



Tradition, Technology and Faculty Partnership: An Integrated Approach to Course Delivery

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ABSTRACT

Technology continues to reshape the dimensions of virtually every industry and institution in our society. This is no less true for higher education than for any other institution. And within higher education, perhaps nowhere has the impact of technology been more powerfully felt than in schools of business where the customer demand for "distance learning" has been pervasive. As these schools have attempted to respond to the opportunity to enhance learning and to expand learning options through technology-delivered education, the challenge is to understand what the most appropriate use of technology for learning might be for a given institution. This study reports on the efforts of one school of business to answer this question for itself. The findings from this study suggest that distance learning may not be the preferred model of educational program delivery for many students. For at least some segment of the non-traditional student market, face-to-face interaction with faculty and classmates may be the priority in course design, with technology valued primarily for ensuring that time spent in the classroom is as productive and meaningful as possible.

Introduction

In his work, *Strategy and Structure*, Alfred D. Chandler (1962) identifies the distinguishing characteristics of successful organizations. His observation that "structure follows strategy" represents a key differentiator for organizations that have the ability to respond effectively to environmental change. Organizations that successfully anticipate and respond to change do so by modifying the organizational structures that are the mechanisms through which high performance strategies are realized. In effect, performance strategies without corresponding changes in organizational structure cannot lead to successful change efforts. This is particularly true in the dynamic technological environment that characterizes contemporary business. Continuous market pressures are forcing organizations to deploy adaptive strategies to remain competitive. The proliferation of e-commerce and wider customer access to the Internet, for example, have accelerated the pace at which anticipative and adaptive strategies must be considered.

This is no less true for institutions of business higher education, as new demands for distance learning and technology-driven education begin to change the way in which these institutions respond to stakeholders. The pervasiveness of the World Wide Web, for example, has provided new opportunities and challenges that are inconsistent with traditional approaches



toward higher learning. Traditional curricular strategies and their delivery systems are being challenged to meet the new demands of "customers" who prefer distance learning and other technology-delivered educational opportunities. It is clear that innovative strategies must be initiated to address these changes in market conditions, and just as important, new curricular delivery structures must be developed which support and maintain these emerging strategies. Changing learning preferences, time constraints, and demands for broader access to education have provided both the necessary and sufficient market conditions for educational institutions to reconsider the strategies through which their "educational mission" is fulfilled (Adams, 1995; Davis and Botkin, 1994; Ives and Jarvenpaa, 1996; Watson, 1995).

The New College B School

For business schools to remain viable in the new reality created by the "Internet Revolution" innovation and adaptation are required. This mandate is made even more urgent by private sector intrusion into the traditional markets served by business schools. "Cable operators and telecommunications companies are aggressively developing virtual classrooms, often without university involvement. Publishers and software houses are developing multimedia products that will substitute for, rather than complement, traditional classroom education" (Ives and Jarvenpaa, 1996:33). Further innovations include centers for management education outside of the business school and corporations launching their own internal "universities" to provide management and leadership education to their members. The following metaphor provides a clear sense of how dynamic the current educational environment may be: "The business school's journey into the turbulent waters of the knowledge age will be difficult. When the storm is over, the boat (of traditional programs of business higher education) will still be there. But some of the sailors will be lost, perhaps run over by the speedboats of innovative and adaptive private-sector entrepreneurs" (Ives and Jarvenpaa, 1996:40).

The B School at New College, situated in a medium-sized New England city, has come face-to-face with this new reality. But market pressures for technology-driven education is not the only factor demanding changes in the course delivery structures of the school. There is also the recent commitment by the College, in the words of its new President, to "elevate" itself. For the B School this means a commitment to pursue national-level accreditation by AACSB, the International Association for Management Education. The impact of both of these changes requires adjustments in the curriculum delivery strategies of the School that ultimately must be reflected in the specific structural dimensions of course design.

This paper reports on the results of a pilot course that reengineers the traditional course delivery structure to reflect and support the College and B School's emerging strategy in response to these changes.

Commitment to National-Level Accreditation

New College's strategic plan commits the College to a strategy designed to elevate it from a regional presence to one which is recognized nationally. In the academic arena this translates to a commitment to maintain or pursue "the highest level of accreditation available" for each of the several schools of the College. The Schools of Law and Engineering at the



College have for a long time maintained national-level accreditation by the American Bar Association (ABA), and the American Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET), respectively. The B School had never pursued national-level accreditation. The newly adopted strategic plan commits the College specifically to pursuing national accreditation through AACSB for the B School. AACSB, the International Association for Management Education is the premier accrediting agency for bachelors, masters and doctoral degree programs in business administration and accounting (AACSB, 1999).

Accreditation by AACSB requires compliance with performance standards in the full range of dimensions considered essential for providing quality programs in business higher education. One of the more challenging performance standards requires that each of the programs of the accredited unit be staffed in such a way that at least 60% of the business school courses required in that program are taught by “academically qualified faculty.” In most cases this means individuals who possess the highest degree offered by their discipline, and who continue to be intellectually active in their field; or individuals with an appropriate advanced degree, who have a significant amount of high-level professional experience in the discipline they are teaching, and who also remain intellectually active in their field.

New College's B School offers programs for traditional and non-traditional students leading to Bachelor of Science degrees in Business Administration and the MBA and other master's level programs for its part-time, non-traditional students. Up to the present time, programs for non-traditional students at both the graduate and undergraduate levels have been delivered with a strong reliance on adjunct faculty. For the most part, these faculty members are practitioners in their respective business fields and hold, at minimum, the Master's degree. The incorporation of adjunct/practitioner faculty has been viewed as essential to the School's mission for the broad exposure it provides students to business professionals in various fields. As a result of this practice, however, the percentage of courses in the business programs serviced by academically qualified faculty has not been consistent with AACSB standards. This has presented a difficult structural challenge in light of the accreditation strategy. While professional practitioner (adjunct) faculty continue to be viewed as essential to the attainment of the mission of the B School, it is clear that there needs to be a better balance between these business professionals and academically qualified faculty in all of the School's programs. One opportunity to align the B School's structure with its strategy is to design a course delivery structure that achieves an appropriate balance between adjunct and academically qualified faculty.

Information Technology, Learning and the Market

The demands of the market (and AACSB standards) relative to incorporating technology in the educational process are considerably less specific than the accreditation standards for faculty deployment. It is clear that there has been explosive growth during the past several years in the number and variety of “distance learning” course and program options offered in business higher education (Byrne, 1995; Hilton and Kameda, 1999; Ragothaman and Hoadley, 1997; Saltzberg and Polyson, 1995; Treadwell and Leach, 1998). "Until recently, distance learning has accounted for a relatively minor proportion of higher education activity. Now...it has become a pervasive and growing phenomenon. New technologies create more



effective techniques to distribute learning in non-traditional ways. As a result, new organizational structures and learning arrangements are appearing throughout higher education" (AACSB, 1999:7). To be effective, however, these new structures must develop from specific and well-defined strategies that drive the institutions to respond to new and emerging market opportunities. It is clear that certain segments of the student market have responded positively to these options (Simons, 1999). Much less clear, however, is the answer to the question of which of these options represent the "right choices" for the B School, its strategy and its stakeholders.

The mandate to develop "technology-delivered educational" structures (AACSB, 1999) is largely driven by the need for curricula to reflect changes in the increasingly technological workplace, as well as by students' demand for increased convenience. The increased time pressures in non-traditional students' personal and professional lives leave them looking aggressively for educational programs that allow them to better balance the demands of the program with the demands of the other areas of their lives. Distance learning options have provided one alternative. However, there are increasing indications that distance learning is not the panacea for everyone (Simons, 1999). In fact, anecdotal evidence gleaned from conversations with students suggests that there remains a strong preference among many for the traditional modality of course delivery. This is characterized by face-to-face interactions between students and instructor and among the students themselves. For these students the value of educational technology is not so much for personal convenience as it is for improving the effective uses of the classroom time. The role that technology may play must be considered in this context for this group of students.

Based on these concerns in terms of technology-driven education, the challenge for business programs is to find effective structural responses to several questions:

- Would the students already in the B School's classrooms prefer a "distance" option for some or all of their courses?
- If a distance option is preferred which courses would be appropriate?
- If distance learning is not preferred, are there technology-driven course elements that would enhance their learning and add value to the experience?
- What would be an appropriate "mix" of technology-driven elements?

While these questions are by no means exhaustive, they certainly merit our attention. The answers to these questions may not come easily. It is almost certain, however, that the market will judge very harshly programs of higher education that fail to incorporate effective and appropriate technology-driven learning enhancements into the design of their courses.

In summary, the strategic shift toward pursuit of accreditation combined with the market mandate to achieve the right mix of technology to enhance the learning experience of its students presents an important challenge for the B School. Its responsibility is to develop responsive learning structures and course designs that facilitate the institution's strategic goals.



The Pilot Course Design

In summer 1999, the authors designed a course that had two objectives in addition to the existing learning goals of the course:

1. To implement and assess a model of staffing that would reflect AACSB standards on faculty deployment while still affirming New College's traditional belief in the value of student exposure to practitioners in the professions.
2. To implement and assess a course delivery model that balanced the opportunity for student learning through classroom-based activities with the opportunity for optimizing the use of classroom time through technology-delivered course elements.

The design was characterized by two distinctive features: a faculty partners staffing model and an integrated model of learning technologies.

The Faculty Partners Staffing Model

The faculty partners staffing model joins an academically qualified member of the full-time faculty with a business professional who has traditionally served as an adjunct faculty member in the B School's program. The term "faculty partners" should not be confused with that of a "faculty team." This is not a "team teaching" situation, at least as that term is commonly used. A "partnership" serves to enhance the interaction between professor and practitioner (Ives and Jarvenpaa, 1996).

The design was implemented in two sections of the same course, taught at separate sites 100 miles apart. Figure 1 provides the basic structural elements of the course and the web-based integration of the two sites. Each faculty member in the design had primary classroom management responsibilities for one of the sites. In this sense, the faculty members were viewed as "partners" providing the same content and pedagogical approaches to two different sets of students.

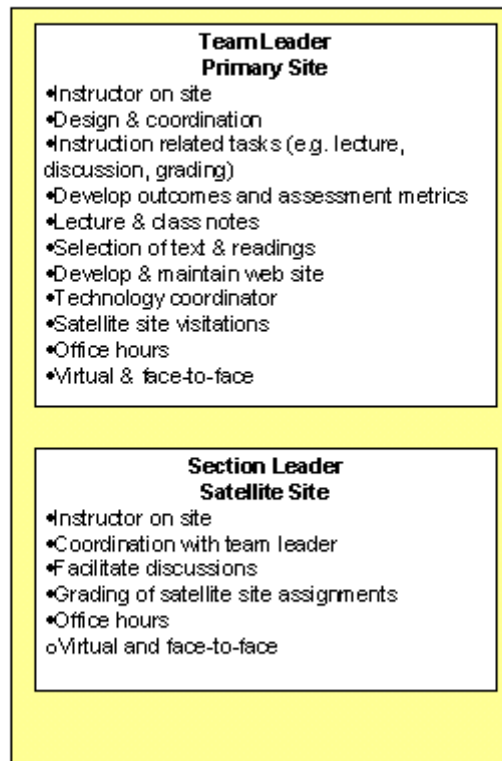
In the Faculty Partners Model, the academically qualified faculty member is designated as the Course Leader and the practicing business professional is the Section Leader/Coordinator. The roles of each of the two faculty members are detailed in Figure 2. In this model, coordination between the two faculty members is managed in two ways: First, there is significant planning prior to the delivery of the course. This consists of a combination of face-to-face and virtual meetings. These sessions ensure that the syllabus and course plan reflect an appropriate match of both the academic expertise of the Course Leader and the practical experience of the Section Leader/Coordinator.

Coordination also continues through weekly (at a minimum) telephone and/or Email conversations between the faculty members, ensuring that both individuals remain current in terms of developments at both course locations. Finally, and no less significant in terms of coordination, the Course Leader visits the "satellite" site three times during the eleven-weeks of



the course: for the first class meeting, for a class meeting during the middle of the course, and for an appropriate class meeting toward or at the end of the course. The Course Leader is also electronically connected to both sites through email, a web-based syllabus, and

Figure 2.
Faculty Roles at Primary and Satellite Sites



digital portfolios of source material and students' presentation material. This insures that both the Section Leader/Coordinator and the students at the satellite location have an easily accessible means of contact with the Course Leader. The approach also reinforces the students' understanding of the partnership between the two faculty members sharing responsibility for course delivery.

An important final point on the partnership model relates to the technology itself. It is essential that both faculty members possess the technology skill set necessary for delivering the course. This is critical to the success of this design as assignments and other relevant communication between students and faculty, between the faculty members themselves, and among the members of the student teams are facilitated through the Internet using common platforms of Email and other communication tools (e.g. "chat" and discussion technologies such as Microsoft's Net Meeting). Additionally, student assignments are submitted and returned electronically with embedded feedback (we used Microsoft Office 97). As noted above, the syllabus, class notes and other relevant source material are web-based for easy access both for



students and for faculty. Again, the primary objective of the Faculty Partners Model was to explore a course design that might broaden the reach of academically qualified faculty while maintaining, for students, significant exposure to teacher-practitioners.

Integrated Learning Technologies

The second major objective of this course design was to provide an opportunity to explore what the appropriate mix might be of technology-driven and traditional face-to-face course delivery elements. To that end, both traditional and technology driven elements were fully integrated in the pilot design.

The Technology of the Traditional Classroom. The central learning outcome set for this course was the development of students' ability appropriately to use theories and concepts from the fields of organizational theory and organizational behavior, to inform students' analysis of organizational activities, and to guide their recommendations for improving the effectiveness of those activities. In addition to these central outcomes and the "experimental" objectives that are the focus of this study, the course design included several specific pedagogical strategies. These included: (1) the use of self-managing student teams as an important vehicle for collaborative learning, (2) formal team presentations which along with team meetings (both face-to-face and virtual) and class discussions represented a significant opportunity for students to continue development of their communication skills, and (3) rapid feedback on performance necessitated by the relatively compressed 11-week term of the course. All of these issues are discussed in more detail later in this paper.

To achieve this broad range of design goals, the course was structured around three assessment opportunities:

1. "Incident"-based quizzes that required the students to select and relate specific concepts from the course content (specifically from the Text and assigned readings) to brief articles from the business periodicals such as The Wall Street Journal and Business Week. There were five incident quizzes, one every other week, beginning in week 3.
2. Written team case analyses submitted every other week with each of the five student teams "taking a turn" presenting their analysis to the class for one of the five cases. These analyses were based on additional information distributed two weeks in advance of the due date. This two-week period was designed to provide the opportunity for careful preparation, team discussion, formulation of analysis, and, if necessary, submission of clarification questions to the faculty via email prior to the next traditional classroom meeting. The traditional classroom meeting was held every other week with a "case preparation" period scheduled during the off-meeting week. Students were encouraged to use this time for virtual discussions on the subject matter.
3. An in-depth, written, individual analysis of an organizational initiative from each student's work experience. This project required each student to write a



“case” based on their own organizational experience and to identify and apply appropriate concepts from the course that would inform their analysis and recommendations.

In this model, both the “incident” quizzes and the team case analyses are viewed primarily as individual and group-based learning opportunities, respectively; these assignments supported the acquisition of the skills associated with the outcome set of understanding, application and analysis and recommendation. The individual organizational initiative analysis project was viewed as the vehicle for actually assessing student performance relative to the outcome set on an individual basis.

E-Technology for Support and Extension of the Traditional Classroom Course. None of these core course activities necessarily requires the use of electronic or information technology, but each does provide the opportunity for the utilization of that technology. The “incident” quizzes can be administered on-line: the “incident” provided by the instructor, the analysis submitted by the student and graded and returned by the instructor, entirely paperless and without any face-to-face contact. The same is true of the team case analyses and the initiative analysis project.

In addition to electronic submission, grading and feedback relative to student written assignments (using Microsoft's Word 97 reviewing function), the course also employed e-technology to provide remote access to course materials including syllabus and other essential information, as well as to library resources and to the instructors and other students in the course via e-mail.

Perhaps the most significant use of e-technology in this model, however, is for virtual meetings by the student teams. Again, none of the above e-technology applications, even all of them taken in together, was sufficient to represent the kind of test of the e-technology “waters” that was an important objective of this pilot. The introduction of virtual team meetings created an opportunity for a significant “distance” experience sufficiently different from the traditional classroom-based learning technology to allow an assessment of students’ reactions. Four scheduled class periods were designated for “case preparation” where no formal class was held. This provided students a “window” of time during which to meet virtually with their teams to prepare the case analysis. The time allocated to this type of “distance” learning activity was necessary to provide students with sufficient experience to allow for informed reactions to it. (It is important to note that the “distance experience” was in lieu of fifteen hours of scheduled class time that would have been conducted in the traditional face-to-face meeting modality.) The case analysis of each presenting team was provided in PowerPoint format and subsequently published on the course web page.

The course design that emerged, then, was one built around traditional, classroom-based activities, supported and enhanced by the integration of information technology. Table 1 summarizes how each of the various elements incorporated into the structure of this course relates to the course’s several “design” goals.



Table 1
Strategic Goals and Structural Elements

Structural Elements

<i>Design Goals</i>	Partnership Staffing	Team Case Analysis	Incident Quizzes	Initiative Analysis	Virtual meetings	Team presentations
Faculty Deployment	X					
Productivity Technology		X	X	X	X	X
Distance Technology					X	
Self-managing Teams		X			X	X
Individual Assessment		X	X	X		
Written Communication		X	X	X		
Oral Communication					X	X



This pilot design was offered during the summer of 1999 and involved students at two locations. The first was considered the primary site because the Course Leader facilitated this section. This section consisted of 13 students, the majority of whom were affiliated with government contractors, and were either active duty military personnel or veterans. The second or “satellite” was more than 100 miles away from the primary site and was staffed by the business professional member of the faculty partnership. This section consisted of 23 students representing a much wider range of employers including health care, transportation, manufacturing, financial services and aerospace organizations. The students in both groups were enrolled as part-time graduate students taking courses in the evening.

Findings

The findings reported here are primarily from student responses to an end-of-course questionnaire. This questionnaire generated information on a number of the elements of the pilot design, including the textbook used and the quiz format. The discussion in this section is restricted to the findings directly related to the two primary strategic goals in the areas of faculty staffing and course technology.

Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for each of the dimensions contained in the questionnaire. The students were asked to indicate their satisfaction with various elements or aspects of the course using a scale of “excellent” (5) to “unacceptable” (1). The questionnaires were distributed and collected by a student in each section, turned in to the Dean’s office, and returned to the instructors only after the final grades for the course had been submitted. This approach assured anonymity and encouraged feedback that would be as candid as possible.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics: Primary and Satellite Sites

Item of Evaluation	Primary Site			Satellite Site		Combined Primary/Satellite	
	Mean	S.D.		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Course Design:							
• User friendliness	4.64	0.50		4.68	0.48	4.67	0.48
• Maximizing learning	4.45	0.52		4.47	0.51	4.47	0.51
• Optimizing class time	4.73	0.47		4.32	0.48	4.47	0.51
Course leader	4.55	0.69		4.05	0.94	4.24	0.87



Text as source of theory & concepts	4.0	0.89		4.53	0.51	4.33	0.71
Incident based quizzes	4.36	0.67		4.21	0.71	4.27	0.69

The findings reflect the responses for each of the two sites (primary and satellite). Overall student responses are positive for each of the four dimensions that comprise the focus of this study. But while the responses are positive on each dimension, there are substantive issues that were raised through the qualitative comments invited on each item on the questionnaire. These findings are discussed with an eye toward incorporating changes into future courses using the present model.

The two student groups were compared to determine whether there were significant response differences on the questionnaire items. Only two of the differences were statistically significant —optimization of class time and text as a source of theory. A more refined questionnaire and additional analysis of the qualitative comments may provide some insight as to why only these significant differences emerge. At the primary site, the student group was older and had a military background while the students at the satellite site were more typically in their first management position in the private sector. The emphasis for the primary site students appears to be on optimizing the class time with less reliance on the textbook as a source for theory. At the satellite site, the reverse was true. However, in both locations, the responses to these items is positive. Additional iterations of this model with similar student populations is necessary to determine whether these findings are robust or are peculiar to these two groups of students.

Student Satisfaction With the Overall Design of the Course

There were three separate items on the questionnaire focusing on student satisfaction with the overall design of the course. The first asked students to assess the “user-friendliness” of the course, the second to assess the extent to which the course “maximized learning,” and the third to assess the extent to which the course “optimized the use of class time.” Each of these represents a distinct and fairly independent dimension of the overall student satisfaction construct.

1. *User-friendliness.* Students from both the primary and satellite locations viewed the design of the course in a positive way with no apparent differences between the two groups. Because the course was structured with virtual and traditional components, it was not clear how students might respond on this dimension. It truly represented an exploratory dimension. For some, technology-based or distance learning was a new experience and represented a significant change from what they had been accustomed to. In some cases, students had not had extensive experience with the Internet or other computer based applications. This presented some difficulty, but assistance was provided to those in need. Both the instructor and team members provided this support. Perhaps at least in part due to this support, each



student was able to achieve an acceptable level of personal comfort with the technology demands of the course. Student comments relative to balancing the demands of work, family and class suggest that this course design responds well to the student stakeholders' increasing emphasis on convenience in their educational programs.

2. *Maximizing learning.* Here the data indicate that the reactions are positive and in close agreement. In practice, it is possible for a course to be extremely "user-friendly," and at the same time be less than effective in its learning outcomes. This does not appear to have been the case with this design. While the overall ratings for this dimension by each section were positive, comments by several students representing both sites indicated the desire for greater opportunity for class discussion than this design provided.
3. *Optimizing use of class time.* The student responses show generally positive views of the effectiveness of the use of class time. There is a difference between the two locations, however, and the difference is significant. The ratings by students at the satellite site, while positive, were not as favorable as the ratings by their counterparts at the primary site. The student comments provide some insight as to the underlying difference. These comments suggest that the inter-group difference seen here may be directly related to the use of class time for quizzes. The students at the satellite site had requested at the beginning of the course that quizzes be administered via the Internet. These students felt that the use of class time for quizzes was too time-consuming and not a constructive use of time. The Course Leader denied this request because of anticipated problems in administering the quizzes on-line. A number of the students in the satellite section were disappointed with this decision (this issue never came up at the primary site), and it seems reasonable to suggest that this disappointment, combined with the above-mentioned desire for more time for in-class discussion, may explain the difference in the ratings on this item between the two groups. Nevertheless, this difference in perspective is one for further investigation.

Satellite Site Student Satisfaction With the Course Leader

The other item from the questionnaire that was of particular interest in evaluating the pilot design was the acceptability to the students at the satellite section of a course in which the "course leader" actually led only three of the eleven class sessions. AACSB standards are clearly concerned with insuring student access to academically qualified faculty. In this design, in addition to the face-to-face visits, the daily accessibility of the course leader via e-mail, and even telephone if the student preferred that medium, was emphasized.

1. *Meetings with course leader.* This item asked students to indicate their satisfaction with the frequency with which the course leader met with the class at the satellite location (three times over the course of the term). The mean rating on this item is 4.05, suggesting a somewhat positive reaction, although not as positive as the items discussed above. Interestingly, only one student comment indicated a desire for greater frequency of interaction with the course leader. An incident from the course may be instructive.



As part of the mid-course visitation to the satellite site, and in the spirit of getting a better feel for the students in that section, the course leader (rather than the section coordinator) graded the fourth team case analysis. This was a somewhat more demanding assignment than the previous three had been, and the grades the teams received were marginally but consistently lower than previous grades had been. Before returning the assignment, the section coordinator reviewed each team's report, as well as the course leader's comments, and concurred with the judgment of the course leader. When the graded assignments were returned to the students, their reaction was good-natured, but it was clear they were less than pleased with what in retrospect must have seemed to them like a change in the rules. Only one student comment referenced this incident directly, but several others might be interpreted as reflecting on that particular experience. Unfortunately, there is no point of comparison with the students at the primary site since the course leader was present at that site for all class meetings.

Response to a Distance Learning Option

A final question on the course evaluation form was open-ended. It read: "Please comment on whether you feel this course could be offered entirely on a virtual basis. That is, after an initial class meeting or two, all interactions between students and faculty and among students would be via the Internet." The vast majority of the student feedback indicated that the course structure worked effectively with a combination of technology-driven and traditional face-to-face pedagogy. Students were clear that more face-to-face time would enhance the experience. Some students argued that the course "could" be offered entirely on the 'net' but would suffer from a loss of the added benefit of interacting with the team and others. The bulk of the feedback suggested that this course would not be as effective if delivered entirely as a distance learning experience. The emphasis here was on the benefit of open discussion of the material. These students did not feel that technology was a substitute for face-to-face interaction.

A summary of the qualitative comments is shown in Appendix 1. Based on student feedback, it appears that, because of the content of this particular course, organizational behavior and theory may be a less suitable candidate than others for a pure distance learning experience. And, in fact, several students did indicate that they might consider taking a class with a distance learning format for a course or two, if the focus of the course was more fact- or technical skill-oriented, where classroom interaction was less important.

Discussion

The pilot course described in this paper was designed to reflect New College's strategic commitment to national accreditation and to be responsive to student expectations relative to the use of e-technology as a means for making education both more relevant to their work environment and more "user-friendly." While the findings from a survey of these two groups of students can hardly be termed conclusive, there appear to be a number of findings that might be considered quite interesting, at least from the point of view of the College.

First, our experience with this course suggests that students in a teaching institution may be quite receptive to a structure in which an academically qualified member of the faculty has primary responsibility for the design and content of the course, but meets with the class only



a few times, with a practicing business professional responsible for managing the on-site delivery of the course. Ultimately, the accrediting organization must be satisfied with the academic integrity and learning efficacy of this approach. But a positive response from students on such issues as the accessibility of the lead faculty member must certainly be part of the case in support of this approach. And certainly seeking stakeholder input is consistent with the AACSB recommendations on distance learning and technology-driven education (AACSB, 1999).

Second, if the students in this course can be considered representative at least of the students in the B School's existing, non-traditional market segment, it appears that such students' expectations relative to e-technology in their educational programs might be better met by fully integrating that technology with the classroom-based experiences, rather than by placing significantly greater emphasis on distance learning models which minimize face-to-face interaction. The findings in this area can hardly be considered conclusive. However, it is interesting that, given the opportunity to indicate a strong preference for virtual classes and distance learning, the students in this course declined. In fact, while they seemed definitely to appreciate the flexibility afforded by the virtual team meetings component of the course, they would like to hold on to that while still increasing the amount of time available for in-class interaction. To the extent that the response of these students is representative, it suggests that despite all the media hype to the contrary, distance learning is not a demand from every segment of the non-traditional student marketplace. For at least some students, e-technology may be valued, not as a substitute for the classroom-based educational experience, but as an enhancement offering increased efficiency and flexibility in providing this experience. This finding, tentative though it may be, might at least call into question the necessity of every institution investing heavily in the technology required for quality distance learning programs.

There are some limitations to the present study. This pilot involved only a single course, and only one type of course. To achieve a reasonable level of confidence in the tentative conclusions we have drawn, this structure will need to be implemented and assessed in a number of other courses.

It is equally important to note that student attitudinal data cannot be the sole metric for determining the effectiveness of a course. Student performance data must also be considered. And while the faculty involved in the delivery of this course feel confident in judging student output from this course to be superior overall to that from their more traditionally-structured sections, future efforts would certainly benefit from a more objective assessment of student performance.

Conclusion

The pilot course design reported in this paper came about as a result of an effort to ensure that course structure at our institution is aligned with our strategies and pedagogical goals. It appears that our initial effort toward this end has enjoyed a certain level of success. At the very least we have gained important stakeholder reaction to a promising staffing model, and valuable stakeholder input in terms of what the appropriate application might be of e-technology in the classroom. For us, this experience has provided a strong reaffirmation of the value of purposeful innovation in pursuit of continuous improvement.



Appendix 1

Primary Site Course Design (User Friendliness)

- Very friendly and open learning environment which helped me to feel more comfortable increasing my comprehension.
- Excellent course design. Case problems blended well with readings and were excellent building blocks for the individual project. Grading scale was well developed.
- Alternating classes gave freedom to use more time management
- More time with groups made it easier to complete assignments.

Satellite Site Course Design: (User Friendliness)

- Great to have time to meet with teams due to busy work schedules
 - Combination of course vs. unstructured was excellent.
 - Very effective design. Allowed the student to spend more time on each subject but also knew what was expected from each class.
 - Flexibility was useful during summer months.
 - I never felt forced to be here. It was a learn on your own and then come back and discuss it, which is very helpful.
 - Loved it. Good mix of virtual and traditional structure.
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- Allowed for preparation and also allowed for individuals to work together at more convenient times if needed.
 - I would have liked more structure. I would like to see more of the professor lecture to get students thinking along different lines. I would like to meet each week to be sure the team is participating as a whole. For some reason there typically seems to be a team member that does not pull their weight. I know this is undoubtedly a trait managers must deal with on a daily basis, but more structure would assist the team members to work together and not individuals working separately on a project.

Primary Site Course Design: (Maximizing Learning)

- I was able to learn more when given an outline of what was expected and performing research on my own.
- The use of teams in the case problems was a good learning tool.
- Made me aware there is much more to this field to learn.
- Would have liked more classroom work with the professor to tap his knowledge and expertise.

Satellite Site Course Design: (Maximizing learning)



- Class discussion was very effective. Could use more of this.
- The alternate week schedule worked well.
- In class discussion on the main topics would have been helpful.
- Using the variety of resources maximized my capability to learn.
- Using teams helped with learning concepts and saw new ways to approach problems.
- You get out what you put in.
- Group learning was very beneficial and the class structure helped to reinforce this type of learning.
- Some of the open-ended ness of the assignments created confusion among some group members.
- I could have learned much more if we met each week. More depth in the readings is needed and better coordination of assignments

Primary Site

Course Design: (Optimizing use of class time)

- Extra time outside of class meeting allowed more opportunity for group meetings and flexibility
- Perfect mix of in-class out of class time.
- Appreciated the flexibility of the optional classes to schedule team meetings which are hard to accommodate.
- The time was used very economically.

Satellite Site

Course Design: (Optimizing use of class time)

- Could have had more discussion during the scheduled class hours.
- Quizzes should be taken through Internet prior to class. Would allow more time for discussion.
- Felt that all scheduled class time was productive.
- Classes that were scheduled were well organized and structured that optimized time spent.

Primary Site

Meeting with course leader (Team Leader) every other week.

- This format encourages self learning.
- Looked forward to hearing his analysis of the cases as we as a group did not see the entire picture until our class/group discussions.
- Our group shared and learned a lot together. Trial and error proved rewarding.
- Wish the course was longer, but we needed every other week to meet and tackle the work load.
- I believe this was a benefit where by being allowed to meet every other week with classmates made us a team and helped us grow as a functional team in discussing case studies.



Satellite Site

Meeting with Team Leader only three times during the course.

- Liked to have seen him more to get a better understanding of his teaching style.
- Not a problem. Good exposure of diverse teaching methods.
- Good system. Can be designed by academic and delivered by practitioner.
- This was fine as he was always available through the Internet.
- The team leader and section leader should share style for learning. Their styles were not the same.
- I don't feel that one professor should assign work and another grade it.
- Works fine as long as the adjunct is a content expert.
- Once at the beginning and once at the end would have been fine.
- Gave just enough direction and input.

Primary Site

Could this course be delivered as a pure distance-learning course?

- No! Face-to-face time with professor is important. The design of this course had the correct balance.
- I like the classroom environment. It gives the opportunity to get to know the instructor and other students.
- Interactions were helpful in clarifying some content.
- Could not be effectively accomplished. Personal interaction and feedback is essential to the learning process.
- Nothing replaces face-to-face meetings.
- Shared knowledge through interaction would be lost if offered virtually

Satellite Site

Could this course be delivered as a pure distance-learning course?

- Like the face-to-face meetings, but do like the virtual component as well.
- Depends on the person.
- No. Would lose information gained through classmates, lose the synergy, lose the interaction so important in a class that discussion is important.
- I don't think a human relations course would be effective without the benefit of relating with humans.
- I believe it could be accomplished but you miss out on shared experiences.
- A combination would work fine.
- Don't believe I would learn as much.
- Only if the technology changes to provide a video interface and interaction.



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