College of Business Administration
Graduate Committee

Minutes: February 26, 2007, 9:00 am, Dean’s Conference Room

Members:

**Present:** Heather Honea, Ken Marino, Mehdi Salehizadeh, Chamu Sundaramurthy, Gene Whittenburg

**Absent:** Murray Jennex

**Guest:** Don Sciglimpaglia

**Item 1** IDS Curriculum Proposals
The IDS Department presented several curriculum proposals. The GC concluded that additional information/clarification was needed before approving them. Approval was postponed pending the receipt of such information.

**Item 2** BA 795 vs. the 790 Course
With guest Don Sciglimpaglia in attendance, the discussion focused on the future of BA 795. In the current 49-unit MBA Program, BA 795 (Integrative Business Analysis) – based on “strategic case analysis of business problems – is the predominant choice, compared to the Thesis option, selected by the MBA students for the culminating experience. As for the MSBA students, the overwhelming majority opt for the 790 course – Directed Readings – which is offered by each individual department. The proposed 48/30 units MBA Program, if approved by CBA faculty, may lead to a substantial increase (drop) in the number of MBA (MSBA) students and thus a rise in the number of needed BA 795 cases. A key question raised: would there be enough cases to accommodate the anticipated increase in the MBA enrollees?

Don brought the GC up-to-date on the current structure of BA 795, the historical number of cases, the overall practical experience gained by students, and the academic as well as the financial rewards benefiting the faculty advisors and the College. Given the potential increase in the demand for such cases, though, Don agreed with the GC that the MBA culminating experience should be flexible, offering students a choice from among BA 795, the (to-be-modified) 790 course, and the thesis option.

BA 795 is graded on the basis of group/case work, is “general” (i.e., college-wide and not department-specific), and is administered through the CBA’s Graduate Business Office. On the other hand, the grade for each 790 course is individually based, and the course is treated differently depending on the specific department offering it. Indeed, significant variations exist in the current offerings of the 790 course across the CBA’s five departments.
There was unanimous agreement that for the 790 course to become an academically-acceptable “MBA culminating-experience option,” it must have a certain degree of uniformity and standardization across the various specializations which will be open to future enrollees in the proposed MBA Program. There was further consensus that financial rewards and course-load issues ought to be addressed for those faculty members involved in the 790 courses. Also, current MBA students, along with student project managers for BA 795 cases, should be surveyed as to the likelihood of a “hypothetical” switch to the 790 alternative. Finally, the committee discussed the feasibility of instituting a college-wide BA 790, an option which will require more in-depth evaluation and planning.

Item 3 Proposed New MBA Curriculum
Ken and Mehdi brought the committee up-to-date on their Q&A meeting with the Finance Department held on 2/9/07. Specific issues raised were:

a) Would certain MSBA degrees/specializations remain?

b) What would the standards be for waiving the proposed core classes? Based on grades? How about AACSB standards? What about applicants with degrees from outside the U.S.? Who will decide: the Graduate Business Office vs. departments/advisors?

c) The graduate program must ensure that the contents of the graduate courses are more advanced than the namesake undergraduate ones.

d) How wide-spread is the 1-year MBA throughout the U.S.? Data is being collected.

e) There should be a re-evaluation of both the ethics and the technology BA xxx courses. How is each being taught (i.e., what are the contents) at other schools? For the former: more legal than ethics? The GC talked about the possibility of offering the legal/ethics and technology BA xxx courses on the basis of “selection from among several choices” (similar to existing theme system)? This would remove objections/concerns raised by a number of faculty members. If agreed to by GC, and in light of the latest MBA Assessment report which highlighted the less-than-optimum outcome from student surveys of these two theme topics, then should the choice courses/instructors be urged to modify their contents?

f) How to distinguish (brand) our MBA program?
g) In a prior e-mail to the GC, David Ely had pointed out that, with a waiveable core, graduate students earning an MBA degree will no longer have the cohort experience which is part of the current MBA program. He had suggested that the program introduce:

“… an orientation week or pre-MBA program. UT Austin’s MBA orientation and boot camp might provide a useful model. During the 1-week orientation students are introduced to the campus and to faculty, and engage in team building exercises and fun activities. Their boot camp consists of short review sessions on accounting and finance. An orientation at SDSU could be used to connect the new students to the university and their classmates. We could use boot camps to prepare students that qualify to waive core courses but may not remember as much as they should as they enroll in advanced courses. UT Austin charges $500 for their orientation.”

h) In the current graduate program: Are there differences in the academic performances of MBA vs. MSBA students in shared/common courses taken by both groups? If yes, who does better? Are there implications for waiving the core?

As the required data/statistics and other pertinent information become available, the committee will re-visit the key issues highlighted above at its future meetings.

Adjournment: 11:00 am

Next meeting: Monday, March 12th, 9:00 am, Dean’s Conference Room

Mehdi Salehizadeh
For the College Graduate Committee