

# **EVOLUTION OF A BUSINESS PROGRAM DESIGNED TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper describes the 20-year evolution of the College of Business in developing a comprehensive, four-year professional and career development program for students. We began by designing a "business spine," a series of courses introducing students to the tools of business decision-making. The spine culminated by requiring each business major to complete two internships, consisting of at least 300 hours of work experience. We now understand that students also need to acquire a variety of skills over four years, on their paths to becoming business professionals. We show the importance to students' success of experiential learning, including internships, mentoring, and skill-development. Students now take freshman and sophomore business experience courses, meet with their career mentors over their four years, and participate in a variety of workshops and other activities and events to help them learn business and professional skills and attitudes. We believe this comprehensive, four-year program contributes to our nearly 99% placement rates within six months of graduation.*

**JEL:** M10

**KEYWORDS:** Assessment, Internships, Student learning, Experiential learning, Business Education

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 1985, a new dean took over operations of the College of Business (COB), which he served until 1993. His vision was to build the COB into a school with a prominent reputation, at least regional if not state and national. He also wanted to compete with more well-respected state and regional schools with an innovative and tailored approach; in other words, on Butler's terms and strengths rather than trying to compete with big state research schools head-on. His guiding motto was to make Butler COB into a "small jewel of a business school." His primary innovation was to design a program which bridged the gap between the business and academic worlds. In developing and implementing his innovative vision, the dean addressed the criticism, even then, about the relevance of business education. Various streams of literature seemed to have informed his vision, but it seems to be derived from criticisms of higher education in general and business education in specific. Many authors point out these criticisms, which still remain relevant today for most business schools.

The dean envisioned emphasizing the development of student skills in addition to the traditional teaching of business content, to address the deficiencies he and others saw in business education. Internships could be considered the epitome of experiential learning, and in the dean's mind, they would be the focal point and culmination of the business curriculum. In addressing innovation in business education, we might consider business schools' failure to address much in the education except content of disciplines such as accounting, marketing, etc. However, the business community keeps demanding but not getting a workforce also trained in both hard skills (thinking and problem solving) and soft skills (interpersonal, communication, empathy, etc.). The body of literature about experiential education suggests that it can be used to enhance students' knowledge, and also encourage and support their skills development.

Thus, the dean thought that required internships, and the preparation of students to undertake such internships, could well address the issues in business education. He developed a program called the "business professional spine," designed specifically to address the issues. The spine was originally

designed to begin in the freshman year with a one-hour course as an introduction to business. It was continued in the sophomore year with courses in information technology tools, as well as critical and creative thinking. In the junior year, students took courses in the application of information technology, as well as their first internship. Finally in the senior year, the spine culminated in the second internship.

Butler University is close to downtown Indianapolis, a city with a population of about 830,000. About 4,500 students enroll in one of six colleges, including fine arts, communications, business, education, pharmacy, and liberal arts. Today, more than 700 undergraduate and 300 graduate students are enrolled in the COB, and choose one of seven undergraduate majors (accounting, economics, finance, international business, management information systems, marketing, and risk management) and one of two graduate programs (Masters of Business Administration and Masters of Professional Accounting). For the undergraduates, their two internships remain one of the most significant reasons they chose Butler. The COB has built its undergraduate program on the foundation of “real life, real business,” which we believe formalizes the connection between academics and business, and embodies the notion of both knowledge and skills development through experiential education.

This paper describes the evolution of the early “business and professional spine” into today’s academic program, which includes as a major component a comprehensive, four-year professional and career development program. We believe we have developed, through this comprehensive approach, a way to address and overcome many of the criticisms about business education. While we know we need to help students learn about traditional business topics such as accounting, marketing, economics, etc., we also believe we need to help them develop into better business professionals, with the skills and attitudes necessary to be successful in business and life. We firmly believe, and the literature supports our contention, that business schools typically fail to address the needs of the business community. This lack relates more to skills development than it does business knowledge acquisition. Therefore, we believe we need to help students develop professional attitudes and skills. We believe there is no better way to do this than through experiential education, which we implement through our career mentoring, business experience courses, and internships. The following literature review describes the theoretical support for our ideas, along the lines of mentoring, professional and career development, skills development, and finally, experiential education.

In the next sections, we outline the literature that supports the three major aspects of our program: our belief that business and professional skills are as important as business knowledge, that experiential learning is an effective tool to help students develop the skills and apply knowledge, and finally that a mentoring process helps students develop the softer, more personal skills such as teamwork and communications necessary to success in business and life in general.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A plethora of research in both academic and public endeavors and publications demonstrate the gaps in the skills and talents that employers need from their new employees and what new graduates show up to work with. After conducting a survey, reported in November 2011, FTI Consulting writes “for every skill and hiring criteria tested, decision-makers’ ratings reveal a gap between stated importance and applicant performance.” Companies, students, and institutions all are noting the discrepancies and looking seriously for remediation, for programs that will serve academic needs as well as professional demands.

Criticism of higher education and especially business education is not new, for example, the Accounting Education Change Commission (1990) and Pearce (1999) both pointed out the lack of relevance and practical experiences in business education. More than ten years later, Hart (2006), Abraham & Karns (2009), and the FTI Consulting group (2011) studied the correspondence between what businesses say they want and what business schools do. Sorensen (2009) suggests that business schools should help

students develop skills to take them into the future, among them being able to cope with change, thinking strategically, both of which can be developed through experiential learning, and networking and job-search skills. The dean's vision is now supported by a vast body of research, including Prince (2004), Bonwell & Eisen (1991), and Kuh (2010) suggesting that experiential learning, i.e. where students are fully engaged in their own learning, is a very effective way to help students learn both content and skills.

Several studies addressed the lack of skills students tend to exhibit after graduation. For example, FTI Consulting [2006] conducted a survey of over United States' 1,000 companies' hiring decision-makers. Commissioned by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), FTI reported two important findings: survey respondents thought prospective employees were deficient in various workplace skills and knowledge, and education institutions could do a better job preparing students for the workplace. The results show that survey respondents thought only 16% of job applicants are very prepared, while 21% were unprepared, leaving 63% in the unenviable position of being "somewhat prepared." Even worse, the survey respondents said only 7% of higher education institutions were excellent in preparing students, while 39% of institutions were only fair or poor, leaving 54% as good. Another consultant, the Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., conducted a survey for the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) initiative "Liberal Education and America's Promise" (LEAP) [2006]. Executives at 305 employers and 510 recent college graduates were surveyed. Both groups stress the importance to education of both knowledge and skills, and that a college education should help students learn knowledge as well as develop skills. In fact, 73% of the employers believed the top-ranked skill that should have more emphasis is integrative learning, which includes the ability to apply knowledge and skills to problems. Finally, Abraham and Karns (2011) studied what businesses want, what business schools want, and more importantly, what business schools tend to emphasize. One of the major issues in business education is the lack of attention to skills development, and experiential education is one very effective way to deal with that.

Experiential education includes professional mentoring and career development (etiquette, career planning, and job search), soft skills (self-awareness, interpersonal, and relationships), and hard skills development (knowledge of business disciplines, thinking, and problem-solving). Tobin (1998) writes of the impact of mentoring on future career success, and Morgan (2011) reports that becoming self-aware is a component crucial job success.

A very unique aspect central to the dean's vision was the concept of "executives-in-residence." Several authors, in academia as well as business, have pointed out the value of mentoring, such as Tobin (1998) and Morgan (2011) to students' careers. Thus, the dean hired individuals near the end of their business careers, people who wanted to help business students as they begin their professional journey. First hired in the late 1980s, one continues to serve as a career mentor, while the other pioneer executives-in-residence have retired in just the last couple of years. These people have vast experience in the regional business community, including banking and finance, health care, insurance, and other areas prominent in the region. Their role was to serve as informal advisors to students about career development, and to provide guidance during the development and delivery of the business spine courses. In some cases, they taught the spine courses. Today, we call them "career mentors," and they have a much more structured and defined role relative to students' professional and career development.

Kuh is a renowned expert in student learning and education, and he finds (2008) nine "high-impact educational practices," one of which is internships. Further, he also claims (2010) that "There are many good ideas for enhancing college achievement and helping more undergraduates succeed. Few promise to deliver as much bang for the buck as making work more relevant to learning, and vice versa."

## **BUTLER UNIVERSITY BUSINESS PROGRAM**

The undergraduate business program currently consists of 127 hours, including about 55 hours of university core. Of about 75 hours in business, 55 hours are required of all business majors and constitute the “business core” (statistics, information systems, business experience, economics, accounting, finance, marketing, and two three-hour internships). The internships were required beginning in 1988, and were then called “cooperative education experiences.” A Department of Education grant funded the program for the first couple of years, after which it became self-sufficient. The grant required two experiences, each for three academic credit hours, called cooperative education, for every student graduating from the COB. Most students enrolled in their internships during their junior and senior years, although some did as sophomores. To ensure students were adequately prepared to perform the work required by employers, over the years we added requirements. Currently, students must have junior standing, have completed at least 12 hours of upper level business courses and the first course in the major.

The requirements of the internship have always been fairly rigorous: the overriding principle has always been that it be a meaningful, productive, business work experience. Students are not allowed to use simply any job to satisfy the internship; rather it must be approved by the staff as representing a real business experience. In other words, students cannot work as a cash register operator or a secretary or a data entry clerk. Furthermore, at least one of the two internships must be directly related to the student’s major. Finally, students must work at least 300 hours in their experience. While they are usually paid, unpaid experiences are acceptable. Students can complete an internship during the fall or spring semester while attending class full-time and working part-time, or they can work full-time during the summer. In the second model, they often choose to live and work in their hometowns, with about 50 percent working in Indianapolis. Several full-time positions are available to students, mostly in the public accounting profession and some with major companies that utilize full-time internship programs as a recruiting tool.

In addition to requiring fairly rigorous work experience, the faculty was always adamant that the course include a strong academic component. After all, they concluded, internship courses award three hours of credit, and in faculty minds, students earn the three hours of academic through the academic component; they do not earn three hours of credit for working. A faculty position, called the “Coordinator of the Internship Program,” was created in the early days to protect, guide, and implement the academic component.

In 2002, a new dean, in developing a COB strategic initiative, wanted to expand the original vision of bridging the gap between the academic and business worlds to include more than simply two internships. He thought the internships should be but one component of a more comprehensive educational process, spanning students’ entire academic career. After two years of faculty investigation, and the study of many divergent ideas and concepts, the COB adopted the foundation of “real life, real business” as the guiding principle of business education. This foundation necessitated rethinking and redesigning the entire business spine. At this point, students completed their two internships during their junior and senior years, the requirements of which were introduced to freshmen and sophomores. In administering to students’ needs in finding jobs and the academic aspects of the internships, very few resources could be devoted to helping students prepare for the internship search or participation in the professional world. However, we could see that while students might be prepared to handle both finding and working at a job, they were not very well-equipped to engage in a search for an internship that could serve as a springboard to their desired career path. In other words, their preparation lacked a comprehensive, longer-term view embodied in the “real life, real business” concept.

To implement the “real life, real business” principle, we realized we needed to enhance the internship program, and redesign some components of the academic program to include a freshman business seminar and a sophomore real business experience. Whereas in the beginning, the focus was on the

internships themselves, the focus is now on students’ entire professional and career development, with the internships serving as the culminating experience to a comprehensive four-year program. In addition, two new courses were added to the curriculum. In the freshman course that introduces students to business, students explore industries and develop a business plan. In the sophomore course, student teams not only develop another business plan, they can actually present it to an evaluation panel and obtain funding for the business, allowing them to operate the business during the following semester.

The current Director of the Internship Office was hired in 2002 and charged with developing the comprehensive four-year program. Under her guidance, and with internship office staff and faculty participation, a model was designed to help students progress through a four-year professional and career development program. Table 1 presents an overview of the program.

Table 1: Integration of Four Years of Career and Professional Development

Year/Activity	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
Major focus	Self-knowledge and awareness	Career exploration	Job search process	Work experience
Major ways of implementation	-- Meet with Career Mentor and attend activities/events to complete required passport activities --			
	DISC and MBTI – personal, teamwork, and leadership tendencies	Strong interest inventory	Building a winning resume	Getting organized and motivated for job search
	Alumni forums	Introduction to BLUE (University job search software) Alumni Career Directory	Interviewing skills and mock interviews	Keys to career / life success
	Career events	Career Research / Resume Development	Making the most of your internship	Evaluating and negotiating a job offer
	Cultural events	Information interviews, networking skills, etiquette workshop	Seeking out a mentor	Assessing a benefits package
	Community service / volunteer events	Job shadowing / information interviews	Dress for success / business etiquette Leadership styles	
<b>Formal Courses</b>				
Non-credit (pass/fail, zero credit)	COB101 Professional and Career Development I	COB201 Professional and Career Development II	COB301 Professional and Career Development III	n/a
For-credit	n/a	n/a	COB300 Career Planning and Development (pass/fail, 1 hour)	n/a
	n/a	n/a	COB401 Internship I (letter grade, 3 hours)	COB402 Internship II (letter grade, 3 hours)

*This table provides an overview of the four years, and the major ways the focus is implemented. Each student is assigned to a career mentor, who helps guide students and ensures completion of activities and event necessary to complete the non-credit courses. Faculty members teach the for-credit courses, which have well-defined learning objectives, with assignments designed to help students demonstrate their learning.*

As outlined in Table 1, career mentors concentrate during the first year on helping students develop self-knowledge and awareness. After students gain some idea of their interests and strengths, they emphasize career exploration in their second year. In the third year, they focus on applying the knowledge gained in years one and two to searching for suitable internship opportunities. Finally, in their fourth year, they concentrate on finding their second internship, and also their first post-graduate job, based on their learning and experiences during their entire four-year program. The idea is that through their four years, students should have attained these major program goals within these four overlapping areas.

The COB now houses the Office of Career Development and Student Services, which provides and manages the structure and mechanisms through which to implement the four-year program. The Office includes the professional and career development program. COB students can also utilize the services

offered by the University Internship and Career Services; however they rarely find this necessary. In Table 2, more detailed information about what students do each year, and in which class, to become young business professionals.

Table 2: What, When, and How Students Learn

Year and Focus	Formal Courses	What They Learned/Developed	How They Learned/Developed It
Freshman year: Self-knowledge and awareness	Freshman Business Experience Course (3 hours), students learn about the global business environment while enhancing their skills such as self-awareness, thinking, problem solving, teamwork, and ethics.	A strong sense of self which they can readily articulate, through both written and oral communications, in terms of personal strengths, values, interests, accomplishments, and life/career goals An initial career path which matches their skills, values, and interests An understanding of and plans to further enhance communications skills An understanding of various definitions of success in life, and the connection between careers and success An understanding of their roles and responsibilities as individuals within communities (school, organization, city, etc.)	Attend a variety of workshops, job fairs, alumni panels, and other forums, covering resume construction, professional etiquette, job search software  Perform job shadowing and mock interviews, write self-reflections, resumes, industry and job descriptions and evaluations
Sophomore year: Career exploration	Real Business Experience course (3 hours required), students develop and present a business plan; Real Business Practicum course (3 hours optional), implement and operate the business  Career Planning course (1 hour), students research, reflect, and write about short- and long-term career management issues	A broad knowledge of various industries, job functions and potential career paths To take responsibility for their own professional career development How to manage their own lifelong strategic career plans, including the skill of adapting to shifting workplace trends	Complete and explore self-assessment tools such as Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Strong Inventory
Junior year: Job search	Internship I course (3 hours), students write papers/give presentations to demonstrate their understanding of how business concepts apply to actual professional situations, and how they can use business concepts to solve business problems	Strong skills and knowledge of career planning and the job search process, e.g., resume design and content, networking, interviewing, etc. A professional demeanor, e.g., personal appearance, language, etiquette, behavior, etc. To use job search resources and strategies found in the library, Career Services, etc.	
Senior year: Work experience	Work Internship II course (3 hours), students write papers to demonstrate their understanding of how business concepts apply to actual professional situations, and how they can use business concepts to solve business problems	An appreciation of the connection between academic theories/concepts and their applications in organizations An understanding of the ethics of career planning and the job search process as well as ethical behavior in the workplace	

\*Students enroll in a pass-fail, zero-credit course, where their career mentors monitor their completion of the activities listed in this column.

*This table shows the detail of what students do each year in their for-credit and non-credit courses. People who participate heavily in students' journey to career development include career mentors, internship coordinators, and the faculty instructors of the for-credit courses.*

The Director of the Office of Career Development and Student Services oversees her staff, which consists of the secretary, the manager of the professional and career development program, professional “internship coordinators,” and the “career mentors.” At the beginning of their four-year COB education, the Director’ office assigns career mentor to all students. As students begin to prepare for their first internship search, an internship coordinator is assigned to help students navigate the search and acceptance process. Students remain with their internship coordinator and career mentor throughout their educations. In addition, COB instructors teach the three for-credit courses, including Career Planning and Development, and Internship I and II.

Career mentors are mostly retired business executives, usually from the local or regional Indianapolis area, who become part of the COB to work with students. They act as mentors rather than instructors or

academic advisors, and guide students through the process of becoming young business professionals. They each guide approximately 60 students from the freshmen through senior years, and are committed to work at least 10 hours per week throughout the calendar year. In return for their stipend, the Director requires them to attend regular training and up-dating meetings. The career mentors help students explore their career interests, identify how those interests coincide with their personal strengths, goals, and skills, and acquire professional attitudes, demeanors, and knowledge. Students meet with their career mentors at least twice per semester, and often more.

The Director, manager, and the professionals serve as internship coordinators. Again, the Director assigns an internship coordinator to each student. The internship coordinators help students with the more professional part of career exploration, especially the part directly related to helping students prepare for and conduct their internship searches.

Students take three for-credit courses, which COB instructors are assigned to lead. Career Planning and Professional Development is a one-hour, pass/fail course students take in junior year in partial preparation for their first internship search. The internships themselves are also formal courses, each worth three hours of academic credit for a traditional grade.

As outlined in Table 2, students are required to attend a variety of workshops and meetings offered by career mentors and internship coordinators, covering a variety of material, such as self-assessment tools including Myers Briggs Type Indicator, Strong Inventory, how to construct a resume, professional etiquette, the job search process including formal job search resources such as mock interview software and the Butler Career Services on-line resources.

Students, guided by their career mentors, internship advisors, and internship instructors, must submit a number of short written summaries, including reflections, resumes, substantiation of job shadowing, etc. For their career mentors and internship coordinators, students must prepare resumes, participate in at least one mock interview, evaluate various industry and job opportunities, etc. For their internship instructors, students prepare academic assignments, complete with sources.

Students enroll in a series of courses beginning in the freshman year and extending through the senior year. In the first three years, the courses are zero-credit, pass/fail courses used to formalize students' activities. The three courses, called Professional and Career Development I, II, and III provide a formal record on their transcripts that students have completed the necessary activities and outputs to warrant course credit.

The career mentors and internship advisors who guide the students through these courses use a "passport," which is a little booklet resembling a real passport. Given to all students at the beginning of their freshman year, the passport is used to record all students' activities, and it provides a formal mechanism through which to monitor students' completion of passport activities. At the end of each semester, the career mentors and internship advisors forward a list of their students who have completed the necessary activities and outputs, so that the staff can assign the passing grade.

In their junior and senior years, students enroll in three for-credit courses. The first, Career and Professional Development, is a one-hour, pass/fail course taught by adjunct instructors. The actual internships, Internship I and Internship II, are both three-hour, graded courses, taught by regular COB instructors.

The internship courses are designed to have a substantial academic component. In fact 70 percent of the course grade is based on academic assignments while only 30 percent comes from the employer's evaluations. Involved faculty members have carefully developed the learning objectives, where we

believe students should be able to accomplish the following four items. First, they should be able to identify, integrate, and apply technical business content and knowledge from their own majors and other business disciplines to their job situation; students should be able to demonstrate skills in communications (especially written), and problem-solving. Second, they should be able to demonstrate skills in communications (especially written), and problem-solving. Third, they should be able to demonstrate awareness and understanding of global issues and business. Finally, students should be able to articulate how their work experience has enhanced their professional, academic, and personal growth, as well as their career development.

For each course, assignments are designed which allow students to demonstrate their achievement of the learning objectives. Instructors meet with students several times through the semester, with the objectives of the meetings being to discuss internship experiences and to provide further structure to students about the three to four assignments.

We believe that students, through the activities, events, and courses outlined above, obtain a better business and liberal arts education, and become better prepared for their business careers. As evidence, we show that since 1988, both Butler as well as the COB has attracted local, regional, and national attention in many respects: the COB obtained initial AACSB accreditation in 1997, has been recognized in national business program rankings, and of course the extraordinary run of the men's basketball team, culminating in back to back appearances in the final game of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament (2010 and 2011). For example, the Butler COB has achieved high rankings in both the *U.S. News & World Report* and the *BloombergBusinessWeek*. Applications and enrollment in Butler's COB have increased over the past few years, in the face of decreases across the nation, with near record freshman classes in both 2011 and 2012.

## ASSESSMENT

Huba and Freed (2000) present a brief history of assessment in higher education. Although the assessment of student learning has a long history, it wasn't until 1989 that the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools began requiring student learning assessment. Subsequently, specialized accrediting bodies in areas such as the arts, engineering, sciences, and business began including assessment as part of program evaluation. In fact, AACSB International, one of the primary accrediting bodies for business schools, revised its standards in its 2012 handbook for accreditation, *Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation*. In Martell (2007), we learn that the AACSB requires schools to develop student learning objectives, monitor student learning outcomes, and then "close the loop" by using data to make programmatic changes to achieve continuous improvement in their business programs.

In 1992, the American Association for Higher Education Assessment Forum published its Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning (1992). We learn that we should be concerned not only what students learn at a particular time in a particular course, but also what they can do with what they know through later performance. The hallmark of a good assessment program is that we assess the effect of the program on student learning, rather than their learning in one course. In other words, we should assess what students have learned, how they have integrated that learning, and finally what they can do with what they learned. Finally, another aspect of learning emphasized in the AACSB Standards relate to the fact that business schools should not rely only on passive learning, rather we should incorporate active learning, which has been shown to be more effective, into business programs.

We have made strong use of internship assignments for both learning and assessment purposes, and the Office of Career Development and Student Services makes good use of rubrics and other assessment-related activities to help students become business professionals.

Although assessment and its implications were not foremost in the introduction of internships and a business professional component into the program in the 1980s, it certainly has helped strengthen our business education. First, we use active and experiential learning through the internships to help student learn about business and more importantly, to integrate and apply what they have learned in real business situations: in other words, use what they have learned and show what they can do. Second, the internships provide many points in the senior year for assessment, thus allowing us to assess what students know and can do in a real business setting, rather than what they have learned in one course. Finally, the Office staff use the notion of standardized, consistent assignment requirements and rubrics to help students in their career management. For example, all career mentors and internship coordinators use a standard rubric to help students develop effective resumes and cover letters.

### **A PATH FOR THE FUTURE**

Business schools need to form partnerships with the business community, so that business education meets the needs of future employers and ensures that students obtain an education. Employers need to keep telling business educators what they need from business school graduates. Such partnerships can incorporate into business education what business school graduates need in terms of preparing them for successful professional careers. Finally, our experience shows that a unit within the business school, a unit that deals directly with and only with students' professional and career development, can be very effective in helping students become successful young business professionals.

### **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

We believe the program achieves the major goals we have for students through this program: it enhances the cumulative learning over four years; it provides knowledge in a "just in time" manner, as they need it in their development; and it adds "real world" and personal and professional application, which adds relevance and urgency to students' desire to learn. We believe all of this helps us produce students who are better prepared to obtain meaningful internships, which lead to more meaningful jobs after graduation. We believe in the attention to "real life, real business" so we pay attention to students' development as people and professionals, in addition to trying to help them learn the traditional content of business education.

Certain factors greatly enhance the ability of Butler University to implement this program, while such factors might limit other universities' efforts. For example, Butler exists in a major metropolitan area, with well-developed industries and business professions such as health care, insurance, consulting, and manufacturing. Second, because of the relatively small size of the COB, we can devote the resources necessary to helping students and we can also place close to 200 students per year. Third, a Lilly Grant (2005) provided the basis for acquiring the staff necessary to support students' career development activities over their four years.

We plan to extend the work of this paper in two ways. We obviously would like substantiation that the program does indeed produce better business professionals. First, we would have to identify what "better business professionals" means to the business community. We believe building better business professionals includes helping students obtain a firm grounding in business content, as well as excellent skills in thinking, problem-solving, communications, and interpersonal and professional development. However, we would like corroboration of this contention. Second, we would like to gather evidence that our students do meet the definition of "better business professionals." We would like to corroborate information by gathering it from employers, graduates, parents, and other constituents.

In summary, we believe that intertwining internships, professional development, mentoring, and workshops with academic learning gives students the crucial links they need to be prepared for successful

careers. Let us end with the national rankings the COB has achieved, as reported by the Butler website (2012): *BloombergBusinessWeek* ranking listed Butler 63<sup>rd</sup> in 2010, 58<sup>th</sup> in 2011, and 48<sup>th</sup> in 2012, out of 124 business schools. The 2012 ranking is ahead of Indiana University and Purdue University. Butler ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in internships, and obtained an A+ grade for job placement, which is 99 percent of graduates placed within six months of graduation. In addition, Butler COB ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in regional Midwest universities by the *U.S. News & World Report*. To conclude, we believe these accomplishments rest on the foundation built in the mid-1980s by a very visionary, forward-looking dean.

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

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