need for refocusing undergraduate business education. This manuscript will address doctoral business education. More specifically, it identifies and discusses eight ways doctoral business programs can help better prepare students.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR REFOCUSING

First, programs should require some related business work experience as part of doctoral program requirements. Experience could be required as a condition of acceptance or students given opportunities to gain experience through internships. Previous research indicates that students at both undergraduate and graduate levels favor professors who include practical examples to illustrate theoretical concepts in their teaching (Jennings & Bartling, 1991; Phillips, Phillips, & Cappel, 1994, 1996). Relevant work experience helps provide business professors with examples they can use in classrooms. Further, professors with work experience probably garner a greater degree of student respect which most likely enhances the learning process.

Also doctoral students should be required to take a course in pedagogy. For too long it has been erroneously assumed that anyone with a Ph.D. could do a good job teaching. Most doctoral business programs could do a much better job in preparing students to be good teachers. Requiring a course in pedagogy would be a good first step in helping students be better teachers. As a further step, students could be required to teach as a part of their doctoral program requirements; this would help give them important teaching experience before their first full-time position. Also, students could be observed while teaching and given suggestions on how to improve.

A third way business doctoral programs can help better prepare students is to show them how to integrate technology into their classrooms. There have been many technological advances in recent

years and are likely to be many more in the next century. Students need to be made aware of and kept up-to-date with these changes. More specifically, they should be shown how to integrate this technology into their classrooms since the use of technology can enhance the learning process. The course in pedagogy, previously discussed, would provide an excellent vehicle for showing students how to integrate technology. Students could be encouraged to use different types of technology in classes they are teaching first as doctoral students and later as professors.

Additionally, it is imperative that doctoral programs adequately prepare students to do high-quality research. Extensive courses should be offered in research methodology. Further, students should be required to conduct actual research studies and write articles (to be submitted for publication) in partial fulfillment of doctoral program requirements. Many programs require the development of proposals, prior to the dissertation phase, but schools and professors should take this a step further to ascertain that students understand the entire process. Among other things, special attention should be given to factors such as how to target a specific journal, how to correspond with journal editors, and the revision process. Also, given the increasing importance of writing grants, students should be taught the basics of this process.

Given the increasingly important international dimension in American business, doctoral business programs also need to emphasize this aspect. Doctoral-level professors should integrate international components in their classes and students should be encouraged to integrate this aspect into their own teaching and research.

A sixth way business doctoral programs can help better prepare students is to underscore the importance of interaction with the community. The community is one of the major stakeholders of a university and the degree to which most universities achieve their mission depends on how well they interact with the community. Doctoral students must understand this relationship; it probably helps when they observe their professors successfully interacting with the community. Specific ways of interacting (e.g., consulting, serving on boards, speaking engagements) should be highlighted.

Further, doctoral students should be encouraged to be interdisciplinary in their teaching and research interests. With regard to teaching, interdisciplinary thought can lead to enhanced student understanding of material. Similarly, many research studies can benefit from using an interdisciplinary perspective.

Also, doctoral business programs should provide a realistic preview of career paths and job opportunities for students. Many programs currently emphasize the placement of their graduates in research universities upon graduation. From the outset, students need to be told of the different career paths available. They should be informed of the potential job markets not only at universities that primarily emphasize research, but also of opportunities at regional universities which generally have a balanced perspective with regard to research, teaching, and service, and at smaller liberal arts colleges that mainly emphasize teaching.

## **CONCLUSION**

In summary, the 21<sup>st</sup> century will bring many new challenges for American business. Business education at the doctoral level must be refocused to help students be better prepared to deal with these challenges.

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## SETTING UP SUCCESSFUL STUDENT TEAMS

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### ABSTRACT

*Interest in developing more successful ways of building workgroup and collaborative learning experience into college courses is accelerating. An increasing number of college and university instructors are responding to both industry demands for employees who can function effectively and energetically in workgroup/team environments and to a developing pedagogical interest in exposing students to the benefits of collaborative learning. Thus, "teaming" is developing a prominence approaching the more familiar content, perspective, and skill areas in the eyes of both employers and professors. This paper and several to follow will suggest concrete ways to enhance the learning experience of students while developing teaming skills in the classroom.*

### INTRODUCTION

Many of the world's leading organizations are moving to a team based work environment. A Wall St. Journal article in the early nineties reported that teamwork was the most common subject of company-initiated training programs among Fortune 500 companies [13]. The increased creativity, productivity and quality of work shown by employees operating in teams is often matched by corresponding increases in employee satisfaction and morale. Consequently, more businesses are seeking employees with strong team skills and significant workgroup experience. And increasingly, these businesses are turning to colleges and universities to provide the necessary opportunities for students to develop both the essential skills and considerable supervised experience [1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8].

University professors, for their part, are coming to recognize that students need to cultivate and practice group skills, partly in response to the just-indicated interest on the part of industry, but also to experience the benefits--and limitations--of "collaborative learning". It is not surprising, however, that many professors may feel some discomfort when faced with the challenge of developing and guiding appropriate classroom workgroup experience. The traditional college curricula are based on work and evaluation of the individual. Most disciplines provide little training to develop the requisite experience necessary to facilitate student workgroups. In addition, professors without significant experience in facilitating classroom workgroups may believe that groups are somehow able to "take care of themselves." The misconception—or fond hope--that groups inherently develop self-correcting mechanisms that need not be aided is common. As a consequence of this absence of training and experience—and the laissez faire perspective, in too many cases, are classroom workgroups that flounder amid a build up of student resentment.

There has been an extraordinary amount of research undertaken and volumes written about a variety of characteristics, processes, and outcomes of a vast array of workgroups, including such popular topics as group size, leadership style, and composition [4, 6, 7]. The series of papers initiated here will take a broad, but practical, approach to addressing those elements which the authors believe will be particularly useful to the classroom instructor.

From both an instructor's and a student's perspective there are three distinct phases in the life cycle of a classroom workgroup: (1) the pre-group stage of preparation, (2) the workgroup in operation, and (3) the post-group stage of assessment (both formal and informal). While each of the phases has some characteristics which also may be found in one or more of the others, here we focus on the first phase. Many frustrations which could develop during the latter two phases, can be mitigated with careful forethought, proper planning, and clear explanations to the students prior to the formation of the workgroups. This is a practical guide to appropriate activities before the launch



of classroom groups. It provides guidance and addresses specific steps such as exercising foresight in preparing the workgroup experience, providing students with simple understandings of the basics of group dynamics, and planning to provide support/oversight during the workgroup experience. (Subsequent papers will focus on the latter stages of providing support and oversight during the actual operation of classroom workgroups and assessing classroom workgroup performance and their benefits and limitations subsequent to the activity). By following the practical, preliminary steps explained here the instructor can:

- improve student understanding
- enhance student workgroup skills
- increase student commitment to their workgroup and its assigned task and
- increase student satisfaction with the overall workgroup experience

### **The Pre-Group Formation Phase**

The presentation that follows is organized around a series of practical matters that most instructors using classroom workgroups will want to address *prior* to the actual formation of a workgroup. Although these factors are highly interrelated, of course, for the simplicity of presentation we will discuss each factor individually. It is left to the reader to recognize how a decision, made in regard to any one of these items, may well influence some or all of the others.

#### **A. Objectives**

The first step, and most likely the single most important step, is to identify the workgroups' objectives, that is, what the workgroups are intended to accomplish in the overall perspective of the course. These choices will structure the nature of all subsequent decisions. Having explicit, clear objectives is useful to "sell" the students on the value of both the specific assignments and the workgroup environment. We suggest that an instructor specify no more than four or five clearly delineated objectives. Some examples of objectives for using classroom workgroups might include:

- increase student understanding of course content by their active participation in a group-based supplement to the lecture.
- achieve higher levels of student performance due to the superior results often achieved through an interactive group effort.
- provide opportunities for students to enhance their interpersonal and group skills. [10]
- increase student understanding of the nature and dynamics of workgroups.

#### **B. Tasks**

The tasks to be assigned to the student groups can be selected next. The choice of tasks, together with the objectives, impact all the structural decisions discussed below. Tasks can range from answering questions in a single class meeting to reporting on a situation to making a series of decisions in an interactive dynamic simulation over a period of several weeks. The criteria for task selection should include such factors as task relevance to the intended learning experience, appropriateness for the students' knowledge and abilities, and the time available to complete the assignment.

#### **C. Size, Composition, and Member Selection Process**

Much has been written over a period of many years about how the size of a group can affect its performance and social characteristics [4, 9, 11]. Workgroups of from three to six individuals are often preferred for a classroom setting [8]. Groups of three to six are small enough that students tend to feel more personally involved and responsible, but large enough that group interaction can continue even if a member temporarily (or permanently) opts "out".

Group composition and its affect on performance and member satisfactions [4, 5, 9] is also well documented. For example, it has been shown that a group with a more homogeneous

membership can make decisions quicker, develop greater group cohesion, and have more satisfied members. All of these characteristics could be considered desirable when the task is relatively simple and the time available is short. In other situations a lack of diversity of skills, experience, perspectives, etc. can limit creative solutions and fail to provide a necessary “check” on such undesirable group processes as “groupthink”. Achieving diversity in small classroom groups, however, has its own set of challenges. Randomly assigning students to groups often does not produce acceptable balance within groups. Even perfect member balance *among* the groups in the class may result in “tokenism” *within* the groups, e.g., having only one member of a group possessing some significant characteristic. We have two particular concerns about a common alternative selection technique--allowing groups to self-select their members.

Permitting students to choose their own group members can have the following disadvantages: (1) the process is less realistic of work situations in which employees rarely get the opportunity to choose their own team members; and (2) the process contains less potential for members to develop new or strengthened team skills since such group elements as roles, norms and values tend already to be established in existing “friendship groups” or, alternatively, they may not develop fully among like-minded individuals and/or in socially homogeneous groups.

In a classroom situation we have found groups of four or five students tend to be more energetic and to keep scheduling problems manageable. Assigning students to groups with some concern about isolating minority characteristics has worked for us.

#### D. Roles in Student Groups

It is often desirable to leave roles undefined and leadership roles unassigned in small classroom workgroups with an assigned task. The absence of an imposed structure allows the students the freedom (and the challenge) to experiment with a variety of arrangements and processes which hopefully will lead them to a workable, effective structure for their operations.

#### E. Number, Frequency and Length of Group Meetings

It is often recommended that an instructor try to schedule one or two workgroup meetings per week with a duration of 30 and 60 minutes per session. It is always important for the instructor to remember that many students need adequate lead times to schedule around their many out-of-class constraints posed by carrying heavy school, family and workloads. Obviously this reduces the time available for other classroom activities.

#### F. Physical Setting and Meeting Times.

It is extremely helpful to students to have some portion of class time set aside at regular intervals to meet with their groups. The classroom provides a setting that is relatively distraction-free and can be arranged so that students can see and hear each other moderately well. Groups use this time in very different ways. Some groups use the time only to assign tasks, determine deadlines and distribute completed work, while others will use the occasion to try to work through the assignment together. Either way, most classroom groups seem to perform better when there is some scheduled class time available for group meetings.

#### G. Motivating and Rewarding Students

Tying some portion of a student’s grade to both his/her group’s performance and his/her individual efforts within the group can be used to help emphasize the importance of the group activity to the overall course. It also gives each student a significant stake in seeing his/her group perform well and in personally playing an important part in ensuring the group’s success. Evaluating groups is the topic of a forthcoming paper.

## H. Instructor's Role

Instructors need to be aware that groups are likely to be more effective if the instructor will be available to monitor and support the groups' dynamics and the contributions made by individual students. Thus, instructors need to plan, in advance, on the role they intend to play during the groups' in class activities. It has been our experience that one way to provide support, without dominating the group dynamics, is to quietly pull up a chair into the group and become a passive (essentially non-verbal) member of the group for a sufficient period of time that students become comfortable with the instructors presence and resume their normal pattern of interactions—relatively unmindful of an “observer”. On the other hand, it has frequently become a mistake for the instructor to permit him/herself to be drawn into the conversations since it thereafter becomes difficult for him/her to shake off the students' expectations for a continuation of the “expert” or “consultant” to the group.

## I. Preparing Students for the Workgroup Experience

The purpose of this paragraph is to note the critical importance of preparing students for their work group experience. The introduction of the group work experience **MUST** be outlined to cover the following points. This preparation should include explicitly informing students of the instructor's expectations both in terms of group process and group output. This preparation should “sell” the students on the importance of enhancing their group skills and prime them for increasing their understanding of group characteristics and dynamics. Taking a relatively few minutes to prepare students for what to expect in the group activities in your class can set a positive mood for the entire project and positively affect the attitudes of the students and their willingness to cooperate effectively with others.

## J. Number of workgroups for students to participate in per course.

The core learning experience should be focused on the functioning of the workgroup itself, not necessarily on the quality/quantity of the output. One aspect of this workgroup-focused learning--that each workgroup and the students' experience in it is likely to be different from all others--suggests an advantage in trying to provide students with experience participating in more than one workgroup. However, this particular advantage may be more than offset by the frustration of attempting to establish another round of new workgroups and their assignment in an inadequate amount of time. Another precautionary note: while members of some groups will be more than ready to cast their lot with another group, the members of other groups will be hopelessly “bonded” and will bitterly resist breaking up their group [12].

## CONCLUSION

Businesses in a wide range of industries have discovered how employee workgroups can benefit their individual companies. Partially as a result of the reorganization of workplace relationships and partially because cooperative learning continues as an effective model, interest on the part of employers and educators in team-based learning and work continues to grow. It is the authors' hope that this work (and those that follow) will help other instructors who want to take steps to improve their student's understanding of, and experience with, the workgroups which are now so vital to a student's education and employment. This set of papers will guide instructors through the phases of the workgroup life cycle, this paper focuses on planning and preparing for workgroup activities. Major areas of pre-group consideration were addressed and a summary of the recommendations follow. The authors would recommend, in general, that classroom workgroups should:

- consist of four or five student members in unspecified roles
- include students with diverse skills, interests and backgrounds
- be given regular class time to meet in an environment conducive to discussion

- be prepared by their instructors to understand the dynamics of group interaction
- be familiar with the instructors' expectations for the groups and its members
- have a grading formula incorporating two components--group performance and individual contributions
- be capable of motivating students by encouraging and rewarding desirable behavior

With the planning and preparation outlined here student learning and satisfaction can be increased.

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