

# **NAVIGATING THE SEA OF CHANGE: DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY UNDERGRADUATE CORE CURRICULUM**

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## ***Abstract***

*While numerous institutions embrace innovative educational strategies, little is known about effective means for implementing the strategic changes. Our strategic change process involved several years of review and evaluative activities, recommendations, and implementation. A systematic approach to institutionalizing the change was supplemented with intense efforts to socialize and embed our faculty in the new program. Looking back on our curriculum change process, it is evident that the human side of the change process is equally as important, if not more important, than infrastructural changes that take place. In building on these themes, we have identified critical elements that enhanced the implementation of our core changes. Couched in strategic change theory, we offer our insights on the key steps that helped us navigate through this sea of change. While our curriculum change took place in the context of a business school, the learnings can be applied in any higher educational setting.*

*A reasonable change ... cannot be instrumented by pure reason.  
~Friedrich Durrenmatt*

*Making meaningful change in academic institutions is hard enough, but it often stops completely at radical curriculum reform. ~Allan Cohen, Michael Fetters, and Fritz Fleischmann*

Businesses increasingly operate in an interdisciplinary fashion but business schools have been struggling to change. Indeed, it has become “increasingly evident that business schools need to become more cross-functionally oriented. However, there is a dearth of commentary on how to develop and implement truly cross-functional academic programs” (Crittenden, V. 2005, p. 955). The Sam M. Walton College of Business of the University of Arkansas recently completed a substantive reengineering of the undergraduate business core curriculum, designing and implementing a 33-hour core which includes 24 hours of integrated courses. The curriculum change process was long, methodical and challenging, complicated by the lack of information available on managing the change process in academic institutions. To that end, we

offer our insights on the critical steps that helped us navigate through this sea of change.

The lessons we learned throughout this process build on three themes that form the foundation for this article. First, both the corporate and academic worlds have issued a call for increased emphasis on cross-functional learning in our business educational programs. Second, while several schools have traveled down this path, knowledge about best practices in curriculum change is somewhat limited. Third, when dealing with curriculum change issues, the human side of the process is equally as important, if not more important, than the infrastructural changes that take place. In building on this triad of themes, we have identified the critical elements that enhanced the implementation of our core changes. Couched in strategic change theory, these eight elements provide insight into the implementation process that proved effective at our institution.

### **The Corporate and Academic Calls for Interdisciplinary Learning**

“The corporate call for the ‘new worker’ of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one who is well-versed in teamwork and connective thought processes, has compelled business schools to rethink how they deliver education...as the demand for such programs increases, one thing is clear: for students to think across disciplines, they must be taught across disciplines” (Bisoux 2002, p. 42; Crittenden 2005; Kleiman and Kass 2007). Academicians recognize that today’s dynamic business environment requires that new employees must be able to analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources, make decisions, and implement a course of action using skills that complement the integrative needs of organizations (Wingfield and Black 2005).

In recent years, there have been several attempts to reengineer higher education into closer alignment with approaches drawn from business, involving an intermingling of perspectives drawn from academics, practitioners, and bureaucracies (Harvey, Novicevic, Ready, Kuffel, and Duke 2006). All too often, these reengineering attempts are undertaken with little regard to the nuances of organizational design and insufficient attention to the conflicting agendas that may result (Green 2003). In anticipation of these challenges, our implementation plan specifically identified key constituent-based strategies for creating and managing cultural change, including relations with corporate employers, current students, prospective students, the academic community, the University

community, and the College of Business faculty. While each of these constituencies played a vital role in the implementation process, this article focuses on the latter group, delineating the strategic process that proved critical in the faculty-based aspect of the curriculum change.

### **Knowledge of the Academic Change Process is Limited**

Clearly, business schools have continued to update and modify their courses (Chattopadhyay 2007; Cornuel 2007; Hurt 2007; Sing and Schick 2007; Weinstein and Barrett 2007; Kung, Yang, Yi 2006; Denton, Kleist, Surendra 2005; Hyman and Jing 2005; Peters, Kethley, Bullington 2005; Sincoff and Owen 2004). The issue at hand is not *whether* change has been pursued but, rather, *how* that change has been pursued. Within the academic community, while action has been taken, the information on the change process has been minimal. With few exceptions such as Sidle and Warzynski (2003), the process by which academic institutions have effected desired change has not been widely disseminated. This gap is of critical importance because, as Carr and Mathews (2004) recognize, curriculum change can be rampant with challenges, and the institution's response to these barriers may lead to unintended consequences. Further, while course design implementations are important, the impact of any single course is less risky given the small number of people involved. When dealing with substantive changes in program philosophy and structure, the problems grow with each additional faculty member touched by the change.

As Pascale, Millemane and Gioja (1997) note of major changes, "revitalization is not incremental change. Its realizable goal is a discontinuous shift in organizational capability." Making meaningful change in academic settings is difficult enough, but undertaking major changes in the educational world is almost impossible (Cohen, Feters, and Fleischmann 2005). The list of concerns with implementation is long and certainly includes the risk involved in the process, the complexity of change at an academic institution, and the difficulty in major types of reform. When combining these critical issues with the corporate call for integrated education, it seems clear that additional insight is needed into the change process.

## **The Human Element**

In hindsight, the most controllable aspect of the change process revolved around the objective institutionalization of the changes: laying out the new sequence of courses, meeting with departments to discuss changes in courses, restructuring of prerequisites, delineating the objectives encompassed by new courses, and more. While these issues are time-consuming, most characteristics of this part of the process could be achieved with patience and attention to detail. Once the appropriate approval process had been completed, the reality of the structural changes needed became evident.

Based on theories of organizational structure, two complementary views of structural change emerge as important aspects to examine: frameworks and processes (Rapert and Wren 1998). Structural frameworks include the allocation of work roles and administrative mechanisms that allow organizations to conduct, coordinate and control their work activities. A second, equally important, component of the change process involves the actuality of structural processes arising within the firm, including naturally evolving patterns of communication through which information flows in the organization (Skivington and Daft 1991). Accordingly, it would not be sufficient to implement the new core curriculum using only administrative changes of work roles. Rather, intentionally addressing the *human element* of structure would prove vitally important.

One of the most insightful discussions of the role of the human element in change was put forward by Deal and Kennedy (1982) who noted that culture change is marked by “real changes in the behavior of people throughout the organization. In a technical sense we mean people in the organization identifying with new role-model heroes...telling different stories to one another...spending their time differently on a day to-day basis...asking different questions and carrying out different work rituals”.

The structural human process starts at the beginning when employees are allowed to take more responsibility for their own destiny through participation in defining objectives, deciding how to achieve them, and setting targets (Argyris 1998). Change is maintained when there is a permanent rekindling of individual creativity and responsibility, a lasting transformation of the company's internal and external relationships (Pascale, Milleman, Gioja 1997). In short, effective change of the structural process is captured through substantive change in human

behavior and communication on the job. Unfortunately, the call for managing structural framework and process change in the educational domain has remained largely unanswered (Harvey et al. 2006).

**CHANGING OUR MODEL:  
A CROSS-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO THE  
UNDERGRADUATE CORE**

Complete details of the process leading up to our strategic change, including information-gathering activities, summaries of meetings, modifications of proposals, and institutionalization efforts are provided on our website: [waltoncollege.uark.edu](http://waltoncollege.uark.edu). This extensive process, spanning several years of input and analysis, is summarized in Table 1. A key element of success lies in the development of an Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC), composed of a representative from each of the six functional areas of the college, one student member, and chaired by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs as an ex-officio non-voting member.

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**TABLE 1**  
**Timeline for the Curriculum Change Process**

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1999	Fall	Initial study and benchmarking activities
2000	Summer	Reflection and proposal formulation
	September	Initial proposal to the Walton College faculty
	November	Follow-up to the initial proposal: continuing the conversation
2001	January	Endorsement of concept of “smaller integrated core”
	Spring	Visits from other business schools
	September	Revised proposal
	Fall	Compromise proposal and approval of new curriculum structure
2002	Spring	Development of initial course outlines
	Summer	Detailed course outlines, other curriculum issues, FIPSE grant
	Fall	Implementation planning & course development team selection

2003	Spring	Course development begins: freshman-level courses
	Fall	Training for freshman-level courses; course development of sophomore-level courses begins
2004	Spring	Freshman-level courses begin; course development of sophomore-level courses begins with training taking place in summer
	Fall	Sophomore-level courses begin; course development of junior-level course begins with training taking place in summer
2005	Fall	Junior-level course begins
2006	Fall	Review of process to-date
2007	Fall	Full run of modified courses
2008-09	Ongoing modifications and reviews	

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The review/evaluation activities included (1) examination of the core curriculum at fifteen benchmark business schools, (2) brainstorming sessions with the Walton College's two advisory boards, (3) business alumni surveys, (4) interviews with corporate employers, (5) focus groups with current students, and (6) participation in an AACSB-International conference on undergraduate curriculum innovation. The information gathered from these diverse constituencies, using a variety of communication techniques, converged on five consistent themes. First, our curriculum is typical of many business schools but a number of schools are grappling with ways to have a more integrated curriculum. Second, companies who hire our graduates respect their functional area knowledge but are critical of their knowledge of "how a business really works." Third, business alumni cited examples where demands for integrated business knowledge increased as they progressed in their careers. Fourth, students expressed a desire to get involved with business courses sooner in their career. Finally, the AACSB conference gave us the opportunity to discuss efforts to integrate business curriculum with other schools facing the same issues, identifying some of the critical challenges.

The next stage involved the development of recommendations for change, a multi-step process which included proposals, small group discussions, shared files for feedback, formal faculty votes, and the search for additional information. To begin, the UPC formulated a curriculum revision proposal, building on the concept of business processes. This concept, which quickly became a guiding principle for our new curriculum, was first captured by Walker and Black (2000). The term "business processes" refers to the essential activities that every business must perform to succeed: acquiring resources, producing a good or service, and selling the good or service. These processes are inherently interdisciplinary and provide an organizing background that places each functional area of business in perspective.

The initial proposal to the full faculty was designed to make everyone on the faculty a little uncomfortable, encouraging participation in discussions. The most controversial items were: (1) a proposal to replace the 42 semester hour core or with 24 semester hours of integrated courses based on business process concepts and (2) a proposal that the integrated courses would be taught by individual faculty members rather than teams, requiring faculty to teach some material outside their primary field of specialization. Discussion groups were formed, moderated by a senior faculty member who committed to a neutral stance. The groups were asked to address a list of questions and report back to the reassembled group on their opinions of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement, implementation issues, and suggestions for the Committee. Shared files were established to increase the transparency of comments.

The Committee reviewed the issues and feedback, and hosted another faculty meeting to "continue the conversation." At that time, the UPC proposed the following motion to the faculty, successfully seeking an endorsement of the concept of a smaller integrated core before continuing its work: "The faculty endorses the goal of developing a smaller integrated undergraduate business core curriculum. The faculty agrees that we should continue to investigate ways to achieve this goal with the objective of seeking faculty approval of a method or framework for integration as the next step in the revision process."

The college hosted presentations by business schools that are attempting to integrate their undergraduate curriculum: University of Virginia,

University of Tennessee, University of Oklahoma, and University of Wyoming. Based on these presentations as well as meetings with the departments and the Executive committee, a revised proposal was presented, with the UPC recommendation receiving a majority vote of the faculty. After 26 months of study, consultation, and debate, the Walton College faculty responded by deciding to develop an innovative path - an interdisciplinary undergraduate business core curriculum that focuses on business processes -- the things that every business must do. Building on the basic premise of “business processes”, the new curriculum replaces traditional core courses in accounting, finance, marketing, management, and information systems with integrated courses based on business processes that must be in place for any organization to be successful. In order to ensure that all necessary content from our old core would be carried through to the new core, a subcommittee of faculty from each department worked diligently to identify all of the key business concepts that would need to be addressed in the core. This exhaustingly extensive list of concepts was then allocated across the seven integrated courses so that each concept would be introduced and subsequently reinforced at various touch points. An overview of the resulting program, and description of the seven integrated courses, is found in Table 2.

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**TABLE 2**  
**The End Result: A Revised Program including**  
**Seven Interdisciplinary Courses in the Undergraduate Core**

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**Business Foundations** (second semester freshman year) provides an overview of what business is about, presenting a framework that will allow them to see how future business courses are related to each other. Students learn that there are no separate “production decision” or “marketing decisions” or “accounting decisions”. Instead, all decisions are *business decisions*; involving issues that simultaneously relate to accounting, marketing, finance, etc.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation** (second semester freshman year) is an introductory course which enables the students to develop an understanding regarding the application and interpretation of basic data analysis techniques with an emphasis on statistical applications.

**Markets and Consumers** (sophomore year) builds a fundamental understanding of consumers and economic markets and the basic

functional areas related to these domains. It includes an overview of competitive markets, buyer behavior, developing new markets and products, promotion and distribution channels, profitability concepts, the sales and collections process, and strategic planning.

**Production and Delivery of Goods and Services** (sophomore year) encompasses the acquisition and movement of materials both within and across firms needed to product the end product/service. The course focuses on concepts and methodologies for managing the flow of material and information with emphasis placed on the coordination of decisions to ensure that required materials arrive in the correct quantities, at the right time, and at the desired location while minimizing costs.

**Acquiring and Managing Human Capital** (sophomore year) focuses on the organizational behavior, legal, economic, and technical issues concerned with acquiring, motivating, and retaining the best people. It addresses the effective management of people for all who will function in organizations with emphasis given to policies and practices consistent with the legal, social, human and environmental dynamics.

**Acquiring and Managing Financial Resources** (sophomore year) addresses key decisions related to the acquisition and management of capital resources, including what to acquire, how to finance acquisitions, and issues related to the accounting of those capital resources. The identification of key decisions leads to decision models and related information needs.

**Business Strategy and Planning** (junior year) is a six-hour, integrative study of the managerial decisions that ensure the long-term effectiveness of the organization. Introducing students to an understanding of strategic competitiveness and the way in which business strategy in large and small decision is formulated and implemented, the course adopts the perspective of top managers in outlining the issues to be addressed by strategic decision-makers.

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## **LESSONS LEARNED: A FRAMEWORK FOR CREATING & MANAGING CHANGE**

The extant literature on strategic change provided the perfect foundation for anticipating, understanding, and embracing change. The classic seminal pieces, the current research efforts and the contemporary anecdotal literature from popular business press publications, converged to provide beneficial insights into the critical factors for achieving organizational change (Green 2007; Lawler and Worley 2006; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, Flowers 2005; Bridges 2003; Kotter and Cohen 2002; Trice and Beyer 1993; Daft and Steers 1986, Deal and Kennedy 1982). While the key learnings from each of these sources proved invaluable, the guiding framework for our change is best captured through an eight-step framework for creating and maintaining cultural change (Trice and Beyer 1993):

- Find and cultivate innovative leadership
- Modify socialization tactics
- Capitalize on propitious moments
- Discover and articulate distinctive ideologies
- Understand resistance to culture change
- Change many elements but maintain some continuity
- Recognize the importance of implementation
- Select, modify, and create appropriate cultural forms

In an effort to highlight the aspects of the change process that emerged to be of critical importance, this framework provides an actionable series of steps for managing change in the faculty community. For each of the steps, a conceptual perspective is provided along with specific examples of how the step was institutionalized to become part of both the structural framework and human process.

***Find and cultivate innovative leadership.*** Champions of the change must be able to consistently and continually reinforce commitment to the new vision. More importantly, they must be credible role models who have established reputations in the organization. Further, employees at every level must make committed, imaginative contributions to organizational success (Dover 2003). Accordingly, one of the most important steps in the change process was identifying and recruiting highly-respected individuals

to participate in the design and implementation process. The initial course design teams were comprised of 3-4 faculty members from various disciplines, working under the leadership of a course coordinator. The faculty chosen to work on this process represented a cross-section of the college in terms of academic levels, teaching-orientations, functional specialities, and collegial spheres of influence. For example, the team for Markets and Consumers was led by an Associate Professor of Marketing with strong teaching and research credentials. Team members included a Full Professor of Economics who is highly recognized for his research contributions, a Marketing Instructor who has won the University-wide Award for Excellence in Teaching while running his own successful small business, and an Accounting faculty member who is consistently recognized for service, teaching and advising contributions. The design team for Acquiring and Managing Human Capital included the Chair of the Management Department, a Chair-holder and Full Professor in the Management Department, and a world-renowned researcher who is a Full Professor in Economics. All seven design teams were comprised of equally impressive and diverse sets of individuals. Of the seven course coordinators in charge of these teams, three held Chaired positions in the college, all were of at least the Associate Professor level, and the seven represented five different functional areas. In short, the integrated curriculum was designed, implemented and maintained by an integrated faculty, individuals who are champions in a variety of areas with credibility across departments.

***Modify socialization tactics.*** One of the primary ways that people learn about organizational culture is through the socialization processes they experience. Communication within the firm is seen as the social glue that ties members, subunits, and organizations together. This concept is a substantive component of the aforementioned human element captured through structural processes. Through the communication in socialization networks, individuals create a social world, constructing meaning for the objects and events around them (Rapert, Velliquette, Garretson 2002; Weick 1995). Rather than objective, a priori structures, organizations are actually entities that exist via the communicative networks of organizational members (Rapert and Wren 1998). Accordingly, it was important to create new networks that would enhance a shared meaning of the change process. Our business building is organized such that faculty members within each department have offices in close proximity, with little overlap across all six functional areas. Hence, an immediate challenge was to form and maintain new socialization networks that would

become strong enough to overcome the lack of natural proximity. To that end, the course design process was developed such that teams met on a weekly basis (at a minimum) for over a year. The frequency and consistency of these meetings formed natural ties among team members. The champions discussed in the previous paragraph did an extraordinary job of nurturing the relationships among team members, encouraging casual interactions as well as formal meetings. For some teams, these weekly meetings forged friendships that are still maintained years later, long after the initial design process was completed. The same process was undertaken for the faculty teams in charge of implementing the course. Fortunately, all but two members of the original design teams continued through the process, enhancing the continuity of the experience.

The teaching teams are generally comprised of five faculty members, each responsible for 1-2 sections of the course. These members, drawn from a variety of functional areas, meet on a regular basis to share best practices, design new modules, draft copies of exams, and visit. These socialization networks, enhanced by both framework and process aspects of structure, have helped to sustain and grow the relationships within the core faculty.

***Capitalize on propitious moments.*** Recent events in the business world have garnered much attention, with strategic change initiatives as a major outcome. The media focus on WorldCom, Enron, Mattel, and other companies have certainly highlighted the dramatic events these firms have encountered. Our change did not arise from similar circumstances, yet the lessons learned by these firms provided insight into the change process. Watching well-known companies respond quickly to a cataclysmic event reinforced the importance of taking action when the opportunity arises. As Trice and Breyer (1993) note, culture change is best initiated at propitious moments, when some obvious problem, opportunity, or change in circumstances makes change seem desirable. The moment can prove instrumental in persuading participants and constituents that a cultural change is justified.

In our case, there was not a single moment but rather a convergence of sentiment that the curriculum change was needed. The Undergraduate Program Committee, working over a four-year period, solicited opinions from a wide variety of constituents. Contributing to the dialogue were fifteen benchmark schools, alumni, AACSB conference participants, students, advisory boards, corporate employers, and more. The consistency of their comments resonated with our faculty, especially in

light of the corporate call for interdisciplinary work combined with sentiments of our own faculty members. Together, these moments provided the natural starting point to develop a new approach, sustained by the faculty's willingness to take risks and embrace change.

***Discover and articulate distinctive ideologies.*** Within this framework, change theorists promote three avenues for enhancing the change process: originate and recognize ideologies to which others can subscribe, make the ideologies understandable and convincing, and communicate widely/repeatedly so others come to share the ideas. To facilitate communication, a complete picture of the change process was provided on the college website for all constituencies to access when desired. Intranet working zones were developed to house common information so that teams within one course could view the learning objectives or lessons of another course. The rolling implementation allowed the opportunity for the first two course development teams to mentor the subsequent teams, providing best practices while strengthening the link between courses. Training workshops were held to allow faculty members with expertise in one area to share that expertise while learning from others. An instructional designer attended most meetings during the course design phase, serving as a powerful conduit of information between teams. Finally, through the support of our Center for Teaching Effectiveness, semester lunches were held where all faculty teaching in the core could meet to share ideas, learn specific examples that were used in earlier classes, and identify problem areas of learning. For example, faculty members teaching at the freshmen level would provide specific examples of cases/exercises that they use in the classroom. The faculty teaching the subsequent sophomore-level courses could then reference those specific examples the next semester, enhancing the perceived and real linkages between the courses.

***Understand resistance to culture change.*** Without the support from the top levels of administration, the risks involved with change would have been too great. From the first conversation regarding the curriculum change, the support of the Dean and Associate Dean was resolutely felt and clearly communicated. These individuals, along with Department Chairs, understood the natural resistance to cultural change. Theoretically, this change is generally embodied in six ways: fear of the unknown, natural self-interest, selective attention on the part of how faculty see "their world", habits which have been developed over time, reluctance to

support change until they see others doing so, and security with their current roles.

Half of the battle was won through simply recognizing and acknowledging the various avenues through which resistance can grow. Identifying tangible means of attenuating resistance served as the remainder of the battle. The structural framework was adjusted so that faculty members could afford the risk of temporarily lower teaching evaluations during the initial stages of the change process. Colleagues, peer review committees, Department Chairs, and college administrators consistently expressed an understanding of the pains associated with any change process. The Undergraduate Core Director worked closely with Department Chairs to provide supplementary evidence of teaching accomplishments during the transitional phase.

***Change many elements but maintain some continuity.*** In hindsight, our faculty accepted a strong challenge to change an overwhelming number of aspects of their teaching environment. The move to a smaller core, the integration of seven complicated courses, the expectation of frequent team meetings, the shift to teach freshmen rather than second-semester sophomores, the increase in the amount of work they were demanding of students...each one of these initiatives was challenging in its own right. Together, they represent a seemingly insurmountable set of challenges. In order to make the change process more feasible, an effort was made to preserve some valued elements of the traditional culture that was being displaced. For example, the advising process remained the same as did a series of courses that had long been an integral part of the underclassmen experience: Principles of Economics, Business Law, and a Freshman Business Connections course. Where the content changes impacted other departments on campus, the effect was analyzed and an alternate solution developed prior to meeting with the affected parties. Departments maintained control of their majors and minors, while enjoying the benefits of additional hours within the major.

***Recognize the importance of implementation.*** As Trice and Beyer (1993) note, at every stage the change process is under threat of the hazard of omission, abandonment, or return to an earlier stage. The change process includes the three primary stages of adoption, implementation, and institutionalization. Building on the research of change theory and the importance of structure, we adopted the dual approach of building up the framework and process sides of structure. The infrastructure included

consistent participation from the administrators, the Core Curriculum Director, the Undergraduate Program Committee, course development teams, instructional designers, course coordinators, and the dedicated faculty teaching the courses. The human element has been sustained through the influence of core champions, the new socialization circles, and the shared ideologies. While creeping inertia is always a threat, the structural framework remains strong and the communication networks have been sustained through cross-functional faculty relationships.

***Select, modify, and create appropriate cultural forms.*** The eighth step in the framework focuses on employing symbols, rituals, languages, and stories to channel cultural meanings. Through these communication mediums, individuals in organizations are able to adjust and react to the dynamic flow of information, ultimately providing for organizational survival through adaptive learning (Rapert and Wren 1998). Our implementation process centered on two “stories” that have come to symbolize our new curriculum: the concept of business processes and the use of learning objectives as the backbone of the core. The consistent theme of business processes resounds as common mantra for the core: there are essential activities that every business must perform to succeed and, accordingly, there are essential activities that every business student must understand. This philosophy has become a litmus test for course design issues. When faced with the decision of altering a portion of a course, faculty rely on the question, “is this an essential business process that every business student, regardless of major, must understand?”. If the answer is no, then the concept is not a focal point of the core.

As courses were developed with this mantra in mind, teams worked hard to establish learning objectives that were embedded in each course. This term also has become an important part of our core language. There are continual references to learning objectives at the program, course, module, and lecture levels. Many faculty members begin their semester with a discussion of the learning objectives for the course, breaking these down into daily objectives which are attainable. The high standards of adhering to these two “stories” were established by the first two course development teams and were reinforced as the remaining teams adopted this language and perspective.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation process involved a seemingly endless number of details, the majority of which are captured in Trice and Beyer's eight-step framework: find and cultivate innovative leadership, modify socialization tactics, capitalize on propitious moments, discover and articulate distinctive ideologies, understand resistance to culture change, change many elements but maintain some continuity, recognize the importance of implementation, and select, modify, and create appropriate cultural forms. Of these, finding and cultivating innovative leadership is the aspect that has been verbalized by faculty as exceedingly important. Particularly during periods where the implementation process faced challenges, the faculty seemed to place a great deal of confidence in the individuals who were involved in the design of the courses, constantly commenting on the caliber of individuals willing to invest time in this initiative. Specifically, having full professors, who are strong researchers and teachers, play such an active role in the design and implementation of courses proved invaluable in terms of sustaining commitment to the new program. While financial support is not the answer to every issue, securing the financial means to allow these individuals to become immersed in the curriculum through temporary course reductions proved invaluable. To that end, the support of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) was irreplaceable.

In the previous century, author and philosopher Bertrand Russell stated that "change is one thing, progress is another". This captures an important issue with strategic change: the possibility that, over time, the natural inclination is to fall back towards a comfort zone. While the framework-related institutionalization of the curriculum change serves as a buffer against such creeping inertia, the human element found on the process side of change is equally important. The enhanced commitment arising from socialization, symbols, and stories has carried the faculty through the process of implementation. The challenge will be to continue to make progress as energy is naturally diverted to other strategic initiatives within the academic environment now that the implementation process is viewed as nearing the finish.

In relaying the lessons learned from our experience, we aim to provide insights that can be utilized in other domains. Three immediate issues that face many schools are undertaking include assessment and assurance of learning initiatives (Martell 2007; White 2007; Berman and Ritchie

2006; Bycio and Allen 2004), examination of program offerings (Chyung, Stepich, Cox 2006; Dood, Brown, Benhan 2002; Emiliani 2006; Richards-Wilson and Galloway 2006), and updating methods of instruction (White 2007). Each of these issues require change that directly impacts the faculty. It is our hope that the eight steps that proved beneficial for our change process will also help ease the pain for others.

Following the implementation of our curriculum change, an interesting article was published which discusses the delicate balance between stagnation and the promotion of unrealistic innovation (Rogan 2007). Drawing on the concept of a zone of feasible innovation, Rogan provides an important awareness of the impact of change on those involved. The curriculum change we undertook was extensive, involving changes in structure of the courses, content, teaching philosophies, scheduling responsibilities, relations with other departments, and more. The exhaustiveness of the change necessitated an intentional strategy with respect to our relationship with corporate employers, current students, prospective students, the academic community, the University community, and the College of Business faculty. At time, the skeptics suggested that we were pushing the envelope of unrealistic innovation. However, with the energy and enthusiasm of the faculty involved, the human element of the implementation process helped us to safely navigate the sea of curriculum change.

## **ENDNOTES**

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