

# The Team-Taught Cross-Functional Core: Insights From a Long-Term Undergraduate Program

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A small number of undergraduate business schools have made significant changes to their curriculum to deliver a team-taught, cross-functional undergraduate core. The author examines an exemplary early-adopting program to better understand the long-term impact such a change has had on the overall organization, and to seek insights on implementation and sustainability from these experienced faculty and administrators. The author found a program that benefits students with a well-rounded view of how business operates and the people skills employers want. In the process the study school has made broad and lasting connections to business, created a sustaining model to help support the program, and redefined its culture as a community of learners.

**Keywords:** business processes, cross-functional teaching, integrated core, inter-disciplinary

More than 20 years ago, business schools were urged to close the gap between what students learned and what business practitioners wanted new entry-level management hires to know (Porter & McKibbin, 1988). Two decades later, most undergraduate business schools still follow a core curriculum modeled after the functional areas of a business and reflected in part through the discipline-based organizations of most business schools. Marketing, operations, finance, and human resources may identify the tasks of a business, but they do not explain the processes business organizations follow to achieve their goals. For example, order fulfillment, customer service, supply chain management, and new product development are processes that are critical to a firm's survival and success. All of these processes cross the functional areas of a business, but they are hard to manage in a function-based matrix (Spanyi, 2007).

## BACKGROUND

There appears to be consensus among business educators that integration of content across functional disciplines is important. A recent study of business school deans reported that more than 80% believed there is a need to integrate the

undergraduate core curriculum, and 77% of respondents believed it is critical to the future success of students. The same study reported only 23% had implemented a plan to integrate the undergraduate core (Athavale, Davis, & Myring, 2008). These numbers suggest a significant disparity between the concept and its implementation, and the academic literature confirms there are serious hurdles to overcome to achieve a significant level of functional integration in the undergraduate business core.

A number of undergraduate programs have reported team-taught, cross-functional changes in the business core (for example: Bishop, Vaughn, Jensen, Hanna, & Graf, 1998; Cannon, Klein, Koste, & Magal, 2004; Cohen, 2003; Corsini, Crittenden, Keeley, Trompeter, & Viechnicki, 2000; Smith Ducoffe, Tromley, & Tucker, 2006; Stover, Morris, Pharr, Reyes, & Byers, 1997). Many of these schools reported encountering similar challenges to implementation. A representative summary of these can be found in Sauter, Popp, Pratt, and Mills (2000). Two main areas are identified—administrative and instructional issues. Among the administrative issues are resource allocation, turf protection and articulation concerns (i.e., potential problems for students transferring into other business programs), and the potential problem in applying proper class credit moving from an integrated program back to a traditional curriculum. Resource allocation problems occur as a result of the interdisciplinary nature of the staffing for these team-taught courses. Because these decisions have frequently been made within a functional department, faculty concerns arose over

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equity, credit for student hours, and the number of faculty assigned to integrated coursework. Issues of turf protection are not uncommon. Some faculty members believe that an integrated curriculum “harms more than helps student perceptions of . . . individual disciplines” (Sautter et al., p. 26). Instructional issues that arise with the integration process include shifting learning objectives and continuous improvement measures, making a successful transition to team teaching, and managing student expectations and frustrations with the new curriculum. There are several examples in the literature that compare different integrating methods and provide the reader with insights into the process (Aurand, DeMoranville, & Gordon, 2001; Hamilton, McFarland, & Mirchandani, 2000; Jones, 2002; Pharr, 2000).

## METHOD

The intent of this study was to examine in depth the issues of curricular integration from the viewpoint of a well-established program, to investigate in particular the long-term impact of such a program on the overall organization, and to seek insight from these experienced academics on what they believe to be the keys to developing and sustaining a process-based, team-taught integrated core. Naturalistic inquiry, through its recognition of the importance of context, holistic perspective, and multiplicity of variables, was identified as the most promising method for this research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Case study was chosen as the research design for this study, because the case method lends itself to the study of how and why questions about a contemporary phenomenon when the boundary between phenomenon and context is difficult to identify (Yin, 2003). The research plan was to identify an undergraduate program that had developed, implemented, and maintained a cross-functional, team-taught core for a period of more than 10 years. I identified and contacted an exemplary school. The school agreed to grant access for this study, under the conditions that its identity would not be disclosed and the anonymity of contributors would be assured. Certain nonessential aspects of the descriptions of location and overall program have been modified to protect the confidentiality of the study school and participants; attributions of direct quotes are generalized to help insure the anonymity of interviewees. The program is referred to as IBC, short for integrated business curriculum, a fairly common appellation.

A total of three trips were made to the study site and more than 30 people participated in this study either in one-on-one interviews or focus groups, or both, concluding in late fall 2009. Interviewees included present and former IBC students, participating and former IBC faculty, college and university administrators and employers. Program guides were made available, as were syllabi, calendars, exams, and other course documents. There was also a significant body of published work concerning different aspects of the pro-

gram change that helped to triangulate the data. The school provided many opportunities for researcher observation of classroom, student and faculty team meetings, and facilitated several focus groups with participants as well.

In addition to on-site visits, both initial and follow-up telephone interviews were performed. Member checks of transcripts were conducted to help insure validity of data. After an overview on the case study school, this article is organized to examine the study findings in terms of the development and implementation of the program, long-term effects of the program on the organization, and advice from study participants to other schools that seek to develop and maintain a successful program.

The study school is a state-supported university located in an agricultural region of the country. The nearest major population center is about 4 hr away. More than 80% of all students reside on or near campus because of the school’s rural location, and a significant majority is traditional undergraduates in the 18–24-year-old range. The university draws most of its students from in state secondary schools but also pulls enrollment from several nearby states. There were about 12,000 students attending the university, with 1,300 of these students pursuing business majors.

The College of Business has focused on undergraduate education since its inception more than 50 years ago. There were about 40 full-time faculty members in the college. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International accredited the program approximately 20 years ago, and the college has maintained its accreditation. Faculty advises students in their major areas and performs other committee and community service work. Research is emphasized as well. Faculty is expected to produce the equivalent of at least one peer-reviewed journal article per year.

Prior to the development of IBC in the early 1990s, the College of Business offered its majors a group of required basic courses, commonly called the business core, in similar fashion to the majority of undergraduate programs at the time. There were seven courses, in addition to four separate requirements in accounting and economics that students were expected to take in their sophomore and junior years. Many of these core courses were introductory classes in the individual majors. Individual instructors, typically in a class of 30–40 students, delivered these courses. There was no effort to integrate the content of these courses between areas, and some instructors claimed to use these introductory courses to recruit majors.

## RESULTS

### Development and Implementation of IBC

*A change agent.* The findings suggest the dean who took over the college in the early 1990s was a change agent.

According to observers at the time, the dean was concerned about how well prepared the school's graduates were for entry-level management jobs. He reportedly had been influenced by information he had received and discussions he had had at AACSB deans meetings. This is consistent with the timing of Porter and McKibbin's (1988) AACSB-sponsored study and other published work concerning the gap that had been identified between academia and business practitioners. The dean called for an internal analysis of course content and he also asked faculty to set up focus groups with the college's Business Advisory Council to learn firsthand from business people their opinions on how graduates performed in their organizations. From these sessions a list of skills and knowledge was developed that business stakeholders felt would make the school's graduates more marketable. The dean then challenged faculty to develop pilot programs that might help close the gap, and gave them a firm timeline for delivery. The faculty team that developed the IBC program was full of heavy hitters, according to observers. Everyone on the team had tenure, and they were a group that looked on the dean's challenge as an important transformation rather than an onerous task. By all accounts, they set out to develop a more marketable student and they believed in what they were doing.

*Business process framework.* The team was expected to develop the new integrated course and introduce it as a pilot program in the fall of 1994. One of the key changes that facilitated the new course design was the team's decision to use business systems as a framework, replacing the functional, siloed approach. The idea of organizing businesses into horizontal processes as opposed to the functional approach was gaining traction at the time (Hammer & Champy, 1993). Once this theme was adopted as a curricular framework, the actual work of course development began to fall into place. The faculty team visited several other schools that had reported innovative core curricula looking for ideas on structure and content. The team taught the pilot course for 3 years with volunteer students as they worked out the wrinkles in content, order, and delivery. Feedback from students, employers, and instructors convinced the dean and faculty to make the new IBC program a part of the overall curriculum in the fourth year. According to those present at the time, the change was unanimously approved by faculty vote. New faculty teams were organized and new case firms recruited as the program expanded to multiple sections.

*The case firm.* Another critical decision, according to team members, was the selection of an integrating device. Other schools had used textbook cases, or a process such as new product development as a theme to show the integrative nature of business. The pilot team decided to seek out and recruit an actual business enterprise to partner with them as a case firm. They succeeded in convincing a prominent American manufacturer to join them. This collaboration

lasted three years, and became the model for the program. Each cohort since has had a case firm that provides people, information and access, and functions as a real-time, multidimensional case study. Companies typically commit to work with the program for 3 years. They tend to be larger firms, with either a headquarters or significant operations or presence in the school's area. They also tend to be potential employers for the school's graduates, and according to the administration usually become contributors to the business school. They literally have a presence in the IBC classroom as speakers, mentors, and judges.

*Team teaching.* As the integration of the pilot program proceeded another obstacle appeared, in the form of team teaching. Those involved recall this transition highlighted some compatibility and personal choice issues. The loss of autonomy and control in the classroom was not an attractive prospect for some. Others really enjoyed it. There is a significant number of faculty at the school who today view themselves comfortably as permanent members of the IBC team. Others on the faculty look back on their IBC service as an interesting but necessary time they would choose not to repeat.

The expansion of the IBC program was a critical point in the transformation. Until this juncture, faculty who were not directly involved could operate in a traditional fashion. After the vote, almost everyone would be either directly or indirectly involved. Observers noted this was a general period of faculty transition, when a number of senior faculty retired and new faculty were recruited. One faculty member remembered, "That was the hardest part; adopting IBC for all students. But we had proof by then the concept worked. It was new and it was different and it was interesting, so people became interested in it, in participating in it."

*IBC costs more.* One of the biggest obstacles to the adoption of the new program was its cost. IBC is faculty-intensive, and if it were simply a matter of money, the program may not have moved past the pilot stage. But the dean and key faculty were convinced the extra cost and extra work were worth it because they believed they were giving students a competitive advantage in the job market. "The IBC program does cost more," said the present dean. "There's no question a return to legacy courses would save time and free up resources." The average class size across the college is about 35 students. Inside IBC five instructors teach 60 students, so the faculty-student ratio is 12 to 1. The high concentration of faculty in IBC, each representing a specific discipline in the matrix, is one of the keys to the program's success. The present dean continued, "We decided it was worth the money. How is the program sustained? Institutional commitment is the secret." He continued, "One important piece is that support from outside stakeholders is critical. After the first year, advisory board members as well

as case firms began to donate funds for stipends and program development. They also began to hire our graduates.”

*The flat organization.* A significant factor that played a positive role in program adoption, according to some who were there, was the lack of discipline-based departments in the college. This was not a large group as most business schools go. With about 40 faculty, 1,000 students, and 8 majors, the school had only 2 or 3 faculty in some disciplines. A business department that covered all the majors except economics and accounting made organizational sense. This smaller size made it easier for people to get to know each other and fostered a more collegial atmosphere. A subtler factor that reportedly worked against discipline-based organization at the school was the seniority-based assignment of offices. This, according to one faculty member, ensured a random placement with respect to discipline. Another noted that interdisciplinary research was not unusual, even before IBC. A former faculty member added, “In part, because of the undergraduate focus, the research tends to inform teaching and faculty comes to this school because they want to teach.”

### Long-Term Impact

*Breadth versus depth.* One recurring issue related to the IBC program is the trade-off of topic breadth versus depth. This relates to the question of what material to cover—what goes in and what comes out of the IBC curriculum, and in what order it appears. The initial faculty task force identified gaps and redundancies in the legacy core. Eliminating the redundancies freed up some time to fill in the gaps. But the new program was three credit hours shorter than the old curriculum, which meant there would be 45 fewer hours of contact time for students. Whole new topics such as teamwork and business systems needed to find space, which meant other subjects had to be cut from the original list. Using business processes as an organizing mechanism appears to have been a real insight. Functional topics are still covered in the new curriculum, but they are organized in a completely different fashion. As one present IBC faculty put it,

We constantly talk about the issue of breadth. Not only did we reduce the total number of hours . . . we also added major new topics that thinned out the legacy subjects even more. What’s resulted is a new course that delivers the integration of the topics in a business context. Later courses, like the Capstone, are able to add more depth to their content because the IBC student has a better understanding of business processes.

Even though the functional topic content is decided by consensus of the faculty in each discipline, and the most important topics in each area are included, the order of presentation of that information is significantly different, and it’s usually interspersed with topics from different fields.

This order of presentation, unlike in a legacy course, is chosen to emphasize the process modules that make up the new course. The result is a unique experience for students and instructors compared to the traditional classroom. A present IBC team member described it: “IBC has become ‘what does everyone need to know about finance’, not ‘what do finance majors need as an introduction to the major?’” Students notice the difference as well. A former IBC student said, “We’ll talk finance for a day, then we might not talk about it again for a month.”

There was a noticeable change in student outcomes as a result. One present IBC faculty said:

Students don’t come out with the same skill set as they did in legacy classes. There’s not enough time in IBC to cover all the topics in each discipline, because time is needed to teach the concept of integration and why it’s necessary. IBC projects tend to be integrated, and students may miss depth in an individual subject. They’re better off in IBC, though, because they develop the big picture, and begin to see the relationships.

Major discipline areas are responsible for the depth of a topic, and disciplines have made adjustments to their second- and third-level majors courses to include topics formerly covered in the introductory courses replaced by IBC, according to a present IBC faculty member. Another pointed out, “In the end, each discipline needs to figure out what to take out to make room for something new.” One of the pioneer faculty pointed out,

Before IBC, students paid more attention to the legacy course in their major. Since they could take the legacy courses in almost any order, over their sophomore, junior, and senior years, they didn’t synthesize the knowledge in any particular pattern. IBC focuses this entire course content in the junior year, in a functionally integrated way, and students concentrate on their major studies during the senior year.

As one of the senior students who completed IBC last year described it: “You get the breadth in your junior year in IBC, and you get the depth in the senior year major’s classes. It makes you well-rounded.”

*It is not for everyone.* Another theme that emerged in faculty and administration interviews is that the team-teaching experience is not without issues. “IBC is not for everyone. Some people enjoy the independent contractor role,” said a present IBC faculty member. And from the dean:

It’s not a program for “Lone Rangers.” It isn’t without bumps, and you have to be willing to wear the brand from the bottom up. The bigger challenge is for faculty to work on a team, to give up some of the discipline-specific work in favor of a cross-functional experience. The constraint is

[finding] faculty members willing to do this. They have to be willing to make the commitment.

One former IBC instructor said, "One of the downsides to teaching IBC is the lack of autonomy. There is team autonomy, but not individual. Group decisions are the rule." This became evident as the program initially expanded from the original pilot team to a second team, and then a third as IBC moved from optional to mandatory for all students in the late 1990s. "Faculty has to be part of the change," said a former IBC member, "some are frustrated by the lack of depth in topics. Others are unsure of working in other disciplines." One of the pioneer faculty recalled: "At some point during the conversion almost everyone had to work on an IBC course, and it became apparent that everyone wasn't suited for it. Unlike the pilot team, newer faculty teams had some problems."

*The culture changes.* "IBC needs to become part of the culture. Everybody needs to come together and 'get it,'" said a present faculty member. "IBC commands enough of your time, enough of a student's time. It's so big that it's going to flop over and have a big impact on everything outside the program." She concluded, "It needs to permeate everything. That's what's happened here." That sentiment is shared by most of those interviewed. The culture of the organization has changed over the years, as the IBC program became the centerpiece for the school's identity. It may have happened accidentally at first, as faculty team chemistry dictated who could work together and who could not. Individual faculty selected in or out of IBC based on their feelings toward each other, and their desire to participate in the program. According to a present IBC faculty member: "The college made the change amidst a period of faculty turnover and cultural turnover. Many older faculty never participated in IBC, but as they retired were replaced with IBC-focused recruits."

The program has in fact attracted faculty who want to be involved in this unusual approach to business education. A present IBC faculty member remembered his first visit to the school: "I was immediately impressed with IBC. I sat in on a lecture on quality deployment that was being delivered by both Operations Management and Marketing faculty. It was unique." A pioneer faculty member recalled,

We began to change selection criteria. We hired faculty who had MBA's for the breadth it indicated. Job talks [search interviews] moved to more team-oriented individuals. We began to hire faculty who came to school to be part of IBC.

A present IBC faculty member said, "Candidates are sized up by existing faculty in terms of their ability to work together." Another IBC faculty member remembered the period, "We were able to recruit people who wanted to come here to be part of it, and that really made a difference."

The school initiated a policy several years ago that in general requires new faculty to commit to a 3-year cycle in IBC as a condition of employment. This policy has further institutionalized IBC and insures a stream of faculty who are committed to the program. One former IBC faculty member put it, "How do you maintain the culture? In hiring, there's a lot of emphasis on IBC and team-teaching, so if people don't like the idea, they can self-select out of the hiring process."

According to one of the associate deans, the school recently hosted a team of outside faculty functioning as a maintenance of accreditation team. They made several references to the sense of community they encountered while at the school. He attributed this community atmosphere, which extends from administration and faculty through the student body, to IBC and the collegial nature of faculty and student teams. One present IBC faculty member described it, "IBC is part of the culture here now. It seems a very natural part of the school's identity." As another present IBC faculty expressed it,

If you've been here long enough, you've worked with most of the faculty in the building. We all know a lot about each other. Mentoring student teams in IBC gives you a chance to build significant relationships with students as well.

*Continuous improvement.* The study school has both informal and formal processes in place to help insure the program maintains currency and reacts to external stakeholders. First and foremost, the school has adopted a business connection that ranges from business advisory councils at different levels in the organization to business' physical presence in the classroom, participating as speakers, mentors, and advisers. This broad acceptance of business in the inner workings of the IBC program in particular, and the entire school in general, gives the program and its faculty and students an immediate link to practice. This attitude of openness and invitation to business represents an important link to contemporary business practice. One former recruiter for a large multinational firm regularly hired from the study school, even though it wasn't on his initial list of target schools. In his assessment of IBC graduates as employees, he said, "IBC produces individuals who are technically adept in business fundamentals, but also have team and communications skills. They also exhibit conflict resolution skills. This is a very important attribute for people working in self-directed teams, and [for those working] as managers." When asked what he believes made the difference for these students, he pointed to the program and the school,

They asked [our] company for feedback on how to improve the IBC curriculum to make students more employable. They have executed a fundamental academic paradigm shift. They are more outwardly focused. They seek employer input for programs and curriculum, and they make faculty collaborative.

Inside the IBC program, informal mechanisms are in place to promote change. Faculty can individually or in teams introduce new material incrementally into IBC on a trial basis. The results of the trial are reported to the entire program team, which decides whether to adopt the change in all sections. A complete program review was initiated last year by a group of IBC faculty who believed the program had not been thoroughly scrutinized since its inception. This revitalization effort developed to keep IBC from becoming stale and predictable.

Summer camp is the nickname for the annual IBC planning meeting that represents the formal change mechanism for the program. This multiday meeting is a chance to review the past year and discuss possible changes in content, delivery, or format going forward. One of the main functions of this retreat is to act as a clearinghouse for program revision. Because there are a specific number of student contact hours in IBC, and they are all being used, any change that is adopted must be accompanied by a deletion or alteration of something else. This interplay is a negotiation, at times inside a discipline, and at other times between them.

One of the characteristics of the study school is that faculty maintains respect and accountability at the discipline level. IBC faculty teams are made up of representatives of five different disciplines. Each representative is expected to discuss any proposed IBC content changes with the other, non-IBC faculty in his or her discipline. All IBC faculty also teach courses each year in their majors. This disciplinary integrity is important so faculty can maintain academic credence and the specialization that is characteristic of academia.

### Advice for IBC Success

It seems fitting to seek advice from these IBC practitioners. Their school has more than 15 years experience at delivering this integrated, team-taught, cohort-based course. They have developed mechanisms to continually transform themselves and they have become a learning organization in the process. They have changed their culture as well. They've created a community of scholars and a generation of alumni who routinely show their appreciation for the program by hiring its latest graduates or contributing to its funding, or both. Anecdotal evidence of graduates' continuing business success is a driving force in maintaining the program in spite of its higher cost. What are the keys to success? How can another school develop and maintain a program like IBC? Here are some of the most significant responses; the best advice from those closest to the program.

*The right people.* This is a critical element for success. Nearly all respondents placed this factor at the top of the list. There needs to be a core group of faculty who share the vision of an integrated, team-taught course. They must,

- Be able to work together;
- Be willing to commit a significant amount of time and effort to develop the program and to carry it forward;
- Really want to make a difference with students; and
- Be able to exercise patience.

*Unwavering support.* A change of this magnitude can only succeed if it has the complete support of those responsible for budgets and staffing. In some schools this is the dean, and in others it may be the provost or the president. They need to address,

- An increase in costs, either directly or indirectly;
- Release time, stipends, and other forms of compensation needed for program development;
- Ongoing staffing and scheduling changes need to be addressed; and
- The program should become largely self-funded to ensure sustainability.

*Good planning.* A new program that eventually affects the entire school needs special consideration at the outset. There are many of questions to answer:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- How many people will be needed?
- How much time will it take to develop the program?
- Can we find volunteer students to populate the pilot?
- Are there model schools we can visit?

*The right infrastructure.* Many of the respondents in this study believe there are infrastructure constraints that may limit the ultimate success of the new program. These include the following:

- IBC works best in a residential school. A school with a large number of commuting students will find they will have trouble making all the team meetings and out-of-class events.
- IBC won't work as a part-time or night program. The time commitment is too great, and the need for student access to faculty is critical.
- Size is important. The program would be unmanageable at a large school; 25 to 40 faculty and about 1,000 to 1,500 students seem to be the ideal scale. Smaller than this there isn't enough depth in the disciplines, larger, and it becomes logistically impossible.
- The change needs to be all-inclusive. An IBC-type program may work as an honors course in a larger school, but complete faculty buy-in is needed for long-term success.

- Discipline-based departments are barriers to implementation. To the extent they don't exist, or can be consolidated, it will contribute to successful program implementation.

## DISCUSSION

What this study has found is an undergraduate business school that at every level seeks out and embraces practitioners for advice, council and direct input for the benefit of students. Over a period of a decade and a half they introduced and perfected a radically different approach to the business core; the common body of knowledge all business students need to assimilate before they move on to focused study in their majors. In the process they rewrote the contents and objectives of the core, in order to match employer's expectations. In addition to technical knowledge, IBC graduates exhibit enhanced people skills, including teamwork and communications. They also demonstrate conflict resolution and leadership skills, and the ability to give and take constructive performance feedback.

IBC students do not just come to class. They are part of a living business laboratory in which they get a chance to study the fundamental tasks in a way that demonstrates how they fit into the processes that define how business operates and the ways in which individual departments interact to get work done. Students work in self-directed teams on real business problems. Their case studies are in real time. Business people interact with them in the classroom and help them learn. When they complete the IBC program, students talk about how they miss their teammates, the interaction and the intensity. Some of them have begun relationships that may last well into their professional careers. They will remember the IBC experience as one of the most challenging and rewarding times of their lives. Some, as employers, will return to the school to hire new graduates, because they know what they know, and what they've been through.

The teachers that work with these students are special, too. They have given up the individuality of traditional academic endeavors, at least for a time, in favor of a collaborative effort that requires more hours and certainly more compromise. They work long hours, mentor student teams, and still produce a significant body of research. Some of these teachers have been here from the start. Several were on the original pilot team that helped carry out their dean's vision of an undergraduate program that would set their students apart, and give the college a new identity at the same time. Others on the faculty sought this place out because they wanted to be a part of something unique, something really different than the norm. They find themselves working in self-directed teams, similar in fact to the student teams they guide. Some of the faculty finds a permanent home in IBC, others move on to teach in the majors. They individually and collectively work to keep the content fresh and the student experience unique.

The administrators have given their complete support to the program even though it costs more than a traditional approach to undergraduate business education, because they are believers in its effectiveness to produce graduates who will have a leg up on their competition for career-starting jobs. The program has had the positive effect of generating outside funding, which greatly contributes to its sustainability. Several of the college's present administrators were also members of the original pilot team that developed IBC. They have seen their original work grow and adapt as new faculty, the constantly changing business environment and technology continue to raise the bar for their graduates. In the process, the college has become a community of learners. Most of the faculty has worked with each other on an IBC team. The smaller teacher-student ratio of IBC and the extra mentoring built into the program has helped create lasting student relationships.

It's been nearly 20 years since the dean asked faculty to consider if what they were teaching was truly serving their students' needs. The answer to his question went far beyond the core curriculum and began a transformation that affected not only the common body of knowledge courses and how they are taught, but the entire college and its culture as well. Students are attracted to this school because of its reputation for helping its graduates succeed. Faculty comes for a chance to participate in a unique, collaborative approach to business education. Employers find graduates who they believe are better prepared to contribute to their efforts, and academics that are willing to listen and respond to their needs. Graduates become benefactors who help support and sustain the program. The perspective of two decades reveals a pattern that a brief inspection may not disclose. The cycle repeats, in a community of learners.

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