

The Business Core Curriculum: Is It Time for a Change?

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Ask a typical business person, educator, or student what is wrong with collegiate business education and most likely you will wish you had never asked. Critics assert that business schools are oriented toward bureaucratic management rather than toward entrepreneurial activities; that business school graduates are often unable to write or to spell; that business school curricula place too much emphasis on quantitative analysis and too little on qualitative factors such as creative thinking, reasoned judgment, and interpersonal relationships; and that business school faculty are frequently pigeonholed in narrow disciplines and fail to develop integrated business programs. This paper proposes a new business core curriculum intended to overcome much of the criticism currently directed at collegiate business education and, in so doing, to help business students develop professional attitudes, commu-

nication skills, and leadership potential.

Criticism of collegiate business education is not new. In 1959, two independent studies sponsored by the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Foundation recognized the need to broaden the undergraduate business curriculum in order to achieve a balance between vocational and liberal education. Almost a quarter century later, the 1984 report of the National Institute of Education and the 1985 curriculum study of the Association of American Colleges both reached a similar conclusion. Yet, few business schools have seriously attempted to develop a business core curriculum that is anything more than a mismatched collection of departmental courses.

Proposed Core Curriculum

The proposed business core curriculum presented in Table 1 attempts to remedy this problem. The core is structured so as to meet the curriculum standards of the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business

(AACSB) and, at the same time, to allow students to develop liberal art skills within a business context. All of the proposed courses are integrated in nature. Each of the courses, with the exception of "Dimensions of Business," requires students to interact with the computer and to solve unstructured problems. Similarly, written communication is stressed in all of the courses, and students are expected to learn how to interpret business information rather than how to perform mundane calculations.

The proposed business core courses are based on three assumptions. First, the courses are taught on a seventeen-week semester basis with summer classes conducted over eight weeks. Second, each student enrolled in the college of business has ready access to a personal computer, either on or off campus. Third, teaching loads are adjusted to allow several of the courses to be team-taught by faculty members from more than one department and those faculty members teaching a course alone are required to integrate material from current periodicals and other departments into their course.

Description of Core Courses

Dimensions of Business: Presents the historical development of business, the shifting structure of industry, and the changing role of the work force. Emphasis is placed on teaching the student to understand and adjust to institutional changes and to evaluate critically the future roles of business in society.

Prerequisite: None

Faculty: General Business

Information and Control in Business I: Investigates information requirements and data processing procedures relevant to managerial decision making. Basic computer systems concepts are examined, and computer-generated business reports are developed from data files.

Prerequisite: None

Faculty: Accounting; Decision and Information Systems

Information and Control in Business II: Introduces quantitative methods of statistical analysis as aids in managerial control. The use of standard computer programs provides the student with an opportunity to apply various statistical techniques to problems of production, marketing, and finance.

Prerequisites: Information and Control in Business I; Calculus

Faculty: Decision and Information Systems

Analysis of Financial Statements: Examines the processes by which financial accounting information is accumulated and reported to management and external users. Techniques for analyzing and evaluating financial statement information are presented within the context of managerial and investment decision making.

Prerequisites: Dimensions of Business; Information and Control in Business II

Faculty: Accounting; Finance

Cost Behavior and Controls within Firms: Focuses on cost accumulation systems and cost behavior concepts with the integration of quantitative methods. Techniques for managing

inventory and working capital are examined and related to problems of capital budgeting, asset valuation and resource allocation.

Prerequisite: Analysis of Financial Statements

Faculty: Accounting; Decision and Information Systems

Contemporary Issues in Economics: Applies basic economic principles to current problems of economic policy including inflation, unemployment, forecasting, and international trade. An analysis of the monetary system presents the student with an understanding of the functions of money

and the effects of monetary policy on interest rates and economic growth.

Prerequisites: Dimensions of Business; Information and Control in Business I

Faculty: Economics

Economic Influences on Management: Examines current economic issues affecting managerial decision making such as production, competition, price levels, capital formation, and technological innovation. The economic impact of government policies toward business are explored with an emphasis on deficit spending, corporate taxation, and antitrust activity.

TABLE 1. Proposed Business Core Curriculum

First Year	Hours
First-year English composition I	3
First-year English composition II	3
Differential and integral calculus	3
*Dimensions of business	3
*Information and control in business I	3
*Information and control in business II	3
General studies	15
	33
Second Year	
Human communication	3
*Analysis of financial statements	3
*Cost behavior and controls within firms	3
*Contemporary issues in economics	3
*Economic influences on management	3
*Written communication in business	3
General studies	15
	33
Third Year	
*Environmental forces in business I	3
*Environmental forces in business II	3
*Interpersonal communication and negotiation in business	3
*Management of human resources	3
*Management of production and operations	3
*Strategic management of markets	3
General studies or field of specialization	12
	30
Fourth Year	
*Managerial decision making under uncertainty	3
General studies or field of specialization	27
	30

*Business Core Curriculum (45 semester hours)

Prerequisite: Contemporary Issues in Economics

Faculty: Economics

Written Communication in Business: Focuses on the organization and presentation of written business information with an emphasis on the writing of letters, memoranda and reports. The use of computer word processing and graphics teaches the student a variety of techniques to enhance his/her written communication.

Prerequisites: Dimensions of Business; Information and Control in Business I; First-Year English Composition II

Faculty: General Business

Environmental Forces in Business I: Presents an overview of the legal, social, political, competitive, technological, ethical, and international environments as they relate to profit and nonprofit organizations. Guest lecturers provide the student with greater depth concerning the social, political, technological, and international environments and offer the student insights into the value orientations of other institutions and cultures.

Prerequisite: Economic Influences on Management

Faculty: General Business; Guest Lecturers

Environmental Forces in Business II: Continues the analysis of business environments with particular emphasis on the legal and ethical dimensions. Rules governing business conduct and policy are examined and integrated with current trends.

Prerequisite: Environmental Forces in Business I

Faculty: General Business

Interpersonal Communication and Negotiation in Business: Focuses on the theories and dimensions of human interaction within a business setting. Emphasis is placed on teaching the student effective communication and negotiation skills so as to reduce and resolve interpersonal conflicts without recourse to litigation.

Prerequisites: Written Communication in Business; Human Communication

Faculty: General Business; Management

Management of Human Resources: Applies organizational and behavioral theories of management to current problems of selecting, developing, maintaining, and utilizing a competent work force. The use of case studies allows the student to analyze organizational relationships and to explore the impact of change and informal groups upon the effectiveness of employees.

Prerequisite: Written Communication in Business

Faculty: Management

Management of Production and Operations: Analyzes the production function from a managerial point of view and integrates operations management with strategic planning, implementation, and control. The use of case studies allows the student to assess the impact of the major components of production and operations management on organizational productivity and performance.

Prerequisite: Cost Behavior and Controls within Firms

Faculty: Management; Purchasing, Transportation, and Operations

Strategic Management of Markets: Investigates the role of marketing within the firm and society, as well as the managerial and ethical implications of current marketing trends. An examination of policy formulation and implementation teaches the student how to develop marketing objectives and how to respond to market opportunities, environmental change, and competition.

Prerequisite: Environmental Forces in Business I

Faculty: Marketing

Managerial Decision Making under Uncertainty: Provides an entrepreneurial orientation toward business with a broad, humanistic view of the corporation. The use of real-world interaction and case studies trains the student to think creatively and to solve problems in complex, unstructured situations.

Prerequisites: All other business core courses

Faculty: Finance; Management; Marketing

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