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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*. The editorial content of this journal is under the control of the Allied Academies, Inc., a non profit association of scholars whose purpose is to encourage and support the advancement and exchange of knowledge, understanding and teaching throughout the world. The mission of the *AELJ* is to publish theoretical, empirical, practical or pedagogic manuscripts in education. Its objective is to expand the boundaries of the literature by supporting the exchange of ideas and insights which further the understanding of education.

The articles contained in this volume have been double blind refereed. The acceptance rate for manuscripts in this issue, 25%, conforms to our editorial policies.

We intend to foster a supportive, mentoring effort on the part of the referees which will result in encouraging and supporting writers. We welcome different viewpoints because in differences we find learning; in differences we develop understanding; in differences we gain knowledge and in differences we develop the discipline into a more comprehensive, less esoteric, and dynamic metier.

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Michael Shurden
and
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TESTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UNIVERSITY HONOR CODE

Jason J. Ely, Coastal Carolina University
Linda Henderson, Coastal Carolina University
Yoav Wachsman, Coastal Carolina University

ABSTRACT

Many universities are using an Honor Code to deter students from cheating. This paper reports an experiment that examines the effectiveness of using an Honor Code by giving university students an accounting quiz in an unsupervised environment and comparing the average scores among three groups of students: those who did not sign an Honor Code, those who signed an Honor Code, and those who wrote a statement why academic integrity is important. Students who signed an Honor Code had statistically significant lower scores, indicating that they cheated less. However, writing why integrity is important did not significantly affect the students' test scores.

INTRODUCTION

University students often cheat. Depending on circumstances, the rate of cheating among college students varies between 13% and 95% (McCabe and Trevino, 1993). This paper examines the effect of including an Honor Code in an accounting quiz on students' inclination to cheat. It contributes to the literature by relying on test scores rather than surveys or other methodologies that can influence students' behavior; in addition, it focuses on the immediate effect of signing an Honor Code on students' quiz scores. We find that the mere inclusion of an Honor Code significantly reduces the instances of cheating, but having students write why academic integrity is important has no significant effect on their behavior.

Previous research shows that students cheat for a variety of reasons. In an early study, Drake (1941) proposes that cheating becomes an "expedient way to achieve some desired goal and, at the same time, to avoid some of the unpleasant punitive consequences that attend failure." Using a controlled experiment, he shows that weaker students and members of a fraternity are more likely to cheat. In general, students with a low grade point average (GPA) are more likely to cheat than students with a high GPA and younger students are more likely to cheat than older students (Kerkvliet and Sigmund, 1999).

Though most students consider cheating to be wrong, many of them rationalize their behavior by blaming their teacher, workload, or other obstacles to justify their unethical behavior (Murdock and Stephens, 2007). O'Rourke et al (2010) conclude that lax attitudes about cheating, direct knowledge of cheating by others, and neutralizing attitudes all increase the probability of cheating. Neutralizing attitudes are the beliefs that cheating does not matter because everyone does it or because the material is not important. Miller, Shoptaugh, and Wooldridge (2011) find that students who said they would not cheat out of fear of getting caught are more likely to cheat than students who said that they would not cheat because of personal character or the value that they place on learning.

While some studies conclude that males are more likely to cheat (Marsden, Carroll, and Neill, 2005; and Hendershott, Drinan, and Cross, 1999), other studies assert that females cheat more often than males (Graham, etc., 1994). Marsden, Carroll, and Neill (2005) find that students who are younger (under 25) and attend school full-time have a higher grade orientation while students who are older and/or study science have a higher learning orientation. Thus, younger, full-time students may be more concerned about their grades and are therefore more likely to cheat while older students and science majors are generally more concerned about what they learning and are therefore less likely to cheat.

Frequency of cheating varies by discipline. Business students are more inclined to cheat than the general student population. Studies show that business students cheat on average 18% more in undergraduate school and 9% more in graduate school (Bowers, 1964; McCabe and Trevino, 1993; McCabe, 1997; and McCabe, Butterfield, and Trevino, 2006). Frank, Gilovich, and Regan (1993) study the effects of an introductory economics course on business students and find that over the course of a semester students become more willing to engage in unethical behavior in order to achieve a higher degree of self-interested results. Business schools are sometimes accused of teaching bottom-line principles with the sole interest of profit (Ghoshal, 2005). Although Ghoshal's assertion is often disputed, it merits attention since losses from occupational dishonesty and fraud are estimated to approach \$1 trillion annually (ACFE, 2010).

McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield (1996) study the effects of a university Honor Code on ethics in the workplace. They find that students who attend a university that has an established Honor Code become more honest employees. Universities have the opportunity to help produce more honest citizens by instituting an Honor Code since they strongly influence students' moral foundation (Sanford, 1964; and Tomlinson, 1974).

Campbell (1935) was one of the first researchers to investigate the factors that mitigate cheating in a classroom setting. He finds that students report committing or witnessing fewer incidents of cheating when their university has an Honor Code regardless of whether they attend a university with a proctor system, where they are monitored during exams, or a university with an honor system, where they are not monitored during exams.

Bowers (1964) conducts a similar study and finds that the greatest determinant of whether or not a student cheats is his or her perception of peer cheating (i.e., if their peers are

perceived to have cheated then they will probably also cheat). Consequently, most students report peer pressure as the greatest influence over their personal cheating habits. Megehee and Spake (2008) find that perception of classmates' cheating increases and severity of punishment decreases cheating, but there is no significant correlation between perceived probability of getting caught and cheating.

Canning (1956) conducted a six-year investigation into the effectiveness of institutionalizing an Honor Code at Brigham Young University from 1948, when the code was first introduced, to 1954. He had students take an exam and, unbeknownst to the students, had the instructor make a copy of the exam, grade the copy, and record the score. At the beginning of the next class period, the instructor explained that, due to tight scheduling, the exams had not been graded and subsequently passed back the original exams and the answer key for the students to grade during class. The scores from the student-graded exam were compared to the scores from the teacher-graded exam. He found that cheating decreased from 81% to 30% during the six-year period after the Honor Code was introduced.

Gardner (1988) attempted to replicate Canning's (1956) experiment, but came to a different conclusion. Gardner (1988) is one of the few studies that claim that Honor Codes are ineffective. However, Gardner's research did not have a control group and the subjects were aware that they were participating in a research experiment. McCabe and Trevino (1993, 1995), McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield (1999) and Kerkvliet (1999) all conclude that instituting an Honor Code reduces the incidence of cheating.

This study adds to the existing literature in two ways. First, our research relies on an experiment that is unlikely to have an experimenter's bias. Specifically, we allow the participants to take a quiz at home and only measure cheating indirectly by looking at their quiz scores. Thus, participants in our experiment knew that there is no chance that they would get caught if they cheated and, therefore, their behavior was not influenced by the fear of getting caught. Secondly, unlike previous studies, we focus on the immediate effect of reading and signing an Honor Code as opposed to the effect of instituting an Honor Code. Our research answers a simple question – will including an Honor Code in assessments reduce the instances of cheating?

METHODOLOGY

The experiment was conducted in the E. Craig Wall Sr. College of Business Administration at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, South Carolina. We utilized over two hundred and fifty students who were attending a standardized introductory accounting course. Most of the students were sophomores or juniors and roughly 42% were females. The average age of the participants was 20. Participation was voluntary and the participation rate was 97.6%.

Ely, posing as the graduate assistant, offered students the opportunity to complete a quiz made of ten multiple-choice questions that were based on material that was covered in class. The quiz was designed to be very challenging, but the answers to the quiz were available in the

textbook. Ely stated that the purpose of the quiz was to evaluate the students' retention of the course material.

The questions were identical on all the quizzes; however, we utilized three versions of the quiz (experimental treatments): 1. No Code (NC) only included the quiz's instructions, questions, and space for answers; 2. Code Given (CG) also included Coastal Carolina University's newly approved Honor Code and a space for students to sign the code; 3. Write Statement (WS) omitted the Honor Code and instead included a short question that asked students to "Explain why academic integrity is important and why cheating is wrong." Students in the NC, CG, and WS treatments were asked to complete the quiz at home where they could easily cheat by finding the answers in the textbook, on the Internet, or elsewhere. Additionally, we included a fourth Proctored Exam (PE) treatment in which the students took the quiz without an Honor Code in class and were carefully monitored. Students in the PE treatment did not have a time limit.

The quizzes were given to undergraduate business students in ten introductory accounting courses. In three of these courses the students were proctored while taking the quiz (PE treatment) and in the other seven courses they were randomly divided into three groups that were given one of three test conditions (treatments NC, CG, and WS). Ely verbally informed all the students that the quiz must be completed without any outside assistance from the textbook, class notes, classmates, etc. Students were allowed to complete the assignment for extra credit worth up to one percent of their total class grade.

After we collected all the quizzes, we graded them and analyzed the grades. Two of the students in the WS did not write a statement about academic integrity, and we did not include their scores in the data. Since we did not observe the students' behavior directly, we used their quiz scores to compare the inclination to cheat across treatments. If students cheated more in a given treatment it is reasonable to expect that they would have a higher average score. We analyzed the data using non-parametric statistics in order to test the following hypotheses.

H1 There is a statistically significant level of cheating among undergraduate business students. Consequently, the average test score in the No Code treatment will be significantly higher than the average test score in the Proctored Exam treatment.

Previous studies demonstrate that cheating among college students is common in unproctored environments (McCabe and Trevino, 1993; and elsewhere). Therefore, we anticipate that the average score in the NC treatment, where students are neither proctored nor have to sign an Honor Code, will be significantly higher than in the PE treatment, where students are monitored, since some of the students in the NC treatment will obtain a higher score by cheating.

The primary objective of the study is to examine how the introduction of an Honor Code affects students' behavior, as indicated in Hypothesis 2.

H2 Students who sign an Honor Code are less likely to cheat than students who do not sign an Honor Code. Consequently, the average scores in the No Code treatment will be significantly higher than the average scores in the Code Given treatment.

Mazar, Amir, and Ariely (2008a) show that signing an Honor Code can trigger ethical norms that influence students to make more ethical decisions. Thus, we anticipate that students in the NC treatment are more likely to earn a higher score by cheating.

Our final hypothesis posits that writing a statement about academic integrity will also reduce cheating among university students.

H3 Students who write a statement about academic integrity are less likely to cheat than students who do not write a statement or sign an Honor Code. Consequently, the average scores in the No Code treatment will be significantly higher than the average scores in the Write Statement treatment.

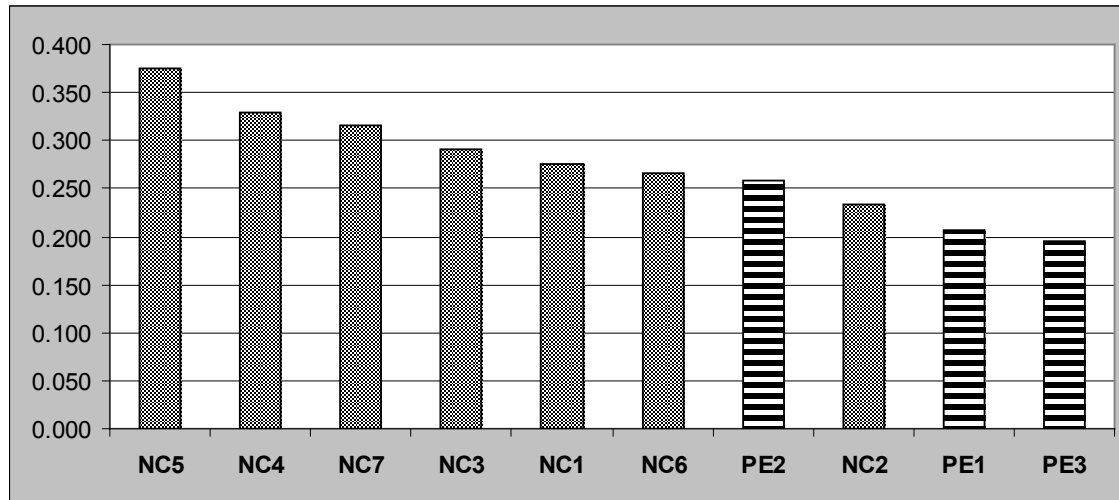
Mazar, Amir, and Ariely (2008b) also demonstrate that writing a statement about academic integrity triggers ethical norms that lead students to make more ethical decisions. Therefore, we anticipate that students in the NC treatment are more likely to earn a higher score by cheating than students in the WS treatment.

RESULTS

We use a Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney rank-sum test to compare the average scores of the sessions in each treatment. We utilize a non-parametric test since non-parametric statistics are commonly used in experiments and because the test scores are not normally distributed. The p-value of a Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test provides the likelihood that a given pattern is a random occurrence. We select a level of significance of .05 since it is the most commonly used value in social sciences and business research. We find that hypotheses 1 and 2 are supported while hypothesis 3 is not supported by the data. The data is presented in the appendix.

Result 1: There is a statistically significant level of cheating among undergraduate business students.

Figure 1: Average Quiz Scores for NC and PE Treatments by Session

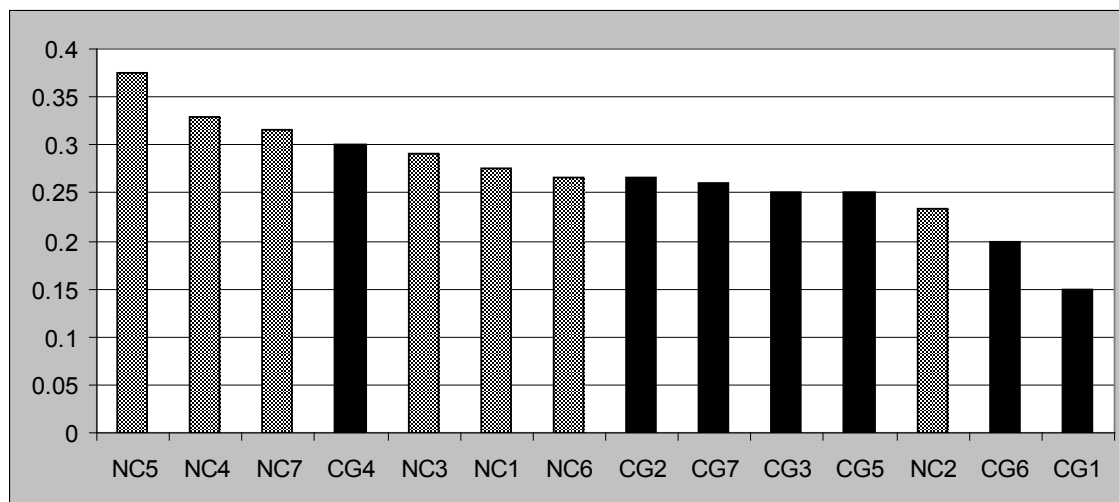


We ranked the 3 PE sessions and 7 NC sessions from highest to lowest average score (Figure 1). Note that the dependent variable in figures 1 and 2 shows the portion of the questions that students got correct, on average, in each session. Then, using a Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test with $m = 3$ (number of PE sessions), $n = 7$ (number of NC sessions), and $W = 7$, we find that the p-value is .0167. The variable W is calculated by assigning a value of 1 to the session with the lowest average score, 2 to the session with the second lowest score, and so on and then adding up the values of all the sessions in the PE treatment. Thus, we accept the alternative hypothesis that students cheat more in an un-proctored environment.

We acknowledge that part of the difference in the score could be due to the fact that students took the quiz in different environments. Perhaps some students scored higher in the NC treatment since they took the quiz in a low-stress environment at home. However, since there was no time limit for the quiz in the PE treatment and students were told that the quiz is just worth a few bonus points, it is unlikely that stress had a significant effect on the students' performance. Next, we examine the effects of having the students read and sign an Honor Code.

Result 2: Making students sign an Honor Code significantly reduces the level of cheating among undergraduate business students.

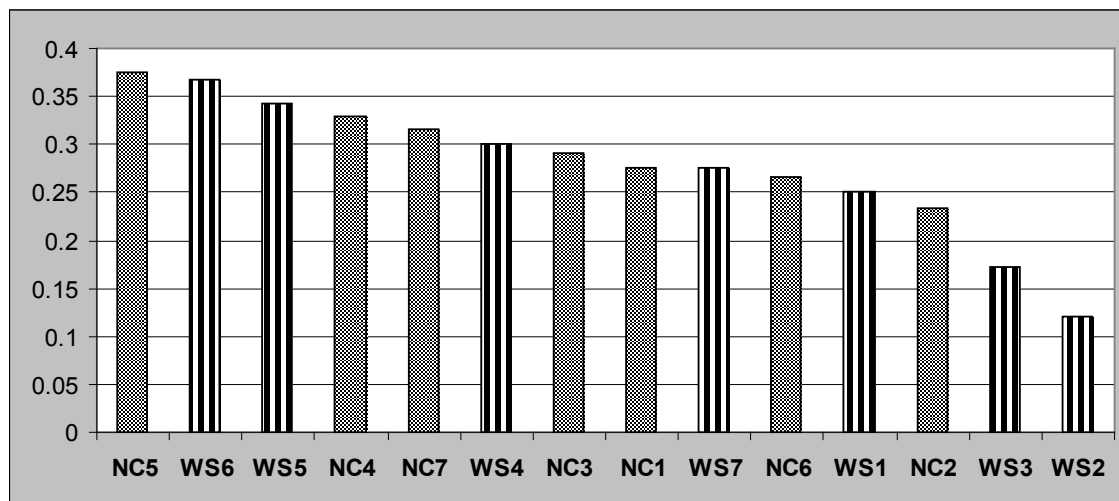
Figure 2: Average Quiz Scores for NC and CG Treatments by Session



We ranked the 7 NC session and the 7 CG sessions from highest to lowest average score (see Figure 2). Using a Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test with $m = 7$, $n = 7$, and $W = 36$ results in a p-value of .0189. Therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis that students cheat less after reading and signing an Honor Code. The mere act of signing an Honor Code can significantly reduce cheating among college students. But does writing a statement about the important of academic integrity have any effect on students inclination to cheat?

Result 3: There is no statistically significant evidence that having undergraduate business students write about academic integrity reduces cheating.

Figure 3: Average Quiz Scores for NC and WS Treatments by Session



As seen in Figure 3, when the sessions in the NC and WS treatments are ranked from the highest to the lowest average quiz scores, there is no discernible pattern between the treatments. A Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test with $m = 7$, $n = 7$, and $W = 47$ results in a p-value of 0.2675. Therefore, we cannot reject the null hypothesis that writing about academic integrity does not affect the students' behavior. Nevertheless, we cannot conclude that writing about academic integrity does not affect cheating. There might be a way to increase the effectiveness of making students write a statement about integrity by, for instance, making them write at least one page or cite articles that they read on the issue.

It is also interesting to note that there is no statistically significant evidence that students who take the quiz after signing an Honor Code cheat. Using Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test to compare the average scores in the CG and PE treatments yields a p-value of 0.2583. This result does not imply that none of the students cheated after signing an Honor Code. However, it does lend further support to the effectiveness of using an Honor Code in order to reduce cheating.

DISCUSSION

This study supports the findings of previous researchers that Honor Codes are effective at deterring cheating (Campbell, 1935; Canning, 1956; Bowers, 1964; McCabe and Trevino, 1993; and McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield, 2001). We find that merely reading and signing an Honor Code reduces cheating amongst undergraduate business students.

We, nonetheless, recognize that our experiment does not indicate that signing an Honor Code always reduces cheating. In particular, most of the students in the experiment signed an Honor Code for the first time and may have reacted differently had they signed an Honor Code in the past. Moreover, there are likely to be additional benefits from carefully instituting a culture of integrity in academic institutions (Hutton, 2006).

We also find that writing a statement about why academic integrity is important does not lead to a statistically significant reduction in cheating. This might be because many of the students did not put much thought into the statements that they wrote – most of the statements were a couple of lines long. Asking students to discuss the importance of academic integrity or to read articles about it before writing a statement on integrity may further reduce cheating.

Not surprisingly, we find that when students take an assessment in an un-proctored environment without signing an Honor Code they are more likely to cheat. Nonetheless, although the average scores in the NC treatment were higher than the average scores in the PE treatment, they were only slightly higher. On average, students in the PE treatment obtained a score of 2.20 out of 10 points, whereas students in the NC treatment obtained a score of 2.98. In fact, only 4.8% of the students in the NC treatment received a score of 7 or higher, which indicates that only a couple of them cheated on most of the quiz questions.

One possible explanation is that many students in the NC treatment decided to cheat but did not understand that they could obtain the answers to the quiz simply by searching for the

answers in the index of the textbook. But a more likely explanation is that although students in the NC treatment cheated, they cheated in ways that they could rationalize rather than blatantly cheating. Perhaps they asked a friend a “clarifying” question or looked up something that was “on the tip of their tongue”. Our interpretation is that although cheating among university students is commonplace, most students prefer not to view themselves as cheaters and, consequently, they only cheat sparingly and then rationalize their behavior.

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APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF EXPERIMENTAL DATA

Table 1 Average Score by Session (portion of correct answers)				
Session	NC Treatment	CG Treatment	WS Treatment	PE Treatment
1	0.275	0.150	0.250	0.207
2	0.233	0.267	0.120	0.259
3	0.290	0.250	0.171	0.195
4	0.329	0.300	0.300	
5	0.375	0.250	0.343	
6	0.267	0.200	0.367	
7	0.317	0.260	0.275	

THE EFFECT OF HUMAN INTERACTIONS ON STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND SATISFACTION OF BLENDED LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines whether human interaction in blended learning enhances student performance and satisfaction for an introductory principles of accounting course over the period 2010-2011. It has been argued that interaction is one of the most important components of any learning experience (Dewey, 1938; Vrasidas & McIsaac, 1999). Results indicate that the blended course with greater human interactions does not impact the student performance after controlling several control factors such as prior GPA, math grade, gender and transfer status. However, student evaluation improves with greater interaction, suggesting human interaction is associated with greater satisfaction with teaching.

INTRODUCTION

It has been argued that blended learning allows faculty to integrate the best of the online learning environment with the best of the face-to-face learning environment (Graham, 2005), and it works better than purely online and purely face-to-face learning. However, it has not reached a consensus on how to better incorporate the face-to-face and online teaching resources. This study provides additional evidence on blended course implementation, student performance and satisfaction for introductory financial accounting course by emphasizing the effect of human interactions in blended course.

Interaction is one of the most important components of any learning experience, and it has been identified as an essential characteristic of successful distance learning courses (Fulford & Zhang, 1993; McIsaac & Gunawardena, 1996; Moore, 1989; Wagner, 1994). Previous studies have identified a theoretical basis for defining interaction (Hillman, Willis, & Gunawardena, 1994; Moore, 1989; Wagner, 1994; Zhang & Fulford, 1994). (Moore, 1989) distinguishes three types of interactions for distance education: (1) learner-instructor interactions that provide motivation, feedback, and dialogue between teacher and students; (2) learner-content

interactions, through which students may acquire facts; (3) learner-learner interactions, through which students exchange and sharpen subject-related knowledge. (Hillman et al., 1994) argue that past discussions of interaction failed to acknowledge the fact that for any of the three types of interactions to take place, the learner had to interact with the medium. Therefore, they propose a learner-media interaction. (Zhang & Fulford, 1994) emphasize the important and complex interplay between interaction for instructional purposes and interaction based on social connections and perceptions of connections among participants. In this study, we focus on two human interactions: learner-instructor interactions and learner-learner interactions.

(AACSB, Revised 2007) recommends that a mix of student-faculty and student-student interaction be included in quality distant learning program. Considering behavioral and cognitive theory, (Bryant & Hunton, 2000) argue that “Feedback should be given to students to monitor their progress and reinforce positive behavior.” (Guideline #3). “Individual characteristics of learner should be taken into account in instructional design, e.g., the prior knowledge of the student, the motivation of the student, and the learning style of the students.” (Guideline #4). (Bryant, Kahle, & Schafer, 2005) raise questions such as “what are the factors related to student satisfaction with a technical topic like accounting?” as well as “how does increased interactivity promote knowledge transfer in accounting distance education?” This study tries to answer these questions by looking at the human interaction in blended introductory financial accounting courses.

The empirical tests use one blended course for two semesters. The difference is that one semester has greater human interactions. We posit that the communication from the instructor prior to the online assignment, the timely feedback on the individual/overall task performance, as well as the communication among the student group members effectively enhance student motivation and mental effort. It enhances the student’s performance and, in turn, the evaluation of the course. Results using an introductory accounting course over the period 2010-2011 indicate that the blended course with greater human interaction does not impact the student performance after controlling certain control factors such as prior GPA, math grade, gender and transfer or freshman start status. However, students' evaluations have improved with greater interaction. The results indicate that human interaction is associated with greater student satisfaction.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

With blended learning, the learning process changes from a teaching-centered to a learning-centered process. The interactive methods are different for face-to-face versus distance learning settings. (Vrasidas & McIsaac, 1999) identify four factors influencing interaction in an online course from both teacher and student perspectives, which include structure of the course, class size, feed-back, and prior experience with computer-mediated communication. They argue that some structures of the course such as requiring students in discussing the final paper outline

with the teacher, collaborating on peer editing of students' papers, and participating in online discussions lead to more interactions and increased dialogue among students, while other aspects of structure such as demanding amount of workload and the schedule of face-to-face and online meetings lead to fewer interactions. Further, the smaller the class size, the less the interactions during the asynchronous online discussions. In addition, feedback influences interaction. The teacher should provide timely feedback to students' contributions in all aspects of the course. Lastly, prior experience with computer-mediated communication influences interaction. Participants with limited prior experience may feel intimidated when others use emoticons during their interactions. Communication from the instructor prior to the online assignment and timely feedback on the individual/overall task performance, and communication among the student group members can effectively enhance student motivation and mental effort. It enhances the student's performance and, in turn, the evaluation of the course. This study hypothesizes that human interactions such as timely feedback and group work in blended course will motivate the students and enhance students' course performances. The hypothesis is stated as follows:

H1 A blended teaching model that incorporates human interactions improves the student final performance.

In addition to learning outcomes, students' satisfactions of blended course are important. Prior studies have found mixed results for students' satisfaction on blended course. For example, (Love & Fry, 2006) find that few students view the web-based environment as a "springboard" to enhance education performance. The online version of teaching materials does not motivate students to either attend face-to-face sessions or to use the online materials to engage in an independent and deep approach to learning. Their findings do not support existing literature that the web-based environment contributes to improved relationships in terms of communication between learner-tutor and learner-learner. On the other hand, (Jones & Chen, 2008) find that blended learning students are significantly more likely to indicate that the instructor provides prompt feedback outside of class, is available to answer their question, and keeps students informed of their progress. However, students in blended class are significantly less likely to indicate that instructor explains the material in an interesting manner, and the students are less satisfied with the interaction between instructor and students. (Stevenson, Sander, & Naylor, 1996) find that timely and encouraging feedback on their assignments directly affected students' general sense of satisfaction with the course. Hypothesis 2 is stated as follows:

H2 A blended teaching model that incorporates human interactions improves the student satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Course Design

Principles of Accounting I (ACT 211) is an introductory financial accounting course and is required for all students and all degrees offered by the business school. In addition, a portion of students come from other colleges such as Arts & Sciences, Liberal Arts, and Engineering. Therefore, the students range from freshman to senior, and some of them are not business major. For a large portion of the students, this class will be the only accounting course that they take. Among these students, many tend to have negative attitudes towards accounting (Mladenovic, 2000).

The course objective of ACT 211 is to provide students a basic understanding of accounting and to use accounting information to make business decisions. Topics covered in the course include basic accounting concepts and procedures through the analysis, classification, recording, and summarizing of business transactions; preparation and analysis of the major financial statements; and recording and reporting the major components of the statements, such as cash, receivables, inventories, long-lived assets, payables, notes, bonds, equity, and investments.

Prior to fall 2010, the ACT 211 was delivered using a traditional teaching model that involved two 75-minute sections each week, supplemented by WebCT. Lecture slides were posted on WebCT for student convenience. Announcements were made through email and WebCT. Homework solutions were posted after returning the students' assignments. Student grades were updated each week on WebCT. The instructor collected the homework assignments and handed back after grading them. The face-to-face meeting included lecture discussion and in-class exercises. In fall 2010, the ACT 211 was granted Davis grant for Implementation of Blended Learning for the Improvement of Student Learning (IBIS) and delivered using the blended learning model. Through intensive training during summer 2010, the course was redesigned from web-enhanced learning to blended learning.

(Wagner, 1994) proposes three prerequisites in order to make interaction a more useful construct for distance learning environments: (1) an operational definition of interaction based on relevant theory and research; (2) course designs that go beyond replicating face-to-face methods and infuse interaction in ways that take advantage of the mediation possible between learner and technology; and (3) empirical assessments of interaction and measurement of effects on achievement.

To go beyond replicating face-to-face methods, the blended course design in ACT 211 was not to just post materials online as web-enhanced learning. It shifted some of the learning activities online. For example, online tools were designed so that students could learn by themselves and from each other before and after classes. Ways for students to learn before class included posting knowledge-based questions / quizzes/ video/ slides online, and required

students to submit answers online before the class started. Ways for students to learn during class included in-class discussions and individual or group cases and exercises. Ways for students to learn after class included (1) asking students to post on discussion board what was the most confusing part of the class and what they thought was the main point of the class, (2) after-class online individual homework and quizzes, and (3) online group real company analysis postings and comments. The design of blended courses follows (Shibley, 2009) and (Michaelsen & Black, 1994). Bloom's Taxonomy classifies the education objective into six categories: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation (Bloom, 1956). (Shibley, 2009) suggests that lower level of Knowledge and Comprehension be learned by the student themselves before class and tested through short online quizzes. (Michaelsen & Black, 1994) discuss that one of the key course design considerations in team learning is Readiness Assurance Process (RAP), which is in consistent with (Shibley, 2009).

Assessment of student performance in the blended course was based on homework assignments (turned in via Homework Manager or Connect), in-class exercises, in-class participation, publisher's online quizzes (turned in using WebCT), a company social responsibility writing project, two midterm examinations, and a final examination, as well as the online components including before-class quizzes, after-class comments postings, and real company case and project postings. The formats of the midterm and final examinations were 44 and 66 multiple choice questions, which increased the comparability of the student performance during two years. The classes were taught by the same instructor using same materials for two semesters. Both classes used the same textbook, homework assignments and publisher's online quizzes.

In fall 2010, the blended course was taught with less human interactions as compared to spring 2011. For example, in fall 2010, students complained that there was too much work to do, and instructor indicated that monitoring students' online postings were time-consuming. As a result, the instructor did not provide much feedback for the online portion of the course due to time constraints. Students also felt that their peers did not provide them with enough feedback on online discussions. In spring 2011, instructor worked hard to provide timely feedback on student performances. In addition, the real company analysis case and project was redesigned as group project instead of individual work to enhance interaction between learner and learner. The students were assigned into groups at the beginning of the semester.

3.2. Empirical Model for Student Performance

The empirical model is as follows:

$$\text{Grade} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{Type} + \alpha_2 \text{Gender} + \alpha_3 \text{Transfer} + \alpha_4 \text{Mathgrade} + \alpha_5 \text{PriorGPA} + \alpha_6 \text{BusinessProg} + \alpha_7 \text{Level} + \text{error}_t$$

where,

Grade = final course grade or final exam grade in financial accounting course.

Type = 1 if blended with greater human interaction (spring 2011), 0 if blended with less human interaction (fall 2010).

Gender = 1 if male, 0 if female.

Transfer = 1 if transfer student, 0 freshman start.

Mathgrade = Math 103 grade, math course taken when first entering college.

PriorGPA = prior grade point average (GPA) before taking financial accounting course.

BusinessProg = 1 if business program, 0 otherwise.

Level = 1 if sophomore, 0 otherwise.

Hypothesis 1 posits that blended teaching model directly improves the student final performance, which suggests that $\alpha_1 > 0$.

3.3 Student evaluation of teaching

The student evaluation form uses a standard set of measures to evaluate the course and the instructor. There are 15 questions in the evaluation form. The student evaluations are based on 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (No Strong Opinion), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly Agree) scale. The student evaluations are performed at the ending 15 minutes of the last scheduled class. The instructor is absent from the room while students conduct their evaluations. The form and responses are then collected by a student volunteer and deliver to the department. The evaluation results are sent to the instructor at the beginning of the next semester.

3.4. Sample

The sample includes students who completed Principles of Accounting I in fall 2010 and spring 2011. In fall 2010, 51 out of 52 students completed the course; in spring 2011, 46 out of 50 students completed the course. Following (Dowling, Godfrey, & Gyles, 2003), a student is classified as completed the course if he/she has attempted the final examination. 25 students without math grade or prior GPA are also dropped from the sample. The final sample includes 71 students: 40 from fall 2010 and 31 from spring 2011.

The student information including academic affiliations, gender, and prior grade point average (GPA) is presented in Table 1. The students come from a variety of academic backgrounds, and vary for the sample period. There are 0.5% (2) in Arts and Science in fall 2010, 44% (15) in Arts and Science in spring 2011. Business major is 38/40 (95%) in fall 2010, and 13/31 (42%) in spring 2011. Male is 30/40 (75%) in fall 2010, and 19/31 (61%) in spring 2011.

The descriptive statistics on final course grades and final examination grades indicate that there are no statistically significant differences for high and low human interactions. In addition, the control variables PriorGPA, Mathgrade, gender, and transfer are not significantly different.

Table 1. Student Information for Blended Courses With High and Low Human Interaction

Panel A		
Items	Greater Human Interaction (Spring 2011)	Less Human Interaction (Fall 2010)
By academic affiliation		
Arts and Science	15	2
Engineering	3	0
Business	13	38
Business Undeclared	7	22
Accounting	2	5
Other Business Majors	4	11
Total	31	40
By Level		
Freshman	2	20
Sophomore	24	19
Junior	5	1
By Gender		
Male	19	30
Female	12	10
Total	31	40

Panel B						
Variables	Greater Human Interaction (Spring 2011)		Less Human Interaction (Fall 2010)		Mean t-test (t-value)	Wilcoxon Median test (z-value)
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median		
Overall mark	76.260	76.92	76.335	78.38	-0.021	0.116
Final exam	70.679	67.52	70.524	71.775	-0.454	-0.389
Prior GPA	2.648	2.7	2.670	2.843	-0.351	-0.301
Math grade	2.752	2.7	2.63	2.85	0.538	0.397
Gender	0.613	1	0.75	1	-1.234	-1.230
Transfer	0.194	0	0.075	0	1.491	1.479

Note: The variables are defined as follows. Gender = 1 if male, 0 if female. Transfer = 1 if transfer student, 0 freshman start. Mathgrade = Math 103 grade, math course taken when first entering college. PriorGPA = prior grade point average (GPA) before taking financial accounting course.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents regression analysis of final examination grade (Model 1) and total course grade (Model 2) for high and low human interactions after controlling for gender, transfer status, math grade, prior GPA academic affiliation, academic level. The results show that Type is not statistically significant, which does not support hypothesis 1. The only significant factor is PriorGPA. Student with higher prior GPA receives higher grade in the class.

Table 2. Regression Results for High and Low Human Interactions on Blended Course

Dependent variable	Model 1 (final exam grade)		Model 2 (final course grade)	
Intercept	24.451**	(2.59)	33.077***	(4.41)
Type	0.631	(0.13)	0.655	(0.17)
Gender	3.265	(0.78)	2.252	(0.68)
Transfer	4.134	(0.74)	2.384	(0.54)
Mathgrade	1.693	(0.72)	2.206	(1.19)
PriorGPA	12.200***	(3.36)	12.700***	(4.41)
Program	3.689	(0.72)	-0.519	(-0.13)
Level	3.763	(0.92)	2.400	(0.74)
Adjusted R ²	0.217		0.334	
F	3.78		6.01	
Significance	0.001***		0.000***	
observation	71		71	

Notes: The variables are defined as follows. Gender = 1 if male, 0 if female. Transfer = 1 if transfer student, 0 freshman start. Mathgrade = Math 103 grade, math course taken when first entering college. PriorGPA = prior grade point average (GPA) before taking financial accounting course. BusinessProg = 1 if business program, 0 otherwise. Level = 1 if sophomore, 0 otherwise. The t statistics are in parenthesis. ***/**/* denote the significance at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level.

Table 3 provides the results on student satisfaction for the course. Among the 15 evaluation questions, seven (ten) items are significantly higher for greater human interaction than less human interaction at 5% (10%) significance. These include the students' views of instructor, such as "Instructors was concerned that students learn and understand"; "Instructors was able to transmit knowledge clearly"; "Instructor used class time effectively". The items also include students' views of the course, for example, "Course was well organized"; "Teaching materials required for this course was helpful". On the other hand, opinions regarding exams and grading fairness remain the same.

Table 3. Student Satisfaction for High and Low Human Interactions on Blended Course

Items	Spring 2011: Greater Human Interaction Mean (Median)	Fall 2010: Less Human Interaction Mean (Median)	Two-sample t test p-value for Mean Difference	Two-sample Wilcoxon rank-sum (Mann-Whitney) test for Median Difference
1. Instructor used class time effectively.	4.438 (4.5)	3.462 (4.0)	0.008***	0.014**
2. Instructor was able to transmit knowledge clearly.	3.625 (4.0)	2.769 (3.0)	0.018**	0.032**
3. Instructor was able to generate student interest in the course material.	3.563 (3.5)	3.0 (3.0)	0.077*	0.274
4. Instructor was well prepared for class sessions.	4.625 (5.0)	3.923 (4.0)	0.014**	0.031**

Table 3. Student Satisfaction for High and Low Human Interactions on Blended Course

Items	Spring 2011: Greater Human Interaction Mean (Median)	Fall 2010: Less Human Interaction Mean (Median)	Two-sample t test p-value for Mean Difference	Two-sample Wilcoxon rank-sum (Mann-Whitney) test for Median Difference
5. Instructor attended classes regularly.	4.875 (5.0)	4.462 (5.0)	0.065*	0.099*
6. Instructor was open to relevant discussion in class.	4.063 (4.0)	3.923 (4.0)	0.341	0.798
7. Instructor was concerned that students learn and understand.	4.438 (4.0)	3.846 (4.0)	0.043**	0.130
8. Instructor showed an interest in and respect for me as an individual.	4.313 (4.0)	3.923 (4.0)	0.084*	0.163
9. Objectives and topics of this course were made clear.	4.063 (4.0)	3.769 (4.0)	0.221	0.752
10. My course responsibilities were well defined.	4.375 (4.0)	3.615 (4.0)	0.040**	0.127
11. Course was well organized.	4.188 (4.0)	3.462 (4.0)	0.039**	0.095*
12. Teaching materials required for this course were helpful.	4.375 (4.0)	3.462 (4.0)	0.009***	0.013**
13. Exam content was representative of the course content and objectives.	4.25 (4.0)	4.0 (4.0)	0.260	0.814
14. Exam items were clear and well written.	4.188 (4.0)	4.0 (4.0)	0.313	0.981
15. Exams, homework and projects were graded fairly.	4.188 (4.0)	4.231 (4.0)	0.557	0.832

Note: The student satisfactions were based on 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (No Strong Opinion), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly Agree) scale. It was performed at the ending 15 minutes of the last scheduled class. The instructor was absent from the room while students conducted their evaluations. The form and responses were then collected by a student volunteer and delivered to the department. The evaluation results were sent to the instructor at the beginning of the next semester.

SUMMARY

Blended course combines traditional delivery with online teaching resources to enhance the quality of student learning. Recently, studies have examined whether blended learning model enhances the student performance as compared to traditional learning model. This study adds to this literature by examining whether human interaction in blended course will enhance student performance and satisfaction.

(Bryant & Hunton, 2000) suggest that the underlying theory for technology research include behavioral and cognitive theory. Behavioral theory focuses on the manipulation of controllable variables to achieve a desired, quantifiable outcome and the cognitive theory focuses on the interaction between the media and the learner. The emphasis is to identify learner

variables that mediate learning and to understand the mental processes that occur within the learner. As both behavioral and cognitive influences play important roles in designing instruction, the instructional design should have focused on both behavioral and cognitive influences. Based on cognitive theory, the degree of interactive participation by the learner is highly influential in enhancing learning outcomes.

Using an introductory principles of accounting course over the period 2010-2011, the results indicate that the blended course with greater human interaction does not impact the student performance after controlling certain control factors such as prior GPA, math grade, gender and transfer. However, students' evaluations have improved with greater interaction, suggesting that human interaction is associated with greater satisfaction with teaching.

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A NATIONAL SURVEY ON THE PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF SYLLABI COMPONENTS: DIFFERENCES AND AGREEMENTS BETWEEN STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS IN THE PRINCIPLES OF ACCOUNTING COURSE

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ABSTRACT

Faculty often spend a great deal of time preparing their course syllabi. What goes into the syllabus is often dictated by requirements of their respective universities and by various accrediting agencies. In addition, the faculty may want to relay information that they think is most important to their students' success and wish to stress this information in the course syllabi.

However, the information that the faculty feels most important may not be the same as what students feel most important. To make the syllabi more useful to students, faculty members need to know what information the students most want. This study identifies 28 items required or found on most course syllabi and asks both faculty and students to rate their importance on a 7 point Likert scale. A Welch ANOVA was used to test whether significant differences exist as to faculty and student perceptions.

INTRODUCTION

The syllabus is a course contract between a faculty member and the students and contains a great deal of information. What a faculty member includes in the syllabus is often dictated by their respective university or accrediting body. When preparing their syllabus or when reviewing it with the students on the opening day of class, a faculty member may highlight and put more emphasis on the things the faculty member feels the students need to be successful in the course and may, therefore, cover these topics in more detail.

Alternatively, students may consider certain items to be more important than the faculty member thought. If so, then the faculty member should be aware of the students' perceptions and place greater importance on the items in the printed syllabus and class introduction.

A survey was conducted in the Principles of Accounting course at 31 academic institutions to compare faculty and student perceptions as to the relative importance of various

items typically found on course syllabi. When having their students complete the survey, the faculty member also completed a separate survey asking the same information. A seven-point Likert scale was used to ask the students ‘how much attention they paid’ and the faculty member ‘how much attention they thought the student paid’ to 28 items found on a typical course syllabus, with ‘1’ being ‘No Attention at All’ to ‘7’ being ‘great deal of attention.’ A Welch ANOVA was used to test whether the perceptions of the faculty members were significantly different from the perception of the students. Of the 28 items surveyed, 16 were found to be significantly different between the two groups.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years there have been several calls for improvement in higher education (Seldon 1990). Specific encouragement to improve university accounting education practices has been provided by the Accounting Education Change Commission (AECC), the American Accounting Association (AAA), the major accounting firms, and many others (AAA, 1996; AECC, 1993; Albrecht & Sack, 2000; Kerr & Smith, 2003). Even though accounting is a discipline devoted to the presentation and communication of decision-making information, there has been little research on improving the course syllabus in accounting classes (Marcis et al., 2005).

Doolittle and Lusk (2007) assert that course syllabi serve several purposes. Although the basic premise of this research is that the content of the course syllabi varies greatly, most syllabi do reflect the design of the course, the selection of appropriate material, the pedagogical methods and assessment devices that will be used, and some guidance to the students on how to successfully complete the course. Thus, the importance of the content within the class syllabus makes this research relevant. In addition, Jervis and Hartley (2005) suggest that faculty may use syllabi from other schools to aid in developing a course, and several AAA sections support syllabi exchange websites. Parkes and Harris (2002) believe that a syllabus serves as a contract, provides permanent documentation for the course, and provides information useful for student learning. Therefore, the content of the class syllabus is important to resolve disputes between the instructor, to assist in maintaining accreditation of curriculum programs, and in serving students as valued customers (Matejka and Kurke, 1994; Shelley, 2005; Halbesleben et al., 2003). In view of the many different purposes that a syllabus serves, one should not be surprised that the syllabus has grown from a one-page document to a course guide of several pages (Garavalia et al., 1999; Parkes et al, 2003).

A review of the literature indicates that many different opinions exist on the components that make up an “ideal” syllabus and the effectiveness of the typical class syllabus. Smith and Razzouk (1993) found that undergraduate marketing students displayed an inability to recall basic course information from their class syllabus. Becker and Calhoun (1999) surveyed undergraduate psychology students regarding the importance that 29 items that typically appear in a course syllabus. Their results indicated that the students more highly valued information

regarding grading policies, exam and assignment due dates, and reading material covered by an exam or quiz than information such as the academic dishonesty policy, course withdrawal dates, the titles of the required textbooks/readings, or basic course information such as the course number and title. Becker and Calhoun also found that opinions on course components varied between traditional and non-traditional students. Garavalia et al. (1999) surveyed 74 faculty members from various disciplines in addition to surveying undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory psychology course. Their survey found that faculty and students differed in the amount of importance that they assigned to 15 syllabi items, out of the 39 syllabi items contained in the survey. Keller et al. (2006) found that introductory accounting students at different types of universities have differing opinions on the importance of various syllabi components. Keller et al. (2008) extended prior research and found that the amount of importance given to syllabus components varies by student demographic factors. Doolittle and Lusk (2007) studied syllabi created by faculty and their results indicate that both gender and the type of academic institution affect the information included in the course syllabus. Parkes et al. (2003) found that syllabi exhibit differences when considering the academic discipline of the course and the whether the course was at the undergraduate or graduate level. Furthermore, their study found that some instructors do not include information in their syllabus that is important to assessment.

Although some faculty may not accept the viewpoint of students as customers, they may still find student opinions are important for several pragmatic reasons (Zell, 2001). First, students may use the syllabus to decide if they should continue their enrollment in the class. For example, a student may decide his/her schedule is overloaded if the syllabus communicates that several time-consuming projects are required for the class. The student can withdraw from the class and take the course in a later semester, presumably when the student has more time available. Additionally, professors who have enrollment-sensitive classes may need to know the most important syllabus factors in the prospective student's decision. Second, an instructor may find it prudent to know the critical components of a course syllabus from a student's perspective, given the relative weight of student evaluations in tenure, promotion, and pay raise decisions. Course evaluation forms often ask the student to respond to questions about the syllabus (e.g., "The instructor provided a syllabus that clearly stated the course requirements"). Thus, an instructor's evaluation scores could be negatively affected if the material considered most important to the student is not included in their syllabus. Finally, as the course syllabus grows in length, the students may struggle with information overload. In other words, the increasing length of course syllabi may impede the student from discerning the information he/she really needs to process, particularly if the size of the syllabus discourages the student from reading the entire document.

In any case, Altman (1999) suggests that syllabus goals can only be achieved if the syllabus provides sufficient information. Yet, sufficient information may not be the only problem facing the instructor's syllabus. One would expect students to read and remember only information they deem important. Even though an instructor may believe that all of the

information in the syllabus is of great importance, it does not necessarily follow that the students will attach the same weight to that information. Therefore, this study examines where accounting students and faculty disagree on the importance of syllabus components, so that faculty can identify areas of information that may need to be emphasized by different methods or practices to create effective communication.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Accounting faculty at 50 colleges and universities were contacted and asked to participate in a study pertaining to the course syllabus. The contacted faculty members were asked to administer a survey questionnaire to students enrolled in an introductory accounting course. Some faculty stated they were interested in the research concept but were not teaching an introductory course in the spring term. Other faculty stated that institutional policies or other reasons made them unable/unwilling to participate in this study. Faculty at 31 institutions in 19 states agreed to administer the survey questionnaire to students enrolled in the Principles of Accounting course. Faculty who agreed to have their classes participate in the study were mailed a package that contained a specified number of student survey questionnaires and a pre-paid, pre-addressed envelope in which to return the completed student questionnaires. Each faculty participant was asked to distribute the student questionnaires to willing volunteers. The students answered the survey questions after their class session.

The instructions at the top of the survey were: "The Syllabus for a course is an 'agreement' between the instructor and the students in a course. We are researching what factors students feel are important to include in a Syllabus." The survey instrument contained two sections. The first section contained 28 items that frequently appear on a course syllabus. A number of the survey items used in the current study were also used in the study by Becker and Calhoun (1999). A seven-point Likert scale was assigned to the student responses (where "1" = "no attention at all" to "7" = "great deal of attention"). Each item in this section had a corresponding reference to a course syllabus component (e.g., "attendance policy," "examination and quiz dates," "late assignment policy," "course goals and objectives," and "required prerequisite coursework to enroll in the course").

The second section of the survey requested demographic data from the individual student respondent. Specific questions pertained to the respondent's gender, age, year in school, primary field of study, and grade point average. Each faculty member who agreed to distribute the surveys to undergraduates received a separate envelope with five copies of a faculty version of the survey and five self-addressed, pre-paid envelopes. The faculty member was asked to complete one of the faculty surveys and to distribute the other four faculty surveys to colleagues (with the enclosed envelopes). Specific questions inquired if the institution was either private or state-assisted, if the school of business was accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate

Schools of Business-International (AACSB), the state in which the college/university was located, and the approximate “full-time equivalent” (FTE) size of the student body.

RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes institutional characteristics (Panel A) and demographic data (Panel B) based on student responses to the survey. The total number of students responding to the survey was 1,726. Students at state-assisted institutions accounted for 71.4 percent (1,233 of 1,726) of the respondents, although only 61.3 percent (19 of 31) of the colleges and universities that administered the survey were public institutions. Approximately 39 percent (672 of 1,726) of the student respondents were at institutions accredited by the AACSB. Using full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment as a proxy for the size of the institution, the data reveals that almost half of the student group were from institutions that had student enrollment at less than 5,000 FTE. Panel B of Table 1 indicates that the number of male and female respondents were approximately equal. Most students were in their second (44.8 percent) or third (31.6 percent) year of collegiate studies. Although the most frequent majors reported by the students were within the business disciplines, with Management being cited the most frequently (18.4 percent of the students), at least 15 academic majors were represented by the respondents. Based on averages, the typical respondent was slightly over the age of 21, had a 3.0 GPA, and was taking slightly more than 14 credit hours of classes in the semester of the survey.

Table 1 – Panel A		
INSTITUTIONAL DATA OF STUDENTS		
	STUDENTS	
CHARACTERISTIC	Number	Percent
Public (state-assisted)	1,233	71.4
Private	493	28.6
AACSB	672	38.9
Non-AACSB	1,054	61.1
Less than 1,000 FTE	19	1.1
1,000 – 4,999 FTE	834	48.3
5,000 – 9,999 FTE	551	31.9
More than 10,000 FTE	322	18.6

Table 1 - Panel B		
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF STUDENTS		
CHARACTERISTIC	NUMBER	PERCENT
Male	864	50.0
Female	847	49.1
Not Reported	15	0.9
First Year	169	9.8
Second Year	774	44.8
Third Year	546	31.6
Fourth Year	174	10.1
Fifth (or More) Year	31	1.8
Not Reported	32	1.9
Accounting	287	16.6
Economics	45	2.6
Finance	144	8.3
General Business	269	15.6
Information Systems	189	11.0
Management	318	18.4
Marketing	250	14.5
Other Business	45	2.6
Sciences	20	1.2
Humanities and Social Sciences	58	3.4
Journalism	8	0.5
Mathematics & Comp. Science	15	0.9
Education	3	0.2
Fine Arts	7	0.4
Other Major	25	1.4
Undecided/Undeclared	15	0.9
Not Reported	28	1.6
Age (in years)	1,677	21.63
Credit Hours Current Semester	1,691	14.29
Cumulative G.P.A.	1,508	3.00

Table 2 summarizes institutional characteristics (Panel A) and demographic data (Panel B) based on faculty responses to the survey. Of the 56 faculty members responding to the survey, 51.8 percent were at AACSB institutions. Similar to the student group, almost 68 percent (38 of 56) were teaching at public colleges and universities and exactly half of the

Instructors were working at institutions with student enrollment at less than 5,000 FTE. Panel B of Table 2 reveals that slightly more males than females responded to the survey. Most of the respondents had obtained a doctorate degree, although 30.4 percent of the instructors report having acquired an MBA as their highest degree of education. The number of MBA respondents is not a surprising result, given that many accounting programs only require a master's degree to be qualified to teach the accounting principles courses. Also, the data

indicates an almost equal spread across the academic ranks, and a variety of experience levels accumulated by the faculty respondents.

Table 2 – Panel A		
INSTITUTION AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF FACULTY		
CHARACTERISTIC	FACULTY	
	Number	Percent
Public (state-assisted)	38	67.9
Private	18	32.1
AACSB	29	51.8
Non-AACSB	27	48.2
Less than 1,000 FTE	5	8.9
1,000 – 4,999 FTE	23	41.1
5,000 – 9,999 FTE	15	26.8
More than 10,000 FTE	13	23.2

Table 2 - Panel B:		
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF FACULTY		
CHARACTERISTIC	NUMBER	PERCENT
Male	29	51.8
Female	26	46.4
Not reported	1	1.8
Ph.D.	21	37.5
D.B.A.	5	8.9
Ed.D	3	5.3
M.B.A.	17	30.4
Other	10	17.9
Instructor	12	21.4
Assistant Professor	14	25.0
Associate Professor	16	28.6
Full Professor	14	25.0
0 – 5 years of experience	11	19.6
6 – 10 years of experience	8	14.3
11 – 15 years of experience	6	10.7
16 – 20 years of experience	14	25.0
21 – 25 years of experience	9	16.1
26 – 30 years of experience	3	5.4
31 – 35 years of experience	2	3.6
Not reported	3	5.4

Table 3 reports means, the absolute difference between the means of the two groups, and the *F* statistics for each of the 28 survey items. The survey items (i.e., syllabi components) are listed in order from the largest difference in means to the smallest amount difference between means.

Table 3 FACULTY/STUDENT SYLLABI COMPONENT PREFERENCES ANALYSIS: WELCH ANOVA RESULTS, RANKED BY ABSOLUTE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEANS						
		Means		Absolute Diff.		
Item Number	Item	Faculty	Student	between Means	F ratio	Prob > F
16	Whether extra credit can be earned	3.46429	5.71221	2.24790	57.1627	0.0001
15	Title and authors of textbooks and readings	6.42857	4.74985	1.67872	148.509	0.0001
9	Type of examinations and quizzes (for example, multiple choice, essay)	4.62500	5.98084	1.35580	29.4383	0.0001
20	Dates and time of special events that must be attended outside of class	4.36364	5.68972	1.32610	15.5757	0.0002
28	Available support services (for example, tutoring, computerized study guides)	3.98182	5.27155	1.28970	23.9663	0.0001
22	Where to obtain materials for class (for example, texts, readings, lab materials)	3.98182	5.06166	1.07980	12.4490	0.0008
27	Drop/withdrawal dates	4.00000	5.05076	1.05080	10.3110	0.0022
3	Course information (for example, course number and title, section number, credit hours)	5.98214	4.99188	0.99026	22.7218	0.0001
19	Required prerequisite coursework necessary to enroll in the course	5.96429	4.97488	0.98940	22.7874	0.0001
21	Amount of work (for example, amount of reading, number and length of other assignments)	4.48148	5.32249	0.84100	8.8115	0.0044
26	Academic dishonesty policy	5.50000	4.69074	0.80926	8.5196	0.0050
6	Instructor information (for example, name, title, office location, phone number, e-mail address)	6.71429	6.12580	0.58849	44.2403	0.0001
5	Course format (for example, lecture, discussion, videos, classroom activities)	5.00000	5.57724	0.57724	5.5838	0.0215
23	Course goals and objectives	5.85714	5.29971	0.55743	8.1453	0.0059
18	Late assignment policy	6.17857	5.66240	0.51617	10.4968	0.0019
25	Instructor's office hours	6.57143	6.05814	0.51329	28.2867	0.0001
4	Course description	5.87500	5.43808	0.43692	5.0423	0.0285
2	Days, hours, and location of class meetings	6.08929	5.73754	0.35174	2.6270	0.1104
24	Holidays observed	4.87500	5.21279	0.33779	1.3308	0.2534
7	Grading procedure and policies	6.78571	6.45064	0.33508	26.3515	0.0001
13	Reading material covered by each examination or quiz	5.67857	5.97499	0.29641	2.0594	0.1567

Table 3 FACULTY/STUDENT SYLLABI COMPONENT PREFERENCES ANALYSIS: WELCH ANOVA RESULTS, RANKED BY ABSOLUTE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEANS						
		Means		Absolute Diff.		
12	Examination and quiz dates	5.98214	6.25523	0.27309	2.0513	0.1574
17	Due dates of out-of-class assignments	5.80357	6.06515	0.26158	1.3468	0.2506
14	Schedule of topics to be covered	5.85714	5.62413	0.23302	1.9762	0.1649
8	Attendance policy	6.26786	6.04479	0.22306	2.5417	0.1160
10	Number of examinations and quizzes	6.48214	6.26236	0.21978	3.7061	0.0588
1	Class participation requirements	5.27778	5.45739	0.17961	0.5167	0.4753
11	Kind of assignments (for example, readings, papers, presentations, projects)	6.10714	6.00756	0.09958	0.4226	0.5181

The means for each survey item were created from the responses on a seven-point Likert scale, where both faculty and students indicated their perceived importance (“1” = “no attention at all” to “7” = “great deal of attention”) of a given syllabi component. We computed the mean score for each survey item for each group. The faculty group size varied from 54 to 56 responses, depending on the item. The student group size varied from 1705 to 1726 responses. Ideally, each group would be the same size with a normal distribution. Yet, if each group is larger than 30 subjects, a traditional ANOVA procedure is robust against moderate departures from normality (Lehman et al. 2005). However, Stevens (2002) suggests that if the number of subjects in the largest group is more than 1.5 times than the number in the smaller group, the assumption of equal variances on the responses of the groups may be violated. Therefore, for each syllabi component we compared the mean scores of each group using a Welch ANOVA as a conservative approach. The Welch ANOVA, which will yield the same results as a Welch *t*-test, will accommodate the difference in sample size between the two groups as well as unequal variances (Welch 1951).

Table 3 indicates that instructors and students perceptions on the importance of syllabi components differ significantly ($p < .001$) on 11 of 28 items (or 16 out of 28 components when $p < .01$). Faculty considered the following items more important than students: “Title and authors of textbooks and readings,” “Course information (for example, course number and title, section number, credit hours),” “Required prerequisite coursework necessary to enroll in the course,” “Instructor information (for example, name, title, office location, phone number, e-mail address),” “Instructor’s office hours,” and “Grading procedure and policies.” In contrast, students considered the following syllabi components more important than faculty members: “Whether extra credit can be earned,” “Type of examinations and quizzes (for example, multiple choice, essay),” “Dates and time of special events that must be attended outside of class,” “Available support services (for example, tutoring, computerized study guides),” and “Where to obtain materials for class (for example, texts, readings, lab materials).”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The content of the course syllabus is important to a number of stakeholders for several different reasons. First, the syllabus documents the course content and policies. Second, the syllabus communicates the instructor's expectations and requirements necessary for a successful learning experience. Third, the syllabus is useful for resolving disputes between instructors and students. Fourth, the course syllabus is closely scrutinized during the accreditation process. Finally, the syllabus may influence the prospective student's decision to enroll into the class. Given all of these important reasons, it is surprising that the syllabus has received so little empirical study. The primary purpose of this study was to determine if students and faculty placed different levels of importance on items typically included in a course syllabus.

The results of this study do indicate that faculty and students differ in their opinion on the importance of several syllabi components. In general, the accounting instructors considered procedural and contact information as more important than the student subjects. Procedural items, such as required prerequisites or grading procedures, were rated higher in importance by faculty than students. Likewise, contact information such as the instructor's office hours or the instructor's name and phone number received higher scores by faculty. In addition, basic information such as the course title, course number, or the title and authors of required textbooks were perceived to be more important by the accounting instructors.

In contrast, students appear to place more emphasis than faculty in factors that may affect their grades or items that involve out-of-class activities. For example, students were more interested in whether extra credit assignments were available or the type of examinations/quizzes used in the course. Some instructors believe that extra credit shouldn't be necessary, and others insist that they will offer extra credit only if special circumstances warrant the additional assignment. Thus, they may feel that information on extra credit assignments shouldn't be in the syllabus and presented on the first day of class. Also, some faculty may feel that if a student really learns the material, the format of the exam should not affect the student's score significantly. Therefore, they may place less importance on communicating the types of exams and quizzes they will use in the course. Concern for their grades may have caused students to rate available support services (e.g., tutoring) higher than faculty members. While instructors may think that special events outside of normal class times should be a normal part of the university experience, students may be scoring this item higher than faculty because they will have to adjust the schedules of their other activities (e.g., work) to attend the event. Finally, faculty may assume that obtaining course materials should be a simple matter for students, but students may have a greater appreciation for the convenience provided by information in the syllabus that would help them to locate and obtain the materials.

This study focused on comparing faculty ratings to students' ratings on the importance of particular syllabi items in the hope of developing further insights that improve communication and course administration. The results of the study reveal the amount of importance that students

assign to different syllabus components significantly differs from faculty perceptions of the same components. This study extends previous research on syllabus components because no other study has been conducted on syllabus components that compared accounting instructors and students enrolled in an accounting principles course. The only study conducted in a business field tested the recall of syllabus elements and by upper-level marketing students.

However, this study does not specifically address how an instructor should incorporate these findings into their syllabus. Becker and Calhoon (1999) suggest alternative strategies may be used to communicate syllabus information. An instructor who wishes to satisfy student interests can use the results from this study to place the student's highest-rated components on the first page of the syllabus or to give the information a prominent display using word processing features (e.g., boldface type, different font sizes, etc.). An alternative strategy is to use the results to determine where student interest is lower, but the instructor believes the information is highly important. Then, the instructor may attempt to overcome the lack of interest by making those syllabus items more prominent. A variant of this approach would be to create special handouts of the items the instructor considers the most important, or conversely, if the instructor feels their syllabus creates information overload, to eliminate unnecessary information and to use separate handouts for topics of lesser importance.

A limitation of this study is survey response bias, which is inherent in all survey research. However, the large sample size should overcome most objections to this limitation. Furthermore, the study's institutional response rate is 62 percent, as 31 of 50 schools agreed to participate in this study. Further research might look for other factors that influence syllabi components. For example, how much influence do accreditation agencies exert upon the syllabus? A longitudinal study investigating changes in syllabi components over time may be of interest to educators and administrators. Finally, a study comparing business students with differing majors or personality types and their preferences on syllabi components could yield interesting results. In conclusion, we hope that faculty members may use the findings of this study to reassess their syllabi and perhaps include, emphasize, or provide more complete explanations of those items that are of the greatest concern to their students.

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THE HEART AND THE FIST: STUDENT ATTITUDES ON GLOBAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL WELFARE

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ABSTRACT

Many universities employ common reader programs as part of their first-year experience, with goals of exposing students to new ideas, broadening horizons and effecting change in attitudes toward global, humanitarian and other aspects of citizenship. Pre- and post-test surveys were administered to students at a regional state university that uses a common reader. Results of the study showed that, unlike earlier studies, females and males were not statistically different in measures regarding engagement with the common reader program, as well as global identification. Furthermore, students showed marked decreases in global identification and human welfare measures after reading the book.

Common reader programs have become a vital part of many university first-year experience orientations. Books intended to challenge or unite incoming freshmen are chosen to create a sense of community with the ultimate goal of retaining students. Readership committees often select books based on their ability to generate discussion, promote ethics-based education, develop learning communities, or a combination of these goals (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Mallard, Lowery-Hart, Andersen, Cuevas, & Campbell, 2008; Segal, 2011). Despite the development of common reader programs at over 100 universities around the country (Fister, 2011; Twiton, 2007), there is very little published assessment of such programs. Although common readers might engage students in discussion, there is little indication of what students actually gain from the chosen books. This study seeks to understand how a common reader might create community and affect attitudes of incoming freshmen at a Southwest regional university.

RATIONALE

The lack of published work on common reader programs is surprising given their popularity. Internal assessments are occasionally published and are no doubt completed to evaluate retention efforts, but little is done to consider the effectiveness of these texts in achieving academic goals. Considering the interest in generating conversation about socially

important topics and addressing ethical concerns, assessing the impact seems both academically and societally worthwhile. As a program, common readers are asking students to think about social issues and identify their places as individuals within such global concerns, which in turn could impact how these students interact with others in the university and their places of work. These potential implications on the broader community should encourage universities to have a better understanding of their common reader programs' role in the developing attitudes of students.

Certainly the advantages of encouraging reading cannot be overstated as research has shown an incredible academic and financial advantage to those who grew up surrounded by books over those who did not (NEA, 2007). Generating discussion about texts outside the general course requirements could have intrinsic benefits for students as critical thinking skills (Terenzini, Springer, Pascarella, & Nora, 1993), academic performance (Zapatero, Chen, Panigrahi, & Harris-Peoples, 2010), and comprehension (Murphy, Wilkinson, Soter, Hennessey, & Alexander, 2009) are enhanced because students are given more control in the learning process.

A study like this would be remiss without acknowledging the Millennial generation being reached by these programs. Unlike the generations that preceded them, Millennials are living in a time of social change, social media, and a country that has almost always been at war in the Middle East. It is a generation of multiracial families who have always experienced the "inextricable link" between race and class and as a group, Millennials "show deep concern for today's income inequalities and social stratification" (Baggott, 2009, p. 32). This generation is also more likely to engage in volunteer and civic responsibilities, which provides great opportunities for these readership programs. Baggott (2009), a Millennial herself, argues for more service-based learning and leadership opportunities to match the concerns of the Millennial generation, which is likely something the right books could help universities achieve.

LITERATURE REVIEW

All incoming freshmen at a Southwestern regional university are required to read a common text as part of a first-year experience (FYE) course. This is the eighth year of the common reader program at this university, with years 3 through 8 adding a study abroad component for essay contest winners. The 2012-13 text was *The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, the Making of a Navy SEAL* (HATF) by Eric Greitens. Greitens (2012) traveled the world working in refugee camps and saw first-hand the effects of army invasions. Joining the Navy SEALs, Greitens faced the brutality of war associated with the hope of defending those who needed it most. Each year, students in the FYE courses complete book-club style worksheets and engage in activities that pertain to the theme of the book, which in this case is global identity and social welfare.

Common reader programs have had mixed results, with some books being viewed as less successful in captivating the student body, but at the same time considered by most as critical to the success of first-year experiences (Anderson, 2006; Drumheller, Gerlich, & Mallard, 2012; Mallard et al., 2008). Although book selections vary according to the goals of the program, many readership directors are more focused on generating discussion than worrying whether students

will like the book (Mallard et al., 2008; Segal, 2011). Regardless of whether students like a book, the value of the lessons learned by the students and the discussion-building community is worth criticism (Mallard et al., 2008).

Beyond basic assessment of common reader programs, the most recent research on the effects of common readers on student attitudes explored the impact on consumer ethnocentric tendencies of freshmen after exposure to the common reader, *Where Am I Wearing: A Global Tour to the Countries, Factories, and People that Make Our Clothes* (WAIW; Gerlich et al., 2012). WAIW walks readers through the author's journey to discover the origins of his favorite clothes, where he often finds factory workers in harsh conditions. The author does not argue for boycotting necessarily, but for awareness about where our clothing is manufactured and under what conditions. In studying student engagement with the common reader program and consumer ethnocentric tendencies after reading WAIW, females were more engaged with the common reader program than males and that student awareness did indeed increase (Gerlich et al., 2012). Based on these previous findings, this study hypothesizes that:

H1: Females are more engaged with the common reader than males.

Additionally, white, conservative, male students from rural areas tended to be more consumer ethnocentric than their female counterparts, preferring at least the idea of American based products; however, financial resources more often dictated purchases despite ideals. Students who read the book in its entirety had lower consumer ethnocentric scores compared to those who did not finish reading the text, indicating a greater awareness of the global economic connectivity. Based on gender differences in the WAIW study, we hypothesize a similar difference:

H2: Females are more globally aware than males.

HATF carries a similar global theme as the previous year's common reader, in this case comparing and contrasting war and humanitarian efforts.

JUXTAPOSING WAR AND HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS

The globalization discourse that captured the attention of society at the end of the twentieth century continues to command public attention. Globalization was credited for the good things like growth and development as well as blamed for economic, political, and social woes. Globalization connects people from different locations and distances by providing the space for shared experiences such as media consumption, cuisines, and education (Lechner & Boli, 2008). Additionally, the work of international organizations (e.g., the United Nations), military activities by various countries, and media coverage of world events keep globalization in the daily conversation of our society. Ultimately, globalization brings both war and humanitarian efforts to the attention of U.S. citizens.

As such, rhetoric supporting military action for humanitarian good is particularly relevant as positioned by Greitens who advocates military service to protect those in need. Moral

disengagement is “the process by which people execute various cognitive justifications for harming others” (Finnel et al., 2011, p. 246). Protecting the U.S. and its allies from terrorism, acting against genocide, and protecting those who cannot protect themselves can be seen as justifications for military action. Additionally, President Obama (2009) has stated that the use of force is necessary and justified for humanitarian ends. Such justifications can help U.S. residents detach themselves from the consequences of war and instead see the moral ends found in helping others. But such reasoning could also hurt goals of providing foreign and civilian aid (Finnel, Reed, & Aquino, 2011). The Millennial generation has rarely known a time when the U.S. was not at war in the Middle East, which could have implications for how the world is viewed by them in terms of war and humanitarian efforts.

Because of America’s long-term connection to the war in the Middle East, it is possible for Millennials to develop a stronger U.S. identity. In a comparison of charitable giving based on centrality of American and moral identity, Finnell et al. (2011) found that “participants who rationalized harming others during war donated less to a charity that aids foreign civilians (Global Fund) and more to a cause that aids U.S. soldiers (USO)” (p. 255). Further, the more central the U.S. identity was to participants, the greater the moral disengagement and thus the more focused they were on helping American causes. Additionally, Chouliaraki (2010) cautions that certain types of humanitarian calls to action “may be feeding back into a dominant Western culture where the de-emotionalization of the suffering of distant others goes hand in hand with the over-emotionalization of our safe everyday life” (p. 122). This too can reproduce a dominant U.S. view to the detriment of global awareness and social welfare concern.

GLOBAL IDENTITY

Studies show that young adult cohorts possess a significant sense of global awareness and global identity because of their exposure to global media and brands (Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp, & Ramachander, 2000; Zhou, Yang, & Hui, 2010). Young adult cohorts face challenges when making decisions about the relationships between their global and local identities and their beliefs, values, and upbringing (Berry, 2001; Jensen; 2003, 2011). Exposure to globalization results in identity transformations, where individuals potentially form a bicultural identity “in which part of their identity is rooted in their local culture while another part stems from an awareness of their relation to the global culture” (Arnett, 2002, p. 777). This bicultural identity gives young people “a sense of belonging to a worldwide culture and includes an awareness of the events, practices, styles, and information that are part of the global culture” (p. 777). Media play an important role in developing a global identity because of the information conveyed about different places in the world and the opportunities to communicate with a global audience. This is because mass media are an integral part of the process of globalization and serve as tools for developing both national and global identities within communities (Rantanen, 2005). Crothers (2010) states “people care where their cultural artifacts come from, what values they express, and how they shape the lives of the people who use them” (p. 6). For many young people, the development of a global identity evolves alongside a developing local identity.

Globalization may also lead to identity confusion in those for whom the “images, values, and opportunities they perceive as being part of the global culture undermine their belief in the

value of local cultural practices” (Arnett, 2002, p. 778). Global cultures may contradict known experiences, potentially leading to identity confusion in the form of marginalization, acculturative stress, or cultural distance (Arnett, 2002; Berry, 1993, 1997, 1998; Segall, Lonner, & Berry, 1998). Marginalization occurs when individuals feel disillusioned with their local identity but excluded from global communities. Acculturative stress results from the experience of conflict between one’s original culture and a new culture (Berry, 1998), often resulting “when the norms and practices of the local culture are incompatible with the norms and practices introduced by the global culture” (Arnett, 2002, p. 779). Cultural distance refers to the degree of dissimilarity between cultures in their beliefs and practices” (Arnett, 2002, p. 779; Berry, 1997). Identity confusion thus results from the inability to reconcile the local and global cultural differences.

Little has been done to explain the “tensions, complexities, and interplay” that occurs as individuals negotiate their local and global identities (Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price, 2012, p. 51). In an attempt to rectify this vacancy, Strizhakova et al. (2012) developed four segments of global awareness or identification, namely “globally-engaged,” “glocally-engaged,” “nationally-engaged,” and “unengaged” (p. 51). They argue that “globally-engaged” and “glocally-engaged” young adults had strong connections to global brands compared to young adults who were categorized as “nationally engaged” and “unengaged.” These four segments of global awareness and identification support the social identity theory idea that human beings appreciate their association with specific social groups and desire to distinguish themselves from groups with which they do not associate (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987).

Other studies show that knowledge and exercise of global awareness in some cases is lacking among younger generations. A 2001 global awareness survey involving 3000 college students in the United States found that college students lacked a sense of global perspective and awareness. Additionally, respondents consistently addressed social, economic, and political issues in a national context rather than a global context (Torney-Purta, 2001). Providing students with a global perspective “requires a broad approach to fostering awareness which extends across disciplines” (Torney-Purta, 2001, p. 201). Additionally, Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) observed that college students with study abroad experience fail to include that experience in their academic experience. This potentially speaks to the young adults’ hesitation about global awareness and identity despite being given the opportunity to see social welfare through a global lens.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Although there is a plethora of research related to specific social policies such as homelessness, hunger, and disabilities, research related to general views on social welfare is sparse. Research that has been done has been largely relegated to the social work field in other countries such as China (Tam, 2001; Lou, Pearson, & Wong, 2010) and Hong Kong (Tam, 2003). Tam (2001) developed a social welfare scale that was also used in a subsequent study with undergraduate social work students (Tam, 2003). In both studies, Tam (2001; 2003) found that participants had a positive orientation toward humanitarian issues.

A study of social welfare values with social work students in Beijing and Shanghai by Lou et al. (2010) found no strong commitment to humanitarian values, which is surprising

considering Tam's earlier work, but females were likely to have "more favorable humanitarian welfare values" (p. 75). The authors also determined the most and least supported individual items from the social welfare scale they used, and like Tam (2001), found that the items participants supported most (by 40-50% of respondents) were "The welfare of every person should be protected by law," and "It is more important to enhance a person's well-being than to worry about cost" (Lou et al., 2010, p. 74). The items that were least supported (by less than 10% of respondents) were "Everyone in society should have a fair share of the resources," "Criminals are victims of an evil environment; they need help, but not punishment," and "Every person should have a good house to live in, even if the government has to provide it" (p. 75). The cultural, economic, and political differences between China and the U.S. could have interesting implications for the use of the social welfare scale.

The Millennial generation has grown up struggling to define what globalization means for them. For many, entering college provides the first opportunity to fully engage multiculturalism on campus and through study abroad. Common reader programs have the potential of providing foundations for the construction of global identities and exploration of social welfare values. Millennials tend to believe in a larger government role in addressing social inequality (Baggott, 2009), so classroom discussions related to a common reader can assist with critical thinking in relation to media representations of war and humanitarian efforts as acceptable strategies for building local communities. With this in mind, the following research questions are asked in relation to the potential change in attitudes after reading HATF:

- RQ1: How does reading the common reader, HATF, impact students' global identification?
- RQ2: How does reading the common reader, HATF, impact identification with human welfare?
- RQ3: What is the impact of the common reader, HATF, on student attitudes toward the sense of community on campus?

The method for this study is presented followed by the results and a discussion of the findings and implications. Limitations and areas for future research are provided in the conclusion.

METHOD

Participant Selection and Survey Distribution

Incoming freshmen at a regional Division II state university were surveyed regarding their attitudes about global citizenship and welfare, in conjunction with the Common Reader Program and the book *The Heart and the Fist* they were required to read. The survey was administered twice, first during a summer new student orientation weekend (before they had read the book), and again during the middle of the fall semester, after which time they were to have completed the book. The two surveys were identical except for two elements. The post-test asked how much of the book was read, as opposed to whether it had been read before, and included an additional scale to measure attitudes toward the Common Reader Program.

The pre-test was administered electronically and was available online via Qualtrics. The post-test was administered in the classroom as a pencil-and-paper survey; data were then entered manually into Qualtrics. No personally identifying information was gathered other than the last four digits of their cell phone number, which allowed for pairing of pre- and post-test data.

Both surveys collected the following demographic information: last four digits of phone number, gender, marital status, birth year, high school GPA, ACT or SAT score, country, state, political preference, ethnicity, religious affiliation and personal view on level of spirituality/religiosity. The surveys were matched manually using the last four digits of the phone number, gender, marital status, birth year and state. These matches were further revised through manual evaluation to compare additional values for possible false matches. The final matched set was the primary data used for this paper with 246 matched responses from the pre- and post-test data.

The majority of the final sample was white (65.7%), with males comprising 39.4% and females 60.6%. Participant ages were primarily 18 (59.3%) and 19 (39.4%) years of age. Most participants were unmarried (98%), leaning Republican (82.1%), claiming some form of Christianity (94.7%) with moderate to high spirituality (78.7%), and living in predominantly suburban and rural areas (57.5%) of the state of Texas (78.9%). Students in the final sample reported reading more than 80% of the assigned common reader on average.

Measures

Three scales were used in the survey to measure global identity, attitudes toward human welfare, and attitudes toward the common reader program (included only in the post-test). Negative statements on each scale were reverse coded as needed, and the individual responses for each item were summed to create a new variable representing the overall response value for that scale. In this way, a summated score was derived and used for analysis against other variables. This process was completed on scale responses for the pre- and post-test results. Comparing the pre- and post-test summated values of the first two scales allowed for the comparison of means for the scale as a single item to evaluate the overall significance of any change. The possible range of each scale represents the lowest and highest summated values possible. Because of reverse coding, lower values represent strong disagreement or a lack of identification with the scale overall whereas higher values represent strong agreement or identification with the scale overall. The following subsections discuss each scale in turn.

Global Identity Scale. A 9-item scale was used to determine the measure of student global identity. Students were asked to rate their response on a scale (1 = not at all true of me to 7 = very true of me) with each item. All items on this scale were positively phrased and did not require any reverse coding. These nine items are the global items found in Zhang and Khare's 19-item global identity scale (2009). They reported Cronbach's alpha of .70 for these nine global items separately from the other 10 local items, allowing for separate use and adaptation here (2009, p. 528). The possible range of responses of the summated scores was 9 – 63, with lower scores representing a lack of global identity or awareness. Cronbach's alpha for this study was .860.

Welfare Values Scale. An 11-item scale was used to determine the measure of student concern for human welfare. Students were asked to rate their response on a scale from 1 to 4 on each item (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree). Five of the items on this scale required reverse coding to put all items in a positive context. The scale was originally created and validated by Tam (2001). Later work by Lou, Pearson, and Long (2010) also used this scale. The range of summated responses was 11 to 44, with lower scores representing a general lack of concern for human welfare. Cronbach's alpha for this study was .775.

Common Reader Scale. This 8-item scale was used to measure student attitudes about the common reader book choice (Mallard et al., 2008). The scale asked students to respond to each item with a rating from 1 to 5 (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). One item required reverse coding to put all items in a positive context. The range of summated responses was 8 to 40, with lower scores representing a negative attitude or experience with the book used in the Common Reader Program. Cronbach's alpha for this study was .855.

RESULTS

The first hypothesis predicted that females would be more engaged with the common reader than males. An independent samples t-test comparing the results of the Common Reader Scale failed to support this hypothesis. There was no significant difference in scores for males ($M = 29.74$, $SD = 4.76$) and females ($M = 29.51$, $SD = 6.12$; $t(234) = .304$, $p = .761$). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = .231, 95% *CI*: -1.27 TO 1.72) was very small ($\eta^2 = .004$). A possible explanation could be the subject matter of this year's common reader attracted more male readership. This would indicate more fully engaged males, but not at the expense of female engagement. We thus reject H1.

The second hypothesis predicted that males would be less globally aware than females. An independent samples t-test on the combined results found the pre-test mean score for females ($M = 42.01$, $SD = 9.91$) was slightly higher than the males ($M = 41.73$, $SD = 10.24$); however, there was no significant difference in the results ($t(227) = -.207$, $p = .837$, $\eta^2 = .002$). The post-test also failed to support the second hypothesis ($t(234) = .317$, $p = .751$, $\eta^2 = .004$); however, the post-test mean score for males ($M = 37.46$, $SD = 9.94$) was higher than for females ($M = 37.04$, $SD = 9.62$), in contradiction to the original hypothesis. We thus reject H2.

The first research question asked whether students would have a higher or lower sense of global identity after reading the common reader. A paired sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the common reader on student global awareness as measured by the global identity scale. There was a statistically significant decrease in their sense of global identity from the pre-test ($M = 42.18$, $SD = 9.83$) to the post-test ($M = 37.21$, $SD = 9.78$; $t(215) = 7.43$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .21$). The results suggest that the common reader did indeed have an impact on student engagement in global awareness and that, in this particular circumstance, the impact was to reduce their overall engagement and awareness.

An item-by-item analysis of the global identity scale was also conducted to determine if any specific questions deviated from the overall findings. Paired sample t-tests were calculated for each of the nine items, with a significant drop in each of the nine mean scores. This means that students were consistent in this decrease.

The second research question asked whether students would have stronger or weaker attitudes toward human welfare after reading the common reader. A paired sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the common reader on student global awareness as measured by the welfare values scale. As with the first research question, a statistically significant decrease was found from the pre-test ($M = 31.39$, $SD = 4.36$) to the post-test ($M = 30.70$, $SD = 4.84$; $t(206) = 2.24$, $p = .026$, $\eta^2 = .024$), suggesting a reduction in overall sensitivity and awareness in human welfare.

Similarly, an item-by-item analysis was conducted using a paired sample t-test for each of the 11 items. In this case, though, very mixed results were observed. Six items had statistically significant mean reductions; three items had statistically significant increases; finally, two were virtually unchanged and thus not statistically significant. Still, the aggregated change was a significant decrease in welfare values scores.

The third research question asked what impact the common reader would have on student attitudes toward the sense of community on campus. This dependent variable was measured with a single-item Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). An independent samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the mean differences of student attitudes regarding whether or not the common reader program fosters a sense of community at the university. There was a statistically significant decrease from the pre-test response ($M = 4.06$, $SD = .763$) and the post-test response ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.09$; $t(233) = 11.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .363$). The results suggest that the book chosen as the common reader was associated with a decrease in the sense of community among peers on the university.

DISCUSSION

The results reported above are surprising in that they contradict much of what has been reported in prior studies of common reader programs, in particular at this university. Females were not more engaged than males, and males did not have a lower sense of global identification as hypothesized. Furthermore, in addressing the research questions, it was determined that students demonstrated a lower sense of global identity, less favorable attitudes toward human welfare, and a lower sense of campus community in the four months that elapsed between pre- and post-tests. These findings may be explained in part by the selection of the book, one that appealed more to males than did prior year selections. But whereas prior books that appealed to females did so at the expense of males, the current book appealed more to males yet without losing females in the process.

There may have also been unintended consequences resulting from the selection of this book in that the author wrote a very pro-military book with strong American-identified themes. This likely played well among participants (particularly the males), the majority of whom self-identified as Republican. If anything, the book may be partially responsible for pushing students in the opposite direction, causing them to increase in domestic identity at the expense of global identity and attitudes toward human welfare. This is consistent with Finnel et al. (2011), who found that being supportive of war and measures of American identity are inversely related to support for foreign humanitarian aid as well as global identity.

Although there was a slight reduction in the means of the social welfare scale between the pre-test and the post-test, there are several possible explanations. This scale has no neutral anchor, therefore students toggling between answers could have created the difference from the pre-test to the post-test. Additionally, the means on the scale were on the higher end suggesting greater social welfare support than the comparison might suggest. In comparison to the Lou et al. (2010) study, the common reader students showed much more support for the individual items in most cases. Similar to Lou et al., the U.S. students held the most support for “The welfare of every person should be protected by law” but also items involving equal treatment and care for those with disabilities, which were not highly supported in the Lou et al. study. The least supported was “Criminals are victims of an evil environment; the need help, but not punishment,” similar to the Lou et al. study, but no other item scored nearly as low. The next least supported item was “Every person should have a good house to live in, even if the government has to provide it,” but even that item had nearly 50% support where the Lou et al. sample had only 10%. Students in the U.S. may have a greater sense of the need to share resources with those who need it than students in other countries where resources are more constrained and limited.

It was also surprising to find that the book did not provide the social glue necessary to heighten student feelings of campus community. Common reader programs implicitly seek to enhance first-year experiences; that this book was not perceived to do so leads us to conclude that it may not have been a good choice for the program. It is possible that students had difficulty identifying with the author’s experiences and travels, which might be necessary for feeling engaged in discussion. The previous year’s common reader, WAIW, created a better sense of community (Gerlich et al., 2012), possibly because it had students looking in their own closets and homes for where their belongings were made. Although the countries referenced were just as distant as those in HATF, the relationship with those countries was literally on their bodies and in their homes. Providing a stronger relational connection could help students manage the local identity/global identity tensions (Arnett, 2002).

Although Millennials might be more civic minded (Baggott, 2009), they still need to feel connected to their causes. Leaders of FYE and common reader programs need to consider books that not only create discussion, but also create engagement so freshmen are more inclined to share and build community with one another. Feeling disengaged could have unintended consequences as identified in this study.

The specific scales may also have an influence on our results. For example, the Global Identity Scale and Welfare Values Scale were originally developed for use in China. It is possible that the wording and phrasing of scale items may need to be reviewed for use within the U.S. or any other country. Furthermore, while the Common Reader Scale has been used multiple times on this campus, it has not been published elsewhere. A broader use of this scale could further test its ability to measure that which it purports to measure.

CONCLUSION

The results reported herein are very mixed with regard to the effect of a collegiate common reader program. Such programs hope to expose students to new ideas and global

concerns with the goals of opening minds and perhaps changing attitudes. The findings suggest that, in this instance, the book was not effective in achieving these goals. If anything, it appears that students retreated and demonstrated a lower sense of global identity as well as less favorable attitudes toward human welfare. Furthermore, they reported a lower sense of campus community engendered by the book selected for the common reader program. These findings are surprising given the exciting topics in HATF and the success of prior books chosen for the program at this campus.

Limitations

This study is limited in that it explores student attitudes at only one university during one year of an ongoing common reader program. Results could be different depending upon the book used, the university, the socio-demographic composition of the student body, and other factors. Furthermore, the final sample utilized for this analysis was limited in the ability to pair the pre- and post-test because of those who failed to provide their identifier in both the survey implementations. It is possible that the larger sample has views different from the minority studied herein.

Yet another limitation is that any differences reported between pre- and post-test measures may not be solely attributable to the book or the common reader program. Four months elapsed between measurements, which would be sufficient for effects of the book to be realized, but numerous other factors could also affect student attitudes on human welfare as well as their sense of global identification.

The selection of specific books may also cause results to vary from year to year. Whereas the current book was likely more engaging for male readers (but not at the expense of female readers), prior years' books were likely more appealing to female readers (but at the expense of male readers). Furthermore, the subject matter of this year's book (pro-military) may have influenced results, especially in contrast to the previous year's book that had a more accessible and personally relatable theme.

Finally, the global identification and human welfare scales utilized in this study are not normally applied in a common reader setting; as such, this study is extending the use of these scales within a different context.

Areas for Future Research

Given that common reader programs typically have the aim of broadening student horizons, it would be relevant to apply the current research design across different books, different universities, and across multiple years. This would allow for better conclusions to be drawn regarding the efficacy of common reader programs toward effecting change.

Greater attention should also be given toward drawing and retaining a larger sample. While such studies must be opt-in, the majority of the freshman population was lost by virtue of either opt-out or inability to pair respondents anonymously. While a usable sample of 246 is still sufficient for our purposes, it is not without some concern that three times this number could not be used. It is important to use pre- and post-tests in order to try to gauge change among students;

the research design is sufficient in that regard. Further refinement of participant recruiting at both data collection points is needed in order to increase the usable sample, as well as to be able to draw better conclusions.

The results also illustrate how difficult it can be for common reader program committees to select a book that will resonate with students and effect the changes sought by the broader university. What looks good to faculty, staff, and upperclassman committee members may in fact fall flat with incoming freshmen.

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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF INTRODUCTORY ACCOUNTING AND THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine particular aspects of students' perceptions of some characteristics of the accounting profession and particular aspects of their learning experience in the introductory accounting courses at three colleges/universities in the United States that are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The questionnaire items were selected to focus on: (1) seven aspects of the learning experience and (2) three characteristics of the accounting profession. Questionnaire responses were collected from 375 students at the end of the second introductory course. The student population consisted primarily of business students. These study results can be used to improve accounting curricula at the undergraduate level and to design a program of study that may motivate the "best and the brightest" students to enter the accounting profession.

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports the results of a study made to examine particular aspects of students' perceptions of some characteristics of the accounting profession and particular aspects of their learning experience in the introductory accounting courses at three colleges/universities in the United States that are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The questionnaire items were selected to focus on: (1) seven aspects of the learning experience in the introductory accounting classes and (2) three characteristics of the accounting profession that are perceived by students to be desirable. Questionnaire responses were collected from 375 students at the end of the second introductory accounting course. The student population consisted primarily of business students. These study results can be used to improve accounting curricula at the undergraduate level and to design a program of study that may motivate the "best and the brightest" students to enter the accounting profession.

BACKGROUND

Starting in the mid-1980s, there have been many calls for changes to be made in accounting education. In 1986, the Bedford Committee of the American Accounting Association (AAA) presented an analysis that suggested a major reorientation. The committee reported that

massive changes had occurred in the business environment; while at the same time; academic institutions had failed to respond to these changes, particularly in technology and social values (AAA, 1986).

In 1989, the chief executives of the eight largest public accounting firms presented their position on accounting education. They reported that accounting education had not kept up-to-date with business needs. Their view was that change was mandatory for accounting degree programs but also for the introductory accounting courses servicing all business majors (Kullberg et al., 1989).

The Accounting Education Change Commission (AECC) was appointed in 1989 by the AAA to be a catalyst for change in the academic preparation of accountants. The AECC stated that the primary objective of the introductory courses in accounting is “for students to learn about accounting as an information development and communication function that supports economic decision making” (AECC, 1992, p.2). This primary objective of the introductory accounting courses was in sharp contrast to the traditional objective of the courses which was to teach bookkeeping essentials to accounting majors. Baldwin and Ingram (1991) described the traditional introductory accounting courses as the first courses in accounting (for accounting majors) rather than the only (and last) courses in accounting for business majors.

In 2001, the AAA, the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA), the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), and the Big Five public accounting firms sponsored a study of the future of accounting education. Albrecht and Sack (2001) were the researchers for this study and they observed three major developments in the business environment: technology, globalization, and investor power in the capital markets. They suggested major changes in the following areas: course content and curricula, pedagogy, technology, faculty development and reward system, and strategic direction.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) (2003) issued a statement emphasizing that accounting programs must be successful in attracting the right students, in providing a vigorous and challenging curriculum, and in maintaining adequate resources to ensure the viability of the educational process. The Federation of Schools of Accountancy (2003) issued a response and suggested a sense of urgency in the need to improve accounting education.

Diller-Haas (2004) surveyed 33 accounting departments in the New York City metropolitan area about their approach to teaching introductory accounting. The purpose of the study was to see if AECC’s recommended changes in approach (from the “preparer approach” to the “user approach”) had been adopted. Only 29 percent of the responding schools had made major changes to their introductory curriculum. This means that 71 percent of the surveyed schools still used the traditional, “preparer approach.” Diller-Haas suggests that the old curriculum emphasizing memorization and transaction recording gives the student a distorted view of accounting and may discourage them from majoring in accounting.

A number of researchers have studied students’ perceptions of accounting courses. Geiger and Ogilvy (2000) found from their study of students’ perceptions, that students’ experiences in the first courses were major factors in the decision to major in accounting. As important as these experiences are, Chen, Jones, and McIntyre (2004) reported that accounting and non-accounting students did not perceive much value for the first accounting course. Jones and Fields (2001) studied the perceptions of students and found that the technical demands of

introductory accounting lead to discouragement, failure, and overall poor student perceptions of the accounting profession and curriculum.

As mentioned earlier, the specific purpose of this study is to examine particular aspects of (1) students' perceptions of their learning experience in the introductory accounting courses and (2) students' perceptions of particular characteristics of the accounting profession. The following sections of this paper present the research methods, results, a discussion of the findings, and conclusions including suggestions for future research.

RESEARCH METHODS

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was developed specifically for this study. The questionnaire contained seven items which targeted the students' perceptions of their learning experience in the introductory accounting classes. In addition, the questionnaire contained three items that targeted the students' perception of the accounting profession.

Respondents were first asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of seven statements related to their experience with the introductory accounting courses using a five-point Likert scale ranging from '1 = strongly disagree' to '5 = strongly agree'. Secondly, the students were asked to indicate their perceptions of the importance of three characteristics of the accounting profession on a five-point Likert scale from '1 = not at all important' to '5 = extremely important'. In addition to the 10 questionnaire items, the respondents were asked to provide basic demographic information including: major, rank, grade point average (GPA), and gender.

Sample

The target population included business and non-business students at three colleges/universities in the United States that are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The students had all completed the second course of accounting principles. Consequently, a survey of these students would provide a representative picture of students' perceptions of their learning experience in accounting principles. The same questionnaire was administered in all three schools. There were 375 respondents to the survey. However, the reported responses varied by questionnaire item from 367 to 375 due to non-response on certain questionnaire items.

Analysis

Where appropriate, the Scheffe pairwise comparison method was used to compare the means by dimension for the seven learning experience items and the three items related to the characteristics of the accounting profession. The Scheffe test was used because it provides protection from Type 1 errors and it requires a larger sample mean difference before it concludes that a difference is significant (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2004; Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998).

RESULTS

Learning Experience Items

There were seven items in the questionnaire focused on the introductory accounting learning experience. These responses were compared across the three school samples by the following dimensions: major, rank, gender, and GPA.

Overall Means. See Table 1: Overall Means for Learning Experience Items in Descending Order. For the 375 respondents in the sample, the highest overall means in the learning experience group were: *rigorous* (4.03), *overload* (3.80), and *reason critically* (3.50). The items that were rated less than 3.5 were: *bookkeeping* (3.41), *boring* (3.30), *trivial* (3.13), and *computer use* (2.73).

Table 1 Overall Means for Learning Experience Items in Descending Order	
Item	Overall Mean
Rigorous	4.03
Overload	3.80
Reason critically	3.50
Bookkeeping	3.41
Boring	3.30
Trivial	3.13
Computer use	2.73

Means by Major. See Table 2: Learning Experience Item Means by Major. The seven item means for three classifications of majors were compared: (1) accounting, (2) finance, and (3) all other majors. Of the seven items, there was a statistically significant difference for the item *boring* (14.3%).

Table 2 Learning Experience Item Means by Major (Accounting, Finance and Others)						
Quest. Item	1 Account. Mean	2 Finance Mean	6 Other Major Mean	Total Mean	F-Values	Significance
Overload	3.63	3.71	3.91	3.80	2.511	ns
Bookkeeping	3.35	3.61	3.36	3.41	1.746	ns
Trivial	3.10	3.18	3.12	3.13	.114	ns
Boring	2.61	3.31	3.56	3.30	16.693	***
Rigorous	3.92	4.13	4.03	4.03	.761	ns
Computer use	2.86	2.94	2.59	2.73	2.721	ns
Reason critically	3.73	3.54	3.39	3.50	2.869	ns

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

Major Paired Group Comparisons. See Table 3: Significant Learning Experience Item Mean Differences between Major Paired Groups. The comparisons are shown in Panel A (accounting vs. finance) and in Panel B (accounting vs. all other majors). There was only one

statistically significant difference of the seven items shown on Panel A and Panel B for *boring* (14.3%).

Table 3 Significant Learning Experience Item Mean Differences between Major Paired Group Panel A: 1 = Accounting vs. 2 = Finance				
Quest. Item	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance Value	Significance
Boring	-.698	.192	.002	**

Table 3 Significant Learning Experience Item Mean Differences between Major Paired Group Panel B: 1 = Accounting vs. 3 = All other Majors				
Quest. Item	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance Value	Significance
Boring	-.950	.165	.000	***

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

Means by Rank. See Table 4: Learning Experience Item Means by Rank. The seven learning experience item means were compared for four ranks of students. The ranks included freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. There were four (4) statistically significant differences of the seven items across the rank dimension (57.1%).

Table 4 Learning Experience Item Means by Rank							
Quest. Item	1 Freshman Mean	2 Sophomore Mean	3 Junior Mean	4 Senior Mean	Total Mean	F-Values	Significance
Overload	2.58	3.79	4.03	3.72	3.81	7.110	***
Bookkeeping	2.69	3.48	3.42	3.19	3.40	2.619	ns
Trivial	2.69	3.14	3.20	2.98	3.12	.890	ns
Boring	3.08	3.07	3.61	3.67	3.30	5.824	***
Rigorous	3.00	4.00	4.15	4.10	4.02	4.941	**
Computer use	2.33	2.91	2.48	2.51	2.71	3.217	ns
Reason critically	3.54	3.67	3.29	3.16	3.49	4.248	*

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

Rank Paired Group Comparisons. See Table 5. The pairwise comparisons are shown in Table 5, Panel A (freshman vs. sophomore), Panel B (freshman vs. junior), Panel C (freshman vs. senior), Panel D (sophomore vs. junior), and Panel E (sophomores vs. seniors). The significant differences were for: *overload*, *rigorous*, *boring*, and *reason critically*.

Table 5 Significant Learning Experience Item Mean Differences between Rank Paired Groups Panel A: 1 = Freshman vs. 2 = Sophomore				
Quest. Item	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance Value	Significance
Overload	-1.204	.314	.002	**
Rigorous	-1.005	.295	.010	**

Table 5 Significant Learning Experience Item Mean Differences between Rank Paired Groups Panel B: 1 = Freshman vs. 3 = Junior				
Quest. Item	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance Value	Significance
Overload	-1.443	.321	.000	***
Rigorous	-1.155	.303	.003	**

Table 5 Significant Learning Experience Item Mean Differences between Rank Paired Groups Panel C: 1 = Freshman vs. 4 = Senior				
Quest. Item	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance Value	Significance
Overload	-1.138	.345	.013	*
Rigorous	-1.098	.329	.012	*

Table 5 Significant Learning Experience Item Mean Differences between Rank Paired Groups Panel D: 2 = Sophomore vs. 3 = Junior				
Quest. Item	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance Value	Significance
Boring	-.542	.150	.005	**
Reason critically	.370	.128	.041	*

Table 5 Significant Learning Experience Item Mean Differences between Rank Paired Groups Panel E: 2 = Sophomore vs. 4 = Senior				
Quest. Item	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance Value	Significance
Boring	-.609	.214	.045	*

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

Means by Gender. See Table 6: Learning Experience Item Means by Gender. A t-test was performed to compare the perceptions of male and female on each of the seven items. There were two statistically significant differences for *bookkeeping and trivial* (28.6%).

Table 6 Learning Experience Item Means by Gender				
Quest. Item	1 Male Mean	2 Female Mean	p-Values	Significance
Overload	3.86	3.73	.277	ns
Bookkeeping	3.53	3.18	.004	**
Trivial	3.25	2.92	.012	*
Boring	3.40	3.13	.053	ns
Rigorous	4.10	3.92	.120	ns
Computer use	2.71	2.74	.864	ns
Reason critically	3.54	3.43	.389	ns

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

Means by GPA. See Table 7: Learning Experience Item Means by GPA Group. The seven item means for four GPA levels were compared. The GPA classification levels included: (1) 3.6-4.0, (2) 3.0-3.5, (3) 2.5-2.9, and (4) below 2.5. There was one statistically significant difference across the GPA dimension for *boring* (14.3%).

Table 7 Learning Experience Item Means by GPA Group							
Quest. Item	1 3.6-4.0	2 3.0-3.5	3 2.5-2.9	4 Below 2.5	Total Mean	F- Values	Significance
Overload	3.62	3.82	4.01	3.50	3.80	2.027	ns
Bookkeeping	3.27	3.44	3.37	4.00	3.40	1.448	ns
Trivial	3.12	3.15	3.30	2.60	3.15	1.023	ns
Boring	2.89	3.38	3.66	2.70	3.29	6.094	***
Rigorous	4.02	3.96	4.17	4.50	4.03	1.333	ns
Computer use	2.58	2.83	2.47	2.70	2.69	1.553	ns
Reason critically	3.71	3.42	3.34	3.50	3.48	1.914	ns

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

GPA Paired Group Comparisons. See Table 8. The pairwise comparisons are shown in Panel A (3.6-4.0 vs. 3.0-3.5) and Panel B (3.6-4.0 vs. 2.5-2.9).

Table 8 Significant Learning Experience Item Mean Differences between GPA Paired Groups Panel A: 1 = 3.6 to 4.0, 2 = 3.0 to 3.5				
Quest. Item	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance Value	Significance
Boring	-.487	.163	.031	*

Table 8 Significant Learning Experience Item Mean Differences between GPA Paired Groups Panel B: 1 = 3.6 to 4.0, 3 = 2.5 to 2.9				
Quest. Item	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance Value	Significance
Boring	-.774	.201	.002	**

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

Accounting Profession Characteristics

There were three items in the questionnaire focused on characteristics of the accounting profession. These responses were compared across the three school samples by the following dimensions: major, rank, gender, and GPA.

Overall Means. See Table 9: Overall Means for Accounting Profession Characteristics. For the 375 respondents in the sample, the highest overall mean in this section was for *long-term awards* (4.23), followed by *own boss* (3.94), and *contribution to society* (3.81).

Table 9 Overall Means for Accounting Profession Characteristics	
Item	Overall Mean
Long-term awards	4.23
Own boss	3.94
Contribution to society	3.81

Means by Major. The three item means for three classifications of majors were compared for accounting, finance, and all other majors. There were no statistically significant differences across the major dimension.

Means by Rank. The three item means were compared for four ranks: freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. There were no statistically significant differences across the rank dimension.

Means by GPA. The three professional item means were compared across the GPA groups. There were no statistically significant differences.

Means by Gender. See Table 10: Accounting Profession Characteristic Item Means by Gender. The three professional item means were compared for male and female responses. There were two statistically significant differences across the gender dimension (66.7%). The statistically significant differences were for *long-term awards* and *contribution to society*.

Table 10 Accounting Profession Characteristic Item Means by Gender				
Questionnaire Item	Male Mean	Female Mean	p-values	Significance
Own boss	3.88	4.05	.123	ns
Long-term awards	4.16	4.36	.021	*
Contribution to society	3.67	4.08	.000	***

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to investigate the perceptions of business and non-business students regarding their learning experience in the two introductory accounting courses. In addition, the study was made to investigate student perceptions of certain characteristics of the accounting profession.

Learning Experience Items

Means by GPA. See Table 7: Learning Experience Item Means by GPA Group. The seven item means for four GPA levels were compared. The GPA classification levels included: (1) 3.6-4.0, (2) 3.0-3.5, (3) 2.5-2.9, and (4) below 2.5. There was one statistically significant difference across the GPA dimension for *boring* (14.3%).

The student responses to the individual items on the learning experience section of the questionnaire were noted on a scale of '1 = strongly disagree' to '5 = strongly agree'.

Items by Major. As shown in Table 2, there was only one statistically significant difference in the mean scores of students classified by major. The item *boring* was rated by accounting majors at 2.61, finance majors at 3.31, and other majors at 3.56. This analysis indicates that accounting majors do not find accounting to be as boring as the finance majors and other majors. This *boring* aspect of accounting may have a huge impact on a student's decision to major in accounting. As such, educators should make a concerted effort to make accounting less boring and much more interesting for all majors.

Items by Rank. As shown in Table 4, there were four statistically significant differences in the mean scores of students classified by rank. The freshmen gave low scores to *overload*, *boring*, and *rigorous*. Freshmen do not usually enroll in the introductory accounting courses. When they do enroll, they may have a higher level of academic skills that allow them to excel in the courses without feeling overloaded, bored, or that the courses are rigorous. There was also a statistically significant difference on *reason critically*. This item was rated by sophomores, juniors, and seniors at 3.67, 3.29, and 3.16 respectively. It may be that many students are going to experience accounting as rigorous. However, educators have a responsibility to insure that students do improve their skills to reason critically. The student's perception of *reason critically* should not decline as they advance through the ranks of their academic programs.

Items by Gender. As shown in Table 6, there were two statistically significant differences in the mean scores of students when compared by gender. The male responses, when compared with female responses, gave significantly higher mean scores for *bookkeeping* (3.53 vs. 3.18) and for *trivial* (3.25 vs. 2.92). We should make an effort to marginalize these aspects of the introductory accounting courses.

Items by GPA Group. As shown in Table 7, there was only one item that exhibited statistically significant differences across the GPA dimension. The factor *boring* was rated 2.89, 3.38, 3.66, and 2.70 respectively by good students (3.6-4.0), moderate/good students (3.0-3.5), average students (2.5-2.9) and poor students (below 2.5). It is interesting to note that the good students and the poor students rated *boring* lower than the moderate/good and average students. Accounting educators must create and administer an introductory accounting curriculum that is not viewed as boring by any student.

Accounting Profession Characteristics

The student responses to the individual items on the accounting profession section of the questionnaire were noted on a scale of '1 = not at all important' to '5 = extremely important'. As shown in Table 9, the three items received mean scores out of '1' to '5' were: *long-term awards* (4.23), *own boss* (3.94), and *contribution to society* (3.81). These results are similar to the results of Francisco, Noland, and Kelly (2003). Their study of business majors identified 'long term salary prospects' and the 'prestige of the accounting profession' to be the most important factors for students. These relatively high ratings indicate that it may improve the recruiting of quality students if these aspects of a career in accounting are stressed in the introductory accounting classes. Also, the current state of the economy may be influencing students' opinions of professions/jobs that pay well.

The student responses for the profession were compared across the dimensions of major, rank, and GPA. There were no statistically significant differences across these dimensions. The students in each major, in each of the four ranks, and in each of the four GPA categories perceive the importance of the three profession characteristics similarly.

However, this was not the case when the student responses for the profession were compared across the dimension of gender. As shown in Table 10, the female responses when compared with the male responses were significantly higher for *long-term awards* (4.36 vs. 4.16) and for *contribution to society* (4.08 vs. 3.67). The female responses were also higher for *own boss* (4.05 vs. 3.88); however, this difference was not statistically significant. It is interesting that the female students were able to see beyond the *bookkeeping* and *trivial* aspects of the introductory accounting courses and were able to appreciate the professional characteristics. We should make an effort to marginalize the *trivial* and *bookkeeping* aspects of the introductory accounting courses.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper reports the results of a study made to examine students' perceptions of their learning experience in the introductory accounting courses at three colleges/universities in the United States that are accredited by the AACSB. Questionnaire items included seven items focused on the students' learning experience in the introductory courses and three items focused on characteristics of the accounting profession. Questionnaire responses were collected from 375 students at the end of the second introductory accounting course.

In our review of the student perceptions of the accounting profession, high mean scores were given to *long-term awards*, *own boss*, and *contribution to society*. The study results suggest that the students understand and value the financial aspects of working in accounting. They appear to value the role that accounting plays in our society.

The results of the student perceptions of their learning experience in the introductory accounting classes were moderately negative although the student perceptions were positive regarding the profession. Students gave moderate to high rankings of their agreement to the following learning experience items: *rigorous*, *overload*, *bookkeeping*, *boring*, and *trivial*.

As previously noted, it is a primary purpose of the introductory accounting classes to teach students the principles of accounting and have them understand how accounting

information is used by investors, creditors, and other users. We can be successful with these students if we can achieve this objective for the introductory accounting courses, and at the same time, not turn them off from accounting by having them perceive accounting as rigorous, boring, and trivial. The student responses in this study indicate that we, as educators, are not doing the best job that we can do in introductory accounting. Again, it is time to review the topic coverage, pedagogy, and ways to motivate students in the first two accounting courses.

There are a number of suggestions for future research in this area of introductory accounting. A survey of faculty members and business professionals should be made to identify the topics and level of coverage for the principles courses. A survey of business professionals can be made to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are necessary for success in the accounting profession.

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DO WE PRACTICE WHAT WE PREACH? MECHANISM DESIGN AS A SOLUTION TO THE PATH DEPENDENT BEHAVIOR OF UNIVERSITY POLICY

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ABSTRACT

University departments suffer from issues relating to path dependence, which inhibits the use of mechanisms that allow efficient operations. While Management scholars teach future managers about efficiencies, the units under which they are employed often do not follow the same guidelines. This paper puts forth a clear problem statement which includes four specific issues in business schools: 1) the lack of clear institutional or departmental goals, 2) the tenure system, 3) the disparity between full-time and part-time faculty compensation and 4) the “One Size Fits All” model of tenured faculty. Following this, I posit that Mechanism Design can help to resolve these issues. Finally, I offer a specific mechanism design that business departments can utilize to reduce path dependent behavior and which will induce ex ante truth-telling by potential faculty.

BACKGROUND

The Management and Economics literature contain a wealth of works on the idea of incentives and the effect that such incentives have upon the behavior of managers, employees, firms and other market actors (Fey and Furu 2008; Wowack and Hambrick 2010). Although academics in these fields perform much of the research on incentives, it is ironic that the institutional system that employs them rarely implement these tactics. Specifically, the “two size fits all” scheme that business schools employ is not only counter-productive but also hypocritical in many aspects. This scheme can be described as follows. In order to staff all of the courses that departments offer, department managers hire either full-time, tenured track faculty or part-time adjunct faculty. While there are always exceptions in departments, the majority of Management departments seem to utilize this scheme.

Full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty are contracted to teach some number of courses while also fulfilling a research agenda set forth by the university. There tends to be an inverse relationship between a professor’s teaching load and the quantity and/or quality of research expected of him or her. Teaching load is normally bounded between two and four courses per semester while research output is bit more subjective. What can be said about the research load

is that, at institutions which are on the low end of the teaching requirements, the quantity and quality of research output is very high while the opposite is true at institutions which implement a high teaching load. On the other hand, adjunct faculty may teach just one course at an institution or many courses. Pay for many of these adjunct faculty is on a contract, per-course basis. Additionally, benefits such as pensions, health insurance, and tuition remission are often withheld from these types of positions.

The problem inherent in this system is the central theme of this paper. The argument that I posit most forcefully is that the current system which is in place at the vast majority of institutions is indeed suboptimal and, therefore, needs to be replaced by a more efficient, market-based approach which is centered around incentive-alignment. Why is this system sub-optimal? I argue that there are four main problems with the current scheme that will cause the system to fail in the long-term assuming that the goal of an educational institution is to actually educate students. These four reasons can be stated as:

- 1) the lack of clear institutional or departmental goals,
- 2) the tenure system,
- 3) the disparity between full-time and part-time faculty compensation and
- 4) the “One Size Fits All” model of tenured faculty.

In addition, this paper will argue that there is one cause and one solution to the problem both of which derive out of current theory in Information Economics and Strategic Management. The remainder of the paper will focus specifically on business schools yet there is no logical reason why it could not be extended to other schools in the university system. The major contribution of the paper is more practical than theoretical. I will submit a recommended action plan which is a more efficient and equitable while being based on a market forces approach as opposed to the inertial state which university departments find themselves in currently.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

As stated before, I argue that there are four critical problems with the current system which will be discussed in this section in more detail.

The Lack of Clear Goals

What is the goal of a university? Bennis and O’Toole (2007) argue that business schools have a dual mandate that includes both the education of students and the creation of knowledge through research. The mechanism for this creation is proactive research which facilitates hands-

on learning for the academic professional. This newly created information can then be added to the stock of knowledge for future diffusion. While knowledge creation constitutes an important goal, the implicit demand-side goal of a university, and by definition the university's departments, is to educate the students who choose to enroll in the university. Students have a wide choice as to which universities to apply to and, assuming multiple acceptances, have some choice as to which school to attend. However, even though education is the intended goal of these institutions, the emergent goal is not so clear. Since universities, especially large ones, are organized in a bureaucratic manner, individuals who run their daily operations have tremendous aggregated influence on the path that the organization follows. Therefore, job retention has become a key goal for many individuals who are employed at universities, including faculty. It can be argued that at many schools, there has been a tipping point or critical threshold that has been surpassed whereby the intended goals of the system have been overcome by the emergent goals (Mintzberg 1979) of the aggregation of employees.

The education of students can be paralleled to the diffusion of information in the innovation literature. Experts, such as professors, are hired by universities in order to transfer explicit knowledge which students then absorb. Students have idiosyncratic absorptive capacity levels (Cohen and Levinthal 1990) and, therefore, knowledge is diffused in a lumpy fashion between and amongst agents (i.e. students).

The Tenure System

The tenure scheme implemented at universities was originally intended to incentivize faculty. In times past, when professors were not given the freedoms that they enjoy today, tenure ensured their ability to speak freely while teaching. This freedom was, and is, deemed necessary for a true learning environment. This initial argument for tenure was beneficial not only for the individual who was granted such an accolade, but also for the students to whom the individual was hired to educate. In other words, there was little to no conflict of interest inherent in the tenure scheme in its initial form.

However, in the present day, tenure has a completely different effect in that faculty members (tenured or not) have much more inherent freedom to openly discuss topics that decades ago would have been seen as inappropriate. Tenure, in its present form, is a type of university welfare system by which professors are given a *de facto* guaranteed position at an institution with limited responsibility to their students or departments. This is not to say that some professors who have tenure do not exert the same amount of effort that they had when striving for tenure; however, unless full effort is given by all (or almost all) faculty members, then the system cannot operate in an efficient manner.

The Disparities Between Adjunct and Tenured Faculty

Department chairs have a double constraint problem to solve each year. They must offer enough courses for their current student population while also remaining within some stated budget. A result of the tenure system discussed above is that much of the budget allocated to the department is absorbed by the tenured faculty through their salaries and benefits. Since this figure is fixed due to unionized collective bargaining action (in many cases), the financial equation that departments must solve can be reduced and simplified. The problem question is how many courses that the department offers in total can be filled with tenured faculty? Then, conditional on the residual value in the answer to this question, how do we fill the rest of the courses with respect to labor units? At this point, departments must hire faculty yet are constrained only to hire adjunct professors at a much lower per-course rate than full-time faculty due to the fixed budget constraint.

Reverting back to the first problem stated—unclear university goals--there is now a dual incentive problem. On one hand, you have well-paid professors who are dis-incentivized to exert full effort due to their job security. On the other hand, you have poorly paid professors who are dis-incentivized to give optimal educational instruction. The dis-incentives for adjuncts are different than those of full-time professors and consist of at least two primary reasons. First, they are paid poorly relative to their full-time peers. Secondly, in order to aggregate a living, adjunct professors may work at several locations leaving very little time to actually interact with the student population. Therefore, if the goal of the institution is to educate students, then the current system fails at reaching this goal.

The “One Size Fits All” Model of Tenured Faculty

The final issue that needs to be addressed in order to resolve the disincentive effects in universities is the “one size fits all” model that is utilized with tenured faculty. For arguments sake, let us assume that universities can be classified as one of three types: 1) Research, 2) Equal, and 3) Teaching. Although this should be apparent, the first category is typical of large universities where research is a faculty member’s primary goal. At such a school, professors may teach two courses per semester but must produce many high quality publications in order to reach tenure. The third category is the opposite, in which the research that faculty must produce is of lower quality and quantity, but the teaching load can be as high as four courses per semester. The focus in this category is on teaching and teaching evaluations are most important for tenure. The middle category is simply in between the first and third and we can assume that teaching and research are equally important.

The argument behind the “one size fits all model” is that each university assumes that they have a model (research or teaching) and that the academics that work in their departments are aligned with this model. Therefore, it is improbable that a professor who enjoys teaching, but who does not enjoy research, to ever be employed at a large university. Likewise, it is equally impossible for a professor who focuses on research but is not fond of the classroom to ever succeed at a small, liberal arts college. The institutions are pigeon-holed into their respective positions and then hire accordingly. The problem with this implementation is that those individuals who are enthusiastic about teaching to college-aged students tend not to be overly present in large institutions, which again leads to the failure in reaching the goals of the institution. While the problem may be less pronounced in the small, liberal arts colleges, there is still the problem that professors who do little research may be stuck in the mindset that they were educated in during their doctoral studies.

THEORY

With the problem statements written, two theoretical streams will be posited—Path Dependence Theory and Mechanism Design. The first is proposed to explain why the system has reached such a failed state and the second is proposed to help provide a solution to the problems analyzed in this paper.

Path Dependence Theory

Path Dependence Theory (PD) argues that decisions in the current period are conditioned upon the previous behavior of both the individual and institution of interest and that the outcome of such decision-making may be inefficient (Schreyoegg and Sydow 2011). Case studies on the width of rail gauges, the QWERTY keyboard, and VHS technology diffusion (Paul 1985; Mahoney 2000) have illustrated the point that the result of human action is not always, as Darwinists may argue, first-best. Organizational rigidities, due to path dependent routines, can overtake a collective body in order to produce entrenchment (Leonard-Barton 1992). In the management literature, the study of inertia (Tripsas and Gavetti 2000) within corporations has led to the idea of strategic persistence as well as managerial myopia. These dysfunctional attributes hinder organizational growth. In a similar fashion, university routines have become institutionalized thus leading to a second-best outcome with respect to incentivizing mechanisms.

In the university system, which is both bureaucratic and not profit-driven, Path Dependence Theory can explain why inefficient outcomes have resulted even though decision makers are highly educated, in general, and highly educated in the theory of decision-making, specifically. Since universities started offering tenure in generations past, each individual

generation then expects the same. While a generation is an arbitrary unit of time measurement, making matters more difficult is the fact that faculty are not cohorted by generation, meaning that every year there are entry and exits into the faculty pool at all or most institutions.

Imagine the chaos of attempting, even if it were agreed upon, that a certain benefit would be cut off for those professors with X years of service but not for X-1 years. Therefore, this complexity leads to decision-makers making suboptimal choices such as a “stay the course” option instead of “change the course” option. The issue with tenure is that it has a disincentivizing effect on the behavior of those that participate. Couple this disincentive with the collective bargaining aspect of many union-affiliated faculty members and the result is a system where professors are incentivized not to exert a high level of effort. In fact, it is completely rational for a professor to act in such a way because the mechanism that has been designed around his or her position has the effect of altering behavior, in this case altering it toward inefficiency.

Information Economics and Mechanism Design

Mechanism Design Theory is part of the broad topic in Information Economics. Information Economics is concerned with asymmetrical information that exists between parties who transact with each other. While a detailed discussion of Information Economics is not feasible in this paper, the following section will offer a brief description of some issues as well as seminal citations. It is important to note that these sections concern themselves with agency issues, namely the Principal-Agent (P-A) Problem.

Agency Theory. Agency Theory (Alchian and Demsetz 1972; Jensen and Meckling 1976; Fama 1980; Fama and Jensen 1983; Eisenhardt 1989) is concerned with the issues that arise from two parties which may not have naturally aligned incentives. Taken mainly from economics, a basic agency tenet is that of mistrust between a principal and an agent which, logically, has been labeled the Principal-Agent (P-A) Problem. However, this mistrust is derived from an information problem in that an agent possesses some private information that the Principal needs yet cannot extract. For example, in the case of a board of directors and a manager, since the manager has more information on the daily routines of what makes the firm successful (or not successful), then the manager, by definition and default, is the agent. In this same example, the firm is the principal because, as the hiring party, the principal must rely at least partly on the characteristics and actions of the agent in order to maximize profits. That is to say that profitability is a function of a vector of variables, two of which are the manager’s ability and effort. This ability and effort are partially unobservable and, therefore, asymmetric. The unobservability of ability and effort lead to two major issues in the theory which are adverse selection (hidden characteristics) and moral hazard (hidden action)

Therefore, there are two major issues present. The first is the information asymmetry problem which occurs because the agent possesses private information. The second is a derivative of the first and that is that there exists a conflict in the relationship because of goal incongruence. Although circular, this goal incongruence flows from the fact that there is private information. Taken together, these two issues are the root cause of agency problems which, in turn, result in agency costs (Jensen and Meckling 1976). What, specifically, is the agency problem? In other words, stating that there is asymmetrical information and goal incongruence is not enough to establish a well-grounded agency argument. The following sections will attempt to answer this question.

Adverse Selection. *Adverse Selection* results from the hidden characteristics that an agent possesses. Much work on adverse selection, as would be expected, takes place before a contract is put into place (i.e. *ex ante*). For example, Akerlof (1970) describes the “Market for Lemons” with examples from several phenomena, the most influential of which is the used cars market. The problem for Akerlof is that quality is unobservable and, therefore, car buyers (Principals) have an information disadvantage. If sellers (Agents) cannot signal the quality of a used car, then buyers will calculate the expected value of the average car with respect to quality. In this case, only agents who will profit from this structure will actually sell (i.e. any seller whose car is of a quality type below the average or expected value). In its logical extension, this market will fail because average quality, and therefore average price, will continue to decline in a series of repeated time periods.

One potential solution to adverse selection problems is in signaling. *Signaling Theory* can be traced back to Spence (1973), who formulated a clear understanding of signals in his often cited education model. In this model, signals are sent from job applicants (agent) to a firm which is hiring (principal) to convey some private information. Specifically, education credentials are used as a signal to convey the private information of the agent’s ability. However, one caveat that constrains signaling models is the informativeness of the signal (Holmstrom 1979). Mathematically, this can be represented as $C'_e(\theta) < 0$. Simply put, this means that the marginal cost (C') of a signal (subscript e for education in this example) for an agent of a certain type (θ) must be decreasing in ability. According to the *Informativeness Principal*, an agent of a high type must be able to obtain a certain level of education at a lower cost than an agent of a low type. Cost, in this context, is not the direct cost of education; instead, it is the cost to the agent of being able to attain the goal. Consider the goal to be completing an M.B.A degree from a reputable and accredited institution. A high type agent (θ_H) will be able to complete these requirements due to his/her superior ability with less cost (consider the cost of effort) than would an agent of a low type (θ_L).

Therefore, a principal can use education as a signal (albeit noisy) to tease out the agent’s type. Spence, and those that followed him, showed that obtaining this degree becomes cost

prohibitive for agent's of a very low type in that 1) they would either not be able to finish the degree or 2) they would not be able to recoup the fixed-cost internal investment made to finish the degree. Alternatively, if used car sellers could convey an informative signal to used car buyers, then the previously discussed "Market for Lemons" may not exist. Such signals may include warranties or guarantees where the seller is signaling the quality of the car as a function of the reputation of the seller. A seller with a true lemon may not offer the warranty (the signal) if he knows that the car is of such low quality that the warranty will be redeemed at future dates at high costs to the seller.

Moral Hazard. *Moral Hazard* results from the unobservable effort of an agent. Agent's can exert, in a discrete world, low effort or high effort but Principal's cannot discern which type an agent is because the effort policy is the private information of the agent. Therefore, since effort is unobservable, contracting on effort is not possible and Principals must resort to a second alternative which is to contract on output. The logic in contracting in a world with moral hazard is that an outcome is observable and is somewhat dependent upon effort. Therefore, a Principal can contract on an agent's outcome and, in an efficient design, induce the agent to exert more effort. For example, executive compensation schemes are attempts by Principals (Shareholders represented by the Board of Directors) to induce maximal effort from agents (Top Managers). In this simple example, the inducement must be a convex function with respect to effort or the agent may choose an effort policy that is lower (i.e. shirk) based on his or her utility function.

As noted in the literature, tasks that are simple to observe and have high task programmability (Eisenhardt 1989) often can be controlled through behavioral mechanisms since the variance in output is small. The small variance is a result of there being a low probability of exogenous factors (those factors besides the agent's effort) being the actual cause of the final output. In a corporation, a janitor's tasks are highly programmable in that it would be difficult to think of a reason that a room is clean for any other reason than that the janitor did a good job. On the other hand, output control is typical when the opposite case is found. Certain jobs, such as those of management, have low task programmability and, therefore, are difficult to assess based on behaviors because much of the observable result is derived from exogenous factors. Exogenous factors may include the efforts of a team of employees, the overall economy, luck and other variables. Since it would be cost prohibitive to monitor the manager and impossible to assess what portion of the output is due to the manager's behavior, output controls are put in place. Output controls normally consist of incentive schemes that are attempts to induce managers to exert more effort.

Mechanism Design. *Mechanism Design* (aka Contract Theory, Optimal Contracting, or Implementation) is a branch of information economics that deals with the fact that asymmetrical information influences the behavior patterns of principals and agents. Mechanism Design works by formulating optimal contracts in order to deal with the information asymmetries that are

present in all P-A relationships. One of the central tenets of this theory is that agents can only contract on variables that are both observable and verifiable. Principals, through designing effective mechanisms, are attempting to sort agents by type in order to contract as efficiently as possible. In other words, principals may offer multiple contracts to agents, which include different incentive mechanisms depending on the type of contract. An agent, having perfect information about himself/herself, will choose the contract that is *ex ante* most appropriate depending on his/her natural ability (endowment) and chosen effort policy (strategic choice).

An often-used example is that of an automobile insurance policy that offers multiple deductible amounts yet lets the customer choose which he or she will contract upon. This menu of contracts is an example of a mechanism design that sorts agents by type, in this case the type of driver that he or she is. While previous driving records are an historical example of driving, assuming to know a driver's ability and effort based on these may be erroneous because the outcome is open to exogenous factors. These exogenous factors may not reveal information about the driving ability and habits of the individual but may affect the observable outcome. Take an example where a relative good driver lives in an extremely rigid town where police are known to give violations regularly versus a poor driver who resides in a more liberal region. Both individuals may have similar driving records. This similarity tells the insurance company very little about their driving habits and results from factors separate from the ability and effort of the agent. In this case, think of driving habits as the agent's effort policy. Therefore, by offering a menu of options, agents will reveal themselves by choosing a deductible that coincides with their effort. The key is in designing the payout or penalty. For example, it must be cost prohibitive for a poor driver to choose a menu selection that he or she would profit from through shirking. By setting prices according to expected payouts, drivers self-select into the product that is most efficient for them. The efficiency is gained through revealing their true type and this principle is known as the Revelation Principle or Truth Telling.

The literature on mechanism design includes implementation of efficiency devices in e-commerce markets (Weijun and Wang 2008), service contracts (Akan, Ata and Lariviere 2011), inventory systems (Zhang 2010), auction pricing (Chen-Ritzo, Harrison, Kwasnica and Thomas 2005; Chen, Seshadri and Zemel 2008), and timeshare exchanges (Wang and Krishna 2006). However, a broad literature on mechanism design also exists in the study of environmental policy (Feng 2007; Sheriff 2009; Dupaz, Latouche and Turpin 2009), especially with respect to pollution (Cabe and Herriges 1992; Burton 1996; Andersson 1997).

SOLVING THE PROBLEM THROUGH MECHANISM DESIGN

This section will attempt to apply the idea of mechanism design to the problems inherent in the university system set forth in Section II. The goal of this section, and this paper, is to

break away from path dependence and create a system that is efficient for both the university and the faculty. Information for the problem setup was collected by both archival methods as well as short interviews at six universities in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. While this is a small sample, the point is to gather actual data in attempting to solve the problem instead of only including a hypothetical example. Note that these data are for the Management Departments at these universities:

Data Summary

Below are the results of a simple process of data collection for faculty in the Philadelphia region. The institution numbers are located in the first column in place of the actual institutional name. Note that “Teaching” is the annual teaching load for full-time faculty.

Table 1--Philadelphia Area Faculty Data			
	Average Tenured Faculty Compensation	Average Adjunct Faculty Compensation	Teaching
1	\$94,000.00	\$5,600.00	8
2	\$112,000.00	\$4,400.00	7
3	\$120,000.00	\$4,650.00	6
4	\$121,000.00	\$4,800.00	6
5	\$141,000.00	\$5,500.00	4
6	\$170,000.00	\$6,000.00	4
Mean	\$126,333.33	\$5,158.33	5.83

Problem Setup

As explained in Section II, faculty can be described as either full-time or part-time. To simplify, I will list my assumptions as follows:

1. Assume that the university or department is the principal and the faculty member or prospective faculty member is the Agent. This assumption is derived from the fact that the faculty member has more private information about his or her ability and effort with respect to what the position calls for, namely the research/teaching mixture.
2. Assume that full-time is equivalent to either tenure-track or tenured and part-time is equivalent to an adjunct professor.
3. Assume that all full-time faculty members have idiosyncratic utility functions which include deterministic parameters made up of the utility gained from teaching and the

utility gained from research. At the extremes, there exists faculty members who only wish to teach and those who only wish to research; however, most agents are in between whereby these individuals have some utility from each although not necessarily of even proportions.

4. Assume that the individual utility function of a faculty member is private information. The intuition is that if a high paying appointment requires more of one of the two parameters (teaching or research), then the faculty member may have an incentive to discount truth-telling to maximize wages.
5. Assume that the budget is fixed for the department's salaries at \$7,500,000 per annum and, for simplicity, assume that all types of faculty receive salary only with no benefits.
6. Assume that the department must offer 280 courses during the Fall and Spring Semester (in total) and that there are no other terms where courses are offered.
7. Assume that research positions pay a higher salary or wage than do teaching positions; however, some positions can be a mix of both functions.

Solving the Problem Through Mechanism Design

The crux of the issue is to integrate the multiple problems that exist in the current system to attempt a solution that minimizes them simultaneously through a specific design. The goal is to:

- 1) maximize education,
- 2) maximize faculty member utility,
- 3) remain within the departmental budget,
- 4) remain consistent with any regulatory body constraints,
- 5) increase research output, and
- 6) increase teaching quality.

Of these, one which has not been discussed yet is number four, which is concerned with third party regulation. This may refer to accrediting bodies such as the AACSB, which regulates business schools. This is an important constraint because if it were not present, many universities may be tempted to hire an entire faculty comprised of adjunct professors to maximize the discretionary portion of their budget. However, bodies such as the AACSB require that a large percentage of faculty members are full-time and have a terminal degree.

This problem is easier to solve for a small, teaching institution than it is for a large, research institution so I will model the solution to the latter. The issue that large, research universities have is that they incentivize faculty to produce large quantities of research but do not

incentivize teaching output to the same degree. Research universities tend to hire those individuals who have a high probability of producing quality research and then delegate many courses to graduate students. Professors at these institutions will normally teach no more than two courses per semester. I posit that the larger problem here is that academics who value teaching more than research are unable to gain employment at research institutions and/or are unable to keep employment through tenure at such places. This leads to an overemphasis on publications while neglecting the education of the students who enroll there.

Many research universities have a “one size fits all” hiring mentality where they assume that professors are homogeneous with respect to research/teaching preferences. This opens the university up to both an adverse selection and moral hazard problem. The adverse selection problem is that, *ex ante*, the university must attempt to sort those individuals who will most likely succeed at research and, for the most part, this is accomplished through screening curriculum vitae. The moral hazard problem is that faculty may, upon hire, shirk with respect to the research duties if they do not succeed in reaching benchmark goals early. This is especially true at research institutions because the pay is generally much higher than at teaching institutions. However, it is naïve to assume this homogeneity because each faculty member has an idiosyncratic utility function toward research and teaching. Additionally, some faculty who honestly thought they were interested in a majority research position may find that they were incorrect in their own preference prediction.

How can this university sort agents to reveal the truth while not compromising its budget or its research output? Assume that the makeup of this year’s teaching and compensation for the department are as reported in Table 2.

Table 2--Assumptions	
1	Full-time faculty earn \$140,000
2	Full-time faculty teach 4 courses per year
3	Part-time faculty earn \$6,000 per course taught
4	The Department has 50 Full-time faculty at a cost of \$7,000,000
5	The Department has 20 Part-time faculty who teach 80 courses
6	The Department has a cost of \$480,000 for Part-time faculty

Individuals know their own utility functions but the university/department does not. In addition, since many of the Full-time faculty members are tenured, they have little incentive to exert maximal effort once tenure is achieved. Therefore, the dysfunction comes from both the shirking by tenured professors due to job security and the shirking from the adjuncts based on the

poor compensation structure. The normal avenue for adjunct faculty is unionization and collective bargaining. However, this is not a market process and is open to the criticism of artificiality. Therefore, the following mechanism design is proposed:

- Professors are hired on only a full-time basis with successive five-year terms of employment. There are no tenure-track positions and no adjunct positions.
- Benchmark measures are given for each type of contract which must be reached by the fifth year. The contract extension is automatic if these conditions are met. The conditions may include a specific number of publications in certain journals for a research-based scholar or a minimum teacher evaluation for a teaching-based scholar (and, of course a mix of these for a mixed contract).
- While not automatic, faculty members can transfer to one type of contract (i.e. teaching-research mix) from one five year period to another. For example, as a research scholar moves closer to retirement, he or she may want to add more teaching and less research.
- There are five contract types (Research: Teaching Percentage): 100%, 75%, 50%, 25%, 0%. The first is all research and the last is all teaching.
- Because this is a research institution, the goal of the university must be to both educate their students maximally and to produce quality research maximally. Therefore, research contracts must be awarded higher compensation.
- For initial contracts, the salaries and teaching loads are as follows. Note that the number of courses taught are per year but the number of publications are per contract term (five years):

Table 3--Mechanism Design					
Category	Research %	Teaching %	Salary	Courses Taught	Publications
1	100	0	\$180,000.00	0	10
2	75	25	\$140,000.00	2	6
3	50	50	\$110,000.00	4	4
4	25	75	\$80,000.00	6	2
5	0	100	\$60,000.00	8	0

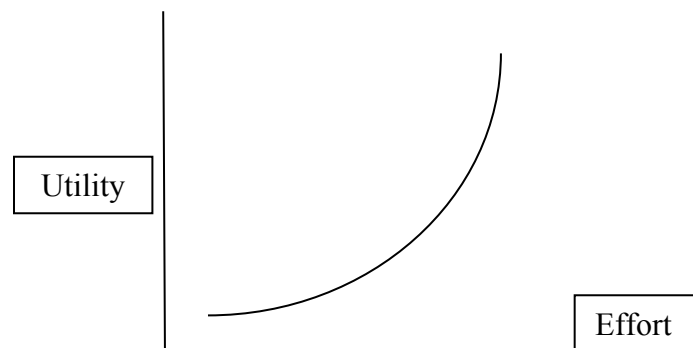
Results of the Mechanism Design

A key feature of the new design is that effort, which is unobservable, is more controlled in all of the contract types because of continuous benchmarking throughout the professor's

career. However, the most important feature is that this design should induce truth-telling concerning the agent's preferences due to the compensation scheme. Notice that there are incentive effects with respect to research especially concerning the 100 percent research position. Also notice that the number of publications needed is not a linear function in that moving from the 75 percent to the 100 percent category entails 67 percent more research production. This is crucial to the sorting of agents.

The reason that this design will induce agent self-revelation is due to the costs incurred from the disutility of research for those agents who value a greater proportion of teaching responsibilities. For example, while the 100 percent category is by far the most lucrative, agents must feel comfortable that they will be able to continue with the employer as long as possible. Therefore, if an agent is inclined to quality teaching but, at best, can only produce mediocre research, he or she will not sort to the 100% category because the costs to attain 10 publications are prohibitive to this person's ability and/or effort. In terms of incentives, the function must be convex in the relation of publications to compensation (This will reverse for a teaching institution). See Figure 1 for an abstract representation of this function. The convexity ensures that those agents who sort to the top of the scale are not only able to do so but are also catalyzed to exert their maximal effort in this pursuit.

Figure 1—Convex Nature of Utility and Publications (Effort)



Compare this system to the current system in place at many research institutions. They hired individuals in years past who produced high quality research and were awarded tenure. Due to the disincentive effects of unionization and the tenure system, these high producing individuals decreased their output to a point, late in their career, where they were a burden to the system. Departmental budgets are consumed by professors who have little incentive to retire from research universities considering that their teaching load is so light and their research output is no longer needed to retain employment.

In the system proposed here, faculty members must constantly surpass some benchmark in order to remain employed. Additionally, most will sort into the category which they are optimally suited for due to the fear of not attaining the minimum criteria for future employment. However, from a system approach, there are two major findings that are also important. First, all courses are taught by individuals who 1) value teaching (as opposed to treating it as a necessary evil), 2) are well-compensated and 3) have terminal degrees. This gives the research institution an added benefit (over the current system) of having a much higher quality of teacher in the classroom for all class levels. Secondly, the adjunct pool has meshed with the Full-time faculty pool. While some adjuncts will be removed from the system, the best adjuncts have meaningful employment without resorting to artificial measures.

In terms of the budgetary constraints, the cost per course is approximately the same with the original system containing a cost per course of \$26,714 and the new system at \$28,500. While the initial system is slightly more expensive than the original system, cost efficiencies should be gained over time by eliminating senior professors who are paid very high wages for very low output. Therefore, this system 1) incentivizes truthful revelation which catalyzes maximal effort through a convex compensation function, 2) eliminates waste with respect to faculty who no longer produce meaningful output, 3) educates students in a more efficient manner, 4) eliminates the need for collective bargaining due to the fact that the university benefits from the system as well as many of the individual faculty members, 5) contributes to society by allowing for fuller employment at high wages, and 6) allows differing types of institutions to hire faculty members with more diverse specialties.

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INCREASING INTERNATIONAL STUDY ABROAD RATES FOR BUSINESS STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

There is almost universal recognition of the need for business schools to increase the participation rates of students studying abroad. AACSB accreditation standards emphasize this. Political and business leaders call for more students to have international experience. Yet the number of students studying abroad inches up at an alarmingly slow rate. What are the barriers to students studying abroad? This paper reports the findings of a survey that was recently completed, results of which suggest strategies for what needs to be done in Colleges of Business, especially those based in the U.S., to increase the number of students studying abroad.

INTRODUCTION

“Far too few U.S. students study abroad – about 1% by most estimates – and the numbers are skewed to wealthier students from elite colleges and universities” (Bellamy and Weinberg, 2006, p. 20) In the 2010-11 academic year, NAFSA (2011) reported that 273,996 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit – still about 1% of all students at institutions of higher education.

Two recent headlines tell the story of academic globalization – “Why Americans are Choosing to Study Abroad in Record Numbers” from The Christian Science Monitor (Mach, 2011) reporting that a record number of American students studied abroad in 2009-2010, 270,604, up 4% from the previous year. The second headline – “More Foreign Students Studying in the USA” - from USA Today on the same day (November 14, 2011) reported that the number of foreign students studying in the U.S. was up 4.7% to 723,277 (Macklein, 2011). So not only do the numbers of incoming students outnumber outgoing by almost 3:1, the growth rate of incoming students is higher.

However, more recent data is even more alarming. The Chronicle of Higher Education (McMurtrie, 2012) has reported that the latest figures show that “the number of Americans who studied abroad grew an anemic 1.3 percent...according to the latest “Open Doors” report by the Institute of International Education.” Further, short trips are increasingly more popular. While

any international experience is worthwhile, spending a semester abroad is generally viewed as more beneficial than a short trip. So not only is growth in study abroad approaching “a standstill”, more students are opting for less intense short term travel programs.

Although much has been written about the benefits of overseas study to returning students, little has been published which discusses how to use this outcome information and other strategies to motivate future students to go abroad. (A comprehensive bibliography of research findings detailing the benefits of study abroad is available from the authors) Indeed much research has provided numerous reasons to encourage participation, but only a handful of studies have empirically explored the obstacles to increasing participation (Salisbury, et al, 2009) The Council on International Educational Exchange’s 2006 publication summed up the lack of research thusly: “While there is a good deal of folk wisdom about what motivates students to go abroad, there is very little hard data” (Council on International Education Exchange, 2006). More specifically, there is a dearth of information relating to business majors and their unique study abroad circumstances.

The reality is that the numbers of US college students studying abroad, starting from a lower base-point, is not growing at the pace of the numbers of students coming from abroad to the U.S. Incoming students continue to exceed the number of outgoing students and is growing at a faster pace. While incoming international students enrich our campus environment, pump more than \$20 billion into the U.S. economy and for most part, leave with a positive impression of the U.S., their presence here does little to better equip our students to compete in a global marketplace when they graduate. As Thomas L. Friedman (2007) says in his book, *The World is Flat*, “Every young American today would be wise to think of himself or herself as competing against every young Chinese, Indian, or Brazilian.”

Perhaps even more alarming is the “array of financial, cultural, and institutional obstacles (which) discourage underrepresented students from even studying abroad” (Dessoiff, 2006, p. 21) Dessoiff identified males, African American and ethnic minorities, first generation college attendees, people with disabilities and financial “high need” students are those who are especially underrepresented in study abroad programs.

In no academic discipline is international exposure more important than the field of business. While it is true that business students study abroad at a higher rate than many disciplines – business students represented 16.4% of the enrolment but 20.2% of the number of U.S. students studying abroad – business students still lag behind humanities students by a considerable number – 14% and 27.9%, respectively (NAFSA, 2011) Graduates are increasingly more likely to be employed by a multi-national corporation and will be called on to manage overseas operations. The AACSB, the premier accrediting body for business schools, has identified four “challenges” for business education:

1. Strong and growing economic forces
2. Differences in organizational and cultural values
3. Cultural diversity among employees and customers
4. Changing technology in products and processes.

Interestingly, three of these four relate to globalization. Further, the AACSB “Assurance of Learning Standards” stipulates that an undergraduate degree program (in business) includes learning experiences in the “Dynamics of the global economy” and “Multicultural and diversity understanding”. (AACSB International, 2012)

The importance of international business to the curriculum of the business school is emphasized by frequent mention in the mission statement. For example, Kwok and Arpan (2002, p. 572) reported that 95.8% of their respondent business schools included a specific reference to International Business as part of their educational and research mission.

The importance and benefits of study abroad have been widely studied and recognized. The challenge remains - how do we, as business faculty members and administrators, encourage more U.S. students to study overseas? Since one of the most commonly used vehicles for providing a semester abroad experience is the “exchange program”, we should also address ways to increase overseas partner institution students’ participation in studying in the U.S. Incoming students stimulate interest in study abroad among domestic students as well as provide a placement slot for potential outgoing students.

THE BARRIERS TO INTERNATIONAL STUDY

The first step is to determine the nature of the barriers to studying overseas. Too often enthusiastic advocates of study abroad focus on a single barrier, most usually cost, but truly effective programs can only be built around eliminating multiple barriers.

One must also be aware that when students explain their reasons for not studying abroad, sometimes they will not express their true reasons, but rather will state a reason which is perhaps less embarrassing. For example, cost is often stated as a reason for not studying abroad, even when generous scholarships almost eliminate this barrier. Perhaps the real reason might be something else – perhaps fear? But such a reason is far less frequently expressed

To help gain understanding of the barriers, a survey of study abroad officers at member universities of The Magellan Exchange was conducted. The Magellan Exchange is a non-profit consortium of universities worldwide, predominantly focused on business studies. The respondents were mainly from universities in the U.S. and Europe, but there were limited respondents from Asia and Latin America. For simplicity, the data from only U.S. and European respondents is reported herein. While the number of respondents may seem quite small, each is, in fact, reporting on their accumulated experience in talking to hundreds of potential study abroad students. This survey is, therefore, one based on the responses of experts in the field. Based on the results of this study, barriers were grouped into four main categories – financial/fear, cultural, administrative/academic and other.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Financial and Fear Barriers

The barrier cited with highest frequency by students to study abroad advisors in both geographic areas was “Finances”. Or perhaps more accurately, some combination of the student’s perceived lack of financial resources, an overestimate of the costs of study abroad or that student’s view that this is the most acceptable answer.

Table 1 shows the responses to the survey question relating to barriers to participation. American students were reported to cite financial concerns as more important than did their European counterparts. There might be several reasons for this. Finances, generally, are not a major consideration for European students, who benefit from extremely low costs of attending university. Further, fewer Europeans have part-time jobs they may need to sacrifice in order to study abroad, so perceive a lower opportunity cost to study abroad. Finally, European students have study abroad options which are much closer to home when compared to U.S. students.

However, especially in the case of U.S. students, the financial ability to support a semester abroad might be increased if students’ expenditure patterns were re-prioritized. Students seem to have little trouble in purchasing relatively new cars and equipping them with expensive wheels and “killer” audio systems. It’s often just a matter of priorities. In addition, students may often estimate that a semester abroad will cost them significantly more than it really would. In reality, the true incremental cost might be quite affordable.

The financial cost can be both actual cost and opportunity cost. Reducing the net actual cost to the student can be accomplished in two basic ways – reduce the price or make funding available to defray the cost. Usually the most cost effective semester study abroad option is an exchange program. Benefits of these programs accrue to both the student and the institution. The student incurs only normal tuition costs, which are “banked” by the home institution and used to pay the tuition of an incoming student. This not only creates an affordable study abroad option for the outgoing student, it also creates an opportunity for an incoming student, who in turn will help internationalize the home institution’s campus. Such programs also provide for continuity of enrolment at the home institution and retain access to Federal Student Loan programs.

Particularly for U.S. students, who more typically live away from home while attending university, overseas housing costs may generally be close to what the student may incur while studying at their home university, at least what may be referred to as the “Monday to Friday” cost. The added costs substantially come from the upfront airfare and the weekend travel costs – the “Friday to Monday” costs. It is here that innovative programs may help reduce these Financial Barriers. Traditionally, scholarships awarded on the basis of merit or need have been the most common solution. But perhaps funding programs can be designed that are more innovative. One university provides airfare scholarships to those students who are active in one of the College’s professional organizations. This is a double win for the student – the benefit of developing leadership skills within an organization which happens to be linked to the discipline of one’s major, while earning funding for a study abroad experience. Requiring some matching

funds from the organization may also pave the way for the organization to seek alumni support and an ongoing program of support.

Another option is to help the student create a personal travel fund from their freshman year. Adding \$40 a week to a savings account will generate about \$2000 for the year. That's \$6000 saved by the end of the junior year – certainly enough to cover the incremental cost of a semester abroad versus a semester at home. The university might be able to add partial matching funds which might be an added incentive for the student to elect to participate.

Table 1 BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION						
Barriers/ Reasons not to study abroad	Region	Not at All a Barrier	Somewhat of a Barrier	A Large Barrier	Number of Respondents	Average Rating
1 Finances	Europe	40% (4)	60% (6)	0% (0)	10	2.6
	US	20% (2)	80% (8)	0% (0)	10	2.8
2 Fear	Europe	60% (6)	30% (3)	10% (1)	10	1.5
	US	70% (7)	30% (3)	0% (0)	10	1.3
3 Family	Europe	40% (4)	50% (5)	10% (1)	10	1.7
	US	0% (0)	90% (9)	10% (1)	10	2.1
4 Friends	Europe	60% (6)	40% (4)	0% (0)	10	1.4
	US	20% (2)	80% (8)	0% (0)	10	1.8
5 Lack of Dept. Support	Europe	70% (7)	20% (2)	10% (1)	10	1.4
	US	44.44% (4)	33.33% (3)	22.22% (2)	10	1.6
6 Perceived Career Relevance	Europe	80% (8)	20% (2)	0% (0)	10	1.2
	US	11.11% (1)	77.78% (7)	11.11% (1)	9	2.0
7 Course Availability Abroad	Europe	30% (3)	60% (6)	10% (1)	10	1.8
	US	0% (0)	44.44% (4)	55.56% (5)	9	2.56
8 Destinations	Europe	50% (5)	30% (3)	20% (2)	10	1.7
	US	55.56% (5)	44.44% (4)	0% (0)	9	1.44
9 Grade Conversion	Europe	70% (7)	20% (2)	10% (1)	10	1.4
	US	66.67% (6)	33.33% (3)	0% (0)	9	1.33

The concern about forgoing an income producing job while overseas is more difficult to address. The actual amount of potential income not earned is actually quite small. Even a generous \$15 an hour job for 20 hours a week will produce gross income of less than \$5000 for a semester. With limited resources, a college might be unable to provide funds in this magnitude.

Eligible low-resource students may borrow funds under their Federal Student Loan Program. However, for students ineligible for such loans, those just above the maximum eligibility guidelines, perhaps a program could be implemented by the university where students

are given loans from donated funds while overseas. Repayment of the amount will replenish the fund, making funding of future students possible.

Students seem to understand that their career earnings will be far greater with a college degree than without. Perhaps publicizing data which shows that those who study abroad have a greater lifetime earnings stream than those who don't may make a persuasive argument. Evidence suggests that a semester abroad will increase one's prospects of getting an interview and obtaining a job offer and the skills learned abroad will result in a faster track through the corporate ranks. Further, one should not neglect the idea that a study abroad experience will also increase entrepreneurial opportunities for the graduate. (for example Relyea, et al, 2008; Franklin, 2010; Curran, 2007)

Fear was one of the lessor cited reasons for not studying abroad but may be closely related to financial barriers. The researchers feel that many students actually cite "Finances" as their main barrier to overseas study, when, in fact, it is fear. Especially for males, it is far less macho to admit they feel "fear", while blaming "finances" presents a more logical reason for not going abroad. Perhaps reducing fear might be just as beneficial as reducing financial barriers in attracting students to a study abroad experience.

Testimonials from returning students, informational meetings and classroom presentations may all help reduce fear. Arranging for students to travel together to an overseas destination or assuring them that other people from their home country will be there might also reduce fear. The enthusiastic support of the faculty member is also helpful.

CULTURAL BARRIERS – FAMILY AND FRIENDS

There are a variety of cultural barriers to studying overseas. Here we run into the Study Abroad 4 Ps. Perceptions, Parents, Peers and Professors. The student's perceptions can be a strong barrier – the already discussed perceptions that a study abroad semester costs too much, beliefs that they need to be fluent in a foreign language, that there are added dangers abroad, that they won't like the food, and so on. Repeated reinforcement that such fears are false is needed. It needs to be reinforced that even students with no foreign language skills at all can participate in a study abroad experience in a non-English speaking country. Many overseas universities offer some/much of their business coursework in English, meaning academic success is not in jeopardy due to poor foreign language skills, and that all classmates and teachers will speak fluent English.

Family and Friends are both reported to be far more influential as a barrier to U.S. students than to European students. Ninety percent of U.S. respondents reported family was either somewhat a barrier or a large barrier. Conversely, 40% of Europeans reported that family was no barrier at all. In part, this may be explained by European parents having more experience with overseas travel, thus more encouraging to their children.

Particularly with first generation college students, there is often little encouragement from home. In fact the opposite might be true – parents might actually discourage their children

from studying overseas. For U.S. student recruiting, step one is to get families on board. Mailings to the students' families, pointing out the benefits and the safety of studying abroad can help provide positive reinforcement from home and strongly sway a student's decision to study abroad.

The influence of friends follows a somewhat similar pattern, with Europeans reported as viewing friends as much less of a barrier than did U.S. respondents.

Enlisting the help of returning students, especially students who have similarities to the prospective students is important. Peer reassurance is very influential. Matching returning students with prospects on the basis of gender, race and academic discipline will help reduce barriers. From alumni, stories of how the experience enriched their work experience, all resonate with prospective students. Peer influence is one of the strongest ways of influencing a student to go abroad. Establishing a program where students currently overseas write a blog of their experiences and requiring them, when they return, to speak to various student groups can be a great help in encouraging a study abroad experience. Recruiting student leaders to be participants and spokespeople can be influential. Both formal or informal opinion leaders, can be very helpful in encouraging others to go abroad.

Finally, professors have to buy into the value of international experiences. Kwok and Arpan (200, p. 575) reported that only 18.6% of U.S. business school faculty members had functional international experiences. This figure was significantly higher for non-U.S. schools – 27.4%. The college which provides incentives and encouragement to its faculty members to internationalize will likely see an uptick in numbers of students studying abroad. How does a college prod professors to participate in an overseas experience? Obviously one answer is by providing funding for overseas conferences or sabbaticals for overseas teaching semesters. However, this usually only attracts a small number of faculty members, usually those already pre-disposed to going overseas.

How can we encourage more reluctant faculty members to “take the plunge”? Departments and colleges could incorporate international experiences into the criteria for tenure and promotion or for merit pay evaluation. Specifying that one should present research at international conferences, teach overseas for some period or serve a professional organization by volunteering to act as session chair or discussant at some overseas conference might increase interest. By incorporating these criteria into the personnel evaluation process, the school is providing a strong signal that internationalization is really important. Even if institutional funding for such purposes is limited, the faculty member is more likely to prioritize their own expenditures to support international professional travel. Pointing out that the cost of such professional-related travel is tax deductible might cushion the financial burden as well.

ADMINISTRATIVE, ACADEMIC AND OTHER BARRIERS

Perhaps one might best view the Administrative Barriers as those imposed by non-academic departments of the university, while Academic Barriers are those imposed at the

department or college level. Both may require a change in institutional culture in order to make the student's international experience "work". Different administrative rules have to apply to those studying overseas. Deadlines have to be flexible, in recognition of different school calendars in different countries. From the Provost's office, to the Registrar to the Dean to the department, an attitude of "let's make it work" must replace "but, we have a rule..." Department and College support is essential for effective student recruiting.

Looking at the question of perceived relevance of study abroad to one's career, Europeans reported this as much less of a barrier. In fact, this barrier was the one where the difference between Europeans and American is the largest. Eighty percent of Europeans reported this as no barrier at all, while 89% of Americans reported this as either somewhat a barrier or a large barrier. In particular, career benefits to having an international experience on the student's resume should be emphasized to American students.

"Available Courses Abroad" seems to be a more problematic factor for U.S. students headed overseas. Well over half (55.56%) of U.S. respondents reported Course Availability as a large barrier, compared to only 10% of European students. U.S. academic units need to increase flexibility in transferring course credits. Too often departments try to match overseas transcripts course by course. "...Faculties further complicate the problem by insisting that "if you haven't taken the course with us, you really haven't taken it"" (Huebner, 2006, p. 21) This creates a problem as the exact courses may not be available at overseas locations. A more holistic approach is needed. This tends to be the approach more commonly taken at European institutions.

There is no business major which covers every piece of knowledge in the discipline. So departments should recognize that the student who learns something different than what might have been identified in the major coursework at home had at least an equally rich academic experience as one who stayed at home and followed the precise curriculum. Prerequisite requirements may need to be waived – for example, does it really matter which comes first – micro or macroeconomics? Basically, every effort needs to be made to ensure a semester of overseas study moves the student a semester closer to graduation.

"Available Locations" is often viewed as a barrier. European students often want to go to New York or Los Angeles while Americans want London or Paris. For a variety of factors, these locations might not be either feasible or available. The benefits of alternate locations need to be emphasized. The lower cost and safety of smaller communities in the U.S. or the widespread use of English outside of the U.K. are some of the ways of reducing this barrier. Generally both Americans and Europeans viewed locations as a barrier at a similar rate.

"Grades" may be a factor, although the true problem with this may not manifest itself until the student returns to their home country. The problem lies with grade distributions that are quite different in other countries than they are in the U.S. It would generally be true that far fewer students are awarded a grade of "A" in most European countries than in the U.S. This may create a perverse barrier for the "best and brightest". A U.S. 4.0 G.P.A. student might

hesitate to study abroad for fear of losing their prized grade point average. Or a student on the borderline of losing a scholarship with a 3.5 G.P.A. might also resist going abroad. Transferring in credits rather than specific grades might help eliminate resistance to going overseas. Alternately, a generous grade equivalency transfer policy may alleviate student fears and may stimulate interest in study abroad.

CONCLUSIONS

Increasing student participation in study abroad programs should be a key goal of all business schools. While there is some variation in the student reasons given for non-participation between European and U.S. study abroad coordinators, universities on both continents are confronted with students who are reluctant to study abroad.

Institutional support for study abroad must be a priority. Too often the financial imperative of getting more fee-paying international students usurps the educational mission of internationalizing the domestic student body. Support, both financial and other, at all levels within the institution, must be provided to domestic students to encourage study abroad. The role of fear as both a stated and implied barrier should be recognized, as should the possible overstatement of financial barriers. Focusing only on reducing the financial barriers will likely yield sub-optimal results. In addition to financial aid, Administrative and Academic barriers must be reduced. Faculty members must be encouraged to participate in globalization. Student opinion leaders should also play a role.

Strategies required of European study abroad coordinators might somewhat differ from those which may be required by American study abroad coordinators. This is particularly true with the barriers of the influence of Family and Friends, Career Relevance and Course Availability. Customized approaches need to be developed according to the specific needs and student profiles at each university.

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CLICKING FOR HEALTH: USE OF A STUDENT RESPONSE SYSTEM IN A LARGE INTERDISCIPLINARY HEALTH CLASS

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Large auditorium lecture classes are a challenge to college health educators who must present knowledge that may be sensitive or controversial in a setting that can be perceived to be impersonal and alienating. Participants: Survey data were obtained from 212 undergraduate students in December 2010. Study reports on general observations that occurred from August 2007 to May 2011. Methods: Observation, reflection, and a cross sectional survey collected participant and programmatic data. Results: This program note describes the use of a student response system in a 240-student class on health issues at a regional university. It provides suggestions and techniques for the effective implementation of an electronic personal response or “clicker” system that are of particular interest and use to health educators. Conclusions: Electronic student response systems can be a helpful tool in providing health classes in large lecture halls.

EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD

In large lecture classes, opportunities for personal interaction and student class participation are limited. Student participation and involvement are curtailed because of the distance between faculty and students, the impersonal nature of the space, the seating arrangement, and the sheer number of students.¹ These barriers are especially important in courses which contain material on personal health behaviors. Because of the subject matter, students may have questions or need information that is of a personal nature and may not feel comfortable identifying themselves to the instructor or to their peers. They must often choose between waiting to speak to the instructor before or after class, coming to faculty office hours, or remaining uninformed.

Electronic Student Response Systems (“clickers”) are an increasingly popular solution. Clickers enable each student with a uniquely assigned keypad to answer questions posed by their instructor. Their responses are electronically recorded via the use of a receiver that is attached to the instructor’s computer. Uses of the clickers include taking attendance, completing quizzes

and exams, and providing student comprehension feedback to the instructor. Questions can be created in advance or “on the fly.” Student responses are aggregated and presented immediately as graphs or tables, while maintaining the anonymity of individual students. This technology has the potential to transform the classroom experience, providing opportunities to modify the class to better meet the needs of students.

The literature on the use of clickers in the classrooms is preliminary. Many studies have been descriptive, often focused on the attitudes and opinions of students and instructors regarding the use of clickers.²⁻⁴ The literature suggests that several factors contribute to students’ attitudes and perceptions of clickers. Some of these factors are the students’ desire to be engaged, the view that traditional lecture styles are not best, the evaluation of feedback, the amount of clicker use in the class, and the anticipated course performance.⁵ For example, in sexuality education classes, students have reported that they have enjoyed using a student response system and that it had a positive influence on their learning experience.⁶ Of particular significance for the health sciences, students have reported that they were more likely to answer personal questions honestly with the use of clickers.⁷

While some authors have provided general recommendations and guidelines for the use of clickers,⁸⁻⁹ a discussion of clicker use in large health courses has not been undertaken. This paper reports on the experiences of the use of a clicker system at a regional university for a large lecture health class. It provides an overview of how clicker use is warranted in classes that address issues of health and provides strategies that can be used in the large classroom.

Clicker Use in an U.S. Health Issues Course

This research was conducted in an interdisciplinary course on the structure and function of the U.S. healthcare system and issues of concern to public health. This course drew students from across the university as it fulfilled an interdisciplinary studies general education requirement for students completing the baccalaureate. The class met twice a week for one hour and fifteen minutes and had an enrollment of 240 students. Although this course has been taught with and without clickers for 12 semesters by one of the authors, this discussion focuses on one section taught in Fall of 2010.

This study was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board of the University. Students signed an informed consent document using traditional paper and pen on the first and second day of class.

At the end of the semester, students were asked to complete a voluntary online evaluation survey that included questions on clicker use. Those survey data are presented here. Of 240 students enrolled in the course, 212 were enrolled in the study and completed the survey. Class composition was consistent with previous semesters. Sixty-two percent of students were female, 41 percent had used clickers in previous classes, and 24 percent were African American. Please see Table 1 for further details.

Table I: Student Characteristics	
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	41% (n=87)
Female	59% (n=125)
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	
White, not Hispanic	53% (n=113)
Hispanic	11% (n=24)
Black	24% (n=51)
Asian	9% (n=19)
Other	2% (n=5)
<i>Class Level</i>	
Freshman	9% (n=20)
Sophomore	18% (n=38)
Junior	48% (n=101)
Senior	25% (n=53)
<i>Previous Clicker Use</i>	
Yes	41% (n=87)
No	59% (n=125)

Benefits of Clicker Use in Health Education

Throughout the semester, clickers were used in three ways. First, the instructor posed questions to assess student comprehension of material and guide lectures. Second, they were used to increase participation by conducting polling on current debates in health. Third, personal risk behavior questions were asked that could be answered anonymously.

Assessing Student Comprehension: Disparities in Student Knowledge

Unlike English and Mathematics, where placement and testing is more uniform, health is taught with varying degrees of rigor and there is no uniform assessment at the state or national level. For instance, in Illinois, high schools are required to provide only one semester of health education to students. Some students only have minimal exposure to health information, while others come from school systems which have offered much more extensive health education programs. In addition, health information is often provided in the home and medical care setting. Depending on individual access to those settings, great disparities in the knowledge base of students can exist.

These disparities create quite a challenge to the college instructor. Clickers are invaluable as a means to determine the extent to which a particular topic needs to be addressed in a given class. Quick knowledge questions can be asked to assess basic knowledge and lectures can be modified to address gaps in pre-existing knowledge. Rather than address content that is already familiar to students, educators can tailor their lessons to meet the particular needs of their class. In addition, as basic knowledge questions are posed and students submit responses, there is an opportunity to rectify misconceptions.

Increased Participation: Current Debates in Health

Discussions regarding the U.S. healthcare system and the health status of populations within that system are inherently controversial. Clickers can be used to poll students on specific controversial issues. In this course, current debates in health and healthcare were examined with the help of the clickers. For example, when discussing the structure of the healthcare system, select students volunteered as advocates for a particular position on the controversial issue “Is healthcare a right or a privilege?” The students, who had previously researched the topic, debated for approximately 10 minutes. The debate then spurred a class discussion. Students in the audience posed questions to the debaters or added their own comments. The students were polled before and after the discussion about their personal beliefs and students could see how class opinions may have shifted on an issue. This format can lead to very lively discussions during which students can improve their critical thinking and communication skills.

Assessing Risk: Personal Risk Behaviors

One of the goals of instruction in health is to encourage students to identify and minimize risky health behaviors. Because of the personal and private nature of these behaviors, students may be hesitant to identify themselves as having participated in high risk activities. It would be foolhardy to expect students to honestly answer questions such as, "Did you use condoms the last time you had intercourse?" if responses were public. With clickers, the instructor can pose very sensitive questions and students can feel free to answer honestly.

When using this technique, the instructor should demonstrate to the students that their responses are completely private and not subject to review by the instructor or their peers. Students can observe as the instructor sets up the session and chooses the ‘anonymous’ option. This enables students to be confident of the anonymity of their responses while receiving immediate information as to how their behavior compares to their peers. Instructors should make it clear that whether a student chooses to answer is voluntary and students may choose to answer some questions and not others.

Armed with this information, the instructor can tailor the presentation of content to the needs of students. A useful exercise is to poll the class using the same questions and format as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Class data can then be compared to national and state data and differences can be noted and discussed. For example, when compared with national data collected by the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, students in this class had higher rates of alcohol use yet lower rates of smoking than college students from the national sample. Students hypothesized this might be due to campus policies against smoking.

CONCLUSION

There are several challenges health instructors should be aware of before implementing a clicker system in their classrooms. These considerations include the fact that there will be a learning curve, that the system will increase costs for students, and that technological issues are going to arise.

In terms of the learning curve, instructors must become familiar with the software and the hardware, and how that software interacts with existing course products such as Blackboard or other course management systems. Instructors should avail themselves of the tutorials provided by the clicker manufacturers as well as any training that might be available to them on their campuses. Instructors should practice logging on to the system both as the instructor and as a student. Fair policies regarding the consequences to students saying "I forgot my clicker" must be developed and incorporated into the grading schema. Furthermore, new assessment instruments and teaching techniques that are structured to take advantage of the clicker system must be developed, tested, and implemented.

The cost of the equipment often comes up as an issue of concern. Although the transponder and software used by the instructor is generally free, student costs can vary from \$15 to \$35 depending on the arrangements made by the university with the vendor. This has not proven to be overly burdensome to students in the experience of the authors. In the online survey described above, only 18 percent of students answered yes to the question, "Do you think the clickers were too expensive?"

The technological issues that often arise can cause great difficulties, especially if there are no back up mechanisms in place. Problems can occur for both the instructor and the students. The system may lock up and need to be re-booted. This tends to happen more often as the data file becomes larger or the equipment becomes older. A student may not be able to log into the system, for example, if batteries are not working or their clicker has malfunctioned. In the online survey, when asked, "What don't you like about the clicker system?" Forty-two percent of students discussed technological problems as a concern. Instructors must be flexible enough to take these glitches in stride and not let the failure of the system take over the class. When dealing with technology, sometimes things do not always go perfectly. Adaptability and flexibility are of great importance, both for instructor and students. Building that flexibility into the grading process (dropping lowest 2 quiz scores, for example) can be useful.

These challenges can be addressed and clicker systems can be successfully implemented. Students themselves, who bear the economic cost of the system, can see its usefulness. When students were asked in the online survey "Should the professor use the clickers the next time she teaches this class?" Eighty-two percent said "Yes."

Regardless of class size or setting, educators must do what they can to ensure that the information they are sharing is heard, understood, and incorporated into the lives of their students. A student response system does not eliminate all of the various challenges that are

presented by teaching in large class settings, but clickers can be a useful tool to address some of the challenges and improve instruction.

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A MODEL FOR DESIGNING FACULTY-LED STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS IN THE BUSINESS CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

The increasingly emergent globalization of markets, financial institutions, and economies exerts increasing influence on the curriculum in business schools. As such, schools of business are searching for ways to embed international experiences into their curriculum. An approach to address this need is to develop a study abroad program which provides a poignant venue to incorporate a focus on global and international business into the curriculum. This paper outlines experiences in developing a study abroad program focused on the needs of the business curriculum and provides cost and feasibility limitation discussion. We compare and contrast our recent faculty-led study abroad programs in order to provide a model for analysis such that these programs provide both rigorous and relevant content and structure which increases the global and international competencies in our students. Important aspects of designing a study abroad trip such as location, cultural immersion, academic rigor, and linking learning goals and objectives to the college mission and learning objectives for each trip are encapsulated in the model.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristic of the 21st Century has been the phenomenon of a smaller and flatter world (Friedman, 2005). Accordingly, new technologies continue to make the world smaller such that cultural, political, and business transactions across different time zones and countries are commonplace. In the business school curriculum, this transformation creates new imperatives for design of our curricula and our pedagogical outlook. Many schools of business have recognized this change and have accordingly added courses which emphasizing the international and global component of business. While will continue to rely on our classrooms to deliver this content, students may have the best opportunities to appreciate the global nature of business by developing first-hand experiences outside of their own culture and context. Moreover, while Massively Online Open Courses and other Internet-borne innovations bring students and

curriculum closer together and more accessible, the richness, immediacy, and personalization of these conduits are far from replacing the impact of first-hand and in-person experiences. This is particularly true when the visceral impact of global business is the aim of our curriculum design.

One way to achieve a global perspective in business curriculum is study abroad programs which encourage students to experience business and life in other countries. Traveling to other countries not only gives students a chance to see how businesses operate differently, but also exposes them to other beliefs, value structures, and attitudes. Recognizing and reconciling with these differences provides a foundation for a business student to truly develop a global perspective in their education. While the face validity of extending business education with a study abroad program is fairly apparent, the form and method of delivery for these experiences varies significantly. Therefore, it is difficult to recommend a best practice for study abroad programs designed to increase global awareness for business students. These opportunities hinge significantly on the mission, educational goals, and overall disposition of the institution. As such, it is important to disclose that this paper is written from the perspective of a small regional institution in North America, such that our experiences may not compare to schools otherwise situated.

In this paper, we compare strategies and alternatives which can be used to develop a study abroad program. We stress the importance of designing a study abroad program which is tied to the mission, goals, and objectives of the college. Also, we discuss the external validation for such programs from the perspective of accreditation bodies, such as AACSB. For instance, a study abroad program which anchors students' experiences within the normal college-wide curriculum are preferential. In order for a viable study abroad program to develop and flourish, it is also necessary for the approach to be consistent with the tendencies, intentions, and desires of the faculty. Thus, when coupled with accreditation efforts, faculty interest and mission alignment are most likely to be synchronized. In reflection of our own experiences, we present a model for the design of study abroad programs with all of these considerations in mind. This framework stresses balancing requisite elements such as willingness, need, opportunity, ability, relevance, and rigor required for an optimal and successful study abroad program.

The paper proceeds as follows: First we provide an account of our own background and experiences in developing a study abroad program. We speak to opportunities and alternatives available for the study abroad program. We analyze our own past study abroad programs to reflect on the design decisions and learning opportunities from those offerings. These experiences have provided a rich context from which we can further illustrate a key conundrum and challenge for study abroad program design: that is the balance between rigor and relevance. It is important to plan a trip that is rigorous and relevant to course content; one that could not be mistaken as a vacation.

BACKGROUND

Overview of Study Abroad Programs

Every year, the Institute of International Education and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs partner to produce the Open Doors Report. This report provides statistics about students who studied abroad during the previous academic year. According to the 2011 report, "Study abroad by students enrolled in U.S. higher education has more than tripled over the past two decades (Open Doors, 2011)." During the 2009-2010 academic year, 270,604 students from the United States studied abroad and of those participants, 21% were business and management students. While it may seem that study abroad has become very popular, it is important to remember that there are around 20 million students enrolled in higher education in the United States. This means that only about 1% of students enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities study abroad during their academic career. The report revealed that the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France, and China were the top destinations for study abroad. There is little doubt that Europe is a popular destination for North Americans. Knowing this, perhaps it is unexpected that, "Fifteen of the top 25 destinations were outside of Western Europe and nineteen were countries where English is not a primary language (Open Doors, 2011)."

As a business professional, it is best to describe and discuss the nature of study abroad programs in the language and lexicon of those who are involved in the industry. There are several ways to approach this. It is our hope to consider the value and shortcomings of various types of study abroad programs currently offered and being developed in the United States. There are two main types of study abroad programs: Academic year/semester abroad and faculty-led, short-term trips. Both types of trips have distinct differences which, in turn, means that there are advantages and disadvantages of each style.

Differences in Study Abroad Program Design

In this section, we examine the differences between long-term study abroad programs and faculty-led, short-term study abroad programs. Our interest in comparing these strategies is the implications they have for designing study abroad programs which best meet our educational objectives and assurances of learning for our College of Business.

Academic Year or Semester Abroad vs. Short-Term Faculty-Led Programs

We provide a summary SWOT analysis of academic year or semester abroad vs. short-term faculty-led programs in Table 1 below. The SWOT analysis is a well-known method for decision-making, strategic planning, and analysis (Pickton, 1998; Rudzki, 1995).

Table 1 SWOT Analysis of Study Abroad Types				
	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Academic Year or Semester	More time to experience culture; time to learn new language	More expensive; shy students not likely to travel abroad; may not fit business curriculum; not much control over rigor of courses	Personal development; develop a network that increases incidental opportunities	Economic and geopolitical instability; natural disasters; parents less likely to support
Faculty-Led Short-Term	Course taught is specific to learning objectives; more focused; have opportunity to be rigorous; decrease in trip cost due to economies of scale	Short length; less freedom; internal group conflict; only as strong as the weakest link	Personal contacts used as networks; businesses more receptive to group visits not individuals	Opportunity for trip cancellation; group makes it obvious that you are tourists

We have generally found that short-term faculty-led programs have been best for our institution. This is the case for several reasons: the rural context of our institution, the connectedness of this design to our college mission, and due to our ability to oversee and manage the balance of rigor vs. relevance. Faculty-led trips offer more focused instruction in line with the learning objectives of a course. Additionally, we have found that our faculty members are more comfortable giving credit for a short-term faculty-led program as they afford more direct control.

Selecting from Varieties of Short-Term Faculty Led Program Designs

Once an institution commits to faculty-led study abroad programs for their students, there are a variety of program designs to select from. Our college has noticed three types of faculty-led trips: a partnership with another university, trips based on personal contacts, and a pre-packaged trip developed by a third-party travel agency. Table 2 demonstrates a SWOT analysis for each of these program designs.

Table 2
Types of Faculty-Led Study Abroad Programs

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Partner with another University	Local contact for local businesses; can be reciprocal; two school administrators working together	One partner can contribute less than the other	Easier to visit inaccessible places; makes typically unappealing destinations appealing	School budget problems or policy changes
Personal Network	Flexible; local contact for local businesses; more tailored to your needs	Less likelihood for traditional classroom environment; depending on individuals not an institution	Flexibility allows for incidental opportunities	Personal contact could become indisposed; personal contact may not meet expectations
Pre-Packaged Trip	Trip logistics already planned; faculty can spend more time teaching students instead of worrying about logistics	Less likelihood for traditional classroom environment; less opportunity for customized experience	Cheaper trip; travel agency has more purchasing power	Dealing with another business that could have its own problems; agency might not have high standards

Our partnerships with other institutions have manifested themselves as two principal categories: 1) Reciprocal agreements with the partner institutions where visits and excursions were bilaterally designed; 2) Programs co-created and co-designed with a partner institution to a jointly visited destination.

Study Abroad Activities at our Institution

The Study Abroad Office at our institution was established in the Fall of 2005. According to our current Study Abroad Director, the office was established in response to faculty members demand and due to new leadership that valued the pedagogical and personal growth opportunities inherent in study abroad. During the first academic year, twenty-four students studied abroad and since then, participation has dramatically increased. To date, over 750 students from our institution have studied abroad in over 25 countries. It is interesting to note

that most of these students participated in faculty-led trips rather than studying abroad on their own (Director of Study Abroad Programs, personal communication, November 15, 2012).

College of Business Study Abroad

The College of Business must ensure that all of our programs meet specific criteria: leading our students to satisfy these requirements is the reason we exist as an institution. By meeting these demands we ensure consistent and meaningful programs which benefit our students. In this paper we develop a model for conceiving and launching study abroad programs, which begins at need, carries through to opportunity, and ends with balancing the rigor and relevance of the program. We have arrived at this sequence by reflecting our recent experiences in designing and delivering study abroad programs. In the past five years, our College of Business has planned and successfully designed and delivered six different study abroad programs. With these experiences, we were able to compare and contrast the trips to reflect on what has worked well for faculty-led study abroad trips and what has not. Table 3 below provides a brief synopsis of our recent study abroad programs.

Table 3 Synopsis of Our College's Study Abroad Programs				
Year	Destination	Course	Type	Details
2008	Nizhny Novgorod, Russia	ECON 4321 - Comparative Economic Systems	Reciprocal partnership with another university	Partnered with Nizhny Novgorod Commercial Institute (NNCI). Lectures from Russian faculty in the morning and a cultural/business excursion in the afternoon. Excursions included the local legislative body, the state bank of Russia, a car dealership, an outdoor history museum, as well as other local businesses. Weekend trip to Moscow.
2009	Nizhny Novgorod, Russia	MGT 4333 - Diversity and Cross-Cultural Management	Reciprocal partnership with another university	Cultural and business activities on this trip included visits to IKEA, the Volga Beer Brewery, and the Ariel glass ball company. Trip further enhanced by the inclusion of a group of German students visiting at the same time.

Table 3
Synopsis of Our College's Study Abroad Programs

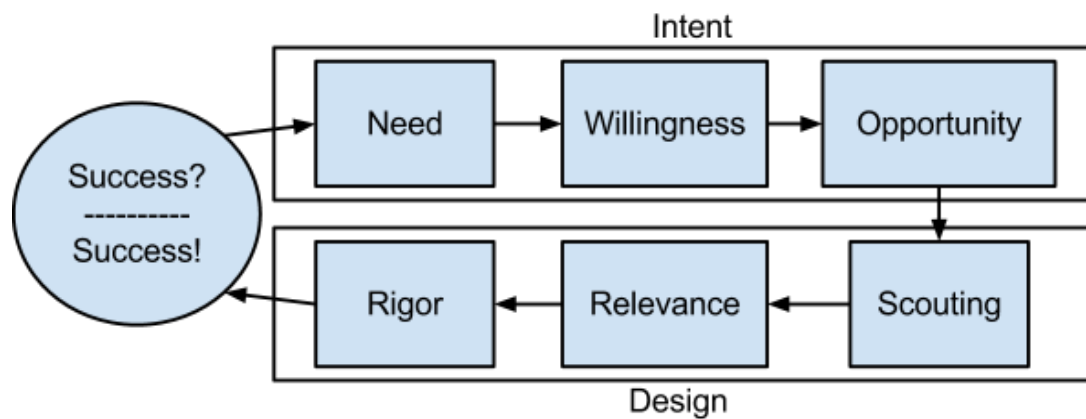
Year	Destination	Course	Type	Details
2010	British Columbia, Canada	MGT 4333 - Diversity and Cross-Cultural Management	Personal Network	Visits to Vancouver, Vancouver Island, Whistler, Chinatown, a Punjabi Market, and a museum about the First Nations People.
2011	London, England	MKT 5340 - International Marketing	Pre-Packaged Trip	<p>Purpose was to study international sports marketing due to the upcoming 2012 Summer Olympics.</p> <p>Visits to the Olympiad, Westminster Abbey, the BBC, the River Thames, and Stonehenge.</p>
2011	Quebec, Canada	Partnered university's course	Partner with another university	<p>Visits to Bombardier, a botanical garden, a microbrewery, many different museums, and whale-watching.</p> <p>Visits to Canadian universities where they received lectures about the Canadian political system and NAFTA.</p> <p>This trip also had a very culturally diverse group of students with only five students from the US, five students from Taiwan, one from China, one from Thailand, one from Mexico, and the last from Mauritius.</p>
2012	Copenhagen, Denmark Malmö, Sweden	ECON 4301 - Industrial Organization and Regulation	Personal Network	<p>Students studied at Copenhagen Business School (CBS) and explored the Øresund Region.</p> <p>Visits to the Microsoft Development Center, Lund University in Sweden, Tivoli Gardens, LEGOLand, and Kronborg Castle.</p>

A PROCESS FRAMEWORK FOR TRIP PLANNING

From our experiences, we have found that planning and implementing a successful study abroad trip can be viewed as a sequential set of events. The initial step in this process is to recognize willingness and need for a study abroad program. The college must believe that study abroad is important for their students and there must be faculty members willing to put in the extra work to make a trip happen. Once this need and willingness has been established, the

organizers must utilize personal and business networks to find an opportunity for a trip. Having international contacts helps this step considerably. Scouting the location is the next event to take place, and is a tipping point for the development of the program. If all of the elements have fallen into place with the appropriate number and quality of agents willing to make the program a success, then a site visit is in order. This means that faculty will need to confirm any research they have done regarding where students will stay, what businesses they will visit, how much money it will cost per person for the trip, et cetera. Another important step is to make sure that the trip has relevance to both the college curriculum and to student interests. If this element is missing, then the excursion has no bearing on the academic development of the student, which would circumvent the mission and objectives of the university. It is equally important that faculty determine that an appropriate amount of academic rigor is included during the trip. These six steps are all important for the success of a study abroad trip, but they must take place in sequence for the model to work most effectively (See Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Process Framework for Planning a Successful Faculty-Led Study Abroad Trip



Intent Phase

Study abroad represents a significant additional cost to universities, colleges, programs, faculty, staff, and students. In the particular case of West Texas A&M University, faculty led study abroad programs are tightly aligned to the college mission. In service to this mission, College of Business funds are earmarked and allocated on a regular, consistent basis. In this sense, budgeting and prioritizing study abroad activities and programs is part of the college culture. The first part of our model is the intent phase. During this time, the need for a study abroad trip must be realized. Once a college has established this need, a faculty member (or several faculty members) that is willing to take on this task must be identified. Finally, the faculty member should look for an opportunity for study abroad that is of interest to them.

Need

Before a successful study abroad trip can be accomplished, there must be a willingness or need to plan an international trip for students. Of course, it is possible for a faculty member to initiate a trip solely based on their desire to travel. However, their institution must be willing to go along with their idea in order for the trip to come to fruition.

The need to cultivate a study abroad program in the College of Business at West Texas A&M University arose from the commitment from the college's administration to pursue AACSB Accreditation (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) in 2006. According to the AACSB website, schools wishing to become accredited must first meet seven criteria before being accepted into the accreditation process (AACSB International Website). One of these requirements states that the institution must be, "consistent with its mission and its cultural context, the institution must demonstrate diversity in its business programs (AACSB International)." Since our mission explicitly mentions the importance of a global perspective (West Texas A&M University) the initiation of a study abroad program was key to meeting this standard. The college also recognized that the increasing globalization of our world has made the importance of teaching international business practices vital for business students (Fulgate 2001).

Willingness

Once the need for a study abroad program has been established, there must be a willingness to commit to the task from the college administration. Administrators need to champion the cause so that faculty members can see that they are being supported and helped in any way possible to make the trip occur. In our college, the six study abroad trips mentioned above would have never occurred had it not been for the support of our dean. He was willing to research the destinations to give input on logistics and ideas to make the trips seem special to the students. He was also willing to support the trips by giving the faculty members a budget for pre-site visits and any other necessary costs for the trips.

Just as important as having a supportive administrative team is finding faculty members that are willing to undertake the planning and implementation of a study abroad trip. The idea may be appealing to many but few are likely to see the project through completion. By the time a study abroad trip occurs, the faculty member has likely devoted at least a year to planning and developing the trip. All of this work is done without any pay other than the final trip itself. This fact alone is significant enough to deter some faculty from wanting to lead a trip.

Opportunity

Once the need and willingness for a study abroad program has been established within a college, it is important for interested faculty members to look for opportunities to study abroad. Opportunities can come in many different forms including personal contacts in foreign countries, partners with other universities through the campus study abroad office, or even locations with businesses or cultural sites consistent with faculty research interests. All six of our study abroad trips have developed through one of these opportunities. As mentioned before, the trips to Russia were a partnership with an institution called Nizhny Novgorod Commercial Institute. This partnership was started by a professor at our institution that knew a few people at NNCI. She was able to put our study abroad office in contact with the right people and the reciprocal agreement between the two schools was drawn up. The location for the first Canada trip was determined due to a personal contact of the dean and associate dean of our college. Their contact in Vancouver allowed our students to visit businesses that would have been hard to arrange without knowing the right people to call. The London trip was developed because of the faculty member's interest in the upcoming summer Olympics. Because he wanted to study international sports marketing, this was the perfect location and the trip was easily arranged by a travel agency. The trip to French Canada was a partnership between two Texas universities. The associate dean at our university had personal contacts at Tarleton State University, allowing this trip to come to fruition. The final trip to Denmark was also based on a personal contact. The faculty member that developed this trip knew a professor at Copenhagen Business School and was able to plan the trip with the help of that contact.

Design Phase

The second part of our model is the design phase. During this stage, the trip leader conducts a pre-site visit to scout the territory. This gives them a chance to plan the logistics of the trip. Once that step has occurred, the faculty member should start planning the course that will be taught during the trip. In thinking about the course, relevance and rigor must be considered.

Scouting

The first step when designing a study abroad trip is to conduct a pre-site visit at the proposed study abroad location. Pre-site visits are very important because they give faculty members a chance to inspect the location for the trip to make planning easier once they return home. It is essential for faculty to choose where students will stay, decide the best way to transport students from one place to the next, and to know how expensive food and other provisions are at that location. Of the six trips led by our college, faculty members went on pre-

site visits for five of the locations. The only trip that did not have a pre-site visit was the trip to London and it was not as vital due to the fact that the trip was planned by a travel agency.

When planning trip accommodations, faculty members must take into consideration many factors before deciding on the best course of action. Location, cost, safety, and even type of lodging are important to consider. Over the last five years, students on our study abroad trips have stayed in university dorms, chain hotels, a ski lodge, a bed and breakfast, and a variety of hostels. With each of these locations, there were distinct advantages and disadvantages and we have learned a lot about choosing housing for our students.

As mentioned above, another thing to consider during a pre-site visit is transportation. Transportation is important not only for the ease and convenience of transporting a group from one place to the next but also for the cultural immersion that is important for these trips. Because many of our students are from small towns, they may not have had the chance to experience certain types of transportation. During our trips, students have experienced airplanes, trains, taxis, ferries, subways, public buses, and chartered buses. It has not been uncommon for at least one student to experience all of these modes for the first time while studying abroad. Students will also be likely to need to walk further than they are accustomed to while in the US. During the pre-site visit, faculty need to assess their options in regards to ease of travel per size of group and cost per person for the trip. While this might not seem very important to many people during a pre-site visit, it is essential to think about how you will get to group from one place to the next, how long it will take to move the group, and how much it will cost. Transportation costs were a large part of the budget for many of our past trips.

Another important consideration is the cost of living at the location chosen for study abroad. If students are required to buy some of their meals each day, it is imperative that the group leader gives them an idea of an accurate amount of money that they will need in order to eat during the trip. We actually had a problem with this during our trip to British Columbia. While prices between the US and Canada are very comparable, we neglected to warn students that prices on Vancouver Island would be considerably higher due to the costs associated with moving the food from the Canadian mainland to the island. A few students experienced sticker shock and had to scale down considerably during the four days we were on the island. Because this had occurred, and because one faculty member kept this in mind during their pre-site visit, the students that traveled to Denmark were properly warned of the very high prices of food and drinks/snacks at convenience stores.

While on a pre-site visit, it is also important to visit cultural sites and local businesses in order to get an idea of what to see while leading the trip with students. This not only allows the faculty member to develop partnerships with local businesses, but also makes sure that the business will be interesting to the students and relevant to the course content taught for the trip. While some businesses may seem perfect to demonstrate course learning objectives, upon visiting them the professor may find that their presentation skills may be lacking or the business may not be relevant to the course. It is also important for the faculty member to visit these

places in order to know how much time to allot in the schedule to get the group to and from the business/site.

Relevance

When planning a study abroad trip, it is important to design the trip and course so that they are relevant to the mission, learning goals, and learning objectives of the college and university. Keeping these goals and objectives in mind will help to determine the best study abroad location and businesses/cultural activities to visit while there.

Our college mission states, “The mission of the College of Business is to provide high quality undergraduate and graduate business education with a global perspective and ethical awareness. We accomplish this through emphasis on excellence in teaching, which is strengthened by faculty scholarship and supported by professional service (West Texas A&M University).” As mentioned earlier, the reason that we began a study abroad program in our college was because our mission specifically stated that our students would be taught business concepts with a global perspective. If we look one step further, our college has specific learning goals for the BBA program and the MBA program. For the undergraduate students, WTAMU strives to teach communication, critical thinking, ethical, global, and social factors, and finally functional business analysis and applications. At the graduate level, students are taught professional communication, leadership, ethical, global, and social trends affecting business, and quantitative and qualitative techniques in relation to business. Teaching our students relevant skills for the business world is vital for our curriculum (Bennis, 2005).

When embedding a study abroad experience into curriculum, it’s important to identify courses which can best accommodate the aims and objectives of the trip or opportunity. Thus, faculty should tie course learning goals and objectives to program learning goals and objectives to college learning goals and objectives. Because a global perspective is important to the mission of the college, every BBA and MBA students must take an international component within their degree plan. The authors of this paper decided to examine the syllabi for three courses that explicitly teach a global perspective to see if the course design of the COB study abroad trips met most of the learning objectives within those courses. The courses examined were MGT 6330 – International Management, MGT 5333 – Diversity and Cross-Cultural Management, and ECON 5321 – Comparative Economic Systems. Out of these three courses, many of the learning objectives could be directly linked to activities and excursions of the six study abroad trips.

Rigor

As mentioned earlier, academic rigor during a study abroad trip is very important. Not only are students receiving credit for a short amount of time, they also need to have command of

the learning objectives of the course when they return. While there is a delicate balance between being too rigorous or not, it is usually better to err on the side of being thorough. The danger of not being rigorous enough is that without work that assesses what students are learning during the trip, there is no guarantee that the trip relates back to the curriculum.

As an example, we will examine the work that students were required to do for the Denmark study abroad trip in 2012. Before the trip, we met with the students at least twice a month to get to know one another, discuss cultural differences to be aware of, and to set some ground rules for the trip. During these meetings students were given a chance to ask questions about the logistics of the trip, the course requirements, and any other subjects that may be on their mind. The faculty members leading this trip wanted to make sure that this trip was academically rigorous and included several different methods to ensure this desire.

Students were required to write five, two to three pages in length, papers about expectations, exposure, networking, experiences, and finally action. The first paper was due the day before the group departed for Denmark, three of the papers were due during the trip, and the final short paper was due after the group returned to the United States. During the trip, students were divided into groups and each group was asked to summarize certain chapters of the required textbook. Students were also required to blog about their experiences each day on the group website that was developed by the faculty leaders. The two faculty members also conducted group discussions throughout the trip to make sure students were thinking about what they were experiencing each day. On the final day of the trip, the group was expected to give a presentation about the places they had visited and how they tied into the learning objectives of the course. Finally, the students were asked to combine their five short papers and expand them into one final paper that was due about one week after the group arrived home.

This was a very rigorous study abroad trip and while it may have been too rigorous in hindsight, all of the work that the students did proved that they did indeed learn the learning objectives of the course. There is a fine line between being too rigorous and not rigorous enough, but the danger of lacking rigor is that there is no guarantee that the study abroad trip ties back the curriculum of the college.

WEAKNESSES AND LIMITATIONS

While international study abroad programs are inherently important for the contemporary business curriculum, by their nature, these study abroad trips are typically only available to a small subset of our students. In the United States, 1% of the students enrolled in higher education participate in study abroad during their academic career (Open Doors, 2011). As such, we face challenges in extending the benefits of study abroad programs to the greater majority of our student body. While college administrators and faculty members should work together to increase the reach of these programs, it is likely that the impact will never reach a majority of students. Whereas students who have studied abroad could share their experiences with other

classes once they return, these second-hand accounts are not a substitute for the actual experience. Furthermore, while it is also possible to ask international students that are themselves studying abroad in the United States to share about their culture, this too is a second-hand account. While these ideas do not solve the problem, they provide some degree of amelioration.

Furthermore, our experiences, and our ensuing model, are reflective of a study abroad approach that is consistent with the context of our institution, college, and programs as situated in a small and rural school. For an urban university in a “world city,” such as New York or Los Angeles (Doel & Hubbard, 2002), the structure and motivations for study experiences may vary from our experience. Students from a more complex and diverse metropolitan area may seek other study abroad experiences that are more independent as compared to faculty-led study abroad courses. Nevertheless, our model still serves as a potentially useful tool for considering faculty-led study abroad courses as a means of strengthening the embeddedness of a curriculum which engenders a global perspective suited to the increasing international context of business.

Moving forward our model requires operationalization, testing and validation as a tool for planning future study abroad programs which remain consistent with, and relevant to, the academic programs and mission of our College. To this end, our model must also be accompanied by a means of analyzing and evaluating future faculty-led study abroad programs to measure their potential value and viability. Providing rubrics which extend the model for evaluation would serve us well in assuring that the design of our faculty-led programs remains both rigorous and relevant.

Costs and Feasibility

A principal weakness of our model is the degree to which it abstracts the costs involved. For a regional institution, cost may still prohibit a faculty-lead study abroad program despite all of the factors in the model flowing favorably. Thus, while our model reflects a reasonable process flow which affords a higher possibility of success, prohibitive costs and limited resources may be insurmountable. Thus, we further expound upon how we approached costs for our recent faculty-led program in Denmark. Although most of our faculty-led study abroad programs have been funded in a similar fashion, for our most recent trip to Denmark, students were expected to bear a significant share of the costs. For that trip, students paid around \$4,100. This amount included airfare, hostel accommodations, some meals, field trips/entry fees, ground transportation, health insurance, and tuition/fees for one undergraduate course. This total also included a portion of the cost for the faculty and staff that lead the trip. While the students did contribute to the faculty/staff expenses, the administration in our college also budgeted \$8000 to help defray the cost of the faculty/staff members. In this regard, a key aspect of the “intent” segment of our model involves ensuring that students factor these costs into their own planning.

Critical to students' planning their own costs is to get information regarding the study-abroad program early and often. What was most effective for our Denmark program was that many face-to-face interactions occurred in the early fall semester for a program that was offered in the subsequent early summer of the next year. Students were then able to build up support within their own families to gauge the overall value of the program and financially allocate for this endeavor. While it was inevitable that some students were from a financial position which could easily sustain the additional expense of study abroad in one of the more expensive areas of the world, it was also the case that several students, and their families, did plan and manage what was a significant financial outlay beyond their normal resources.

This financial challenge further underscores that the institution and faculty communicate the value proposition of the study abroad program early and with a personal touch. The personal, one-on-one, approach would not have been possible without a trusted and tightly-integrated team within the institution. In our case, the team extended beyond those leading the program to others in administration and staff. Thus our model supposes a partnership of willing administrators who provide both the strategic and operational structures for success, along with infrastructure such as a dedicated study abroad office to ensure that students and faculty are supported in areas of safety, risk management, and logistic support.

Part and parcel of the "campus-wide" support afforded to ensure successful faculty-led study abroad programs are the scholarships made available by the University Office of Study Abroad. Students with a GPA of 2.5 or higher were guaranteed a minimum of \$500 and could potentially be awarded \$1000 towards the expenses of the trip. Most of our students received around \$750 each, which essentially covered the cost of their tuition and fees for the course. While this may seem like a very expensive trip for students, our early promotion and education efforts allowed for ample time to find a way to raise the money needed for the trip.

Thus, while we offer the absence of cost as a weakness of our model, the elements of our model describe the development of a program that is designed to offer and demonstrate maximum value. In the case of our particular trip to Denmark, this value was evident such that both the institution and the students colluded to ease and/or justify the additional expense in realization that such an experience would have a cost associated with it. While Scandinavia is indeed an expensive destination, the trip was made feasible by due diligence and hard work during the scouting phase. We were able to hand-pick experiences and options that provided good value and yet afforded cost savings. For instance, the Danhostel chain of hostels offers great value with clean and safe accommodations at a price much lower than hotels and less complex than homestays. A city like Copenhagen enjoys a very comprehensive and robust multi-modal public transportation system which sufficiently moved both students and faculty to all of our destinations in a way that many comparable cities in the United States could not. A combination of good planning on the part of the faculty, and mission-driven university and college-level support also went a long way in mitigating costs. Issues related to cost are certainly not a trivial matter, and we again recognize the threat costs poses to the efficacy of our

model. However, approaching planning and execution according to the model offers redress to the cost issue by focusing on a program which offers high excitement, value, and intrigue for the students coupled with institutional support to make the plan actionable.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we make the case that business students studying in a rural and/or regional institution require additional opportunities to understand and appreciate the increasingly global and international context of business. Whereas we can argue that the business world we teach to our students is both smaller and flatter on account of advances in information technology, concern remains that students will not fully understand their changing world in a meaningful and visceral manner, without firsthand international experiences embedded in the business curriculum. Based on nascent faculty-led study abroad experience, we have outlined a model for study abroad planning and assessment which can be used to define and refine study abroad experiences as a means of augmenting and enhancing our mission-driven need to increase global awareness among our students. Whereas study abroad courses may only reach a small percentage of students, the enhancements these experiences bring to both faculty and students who participate have had an impact on the culture within our college. As we have undertaken at least one study abroad experience each year since 2008, these trips have increased student and faculty awareness of, and willingness to, participate in these experiences. The success of our faculty-led study abroad programs has increased a culture of awareness of these opportunities and has increased the desire, among both students and faculty, to engage in these opportunities.

However, our model demonstrates that need and intent alone are not sufficient to create viable and successful embedded study abroad experiences which are consistent with our stated mission aim to promote global awareness among our students. To the contrary, our model stresses the need for faculty site visits to scout the territory and to develop a picture of how study abroad experiences can be designed to deliver both rigor and relevance. Moreover, these scouting trips are somewhat ill-advised absent the precedent and groundwork afforded by cultivating opportunities through the extended network of the institution, the college, and that of individual faculty members. To wit, faculty-led study abroad experiences can maximize curriculum enhancement when these experiences tap into the network of faculty contacts and faculty liaisons. We have found the greatest potential for high impact study abroad experiences when both new and existing contacts are leveraged toward the aim of long-term associations with corresponding institutional and business affiliates in the destination countries. We have seen seeds of these possibilities with our experiences in Russia and believe our recent experiences in Canada, the U.K., and particularly Denmark, stand a high chance of bearing fruit in this regard. In reflection of the inter-connectedness of business in most sectors across national and cultural boundaries, the opportunities to connect with institutions such as the Copenhagen Business School bode well for deepening the embeddedness of global experiences in our own curriculum.

The most important aspect of our model is the need to balance rigor and relevance such that both students and faculty successfully engage in study-abroad as an ongoing process. This is a fine line where a faculty-led study abroad program must present an appealing excursion for the student, but also be designed with in-country experiences which are academically rigorous. Achieving this balance is a serious responsibility for both the faculty and institution if the credibility of faculty-led study abroad programs can be presented as a viable strategy to ensure the achievement of global awareness as a learning goal and mission aim. Clearly relevance is important if these programs will remain feasible and attractive to students. However, a lack of rigor can rapidly threaten the credibility of a business curriculum which holds the faculty-led study abroad as a strategically key component. Unfortunately, there is no “silver bullet” to achieve this balance between rigor and relevance and, perhaps more so than our need to strike this balance in our own scholarly work, getting this balance right for study abroad programs can be a make or break proposition.

Overall, even given limitations of costs and feasibility, our experience with faculty-led study abroad programs has been successful and positive. We have provided synopses and lessons-learned derived from these experiences to develop a post-hoc model for considerations in planning future faculty-led study abroad programs. Our experience has shown that our willingness to increasingly tie our study abroad programs to our mission, learning goals, and assessment activities has brought the benefits of these programs closer to the core of our curriculum and has developed new expectations among and between our faculty and students. We present a model which we can use to keep our own faculty-led study abroad programs on track and proffer this model as a means of establishing programs for other regional and rural schools who may share similarities in our own context.

We have little doubt that our study abroad programs have strengthened our curriculum and have played a key role in achieving the academic excellence commensurate with solid accreditation of our college and its curriculum. While our study abroad programs are not the only means by which we achieve global awareness for our students, they have provided a cohesive direction that has served to both focus and amplify our other efforts.

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TEACHING “CAUSE AND EFFECT” IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS: A PATHWAY TO IMPROVED STRATEGIC THINKING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

Course delivery in business schools has evolved over the last several decades to include andragogical methods beyond readings, lectures, and written assignments. More contemporary methods include case studies, simulations, group projects, and evidence-based discourse. While more current teaching techniques attempt to provide a perspective of real world activity for use in future decision-making, they do not train students to observe global events in order to understand the likely sequencing of actions that truly inform strategic business thinking. As an improved methodology, the continual examination and analysis of world events and their cascading impact upon the business environment is proposed. Over time, students develop an intuition regarding cause-and-effect under various circumstances based upon their study of the observations. As some intuition is attributable to learned experiences, the study of sequential effects can serve as a proxy for practice. Heightened intuition in regards to cause-and-effect will provide students (our future business leaders) an ability to more rapidly and accurately react to changing conditions caused by unexpected events.

Keywords: cause-and-effect, intuition, strategic thinking

INTRODUCTION

Organization leaders face a seemingly ceaseless acceleration in the pace of change. Complexity, technological innovation, and global competition place increasing demands upon leaders to be strategically reactive to events (Ireland & Hitt, 1997). To be successful, rising leaders must combine schooling with significant work experience in order to execute appropriate strategic decision-making in such an environment. In a sense, leaders need to develop within their memory an “internal database” of applicable knowledge that is the composite of book learning, followed by the addition of relevant observation and work experience. Requiring many years of “apprenticeship,” the development of such an internal database can be lengthy. Given the long time frame required, it would be valuable if this knowledge gain could be meaningfully accelerated such that individuals reach a state of leadership preparedness earlier. Is it possible for future leaders to begin the attainment of the experiential and observational learning necessary

for complex strategic decision-making while still in school? The purpose of this paper is to propose that such acceleration is possible and suggest a pathway for this to occur.

Course delivery methods in business programs have evolved over the last several decades beyond readings, lectures, and written assignments. More contemporized andragogical practices include group projects, case studies, internships, evidence-based discourse, and computer simulations. While each of these methods have advantages and provide useful learning opportunities, they do not fully train students to observe global events in order to understand the likely sequencing of the organizational actions that truly inform strategic business thinking.

Effective leadership requires many skills including the ability to think strategically. Strategic thinking develops over time through the application of knowledge gained experientially. Students cannot directly experience the application of their classroom learning. Simulations come close, but still are not real-world. Even internships are limited in scope. Thus, the development of strategic thinking might only be advanced in the classroom if students commence the creation and synthesis of knowledge into intelligent decision-making through specific assignments designed to enhance this skill.

STRATEGIC THINKING

The ability of leaders to successfully execute strategic thinking is perhaps their most important responsibility. Without such a capability, it is unlikely an organization can obtain any level of effective performance in the long-run (Davids, 1995). Boal & Hooijberg (2001), referencing the concept of absorptive capacity from Cohen & Levinthal (1990), state that a key component of strategic thinking is the creation of absorptive capacity or the ability to recognize relevant new information and patterns in order to synthesize that information toward useful results. Others have applied similar perspectives of strategic thinking. Abraham (2005) suggests that strategic thinking is a cognitive approach that attempts to discover new and unconventional ways of competing. According to Sanders (1998), strategic thinking consists of insight about the present and foresight about the future. Fink & Schlake (2000) assert that it is helpful to view strategic thinking in terms of scenario building. They propose “future-open thinking” since predicting future developments is exceedingly intricate. Consequently, it is critical for organizations to accept that there is no one predictable future and be prepared for a multitude of possibilities.

In human affairs—political, social, economic, or business—it is pointless to try to predict the future, let alone attempt to look ahead 75 years. But it is possible—and fruitful—to identify major events that have already happened, irrevocably, and that will have predictable effects in the next decade or two. It is possible, in other words, to identify and prepare for the future that has already happened. (Drucker, 1997)

In his interview with the *Harvard Business Review*, acclaimed management scholar Peter F. Drucker was effectively stating that foretelling the future was not a possibility without an understanding of past patterns and actions, as well as, an understanding of the probable sequential results to follow. Thus, a key ability of leadership is the assimilation of past facts, figures, and patterns for use in future decision-making. Stated differently, strategic leaders must inculcate an expansive set of information to memory, as well as, maintain the ability to draw upon their memory to provide rapid organizational direction. According to Henry Mintzberg (1994), strategic thinking is a synthesizing process that uses intuition and creativity in order to develop “an integrated perspective of the enterprise.”

STRATEGIC THINKING AND INTUITION

Intuition as a human trait has a history of study, but only recently is receiving visibility as a valued trait of executive decision-making. As an early researcher on the topic, Jung (1933) described intuition as a psychological characteristic which conveys perceptions in an unconscious way. Wild (1938) defined intuition as an immediate awareness of subject matter without any sensory support to account for the awareness. Bruner (1979) suggested that intuition was the act of understanding meaning without the use of analytical skills. Shapiro and Spence (1997) provided a broad-based description of intuition as an unconscious process where judgments are made without awareness of the “rules of knowledge” used for inference. These judgments feel correct, but the individual has no basis for describing the affirming sensation. Raidl & Lubart (2000-2001), using a phenomenological point of view, asserted that intuition is an incessant human practice that subconsciously connects incongruent pieces of information through pattern recognition. The commonality of these definitions resides within the subconscious. If intuition is a matter for the subconscious, then it must be readily available and rapid in application. Myers (2002) asserted that intuition occurs before rational analysis and is direct and immediate. Most recently, Kahneman (2013) described intuition as the judgments and choices made through immediate cognition and without significant reflection.

Why is intuition important to strategic thinking?

As it pertains to management decision-making, Burke & Miller (1999) portray intuition as a cognitive conclusion based on a decision-makers’ previous experiences and emotional inputs. Miller & Ireland (2005) aptly describe the importance of intuition:

The need for quick decisions, the need to cope with demands created by complex market forces, and the assumed benefits of applying deeply held knowledge combine to create strong perceived value for the intuitive approach.

They further describe intuition as a “holistic hunch” and as “automated expertise.” In this sense, decision-makers unconsciously draw upon data, experiences, and patterns stored in their memory to execute judgment.

There is growing research and evidence that senior leaders effectively use intuition in decision-making. As intuition is a subconscious activity, decision-makers do not realize their degree of dependence on intuition. Simon (1987) noted that during problem solving, leaders cannot coddle themselves in the choice between objective examination and intuition since expertise involves the use of both types in decision-making. Just as important as the approval of intuition in the decision-making process is the acceptance of the value of intuition in such an activity. Intuition allows individuals to make strategic adjustments to their decision-making as new patterns are observed. Langer (1989) noted that rational thinking only confirms “old mindsets” whereas creativity arises through an “intuitive experience of the world.” Successful executives go beyond the utilization of stale knowledge and past approaches. The ability to alternate between “habits of mind” and “active thinking” is the ultimate skill in today’s organizations (Hodgkinson & Sadler-Smith, 2003).

Can intuition be taught or are humans genetically predisposed to varying levels of intuitive ability? According to Hogarth (2010), it is largely the result of learning. If experience is organized so that people learn the “right lessons” from their interactions with the world, intuition can be educated in the sense that judgments become more accurate in specific domains. Dane & Pratt (2007) connect intuition with implicit learning described as the way individuals subconsciously generate knowledge about structures and patterns within a complex environment. They assert that implicit learning is necessary for the development of the intuitive judgment employed in executive decision-making. Thus, it can be suggested that while intuition is still not well-researched in regards to management decision-making, it is believed to be a teachable skill.

Through experience, people learn associations that provide the basis of intuition. This enables instantaneous judgments and pattern recognitions that serve as expertise (Myers, 2010). Very common displays of intuition include car mechanics and physicians. Mechanics have the ability to quickly listen to a car engine and diagnose the malfunctioning situation without referring to automotive manuals. Physicians listen to patient symptoms and recognize the problem almost immediately. Chase & Simon (1973) studied chess masters and noted the strong pattern recognition capabilities that were developed over many years of competition. Chess masters, while playing many games simultaneously, can glance at a multitude of chessboards and within seconds on each board determine the most effective moves in defeating less capable challengers. Intuitive decisions by successful executives are noted by Hayashi (2001). One such decision was by Chrysler president Lutz and his insistence to develop the Dodge Viper. Another example was the decision by ABC’s Eisner to launch “Who Wants to be a Millionaire.”

PROPOSED TEACHING METHOD – “CAUSE AND EFFECT”

Based upon the acknowledgement (1) strategic decision-making is critical for leaders, (2) intuition is an important element in strategic decision-making, and (3) intuition can be a learned skill, it is rational to conclude that it is feasible to develop teaching techniques for business school students as a method for accelerating their success in future organizational leadership positions. One such approach is to provide assignments that challenge students to observe and analyze global events for their cascading impact upon the business environment. This may facilitate the earlier development of strategic thinking skills. By focusing attention on sequential outcomes, students develop an intuition regarding “cause and effect” under varying circumstances. As some intuition is attributable to learned experiences, the study of sequential effects might serve as a proxy for practice. Hence, heightened intuition will provide students (our future business leaders) with an ability to more rapidly and accurately react to changing conditions.

Appendix I displays an assignment provided to undergraduate students in an upper-level Organizational Behavior course. In summary, the assignment required students to analyze the potential alternative decision-making options and the potential impact of each alternative. Further, it required students to select the most likely outcome. It specifically motivated students to think beyond a “first move” strategic decision and instead prompted thought regarding the second stage of reaction. While unscientific in nature, evaluation of the assignment through student assessment was performed in order to preliminarily judge the potential merit of a cause and effect approach to study. After assignment was submitted, students were asked to anonymously provide feedback by responding to the following (although admittedly bias-producing) question:

Did the assignment make you think about the complexity of cause and effect relationships within organization? Why or why not?

With 100% response rate in a class of 23 students, 91% of responses reflected a positive evaluation. Responses included:

“Yes. It made me analyze a situation broadly. It’s interesting to see how one thing can lead to another and so on.”

“Yes. It was an eye-opener to the number of affected individuals/groups and the great variety of potential outcomes that can be involved with even minor events.”

“Yes, it challenged me to consider multiple outcomes of a given event.”

“Yes, it did. The assignment made me think in depth of how everyone is affected in an organization.”

“Yes - it requires the student to think in broader terms to consider the great number of possible outcomes each action has.”

This type of assignment could be adapted to various types of courses. For example, while accounting is generally quantitative in nature and the cause and effect path is generally thought to be purely mathematical, an assignment that studies the sequencing of events from an accounting method change or restatement might be valuable. In marketing, students could document competitive reactions to an advertising campaign. In a finance course, students could evaluate the capital market reactions from a dividend policy change. The idea is to motivate students to study sequential action and reactions to events as a learning exercise that simulates practical work experience. Continual practice from such assignments will serve to heightened skills in strategic thinking, as well as, provide the early foundation of intuition that more experienced professionals utilize in decision-making.

LIMITATIONS

This exercise has not proven to be effective. While anecdotal evidence suggests that teaching methods could be developed that enhance the advancement of strategic thinking for students in preparation for leadership assignments, more research is required to provide a tested foundation before significantly incorporating within the classroom. For example, it is unknown whether business domain dissimilarities impact the degree of cognitive absorption by students. Further, teaching cause and effect may be more successful with graduate rather than undergraduate students. Finally, cultural differences may suggest the need for varied approaches at international institutions or within programs with large numbers of international students. Consequently, incremental research is needed to confirm the validity of this educational methodology, as well as, refine potential cause and effect assignments.

FUTURE RESEARCH

As empirical evidence that supports the value of the conscious study of cause and effect relationships is lacking, it is proposed that a specific assignment be disseminated to students in order to collect data on performance. The goal of the assignment is to study student cognitive processes surrounding strategic thinking and intuition. A simple task will be assigned at the beginning of the semester and then repeated at the end of the semester. The following is the proposed assignment to be distributed to a Principles of Management class and an Organizational Behavior class:

An excellent employee with 4 years of service at a large discount retailer has called in sick two consecutive Saturdays during the month of May. Normally scheduled 30 hours per week, the employee has now called in sick for third consecutive Saturday. How should the employee's supervisor react? Briefly explain your answer.

A simple response by a student would be to place employee on warning or fire them because worker was unreliable. A deeper response would attempt to reflect upon the impact to other employees or to customers from any decision. For example, an explanation that highlights the need to cover the absence, consideration of other employee perspectives of the situation, or the company cost from rehiring due to worker termination would be reflective of more profound awareness. Scoring of the assignment will be based upon the number of sequential events noted by the student. A response that does not consider any additional impacts from the management decision will be recorded as a zero, a response that considers one impact from the decision will be recorded as a one, and so forth. The results can be compared and measured for changes in student strategic thinking. As students in a Principles of Management course often continue with the upper-level Organizational Behavior course, it will be possible to monitor student responses over the passage of two semesters. Thus, a longitudinal study which evaluates cognitive change over time from cause and effect assignments can be generated.

This assignment is specific to management students. It would be valuable if readers could develop and test similar exercises within their own courses and report the results to this publication. A collaborative effort would more rapidly and accurately assess the value of teaching cause and effect, as well as, develop more meaningful teaching approaches in a variety of courses.

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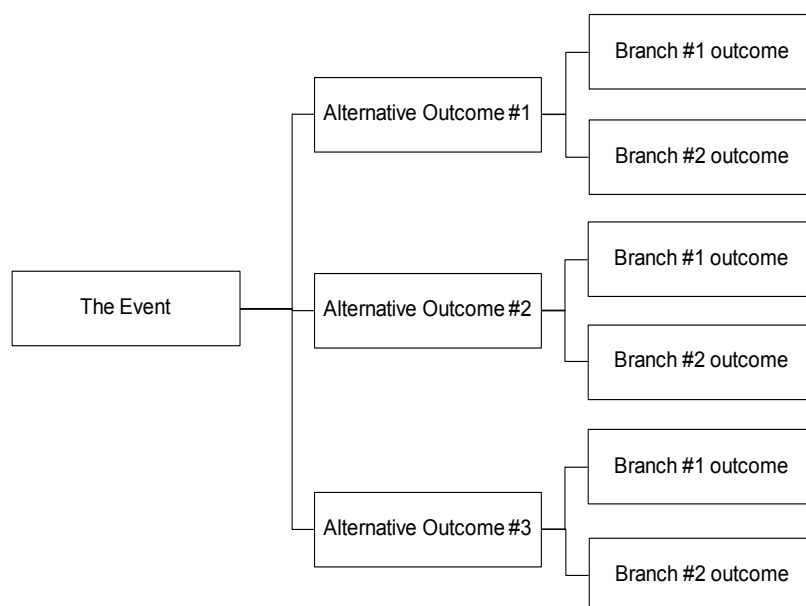
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APPENDIX I

Organizational Cause and Effect Assignment

1. Select an event (local, state, national, or international) that has occurred within the last 30 days and describe it in 1 paragraph.
2. Pick an organization (e.g., business, non-profit, sports team, political party, social club, PTA, etc.) that is impacted by the event selected in item #1 and describe this organization in 1 paragraph.
3. Create a flowchart (similar to the one below) depicting two to four alternative outcomes to the organization resulting from the event (for your convenience, a flowchart template and example are posted on Blackboard). The flowchart must have at least two branches for each alternative outcome. Provide brief descriptions inside of each box. Use bold type to highlight your prediction of the most likely path.



4. Write a 1-page summary of the mostly likely outcome. Include in your summary any theories that support your conclusion, as well as, an estimated timeline for outcomes.

KEY EXTERNAL FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESSFUL DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

The increasing popularity of distance learning programs in both non-profit and for-profit educational institutions has led many institutions to expand enrollment and provide greater flexibility and options for students. Higher education administrators need to understand the external influences currently impacting the educational environment to develop strategic plans to take advantage of positive factors. This paper examines some of the major positive changes that have contributed to the growth of distance learning programs since 2000 and charts the development of successful DL programs in two different universities. A qualitative, multiple-case study was conducted at Athens State University in Alabama to identify perceived positive external factors affecting the institution. A semistructured interview questionnaire was used to gather data for the study. Using purposeful sampling, 16 knowledgeable participants were selected to participate from the administration, accounting/business office staff, and the University Master Plan Committee. Yin's 5-phased cycle qualitative data analysis process was used to process the data via grounded codes. Two positive external factors were identified through the study: competitive issues and meeting the needs of students. If a competitive advantage can be developed using the perceived positive external factors identified in the study, small colleges such as Athens State, may continue to exist and be profitable. Future research should explore the results of creating competitive advantages for online and traditional education to assist in strategic decision making.

KEY EXTERNAL FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESSFUL DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Administrators of public higher education in the 2000s must recognize changes in the external environment, including changing student demographics, increased competition, and declining government support (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Berg, 2005; Smith & Bramble, 2008). Nontraditional students represent a growing percentage of the student base in higher education and demand a flexible schedule (Blankson & Kyei-Blankson, 2008). Due to declining state allocations, administrators of public higher education must reevaluate the missions of their institutions (Fathi & Wilson, 2009).

What are the perceived positive external factors affecting the institution that can be identified in the context of online higher education? Positive external factors identified in the

literature included changing student demographics and expectations as well as positive results of implementing distance learning programs. Several significant positive changes in the external environment have occurred in higher education since 2000 (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Dykman & Davis, 2008; Radford, 2011). Higher education administrators need to understand these changes to develop strategic plans to take advantage of positive factors. With such an understanding, leaders will be able to develop a competitive-advantage strategy for online education (Porter, 1998).

The purpose of the qualitative, exploratory, multiple-case study described here was to identify positive external factors that would assist university leadership in strategic decision making. The study was conducted at Athens State University, located in Athens, Alabama. The focus of the study was to gain in-depth knowledge of the positive external factors at Athens State.

Since the study was conducted at a single institution, the results are specific to the university selected and may be limited to that context. The number of two-year upper-level universities in the United States is limited, and ASU is the only institution in Alabama that falls within the category (ASU, 2009b).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Distance Education

Since the beginning of distance education, administrators have been required to tailor courses to satisfy the needs of students to establish viable programs (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). With the current generation of distance education, defined by the flexible learning model, the Internet was used to provide online delivery (Taylor, 2001). Online education was implemented shortly after the World Wide Web was developed in 1991 (Casey, 2008). Since then, the Internet has developed into an integral part of the daily lives of university and college students (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). College and university administrators throughout the United States have embraced the Internet as a new delivery method for instruction. Online instruction has developed into the largest alternative to traditional classroom (Bejerano, 2008). There is a close relationship between online education and distance education, and the terminology is often used interchangeably (Bejerano, 2008).

In the United States, online education has experienced significant growth since 2002, particularly at public postsecondary institutions (Allen & Seaman, 2010). Online courses are offered at 97% of the two-year public postsecondary institutions and 89% of public universities (Parsad & Lewis, 2008). The results of a recent study by Sloan-C revealed that enrollment in higher education online courses continues to grow at a higher rate than traditional course enrollment (Allen & Seaman, 2010).

Changing Student Demographics and Enrollment

In 2002, a report issued by the U.S. Department of Education noted that students between the ages of 18 and 24 represented only 27% of postsecondary enrollment (Blankson & Kyei-Blankson, 2008). Students in that age bracket, also referred to as traditional students, often

direct their efforts toward academic work. Older nontraditional students have more commonly allocated their time between academics and a full-time job, or they may have families or work responsibilities (Blankson & Kyei-Blankson, 2008). In 2008, married students or students with at least one dependent were enrolled in more distance learning courses than other students. Thirty-two percent of married students and 29% of students with one or more dependents were enrolled in at least one distance learning class, compared to 18% of students without these characteristics (Radford, 2011). In 2008, the majority of students in higher education required flexibility to meet the demands on their time. Administrators at many colleges and universities have offered a variety of flexible delivery formats and methods to meet students' needs (Blankson & Kyei-Blankson, 2008).

Enrollment increased 37% at degree-granting institutions between 2000 and 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Full-time student enrollment increased 45%, compared to 26% for part-time students during the same decade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Enrollment of younger students has grown faster than has enrollment of students over 25; however, the trend is projected to reverse. Between 2006 and 2017, the number of students under 25 is expected to increase 10%, and the enrollment of students 25 and over is expected to increase 19% (Snyder et al., 2009).

In the fall of 2011, college enrollment was 21.6 million (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Nontraditional enrollment is expected to increase at a higher rate than is traditional enrollment. In terms of age groups, between 2007 and 2018 enrollment is expected to increase 9% for ages 18 to 24, 25% for ages 25 to 34, and 12% for ages 34 and older (Hussar & Bailey, 2009).

Although postsecondary enrollment has increased, growth in high school enrollment is slowing. The number of students graduating from high schools nationwide is projected to increase 5% between 2004 and 2017 (Blumenstyk, 2008), which is a significant decrease from the 24% growth experienced in the preceding 12 years. The Northeastern and Midwestern regions of the United States are expected to be particularly affected by declining numbers of high school graduates. The Southeastern and Southwestern regions are projected to have the largest enrollment growth (Blumenstyk, 2008).

Reasons for Implementing Distance Learning Programs

A study of 176 institutions of higher education examined reasons why college and university administrators implemented distance learning programs (Berg, 2002). The majority of the participants had developed strategic plans to implement distance learning to further the aims of their institutions. Reasons for making major commitments to distance learning included the prospect of increasing enrollment, reducing cost, remaining competitive with other institutions, and public pressure (Berg, 2002). Four explicit reasons for using distance learning were identified: increasing access (92.0%), the pedagogical advantages of distance learning (62.5%), keeping up with competing institutions (55.1%), and providing new sources of revenue (39.77%).

At first glance, university and college administrators appear to be motivated to implement distance learning at their institutions to increase educational access and to increase learning with new teaching methods (Berg, 2002). However, community college administrators have shown

more interest in distance learning than have administrators of institutions that grant doctoral degrees. Community college administrators have been motivated by their desires and their mandates to meet the needs of the community for higher education (Berg, 2002).

Evidence has shown that distance learning programs were not implemented in higher education mainly to increase revenue (Berg, 2002). However, there was a strong indication that distance education is connected to the commercialization of higher education (Berg, 2002). Increased revenue was one of the factors included in the decision-making process, especially in institutions with doctoral programs. Research college and university administrators with explicit revenue motivations are increasingly taking the lead in developing distance education programs directed in many cases at the corporate market (Berg, 2002).

Findings have also shown that institutions where academic leaders implemented distance learning mainly to increase revenues were not less likely to be academically strong (Berg, 2002). More than 76% of respondents reported that adjuncts at their institutions occupied 25% or fewer of all faculty positions (Berg, 2002). Additional study is required to determine how the use of adjunct faculty affects the quality of education. There are indications that profit motives may lead to a decline in quality (Berg, 2002).

Student demand for flexible schedules and distance learning courses should be a component of future strategic plans in traditional institutions (Falk & Blaylok, 2010). Between 2000 and 2008, the percentage of undergraduate students taking at least one distance learning course increased from 8% to 20% (Radford, 2011). University administrators considering constructing traditional brick and mortar buildings need to pay special attention to changing student needs. As the number of traditional students continues to decrease, there will be an excess of classroom space, which could result in financial peril for institutions (Falk & Blaylok, 2010). Administrators cannot assume new or renovated campus buildings will attract nontraditional students to attend classes on campus. Nontraditional students tend to work and have family obligations, and the flexibility of distance learning courses is more important than on-campus activities (Falk & Blaylok, 2010).

Competitive Advantage

The meanings of competitive advantage and core competency are misunderstood (Mooney, 2007). Core competencies are the skills that distinguish an institution from competitors (Jacobs, Chase, & Aquilano, 2009). The core competency of an institution is the one function or service that the institution can perform better than any competitors can. A core competency is central to the value-generating activities of an institution. A competitive advantage can be either a capability of the institution or a superior resource, such as a recognizable name, a desirable product, or a favorable location, that enables an institution to be successful (Mooney, 2007). A core competency can exist without being a competitive advantage (Mooney, 2007). The goal of academic leaders is to have a core competency that generates a long-term competitive advantage to the institution (Jacobs et al., 2009). Administrators of higher education have often viewed technological changes such as online education as being necessary for providing a service or product on demand, meeting the needs of nontraditional students, and maintaining the competitive advantage of an institution in a growing and competitive market (Gibson & Harris, 2008).

Although many higher education educators may not be familiar with the competitive advantage concept, the concept can be beneficial for administrators evaluating areas where their institutions vie for students, state appropriations, and additional resources (Meyer & Wilson, 2010). A cost advantage exists when university administrators provide a service equivalent to competing institutions at a lower price. In the competitive distance learning market, a competitive advantage can be derived from a cost advantage or by providing different services at the same price. In distance learning, greater flexibility may result in a competitive advantage (Meyer & Wilson, 2010).

A competitive advantage is necessary as administrators of postsecondary institutions develop a strategy to compete on price, quality, or availability (Burns, 1997). Administrators have been encouraged to follow the model of business executives who are moving from commonly held beliefs to a more assertive and innovative corporate strategy, implementing a new plan of action away from old traditions (Burns, 1997). Four important factors have been identified in gaining a competitive advantage: price, product, promotion, and place. Traditionally, leaders focused on price, product, and promotion. However, leaders can also develop a competitive advantage by focusing on place (Burns, 1997). The flexibility of online education allows a product to be offered anywhere.

Online education can be used to obtain a competitive advantage. For example, administrators at state-run colleges in Minnesota expected that 25% of the total enrollment would be online by 2015 (Ross, 2009). Most courses offered in Minnesota have a website and a discussion board, even when the courses are not online. Some administrators and faculty members are concerned that quality may be lost online, stating that it would be better to focus on quality and unique programming (Ross, 2009). Most of the students at the University of Minnesota are not seeking a 100% online degree program. The University of Minnesota has marketed online-only courses to students who are seeking to complete unfinished degrees and who reside in areas where online delivery has a competitive advantage (Ross, 2009).

A sustainable competitive-advantage model provides a framework that links the core practices of an institution to organizational competitiveness (Heywood & Kenley, 2008). In such a model, internal organizational aspects are connected with external business aspects. Three categories of information required for a sustainable competitive advantage are costs, differentiation, and innovation. The use of a competitive-advantage model allows managers to realize consistent strategic fit for the activities of an institution by arranging the competitive results of their procedures with the competitive advantages of the institution (Heywood & Kenley, 2008). The model can be used to help leaders determine the basis of an institution's competitive advantage and to align the strategic plan to support the competitiveness of the institution more effectively (Heywood & Kenley, 2008). Leaders who utilize a competitive-advantage model may obtain better results than do leaders who do not use the model (Ormanidhi & Stringa, 2008).

Researchers developed 10 basic sources for supporting the financial sustainability of a higher education online program (Meyer et al., 2009). Competitive advantage is the focus of the first basic principle: know your market. According to the principle of knowing the market, academic administrators need to identify the competitive advantage of their program (Meyer et al., 2009). To achieve a financially sustainable program, the administrators must obtain a

detailed and thorough understanding of the market. The market is comprised of several key elements, including the interest of prospective students, the job market for graduates, the programs or institutions that will compete with the planned program, and how the planned online courses may be used by other departments or programs within the institution (Meyer et al., 2009). All these key elements combine to create the competitive advantage of the planned program, as conveyed by students, employers, and accreditors (Meyer et al., 2009).

Administrators in higher education need to understand the details and requirements of the job market. Details and requirements include the types of jobs their future graduates can fill, whether the demand for these jobs is increasing, what specific job skills are required, and what standards have been created by accrediting or certifying associations for these jobs (Meyer et al., 2009). To understand the target student market, administrators need to know the number of potential students, the economic influences on student interest in the program (such as a new local employer or job growth), student demographic information (such as whether the students are traditional or nontraditional), and whether the students have the required skills or will need additional training to obtain the necessary skills (Meyer et al., 2009).

Administrators in higher education may face competition from local, regional, or international institutions. Administrators need to identify the following information regarding competitors: the number of competitors, the variety of delivery formats offered, the flexibility of the programs, whether on-campus time is required, what the competitors charge, and their target market (Meyer et al., 2009). In addition, administrators need to identify if their competitors' programs have the same focus or requirements as the programs at their own institutions (Meyer et al., 2009).

After identifying the competitor information, administrators of higher education can determine whether the institution has a competitive advantage and whether the administrators are likely to achieve financial success. Administrators need to understand whether their competitive advantage is based on price, reputation, flexibility of the program, program focus, employer preference, or loyalty of the students to the institution (Meyer et al., 2009). Administrators need to monitor the market continually to identify strategic changes implemented by existing competitors or new competitors entering the market (Meyer et al., 2009).

Successful utilization of Porter's 1980 model of generic competitive strategies requires an understanding of the internal and external factors affecting the competitive strategy (Porter, 1998). Porter (1998) identified four key factors that establish the limits of what an institution can successfully achieve: (a) organization strengths and weaknesses, (b) industry opportunities and threats, (c) broader societal expectations, and (d) the personal values of the key implementers. In addition to understanding the market of an institution, leaders must think strategically about whom a new online program would serve and whether the program would have an important role within the institution. The first step in planning for the financial sustainability of a new program is to identify realistically what the program can provide as an improvement to programs of competing institutions (Porter, 1998). Administrators at institutions of higher education must be prepared to close programs and activities that are relatively ineffective and costly to pay for technologies required for new online programs (Bates, 2000). College and university leaders may need to concentrate their resources on the programs that provide their institutions the greatest competitive advantage (Bates, 2000).

Successful Cases of Distance Learning Implementation

Bellevue University is an example of a university that would not have survived if its president had not implemented an online education strategy (Der Werf, 2003). Bellevue University was close to failure in 1985, when the board of directors of the university gave the new president, John Muller, permission to implement a strategy of becoming the dominant provider of nontraditional education in the Omaha, Nebraska, market. The leaders of Bellevue University decided to focus exclusively on nontraditional students with full-time jobs. The students were offered a combination of flexible online and traditional courses. By 2003, over 25% of Bellevue students were taking only online courses (Der Werf, 2003). By 2008, enrollment had quadrupled and Bellevue was the largest private college in Nebraska, primarily because of its online presence (Elfrink, 2008). Bellevue University is recognized as an innovative national leader in adult learning programs, and Bellevue's adult learning programs are provided both online and at 11 sites in four states (Gross & Hawkins, 2007).

Table 1 ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY CLASSES BY SCHEDULE TYPE								
Year	Fall enrollment	Credit hours						
		Total	Face to face	%	Internet	%	Blended	%
2002	2,528	22,213	20,788	94	1,425	6	0	0
2003	2,535	23,407	21,115	90	2,292	10	0	0
2004	2,575	22,848	19,093	84	3,755	16	0	0
2005	2,643	23,374	15,635	67	6,508	28	1,231	5
2006	2,777	24,619	10,964	45	9,150	37	4,505	18
2007	3,038	27,292	9,446	35	13,795	51	4,051	15
2008	3,330	29,727	8,720	29	16,360	55	4,647	16
2009	3,512	31,560	9,535	30	17,367	55	4,658	15
2010	3,624	32,015	9,169	29	18,337	57	4,509	14
2011	3,389	30,198	8,143	27	13,961	46	8,094	27
2012	3,415	30,740	7,471	24	14,357	47	8,912	29

The first Internet courses were offered at Athens State University (ASU) in the spring semester of 1998 and the first blended courses were offered in the fall semester of 2005 (ASU, 2013b). Since the introduction of Internet courses, ASU has transformed from a traditional university to a university at which the majority of the courses are provided using the Internet. In the fall semester of 2002, 94% of the total course credit hours at ASU were taught using the traditional lecture format and 6% were taught using an Internet format (ASU, 2013a). In the fall semester of 2012, 24% of the total course credit hours were taught face-to-face, 47% of the total

course credit hours were taught online, and 29% of the total course credit hours were taught using a blended format (ASU, 2013a). A detailed summary of classes by schedule type appears in Table 1.

On November 15, 2005, Jerry Bartlett, ASU president at the time, announced that students would no longer have to come to the ASU campus to complete a degree (Hollman, 2005). Starting in the spring 2006 semester, students could complete four business majors completely online. In 2009, six online degree programs were offered at ASU (ASU, 2009a). Linda Shonesy, dean of the College of Business, stated that in 2005, 92% of the students in the College of Business had taken online courses (Hollman, 2005). In the fall semester of 2012, 89% of ASU students took some online courses (ASU, 2013a). Between the fall semester of 2005 and the fall semester of 2012, total ASU credit hours increased by 32% (ASU, 2013a). During this same period, the number of lecture credit hours decreased 52% (ASU, 2013a).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Administrators of higher education have often viewed technological changes such as online education as being necessary for providing a service or product on demand, meeting the needs of nontraditional students, and maintaining the competitive advantage of an institution in a growing and competitive market (Gibson & Harris, 2008). Research studies such as the one described here can identify the positive external factors influencing the implementation of distance education, thereby assisting administrators in enabling their institutions to obtain a competitive advantage.

A competitive advantage is a capability or resource that enables an institution to be successful (Mooney, 2007). Identifying and implementing a competitive advantage is necessary for university leadership to operate in a changing market (Meyer et al., 2009). In the competitive distance learning market, a competitive advantage can be derived from a cost advantage or by providing different services at the same price. In distance learning, greater flexibility may result in a competitive advantage (Meyer & Wilson, 2010). University leaders can develop a strategy using online education as a competitive advantage to increase student enrollment and to operate more efficiently (Ross, 2009).

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question addressed in this study was stated as:

What are the perceived positive external factors affecting the institution that can be identified in the context of online higher education?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The boundaries of a case study may be defined by the organization (Yin, 2009), and the current study was limited to ASU in Athens, Alabama. Athens State University has approximately 82 full-time faculty and eight executive employees (ASU, 2009d). The

population for the study consisted of the 40 senior-level administrators, department chairs, accounting/business office staff, and members of the Vision 2020 Committee at ASU who are responsible for or have direct input into developing the strategic direction of ASU. According to D. Betts, ASU vice president of Academic Affairs (personal communication, March 25, 2009), the population has access to financial information and other operational data that are not readily accessible to other ASU employees. The population consists of the president; four vice presidents; three college deans; 12 department chairs; five business office/accounting staff including all accountants; seven faculty; and six community, business, and government leaders (D. Betts, personal communication, March 25, 2009).

Materials/Instruments

A semistructured interview questionnaire was used to gather information for the qualitative multiple-case study (Shank, 2006). The interview questionnaire consisted of questions from instruments used in similar studies by Berg (2002) and Kraenzel (2002). Questions that were relevant to answering the research question for the research study were selected. Approval was obtained from Berg and Kraenzel to use or modify their questionnaires. The interview questionnaire addressed issues concerning the research question and was answered by upper administration, department chairs, and other knowledgeable members of the population selected through purposeful sampling.

As a final preparation for collecting data, the questionnaire was field tested by a small convenience sample of ASU faculty and staff members (Yin, 2009). The field test was used to assist in verifying that the questions elicited relevant information and that the interview questionnaire was organized in a logical and effective manner (Yin, 2009). The review indicated no need for refinements to the semistructured questionnaire to clarify the questions or improve the flow of the interviews.

Analyses of Data

In the study, data analysis was performed using Yin's (2011) five-phased cycle qualitative data analysis process to find patterns, themes, and categories of information within the data. The processes of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are interrelated and frequently occur simultaneously in a qualitative research study (Yin, 2011). The analysis of the data began after the researcher received the transcription of the first interview recording. The five phases of the data analysis process are "(1) Compiling, (2) Disassembling, (3) Reassembling (and Arraying), (4) Interpreting, and (5) Concluding" (Yin, 2011, p. 177).

Compiling

The first phase, compiling, involved reviewing the recordings immediately after each interview. An immediate post-interview review was performed to record observations about the interview and details about the setting. If information in the notes or recording was not clear, the interviewee was contacted as soon as possible for clarification. The transcripts were compared to the recordings and interview notes to ensure accuracy. If errors were found the transcription was corrected. Following the review of the transcripts, names were replaced with anonymous numbers to ensure confidentiality.

Disassembling

In the second phase of the data analysis, the transcripts and interview notes were reviewed and the data were disassembled, or broken down into smaller pieces (Yin, 2011). The disassembled data were analyzed to determine if any significant patterns were emerging (Yin, 2009). Codes were assigned to the pieces. Memos identifying the key concepts, ideas, and short phrases were added to the Excel worksheet created for each interviewee transcript (Yin, 2011).

Reassembling (and arraying)

In Phase 3, reassembling and arraying, substantive themes and patterns were identified and matrices were created to reassemble the data (Yin, 2011). The coding scheme for the study began with relatively simple codes and expanded on those as the data required. Grounded codes emerged from the data as they were reviewed and new codes were added as new themes were identified (Patton, 2002). The interview transcripts were reread until no new codes emerged (Patton, 2002). During the reassembling process, constant comparisons were performed to minimize biases in identifying emerging patterns (Yin, 2011). Broader themes emerged during the reassembly process.

Interpreting

In the fourth phase of the data analysis, interpreting, a comprehensive interpretation of all the study data was performed. Five attributes were incorporated into the comprehensive interpretation: “(a) completeness, (b) fairness, (c) empirical accuracy, (d) value-added, and (e) credibility” (Yin, 2011, p. 207). Over 500 pages of interview transcriptions were analyzed and the interpretations accounted for all of the available data (Yin, 2009). During the development of the comprehensive interpretation, feedback was obtained from respondents and colleagues (Yin, 2011).

A significant method of improving the quality of a case study and ensuring the construct validity is to have the participants of the study review the draft of the study report (Yin, 2009). Participants may disagree with the interpretations and conclusions, but the participants should agree on the facts of the case. A small convenience sample of eight study participants was selected to form a focus group to validate the results of the study (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). A semistructured, open-ended script was used for the focus group. The preliminary analyses consisting of themes, interpretations, and conclusions were presented to the focus group. Group members were asked to comment on the participants’ perceptions of the accuracy and reliability of the study (Yin, 2009). In addition, the focus group participants were asked what was missing from the preliminary analyses and whether the participants remembered any new information not discussed during the initial interview (Yin, 2009). During the focus group discussion, none of the participants offered any major rival interpretations (Yin, 2009).

Concluding

In the fifth phase, concluding, the conclusions and the significance of the entire study were determined and “implications of the research” (Yin, 2011, p. 220) and “practical implications” (Yin, 2011, p. 220) were identified. During the fifth phase, the key competitive

forces, core practices, costs factors, and differentiation factors were identified based on frequencies of responses by the interviewees.

FINDINGS

Cross-case synthesis results in more robust findings when a minimum of two cases are analyzed (Yin, 2009). For the current study, each participant was one unit of analysis for the interview questions. An evaluation of the key points made by respondents resulted in cross-case conclusions across the aggregate. Findings from the cross-case analysis for the Research Question, “What are the perceived positive external factors affecting the institution that can be identified in the context of online higher education?” are discussed below.

Analysis of the aggregated data for the Research Question contributed to two prominent themes: (a) students and (b) competitive issues. Fifteen of the respondents specifically mentioned or commented on students and nine mentioned or commented on competitive issues as positive external factors.

Representative summarization comments were developed for each of the different themes identified through the cross-case analysis. No further aggregation was performed.

Theme 1: Students. The ASU administrators have selected the growing nontraditional working student market as a strategic market. The majority (69.61%) of students enrolled in the fall of 2009 was in the over-24-years-old age category (ASU, 2009d). In the 2009 spring semester, 85.4% of the graduating students worked while attending ASU (ASU, 2009c). Meeting the needs of students by offering flexible traditional and distance learning courses was identified as a competitive advantage for ASU. Ninety-four percent of the respondents commented that students want flexibility in traditional or distance learning courses. One respondent noted that Athens State University administrators can attract the niche of nontraditional students who need or desire flexibility and are not seeking a traditional educational experience. Another commented that the ASU administrators have been successful in enrolling the growing nontraditional student population by offering flexible traditional and online scheduling.

Theme 2: Competitive issues. Athens State University has a competitive advantage in several areas of distance learning, including lower cost. Sixty percent of the respondents commented that ASU has low tuition compared to other universities in Alabama. One respondent commented that being a cost leader will continue to help increase enrollment. Another respondent stated that ASU online programs are well respected by peer institutions.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications of the study findings for the Research Question led to the development of two prominent themes: (a) students and (b) competitive issues. Study findings indicated that continuing to meet the flexibility needs of changing student demographics may be the positive external factor that is the least difficult to achieve. Study findings also indicated that maintaining a low-cost competitive advantage may be the most challenging positive external factor to achieve. The study findings for the Research Question were a synthesis of the two themes.

Theme 1: Students. The study findings indicated that ASU administrators have recognized the changing higher education demographics and the growth in nontraditional students and have reacted to meet the increased flexibility needs of students. In distance learning, greater flexibility may result in a competitive advantage (Meyer & Wilson, 2010). Administrators' ability to react to positive external factors has resulted in a competitive advantage for ASU. The study findings indicated the increase in enrollment is a result of meeting the needs of nontraditional students. At the same time, Athens State University administrators have experienced limited success in increasing the enrollment of traditional students. The financial viability of the institution could be severely impacted without a significant nontraditional enrollment.

In the 2000s, several significant changes in the external environment occurred in higher education (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Dykman & Davis, 2008; Parsad & Lewis, 2008). In terms of age groups, between 2007 and 2018 enrollment is expected to increase 9% for ages 18 to 24, 25% for ages 25 to 34, and 12% for ages 34 and older (Hussar & Bailey, 2009). In 2008, the majority of students in higher education required flexibility to meet the demands on their time (Blankson & Kyei-Blankson, 2008).

In 2002, a report issued by the U.S. Department of Education stated that only 27% of postsecondary students were between the ages of 18 and 24 (Blankson & Kyei-Blankson, 2008). Older nontraditional students have more commonly allocated their time between academics and a full-time job or they may have families or work responsibilities (Blankson & Kyei-Blankson, 2008). In 2008, the majority of students in higher education required flexibility to meet the demands on their time. Administrators at many colleges and universities have offered a variety of flexible delivery formats and methods to meet their needs (Blankson & Kyei-Blankson, 2008). Nontraditional enrollment is projected to grow at a higher rate than is traditional enrollment.

Theme 2: Competitive issues. The study findings indicated ASU has a competitive advantage in several areas of distance learning, including lower cost. In the competitive distance learning market, a competitive advantage can be derived from a cost advantage or by providing different services at the same price (Meyer & Wilson, 2010). The ability to maintain low tuition is becoming increasingly important and could result in increased enrollment as competing public schools are forced to increase tuition as a result of declining state funding. Sixty percent of the respondents commented that ASU has low tuition compared to other universities in Alabama. One respondent commented distance learning provides a competitive advantage by lowering cost and ASU is small enough to be able to add classes at the last minute. A second respondent commented that ASU's tuition rate is lower than most competitors' rates. Another respondent stated that ASU online programs are well respected by peer institutions.

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the study may have affected interpretations of the findings. Participants were limited to senior-level administrators, department chairs, and key members of the Vision 2020 Committee who were responsible for or had direct input into developing the strategic direction of ASU. The perceptions of the participants may have been impacted by their years of experience at ASU, which ranged from 5 years or less to more than 20 years. If the

study population was expanded to include all ASU faculty and staff, the findings and the interpretations of the findings may have been different.

The study was conducted at a single institution. The study findings are specific to the university selected and are limited to that context. Therefore, applicability of findings from the study may be limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study findings and the literature review indicated several areas for further research. Two future research recommendations follow. If implemented, the recommendations could contribute to an understanding of the use of competitive-advantage models in higher education and lead higher education administrators to more efficient use of resources.

Research Recommendation 1. Explore the results of implementing a competitive-advantage model for online and traditional education to assist in strategic decision. One model which may be applicable is Porter's 1980 model of generic competitive strategies, which has proved to be suitable for many industries (Heywood & Kenley, 2008; Ormanidhi & Stringa, 2008). Exploring the results of implementing a competitive-advantage model for online and traditional education at ASU could determine the effectiveness of the model and reveal if any modifications are required for use by public higher education administrators.

Research Recommendation 2. Explore how higher education administrators can use cost-benefit analysis to use resources more efficiently. Leaders in higher education must be prepared to eliminate relatively ineffective programs and activities to pay for the technologies required for online programs (Bates, 2000). Cost-benefit analysis must be modified for use in public higher education because public funding is used to help support some programs that produce nonfinancial benefits.

CONCLUSION

Administrators in higher education implement distance learning programs for varied and complex reasons. Although Berg's 2002 hypothesis that academic leaders implemented distance learning primarily to increase revenues was not supported by this study, there appears to be evidence indicating academic leaders are increasingly implementing distance learning programs for explicit revenue motivations. Additional studies are necessary to determine how attempts to increase revenue and reduce cost are affecting the quality of online education (Berg, 2002).

The study findings described here indicated that ASU administrators have recognized the changing higher education demographics and the growth in nontraditional students and have reacted to meet the increased flexibility needs of students. Administrators' ability to react to positive external factors has resulted in a competitive advantage for ASU. The study findings indicated the increase in enrollment is a result of meeting the needs of nontraditional students. Athens State University administrators have experienced limited success in increasing the enrollment of traditional students. The financial viability of the institution could be severely impacted without a significant nontraditional enrollment.

The ASU administrators have selected the growing nontraditional working student market as a strategic market. Meeting the needs of students by offering flexible traditional and distance learning courses was identified as one of ASU's competitive advantages. In distance learning, greater flexibility may result in a competitive advantage (Meyer & Wilson, 2010).

Study findings indicated the positive external factor that may be the least difficult to achieve is continuing to meet the flexibility needs of changing student demographics. Study findings also indicated the most challenging positive external factor to achieve is maintaining a low-cost competitive advantage.

Higher education administrators in all successful institutions need to understand the positive external factors affecting the institution. In the 2000s, several significant changes in the external environment occurred in higher education (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Dykman & Davis, 2008; Parsad & Lewis, 2008). Key changes involve changing demographics, especially in the increasing age of students enrolling in higher education, and, concurrently, a growing need for flexibility in scheduling as a greater number of older students with job and family responsibilities sign up for classes.

Administrators at many colleges and universities have offered a variety of flexible delivery formats and methods to meet the needs of this expanding group of nontraditional students (Blankson & Kyei-Blankson, 2008).

The study findings indicated ASU has a competitive advantage in several areas of distance learning, including lower cost. An external challenge facing many institutions of higher education centers on declining state and federal funding, often leading to increases in tuition rates. The ability to maintain low tuition is becoming increasingly important and could result in increased enrollment as competing public schools are forced to increase tuition as a result of declining state funding.

Administrators of higher education have often viewed technological changes such as online education as being necessary for providing a service or product on demand, meeting the needs of nontraditional students, and maintaining the competitive advantage of an institution in a growing and competitive market (Gibson & Harris, 2008). Research studies such as the one described here can identify the positive external factors influencing the implementation of distance education, thereby assisting administrators in enabling their institutions to obtain a competitive advantage.

In summary, the growth in online education has been affected by a variety of factors, including changing student demographics and students' demand for flexibility. Nontraditional enrollment is expected to increase at a higher rate than is traditional enrollment. As indicated by this study at Athens State University, higher education administrators who recognize and respond strategically to the growing number of nontraditional students and the changing flexibility requirements can increase enrollment, increase revenues, reduce cost, and remain competitive (Berg, 2002; Falk & Blaylock, 2010).

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FEELING WELCOME WITH NO “BUTS”: CHINESE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN RESIDENCE LIFE

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ABSTRACT

College student personnel and administrators working in residence halls are expected to provide a positive learning environment where every student's point of view is welcomed respectfully. Creating that learning community requires residence coordinators to understand the circumstances of all students providing the means of a safe engaging environment to all of them. College administrators have to come up with innovative techniques and strategies to accommodate and extend helping hands to these students.

Social adjustment is tumultuous for first year international students especially for those living in residence halls. Yet, research focused specifically on international residents in this environment is lacking (Paltridge et al., 2010). A quantitative study conducted at a Midwestern, midsized private institution examined first year international students' perception of racial climate, community, and diversity in residence halls and how their perception influences learning outcomes. A descriptive analysis of the data was conducted, and the results were compared to data collected from the American College and University Housing Satisfaction Survey to compare experiences between international and domestic students. With insights on international student perception, practitioners can tailor programming to engage them.

INTRODUCTION

For any new college student, the first year is critical in the socialization process into becoming a college student and to the student's success in higher education (Ramsay et al., 2007). For international students, social integration has focused on cultural factors and transitional challenges (Sovic, 2009). International students, typically devoid of families and friends in the host country, need to rely heavily on university-led support systems to form peer relationships as their access to social support networks is greatly reduced upon arrival in a foreign country (Paltridge et al., 2010; Razek & Coyner, 2013; Sovic, 2009). Residence halls serve as living spaces conducive to social and academic interaction among students, and thus offer an essential research setting in college life.

OBJECTIVES

In determining the perspectives of intercultural interactions between international and domestic students, Brebner (2008) found that international students were less interested in campus-wide cultural activities but more in administrators fostering a supportive campus environment. The purpose of this study is to examine how first year international students' perception of racial climate within residence halls affect their level of engagement on the floor through comparing it to that of domestic students. Knowledge of how student perceptions of racial climate and diversity affect student living experience, student affairs professionals may be better able to create an environment that truly supports intercultural exchange and engagement. Results provide answers to following research questions:

- 1) What are international students' perception of the residence hall living environment, community, and diversity?
- 2) How do these perceptions differ from the perceptions of domestic students?
- 3) How does this perception affect their level of engagement on the floor?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As first year international students begin their college career in the U.S., they experience a number of transitional challenges including lacking awareness of campus resources, language barriers, culture shock, and a lack of social support. The degree of peer interactions that students experience significantly affects their growth and development in college, as do racial diversity. Perceptions of racial-ethnic prejudice have negative effects especially on minority students' transition and adjustment to college, as well as their sense of belonging to their institutions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Barriers Experienced By First-Year International Students

For any new college student, the first year is critical in the socialization process into becoming a college student and to the student's success in higher education (Ramsay, Jones & Barker, 2007). Social integration is equally important for all students, but the emphasis has been different for domestic and international students. For domestic students, social integration is commonly associated with academic success. For international students, however, the emphasis has been more on cultural factors and transitional challenges (Sovic, 2009). These challenges include adjustment issues, culture shock, a lack of peer support, a lack of awareness of campus resources, and difficulties securing basic amenities.

Adjustment Issues and Social Integration

Adjustment issues exacerbate the socialization process for first year international students during the initial transition period (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). According to Ying (as cited in Poyrazli and Grahame, 2007), a student's perceived discrimination, English language proficiency, personality type, and approach to forming relationships with Americans are additional variables to the success of student adjustment. These variables are further intensified for students from non-English speaking and non-Western backgrounds (Fontaine and Todd, 2011). During this initial arrival period, international students experience culture shock (Brown

& Holloway, 2008; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007) showing evidences of mainly negative mood states such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and stress. Sovic (2009) reported that students who experience positive peer interactions have been reported to be better adjusted academically and socially, and generally have less psychological health problems associated with loneliness and isolation. Due to their lack of high language proficiency, international students are less likely to interact with peers and consequently missing this positive support.

International Students Experiences in Residence Halls

Residence halls offer an essential research setting for international students. This type of on-campus housing serves as the key environment for building a sense of community, facilitating group learning and enriching the college experience for students (Demarest, 2001). By nature of having students live in close proximity, on-campus housing may reflect a different racial climate than the university campus at-large (Johnson, 2003). Residence halls present the following diversity challenges and opportunities that ought to be examined.

International student experiences of living on campus can be a negative impact on their college experience if they constantly experience discrimination. A perceived negative racial climate could lead them to feeling disenchanted with their living experience. Further, when residence life staff members lack intercultural sensitivity to engage domestic and international students, it may result in a lack of diverse interactions between both parties. Barriers in cross cultural communications may further exacerbate the residential living experience for international students, stemming from reasons such as differences in personality, interests, and communication preferences.

Perceived negative racial climate

International students frequently experience issues revolving around racial climate. The largest international student populations have historically been from China, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and India ("Open Doors", 2012). The majority of international students inevitably become racially underrepresented students on campus. As students who may not have been previously exposed to academic culture in the U.S., they can very easily perceive student affairs professionals as catering only to White students (Patton & Hannon, 2008). Subsequently, they may perceive that mainstream activities such as homecoming and Greek Week as unwelcoming of diverse participants or even boring. Such perceptions may pose as barriers for meaningful interactions between international and domestic students.

Lack of intercultural sensitivity

Racial and ethnic sensitivity can become a challenge specifically for international residence hall students, especially in predominantly White institutions. Due to the close living proximity in residence halls, students may embrace diversity differently compared to the classroom, where they may be more open to accepting diversity intellectually (Johnson, 2003). Because residence halls are where college students spend the majority of their time, negative racial climates can adversely impact the perception of international students toward American students. The small number of international students who participated in Johnson's (2003) study indicated their perceived need for hall programs to reflect more of an international presence. They also felt like the staff was unable to relate to them and that they often felt misunderstood. This result is particularly problematic, as institutional staff members play a role in shaping

students' perceptions of the overall campus climate, particularly for students of color (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Hindering factors in cross cultural communication

Diverse interactions do not always develop organically. Domestic students expect the "visitors" to be the ones trying to get to know them rather than the other way around (Brebner, 2008). Conversely, international students perceive cultural differences, personality issues, and common interests as factors hindering cross-cultural relationships (Brebner, 2008). Other deterring factors include language barrier that leads to reluctance in residents to bridge intercultural gaps, differences in experiences, preferred means of communication (Paltridge, Mayson & Schapper, 2010), age, qualifications, and expectations (Razek & Coyner, 2013; Sovic, 2009).

METHODS

To examine first year international students' perception of racial climate, community, and diversity in residence halls and to determine how their perception affects their level of engagement in the residence hall a quantitative inquiry was conducted seeking self-reported feedback from first year international students. To fully realize these objectives, we had three hypotheses:

1. H1: International students will report dissatisfaction with the racial climate in their residence halls
2. H1: International students' perceptions of the residence hall climate will influence their campus engagement.
3. H1: International students will show more dissatisfaction with residence hall cultural climate than that of their domestic peers.

A quantitative, cross-sectional research was conducted in residence halls in the Spring 2013 term. Respondents were first-year students enrolled full time in the university with approximately a hundred international students. This method allowed inference to be drawn about international students' experiences in residence halls in the U.S. based on data tabulated from a relatively small sample size (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

DATA SOURCES

Data were collected at a mid-sized, private, religiously affiliated higher education institution. The institution has approximately 7,000 undergraduate students with a population of 1,500 international students. Out of the total 150 first year international students who live on campus, 98 students voluntarily responded to the questionnaire with a response rate of 65%.

Instrument and Data Collection

The survey instrument consisted of three main parts: demographics information, satisfaction section, and racial climate perception section. In the first section, demographic variables, including current place of residence, length of residency in current hall, gender,

academic classification, ethnicity, national origin, and ethnicity of residence hall staff were collected. The variables were presented and analyzed for categorical frequencies.

The second section was adapted from the American College and University Housing Officers-International/Educational Benchmarks, Inc. (ACUHO-I/EBI) Satisfaction Survey. This survey is routinely administered in 1,500 colleges and universities and measures the effectiveness of housing programs from the residents' perspectives. Questions included factors such as satisfaction of hall staff, floor climate, community, and diverse interactions. Participants were asked to select on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

The third section was adapted from the Perceptions of Racial Climate Questionnaire (PRCQ) (Johnson-Durgans, 1990; Johnson-Durgans, 1992; Johnson, 2003) used to assess the perception of racial climates among students living in residence halls. The components in the questionnaire were on the perception of hall environment, staff, and hall peers. The questionnaire was again presented in a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Each perception statement was stated positively to avoid suggestion of a negative climate, researcher bias, and inadvertently causing respondents' uncomfortable feelings (Johnson-Durgans, 1994).

Data Analysis

The questions were grouped into four factors: perception of hall environment, perception of hall staff, perception of hall peers, and learning outcomes. A descriptive analysis was then conducted to compare students' overall perceptions with the intended learning outcomes. This analysis helped determine the correlations between their perception and their overall learning experience. Next, the data was compared with the dataset from the ACUHO-I/EBI survey that was administered to all residential students on campus during Spring 2012. The response rate from the ACUHO-I EBI survey was representative of the institution's population and was generalized to the university's undergraduate population for data comparison and for a more balanced discussion.

RESULTS

A sample of 98 students responded to the survey out of 150 first-year international students who lived in residence halls, representing a return rate of 65%. 88 students indicated that their ethnicity was Chinese and with 86 students indicating that they were from China. The other countries represented were Sweden, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Togo, El Salvador, and Thailand. Other self-identified ethnicities were white, Arabic, African, and Latino. Male students represented 63% of the respondents and female students represented 37%. The respondents identified 88 of their Resident Assistant or Residence Coordinator as White. The other ethnicities represented on the hall staff were African American (2%), international (4%), Latino (3%), and Asian (1%). Although data were obtained from other nationalities, their numbers were too small to include in the data analysis. For this purpose, the data analysis will focus only on Chinese respondents.

Perception of Hall Staff, Peers, and Climate

Based on the original questionnaires, the set of 20 questions were initially grouped into four categories: (1) perception of hall environment, (2) perception of hall staff, (3) perception of hall peers, and (4) learning outcomes. The dimensionality of the 20 items from the questionnaire was then analyzed using principle component factor analysis. Two criteria were used to determine the number of factors to rotate: the scree test and the interpretability of the factor solution. Based on the scree plot, four factors were rotated using a Varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization. The rotated solution identified a five-factor solution accounting for 69% of the variance in scores, labeled as: (1) perception of hall environment; (2) perception of hall staff; (3) perception of hall community; (4) perception of hall diversity; and (5) learning outcomes.

The majority of Chinese students responded positively on each of the questions. Between 40% and 60% of the students responded “agree” to each question and between 27% and 59% of all students responded “strongly agree” to each question. All 88 of the Chinese students unanimously agreed or strongly agreed that they “respect people of different race or ethnicities.” Questions with about ten percent of disagree responses are that the programs in the hall are for people of all races (11%), there are enough non-whites on the hall staff (17%), the students do not mind being on the hall staff (20%), the staff relates well to people of all races (17%), students feeling a part of their floor (14%), and that living in the residence hall enhancing students’ ability to improve interpersonal relationships (10%).

Relationship between Hall Staff, Peers, and Climate

Students’ perception that they felt welcome when first moved into the hall moderately correlates with their perception of hall diversity ($r=.553$, $p<0.1$) and hall community ($r=.599$, $p<0.1$). Specifically, students who felt welcome initially are likely to perceive that the residents in their hall are friendly ($r=.559$, $p<0.1$), that residents get along well regardless of race ($r=.501$, $p<0.1$), and that hall programs are for people of all races ($r=.576$, $p<0.1$). Further, students who perceive an initial sense of welcome into the community were also likely to interact with residents who are different from them ($r=.536$, $p<0.1$) and benefit from those diverse relationships ($r=.509$, $p<0.1$). This finding confirms that the early weeks at college are a crucial time for building relationships (Sovic, 2009).

Hall Perception and Learning Outcomes

A standard multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how well factors 1-4 predicted the overall perceived learning outcomes from living in on-campus housing. The linear combination of the factors were significantly related to overall program effectiveness, $p<.001$. The multiple correlation coefficient was .84, indicating that approximately 71% of the variance of the learning outcomes can be accounted for by the linear combination of the four factors. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was then computed to assess which factors were most closely associated with the learning outcomes. There was a significant relationship between student perception of hall diversity ($r=.789$, $p<0.1$) and hall community ($r=.777$, $p<0.1$) and perceived learning outcomes. Among the four factors, perception of hall staff was the least associated with perceived learning outcomes ($r=.518$, $p<0.1$); student perception of hall environment was moderately correlated with perceived learning outcome ($r=.608$, $p<0.1$).

Hall Environment and Learning Outcomes

Students' sense of welcome when they first moved into the hall is moderately correlated with their perception that living in the residence halls have enhanced their communication skills ($r=.558$, $p<0.1$) and ability to meet other people ($r=.500$, $p<0.1$). Interestingly, the students' perception of whether the staff is consistent and fair in discipline matters ($r=.278$, $p<0.009$) and their satisfaction with their hall staff's efforts ($r=.300$, $p=.005$) to get to know them has low correlation with their perceived learning outcomes. This finding counters the argument that residence life staff members' ability to create a positive environment could impact students' experience (Dusselier et al., 2005).

Additionally, students' perception of a lack of racial problems on their hall moderately correlated with their perceived ability to live cooperatively with others ($r=.551$, $p<0.1$). Students who perceive their hall as a great place for diverse races to live are linked to an enhanced ability to live with others ($r=.501$, $p<0.1$) and improved interpersonal relationships ($r=.520$, $p<0.1$). These findings signify the impact a positive racial climate plays on students' learning and living experience. Conversely, although students unanimously perceived that they respect diverse others in their residence hall, this perception has low correlation with each of the learning outcomes, with Pearson's r ranging from .320 to .380. Hence, it is likely that in order to achieve the learning outcomes, their perceived quality of hall environment plays a more important role than their attitude towards others.

Hall Staff and Learning Outcomes

Students' perception of their hall staff is moderately correlated with their self-reported learning outcome ($r=.518$, $p<0.1$). The number of non-white staff on the floor has little correlation with students' perceived learning outcomes ($r=.146$, $p=0.175$). Additionally, students' perception of having sufficient diverse staff members on their floor has little correlation with their perceived ability to respect other ethnicities ($r=.085$, $p=.430$). These findings suggest that the ethnicity or race of the residence life hall staff may have little impact on students' perceived learning. At the same time, because the residence hall staff at the sampled institution is predominantly White, it is difficult to determine if residents with cultural minorities as resident assistants had different perceptions of hall climate and learning outcomes than residents who do not.

Hall Diversity and Learning Outcomes

Students who perceive that they interact with diverse others and benefit from diverse interactions are highly correlated with a perception that living in the residence hall have enhanced their ability to respect other races and ethnicities ($r=.710$, $p<0.1$). The hall diversity factor also moderately correlates with other learning outcomes, such as improved communication skills ($r=.693$, $p<0.1$), enhanced ability to live cooperatively with others ($r=.694$, $p<0.1$), and improved interpersonal relationships ($r=.688$, $p<0.1$). This finding confirms that positive interactions among diverse residents help prepare students to develop greater openness to diversity (Pike, 2002).

Hall Community and Learning Outcome

Students' perception of their hall community is highly correlated with their perception that living in the residence hall enhanced their ability to live with others ($r=.749$, $p<0.1$) and to

improve interpersonal relationships ($r=.707$, $p<0.1$). Additionally, students' perception that everyone gets along well regardless of race moderately correlates with their perceived ability to live cooperatively with others ($r=.696$, $p<0.1$). Students who feel very much a part of their floor are also moderately correlated with their ability to improve interpersonal relationships ($r=.669$, $p<0.1$). These findings relate to international students' perceived importance of social influences in influencing the satisfaction of their education experience (Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Social companionship support is highly valued by international students (Ramsay, Jones & Barker, 2007) and the analysis suggests a similar conclusion.

INTERPRETATION

An examination of the data reveals that student perception of hall peers significantly correlates with their perceived learning outcomes. Students who considered themselves as benefiting from diverse interactions were more likely to perceive that their living experience positively impacted them as a whole. Students who report that they interact with residents who are different from them also perceive that their on-campus experience enhanced their ability to respect other races and ethnicities. This finding confirms that the quality rather than the quantity of social interactions were more important for Chinese international students (Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000). Additionally, students who believe that they interact with diverse others and feel a part of their floor help their ability to meet the learning outcomes as described in the questionnaire. Specifically, when students perceive that they are a part of their floor, they tend to rank positively that living in the residence hall has enhanced their ability to improve interpersonal relationships and to live cooperatively with others.

International student response of hall environment is related to their perceived ability to meet other people, live cooperatively with others, improve interpersonal relationships, respect others, and improve their communication skills. When students perceive that they benefit from interactions with residents who are different from them, it positively impacts their ratings of all learning outcomes. Students need to feel that they are benefiting from diverse relationships; this perception is key because it influences how they rank their learning outcomes and experiences. It is not as influential that they only interact with diverse others; it is more important that they benefit from those relationships. Residence life staff members thus need to be very intentional about how they program and educate students about differences; it needs to be meaningful and impactful relationship building. Further, the data reveals that student perception of hall staff affects how they perceive their hall environment. When students feel welcomed when they first moved into the residence hall, they are more likely to believe that hall programs are for students of all races.

DISCUSSION

The data reveal that students' sense of welcome when they first moved into the residence hall influence their perception of hall diversity and hall staff. This finding indicates that the resident assistants need to ensure that they make efforts to welcome new students on their floor.

When students perceive as being a part of their floor, they tend to rank positively that their living experience have enhanced their ability to improve interpersonal relationships and to live cooperatively with others, which confirms literary findings that integration with domestic students is crucial to ensuring that students can foster positive interpersonal relationships.

Factors Influencing Chinese Student Response

Due to the overwhelmingly high number of Chinese respondents in this study, it would be beneficial to take a closer look at possible cultural factors influencing the responses from this population. These factors include collectivism, high power distance, *renqing* (reciprocity), *mianzi* (face) and *guanxi* (relations).

Collectivistic culture

The lack of significant statistical difference between students' age, gender and residential areas is perhaps suggestive of the collective nature of the Chinese culture. Hofstede (1980) suggested that Chinese societies are generally considered more collectivistic in value orientation (as cited in Hwang, Ang & Francesco, 2002). Collectivistic cultures influence what may be perceived as acceptable social behaviors. In collectivistic cultures, conformance to socially expected behaviors is key and there is a strong desire for harmony, unity, loyalty, and conformance (Hwang, Ang & Francesco, 2002). This concern for harmony may influence students' willingness to voice contrarian opinions or negative evaluations in the surveys for fear that their views may be unacceptable to authority figures, such as the Resident Assistants or Residence Coordinators.

Social desirability bias

Social desirability bias (Furnham, 1986) is the tendency among individuals to admit socially desirable actions and to deny engaging in less socially desirable acts (as cited in Dunn and Shome, 2009). A low social desirability bias occurs when the values of the respondents are similar to that of their peers. In a study comparing the ethical attitudes between Chinese and Canadian business students, Dunn and Shome (2009) found that Chinese students revealed a low social desirability bias, which is consistent with the collectivist Chinese culture. Because the results among Chinese students are comparable, it is possible that the data in this study also indicate a low social desirability bias.

Respect for authority

Prevalent among Asian cultures is the respect for authority figures. Many Chinese students are governed by the fundamental rule of respect for superiors in their identity with Confucianism as the central element of Chinese identity (Ping, 2010). Confucian teaching stresses respecting and obeying authorities, and when Chinese students come to U.S. universities, they bring with them a Confucian-oriented perspective (Dong and Chittooran, 2012). This high respect for authority may cause Chinese students to consider questioning an authority figure to be inappropriate. Such act of questioning may imply a challenge to the knowledge and authority of the one in power (Hwang, Ang & Francesco, 2002). The survey instrument was distributed and collected by Resident Assistants in each area. While students returned the surveys anonymously, it is possible that the respondents did not feel that it was disagree, if indeed they were dissatisfied with their living environment.

The principle of reciprocity

Additionally, the principle of *renqing* is more tightly bound up with ideas of reciprocity compared to other cultures (Hwang, 1987). This principle implies a normative standard for regulating social exchange and emphasizes the value of maintaining personal harmony and social order among those in hierarchically structured relationships (Hwang, 1987). If Chinese students indeed perceive their Resident Assistants (RAs) as authority figures who demand respect, then for the sake of *renqing*, they may feel it necessary to provide positive feedback about their RAs and living experience so as not to jeopardize their relationship.

The principle of *renqing* may have also impacted the high response rate among Chinese students. Whereas quantitative research typically receives low response rates from international students (Dusselier et al., 2005; Paltridge et al., 2010; Ramsay et al., 2007), the difference in this study could be the personal delivery of the survey through the RAs. *Renqing* connotes a set of social norms that one has to abide in order to get along well with other people (Hwang, 1987). One reason for Chinese students to complete the surveys is because they may anticipate having to continue to interact with their RAs in the future and wishing to prevent interpersonal conflict (Hwang, 1987).

Building relationships and saving “face”

Closely related to relationship building is the principle of maintaining *mianzi*. This term literally means “face” and is “a function of perceived social position and prestige within one’s social network” (Hwang, 1987, p.961). Knowing that *mianzi* is vital to others in maintaining a harmonious social network, one common strategy to render someone *mianzi* or to “save face” for another includes avoiding criticizing anyone, especially superiors (Hwang, 1987).

Within the highly communal Chinese culture, the establishment of *guanxi* (relationships) with other people is central. According to Hwang (1987), “In a relation-oriented society, such as China, an individual’s *guanxi* are an important consideration for all concerned” (p.958). In the case of this study, if a Chinese student neglects the rule of *renqing* and turns down the Resident Assistant’s request to complete the survey, their *guanxi* could be inadvertently be marred. Therefore, the need of reciprocity (*renqing*), maintaining one’s image (*mianzi*), and establishing relationships (*guanxi*), may have likely influenced Chinese international students to not only complete the surveys, but also select positive statements in the questionnaire.

Factors influencing positive responses

While current research suggests that international students experience acculturation challenges during their transition to the American campus (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Brown & Holloway, 2008), the experiences of some students may be positive. University of Dayton, the setting of this research, ranked first in international student satisfaction for two straight years in 2007 and 2008, according to an International Barometer Survey (Robinson, 2009). The International Student Barometer is the largest study of international students in the world and is administered by a U.K.-based company named I-Graduate. International students at the University of Dayton reported high satisfaction rates in areas including support services, university orientation, quality of instructors, and the registration and orientation process (Seaver, 2012). When compared to national data, UD was ranked higher in all areas of satisfaction and showed lower dissatisfaction ratings, except in the area of transportation.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Several key factors testify to the significance of this project. First, students' sense of community closely relates with their "feelings of being cared about, treated in a caring way, valued as an individual and accepted as a part of community and the quality of social life on campus" (Cheng, 2004, p.216). Most studies consist of large-scale Web based student surveys to students in various classes (Cheng, 2004; Brown & Holloway, 2008) however, research remains lacking in residence halls. Second, studies are typically conducted at a single institution with predominantly white students (Dusselier et al, 2005; Paltridge et al., 2010; Ramsay, Jones & Barker, 2007). Hence, there is a lack of racial and ethnic heterogeneity, meaning that current data do not adequately represent the views of international students who are typically racially underrepresented on campus. Third, while studies provide valuable insights of perceived racial climates in residence halls, the international student response rates are typically much lower than the representation in the overall student population, thus affecting the generalizability of the original population (Johnson, 2003). In sum, this research project is a concentrated effort to gain feedback from international students so that residence life administrators may better serve this population.

While the questionnaire is a good tool to gauge students' perceptions, it is limited in providing in-depth knowledge about why the respondents answered the questions a certain way. Additionally, although the response rate of this questionnaire is relatively high, international students perceiving a negative floor climate may not have been willing to complete a hall-issued questionnaire (Johnson, 2003). Finally, the survey instrument could not adequately address various factors contributing to student learning outcomes. Qualitative studies such as focus groups or interviews may provide additional insight in order to examine other variables influencing students' perceptions about their on campus accommodations.

One inherent limitation of this research is that it was conducted at a single institution with a significant Chinese student population. The sample is skewed toward Chinese students and thus comparisons between international students from different regions are limited. As a result, the results from this study may not generalize to institutions with student populations that include more racial and ethnic heterogeneity. Moreover, the majority of the residence life staff members are White students, thus limiting the determination of whether or not diverse staff hiring may affect international student perceptions of hall racial climate.

Further research may address the aforementioned limitations to increase the generalizability of findings. First, studies may target diverse international student populations to ensure eliminating the mono cultural influence that was apparent in the current study. Targeting more diverse staff members at similar campuses would be helpful to determine whether the diversity in staff influence students' experience in residence halls.

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