THE FOURTH GENERATION MARKETING CURRICULUM: MEETING AACSB's 50-50 RULE

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ABSTRACT

The decade of the 90's poses some tough challenges for Business schools. In 1992 AACSB noted that "a crisis is at hand and ...survival is a key issue." (AACSB, 1992). Business schools will face constrained budgets, pressures for increased productivity, lower enrollments, and increased regulation and oversight. As the traditional college student market decreases, adopting the marketing concept will become more important. One reason may be that non-business majors do as well as, or better than, business majors in the job market. Employers want students who have problem solving, communication, and 'learning to learn' skills acquired through a broad and deep curriculum (Kearns, 1989). Business schools have been criticized for teaching in functional "silos," failing to recognize that disciplinary boundaries in organizations are fuzzy and career paths often cross these boundaries (Alden et al., 1991). AACSB has responded by mandating the 50-50 Rule (Mason, 1995). While these guidelines pose additional challenges for business schools, they also provide new opportunities for re-engineering business curriculums.

Historically, marketing education has evolved through three generations. First-generation marketing (1950-1965) presented management practices and provided practical materials (Gordon & Howell, 1959). The second generation (1960-1975) focused on conceptual depth, incorporating fundamental disciplines such as social psychology and statistics (Hancock and Bell, 1970). Third-generation marketing curricula (1970 to present) integrated the first and second generations. In response to recommendations like those of Alden et al. (1994), Porter and McKibbin (1988) and the 50-50 Rule, the fourth-generation is now evolving. It involves an interdisciplinary and cross-functional approach to preparing students for "imaginative and responsible citizenship and leadership roles in business and society--domestic and worldwide" (AACSB, 1988).

Conceptually, there are two approaches to meeting the AACSB 50-50 rule: reduce the required accounting, business and economics courses, or increase the required outside courses. The first allows greater flexibility in course selection, enabling a minor or double major within a reasonable time frame. Reducing required business-related courses could be achieved by reducing requirements for the common business core, or the specific majors. Reducing the business core would leave the major requirements intact but weaken the general business background. If requirements for the major are reduced, the opposite would occur. Both would result in a "watering down" of the degree. It would also ignore concerns of the business community. Increasing outside requirements has its benefits. It maintains the core and major requirements and strengthens the major through a judicious selection of nonbusiness courses.

To bring the University of Idaho marketing program into compliance with the 50-50 rule and practitioner demands, a hybrid approach was developed that increased both required business and nonbusiness courses. It involved the college-wide adoption of an integrated business core program, and additional marketing major requirements in accounting, communications, and nonbusiness marketing electives. The new major addresses practitioner concerns regarding depth of understanding, integration of business functions, and communication skills. The nonbusiness electives and communications course also allow the marketing major to meet the 50-50 rule. For students, the new major provides greater flexibility in creating a marketing major to match their own interests. However, it reduces the number of free electives available, thus completing a minor becomes more difficult.

As marketing programs are restructured to facilitate learning, faculty must also learn new content and pedagogical approaches. Faculty will likely work in teams might to deal with complex, multi-faceted cases and concepts. The emerging "metasciences" arising from interdisciplinary and cross-functional integration are the future of marketing education.

References and figures available upon request.