

# Determinants Of Instructor's Influence On Selection Of A Major In An Integrated Introductory Business Course

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## ABSTRACT

*Increasingly, as part of a desire to improve student understanding of the integrative nature of business, more and more schools are introducing interdisciplinary courses into the curriculum. These courses may also assist students with their choice of major. Generally, courses of this type are offered at the introductory level and may be structured in a variety of ways. Many questions still exist about the overall effectiveness of these courses with respect to teaching an understanding of integration, the appropriateness of alternative course designs, and how they might influence the selection of a major. Our institution has had such an Introductory Business Course for more than a decade. The course has always contained a process of continuous quality improvement. The course has evolved rather significantly during the last decade. One of its most recent and substantive changes has been to move from having multiple faculty members teaching each section to having each section taught by a single instructor. We felt that it was critical to examine the effectiveness of this change with regard to teaching, and also to see if the use of the single instructor model impacted student selection of a business major. The paper evaluates the effectiveness of faculty members to teach material outside their discipline. It also examines for the possible influence by instructors on selection of majors in the instructor's discipline in an introductory business course.*

## INTRODUCTION

Undergraduate introduction to business courses have been initiated at many colleges and universities. Although varying in form, these courses generally serve to provide an introduction to business organizations highlighting the interrelationships among functional areas in business. The expectation with this type of integrated course, as part of an integrated curriculum, is to help prepare students to be “adaptive problem solvers” in a constantly changing business environment (Barsky, 1999). Companies expect that this will help students meet industry demand in a global business environment.

Increasingly integration across the business curriculum has been acknowledged as vital to students who must function in 21<sup>st</sup> century organizations (Geiger and Dangerfield, 1996; LeClair, 1998; McKinney, 1998). Driving the move towards integration has been criticism that business schools have produced graduates who are too specialized and who lack the knowledge, methods and skills to make complex business decisions (Behrman and Levin 1984). The criticism implies that the traditional functional focus leaves students with little understanding of the interrelationships between business disciplines (DeMoranville, et al., 2000).

Porter (1997) advocated the move away from a functional focus noting the benefits of cross-functional integration of the business curriculum on life-long learning. Other benefits, as noted by Newell (1994), include development of effective and cognitive skills. Further motivation for a more integrative curriculum stems from pressure by the AACSB-International (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) to integrate the core areas of business and apply cross-functional approaches (AACSB standards). Integration, however, has not been

limited to undergraduate programs. The University of Massachusetts at Lowell M.B.A. program replaced specialty-driven core courses with interdisciplinary courses taught by a team of professors (Lanza 1992).

**NOTE**

Full paper is available from author.

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