

MBA Committee Meeting Minutes
Warrington College of Business Administration
Monday, 11/8/2010
11AM
HGS338

Members attending: Deb Mitra (chair), Joel Houston, Sandy Berg, Virginia Maurer, Deb Garvin, Alex Sevilla

Also attending: Gwendolyn Lee, Tawnya Means, Kara Cupoli & Christine Wilson

I. Approval of Spring 2010 meeting minutes

II. Curriculum Items

Dr. Mitra introduced himself as the new committee chair. Curriculum item discussion began with 3 student petitions, that were approved by email on Oct 11, 2010: Aceves, Gross, Leedom. Group decided that as long as independent studies were done with tenured faculty within the College of Business, no approval necessary from the committee. Alex explained that historically there has not been a formal system in place, but Leedom's issue would typically be brought before the committee for formal decision.

Requests to approve marketing courses towards MBA degree and marketing concentration were considered next. Kara pointed out that E-commerce was once approved, but hasn't been taught in so long, it was deleted. Dr. Berg suggested a motion to accept the course, given the committee receives syllabus and other relevant information. Alex stated that GEB6930 was previously approved for MBA credit, and Dr. Berg wondered the reasoning. Dr. Houston explained that the course focuses more on protecting the brand versus stabilizing cash flows, while examining risks from the customer side. Alex noted that he was comfortable waiting on information from the marketing department before committee makes any decisions.

Finance courses were discussed next. Houston pointed out that these courses have been taught, and their aim is to broaden the scope of electives for MSM students, but will allow MBA's to take if interested. Dr. Berg commented that "Capitalism" wasn't clear. Dr. Houston clarified that it was essentially a broad theory of the underpinnings of capitalism. Alex explained that MBA's should be permitted to take FIN6930 courses, so long as they are beneficial. He also respects the order of operations in this approval process, and believes if current syllabi exist, we should review them. Committee agreed to table FIN6930 course approval decision for electronic discussion, once course materials were obtained.

The situation with the real estate courses was similar. Committee will wait to finalize any decisions until syllabi are received.

The final curriculum item for discussion was the Competitive Strategies in Sustainability course. Dr. Berg noted this course would be an asset to a resume, and Kara stated there was a strong interest from students to approve this course. Dr. Maurer agreed it was a great idea, but wondered if it provides a competitive asset. She also explained the course examines how businesses prosper under social, environmental, and political constraints. Dr. Berg claims it gives students an edge. The course is not limited to just business students, but across many disciplines. Committee approved the course for one-time basis.

III. Grade Distribution and MBA Student Accountability/Behavior – two year review

Alex provided brief history on the grading policy change (3.5 GPA) that affects all MBA students. Dr. Berg wondered if the 3.5 GPA applied to all WPMBA students as well, and Alex answered it did, since those courses are closed to just WPMBA students anyway. Alex reviewed grade data, which showed the mean GPA two years prior to the new grading policy was 3.638, and averaged 3.498 after. He noted the program was mainly concerned with high GPA's (3.7), and not the 3.5, 3.6 averages. After the implementation, two-thirds of the courses had lower GPA's.

Dr. Maurer wondered if it would be worthwhile for Alex/current MBA chair to send memo to faculty kindly reminding them of the policy. By looking at the data, it is obvious many faculty have abided, and this is positive. Dr. Mitra asked for clarification of the policy, and Alex explained that faculty were not required, but encouraged to lower GPA in MBA-only classes. Dr. Maurer then admitted she often thinks of MBA's in separate terms from other master's students. The committee then discussed the ethical dilemma of grading MBA students against a different standard than other master's students in the same class. MBA's tend to have a higher GPA, but is it right to grade them harder? Dr. Houston then pointed out that if faculty graded same all across, they would probably receive pushback from other master's students who tend to score lower. Dr. Maurer asked if they have received pushback, and Dr. Houston explained this practice had never been applied. Dr. Berg commented that a portion of his course grading is peer review, and MBA's tend to have better reviews of each other due to increased participation. They often score higher, just because they have stronger relationships. Other master's students should be graded differently, but this would be unethical. Dr. Maurer noted that it would be nice to see MSM grade data, to see how faculty grade differently. There are many assumptions, but it would be helpful to see what is actual.

IV. Assurance of Learning

Kara gave brief update on Assurance of Learning process. At the last meeting, the committee discussed how to measure achievement, and they agreed to measure 80% of it through the MBA capstone course. Therefore, the program wants to redesign the course to better measure this. Dr. Victoria Dickinson and Dr. Linda Clarke were originally charged with leading this project, but Dr. Gwendolyn Lee is now handling the process. This meeting should serve as a review of the development of the course with the intent of approving the new course in time to teach in MOD 4.

Dr. Berg noted that the course outline was impressive, and the case was solid. Dr. Lee then referred to the list of questions she received from Tawnya Means and Kara, and noted that many of them were incomplete and may not accurately represent core course material. She will collect data, but wants to be sure it is a fair assessment of material on behalf of all departments. She explained the Samsung Case was chosen because it is timely, interesting, and can be applied across multiple disciplines. She then requested the committee review her documents critically, as this is a starting point to laying the course foundation. Dr. Lee suggested that Assurance of Learning be completed separate of Strategic Management course, and will operate under the assumption that assignments are to be individual and not group work. She considered an online platform to ensure students submit their assignments on their own. Dr. Lee also mentioned that she is happy to provide resources for clarification purposes, but will not explain material specific to other disciplines.

Tawnya explained the assessment process should be substantial enough to accurately assess learning, but not too extreme. She pointed out that if assessment is not grade based, students often do not have enough incentive to put forth effort. Dr. Maurer asked if students could pass a course, but fail AoL, and Tawnya explained students are being graded on their work, but AoL is being reviewed simultaneously. Dr. Lee added that students are not aware they are being reviewed for AoL. For example, answering the AoL question: "Does a student submit timely assignments?" can be answered by checking their time submissions. This process can also be used to review team dynamics; although students do not necessarily need to work in teams, based on their answers we can assess their team skills and figure out if they understand team dynamics. Tawnya explained this process could work for other areas, too. For example: questions could be asked based on economics, and answers students provide will show their level of economics comprehension. Tawnya and Dr. Lee agreed that questions asked should reflect information taught in core courses, and include key points instructors expect students to be knowledgeable in.

The committee discussed assessment question format, and Dr. Berg asked if many MBA's are often tested in multiple choice format, and they are not. Dr. Mitra pointed out that information taught is often hard to assess, and therefore having "right" and "wrong" answers would help Dr. Lee. Dr. Mitra then asked if different versions of assessment questions for Samsung Case would be appropriate, and Dr. Lee answered that addendums were welcome, along with any other relevant supplementary items. Dr. Houston asked the committee if the assessment should be lenient, and reminded the group that the assessments should not be intended to overwhelm them. Tawnya pointed out that assessment should cover material they already know, and therefore extra work should not be necessary. Dr. Garvin asked if there should be concern that the ACCSB

finds the assessment too easy, and Tawnya explained that it is more important to have a process in place, which a program continually improves upon.

Dr. Lee admitted she wanted to avoid any negative faculty evaluations because of her task to assess students, while also avoiding faculty criticism on their teaching skills. Dr. Maurer pointed out that although students should have motivation to participate, they are not pleased when tested on information not taught to them. Dr. Berg explained the course will serve as genuine capstone and will integrate cumulative information learned, and it is the students' job to demonstrate what they have learned. Alex chimed in that students have expressed their desire for a capstone course for many years, so it should be well received. Dr. Mitra mentioned the issue of standardization among core course faculty, and Alex agreed there should be consistency, as well as respect for foundation laid by predecessors. Dr. Lee concluded she will make herself available, but will leave it up to individual departments to ensure they are on track with the right questions. Committee agreed that material should be gathered and completed by mid-December, in time for next meeting tentatively scheduled for January.

Kara gave an update on the EDGE course revamping. Details are still being discussed, and a final plan has not been made. Kara and Dr. Maurer mentioned the course may incorporate some AoL assessment.

V. MBA Program Update

Alex provided MBA program update in regards to placement, cohort statistics, and GIE trips. Also explained plans for TMBA curriculum overhaul. This projected two-year project will include benchmarking, review of faculty and resources, and discussions within the College.

Meeting Adjourned (minutes – Christine Wilson)