

An Innovative Approach to Teaching
Business Policy and Strategy
-Taking it to the Field

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Abstract

Policy and Strategy – sometimes referred to as Administrative Policy- has been a staple offering of business programs for over 25 years in most business schools. One of the original intentions of this “capstone” course was to encourage and/or force integration of various disciplines within the field of business into a comprehensive whole. There are many different approaches to teaching the capstone course including: the traditional lecture/case analysis approach; supplementing the course with current literature such as Harvard Business Review, Business Week, and Fortune; simulations and business games; utilization of guest speakers; and the use of a limited number of short localized tours. Over the last 30-40 years adult education literature has emphasized the importance of hands-on, experienced-based learning. Part-time programs and programs aimed at working adults have tried hard to integrate these concepts into the structure of the education. And yet so much of traditional undergraduate business education (due to various constraints such as schedules, finances, inflexible load formulas) has deterred more experiential-based creative approaches.

This paper chronicles the development of a new approach to teaching Strategy/Industrial Organizational Psychology that can be taught in the summer or in inter-term sessions. The approach relies on a combination of approaches configured in novel ways. While no one of these approaches is revolutionary or unique, the combination of these makes it innovative. Many, many of our students have told us, “It is the best course they have had at the university.” In year two we had to turn students away due to its popularity. At the core of our approach is the “living case” study. During the 4 week summer term we had on-site visits at over a dozen companies and organizations, such as Hamburger University, Caterpillar, Deere, the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and many other large and small organizations. Other unusual aspects of the course include: it was team-taught by a business and psychology professor; we relied exclusively on readings rather than a text; we took two over night trips which build camaraderie among students and faculty; we covered many unconventional topics such as economic development, testing and evaluation, workplace violence and manufacturing technology far beyond what is otherwise possible; and featured conversations with professionals about career development and progress. While this course has been an overwhelming success, we have had to overcome barriers and there are inevitable trade-offs we have had to make. The paper discusses not only a roadmap on how we have developed and refined the course, but also discusses the tradeoffs and lessons learned.

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INTRODUCTION

Policy and Strategy – sometimes named Administrative Policy- has been a staple offering of business programs for over 25 years in most business schools. One of the original intentions of this “capstone” course was to encourage and/or force integration of various disciplines within the field of business into a comprehensive whole. In practice business in the past too often has functioned in informational silos. So business schools responded by encouraging a more integrative approach to education. Some of the most important objectives of capstone courses are as follow:

- 1) Help future business leaders understand the comprehensive nature of business and business challenges. Rarely is there any such thing as a strictly management, marketing, accounting, manufacturing, finance, or technology problem. Issues are always more complex than that.
- 2) Better understand how a particular function contributes to the overall business.
- 3) Learn key concepts and develop skills in using tools of analysis from the field of strategic management (since it has developed a rich field of literature in its own right).
- 4) Updating students about to enter the work force with the latest real world issues that they will confront.
- 5) Build and reinforce team-based skills that are increasingly being demanded by businesses today.

This paper chronicles a new innovative approach that other CBFA schools should consider. Based on our positive experiences and numerous student comments such as “This is the best course I’ve ever had at Olivet”, we believe the approach has great merit and is worthy of emulation. Our business field partners have remarked over and over again how lucky our students are to have this program and their cooperation has been phenomenal.

As stated earlier, Policy and Strategy has been the foundation capstone course for over 25 years in most business schools. Dr. Daake holds a Ph.D. in strategy from Florida State University-a leading strategy institution. He has been experimenting with novel and innovative ways to teach the course over the last 15 years. Dr. Gary Koch, who spent many years at Proctor and Gamble, is keenly aware of the need to make education

relevant, interesting, and academically sound. He holds a Ph.D. in psychology. There are many different approaches to teaching the capstone course including:

- Traditional lecture/case analysis;
- Supplementing the course with current literature such as Harvard Business Review, Business Week, and Fortune;
- Simulations and business games;
- Utilization of guest speakers;
- Use of a limited number of short, localized tours.

While Olivet Nazarene University continues to offer the traditional course with considerable success, we began to recognize several limitations in the traditional course including the following issues.

- Most case studies are hopelessly outdated even in new books. For example, many 2005 copyrighted books carry cases which are at least two years dated at the time of publication. Use of even “new” cases usually require considerable updating and revision. While classic cases are instructive, more often than not the issues are dramatically different. Many publishers are now coming out with non-case versions because of this problem.
- Utilizing current literature and guest speakers can be helpful, but this still lacks the realism that many students crave.
- Field visits, which are highly beneficial, are difficult to do given the normal school day scheduling. For institutions in small communities the quality and variety available are often very limited.
- By the time they are seniors, many students have heard the entire lingo about JIT, lean manufacturing, program planning, globalization, strategy formulation and implementation, etc, but often question whether these things are really used in the “real world”. Many business schools and textbooks have in fact tended to de-emphasize manufacturing in recent years and our students do not have adequate exposure to these topics.
- Many of our students end up with careers in non-business environments such as non-profit institutions, government or other types of service organizations, and most traditional strategy textbooks and courses do not adequately cover quasi-business organizations.
- Since most of us come from relatively small institutions, with limited number of faculty, our students need a broader perspective from more faculty and would benefit from team teaching and especially from faculty outside of the Business Department.
- Relationship building is an important aspect of an education at institutions like ours. Given the teaching load we have, other institutional responsibilities, and ever increasing class sizes, it is difficult to develop the more personal relationships that both our students and we desire.

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

For the last 30-40 years adult education literature has emphasized the importance of hands-on experience-based learning. The training and development profession has developed thousands of training programs that emphasize participant involvement. Part-time programs and programs aimed at working adults have strived to integrate these concepts into the structure of education. Those of us who have attended many CBFA conferences across the years will testify to the value that we have personally experienced through CBFA field trips. Not only have those trips to Saturn, Micron, Walker Manufacturing, the San Antonio Spurs, and the Chicago MERC enlighten us but have undoubtedly served as a source of many examples in our classrooms. And yet so much of traditional undergraduate business education (due to various constraints such as schedules, finances, inflexible load formulas) has deterred more imaginative approaches. According to (Angelidis, Tomic & Ibrahim, 2004, p. 32)

“Over the years much criticism has been directed against academia arguing that it is inward focused and preoccupied with abstract ideas and fanciful ideals, that it has become isolated from the complex and dynamic social environment, and that its graduates lack the educational preparation for the real world. Among the disciplines, business is critically positioned to play a significant role in academia’s reconnection with society”

Most of us have already forsaken the “pure” lecture in our classrooms for a more varied and creative approach such as discussion, team work, cases, guest speakers and the occasional field trip. Many faculty at our institutions have come out of the business world and are well aware of the need to blend sound theory with practical examples. That having been said, we also realize that many of our students have a hard time really grasping concepts like corporate culture, JIT, lean manufacturing, or global marketing without experiencing these up close and personal. Internships and service learning projects have become a popular way to bridge the gap (Angelidis, Tomic & Nabil, 2004). Stuart and Tax (1994) point out that experiential methods tend to facilitate learning by increasing the level of cognitive activity.

Ironically, an extensive search of the literature reveals that most of the emphasis on industrial or business field trips is at the K-12 level and in study abroad programs (Duke 2000). Skydel (2002) reviews how Mack Trucks takes a tour out to high school students to encourage technical career choices. Regarding overseas programs, Duke states that company visits are always impressive to students and they should be included. By logical extension, we would argue that the same could be said about our courses. Field trips for grade school children up through high school have become quite popular and many organizations believe they are fulfilling an important civic responsibility in conducting these. Websites are now starting to market student field trips for a variety of purposes, for example at sites such as: http://www.goefit.com/field_trips_welcome.html. An interesting variation of on-site field trips is the emergence of electronic field trips (Gussin, 1995).

Over the last 10-15 years the trend has been towards fewer public tours being available to the public. This has happened for a number of reasons including:

1. Leaner staffs that don't have time to provide these tours;
2. Tours can be disruptive to the workers at a business in many cases;
3. Homeland security issues;
4. Trade secrets and proprietary technology;
5. Regulations such as HIPPA in the medical field;
6. Insurance and liability issues.

On the other hand companies and organizations are re-discovering tours as a potential marketing tool. Mitchell and Orwig (2002) state that the use of manufacturing tours, company museums, and company visitor centers can be used as strategic tools to strengthen the bond between consumers and brands. GM is going so far as to consider putting Web-accessible cameras in its factories to allow consumers to watch the assembly of their vehicle (Mitchell & Orwig, 2002). Deere and Caterpillar both encourage their customers to watch their equipment be assembled. Many organizations are looking at tours again due to the following reasons:

1. Build a connection for a brand and the company to the consumer;
2. Be used as a recruiting tool for prospective employees;
3. Be a corporate citizen;
4. Utilize the tour as a general public relations tool.

On balance, though, the net effect has been more difficulty in arranging for specialized tours for students and the general public. While not impossible, arranging good field trips became a real challenge for us.

THE GENESIS OF A NEW APPROACH TO TEACHING BUSINESS STRATEGY

In the summer of 2004, Dr. Koch, who is an educational psychologist with over twenty years of corporate manufacturing experience and Dr. Daake a strategist, pioneered a new approach to the teaching our Policy and Strategy capstone course. The idea was not wholly original but grew out of the European International Business Institute (IBI) experience pioneered by Professor Bob Bartel over 30 years ago. Dr. Daake was on the IBI program for seven weeks in the summer of 2003. Through observation and participation in corporate visits in Europe that ranged from Nokia and Deere, to the European Central bank, it occurred to Dr. Daake that a "domestic" version could be just as effective and within reach financially for many more of our students. A thorough review of business and educational literature shows the use of field trips at the K-12 level and in international programs such as IBI, but very little has been written about using a comprehensive field-trip based approach to teaching strategy to upper level college students. The summer format was especially attractive because we were able to have the students for four consecutive days for four weeks. Furthermore, students are only

allowed to take our summer course because of the field trip component that often requires all day commitments as outlined below. Our intention was to limit the class to a maximum of 20 students. During the 2004 program we had 17 students, but in 2005 due to the reputation of the first class we took 23 students and had to turn away several additional students. The course was cross-listed. Psychology students could take it for I/O credit and business students took it as a substitute for the traditional strategy course. A majority of the paper is written from the 2005 experience but some reference to the 2004 program will be made.

The Nuts and Bolts of the Program

CURRICULM

Professors Daake and Koch blended topics from I/O and Strategy and co-taught the lecture portion of the courses. One of the tradeoffs that we had to make was the selection of topics. Table 2 lists some of these tradeoffs. Obviously covering topics from two distinct fields meant that we had to compromise the depth of coverage on some traditional topics. However, we found considerable overlap in the areas of culture, goal setting, quality, and many other topics. Students remarked both years how valuable it was to hear different perspectives on cross-over topics. No textbook was used so we relied on limited book chapters and many current articles from relevant journals. Yet we were true to the academic literature covering key concepts that were essential. Most of the journals were copied for the students as part of the course fee or easily available on the Internet. We were conscious of copyright laws in doing this.

Since summer school at Olivet is done in a four week format, it was critical to get the course up and running very quickly. Class generally met Monday and Tuesday from 8-10 a.m. and then from one half to all day on Wednesday and Thursday for field trips. In 2004 we took one over night trip to the Quad Cities about 150 miles away. During the summer of 2005 we took two overnight field trips. A key feature (modeled after the IBI program) was that the students were required to complete briefing reports on their visits. Due to the reduced amount of class time, most of the time was devoted to lecture and interactive discussion. The first year we did team presentations on special topics, but dropped that in favor of more lecture/discussion in the 2005 program. We did not do extensive case studies from a text as is often done in a typical strategy class; rather our field trips were designed to be “living” case studies. Not only did we prepare students ahead of time for what they were going to see, but we also had on-site discussions among students, faculty and hosts as well as extensive follow-up in the classroom about what the students had heard, seen and experienced. Table 1 lists the site visits along with major topics that were discussed and some observations regarding the experience. You will notice that we deliberately scheduled tours and experiences to broaden our students’ perspective on businesses and other organizations, build group coherence and sharpen their analytical and observation skills.

FIELD VISITS

In the wake of 9/11 and the “lean and mean” environment that most businesses find themselves in, it was a challenge to find quality sites for visits especially in year one. (The second year became somewhat easier because virtually all of the sites we re-contacted in year two were pleased to have us return.) Olivet Nazarene University is within driving distance of Chicago, but we still needed to rely on both local and remote sites. The day of open factories and offices is fast ending. Public tours are less and less frequent. Over a period of months and weeks we started making contacts. Because of my work as Director of the Leadership Center and being on the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce, we were able to assemble several excellent local visits, including Riverside Medical Center (2004). At Riverside, the CEO personally took us on a tour of the facility and demonstrated some of the latest state of the art technology. We were able to visit the local newspaper and watch the presses run- a sight very few of us had ever seen. To provide variety, we had the executive Director of the YMCA talk about non-profit management. We took a half day drive around our county to look at area businesses. Since most of our students are from out of town, it was a revelation as to the scope and variety of local industry even in our relatively small county. There were several additional local visits. **(See Table 1 for a complete list)**

Out of town visits

Caterpillar at Aurora-This visit was very hard to come by, but it was the highlight of the summer course for both years. They spent four hours with our students and even provided lunch. Students probably learned more about manufacturing technology and globalization in those 4 hours than they had in four years of course work. The Caterpillar Aurora plant was recently visited by President Bush to announce new trade initiatives.

Deere and Company-Moline, Illinois

Deere is one of those companies that still does public tours. We visited the Harvester combine factory and then got a walking tour of their beautiful corporate headquarters.

Celebration Dinner Cruise-Mississippi River-The Quad Cities has undergone tremendous change and de-industrialization. The area has worked diligently to re-invent itself into a travel destination and gambling center. This of course is very controversial and we wanted our students to grapple with the tradoffs this implied. The Celebration Cruise is a non-gambling boat; nevertheless, we were able to view the redevelopment of the cities and have frank discussions about the pros and cons of the “gaming” industry.

Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago-They gave a good but standard overview of the Reserve System.

Chicago Mercantile Exchange-This was a wonderful chance to see up close and personal the active trading floor along with a short lecture. A wealth of information was gained about the history and a “behind the scenes” aspects of the CME.

Chicago Architectural Foundation River Cruise-This was optional for the students but we paid for those who wanted to go. Chicago is world-class business city and the home of much of modern architecture.

U.S. Cellular Field (Chicago White Sox)-This was a very popular with sports management students. We got a behind the scenes tour of their meeting conference room, skyboxes, dining rooms and a chance to go down to the dugout area. We actually had to pay \$5.00 a person but this money was donated to their Foundation.

Hamburger University and the Hyatt Lodge at McDonald's-The hospitality business is an important industry and the staff of the hotel provided us with the current state of customer services. A walking tour of McDonald's Hamburger University was also featured. Although students from around the world learn of Hamburger U., very few ever get a chance to visit the campus.

Good's Furniture-This is a nationally famous small business organization that has bucked the trend against superstores and has revolutionized the local town's economy as a result. The owners spent about 1 ½ hours with our students revealing their secrets of success.

City of Ottawa (Illinois), Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, Ottawa Economic Development

This summer we focused extensively on economic development. While this seems like an unusual topic it was done so to make our students more aware of the opportunity and responsibility they will some day have in local communities to make a significant contribution. Ottawa has done what very few medium size (19,000) communities have been able to do-rejuvenate its downtown and stimulate major tourism. As part of this trip, we also visited a beautiful WPA lodge at Starved Rock State Park and provided a little historical perspective for our students.

COSTS

Students paid normal summer tuition and a \$250 travel/material fee. The \$250 fee included most travel including two out of town trips, several meals, any admission charges, a hotel room for two nights, the dinner cruise and all handout materials. By choosing to not require a textbook, the course was cost-attractive to students.

TABLE 1 Site Visits and Topics

| Schedule | Place or activity | Topics emphasized or covered | Additional comments |
|---------------------|---|---|--|
| Week 1- Thursday | Deere & Company- Harvester Works (Combine manufacturing) Moline, Illinois; Deere and Company Corporate Headquarters (Total of 3 hours) | JIT, lean manufacturing; advanced manufacturing techniques; downsizing and corporate re- alignment; globalization; labor relations; workplace violence; corporate culture; career planning | Students got an up close view of manufacturing operations in one of the world's most technologically advanced facilities. We also got a tour of the corporate headquarters and had the opportunity to ask questions of an experienced executive and a global strategist. |
| Week 1 Thursday | Whitey's Ice Cream Moline, Illinois 30 minute stop | Small business expansion and success; integrating values into the business | Whitey's is a very successful small business that has 11 stores in the Quad Cities; they could have easily expanded into a regional franchise operation but instead have chosen to remain a successful small/medium size business rather than lose the character of the company. |
| Week 1 Thursday | Celebration dinner cruise/ (optional casino visit) | Economic redevelopment; the tourism industry; utilizing natural resources as a basis of economic redevelopment; ethics related to the gaming industry | While the primary reason was dinner and fellowship on this 2 hour cruise, we used this experience to talk about economic redevelopment, and the issue of "gaming" and the ethics related to that. For those students who wanted to do a quick walk- through of a casino, |

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| | | | we provided that opportunity. The students found it a sobering experience to see not only the demographics but also the depressing atmosphere. |
| Week 1 Friday | Good's Furniture Kewanee, Illinois 2 hour tour | Small business innovation, marketing and advertising; inventory control; competitive advantage and distinctive competence; economic development | A premiere nationally known furniture retailer that has not only grown into a large regional distributor but has become a tourist destination and an engine to revitalize this small western Illinois town. |
| Week 1 Friday | City of Ottawa, Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, Ottawa Economic Development | Public/private partnerships; economic development; long range planning; tourism industry; marketing and advertising | Mayor of community, planning department, Executive Director of Chamber and Economic Development/Tourism coordinator did a presentation and walking tour of the city. |
| Week 2 Thursday | YMCA, Kankakee 1 hour | Non-profit management; marketing; budget development and financial management; organizational culture | Executive director presented an overview with decisions they are facing and asked for student input. |
| Week 2 Thursday | Kankakee Daily Journal Director of advertising and editor of the Journal | Marketing and advertising; materials management; logistics and distribution; organizational culture; women in management; environmental concerns; strategic business alliances issues and recycling | Students got a tour of the production facility and were briefed by the Director of advertising. Then the new editor, Denise Renckens gave us an overview of the editorial side of the business. |
| Week 2 | Guided bus tour of our | Industrial development | We repeated this |

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| | <p>industrial parks along with a community overview 3 hours</p> | <p>and re-development; transportation and logistics; community responsibility; long range planning; small business development; building community and business competitive advantage</p> | <p>activity again this year. A majority of our students are from out of town and have very little idea as to the challenges and opportunities that face a formerly industrialized community in transition. Students were simply amazed at the scope of business and non-profit activities in the community. We are hoping that many of our business students will eventually assume roles on community boards and develop a sense of responsibility.</p> |
| <p>Week 3 Wednesday</p> | <p>Caterpillar, Aurora Large earth moving factory An amazing 4 hour tour!</p> | <p>JIT; Inventory control; advanced manufacturing techniques including robotics CAD/CAD; materials management; logistics; competitive advantage; globalization; labor relations; strategic alliances; corporate culture; training and development; financial analysis; career planning; energy management</p> | <p>Generally the favorite tour of most students. 3 Cat personnel spent 4 hours with us. The tour was up close and we were shown several models from start to finish. Visiting two world-class manufacturing facilities gave our students the opportunity to compare and contrast the relative strengths and weaknesses of Deere and Cat.</p> |
| <p>Week 3 Wednesday night and Thursday morning</p> | <p>The Hyatt Lodge at McDonald's & Hamburger University Overnight stay and 1 ½ hour tour</p> | <p>High performance customer service; marketing; information systems management; an overview of the hospitality industry;</p> | <p>Staying over night at this newly renovated hotel allowed us to experience first hand Hyatt hospitality. Four Hyatt managers</p> |

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| | | culture; training and development; strategic partnerships | gave us an overview of the hospitality industry and how they use customer service, information systems, and Hyatt know-how to provide a competitive advantage. |
| Week 4 Tuesday | Chicago Mercantile Exchange (the MERC) 1 hour | Financial management, hedging; electronic trading; globalization of monetary system and trading; career management; HR issues related to stress management, training, avoiding workplace violence; security issues | A state of the art look at floor trading and electronic trading in real time. Former traders and managers gave us a preview of the future of trading. |
| Week 4 | The Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago 1 hour | Financial markets and banking; security issues related to banking; federal policy and the basic working of the economic system | Even though this is standard public presentation the students benefited by getting a chance to hear first hand about the working of the Fed and how this relates to the business climate. |
| Week 4 Wednesday | CIGNA Insurance 1 ½ hour | Human resources; training and development; an overview of the insurance industry; competitive advantage; distinctive competence; management information systems as a competitive advantage; financial comparisons to key competitors; work-at-home program | This is our county's largest employer and is a state of the art claims processing center. Students were given a company overview and a tour of the facility and showed the technological basis of their competitive advantage. |
| Week 4 Wednesday | White Sox- U.S. Cellular field | Sports management; training and development; | Many of our students have an interest in sports management |

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| | | hospitality and food service; marketing; advertising; community and public relations | This tour provides an inside look at sports management as well as marketing and management of a professional sports team. |
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TRADEOFFS

In the process of building this program we faced a number of important tradeoffs. Issues relating to content breadth of coverage, the balance between field trips and traditional classroom time, the costs to the students, evaluation methods and several other issues had to be faced. Table 2 below summarizes the most important tradeoffs we faced and how we resolved these. We certainly made some adjustments from the first year to the second and will be making some additional ones for future years.

TABLE 2 Tradeoffs

| ISSUE or TRADEOFF | STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH ISSUE |
|--|--|
| <p>The course was really a hybrid strategy I/O psychology course so this presented less lecture time in traditional strategic topics.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students had to do more outside readings and were assigned take-home quizzes over readings. Students were not used to this level and reading load and would prefer we reduce the load, but this is one of the prices that have to be paid in this format. ✓ There was actually considerable overlap between disciplines and students learned concepts from multiple perspectives. Students learned an important lesson about discipline cross-over. Students remarked over and over again how they liked the team teaching approach and the resulting different viewpoints. ✓ The field trips often raised not only the basic topics but demonstrated the complex interaction. ✓ Some topics that have been covered in other core business courses in reality received less emphasis. |
| <p>Team teaching is more expensive and requires careful coordination</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ First and foremost you need to be teamed up with someone you like, respect and is willing to learn and integrate across disciplines. The utilization of ONE Blackboard program for both instructors facilitated student/faculty communication. ✓ We are fortunate that in the summer environment a course must have 6 people to receive full pay. In 2004 we had 17 and in 2005, 23. Since the course is cross-listed. Olivet's structure (at least for now) allows for both of us to receive full summer pay. |
| <p>No textbook, rather we relied on journal articles and 2-3 key chapters.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The \$100-120 text savings makes the \$250 travel fee more palpable to the students. ✓ The cost of duplications of articles was substantial but we were able to cover that with other savings. ✓ Total readings involved about 250-300 pages over the four weeks which was a challenge for the students. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Take home written quizzes were utilized to assure that students read the material. ✓ Readings were directly tied to field trips we were about to take or had just taken. |
| <p>Given the intensity of the course, we met in the classroom 2 days a week for 2 hours and then met 2 days a week (half and full days) for field trips. This greatly reduced the lecture time in class and forced the use of most of that time in a lecture/discussion format rather than group activities, case discussion and so forth.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Our lectures were very fast paced and we relied on students to read that materials without always taking time in class to go over the material. Some students wanted us to spend more time covering these readings. Several students suggested we extend the course to a fifth week. ✓ After the first year, we eliminated group presentations. Students got a sense of teamwork through the intense nature of the course. We shifted to individual papers in 2005 rather than a group paper and presentation. ✓ Lectures were so much more productive after field trips because we had real life current examples the students could relate to. ✓ The use of “briefing reports” for visits was an indispensable bridge between the in-class lectures, readings, and field trips. |
| <p>Students were charged an additional \$250 travel fee beyond tuition.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This tends to be a very reasonable fee, but in year 2 (2005) we did a better job of communicating with students as to what the fee was buying. The students did not have to buy a text and we provided readings. ✓ For the fee the students got travel costs paid including bus transportation, many meals, two overnight stays at hotels, and paid admission to sites that charged. ✓ The \$250 fee was up from \$200 in 2004. Still we had to very closely manage our funds to not run over the allocated budget. On balance the students felt they got their money’s worth. |
| <p>Given the nature of the course we had to be creative in student evaluation.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We end up utilizing several grading methods that supported the format of the course including: take-home quizzes over readings; a participation grade that emphasizes not only in-class discussion but active participation in field trip discussions; a final paper (10-12 pages on a topic of interest); and the very important briefing reports. |

What We Learned From This Experience

Continuous quality improvement is an important aspect of education. It is an expectation of our department, institution and accrediting agencies. We have had very positive feedback, not only from our students but from our partners in the field. Along with the positive responses we have received useful suggestions from many sources and our experience has taught us much. Below is a summary of what we have learned and some useful suggestions for anyone considering a similar program.

Field-based courses are very effective in the learning process.

Literature cited earlier in the paper makes the case for efficacy of field trips. One thing we noticed after the 2004 course is that returning students who had been through the summer course were more attentive and engaged in follow-up courses. Students who take this between their junior and senior years are more likely to benefit the most. Some sample comments from students from the 2005 class are listed below:

“I loved the versatility of the class. Instead of dreading going to class in the morning, I actually looked forward to going. I learned a lot better through actually seeing what was going on.”

“Going on trips to various business facilities gave me a real world look at some of the business organizations we may be interested in working at in the future.”

“I liked the amount of diversity we were exposed to on the field trips. That kind of learning and integration of business strategies just couldn't have been captured in the classroom.”

“The format that emphasized experiential learning especially being a capstone course, actually seeing companies acting out what we've been learning, is very memorable. The perspectives from two different fields were tremendous.”

Summer is the only time this sort of course can be carried out.

While this sounds obvious, it can not be over emphasized. An inter-term might work but it poses traveling difficulties. It also means that a student cannot take more than one summer class during this timeframe. We had a student or two try to do this with disastrous consequences. We have, however, considered expanding the format to allow two courses to be taught simultaneously and sharing field trips. This would require meeting three days a week in the classroom and for three-four hours per class. That way, a student could get six hours of credit rather than just three. For now, though, we plan on staying with the current format.

This experience is financially viable for virtually all of our students.

Many students cannot afford expensive trips out of state or out of the country. Overseas trips or even trips across country can frequently cost thousands of dollars. At this point we are not aware of any school within the Council or even a state university doing this type of experience. IBI's excellent overseas field now tops \$12,000. The total cost of our program including tuition, fees and travel fee is about \$1,100 + room and board costs. This cost has made a high quality field-based experience available to virtually all of our students.

Team teaching is not only fun and interesting but good for both students and faculty.

Our institution has discussed team teaching for years. Issues regarding load credit, coordination, and schedule conflicts have made this a rarity on most campuses. We just decided to go ahead and do it. Fortunately our pay structure was able to accommodate this approach. Students on many occasions expressed appreciation for multiple viewpoints and perspectives. As faculty we learned a great deal from each other that will in turn enrich our future teaching. It is a powerful form of professional development.

Businesses are willing to support these types of programs and frankly are impressed that we are doing this.

It takes tremendous efforts and relationship building over years to make these connections. The prize visit again this year was Caterpillar. It took a lot of creative contacts to get in the first year in 2004. This year we were welcomed back with open arms. A number of our hosts remarked to the students how lucky they were to have this sort of experience and they were most impressed with what they considered an innovative program. Frankly, Olivet is not as well known as we would like it to be but now these companies know us, and it makes it far more likely that a student searching for a job would get an interview.

You have got to be extremely flexible and "go with the flow" in this type of program.

As with any travel program, flexibility is the key. Timing of multiple visits during the same day was necessary but the logistics can present some problems. Even though it might mean students and faculty have waiting time, we recommend building in plenty of slack time since showing up on time at corporate visits is absolutely essential. We were careful to give our corporate hosts our time frames but in most cases they were over or under in the time planned.

On a very practical note, one thing we learned was the inadvisability of allowing students to bring their choice of movie along on our traveling bus. We had a few

travel segments of several hours and wanted to provide some relief to the long bus ride. What some of them found as acceptable “R” rated movies were offensive not only to us but several of our students. In the future any movies will be selected by us.

This approach to Policy and Strategy breaks lots of conventional rules but the testimonies from the students encourage us to continue the course.

As outlined in Table 2, we made several tradeoffs to make this course a reality. But overall we believe the benefits far outweigh the liabilities. We had overwhelming positive feedback from our students. But they have made several suggestions which we are evaluating for the future. Our experience confirms the adult education literature that so strongly endorses hands-on experiential education. The strongest endorsements came from students who highly recommend this course to their peers.

Travel and intense experiences like this build community and will be remembered and valued for years to come.

As our school continues to grow, it becomes more difficult to foster close relationships between students and faculty. This approach makes a real difference. This has been especially noticeable among students who take this course between their junior and senior years. For both the returning students and the faculty, the personal relationships endure and grow.

Students understand the value of field visits and their on-site behavior.

Student dress, behavior, and preparation are issues that require high visibility. But we found that they responded to our expectations of professional dress, behavior and preparation. They understood they were representing not only themselves, but the other Olivet Students and the school itself.

Above all, this course is an integrative experience that not only covers traditional strategy topics, but emphasizes larger issues like economic development, community responsibility, historical context, industry context, and social and economic justice.

Because of the range and scope of visits, the team teaching from two different disciplines, and the special emphasis on community and economic development we believe our students have had a unique experience. Too often college students come to campus from all over the mid-west and isolate themselves from the day to day issues that will ultimately impact their careers, families, and communities. Ultimately we hope our graduates will not only be successful in their careers and involved in their churches, but also become more involved in the social, economic and development issues of their communities.

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