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THE VALUE OF THE INTEGRATED BUSINESS CORE EXPERIENCE: PERCEPTIONS OF RECENT GRADUATES FROM BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-IDAHO

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THE VALUE OF THE INTEGRATED BUSINESS CORE EXPERIENCE:
PERCEPTIONS OF RECENT GRADUATES FROM
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-IDAHO

By

Craig D. Bell

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
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Under the Supervision of Professor Donald F. Uerling

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THE VALUE OF THE INTEGRATED BUSINESS CORE EXPERIENCE:
PERCEPTIONS OF RECENT GRADUATES FROM
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-IDAHO

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University of Nebraska, 2010

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The effectiveness of business education has come under intense scrutiny—with many questioning its overall value. Main criticisms center on the lack of integration across the curriculum, too much emphasis on quantitative analysis, and the absence of relevant application. Most critics call for business education to become more hands-on and to create opportunities for students to practice the discipline of management. The purpose of this mixed method explanatory study was to explore the perceived influence of the Integrated Business Core (IBC) experience at Brigham Young University – Idaho on career success. The study sought to capture the perceptions of recent graduates regarding the IBC experience as it related to preparing them for careers in business.

Four-hundred and nineteen IBC graduates responded to an online survey in which they evaluated their BYU-Idaho IBC experience. Eighteen graduates—with varied perceptions—were then interviewed to gain a better understanding. Overall, graduates reported satisfaction and a higher level of satisfaction with IBC helping them make an immediate contribution to the workplace than of helping them rapidly grow into leadership positions.

Teamwork, group dynamics, and general business understanding through student-run companies were viewed as the most beneficial aspects of the IBC, while the simplicity, monotonous nature, and restrictions placed upon student companies were the least beneficial. The study also explored reasons why students may choose not to be engaged in an academic experience and offers recommendations to enhance the learning experience.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Context of the Problem

In 2002, the Business Management Department at Brigham Young University – Idaho (BYU-Idaho) introduced as a new four-year degree program, the “Integrated Business Core” (IBC). The IBC is comprised of four fundamental business classes: Marketing, Finance, Organizational Behavior, and Operations/Supply Chain Management. The classes are normally taken during the junior year of a student’s undergraduate degree and are presented in a cohort model during one semester comprising 12 credits. Students are placed in groups that are asked to develop a business plan in order to start and run an actual business during the semester.

While attending a conference, Mark Nygren, a BYU-Idaho faculty member, met Dr. Larry Michaelson, who at the time was a business professor at the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Michaelson had started an IBC program in 1994 in which students took four business related courses concurrently while starting a student-run company. Dr. Michaelson agreed to visit BYU-Idaho and help launch the IBC program. The first IBC program began fall 2001 with three student companies. There were over 70 companies since that time up until fall 2009. From 2001-2005 the IBC was optional beginning fall 2005 it was required for all business majors, with approximately 250 students participating in the program each year.

Since the early to mid 1990’s several universities have integrated their curriculum and courses to various degrees (Walker & Black, 2000). While most of the integration

has been focused on combining courses and content, four business schools— including BYU-Idaho—have students-run businesses as part of an integrated experience. The other three universities are University of Oklahoma, Central Missouri University, and Cedarville University in Ohio. The stated purpose of the IBC at Brigham Young University-Idaho has been to create a learning experience for students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to make an immediate contribution in the workplace and to rapidly grow into leadership positions in their organizations (see Appendix A: BYU-Idaho and Business Department Mission Statements).

There has been limited research done to assess the effectiveness of such programs. What little has been done has focused on faculty and current student perceptions versus the overall long-term impact (Borin, 2004). Obtaining feedback from graduates is one way to help determine such long-term impact.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study was to explore perceptions of recent graduates about the Integrated Business Core (IBC) program at BYU-Idaho.

Research Questions

Three basic research questions were addressed and were based upon respondent's perceptions:

1. Has the IBC experience influenced students' ability to make an immediate contribution to the workplace upon graduation? If so, how?
2. Has the IBC experience influenced students' ability to rapidly grow into leadership positions in their organizations? If so, how?

3. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the IBC experience?

Definition of Terms

A Traditional/Stand-Alone Class is a course taught separately that focuses on a specific area of business, such as marketing or finance. Students register for these courses based upon availability and their own schedule.

The Integrated Business Core (IBC) experience is comprised of four business courses (Marketing, Operations, Finance, and Organizational Behavior) that are taught during one semester. Students are placed into teams/companies with each company writing and presenting a business plan to outside professionals or faculty for funding and feedback. Figure 1 shows how the elements of the IBC fit together with the four courses and the student run company at the core of the experience. Students organize and start a company which is in operation for approximately eight weeks. Students who are either majoring or minoring in business management comprise the majority of the students in the IBC.

Brigham Young University-Idaho is located in Rexburg, Idaho. BYU-Idaho—earlier known as Ricks College—was established in 1888. The university is a private religious institution sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In 1923 it became a two-year junior college. In 2001 it transitioned into a four-year university. It was during this time that new curriculum was developed and the IBC was started. BYU-Idaho is currently the second largest university in the state of Idaho with plans over the next few years to increase enrollment—making it the largest university in the state.

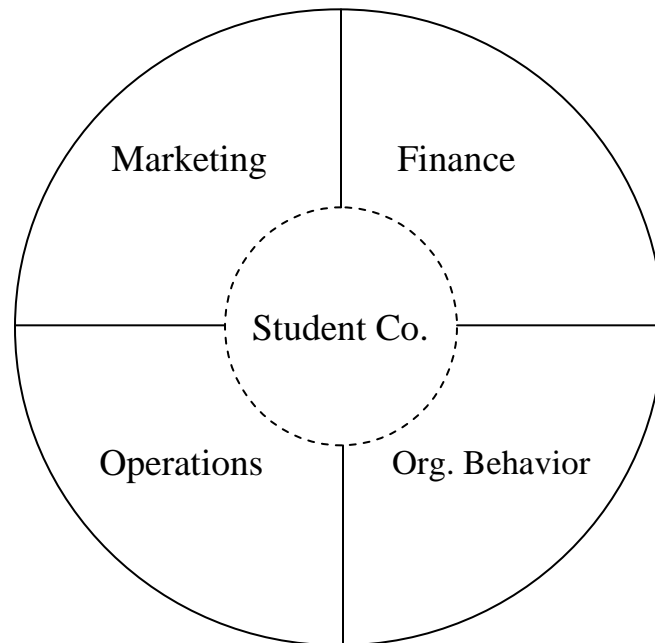


Figure 1: Elements of the BYU-Idaho integrated business core.

Leadership, as defined in the mission statement of the business department, implies position or title. The phrase, “rapidly grow into leadership positions in their organizations” also implies graduates obtaining promotions within a short time frame.

Delimitations

This study focused on the perceptions of graduates between 2001- 2009 from BYU-Idaho who had participated in the IBC program.

Limitations

The study focused on perceptions of graduates from one institution and the results may not be applicable to graduates of other programs.

Significance of Study

Few areas of our society are experiencing more changes than business; therefore, the need to continually rethink business education has never been greater. Business education has been criticized for overemphasizing theory and neglecting “real world” experience, interpersonal and team skills, and active, applied, and integrated learning (Drucker, 2001; Shaw, Fisher, & Southey, 1999). In their recent book, *Rethinking the MBA: Business Education at the Crossroads*, Datar, Garvin, and Cullen (2010, Chp. 4 Kindle Edition) describe the current situation in reference to the above criticisms:

these criticisms raise serious questions about [business] education. As business schools have modeled themselves increasingly on the academic disciplines in order to secure their foothold in the university, their research and teaching have become less relevant to executives and students. Both groups have responded rationally and predictably: the former by viewing...graduates as often in need of additional hands-on training and development, and the latter by disengaging from their academic studies. (Ch. 4 Kindle PC Edition)

It is imperative business schools work to close the gap between academic rigor and practical utility. Institutions must find ways to incorporate both rigor and relevance into the curriculum. To study and to analyze innovative ways of educating the future leaders of business is of great import. A key focus for the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the leading business school accreditation organization, is learning assessment (2009). New standards have been written that reflect a more outcome-based approach. As noted in an AACSB report:

The school must show that students meet the learning goals for their respective degree programs. It is an obligation of the students to meet the expectations embodied in the learning goals, and it is an obligation of the faculty members to monitor student performance to see that the learning goals are respected. (AACSB, 2009, p. 58)

This study will aid the business program at BYU-Idaho in assessing the effectiveness of the IBC program and can perhaps provide guidance to other business colleges.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

History and Future of Business Education

Enrollments in business schools soared during the last half of the 20th Century. In 1955-56, only 3,200 MBA degrees were awarded in the U.S.A. By 1997-98 this number had grown to over 100,000. In 2005, 92% of all accredited colleges and universities offered an undergraduate degree in business. However, concerns arose about the overall effectiveness and relevance of business education (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Mintzberg, 2004; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Student enrollments in mid-level MBA programs have recently begun to decline (Datar et al., 2010).

The business world today has been characterized by rapid change and intense global competition; therefore, the need for better-prepared business graduates has never been greater. Many business management educators have experimented with new approaches to business education, but few have documented and written about such experiences (Jessup, 1995; Schlager, Lengfelder, & Groves, 1999; Shaw et al., 1999). Most of the new methods that were explored were based upon some form of experiential learning. Research indicated that student motivation is enhanced when students can make connections with the real world (AACSB, 2009, p. 57; Schlager et al., 1999). Business students who can relate with other functional areas of the organization will become more important (Drucker, 2001). Business managers today face increasing challenges that cut across multiple areas of the organization (Datar et al., 2010)

Focus on Learning and Teaching

The IBC represented an attempt to improve the learning environment with the purpose of helping students prepare for a successful future. Recent publications suggest a renewed interest in teaching and learning in higher education. Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* is often cited as a landmark work in expanding the definition of scholarship to include teaching and learning. Scholars Lee Shulman and Pat Hutchings from the Carnegie Foundation have written extensively on the importance of teaching and learning (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999; Shulman, 1999).

Larry Spence (2001), the founding director of the Schreyer Institute for Innovation in Learning at Penn State University, concluded that “We won’t meet the needs for more and better higher education until professors become designers of learning experiences and not teachers” (p. 11). The IBC was designed with the intent to provide a significant learning experience fostering skills needed to be successful in the workplace.

Bena Kallick (2000) wrote about three types of knowledge—(a) formal, (b) applicable, and (c) longitudinal (pp. 186-187). Formal knowledge was described as academic and explicit facts. Applicable knowledge was the ability to apply formal knowledge. Longitudinal knowledge was “the basic capability for acting effectively over time, in a way that leads to ongoing improvement, effectiveness, and innovation” (Kallick, 2000, pp. 186-187). As it relates to assessment, Kallick stated that:

If [we] cared about improving people’s capabilities, [we] would design the assessments to make individuals aware of their progress—with all three types of knowledge. [We] also would interpret the results to spark reflection and, ideally, suggest approaches for further development. (2000, pp.186-187)

Innovations in Business Management Education

David A. Bednar, past president of Brigham Young University-Idaho and past associate dean of the business school at University of Arkansas, stated that “If I or a colleague did any critical analysis or any kind of empirical or scholarly work in the realm of teaching and learning, . . . it had no academic respectability. It was considered a joke” (Bednar, 2001, p. 10).

In researching innovations in teaching and learning in business management, one finds the literature sparse. Several universities have pursued innovative methods, but few scholars have chosen to research these methods and publish their findings. Shulman wrote,

How many professional educators, when engaged in creating a new course or a new curriculum, can turn to a published, peer-reviewed scholarship of teaching in which colleagues at other colleges and universities present their experiments, their field trials, or their case studies of instruction and their consequences? Where is the scholarly literature through which higher educators study exemplars of teaching and can build upon that work? With precious few exceptions, we don’t have such literature. (1999, p. 15)

When asked what . . . universities could do to better prepare students for the world of work, one of the most commonly mentioned suggestions is for students to gain practical experience. . . . Practical experience, whether from internships or other work-related opportunities, gives students a taste of a career and better allows them to decide what to do after graduation. (Oblinger & Verville, 1998, pp. 91-92)

Oblinger and Verville stated in their book, *What Business Wants from Higher Education*: “Both academics and employers complain that college graduation requirements, based primarily on passing sets of courses, fail to ensure that the graduate has the personal qualities and skills needed to succeed . . . in the workplace” (1998, p. 73).

General Characteristics of Top Undergraduate Business Programs

Since 1983 well-known magazines such as *US News & World Report* and later *Business Week* have ranked the top academic programs in the country (Morse, 2008). While there are criticisms of the rankings—especially from those who are not highly ranked—they do give an indication of what constitutes a quality program (Shields, 2007). According to David Shields (2007), Dean of the Haworth College of Business at Western Michigan University the *Business Week* rankings used a more “careful methodology” using student rankings as part of their analysis (p. 6). The *Business Week* rankings for 2009 and 2010 identified the top five undergraduate business programs: (a) Notre Dame, (b) Virginia, (c) MIT, (d) Wharton (University of Pennsylvania), and (e) Cornell. Some key characteristics were identified:

1. Restrictive enrollments: Only top students from USA and other countries were admitted usually from high school top 10% with an average ACT of 32.
2. Average annual tuition was approximately \$25,000.
3. Average class size in business courses was 39.8.
4. Average starting salary of graduates was \$58,762.
5. Average job placement upon graduation was 79.2%. (Business School Rankings and Profiles, 2010)

The review listed 53 student comments from the five top programs with 21 or 39.6% of all comments centered on curriculum and courses being fundamental in student perceptions of a quality program. The second most discussed area was career advising with 8 comments. Virginia had what is referred to as the Integrated Core Experience (ICE) in which students take several courses over the course of two semesters. These courses were taught by faculty teams in which students were given real-world problems to discuss. Wharton offered Management 100, in which students were placed in teams

that complete field projects. MIT offered many courses to both their MBA and undergraduate students. Several MIT undergraduates joked they did not need an MBA because they had already taken most of the courses.

Toward Relevance and Practicality in Business Education

In order for meet the needs of employers, it is imperative that business schools focus on the practical needs of business, design meaningful learning experiences to meet those needs, and then document and disseminate successes. As Ernest Boyer stated, “Today, it is widely acknowledged that academic work in such fields as medicine, law, . . . business can be strengthened as both students and professors move from theory to practice and from practice back to theory” (1994, p. 1). There is a need to move business education to a higher more relevant level; as Warren Bennis observed, “If business schools are to regain their relevance, they must come to grips with the reality that business management is not a scientific discipline but a profession, and they must deal with what a professional education requires” (Bennis & O’Toole, 2005, p. 102).

Some business management educators have ventured into researching and documenting the findings of innovative teaching pedagogy. In comparing the effectiveness of case study versus simulation, Thompson and Parshotam found that simulation is an effective way to improve students’ self-efficacy. “So, when students are using simulations, they show an increase in self-efficacy; this is significantly larger than gains due to learning via the case method” (2000, p. 22).

At Western Michigan University, students in Management 301-302 courses were placed in teams and given real world projects to complete. Grades were given based on

the quality of the work and team member evaluations. Student and teacher feedback was extremely positive. In a 1991 survey of graduates from 1980 to 1990, over 90% of them rated the program as good to excellent (Alie, Beam, & Carey, 1998).

At California State University, business students in their senior year were given the opportunity to be part of a team to work on a project for companies in the area. The experience was designed to give the student a “real-world” experience and to apply the principles previously taught. Students reported an increase in their confidence and sense of responsibility. The students were told they would have to arrange their schedules to meet the demands of the project. In summary the article stated, “the first offering of the Senior Experience has been judged a success. This theory based applied team problem solving approach to business education . . . is highly valued by students, faculty, organizational participants, and university administration” (Jessup, 1995, p. 86).

At Bowling Green State University, a study conducted in travel and tourism explored the effects of experiential education versus other forms of instruction. Students were involved in the planning and execution of an extensive trip, wherein sites were evaluated. The research found the more practical experience students have, the more they prefer experiential learning versus a traditional approach. The experiential method had an extremely high motivational value. However, each educational method had been effective at different times in the students’ educational experience. The study was short-term, suggesting the need for long-term studies to be conducted with this methodology (Schlager et al., 1999).

Recent Movement towards Integration

More recently, business schools have experimented with curriculum integration, with varying levels of success and mixed feelings regarding overall benefit. Some schools chose to discontinue their integrated programs or courses (Borin, 2004; Hartenian, Schellenger, & Frederickson, 2001). Other schools began programs with a more focused intent on preparing graduates for employment (University of Arkansas, 2009). There were differing levels of integration—from one course pulling in multiple disciplines to solve business problems to multi-course, multi-faculty programs. Each came with its own set of challenges and opportunities. Research showed the biggest obstacles have been faculty and lack of funding. Some reported the benefits do not outweigh the costs. One article opposed such integration stating it can be detrimental to students by drawing attention away from discipline depth, which is so critical for undergraduates seeking entry level jobs (Campbell, Heriot, & Finney, 2006). Some do not take an either/or approach and offer depth in fundamental courses while integrating in other areas (Datar et al., 2010).

As of fall 2009, in addition to BYU-Idaho three other universities had IBC type programs—University of Oklahoma, Central Missouri University, and Cedarville University in Ohio. The idea for such programs originated with Bucknell University in their Management 101 course, in which students create and manage companies. This was a one-course experience that provided students with the opportunity to establish objectives, design and staff their organizations, and be responsible for the financial performance of the company. Companies typically have operated with a budget of \$3000

to \$5000. The aim of Management 101 was to “provide . . . a solid foundation for critical thinking about Organization and Management, for competent action as practicing managers, and for learning from your own and others’ experience” (Bucknell University, 2010).

In 1994 the University of Oklahoma began an IBC program in which students started companies at the junior level using an integrated multi-course design. As part of the experience, students donated the profits to a local charity and provided community service. Students got “hands-on, real-world training” and developed the skills to launch a successful business (University of Oklahoma, 2010).

In 2004 the University of Central Missouri began what was called the Integrative Business Experience (IBE). Students enrolled in three business courses along with an Entrepreneurship Practicum course. The curriculum was sequenced to support students in organizing and managing their businesses. Students spent the first seven weeks coming up with business ideas and developing a business plan. The next seven weeks were spent running the business and paying back the business loan. Officers from a local bank were invited to campus to hear students pitch their business plans in hopes of getting a loan. Student companies typically ranged from 20- to 35-member companies (University of Central Missouri, 2010).

The Integrated Business Core at Brigham Young University-Idaho

The Integrated Business Core at BYU-Idaho began fall 2001. A year earlier the board of trustees announced that the two-year junior college known as Ricks College would soon become a four-year university named Brigham Young University-Idaho. As

the department began to develop upper division curriculum, a faculty member attending a national conference met Dr. Larry Michaelson, who at the time was teaching at the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Michaelson was instrumental in launching an IBC program at University of Oklahoma and later at Central Missouri University. With the help of Dr. Michaelson, the IBC program at BYU-Idaho was designed.

The IBC had two distinct characteristics: (a) multiple course integration, and (b) student-run companies. Originally the four courses were: (a) Corporate Finance, (b) Organizational Behavior, (c) Marketing, and (d) New Venture Creation. In 2005 the New Venture Creation course was dropped, and Operations/Supply Chain Management was added. The courses were taught in a cohort model and delivered in a just-in-time method. All four courses—a total of 12 credits—were taken within one semester with students meeting in the same room each day for approximately three hours. Course work was designed to correspond with the stages of the companies' development. For example, at the start of the semester more time was spent on marketing and organizational behavior as the business ideas are being developed and the companies are being organized. Operations and finance courses became the focus as the companies began operations.

Students were placed in teams of five to seven members, and then companies comprised of four to five teams—with each company having 20-25 members. Teams were asked to develop a business idea that was then discussed with other members of their company to decide upon one business idea to develop into their company. Once ideas were developed, they were sent to the faculty and administrators for approvals.

Some company ideas were not approved because of liability and other concerns. Early in the semester companies selected a chief executive officer, a chief financial officer, and vice presidents, etc. One of the first steps was to present the business idea to a loan committee comprised of local business leaders. Students were asked for sales projections and were questioned about their ability to pay the loan if granted.

Companies operated for approximately eight weeks before being closed. The main market for their products or services is the BYU-Idaho campus community. Two weeks before the end of the semester, the companies ceased operations—with enough time to settle financial accounts, give final presentations, and prepare for final exams. Approximately 1800 students participated in the IBC from September 2001 through December 2009. This number included students who were majoring and minoring in business management. With the IBC being a central part of the program, it is critical that the department find ways to assess the IBC's effectiveness and determine if it is in alignment with the department mission. There is little outside literature assessing the effectiveness of similar programs like the IBC beyond feedback from current students.

Program Review and Evaluation

The Integrated Business Core at BYU-Idaho represented a major part of the overall degree program and therefore should be part of an ongoing review and evaluation process. The overall focus of this study is to improve the IBC program at BYU-Idaho. Therefore this study is best understood within the context of program review and evaluation. “Program evaluation” is the broad assessment of an overall program

including new and existing programs while “program review” is focused on existing programs (Conrad, & Wilson, 1985).

Over the past half century there was increasing pressure for educational institutions to implement program review and evaluation processes. Much of this was caused by an increase in government funding, greater competition among varying institutions, and the dissatisfaction among stakeholders (Barak & Breier, 1990, p. 1). Most of the impetus for program review and evaluation has come from the outside (Tanner, 2001, p. 1). Those from the outside include; 1) students within a program, 2) non-program faculty, 3) administrators, 4) accrediting bodies, and 5) state-level agencies (Conrad & Wilson, 1985, p. xv) Conrad and Wilson (1985) also list reasons why program reviews are established.

1. To assess program quality, productivity, need, and demand.
2. To improve the quality of program offerings.
3. To ensure wise use of resources.
4. To determine the program’s effectiveness and consider possible modifications.
5. To facilitate academic planning and budgeting.
6. To satisfy state-level review requirements. (p. 39)

While program review and evaluation is often initiated through external forces and outside stakeholders the review process can have powerful internal purposes.

Program reviews are typically focused around institutions stated learning objectives and mission. Barak and Breier (1990) summarized the purpose of program reviews as follows:

Program review is not a panacea for all the ills that confront higher education today. It is however, a critical tool providing valuable information for strategic planning and decision making. Knowing a program’s strengths and weaknesses is

critical in determining its strategic direction. Focusing on a programs need for improvement is the first step toward excellence. A program review provides both the context and the process for conducting student assessments and then following up. In these and other ways, a program review contributes to an institution's overall improvement and accountability. (p. 12)

A program is normally associated with those courses and requirements leading to a degree. Reviewing a given program “for the purpose of improving student learning and development” is a systematic process (AACSB, 2010, p. 3). Starting with the program's purpose, effective program review seeks to assess if the outcomes of the program are in alignment with the stated mission of the program. The Associations to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) summarized key questions to consider as part of effective program review:

1. What will our students learn in our program? What are our expectations?
2. How will they learn it?
3. How will we know they have learned or not?
4. What will we do if they have not learned it? (AACSB, 2010, p. 3)

Faculty should play a major role in the development of desired program outcomes, “however, the standards call for input from a variety of stakeholders including alumni, students, and employers” (AACSB, 2010, p. 6) The AACSB further stated:

The evaluation of a school's effectiveness depends on how well it marshals its resources and efforts toward its mission statement. As an enterprise higher education is accountable for its effectiveness in using its resources to transform the lives of its participants. Each school operates with a moral imperative to use its time, effort, and resources effectively to assure the opportunity for positive transformation in the lives of students and faculty. Accreditation review is concerned to see that positive results are fostered through capable strategic management. (p. 15)

From the literature, the essence of effective program review and evaluation is establishing a continual process that assesses and strengthens institution programs based

upon stated outcomes. Preparing graduates for employment and leadership positions is central to the purpose of the Business Management department and the IBC program. Therefore an ongoing program review is critical to the long-term success of the program.

Summary

As the business world continued to ask for graduates with critical business skills, integrated mindsets, and the ability to work cross functionally and culturally, business schools have tried to best determine how and what to teach. Such demands caused many business educators to reflect: What curriculum or pedagogical system is generally best for students? Could certain pedagogical processes, if incorporated, have a strong impact upon a student's ability to be successful after graduation?

The literature suggested business educators should focus on skills, integration, and practicality and mesh the theoretical and real world together in an educational setting. Business educators should also more earnestly assess and document the successes and failures of innovative teaching methods over a longer period of time. The study sought to look beyond current student perceptions and assess if graduates in the workforce perceive any value in the IBC program.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

This mixed-methods study sought to examine the degree of influence of the Integrated Business Core by surveying and interviewing business graduates from Brigham Young University-Idaho. Data were collected through an online survey, followed by telephone interviews. Those selected to be interviewed were identified based on the findings and responses from the online survey.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods seek to find answers and to add to the overall knowledge of a given discipline or society at large with the eventual goal of “helping others lead a richer, more satisfying life” (McMillan, 2000, p. 2). Both methods are systematic in their approach—following a sequence of steps with the goal of gaining credible information that can then be used to describe, explain, understand, make decisions, and implement improvements. For this reason some are recommending combinations of methodologies to gain a better understanding (Drew, Hardman, & Hart, 1996, p. 36). The following definition from Creswell (2007), an authority in mixed-method research, is helpful.

mixed methods research involves both collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data includes closed-ended information such as that found on attitude, behavior, or performance instruments. . . . The analysis consists of statistically analyzing scores collected on instruments, checklists, or public documents to answer questions or to test hypotheses. In contrast, qualitative data consists of open-ended information that the researcher gathers through interviews with participants. The general, open-ended questions asked during these interviews allow the participants to supply answers in their own words. The mixing of data is a unique aspect of our definition. By mixing the datasets, the

researcher provides better understanding of the problem than if either dataset had been used alone. (Ch. 1, Kindle PC Edition)

Population and Sample

The study population was Business Management graduates from BYU–Idaho from April 2002 through December 2009. At the end of 2009 the BYU-Idaho alumni office listed 1,638 Business Management graduates during these seven years. Of the 1,638 graduates, 1,203 listed e-mail addresses. Permission to conduct the survey was obtained through the University Institutional and Assessment Office January 26, 2010. Assuming a moderate number of graduate e-mail addresses are no longer being used, it was projected that approximately 800 e-mails would be active. Based upon previous research conducted by the department in 2007 a 20% response rate was estimated, which would be approximately 327 respondents from the total 1,638 graduate population.

Previous Institutional Research

In January of 2007, an online general survey of recent graduates was conducted by the BYU-Idaho Business Management Department. Graduates were asked a variety of questions regarding their undergraduate experience. One question relevant to this study was “What was the single most beneficial aspect of your undergraduate business degree program?” Approximately 31% of the graduates mentioned the IBC either directly or indirectly. There was no follow up research to determine why the IBC was or was not perceived to be beneficial. This current study sought to gain such understanding.

Procedures

This mixed method explanatory study used both quantitative and qualitative methods in sequence to gain a better understanding of the IBC experience. Both an online

survey and follow up interviews were conducted. An online survey focused on the research questions along with general information regarding the IBC (Appendix C). The survey was piloted and reviewed with a number of individuals: (a) four recent BYU-Idaho graduates; (b) Dr. Larry Michaelson; (c) Drew Eagar, past Vice President of Marketing for Denny's Restaurants; (d) Paul Cox, past Department Chair of Mathematics at BYU-Idaho; (e) Kevin Shiley, marketing research professor at BYU-Idaho; and (f) the Nebraska Evaluation and Research Center (NEAR). From their feedback, the survey was adjusted to increase validity and reliability.

A seven-point Likert scale based on the degree of helpfulness was determined to be the best option to capture the perceptions of graduates regarding the IBC. It was also determined to select a purposeful sample from those who had taken the IBC and had completed the survey. Graduates were selected at the extremes ends of the survey spectrum and in the middle. A group of three recent graduates was also asked to pilot the interview process. From this feedback it was determined how to simplify and focus the interview process.

Approval was given by BYU-Idaho to conduct research using the alumni database. On May 12, 2010, approval for the study was also granted by the University of Nebraska Internal Review Board (see Appendix E). An e-mail message was sent to recent graduates with an e-mail address asking for their participation in an upcoming survey. The message discussed the benefits of graduate feedback in order to continually improve the programs in the department. The e-mail included a web link to the online survey. Graduates were informed their personal information would be kept confidential.

Survey Monkey was used to administer the survey. The following week a second similar e-mail was sent to those who had not responded to the survey. The survey software was able to track those who had taken the survey. A total of 419 graduates who had participated in the IBC completed the online survey. From this group, a purposeful sample of 18 graduates were identified and invited to participate in telephone interviews (see Appendix D). This stratified purposeful sample was based upon the following criteria:

1. Year IBC was taken: The graduates were placed in two groupings:
(a) 2002-2006, and (b) 2007-2009. The purpose of the groupings was to see if there were differences in perception over time. Is the IBC perceived to be more relevant upon graduation or later when graduates have been in their career for a few years? The number of graduates between years 2002-2006 was proportional to the number of graduates between 2007-2009. This was due to the growth of the program over time.
2. Levels of perceived helpfulness of the IBC: Based upon the distribution of scores regarding the helpfulness of the IBC— in relationship to career success—students were placed in a lower, neutral, and upper grouping based on a 7 point scale. Graduates were selected from each distribution in order to better understand the range of perceptions. After visiting with a consultant at the Nebraska Evaluation and Research Center (NEAR), it was determined to select those students at the extremes and middle of the distribution: Those

students who reported the IBC was very helpful, those who reported the IBC was not helpful, and those who were neutral.

3. Willingness to be interviewed: The online survey asked students for their contact information only if they were willing to be part of the follow-up interview process.

From these criteria, Table 1 shows graduates placed into one of six pools—earlier 2001-2006 and later 2007-2009 graduates, and lower, neutral, and upper segments. Scores of 1-2 were determined to be lower, a score of 4 was determined to be neutral, and scores of 6-7 were determined to be in the upper-level.

Table 1

Graduate Grouping for Interview Selection

Year of Graduation	IBC – Not Helpful	IBC- Neutral	IBC – Very Helpful
2001-2006	3-Lowest Scores	3- Closest to Neutral	3- Highest Scores
2007-2009	3-Lowest Scores	3- Closest to Neutral	3- Highest Scores

Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected from the online survey and qualitative data were collected from the follow-up telephone interviews. The online survey contained some of the following questions: (a) year of graduation, (b) emphasis area, (c) overall rating of the perceived value of the IBC, (d) value of each individual class within the IBC, and (e) perceived strengths and weaknesses of the IBC. The follow-up interviews lasted approximately 22 minutes and focused on graduates' perceptions of the general and

specific value of the IBC, what can be done to improve the IBC, and how the IBC influenced—or had not influenced—their success in their chosen careers. The interviews allowed for more in-depth discussion to uncover deeper reasoning and assumptions.

Creswell (2000) suggests the researcher look through three different lenses and apply several different strategies in order to ensure validity. The three lenses are: 1) lens of the researcher, 2) lens of the participants, and 3) lens of those external to the study.

Under each lens he lists the following strategy:

1. Lens of the Researcher
 - a. Triangulation: The use of different sources to arrive at themes
 - b. Disconfirming Evidence: Looking for disconfirming evidence—researchers have a tendency to look for confirming evidence
 - c. Researcher Reflexivity: Researcher either in a separate section or as ongoing narrative needs to disclose background and biases
2. Lens of the Participants
 - a. Member Checking: Taking results back to participants to confirm data
 - b. Prolonged Engagement: Spending enough time in the field to build relationship of trust with participants
 - c. Collaboration: Participants assist in research such as question development
3. Lens of People External to the Study
 - a. Audit Trail: Selecting someone external to review data—looking at process and product
 - b. Thick, Rich Description: Detailed narrative of setting and study to enhance reader experience—adding credibility to study
 - c. Peer Debriefing: Review of process and data from someone familiar with the research or phenomenon being studied

Steps Taken to Ensure Validity of Study

Triangulation: As part of the quantitative survey there were three open-ended questions allowing the participants to express thoughts and perceptions regarding the IBC. These questions were compared with the interviews in development of themes.

Disconfirming Evidence: During the interviews and subsequent coding process special attention was paid to negative comments regarding the IBC—given the natural bias of the researcher.

Researcher Reflexivity: The researcher has been a member of the Business Management faculty at BYU-Idaho for approximately 15 years, with five years serving as department chair. He was extensively involved with the development of the programs during those years. He was also familiar with most of the graduates who were interviewed. There was a natural positive bias toward the IBC having helped establish the program and having visited with dozens of students who were either participants in the program or who had completed the IBC. The researcher's background was in industry working for a privately held wood products company prior to becoming a faculty member at BYU-Idaho. It was the personal belief of the researcher that business education has not kept pace with the needs of industry and new models are needed.

Member Checking: Interviews were recorded and then transcribed word for word by an external transcription service. There was no participant follow-up after this point.

Prolonged Engagement: The researcher was familiar with the program and most of the participants who were interviewed. The comfort level and openness among the researcher and participants was high. The researcher was aware of the level of familiarity with participants and was concerned they would be reluctant to share negative feelings regarding the IBC. The researcher found participants to be open both with criticisms and praise for the IBC.

Collaboration: A graduate focus-group was held to get initial reaction to the proposed study and what questions should be used. During the survey construction the graduates were also asked to provide feedback regarding the instrument. There was extensive discussion, for example, regarding what words to use for key questions in the survey. It was determined to use the word “helpful” in the key questions.

Audit Trail: An external auditor—Dr. Jenny Powell— was selected by the Committee Chair to review the data and coding process. Documents, including interview transcripts, participant groupings, coding process, and dissertation revisions were sent to Dr. Powell for examination. Her report is found in Appendix I.

Thick, Rich Description: The description of the IBC at BYU-Idaho is believed to be sufficient for readers to understand the phenomenon under study.

Peer Debriefing: The researcher’s dissertation committee did an excellent job in highlighting weakness in process and product. Their feedback has helped improved the quality of the study.

Those being interviewed were asked for their permission to be contacted again if needed for clarification and follow-up. From the quantitative data such measures as central tendency, dispersion, and cross tabulation were conducted to better describe perceptions of students. From the interviews, transcripts were prepared and then coded based upon responses of graduates—allowing for themes to emerge.

Research Design

A mixed method explanatory research design was selected to gather information to describe and interpret the perceptions of BYU-Idaho graduates regarding the value and

influence of the IBC program as they relate to the stated research questions. Creswell (2007) describes the one of the purposes of the explanatory design.

The overall purpose of this design is that qualitative data helps explain or build upon initial quantitative results....This design can also be used when a researcher wants to form groups based on quantitative results and follow up with the groups through subsequent qualitative research or to use quantitative participants characteristics to guide purposeful sampling for a qualitative phase (Ch. 4, Kindle PC Edition).

The purpose of this explanatory study was to discover and to explain perceptions of IBC graduates regarding the research questions. The quantitative survey allowed the researcher to place graduates into a purposeful sample as shown in Table 1.

Eighteen graduates selected comprised the purposeful sample to be interviewed—from this sample the study sought to discover the essence of the IBC experience as it related to the research questions.

Chapter Four

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed method study was to explore the perceptions of recent graduates regarding the Integrated Business Core (IBC) program at Brigham Young University-Idaho. Three basic research questions were addressed:

1. Has the IBC experience influenced students' ability to make an immediate contribution to the workplace upon graduation? If so, how?
2. Has the IBC experience influenced students' ability to rapidly grow into leadership positions in their organizations? If so, how?
3. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the IBC experience?

Given the fact the department mission focuses on program outcomes and seeks to have an impact upon graduates as they enter the workforce, it was determined graduates would provide the most relevant feedback. This is also in line with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) guidelines for program review—seeking feedback from multiple stakeholders. There has not been—based upon the researcher's findings—another study of its kind whose primary source of data were graduates of such a program. It seems logical for a department trying to prepare students to be successful in their chosen careers to seek the opinion of graduates to discover if the outcome was actually realized.

A survey and subsequent interviews focused on the perceived impact the IBC had or did not have in the following areas: (a) making an immediate contribution to the

workplace, (b) rapidly growing into leadership positions within their respective organizations, and (c) the strengths and weaknesses of the IBC program. The graduate list was obtained from the Alumni Relations office at BYU–Idaho. Approval to survey recent graduates was obtained through the Internal Review Boards at BYU-Idaho and University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Demographic Information

On May 20, 2010, an e-mail was sent to 1,190 recent business graduates from BYU-Idaho—with active e-mail accounts—requesting their help to complete a short survey regarding the IBC. Approximately 365 graduates took the survey over the course of two and a half weeks, with a response rate of 30.6%. On June 9, 2010, a follow up e-mail was sent only to those who had not completed the survey. An additional 137 graduates responded, bringing the total respondents up to 503, a response rate of 42%. Fifty-four e-mails did not go through due to various reasons, i.e., e-mail account was turned off or mail box was full. From the survey, 443 graduates indicated they had participated in the IBC program—see Table 2 that shows respondents’ percentages.

From this group, 419 IBC graduates completed the whole survey—answering the relevant questions pertaining to the IBC. Eighteen graduates were then selected based on their varied responses and year of graduation. Between June 21 and July 1, 2010, the 18 selected graduates were interviewed, and their interviews were digitally recorded. Average interview time was 22:47. The interviews were then transcribed for reference and coding.

Table 2

Percentage and Number of Graduates who Participated in the IBC

BYU-Idaho Integrated Business Core (IBC) Survey		
Did you participate in the Integrated Business Core (IBC)?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	88.1%	443
No	11.9%	60
	<i>answered question</i>	503
	<i>skipped question</i>	0

Research Findings

The research questions dealt primarily with the first years of a graduate's career. The question regarding time of graduation was to see if the effects of the IBC were different at the start of a graduate's career versus a few years later. Table 3 lists respondents by year of graduation in both percentages and number.

In relation to the first two research questions and as shown in Table 4, the graduates from 2001-2006 gave the IBC slightly higher ratings—on a scale of 1-7— than graduates from 2007–2009 as shown in Table 5. The difference for both research questions—among both groups—was found to be significant at the .05 level. In Table 6 all graduates—on the same scale—ranked the level of helpfulness of the IBC in relation to helping them make an immediate contribution to the workplace at 4.79 with a standard deviation of 1.54. In relation to helping graduates grow into leadership positions they ranked the IBC at 4.35 with a standard deviation of 1.62.

Table 3

Year of Graduation of IBC Participants

BYU-Idaho Integrated Business Core (IBC) Survey

What year did you graduate from BYU-Idaho? (only students who had participated in the IBC)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
2001	0.2%	1
2002	1.0%	4
2003	7.9%	33
2004	11.2%	47
2005	12.2%	51
2006	11.0%	46
2007	15.8%	66
2008	23.6%	99
2009	17.2%	72
	<i>answered question</i>	419
	<i>skipped question</i>	0

Some of the higher ratings could stem from a more favorable job market during the early part of the decade and the IBC moving from a new program and as an elective to a requirement—removing possible Hawthorne effects. Students still looking for employment upon graduation among the two groups were 12.8% of the respondents among the 2001-2006 graduates compared to 23.1% among the 2007-2009 graduates. This difference was statistically significant at the .10 level.

Table 4

Perception of Helpfulness of IBC among Early Graduates

BYU-Idaho Integrated Business Core (IBC) Survey (2001-2006 Graduates)

How helpful was the IBC in assisting you in the following areas? (1=Not Helpful, 7=Very Helpful)

Answer Options	1- Not Helpful	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Very Helpful	Rating Average	Std. Dev.
Making an immediate contribution in the workplace	3	7	10	39	45	45	33	5.10	1.42
Rapidly growing into leadership positions within the organization(s)	6	13	27	34	39	34	29	4.68	1.64
								<i>answered question</i>	182
								<i>skipped question</i>	14

Table 5

Perception of Helpfulness of IBC among Later Graduates

BYU-Idaho Integrated Business Core (IBC) Survey (2007-2009 Graduates)

How helpful was the IBC in assisting you in the following areas? (1=Not Helpful, 7=Very Helpful)

Answer Options	1- Not Helpful	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Very Helpful	Rating Average	Std. Dev.
Making an immediate contribution in the workplace	10	13	19	43	71	51	30	4.79	1.54
Rapidly growing into leadership positions within the organization(s)	12	26	29	50	63	34	23	4.35	1.62
								<i>answered question</i>	237
								<i>skipped question</i>	10

Table 6

Perception of Helpfulness of IBC among All Graduates

BYU-Idaho Integrated Business Core (IBC) Survey (2001-2009)									
How helpful was the IBC in assisting you in the following areas? (1=Not Helpful, 7=Very Helpful)									
Answer Options	1- Not Helpful	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Very Helpful	Rating Average	Std. Dev.
Making an immediate contribution in the workplace	13	20	29	82	116	96	63	4.93	1.49
Rapidly growing into leadership positions within the organization(s)	18	39	56	84	102	68	52	4.49	1.63
								<i>answered question</i>	419
								<i>skipped question</i>	24

Survey Information**List of Themes that Emerged from the Survey and Graduate Interviews.**

In an effort to explain the level of “helpfulness” of the Integrated Business Core in relation to the research questions, both quantitative and qualitative research was conducted—seeking themes using more than one method of inquiry. A survey was sent to every graduate of the Business Management Department who had an active e-mail address. The survey was short and sought to gain the perception of hundreds of graduates regarding the Integrated Business Core at BYU-Idaho. Interviews were then used to follow-up and seek more in-depth understanding regarding the research questions. Based upon the online survey results, a wide variety of graduates were interviewed. The survey open-ended questions and formal interviews proved to be the most valuable in regards to

gaining a better understanding of the IBC. Eighteen graduates were contacted to seek their availability to be interviewed; when availability was determined an interview schedule was established. The average interview lasted approximately 22 minutes. Interviews took place over the phone and were digitally recorded concurrently through the use of software on VOIP telephone system at BYU-Idaho. The recorded interviews were then transcribed by an independent professional transcriber hired by the researcher. The interviews were then coded based upon the six groups previously mentioned. The researcher read through the transcribed interviews several times marking graduates' comments related to the research questions. Appendix J is a segment from one of the interviews to give the reader a sense of the process. The survey open-ended questions were also downloaded and printed out for analysis. Comments were tabulated and ranked as shown in Tables 7 and 8. The following themes emerged from the survey and interviews and are listed under each research question. Later each theme is accompanied by graduates' comments obtained through the interviews.

Research Question 1: IBC and immediate contribution in the workplace. The following themes emerged in relationship to the IBC helping graduates make an immediate contribution in the workplace:

1. The IBC provides an opportunity for students to engage and contribute in both the student-run company and in several team projects. Generally students choose their level of engagement.

2. The multi-course design found in the IBC allows students to see different aspects of a business operation—which in turn helped graduates to make better decisions in the workplace while exploring interests.
3. Students in the IBC are placed in a team environment with given tasks to complete—learning important group dynamic skills that translated into working effectively with others in the workplace.
4. For IBC students who did not enter business or a workplace characterized by teamwork, the IBC was reported less beneficial in helping graduates make an immediate contribution to the workplace.

Research Question 2: IBC and rapidly rising into leadership positions. The following themes emerged in relationship to the IBC helping graduates to rapidly grow into leadership positions in their organizations:

1. Leadership is too narrowly defined in the IBC with too much emphasis on positions and title versus a student's ability to influence those around them.
2. Leadership positions in the IBC were sometimes viewed as being based upon popularity rather than a student's ability.

Research Question 3: Perceived strengths and weaknesses of the IBC experience.

Tables 7 and 8 list and rank graduates' responses from the online survey in regards to the most helpful and least helpful aspect(s) of the IBC. These open-ended questions provided an opportunity to support or dispute the data obtained through the graduate interviews.

Themes that emerged from the graduate interviews were in alignment with the survey

Table 7

Most Helpful Aspects of the IBC from Survey—Comments from the Online Survey

BYU-Idaho Integrated Business Core (IBC) Survey			
As it relates to preparing you to be successful in your career, what aspect(s) of the IBC were most helpful?			
Answer Options	Response % of Total Number of Comments	Response % of Students who Responded	Response Count
Teamwork & Group Dynamics	31%	36%	133
Running a Business/Hands on Experience	22%	26%	95
Leadership & Team Management	14%	17%	62
Integration/Seeing Big Picture	11%	13%	46
Finance Course and Concepts	3%	4%	14
Developing a Business and or Marketing Plan	3%	3%	11
Organizational Behavior	2%	2%	9
Problem Solving/ Initiative	2%	2%	9
Case Studies	2%	2%	7
Badger Creek	2%	2%	7
Marketing	1%	1%	5
Coursework	1%	1%	5
Dealing with Ambiguity	1%	1%	4
Time Management	1%	1%	4
Teachers	1%	1%	4
Microsoft Excel	1%	1%	4
Resume Builder	1%	1%	4
Dealing with Groups/Conflict	1%	1%	3
Books from Organizational Behavior Course	1%	1%	3
Understanding of Organizational Politics	1%	1%	3
Course/Career Direction	1%	1%	3
<i>Number of Students Responding</i>			366
<i>Number of Comments</i>			435

Table 8

Least Helpful Aspects of the IBC—Comments from the Online Survey

BYU-Idaho Integrated Business Core (IBC) Survey			
As it relates to preparing you to be successful in your career what aspect(s) of the IBC were least helpful?			
	Percent % of Total Number of Comments	Percent % of Students who Responded	Response Count
Running the Business/selling	9%	7%	22
Restrictions on Companies	5%	4%	13
Size of Company	4%	3%	11
Finance Class	4%	3%	11
Grading/Peer Evaluations	4%	3%	11
Organizational Behavior Class	4%	3%	10
Group Work	4%	3%	10
Bookwork	4%	3%	9
Entrepreneurship vs. Corp.	4%	3%	9
Lack of Leadership Opportunities	3%	3%	8
Operations/SCM Class	3%	2%	7
Not Real Life	3%	2%	7
Lack of Rigor	3%	2%	7
Teachers/Teaching Style	2%	2%	6
Marketing Class	2%	2%	5
Case Studies	2%	1%	4
Time- Too Short	2%	1%	4
Lack of Focus . . . Too General	2%	1%	4
Useless Meetings	1%	1%	3
Ambiguous	1%	1%	3
Badger Creek	1%	1%	3
Team Building Act.	1%	1%	2
Interpersonal Conflict	1%	1%	2
Lack of Acct.	1%	1%	2
N/A or Nothing comes to mind	30%	23%	73
Number of Students Responding			315

question(s). Some of the comments regarding the least beneficial aspects of the IBC

include some of the following:

Leadership, it was a joke and not that many people took it serious.

Several of the classes lacked structure. I feel like the actual course work during the IBC was much less valuable than the team assignments that I participated in. Some class assignments felt like busy work and took away from time that could have been spent working on running and developing our company.

Lack of leadership opportunity.

Somewhat crowded, I know that is not an easy fix. I just feel I would have had even more of an impact had there been less people to please and one focus to accomplish.

I spent a lot of time making caramel apples ... I've never used that skill since.

The sky's the limit, while adhering to several limits. This could have very well been IBC's slogan. We were given a wonderful opportunity to simulate what an actual business might be like only we were restricted by some pretty severe regulations.

Book work!

Some of the comments regarding the most beneficial aspects of the IBC include

some of the following:

Working with my classmates and teammates learning how to delegate and organize the work that needed to be done.

Those that I interviewed with enjoyed hearing about my experience in IBC since it was a real-life situation. It helped me get my internship and eventually a full-time position.

The 'INTEGRATED' part of it. Working with other students in different fields gave me a better understanding of working in teams in a business setting.

It allowed me to grow and experiment in an entrepreneurial setting while learning how to build a business with various others' personalities, etc.

A great discussion with interviews on how I had hands on experience.

Being able to delegate and listening to everyone's opinion or ideas.

The instructors who had real-life experience and taught beyond the curriculum and gave useful insight.

Appendices G and H are selected quotes from the online survey. Appendix G is graduate comments stating the most beneficial aspect(s) of the IBC, while Appendix H is selected comments regarding the least beneficial aspects(s). An additional theme not previously discussed is:

1. The IBC experience was sometimes associated with ambiguity which is perceived either positively or negatively.

Table 9 presents the coding guide used to categorize graduate comments. The codes are used to help the reader gain a quick perspective of the graduates' perceptions as indicated on the online survey. Graduates were asked to rank the helpfulness of the IBC in relation to the three research questions. The graduates were selected at the lower, middle, and upper end of the scale. A score of 1-2 was coded as Not Helpful, a score of 4 was coded as Neutral, and scores of 6-7 were coded as Very Helpful. Ten out of 18 graduates indicated the IBC was Not Helpful, Neutral, or Very Helpful in both areas—Making an Immediate Contribution and Rapidly Growing into Leadership. The codes for these are, NHCL, NCL, and VHCL. For example, a code of NHCL would represent the graduate's response that the IBC was Not Helpful in helping make an immediate contribution to the workplace and was not helpful in helping grow rapidly into leadership positions within their respective organizations. The first letter represents the general time of graduation—early (2001-2006) and later (2007-2009). The last two letters of the code represent those who were interviewed. The following code E-NHCL-JD would represent

Table 9

Coding for Graduates Based Upon Responses

Rating Scale Criteria	Research Question	Research Question
Scale= 1-7 1=Not Helpful 7=Very Helpful	Making an Immediate Contribution to the Workplace	Rapidly Growing Into Leadership Positions
IBC Was Not Helpful	Code= NHC	Code=NHL
IBC Was Neither Helpful nor Not Helpful	Code=NC	Code=NL
IBC Was Very Helpful	Code=VHC	Code=VHL
Year of Graduation	Early (2001-2006) = E	Later (2007-2009) = L

an early graduate—John Doe— who felt the IBC was not helpful in neither helping them make an immediate contribution in the workplace nor rising rapidly into leadership positions. The graduates’ comments were slightly edited—being careful not to change the meaning. Such edits included grammatical, simple sentence structure, and deletion of words such as “uh” and “um”. The purpose was to allow the narrative of the interviews to flow without distraction—focusing on the meaning of the graduates’ comments.

Interview Information**Research Question 1: IBC and Immediate Contribution in the Workplace**

Theme 1.1: The IBC creates an environment for student engagement. Every semester was different depending on the students’ decisions. The IBC is designed to allow students the freedom to make decisions within the guidelines the department and university have set forth. While restrictions existed, there seemed to be enough freedom to create an environment in which students reported a certain level of control and

responsibility for their own learning. The results showed this type of learning environment—one allowing more student freedom—can be positive or negative based upon students' choices.

When the level of student freedom rises, the distribution of student satisfaction regarding the learning experience tends to become more widely dispersed. Students either choose to engage and have a positive experience or not to engage and have a more negative learning experience. Later in the study the findings regarding student engagement will be discussed along with their reasons why they chose not to engage in the learning process or chose to engage at certain levels. Some of the following graduate comments below illustrate this.

L-VHCL_TO: The essence of IBC? It's basically . . . to be honest. I approach a lot of classes like a mathematical equation, what do I need to do so that the numbers in the end add up to be the grade that I want? Whereas IBC it's not like that at all. It's just an array of things to learn about and learn from and a proactive student can, and even a non-proactive student . . . is forced into a different model of . . . if you only give a B effort you are probably only going to get a B. I really like, and I kind of mentioned this already, I really liked how there really [weren't] definitions between "this is this class" and "this is this class" and "this is the next class" where it starts and ends because it's not like that here in the work flow. I mean, I started the day with an employee who had an accident in his family recently, so I started with human behavior and interpersonal communications and then immediately went into a meeting where I happened to be discussing some financial models I had created. So in the work flow there is no difference between finance and supply chain and all of those other things. So, I like how IBC keeps those things kind of melded together.

L-VHCL_RC: I started the semester being one of those more reserved. We did the activity at Badger Creek and they line you up in a row—the most vocal to the least vocal person. I was one of the bottom three in the least vocal. Up to that point in the first two weeks of school I had made comments with my little group of six but when it would be all 24 of us there were some loud personalities that would make comments more and I just wasn't one of those. For that activity I was one of the quieter people but eventually as the semester went on I became one of the more vocal people.

E-VHCL_SP: [What] helped me move quickly through my career is the fact that in a group setting like the IBC you have a lot of people who could sit by the wayside and do what was assigned to them and then do it to whatever extent you did it. Or, there were the people that jumped in and said, “Hey, I’ve got this idea and I think if I executed it this way this is how we are going to do it.” Immediately, when you jump into the workforce that’s noted and you’re selected right away.

Not all the graduates expressed praise for the student-run companies. A few thought the experience did not add much value to their career preparation.

E-NHCL_AM: The only thing I really remember about the IBC is spending lots of time standing outside trying to sell subs and soda and chips . . . I don’t know how realistic the IBC was.

L-NCL_BY: [Our business] was making quesadillas and at the end of the day it’s pretty simple. The structure and what you are doing wasn’t [beyond] my knowledge base and so it wasn’t something that I could really get into or this is something I could really use later on. You make quesadillas like you make pizza. If I want to be a chef I would just take culinary arts.

The IBC becomes something different for every student depending upon their background, expectations, and desire to learn. Student learning and skill development depends in large measure upon their effort. This aspect of the IBC appears to be one of the most influential aspects of the program as it relates to the research questions—providing students with an environment to act and not merely to be acted upon—an opportunity to take initiative. When students (a) were interested in the tasks associated with the IBC, (b) had committed enough time to fully participate, (c) believed they had the knowledge and talents to make a contribution, and (d) chose to step forward and become involved—setting aside their reservations—the level of engagement increased along with their satisfaction of the overall experience.

Theme 1.2: Integration across business courses helpful. As graduates entered the workplace they soon realized aspects of business are interrelated—marketing impacts

finance that in turn impacts the operations of the business. Nothing is done in isolation. Graduates who bring this understanding are in a better position to contribute. Graduates believed the integration of the courses helped develop an integrated mindset. Often a key to successful employment is the ability to work with various groups and individuals across the organization. An employee gains credibility as they effectively collaborate with others from diverse backgrounds. Some of the following comments are examples:

L-NCL_JB: Going through those four classes together definitely helped me to build [from] one department to the next which I think was helpful going through the training program because then I could relate this department to that department. The people I was working with actually liked when they saw you making a connection between the different departments. [Our IBC Company] touched all different phases of a real business with the product we had. That was really helpful. I guess the businesses that I saw didn't offer the same teaching opportunities.

E-VHCL_SP: It's business, at least at [place of employment] and in my experience so far for me has been that you have to run the gamut of experience and ideas and thoughts and having to pull together all these ideas to run a business. . . . I feel like all of that was encompassed in the IBC. You had to work with people you like, you don't like. You had to work with teams to kind of look outside the box in some ways, to execute certain tasks that you do and don't like. I felt like the IBC really encompassed that whole, the whole reality of what business is like into one semester.

One student indicated he would have benefited more from separate courses rather being in one large class.

E-NHCL_AM: No, I don't know if it's a benefit all in one giant room and just sitting there the entire time. It felt like there wasn't as much interaction as there are in those smaller classrooms.

Given the integrated nature of the IBC, graduates expressed the opportunity the IBC provided to explore various interests in business. A student may have started out in the marketing area then shifted to finance based upon personal interests. As some stated:

E-VHCL_JH: I had never [worked in] . . . a business before and so dividing into the different divisions that we did with marketing and operations and sales [was helpful]. It was cool to actually see that happen where (I had had a few classes on it before) but to see it come together and then to pick a department. I ended up going the sales route and that ended up being exactly what I'm still doing now. I never saw myself as a salesman . . . So, using something as part of the sales process to get people interested to buy the product...was fun for me [and] to have that contribution to the sales process and got me thinking in those terms from then on that you need to be able to convince people to buy something.

L-NHCL_AW: I felt that in a lot of ways IBC was more of a staging or a testing ground for "here's organizational behavior, here's supply chain, here's finance, and here's marketing." Now this is a little bit of a feel for it. Gauge what you like best and then pursue it a little further in the emphasis.

The integration across subject matter and ability to connect the content of the course with student companies emerged as one of the most dominant themes. Graduates said their ability to see connections and to develop an integrated mindset proved valuable in the workplace.

Theme 1.3: Teamwork, group dynamics, and productivity. Increased competition in the world has compelled organizations to become more productive. Effective teamwork and collaboration are essential for organizational productivity (Datar, et al., 2010). Graduates who are able to work effectively with others in a collaborative environment are more valuable to the organization. While specialization is increasing due in part to the exponential growth of technology and the rise of globalization, the need to collaborate across these areas of specialization has never been greater. Effective management is critical. The most beneficial aspect of the IBC as reported in Table 9 included some reference to group dynamics, teamwork, and leadership. Fifty-three percent of those taking the survey—in an open-ended question—stated that teamwork, group dynamics, and leadership skills were the most helpful aspects of the IBC as it

relates to career success. Appendix G contains a sample of the comments from this open-ended question. A couple of comments relating to teamwork are as follows:

“The team assignments were the most helpful. Working with my company was a great experience that helped me to learn how to work better with others and prepared me for the large amount of team work that I am involved in with my job.”

“Working in the team environments was key. The people management side was so valuable because in the business world you work with so many types of people and you have to learn how to manage those relationships, build them, to be successful.”

One of the key themes that emerged from the research was how the IBC experience facilitated and taught principles of effective group and team dynamics. It provides an opportunity to learn how to influence others around them when there are few extrinsic sources of power and influence. Some of the unique aspects of the IBC in regards to learning how to influence others were:

1. The size of the group. Twenty-five students were asked to perform a task—running a company—which normally would include only a few.
2. The companies were comprised of peers. There were no authority figures per se as there would be in traditional organizations. If students wanted their ideas to be heard and selected they needed to persuade 24 other peers. It was difficult in the IBC to pull rank—even with the officers. They soon learned if they try to influence through formal authority it is less effective.
3. The lack of financial incentive. There were no financial incentives for students to work hard and be an effective team. Companies did not pay wages and there were no bonuses or stock options if the company did well. This left

the officers and all others with more fundamental intrinsic tools of persuasion to accomplish the given tasks.

Some of the comments that reflected this were:

L-VHCL_RC: I think the group of 24 is perfect . . . 20-24 I would say because it gives you enough different people to go off in order to get the work done . . . and splitting up the work and actually who was at the booth, we needed that many people. So I think that 20-24 is the perfect number. . . . I never had a feeling of “Man, we are so big that it’s hard to get anything done.” I felt part of the learning process [was] that we had to learn how to effectively communicate and decide what path we wanted to take and so that was just part of the learning process.

L-NCL_BG: I learned that you’ve got to push back on people like back in the IBC. I was the CFO of my [IBC] company and also, later, the CEO after they re-organized. I was kind of a push-over because I wanted to make people happy and I definitely learned out here that at a point you’ve got to push back and people aren’t going to like it, but at the end of the day it is what you’ve got to do. I’ve found myself comparing situations that I was in out here and how I handled them. I really think that having faced those in the IBC gave me more of a real-world perspective of how it would work out. I think that part was actually quite helpful and once again I never even expected that when I was going through the program itself. It was a by-product, almost. It was definitely helpful.

E-VHCL_TH: So we had this team of 20 people and we all had to put our heads together and figure out a product or a service to sell to a very select audience. The negotiation and the discussion that had to happen in order for us to put that together was a really awesome experience. I still look back on that as being my foundation experience of really working in the team setting: having serious disagreements with teammates and working those out and coming to focus on a good product and a good idea.

L-NHCL_AW: The main point is just more along the lines of in the initial part of the business you had a lot of students that had these ideas or they liked a certain idea but they weren’t willing to say, “This is a better idea and this is how we should do it.” It was very, at the beginning, back and forth, “Well, I like the idea but I don’t. I like this idea.” And so I think that it’s part of the group dynamics where they’re still trying to get a feel for people’s personalities and who is going to be the person that just pushes the group forward.

L-VHCL_RC: I think the biggest thing I came away [with] was just gaining a stronger work ethic and seeing how my individual and then group contributions make a difference as well as learning how to communicate in effectively working as a team in order to get something done.

L-NC_DG: We [were] all college students. Within a company you try to get this instilled in the actual program of IBC but at the same you still realize that [you are] not getting paid. I am the [same] rank as that student, so to speak. One person could say something (and in reality we may blow it off in the real world with our boss) but we still listen. With a student it was push and shove . . . you kind of got your way if you really wanted it . . . [and] then just everybody's opinion, having so many people involved, and using (even though they do this in the real world in the form of write ups) an IBC evaluation [and] people hanging it over other's heads. 'Hey, we'll give you a bad evaluation,' [they said]. I just thought it was a little too much, or not educational in that respect.

The department's learning outcomes for the IBC did not specifically include developing group dynamic skills—but they emerged as one of the strongest themes of the research.

Theme 1.4: Chosen career path influences perceptions of IBC. The findings showed that graduates who entered professions other than business (such as law) did not gain as much from the IBC as those who entered business-related professions. Also, graduates whose primary job was more individually focused, i.e., insurance sales and financial planning did not find the IBC as helpful as it related to making an immediate contribution in the workplace. Some graduates expressed the desire for more in-depth course work. Five of the six graduates who rated the IBC as not helpful either in the immediate contribution or the leadership area were in occupations that did not require high levels of team and interpersonal skills and were often more narrowly focused on one area of business. Those who rated the IBC higher in terms of helpfulness tended to be in occupations that were team based, dealt with multiple facets of business, and had unpredictable daily operations. Occupations in corporate retail, small business management, and corporate banking were examples. The phrase, "How we see the world depends upon where we sit," seems to fit this situation. Some of the following comments

illustrate how a graduates' occupation influenced their perception of the helpfulness of the IBC:

L-NHC_BB: Especially with what I got a job doing, no, not really at all. [referring to how helpful the IBC was in making an immediate contribution in the workplace] . . . No, we are basically individuals. We are responsible for finding our own clientele. The only interpersonal relationship is it's a sales job but I have other sales experience that probably contributed to that experience more than IBC did.

L-VHCL_JP: The setting [my job] is actually very similar to [how the] IBC was set up. We have multiple case study situations and we've had different projects and . . . to wrap it all up, in about two weeks we have our capstone which will be evaluated by the senior vice presidents over merchandising. And so [the] IBC has been very applicable to the situation I am in right now.

Those graduates who were in a more individually-focused position or had chosen to work in an area other than business did not find the IBC as beneficial.

L-NHCL_SB: I am a lawyer, well . . . soon to be lawyer and so part of it's just practically speaking. I have a career change so to speak from what IBC was envisioning. But as far as leadership skills go, I think that those are valuable anywhere that you serve and I didn't feel like IBC was particularly valuable in helping me develop those skills.

L-NCL_BG: I would say getting skills I can readily apply to my day to day job. [Teachers name] does a good job teaching marketing [in the IBC]. I'm a banker, but in my job I don't do anything in marketing. For me, personally I don't have anything against the class . . . I just didn't get a lot of useable skills.

L-NHCL_SS: All four IBC teachers were excellent. However, the usage of the time and preparation for the goal of getting an education, of job placement, of running the booth and running a business, useless unless you are going to open your own small business, [was a] flat out waste of time. But the finance was applicable—I think everyone should take it. Beautiful . . . loved it. The other courses,. . . depending upon what you are getting in to.

The IBC was structured in part to simulate a business setting in which several students working together start and run a business with curriculum integrated throughout the semester. The need for cooperation, teamwork, and general business understanding

are important for the program's success. If graduates found themselves in a career that was more individual and specialized or in a career outside of business, they report the IBC was less helpful.

Research Question 2: IBC and Rapidly Rising into Leadership Positions

Theme 2.1: Leadership too narrowly defined. With 20-25 students in each company and with a limited number of leadership positions, it made sense that graduates had mixed feelings regarding the influence of the IBC upon helping them rapidly grow into leadership positions in their organizations. From the research, a small percentage of graduates were in formal leadership positions. Most graduates were providing leadership but not as defined by the department mission statement—which appears to be too narrowly focused on position and title versus the ability to influence others in a positive way. The following comments were indicative of leadership being too narrowly defined.

L-VHCL_JP: I'm in organizational behavior situations and [it is hard to know] how to handle group dynamics when there isn't necessarily a selected leader who needs to lead or guide a group, but just kind of a peer-chosen leader who can help group dynamics. It seems when you get people all in the same age and level within the company it's sometimes difficult to make sure that everyone gets their opinions expressed and gets their thoughts across as much as they want. That was one of the major immediate impacts it has had on my career and [it has] helped me with that group dynamics situation.

E-VHC_TH: There are leadership opportunities with each IBC group. Not necessarily from an appointed presidential kind of perspective, but opportunities to stand up and say, "hey, maybe we should be doing things a little differently." So, I kind of see it both ways. I think in some ways it didn't so much develop a leadership kind of focus or opportunities for me. At the same time there are leadership opportunities within the IBC from the perspective of somebody that's elected . . . to somebody that is more of an unofficial leader and rallying the troops.

L-VHCL_TO: In the IBC company I had a variety of different leadership positions and one thing that was really apparent to me in IBC about leadership was that leadership and the person who is the appointed or voted-on leader are completely

two different separate things. Oftentimes the leadership for your IBC company comes from other places besides the person who is the CEO or whatever role that they might have.

E-NL_AM: I think it goes down to the definition of the leadership position. One can assume a leadership position [having] a title or a responsibility which may encompass several projects of which one would do interdepartmental collaboration and leading certain projects. . . . [In] three and half years I've applied to four different leadership positions. I have been declined. . . . They were exceptional candidates and if I had the experiences they had then I probably would have attained them, but . . . I haven't been able to take upon those higher level management positions. Whereas from a project standpoint I would say that encompasses interdepartmental collaboration [and the IBC] has indeed helped in that aspect but not from a title standpoint.

While leadership opportunities are provided in the IBC they are less about titles and more about developing the ability to influence others.

Theme 2.2: Leadership positions and popularity. Within the first few weeks, students were asked to select company officers. This was often done with little familiarity concerning each others skills and abilities. While the selection process works much of the time, too often students believed those selected to run the company and the various departments were not the best choice. While this cannot be totally eliminated, a more rigorous process could be put into place. The following comments reflect this:

L-NHCL_SB: As far as leadership skills go I think that those are valuable anywhere that you serve and I didn't feel like IBC was particularly valuable in helping me develop those skills. Partly that was my own experience, [and] partly that was the group that I was with, but I think part of it is the way that the program was managed because leadership is different than popularity and I never really understood. To this day I think that the IBC would be improved if it were changed if the leadership of a company was picked based on merit rather than a vote by the company.

L-NHCL_AW: As far as in overall leadership experience I don't think that it necessarily did [referring to how helpful the IBC was]. Partially I think it was due to the overall organizational behavior of the students. In the company you had a lot of A-type personality business students who all knew what they wanted to do and they all knew how to do it and how to get there and so I think a lot of times

there was quite a bit of conflict as far as which direction things should be taken. Oftentimes, especially in an IBC company, there [are] only so many leadership positions and oftentimes twenty to twenty five head strong business students. . . . Again, I kind of go back to the IBC as more of an opportunity to learn group dynamics versus leadership.

Research Question 3: Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of the IBC

Experience

Theme 3.1: IBC and ambiguity. Students are placed first in teams and then placed in companies the first day of class. Within a few weeks they go through a process of selecting a product for their company and electing company officers. Every semester was different with unique companies and issues. It was the common practice for the faculty to switch company officers in the middle of the semester. Most of the graduates reported this was valuable, even though at the time it was frustrating. The following comments illustrate this:

E-NL_AM: I [had] mixed feelings about it [switching officers half way through]. Looking back at it I think that was awesome. . . . There was a lot of confusion, but I think the adaption to change is key. I think we need to have that. . . . Oh my, heck, I've had four bosses in the past three and a half years and things change. We have got to be flexible.

L-NCL_BG: They [the IBC Companies] need to work [various issues] out on their own. They [the faculty] are not here to coddle you. I definitely think they should work it out on their own.

E-NL_AM: The more change the better. As an alumni [now looking back] . . . not to change it every five seconds . . . but things change.

L-VHCL_JP: [as part of the IBC] just trying to create high stress level situations . . . that's when you understand . . . and I think there are quite a few of those within the IBC, but continuing to create those [high stress] situations[in the IBC].

E-VHC_TH: It [the IBC] was really great, another kind of foundational lesson to me identifying a business problem that we had, and which was clearly a marketing or placement problem, and looking for solutions. . . . Here's the

problem. Here's the product we need to sell. What's the process for how we are going to really get that out there?

L-NCL_BG: I like how they have to work together and basically solve their own problems—create their own sort of hierarchy, more or less, on how they are going to run their business, who is in charge. . . . I've found it helpful to kind of reflect on things that I did wrong in the IBC. I think it helps me to not make the same mistakes here.

L-VHCL_JP: And then also just the ambiguity of the whole program. I really think that was genius in the way that it was set up. And the structure or lack of structure that there was, just being able to go in and . . . if you asked questions you usually got answers to them. But a lot of business students tend to think that they have all the answers before they go in. I really liked how if we asked questions we got answers but if we didn't you just kind of left it up to us to figure out in the long run. I think that was really good.

One reported the chaos at times was too much and not helpful.

L-NHCL_SB: There were no rules to say, yes, this CEO has a dictatorship or no, he doesn't have a dictatorship but he has this many voting for him but the rest of the company can also give their input. It was kind of a free for all and at the end of the day if people wanted to move unilaterally they did and it severely hurt our teamwork and I think the morale of the company. . . . *I* was one of those students and they said, "Stop complaining, we're making money, we're getting a good grade, there's nothing to worry about."

Summary

With a high response rate from the online survey and graduates willing to be interviewed, valuable data were collected in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomena—the Integrated Business Core at BYU-Idaho. The data showed and confirmed that the IBC was an academic experience designed to facilitate the discovery of business principles and foster critical skills such as decision making and effective group dynamics. By design every semester was different with a unique combination of students with various backgrounds with student-run businesses that sell a variety of products. The majority of students readily—or eventually—embraced the experience

while others—for a number of reasons—did not. While a tendency for departments to believe their programs are delivering upon stated objectives and missions, it is critical to continually assess if this is truly the case. Consequently there are many strengths of the IBC—as reported by graduates—nevertheless there are also areas to improve.

Chapter Five

Summary and Discussion

Context

Few areas of higher education have gone through more change and criticism than business education (Datar et al., 2010). Industrial and military needs at the end of the 19th century created a demand for managers, which in turn created a need for business education (Currie & Knights, 2003). There seems to have been consistent debates over pedagogy, purpose, relevance, and the quality of graduates. Many schools have responded with innovations in curriculum with a movement towards more active integrated approaches. While these efforts should be applauded, many believe business education is not keeping pace with the needs of society (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Mintzberg, 2004; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002).

Key accreditation organizations require schools to focus primarily on hiring academically qualified professors—many with very little industry experience—whose major focus is research. The results have been specialized professors with little “real-world” experience teaching courses with little incentive to try anything different (Currie & Knights, 2003). Why would business professors seek to integrate curriculum—working with faculty from other disciplines—when there are few incentives? Few—if any—faculty are given tenure based upon curriculum innovation and preparing students for the world of work. The biggest obstacle to innovation in business education is the system. As one management educator stated,

I fly by the seat of my pants with teaching because my career is determined by my research record. All I need to do is to satisfy on my teaching. The Research Assessment Exercise drives everything I do. I regret this but students are merely a source of cash for this institution so that we can get on with what we get on with—that is research, much of which is theoretical. (Currie & Knights, 2003, p.42)

The common practice throughout business management education is to study textbooks supplemented with case studies. Students sit in classes and read and discuss what businesses have done or should be doing—a theoretical approach—that has led Dr. Jeffrey Pfeffer, a well-known Stanford business professor, to write about the “Knowing Doing Gap,” a situation in which business students and managers are able to intelligently discuss an issue but less likely to actually do something about it (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000, pp. 48-49).

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed method study was to explore the influence the Integrated Business Core program at Brigham Young University—Idaho has had upon elements of career success. The basic research questions focused on the following:

1. Has the IBC experience influenced students’ ability to make an immediate contribution to the workplace upon graduation? If so, how?
2. Has the IBC experience influenced students’ ability to rapidly grow into leadership positions in their organizations? If so, how?
3. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the IBC experience?

Procedures

In 2002, as part of a new undergraduate business program, the Business Management Department at Brigham Young University—Idaho introduced the

“Integrated Business Core” (IBC). The IBC was designed to bring the practical and the theoretical together in an effort to help graduates succeed in the workplace. The IBC has been comprised of four business courses taught over the course of one semester and includes the operation of student-run companies. While feedback has been frequently obtained from current students in the program, there has never been an extensive study seeking feedback from department graduates. This mixed method study sought feedback from 419 IBC graduates in an effort to better explain their perceptions of the IBC program in relation to the research questions.

An online survey was sent to 1,190 business graduates—including those who did not participate in the IBC. Eventually 419 graduates who participated in the IBC completed the survey. Based upon the responses, 18 graduates were selected to be interviewed. The study researched the perceived value of the IBC as it relates to these factors: (a) helping graduates make an immediate contribution in the workplace, (b) helping graduates grow rapidly into leadership positions, and (c) perceived strengths and weaknesses of the IBC program. From the first years of the program, students have often referred to the IBC as the “IBC Experience.” The research was designed to discover the key elements that comprise this academic experience—to find the essence of the Integrated Business Core as it relates to the department mission.

Summary of Findings

Through the strength of a mixed method design and graduates who were willing to participate in both the survey and subsequent interviews, meaningful data were

gathered in relationship to the research questions. Several key findings and themes emerged from the study.

1. The IBC created an environment of choice and ambiguity. Students in the IBC were given the opportunity to engage in a student-run company in which they practiced business principles taught in the classroom. When graduates were asked about their IBC experience, the most commonly discussed elements centered on the student-run companies. While most of the actual time was spent in the classroom, the classroom overall was not viewed as the most meaningful in relation to “helpfulness”.
2. Group dynamics, teamwork, and management/leadership skills were viewed as the most helpful aspects of the IBC experience.
3. What graduates did upon graduation in terms of employment impacted perceptions of previous learning. Those who found the IBC most and least helpful were often involved in business activities that either mirrored the IBC or did not. Five of the 6 graduates interviewed who rated the IBC as not helpful were primarily in individual-based or non-business related occupations or pursuits. This was of interest given the common practice of assessment focused on current students at the end of a particular course versus long-term impact.
4. Levels of engagement varied by student based upon a few critical factors, such as whether or not, (a) students had sufficient time to perform a given task(s), (b) given task(s) were viewed by students as relevant or meaningful, (c) a student’s

personality—level of timidity were such they were inclined to engage, and (d) student(s) had the needed skills or talents to perform task(s).

5. Surveying graduates on an ongoing basis is critical for future effective program review and evaluation. The purpose of most educational programs is to foster learning—knowledge, skill, and personal change. True education is about being and becoming. It was beneficial to evaluate if such learning had taken place beyond a knowledge-based final exam. With current technologies, surveying graduates was not an overwhelming task nor was it cost prohibitive.
6. Providing context along with content was important for lasting learning to have taken place. Integrating core courses along with student-run companies provided valuable context to the IBC learning experience.
7. Business education is at a critical crossroads. Business schools need to rethink how they are preparing future organizational leaders. Traditional methods will not be sufficient to meet the ever-changing needs of society. Generally speaking, there is a gap between what society needs and what business schools are providing. Most schools fail to provide a managerial context and opportunity to practice the art and craft of management.

Discussion

Given a unique opportunity to design curriculum around student learning and department outcomes—such as preparing students for employment—the business department at BYU-Idaho implemented the IBC program. Without an academic ranking system and with teachers hired with industry experience, there were few faculty barriers

to overcome as the program was implemented. While it was believed the IBC program has been beneficial from a faculty or department perspective, it was quite another to obtain the perspective of those who have experienced the program and to ask the difficult questions regarding intended outcomes versus real outcomes.

Program Review and Evaluation

With any new curricular innovation the real questions are, “Does it really matter? Does it make a difference? Is the course or program in alignment with the mission of the university and or department?” This goes beyond multiple choice exams at the end of a program and lies at the heart of program review, which should be based around the mission of the university, college, and respective departments and is often guided by outside stakeholders such as accreditation bodies and employers. Key outcomes—according to the stated mission of the Business Management department at BYU-Idaho—focus on preparing students to make an immediate contribution to the workplace and to rise rapidly into leadership positions. The needed program evaluation in this case calls for feedback beyond current students.

Based upon the results of this study, the majority of Business Management Graduates at BYU-Idaho agree the IBC is a valuable program in relationship to fostering career success. One graduate interviewed suggested the program be discontinued in place of a more traditional classroom experience and one suggested the students be given the option to take the IBC or a more traditional route. The IBC appears to be in alignment with the department and university mission of helping graduates make an immediate contribution to the workplace. However, the mission of the department to

help graduates rapidly assume leadership positions was less influenced by the IBC. This may be due to how leadership is defined both by the department and graduates. Of all the aspects of the IBC, the student-run companies stirred the most discussion and portrayed the widest range of perceptions among graduates. The companies were viewed as both the most and the least helpful aspect of the IBC at BYU-Idaho.

Time for Shift in Learning Models

For many years, Bloom's taxonomy has been used to define levels of learning; it has given educators a framework to design courses and assessments (Robinson, 2009). Most of the taxonomy deals with the cognitive domain—focusing on mental memory, synthesis, and judgment. There has been an increasing demand for a more advanced framework in such areas as learning how to learn, ethical decision making, dealing with change, and working collaboratively with a diverse group. These are examples that go beyond a foundational cognitive model. D. Lee Fink (2003) in his book, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*, stated:

[Referring to new learning demands] . . . they are expressing a need for new kinds of learning, kinds that go well beyond the cognitive domain. . . . This suggests the time may have arrived when we need a new a broader taxonomy of significant learning.

Fink then introduced a new model based upon the current learning demands of society. The basic model is comprised of six areas: (a) Foundational Knowledge, (b) Application, (c) Integration, (d) Human Dimension, (e) Caring, and (f) Learning How to Learn (2003, pp. 29-30).

Other research suggested student engagement plays an important role in student learning. "The premise is deceptively simple, perhaps self-evident: The more students

study or practice a subject, the more they tend to learn about it . . . [it] adds to the foundation of skills and disposition that is essential to live a productive and satisfying life after college” (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006). This raises the question, “What can be done to raise levels of student engagement?”

Recommendations

From the survey and interview results it appears the IBC has been having an impact on students as they moved into their chosen careers and represented a significant learning experience. Most graduates who thought the IBC was not helpful still indicated the IBC was a good program and had great potential. When one graduate who had scored the IBC as not helpful on both criteria was asked if the IBC should be discontinued, he replied, “Oh, I would definitely say keep it. You might want to make a few changes.”

The following are recommendations to improve the IBC experience.

Management of Student Expectations

In some cases graduates could sense the value of the IBC experience, but it did not meet their personal needs based upon individual circumstances. This may indicate their beliefs regarding the IBC are more a reflection of themselves as a student than a reflection of the IBC program. These comments from students lead to a key insight into the importance of managing student perceptions. One student stated, “I was looking forward to the IBC. What [I] experienced was the group of people I was with, the idea they . . . wanted to do was about as complicated and exciting as selling Girl Scout cookies.” It is critical to communicate to students what the purpose of the IBC is, how it connects with the mission of the department and university, and the stated learning

outcomes. Problems occur when perceptions and reality do not match. Faculty and the department can do a better job in managing expectations and, therefore, perceptions. This can be accomplished through the following:

1. Communicate with students concerning the IBC prior to entering the business program. Let them know what the IBC is, the intended learning outcomes and the role students play in the learning process. Students should clearly understand what the IBC is and what it is not.
2. Establish a process for those who have gone through the IBC experience to act as mentors for those entering the program. Most students tend to believe their fellow students' information. Student mentors can play a powerful role in helping set expectations and manage perceptions. Faculty can select students who excelled in the IBC and ask them to act as mentors. Graduates could also be asked to be mentors and to be available for students participating in the IBC. This could have a powerful effect in the process of continuous improvement of the IBC experience.

Focus on Determinants of Student Engagement

While most students chose to be engaged during the IBC experience, some did not. This has been an ongoing concern with the IBC—how to improve the level of engagement among students. With student companies comprised of over 20 students, it has been a challenge for company leaders to get all students engaged. One option is to realize a lack of engagement on the part of some students will always be the case. Another is to understand and communicate to students what the barriers to engagement

are and work to minimize them. During the interviews and from the surveys and as discussed in the previous chapter four elements that are determinants of student engagement were discovered—see Figure 2.

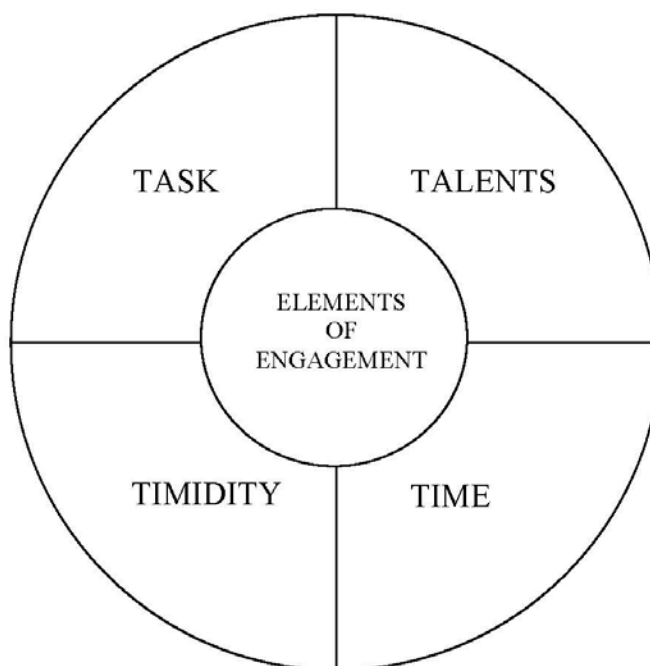


Figure 2. Four elements that determine level of student engagement.

In Figure 2 the four determinants of student engagement are shown. These will be discussed in further detail below.

The Task. In order for a student to get engaged beyond just getting a grade, the task must be interesting and relevant. Relevancy is often connected with career success (Datar et al., 2010). If students see a connection between a given task and career success, they are more likely to be engaged. Faculty must take time to show and continually ask how a particular educational experience or activity is relevant. Relevancy can also

change over time—that which was once relevant may no longer be applicable. In the IBC some graduates indicated they did not get engaged with the student companies because they did not see relevance to their future careers, i.e., selling hot dogs each day.

Talent and skill level. If a student feels unqualified to successfully complete a given task or project they may hold back from volunteering. Therefore faculty could ask the following questions: (a) Are courses and academic programs adequately preparing students to be successful in later courses and programs? and (b) Are there assessments in place to see if a student will be successful as they move forward in the program?

Time constraints. The students' schedule, work, number of credits, and other priorities may impact the level of engagement. Some graduates indicated their schedules impacted their involvement in the IBC—particularly in the student companies. Students struggle to balance the need to get through school with the importance of getting through well. Students should be informed at the beginning of the semester of the time requirements for the program and the detrimental impact upon learning if their schedules are overburdened.

Level of student timidity. How timid a student is can also be a factor in determining a student's level of engagement. For some it is not their nature to volunteer or seek positions of leadership. Group and team building activities can help by breaking down barriers and building trust among students. The fact most business students during their careers will be asked to assume leadership positions is something faculty should help students better understand. The IBC offers students an opportunity to reduce timidity.

Re-Defining Leadership

How do we define leadership? Many equate leadership with positions and places on an organizational chart. From the interviews it seems it would be helpful to re-define or expand the business department's definition of leadership to include the ability to positively influence others and to add value (Pollard, 1997). Several graduates indicated how the IBC gave them the opportunity to influence others and to add value without being one of the officers. While changing the management team in the middle of the semester was viewed by most as a good learning experience, the IBC could find ways to promote and recognize leadership.

One of the concerns and benefits was the size of the class and the companies. A student can get lost in the crowd or rise above it. As one graduate said,

I saw a lot in my classes where people tried to just kind of get by and I think that's what really makes the difference in any class, but especially in the IBC, is to step out of your comfort zone to raise your hand when they ask who wants to be the VP over operations. . . . It's a safe environment to step out of your comfort zone and try something new.

Some seemed to hold back and let others lead and volunteer for projects, while others made a choice to get engaged and sought for ways to demonstrate leadership regardless of formal titles.

Re-Defining the IBC

The IBC is not a small business created to compete with other businesses in the community or beyond. The IBC is an academic experience designed as a student-run business which primarily markets to the BYU-Idaho campus community. The goal is not to make money or be the most profitable. The IBC is designed to mirror as closely as

possible a business environment and is used as a vehicle to aid in the discovery of business principles. If a student goes through the IBC thinking they will have the opportunity to compete with other business in the area, they will be disappointed. It is important for the business department to describe what the IBC is and what it is not. Educational programs can fail due to mismanagement of student perceptions. The purposes and expectations of the IBC should be clear for both faculty and students.

Ongoing Program Review

The Business Management Department at Brigham Young University—Idaho should establish an ongoing process for program review that includes graduates and requires minimal effort—through the use of online technology. Most graduates are willing to spend a few minutes to take a survey to help the program they participated in. All students upon graduation should be asked to complete an online survey to provide feedback regarding their experience in the program—this would include questions regarding the IBC. Graduates should be sent a survey within the year to assess perceptions regarding the program to determine: (a) how well the program prepared them for the workplace, and (b) which areas of the program should be improved. Periodic surveys after one year of graduation would focus on program improvements and trends graduates are experiencing to inform the department as it makes program changes. Such program review processes can be simple yet yield valuable data in order to foster a climate of continuous improvement. The department should also establish an ongoing dialogue with business professionals as part of the ongoing process of program review.

Early Career Preparation

Students who have a career plan and an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses are in a better position to gain from the IBC experience. Due to the nature of the program, students can volunteer for or seek opportunities in various areas of the student-run business. For example, if students want to enter the retail industry, they may opt to be part of the marketing and operations departments. Or, the same students may feel comfortable with their marketing background and seek to strengthen a weakness by volunteering to help in the finance department—realizing that if they have finance skills, they will be better positioned to add value in the retail industry. The department should continue to strengthen the career development process early in a student's academic experience to help students be better prepared to gain more from their IBC experience.

Increase Individual Accountability

There are three levels to any organization: (a) individual, (b) group or team, and (c) the organizational system (Robbins & Judge, 2007). The researcher recommends the IBC should focus more on increasing individual accountability. While most reported learning teamwork skills were beneficial, there were some graduates who reported individual accountability was lacking. The strength of any team lies within the strength of each individual. Though it is true a team of average players working together can defeat a team with great players who struggle to work collectively, it is obviously better to have great individual players who can also play well together. The IBC needs to better develop individuals who can also be great team players.

A peer evaluation should be instituted to help foster a culture of individual accountability. Part of a student's final grade in all IBC courses should include a percentage tied to individual performance within their teams and companies.

Summary

The Integrated Business Core at Brigham Young University—Idaho represents an attempt to more effectively bridge the gap between academia and the world of work. While business schools have been in existence for over one-hundred years, effectiveness of their programs continues to be a concern. Other areas of higher education have come under intense scrutiny, but seemingly business education has received more than its fair share. This may be attributed to the level of rapid change in the business world and the difficulty for such programs to continually meet the needs of society. Business education finds itself in a unique position between the theoretical social sciences and the more practical professional schools law and medicine.

Within somewhat limiting academic systems, several business schools have ventured into curriculum innovation beyond the traditional textbook and case method approaches. Two areas getting a lot of attention seem to be the need for curriculum integration along with the importance of business students gaining practical experience (Datar et al., 2010). As students experience the IBC and choose to be engaged—both individually and as groups—they build confidence, add leadership capacity, and are better prepared to make an immediate contribution in the workplace and to exhibit leadership in their chosen profession.

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Appendix A

BYU-Idaho University and Business Department Mission Statements

BYU-Idaho Mission

1. Build testimonies of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and encourage living its principles.
2. Provide a quality education for students of diverse interests and abilities.
3. **Prepare students for lifelong learning, for employment, and for their roles as citizens and parents.**
4. Maintain a wholesome academic, cultural, social and spiritual environment.

BYU-Idaho Business Department Mission

The Business Management Department's Mission is to create a learning environment for students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to make an **immediate contribution** in the workplace and to **rapidly grow into leadership positions** in their organizations.

Appendix B

IRB Letter of Approval—Brigham Young University—Idaho

BRIGHAM YOUNG
UNIVERSITY
IDAHO

January 26, 2010

Dear Craig,

Approval to use BYU-Idaho alumni as human subjects for your alumni survey is approved for 12 months from the date of this letter.

Good luck with your study.

Regards,

Scott J. Bergstrom, Ph.D.
Chair, BYU-Idaho Institutional Review Board

Appendix C

Online Survey

Dear Alumni:

Thank you for taking time to complete this short survey (approx. 3 minutes). The information from this survey will be used to assist in improving the academic experience at BYU-Idaho.

Warm Regards,

Craig Bell
Business Management Department

Questions:

1. What year did you graduate from BYU-Idaho?
2. Did you participate in the Integrated Business Core (IBC)?
3. As a Business Management major what was your primary emphasis?
4. What would best describe your situation immediately upon graduation from BYU-Idaho? (choose one)

Beginning full-time employment in preferred job
Beginning full-time employment--but not in preferred job
Looking for employment
Preparing to enter graduate school
Choosing not to enter the workforce
Working on a part-time basis
Working part-time while looking for full-time employment
Other (please specify)

5. How helpful was the IBC in assisting you in the following areas?

Not Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Helpful

Making an immediate contribution in the workplace
Growing rapidly into leadership positions in the organization

Online Survey—Cont.

6. What aspect(s) of the IBC were most helpful?

7. What aspect(s) of the IBC were least helpful?

8. Please rate the IBC courses in terms of how helpful they have been in your chosen profession?

Not Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Helpful

B 341 Marketing

B 301 Finance

B 361 Operations/Supply Chain Management (2005- 2009)

B 321 Organizational Behavior

Starting and Running a Business

Additional Comments (optional)

9. We will be selecting a few alumni to conduct follow-up telephone interviews. If you would be willing to visit further about the IBC, please fill out the contact information below.

Name:

City/Town:

State:

Country:

E-mail Address:

Phone Number:

10. Thank you for completing this survey. If you have further comments, please feel free to enter them below.

Appendix D

Telephone Interview Script

Pre-Interview Preparation

1. E-mail potential interviewees to confirm willingness and to set up a time for interview.
2. Schedule time and arrange for recording of interview.

Script

1. Hello with brief introductions
2. Thank you for taking time to visit regarding your experience at BYU-Idaho. This interview will last approximately 15-20 minutes and will be recorded in order to fully capture your comments. Only myself and a professional transcriber will have access to this interview. Do you have any concerns or questions before we begin?
3. From your survey you indicated the following: (clarify answers from online survey)
 - a. Year of graduation---correct?
 - b. Emphasis---correct?
 - c. Employment status upon graduation---correct?
 - d. Level of helpfulness regarding the IBC in relation to your career--correct?
 - e. Some of the most and least beneficial aspects of the IBC---correct?
 - f. Level of helpfulness of the IBC Courses---correct?
4. Reflect back upon your IBC experience what influence(s) (if any) did it have upon:
 - 1) Making a contribution in your work/career, and 2) Opportunities for leadership positions in your career?
 - a. Follow up Questions—seeking to clarify responses.
5. In your opinion what are the strengths (if any) of the IBC?
 - a. Follow up questions--- why some items viewed as strengths?
6. What areas (if any) could be improved?
 - a. Follow up questions –why some items viewed as areas to improve?
7. Would it be okay to contact you again if there is a need to clarify or ask follow-up questions?
8. Are there any comments or questions you have that we have not discussed?

Thank you very much for taking time to visit.

Appendix E

IRB Letter of Approval—University of Nebraska



May 12, 2010

Craig Bell
Department of Educational Administration
1729 N 3000 W Rexburg, ID 83440

Donald Uerling
Department of Educational Administration
134 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20100510631 EX
Project ID: 10631
Project Title: The Value of the Integrated Business Core Experience: Perceptions of Recent Graduates at Brigham Young University-Idaho

Dear Craig:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as exempt category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 05/12/2010. This approval is Valid Until: 12/31/2010.

1. Please include the IRB approval number (IRB#20100510631 EX) in the email messages to participants. Please email a copy of the messages with the number included to irb@unl.edu for our records. If you need to make changes to the messages please submit the revised message to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- * Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and

you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB



Appendix F

Sample of Graduates Employers (from those selected to be interviewed)

1. Wal-Mart HDQ—Bentonville AR.
2. Boeing—Seattle, WA.
3. JP Morgan—New York, NY.
4. Zions Bank—Salt Lake City, UT.
5. Nestle—Saint Louis, MO
6. Wachovia Bank—Social Circle, GA
7. Kohl's—Menomonee Falls, WI
8. Micron—Boise, ID
9. Key Bank—Brooklyn, OH
10. Cisco—San Jose, CA.
11. Vans Corporate—Cypress, CA

Appendix G

Selected Quotes from Online Survey—Most Beneficial Aspect(s) of IBC

“Working with my classmates and teammates learning how to delegate and organize the work that needed to be done.”

“Those that I interviewed with enjoyed hearing about my experience in IBC since it was a real-life situation. It helped me get my internship and eventually a full-time position.”

“The team assignments were the most helpful. Working with my company was a great experience that helped me to learn how to work better with others and prepared me for the large amount of team work that I am involved in with my job.”

“Working in the team environments was key. The people management side was so valuable because in the business world you work with so many types of people and you have to learn how to manage those relationships, build them, to be successful.”

“The ‘INTEGRATED’ part of it. Working with other students in different fields gave me a better understanding of working in teams in a business setting. I also found the struggles of starting a business helpful when it came to interviews. Many of the “experience” questions could be answered with what I experienced during IBC as an entrepreneur.”

“The IBC program was one of the best components of my college education. It allowed me to grow and experiment in an entrepreneurial setting while learning how to build a business with various others' personalities, etc.”

“Having close to real life experience in the IBC was extremely helpful in the business world after graduation. Particularly having interpersonal and leadership experience in IBC helped to prepare me for similar experiences in the work force. Forcing us to develop budgets and work within those budgets while trying to make a profit was very helpful.”

“Working in teams and having a long term project that needed to be executed in a creative manner.”

“A great discussion with interviews on how I had hands on experience.”

“Being able to delegate and listening to everyone's opinion or ideas.”

“The instructors who had real-life experience and taught beyond the curriculum and gave useful insight.”

Appendix H

Selected Quotes from Online Survey—Least Beneficial Aspect(s) of IBC

“Leadership, it was a joke and not that many people took it serious.”

“Several of the classes lacked structure. I feel like the actual course work during the IBC was much less valuable than the team assignments that I participated in. Some class assignments felt like busy work and took away from time that could have been spent working on running and developing our company.”

“The ‘idea’ planning was frustrating. My group couldn't come up with anything extraordinary so we ended up doing several ‘less than exciting’ things.”

“Being graded partially based on the reviews of classmates.”

“Lack of leadership opportunity.”

“Class size was [to] big.”

“Somewhat crowded, I know that is not an easy fix. I just feel I would have had even more of an impact had there been less people to please and one focus to accomplish.”

“I spent a lot of time making caramel apples ... I've never used that skill since.”

“I went into law, so the entrepreneurial focus did not benefit me as much as it might help others. At that time, the business school's focus definitely seemed to be on making us all into small business owners. It did not seem to prepare us for the general workforce in the same way that my experience at BYU-Provo did.”

“I wouldn't go as far as to say that any of it was a waste of time, but given my career choice the marketing and operations portion weren't very helpful.”

"The sky's the limit, while adhering to several limits." This could have very well been IBC's slogan. We were given a wonderful opportunity to simulate what an actual business might be like only we were restricted by some pretty severe regulations.”

“Lectures”

“Book work!”

“I did not like the fact that we couldn't compete against the school. Why is it not an open market?”

“Assigned group work where outside of class meetings were required. Kept me away from work and wasted time. I would have liked something that helped with bookkeeping and understanding taxes and reports required for a small business.

Appendix I

External Audit

External Audit Attestation

By Jenny M. Powell Ed. D.

Craig Bell requested that I complete an educational audit of his mixed methods study entitled: The Value of the Integrated Business Core Experience: Perceptions of Recent Graduates at Brigham Young University-Idaho. This audit was conducted between October 14th and November 21st, 2010. The purpose of the audit was to determine whether the researcher left a clear audit trail. In leaving a clear audit trail, the researcher must delineate a path that others could follow easily. The audit also attempts to determine whether the study is trustworthy.

According to Merriam in her book Qualitative Research, the audit trail describes, “in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (2009, p.223). Merriam also discusses the fact that the audit trail can be used to ensure “consistency and dependability” in the data. It is the auditor’s job, “to authenticate the findings of the researchers by following the trail of the researcher”(2009, p.222). Creswell in his book Educational Research, suggests that the auditor answer several questions including the following: Are the findings grounded in the data, Are the themes appropriate, Can inquiry decisions and methodological shifts be justified, and Are inferences logical. (2002, p.281).

To meet the outlined purpose of this audit, numerous materials were reviewed. The following materials were submitted for the audit:

- 1) The dissertation proposal dated February 2010. The proposal was 37 pages in length including the appendices.
- 2) Clean transcripts of each of the 18 interviews conducted were included. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. The interviews were single spaced and varied from four to nine pages in length, for a total of 118 pages. Each interview contained the time and date of the interview with the number 3627 at the top. These transcripts were divided into three groups. Each group had a different sticker on it. One group was identified as “Very Helpful” with a blue label, one group was identified as “Not Helpful” and had a red label, and one group was identified as “Neutral” and had a yellow label. The “Very Helpful” group had VH_C_JP handwritten on the top right corner. Each subsequent new interview in that particular packet was identified with VH_C_ and the initials of the informant. Some of these interviews were marked with VH_cl_ and initials. The “Not Helpful” group had a NH_C_BB on the top of the paper and each new interview was marked with a NH_cl_ and the initials of the informant. The “Neutral” group was marked with a N_CL_BY at the top of the front interview, the subsequent interviews were marked with a N_L_AM, N_L_JB, N_L_JT, and NC_DG,N_CL_bg.

- 3) A copy of the dissertation draft dated October 2010. This draft was 86 pages in length including appendices.
- 4) Two sets of data. The first set was titled **BYU-Idaho Integrated Business Core (IBC) Survey**. This set of data had a gray box which contained the question “As it relates to preparing you to be successful in your career what aspect(s) of the IBC were least helpful? This box also contained the information Response Count, 315, skipped question, 104. This data contained 15 pages of response text. Each line was numbered from 1 to 315, text was listed and the last column listed a date and time. The last page of this set of data contained a table with the following columns: Least Helpful Aspects of the IBC, # of Comments, and Percent. The other set of data was titled **BYU-Idaho Integrate Business Core (IBC) Survey**. This set of data also contained a gray box with the question “As it relates to preparing you to be successful in your career what aspect(s) of the IBC were most helpful?” This box also contained the information Response Count, 366, skipped question, 53. This data contained 17 pages of response text. Each line was numbered from 1 to 366, text was listed and the last column listed a date and time.

The last two pages in this set of data included a handwritten piece of paper with “Most Helpful” on the top and 366 on one piece. The second piece of paper was a table with the following columns: Most Helpful Aspects of the IBC, and # of Comments.
- 5) Three different packets of information were clipped together. One packet had yellow labels on the right hand side, one packet had blue labels, one packet had red labels. Each of the three packets had a handwritten cover page, survey data, and then responses from the interviews. Each of these interviews were highlighted and contained additional sticky notes. These were obviously the “working” interviews as they contained handwritten notes on the side of some of the interviews along with circles and various other markings.
- 6) A CD labeled “Research Data 2010 C. Bell UNL Dissertation.”

The audit consisted of the following steps:

- 1) I reviewed all materials that were submitted for the audit.
- 2) I read the entire dissertation proposal. I paid particular attention to the introduction, research questions, data collection and analysis procedures, and the interview protocol. I wrote down key steps that were listed in the proposal and later compared them to what the researcher actually did in the completed study.
- 3) I examined the transcripts, comments, and themes in the margins of the transcripts.
- 4) I read the entire dissertation draft.

Summary of the audit findings:

After careful examination of both the process and product of this researcher's work, I believe that this study is trustworthy. This was determined based on the fact that the research procedure was sound and the findings were clearly grounded in the data. The research questions remained consistent from the proposal to the dissertation draft. The purpose of the study also remained consistent from the proposal to the dissertation.. The unit of analysis (graduates of the program) also remained consistent.

This study's research plan was well defined in the proposal as well as the materials that were submitted for this audit. The mixed methods approach that was utilized was explained thoroughly by the author. It is my belief that this research would be easily duplicated.

The researcher made few changes to his study from the proposal to the final draft. Additions were made which helped to explain the study and the steps that were taken to complete the study. However, the interview protocols remained the same. Several tables were added to the final draft which helped to explain the data.

The researcher's procedures were documented in detail, and the materials submitted for the audit clearly supported the procedures he outlined in his proposal and dissertation. Using the mixed methods approach was completely appropriate for this study.

In conclusion, I believe the information provided to me by the researcher, as well as the descriptions in the dissertation draft, allow for an easy to follow audit trail. The study contains a high level of trustworthiness, and the researcher has clearly outlined how he determined his themes, and especially his conclusions. Based on all of the above, I believe other researchers could follow this clear audit trail.

Attested to by Jenny Powell this 17th day of November, 2010.

Jenny Powell, Ed.D.

Principal, Nebraska City Middle School

Appendix J

Segment of Interview Transcript

Researcher: Tell me about leadership positions, the impact the IBC has had there.

L-VHCL_TO: So, in the IBC company I had a variety of different leadership positions and one thing that was really apparent to me in IBC about leadership was that leadership and the person who is the appointed or voted-on leader are completely two different separate things. That oftentimes the leadership for your IBC company comes from other places besides the person who is the CEO or whatever officer that role that they might have. And so in IBC I was able to, in any of the positions, really make an impact or see the people that were making impacts regardless of what level one hierarchy of management they were. So when I started back up at the home office on the [place of employment] macro space team there was a number of huge inefficiencies that could be solved very simply by using some standardized templates or worksheets in Excel or simplified by creating a database in Access or just in reality very simple fixes that were going to make massive efficiency wins for the team. I think a lot of my ability to identify that came from IBC and supply chain and the capstone and really the entire junior/senior year curriculum at BYU-Idaho. I could show up, I knew one, how to identify inefficiencies. I understood the tools that I could use to overcome those inefficiencies and immediately when I could apply those it made an impression on my managers that this wasn't just somebody who came to get a job to do what he was told, this is somebody who came to make a big difference in the organization and be a changed leader and a person who is driving for success. So within a matter of a very few months I was able to establish my degree of knowledge and expertise in a field that I was relatively new to the

company, new to myself and honestly its fairly new to the entire retail industry. I am talking about macro space allocation. And so, go ahead.

Researcher: Let me follow up with your thoughts on something. When you look at a program and you evaluate it, you kind of have to ask yourself what if we didn't do anything. The only thing that we did is the standardized, traditional courses, kind of a textbook-driven, maybe a lecture, versus the IBC. Now, [name of graduate], one of my thoughts is you are the type of student that I wonder if we could put you in almost any environment and you would be successful because you are proactive and you see opportunities and love to learn and things like that. So, I am just trying to get a feel for in your opinion, for you, did the IBC really make a difference. And, what was it about the IBC that, if anything, helped that.

L-VHCL_TO: Yeah, you've got a good point and I think the main difference was it put me a step further ahead because instead of just having the textbook knowledge or the knowledge of I had to build this spreadsheet for my finance professor in order to get a good grade or whatever. It took it from that step to having a problem and having some tools to solve it with Excel or whatever and then me having to come up with the solution. A good example would be I'm in a position now where I have a number of people reporting to me and I've recently been hiring and I hired a girl who is a recent BYU-Idaho graduate and then a couple of other people from other universities. And, the student from BYU-Idaho, her ability to look at, use the systems available to her to solve the problems is a lot advanced then the other students and I think that it's because her schooling was based on here's a problem and here's a system, now you go and solve it

instead of here's a lecture and this is how, if this were to be presented to you, this is how to use, or this is how your results should be driven. I don't know if I am explaining myself well...