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TEACHING BUSINESS LANGUAGES VIA DISTANCE LEARNING

Business language faculty are turning to technology to deliver instruction, as their universities embrace distance learning as an instructionally sound means to extend access to new populations of students. In order to help faculty prepare for electronic education, this study examines the major issues facing those who teach via distance learning. Through information provided by faculty and administrators at twelve business schools that currently offer courses via distance, this research provides insight into how faculty are meeting the challenges of adapting to teaching online and via interactive satellite TV.

Although only one of the programs included here offered a business language course via distance (Thunderbird), the information provided should be useful for business language faculty who are preparing to teach using technology. The author taught “English Business Communication for Executives” via distance in fall, 1998 as part of the MIMLA (Masters in International Management in Latin America) program, Thunderbird’s first distance learning degree. This program is jointly offered by Thunderbird and ITESM of Monterrey, Mexico. The author taught 115 students in Mexico City, Monterrey, and Guadalajara via interactive satellite TV and the internet, using a webboard and email.

This study looks at distance learning program structure, compensation, faculty profile, attitudes toward distance learning, training and support, student performance and course evaluation. It also investigates the major challenges and rewards of teaching via distance. The research provides insight into faculty issues that face those who currently teach or are considering teaching in a distance program.

Global Business Languages (1999)

METHOD

The top fifty graduate schools of business (ranked by *U.S. News and World Report*, 1998) were contacted to learn which offered distance learning courses and programs. Chicago, Duke, Florida, Georgetown, Michigan, Minnesota, Pittsburgh, Purdue and Thunderbird replied in the affirmative. Faculty and administrators from these institutions responded to an interview questionnaire, which was administered in May, 1998 by telephone and email. Ball State, Ohio University, and South Carolina were included in the study because of their experience and reputation in distance learning. Florida International University also took part in the study, because of the extensive knowledge of the then director of distance learning, Cindy Elliott, who since took a position at Fort Hays State University.

Two versions of the questionnaire were prepared to allow for faculty and administrator perspectives on the same issues.¹

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The following institutions in the survey offer an MBA through distance learning: Ball State, Duke, Ohio, Michigan, Pittsburgh, Purdue, South Carolina, and Thunderbird. Institutions surveyed that offer one or more business courses via distance education include Florida International (undergraduate business courses only via distance learning), Georgetown, and Minnesota. The University of Florida's online MBA program is scheduled to begin in summer, 1999. Florida's business school has had 25 years of experience with distance learning at the undergraduate level, providing instruction via a cable channel. For its new online program, students will receive a video camera to attach to their computer monitors.

At the time of the survey, Chicago did not include distance per se in its executive MBA programs; however, it did use email extensively for study groups and communication among learners. Intered, a research firm, estimates that 55% of four-year colleges and universities in the US now offer distance learning courses. *Peterson's Guide to Distance Learning* (1997), a useful reference about distance learning programs in higher education, carries listings for 762 institutions (Gubernick & Eberling, 1997).

¹ Surveys are reproduced in Appendix A. See Appendix B for a list of respondents.

Several distance MBA programs have been in operation for many years. The University of South Carolina has been delivering TV-based graduate business instruction since 1970, and Purdue's Executive MBA program has used distance learning since 1983. The Flex MBA of Pittsburgh started in 1991, while the Global Executive MBA (GEMBA) of the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University began in 1996.

Some programs such as those at Duke, Michigan, Pittsburgh, and Purdue serve international groups. Others like Ball State reach beyond state boundaries to serve US learners in several states. Michigan's Global MBA program does not have open enrollment. Rather, Michigan develops consortia with companies and delivers the Global MBA to clients in Korea, Hong Kong and Brazil.

Class size for distance MBA programs ranges from 20 to 50 students. Michigan, Ohio, and Purdue have approximately the same class size for both distance and regular MBA programs. At Ohio University, the typical distance class has 30 students; classes at Michigan and Purdue have around 50 students. At Pittsburgh (with 20-25 students) and Duke (with 40 students), the average distance learning class size is typically smaller than in their regular MBA courses. Class size in distance learning business courses varies at Ball State and the University of South Carolina, but it can be greater than the traditional class size.

In the business communication class the author taught at Thunderbird, there were 115 students. However, the class was divided into six "neighborhoods" of approximately 20 students each. Six graduate student assistants, called "neighborhood managers," worked with the groups of students to respond quickly to their email, and comment on language-related errors in their writing.

COURSE FORMAT

Although the delivery mode varies somewhat among programs, most have a face-to-face component, as well as a form of video-based and online instruction. Nancy Keeshan, Assistant Dean for Program Operations and Student Services for Duke's GEMBA program, reports "we have found that the face-to-face is critical for establishing trust and familiarity with the professor." The most common formats for the distance programs include live interactive one or two-way video and audio and web-based components such as faculty web pages, electronic bulletin boards, email, and chat rooms. Some programs send CDs of faculty PowerPoint presen-

tations with voice-overs to learners. Others send hard copies of instructional materials to participants, or make readings available on the internet. None of the programs surveyed used pre-packaged telecourses.

Michigan's Global MBA combines 75% face-to-face instruction with 25% technology, using videoconferencing and the web in every class. The Ohio University MBA (OUMBA) combines residencies and online instruction. They take advantage of streaming video, audio conference, and asynchronous delivery with web and data-based instruction.

Duke's GEMBA program consists of 15 courses taught in 19 months with 11 weeks of face-to-face instruction. The program begins with three weeks in Durham, NC. The first week is orientation followed by two weeks of classes. The rest of the course is offered via the internet and distance education technology. The faculty use ScreenCam, a software program that uses PowerPoint slides of the faculty's lecture, accompanied by a voice-over of the lecture. The GEMBA students then spend two weeks in Europe in face-to-face learning followed by another eleven weeks online. Next, they get together in Asia for two weeks of face-to-face instruction followed by 11 weeks online. Finally, they meet in South America for two more weeks of face-to-face classes and 11 more weeks online. Program cost is \$82,500 per student.

Ball State uses live interactive satellite TV with one-way video and two-way audio to deliver its regular three semester, 36 hour MBA program. The program reaches people employed in the workforce, usually at companies in Indiana, New Jersey and Tennessee. The faculty member teaches students on-campus in a studio while interacting with students off-campus.

At South Carolina, the Professional MBA program is TV-based with one-way video and two-way audio. A live class at the university is connected to remote sites around the state. In addition, it offers the Professional MBA to the state of Maine. For the SC program, students come to the main campus four times each semester. For the TV sessions, the university has a facilitator at each site. The Professional MBA costs approximately the same as the regular MBA.

Purdue offers two masters programs via distance. The flagship EMS program, the Krannert Executive Masters of Science in Management, is a limited videoconferencing program. The three semester program has a four to five day orientation, with two two-week residencies each semester. At the end of the semester, the program has two days of final exams.

They use mostly prepared materials and hard copies which are sent to the students.

Purdue's second program is new, in existence since 1995. It is an international program called the IMM (International Masters in Management), a collaborative effort by the Krannert Graduate School of Management of Purdue University, Tilburg University in the Netherlands and the Budapest University of Economic Sciences (BUES) in Hungary. The international schools host the exams, and students can take their exams at either school.

Pittsburgh's Flex MBA uses online instruction and videotapes. Students are required to be at Pittsburgh for thirteen weeks. First, students go to Pittsburgh for orientation and one week of classes. Then they work off-campus for 12 to 14 weeks, communicating via email. Some faculty use web pages to complement their instruction. Students receive videotapes of faculty lectures. The videotapes either show the faculty member teaching a different section of the class, or referring to students in the program by name. For two weeks during the program, students go on an international trip that includes one week of classes. They finish the course in a foreign site.

Thunderbird's MIMLA program uses interactive satellite TV and web-based instruction through a webboard and email. Satellite classes, which are offered on seven Fridays and Saturdays, last two hours and forty minutes. Only one site, Monterrey, has two-way video. Other sites in Mexico City and Guadalajara have one-way video, and an email connection to ask questions and give comments to the live class.

The Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota offered two sections of TekStart, Intro to Computer Technology, an internet-based course to about 220 entering MBA students in 1997. The students took the course before they arrived on campus, so they would have the necessary computer skills before their first class. The course, taught by Gordon Duke, combines live interaction with 1 or 2 way audio/video, web-based instruction, virtual office hours and virtual lecture.

Georgetown's International Business Development course taught by Fred Ricci links students at Georgetown with a class at Xavieriana University in Bogota, Colombia by satellite. The students and instructor made presentations by PowerPoint and occasionally invited guest speak-

ers to class. The instructor used two TVs in the classroom: one to see the distant students and the other to view what they were watching.

FACULTY COMPENSATION

Edwards and Minich (1997) conducted a study of faculty compensation issues in distance education at approximately 52 community colleges. They found that most courses were taught as part of faculty members' regular teaching load. This study also found that many graduate business school faculty teach distance learning courses as part of their regular load (Ball State, Georgetown, Pittsburgh, South Carolina, Thunderbird). At other institutions, faculty normally teach the courses as an overload (Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota). Michigan uses overload compensation for most faculty teaching in the Global MBA, but sometimes faculty teach a course as part of their regular load. Faculty at Purdue decide whether to take compensation as inload or overload. Courses are taught inload in Duke's GEMBA program, but with one-half course additional credit, because the GEMBA semesters are longer than the six week concentrated courses in the regular MBA program.

Faculty usually receive a stipend or release time for new course development only in the start-up period of the distance learning MBA program. At some institutions, faculty receive additional pay or course release to teach a distance learning course for the first time or to develop a new course.

Most faculty for the graduate distance learning programs teach just one course per year via distance. However, in June 1998, Duke's GEMBA faculty began to teach two sections of the same course with 40 students each. Occasionally Purdue professors teach two courses per year in the EMS program.

ADMINISTRATION'S ATTITUDE TOWARD DISTANCE LEARNING

Most respondents reported that their administration viewed distance learning teaching in a positive way for annual performance review. At Minnesota, it is a highly valued contribution. At Ohio, Michigan, and South Carolina, teaching a course via distance learning has the same value as teaching/developing a traditional course. No respondents said it was a less valued contribution than a traditional course, or a negatively valued contribution. "I don't think it's any different. At first we got a lot of publicity for the Administration. That was favorable. Now it is just

normal,” says John E. Stinson, Professor of Management and Director of the Ohio University MBA (OUMBA).

Bob Markland, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at South Carolina, described the distance MBA program in the following way: “it’s a first rate degree, with the same professors, same courses, same universities as the regular MBA at South Carolina. It’s not viewed favorably or unfavorably for tenure. It’s just part of the teaching assignment.”

Some distance MBA programs have received recognition through awards. In fall, 1996, the OUMBA program received a first place award for innovation and educational leadership from the American Association of Colleges and Schools of Business (AACSB) for the project-based, action learning methodology used in the MBA without Boundaries. At Florida International, a business professor received a faculty award and an increase in pay for his work in distance learning.

At some institutions, the recognition is not standard throughout the university. It often depends on the priority that a dean places on distance learning. At two universities, attitudes toward distance learning changed with the change in administration (as new deans came in).

Teaching in the GEMBA is valued by Duke faculty for a variety of reasons. It carries an additional half course credit for every course taught. “Faculty just love teaching in this program because of the diversity of students in the program. They *learn* a lot,” says Keeshan. “We have many repeat customers [among the faculty]. Initially when we began it was not quite experimental. But there was a lot of risk associated with a new program. And the faculty were duly rewarded.”

At Purdue, teaching via distance learning is a valued contribution because of its significant outreach and ability to generate revenue. When the course is taught inload in the business school, the data become part of the faculty portfolio.

At Ball State, the perceived value of teaching via distance learning varies according to the department. Usually, faculty who are very well regarded teach in the program. Young faculty may not be so eager to take time away from their publishing to teach in the program.

DISTANCE LEARNING FACULTY PROFILE

Every program surveyed primarily uses full-time, tenured faculty for the distance learning courses, the same faculty who teach in the regular MBA program. The distance programs typically serve older students with

more experience in the workplace. Executive students can be more demanding of a faculty member's time and talent.

Respondents described the characteristics of faculty who successfully teach in their distance learning programs. Most importantly, the faculty have to be **willing to teach** in a distance learning program. Some are afraid of teaching on television, or unwilling to work with an instructional designer. They may not be open to suggestions on how to teach via distance, especially using the internet which is an entirely new medium that takes experience to use effectively. Faculty must be willing to modify an existing course for the distance learning format, which clearly requires an investment of time. Some distance faculty have personalities and teaching styles that lend themselves to teaching on television and motivating interaction with students. "It takes a certain type of person to teach on TV-- a performer, lively. It requires more preparation," says Markland (South Carolina).

Distance faculty need good organizational skills, since everything has to be planned up front. In Duke's GEMBA program, faculty have to plan the whole course eight weeks in advance. The lead time is vital for getting copyright approval, since pre-readings are sent out to the students. For the most part, the Duke faculty are self-selected and technically competent. Almost all business professors have used distance learning in some form.

One respondent prefers to use young faculty, when available, because of their adaptability to using technology. However, many of the distance learning innovators have been business faculty for twenty or thirty years before starting up their distance MBA programs. The faculty member also needs good computer skills, and a good track record in class. Hixson (Pittsburgh) suggests you need "someone who is proactive, who can see in the future, someone who is really interested in changing how they teach." Nancy Keeshan (Duke) says, "in this particular program the faculty have to be open to the expertise and knowledge of the students. Not xenophobic. They must be willing to hear from the other students, tap their diversity and expertise to create that magic."

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Most programs use informal methods to train faculty to deliver instruction at a distance. Usually a program administrator or faculty mentor works with the professor. In Ohio University's OUMBA program, a six

member faculty team mentors new faculty for six months before the program starts. Michigan provides its faculty with considerable support. Their own technicians support the program. To prepare for its new MIMLA program, Thunderbird sent three groups of faculty for two-day training sessions at ITESM in Monterey, Mexico. The GEMBA program of Duke provides informal training with lots of discussion on how to translate traditional instruction to distance education.

Depending on what is needed, most institutions provide additional faculty support for distance learning courses, including web page development, electronic bulletin boards, site facilitators, graphic designers, and technical assistance. Support staff often consists of program administrators, technician(s), as well as instructional and graphic designers. For example, the OUMBA of Ohio University supports faculty web page development and uses Lotus Notes to share information. The resident business school technician helps with all technical problems and graphic design. Faculty take responsibility for their own instructional design.

Duke's GEMBA program has three technical support people who assist with web page development. The faculty turn in their materials, such as syllabus and course calendar, for the technical support staff to put on the web, although some faculty prefer to do this work themselves. Ball State has an instructional designer, producer, and director to help faculty with course development, while Pittsburgh provides support through the CIDDE, Center for Instructional Development and Distance Education.

Graham Mercer, Director of International MBA Programs at Michigan, sets a very realistic expectation level for faculty. "We talk about how to limit the amount of workload. It's really easy to go overboard. If you ask a question, you have fifty messages instead of one that you'd receive in the traditional classroom if you asked the same question. The students all feel obliged to answer your question. Then you have to answer them or they're slighted."

Institutions give mixed reports on the availability of library support. At Ohio University, the program does not rely on library support because they provide materials on CDs. Since the courses are project-based, students conduct most of their research on the web. Purdue has a self-contained unit for each course, and provides all materials in hard copy to the students or through the internet via hot links that take students to the appropriate data base.

Mercer (Michigan) believes that limited access to library resources has been a weakness of distance learning programs. Search engines and Lexis/Nexis have been made available to the distance students. He considers that the internet alone is insufficient because so much material is available with no review process to evaluate its worth. "With so much information out there, how do we help people to know what's valid information and what's not?"

At Florida International, the library supplies access to CD-ROM data bases online, funded by a state grant that provides links for remote distance learners. The State of Florida higher education library system spent millions of dollars on licenses to use these materials for community colleges and universities in Florida. Ball State and Pittsburgh also provide distance students with access to their libraries.

Duke uses a number of electronic databases such as UMI and Proquest Direct. It obtained the Dow Jones News Retrieval for GEMBA, which required encoding and other procedures. Duke provides access to its online search engines, permitting students to request up to 20 books or articles per term. Duke has the EIU Country Reports in school already, and recently negotiated agreements to have the GEMBA students added.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND COURSE EVALUATION

Most respondents report that student performance in distance learning course(s) compares favorably to their performance in traditional courses. "We find it better. We may get a better quality of student in this program, certainly they are more enthusiastic," says John E. Stinson, Ohio University. "Students learn four times as much, but you only cover one third as much," says Fred Ricci, Distinguished Professor of International Business and Marketing at Georgetown. "The students loved the course and did significantly better [than students in my traditional class]. They couldn't wait to come to class."

Teaching effectiveness for the distance learning courses is usually evaluated with the same student evaluation form as for the traditional course (Minnesota, Georgetown, Michigan, Ball State, Purdue). Ohio University has implemented an interesting evaluation system by inviting externals to evaluate the OUMBA program. They are business people who meet with students in the program to discuss their experience.

Duke has adapted the standard MBA evaluation form to meet the special needs of the GEMBA program. They wanted the form to be consis-

tent with the one used in face-to-face instruction, but administered electronically, while the traditional form has 60 questions. Duke cut some questions that did not apply to the distance learning program, and added some open-ended questions that would provide useful feedback for ongoing program refinement.

At Purdue, the regular program borrows from the distance learning MBA evaluation forms, while Pittsburgh is adding questions developed by the academic directors to the university's standard form for the FLEX and EMBA programs.

MAJOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS

- High cost
- Difficulty establishing community
- Difficulty convincing professors it is a good idea
- Need to plan for the unexpected when technology fails
- Need for learner and professor to stay connected online
- Skill development tougher online
- Global competition among universities
- Accreditation
- Course design and time

Several program administrators cite **cost** as a major issue. Distance learning is an expense to the university, not necessarily a revenue generator, especially at the beginning. It costs money to prepare faculty to teach via distance and market the courses. The institutional mission has to be committed to distance learning for it to succeed. In addition, having the money and expertise to bring in the technology as quickly as it changes can be problematic. Markland (South Carolina) advises, "make sure you understand all the costs involved."

Socialization is another limitation of distance learning. To address this concern, face-to-face residencies are widely used and highly recommended by the respondents. Stinson (Ohio) comments "if we were entirely web-based, you'd have more difficulty establishing community. Residencies at the beginning, midpoint, and end are quite favorable." Mercer (Michigan) finds that technology takes away from the social side of learning, and that the social element is a valuable part of learning which is lost. "TV is cold. The web is even colder," says Markland of South Carolina.

Some respondents cite the need to **convince the faculty** that distance learning can be an effective means of instruction. In some cases, support from the faculty can be difficult to obtain. Other respondents report that this was not a problem in their program. At South Carolina and Duke, for example, almost all of the faculty have participated in the distance education programs.

Another major issue relates to what happens when the **technology fails**. The professor has to **plan for the unexpected**. When technical glitches occur, “you always have to have something else ready” (Ricci, Georgetown). “Video-conferencing fails sometimes, so you have to have fallbacks. These may not be as good as the original plan, but you have to have them,” says Mercer (Michigan). The availability of technology is another limitation, when budgetary constraints hinder a school from updating its technology as quickly as innovations become available.

The **need to stay connected online** is a major issue for both students and faculty. Occasionally mid-to-high level executives disappear from online participation in the classes. “Sometimes they have to go away for a while. They just disappear. Since students must work very closely in learning teams, we request that they let each other know. Sometimes work or family interferes with their studies. In the first week of orientation, we help them to understand asynchronous study is different. If you work with it you can be amazingly productive. Students are encouraged to have patience with each other, and the time differences. It can be very frustrating,” says Keeshan (Duke).

The professor needs to be online every 24 to 48 hours, since the students are waiting for a reply in cyberspace, connected only by computers. If the professor goes away for a week, there can be a real sense of isolation. Martin Rapisarda, Director of Executive Masters Programs at Purdue University, notes that distance learning faculty are on call to a higher degree than for traditional courses. “You have to monitor threaded discussion and email.” Hixson (Pittsburgh) comments that the faculty need to communicate regularly with the students and have significant online interaction with them.

Stinson (Ohio) comments that **skill development is tougher online**, for example developing presentation skills. He finds these are easier face-to-face. The challenge is to redesign the lesson to develop skill sets over the internet or interactive video. The distance between learners, and the virtual community pose special curriculum design problems for the in-

structor. What can be done fairly easily in a face-to-face class, for example, making oral presentations, becomes a challenge via distance.

Another limitation deals with **competition**. Particularly at state universities, the policy of in-state and out-of-state tuition limits an institution's competitiveness. Yet state institutions have "more of a mission to reach out beyond their walls," says O'Donnell, vice -provost for information systems and computing at the University of Pennsylvania. The search for new markets nationally and overseas and the evidence of profitability are driving elite institutions to enter the distance learning market (Blumenstyk, 1997). Private universities such as Duke and Thunderbird have the capability to reach selective new markets anywhere, anytime. While the internet is encouraging global competition, traditional higher education policies can limit an institution's ability to be competitive.

For Judith Roepke, Dean of Ball State's School of Continuing Education and Public Service, a major issue is **accreditation**. With distance learning institutions have more restrictions over who delivers courses and in what mode. Some accrediting bodies require that the student has to be at the site to receive instruction, because some bodies are used to dealing with traditional instruction. Yet many distance learning programs have received accreditation by being part of already existing and accredited institutions (Gubernick & Ebeling, 1997).

Rapisarda (Purdue) identifies **course design** and a different time element as limitations. How can the professor deliver course content within a given structure? "The marketing professor has to decide how to structure the course. You have two two-week periods on campus. What do you include in your face-to-face classes in that period, and what in the rest of the course? You have to decide how to divide content and time given the program structure. Course design is a challenge." Others acknowledge the challenge of curriculum design and the need to make time off-campus more meaningful for the students. Mercer (Michigan) raises an important question about how much work a faculty member should put into developing a distance learning course and materials. What is the relationship between faculty effort on distance learning courses and results in student learning? "We are in some cases putting course packs up on the web, and use stream videos on the web as well. It adds value for the student. But it doubles or triples instructors' workload."

BENEFITS OF TEACHING AT A DISTANCE

- Convenience, flexibility, access
- Diversity and quality of students
- Global perspective
- Greater interaction
- In-depth coverage of content
- Student and faculty satisfaction
- Diversity in instruction
- Integration of technology throughout the business school
- Major boost for the business school

The respondents cited convenience, flexibility and access as important benefits of their distance MBA programs. “The number one top thing is **convenience**. Students can take the machine with them. They tend to travel a great bit. They work regardless of where they are or what time it is. The convenience and flexibility are great benefits,” says John Stinson (Ohio). Roepke (Ball State) sees **access** as an important benefit for people employed with families or who cannot travel to a university. The students drive two to three hours to get to class. So the distance MBA meets their need for graduate business studies at a time and place convenient for them. According to a recent article in *Forbes* (Gubernick & Ebeling, 1997), online education permits people anywhere in the world to study at prestigious business schools. Distance education certainly can provide access to the best instructors and experts. Teams of professors and technicians work together to design courses and prepare multimedia materials. However, some worry that the professor’s role will be redefined by technology and distance education to the point of putting faculty on the sidelines. (Young, 1997)

Many respondents indicated that the **quality of students** in their distance learning masters was very good, at times better than the regular program, due to the students’ higher average age and greater work experience. Markland (South Carolina) says, “the students are very good with a lot of work experience. These are older, more mature, good students. Some faculty perceive being involved with them as a benefit.”

The distance program also brings the advantage of **student diversity**, with students coming from all over the world. The programs bring together diverse cultures and points of view, enriching the classes with a **global perspective**. Hixson reports that the Pittsburgh students find lis-

tening to the viewpoints from different cultures to be an incredible and satisfying experience.

Respondents consistently cited richness of interaction to be a major benefit of their programs. Graham Mercer (Michigan) says, “there’s some power to distance learning. We couldn’t do what we do without it. The students are from all over the world. They come together once a week, and communicate through technology. This can be *very* difficult if you don’t have a sense of community. Distance learning gives the faculty a chance to interact with students in some respects.”

Cindy Elliott, former Director of Distance Learning at Florida International, considers the novel way of interacting with the students via technology to be one of the greatest gains. Shy students who normally would not interact in class have an opportunity to communicate as much as the most vocal students in the traditional classroom. Keeshan (Duke) sees many benefits for the learner in the electronically-assisted interaction. “The nice thing is the international students who typically don’t get into the fray in regular classes, but will enter the electronic bulletin board discussions. You get better discussion. It adds to richer discussion. It makes the experience magical, wonderful.”

Greater **in-depth coverage of course content** is recognized as another advantage of the distance MBAs. Stinson (Ohio) has found that the online discussions in the OUMBA promote more in-depth coverage of content than in the traditional classroom. Ricci (Georgetown) also finds that the outcome of the distance learning course is greater because of the heightened significance of the course to the student. He observed that his students saw marketing from the perspective of a different culture on a different schedule, which highlighted the global aspect of the course. They gave tours of their campus in Colombia. This **diversity in instruction** allowed the instructor to do things that would not have been possible in the traditional classroom.

Several respondents commented that **student and faculty satisfaction** were benefits of the distance learning courses. As for faculty, “there’s no turning back once you’ve used it,” says Ricci.

Rapisarda of Purdue identifies two major effects of distance learning masters programs on the business school. First, the programs have helped to **integrate technology throughout the business curriculum**, and second, they have been a **major boost to the school**. “Situated in West

Lafayette [Indiana] normally it would have been hard for us to support an executive MBA. This has allowed us to be a player.”

In her study of telecourse faculty rewards, Dillon (1989) identifies many of the same advantages discussed above. She found that personal rewards were an important incentive for faculty involved in instructional telecommunications.

FACULTY ATTITUDES TOWARD DISTANCE LEARNING

- Extremely positive after initial skepticism
- Best teaching experience ever
- Intellectual understanding of value with some reservations
- Concern about workload
- Concern about complexity
- Unknown nature and value

Faculty members' attitudes toward distance learning tend to change after the experience. Although they may intellectually understand the need for the program, some passively resist teaching in the program. Some say that they are too busy or it is too complex. Nonetheless, many become very positive after the experience. At the Fuqua School of Business' GEMBA program, Keeshan found that “most faculty say it's the best teaching experience they've ever had. It's the diversity of the students. And their motivation. They really want to be here. It's the only way they can get the MBA.” Graham Mercer (Michigan) says “it's tough. We have *not* had any intellectual backlash. They understand it's coming. Some don't embrace it or put as much effort into it. But they don't really oppose it.”

The faculty members in the OUMBA program also are extremely positive. “Several coming into teaching in the program were skeptical about how well it would work. After one and a half years, the skepticism is gone,” says Stinson.

According to Mercer (Michigan), faculty tend to see a lot of value in teaching in the distance learning programs. But he cautions “you have to be careful not to let productivity fall through the floor. You add more work to something that is already working.” Pittsburgh's Hixson agrees that faculty see how valuable it is, as well as how much work it is. She recognizes that the level of work has to be maintained, which takes dedication.

Rapisarda (Purdue) believes that faculty attitudes toward teaching in a distance learning program depends on how well they are received in the program by the students. Attitudes can also be affected by the stability of the technology. Understandably, when the technology goes down, faculty can get very frustrated.

Roepke of Ball State finds that faculty “get *really* hooked, especially ones who work on the internet, where there is three times as much interaction. TV has less interaction than in the classroom.” She also acknowledges that many faculty still do not understand what distance learning is or its importance.

For those seeking more information, they can consult Clark’s (1997) recent study which provides an in-depth look at the attitudes of higher education faculty toward distance education. In addition to faculty attitudes, Dillon and Walsh (1992) and Beaudoin (1990) examine the role of faculty in distance education compared with the traditional model, and how this role continues to evolve. Brooks (1997) identifies critical factors (including attitudes) that affect the success of distance learning from the faculty’s viewpoint.

TRANSITION FROM TRADITIONAL TO VIRTUAL PROFESSOR

The business faculty who develop the new distance learning programs do so to **try something new**, because they **enjoy what they are doing**, and recognize the **need to deliver self-paced education via technology**. John Stinson of Ohio was a business professor for 33 years when he started the innovative OUMBA. “It sounded like fun. Something new. And I wanted to try.” After developing and teaching in the OUMBA, he found “It’s the most fun I’ve ever had.” Every respondent to this survey referred to the special satisfaction and enjoyment that can be derived from involvement in distance learning programs. They used strong words such as “magic,” “incredible,” “amazing,” “tremendous” and “power of distance learning” to describe the students’, faculty members’, and administrators’ experiences with this instructional delivery system. All were fully aware of the limitations mentioned earlier, and the hard work involved, yet still they spoke with passion about their programs.

When asked how they motivated professors to teach in the distance learning program, administrators said, “with money, the old-fashioned way!” (Rapisarda, Purdue). Another important motivator is the opportunity for faculty to do something new and be on the cutting edge. The dis-

tance learning programs allow faculty to do something very different with a course which they may have been teaching for many years. Judith Roepke (Ball State) says, "some faculty want to try new things. It's just intrinsic in them." However, some teachers do very well on TV, while other master teachers can fail.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN WORKING WITH DISTANCE LEARNING FACULTY

Respondents identified their biggest challenge in working with distance learning faculty. Almost all said the most difficult part was getting faculty to commit the necessary time and effort to making a quality product. Administrators cited difficulties in encouraging faculty to use multimedia, websites and other technologies to make a more engaging course. Several cited the challenge of trying to get faculty to do everything possible with the technology available. Roepke (Ball State) mentions the challenge of getting faculty to put the necessary time into course development. Keeshan (Duke) comments, "I think just getting them to understand that so much preplanning has to take place for this to be successful. You have to reeducate the faculty. Once you do that, you are fine." Rapisarda (Purdue) identifies the challenge of continually moving forward to implement new developments in technology, to keep up with changes.

CONCLUSION

All those interviewed identify significant professional development benefits for faculty who are willing to try something new, and who use technology to reach a diverse, often global, population of talented students. The participating faculty and administrators have already found stimulation, renewal, and energy in meeting the challenges of teaching at a distance. Many of these are experienced business faculty who wanted to do something different after many years of teaching in the traditional classroom. According to the respondents, the level of professional satisfaction is high with those who make the commitment to put the necessary time and effort into teaching via technology. In spite of the labor-intensive courses and risk of technology breakdown, personal satisfaction continues to motivate and reward faculty efforts in distance learning initiatives. Without a doubt, in the coming years, growing numbers of busi-

ness language faculty will become involved in technology-based distance learning.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

I.

**Faculty Development Issues in Distance Learning MBA Programs
Administrator Questionnaire**

The purpose of this study is to examine faculty development issues related to distance learning MBA programs. The paper will be submitted to a professional journal for publication consideration. You will receive a copy of the research results. Thank you for your participation in this survey.

Program Overview

1. How long has your institution offered graduate business courses via distance learning? _____ years
2. Do you offer a masters degree in business through distance learning?
 Yes No
 Name of degree: _____
 Program Director: _____
3. Please describe the graduate business courses taught **via distance learning**.
 - a) Number of courses taught per year _____
 - b) Average class size _____
 - c) Number of distance learning faculty _____
4. What is the format of the distance learning courses? Please check all that apply.
 - Live interactive courses with 1 or 2-way audio/video
 - Modem-based courses delivered via internet, electronic bulletin board, or commercial provider
 - Pre-packaged telecourses offered via cable, PBS, or check-out
 - CDs
 - other _____

5. Is the typical class size in distance learning courses:
- greater than the traditional class size
 - smaller than the traditional class size
 - same as traditional class size

**Faculty Compensation and Rewards for
Distance Learning MBA Courses**

6. How does the business school compensate faculty for teaching a distance learning course? Please mark all that apply.
- part of regular teaching load
 - overload
 - additional stipend for new course development
 - release time for new course development
 - additional stipend for teaching a distance learning class for first time
 - release time for teaching a distance learning class for first time
 - other _____
7. Who determines which faculty teach distance learning courses?
- business school dean or department chair
 - distance learning director
 - faculty
 - joint decision between _____
8. Who determines the enrollment cap for distance learning classes?
- business school dean or chair
 - distance learning director
 - faculty
 - joint decision between _____
9. Are most of the distance learning faculty:
- full-time or part-time
 - tenured or non-tenured
10. How many distance learning courses do faculty normally teach per year?
- one course per year
 - two courses per year
 - entire teaching load
 - other _____

Faculty Support

11. What training do faculty receive to deliver distance learning courses?

Please mark all that apply.

- in-house training sessions
- support for faculty travel to distance learning conference/seminars
- working with faculty mentors
- recommended readings
- no formal training
- other _____

12. How does the administration view work on distance learning courses in an annual performance review?

- highly valued contribution
- valued contribution
- same value as teaching/developing a traditional course
- less valued contribution than a traditional course
- negatively valued contribution

13. What support do faculty receive for distance learning courses, beyond the support given for traditional courses? (Please mark all that apply.)

- webpage development
- electronic bulletin board
- site facilitators
- distance learning or project manager
- instructional designer
- graphic artist
- 800 phone number
- technical support
- delivery service to remote sites
- other _____

14. Which units offer support services for faculty teaching via distance learning?

- continuing education
- instructional media
- library
- other _____

15. How do you evaluate teaching effectiveness of the distance learning courses?
- same student evaluation form as traditional course
 - special distance learning student evaluation form
 - other _____
 - no evaluation form

Please comment on the questions below.

1. What do you perceive as the **major issues or concerns** associated with teaching via distance learning?
2. What **limitations** do you see in distance learning?
3. What do you consider to be the greatest **benefits** of teaching at a distance?
4. How do you select faculty to teach distance learning courses?
5. How do you motivate a faculty member to teach a distance learning course for the first time, to become a “virtual professor”?
6. What advice do you typically give to a faculty member who is new at teaching via distance?
7. a. Describe your faculty’s attitudes toward distance learning.
b. Do these attitudes typically change as they gain experience in teaching learners at a distance?
8. How does the library provide support for the distance learning MBA courses? How adequate is the support?
9. Have you encountered any problems with accrediting agencies such as regional or AACSB?
10. What is the biggest challenge you have faced in working with faculty who teach via distance learning.?
11. Would you like a copy of the results of this survey?
 Yes No

Thank you very much for participating in this survey. Please fax or email the questionnaire to Dr. Christine Uber Grosse.

II.
Faculty Development Issues in Distance Learning MBA Programs
Faculty Questionnaire

The purpose of this study is to examine faculty development issues related to distance learning MBA programs. The paper will be submitted to a professional journal for publication consideration. You will receive a copy of the research results, if you wish. Thank you for your participation in this survey.

Program Overview

1. Does your institution offer an MBA through distance learning?
 Yes No
 Name of degree: _____
 Program Director: _____
2. Please describe the graduate business courses you **teach via distance learning**.
Course Title(s): _____
 Average class size: _____
3. Is the typical class size in your distance learning course(s)
 greater than the traditional class size
 smaller than the traditional class size
 same as traditional classroom
4. What is the format of the distance learning course(s) you teach?
 Please check all that apply.
 Live interactive courses with 1 or 2-way audio/video
 Web-based courses
 Pre-packaged telecourses offered via cable, PBS, or check-out
 CDs
 other _____

Faculty Compensation and Rewards for
Distance Learning MBA Courses

5. How does the business school compensate faculty for teaching a distance learning course? Please mark all that apply.
 part of regular teaching load
 overload

- additional stipend for new course development
 release time for new course development
 additional stipend for teaching a distance learning class for first time
 release time for teaching a distance learning class for first time
 other _____
6. Who determines which faculty teach distance learning courses?
- business school dean or department chair
 distance learning director
 faculty member
 joint decision between _____
7. Are you:
- part-time or full-time
 non-tenured or tenured

Faculty Support

8. What training did you receive to deliver your distance learning course(s)? Please mark all that apply.
- in-house training sessions
 support for faculty travel to distance learning conference/seminars
 working with faculty mentors
 recommended readings
 no formal training
 other _____
9. How does the administration view work on distance learning courses in an annual performance review?
- highly valued contribution
 valued contribution
 same value as teaching/developing a traditional course
 less valued contribution than a traditional course
 negatively valued contribution
10. What support do faculty receive for distance learning courses, beyond the support given for traditional courses? (Please mark all that apply.)
- home page development
 electronic bulletin board
 site facilitators

- distance learning or project manager
- instructional designer
- graphic artist
- 800 phone number
- technical support
- delivery service to remote sites
- other _____

11. Which units offer support services for faculty teaching via distance learning?

- continuing education
- instructional media
- library
- other _____

12. How does student performance in distance learning course(s) compare to their performance in traditional courses?

- much better
- better
- same
- not as good
- much worse

13. How do you evaluate teaching effectiveness of the distance learning courses?

- same student evaluation form as traditional course
- special distance learning student evaluation form
- other _____
- no evaluation form

Please comment on the questions below.

1. What do you perceive as the **major issues or concerns** associated with teaching via distance learning?
2. What limitations do you see in business courses taught via distance learning?
3. What do you consider to be the greatest benefits of teaching at a distance?
4. a. Describe your attitude toward distance learning in an MBA program.
b. How has your opinion of distance learning changed as you

gained experience with it?

5. How does the library provide support for your distance learning MBA courses? How adequate is the support?
6. How were you motivated to make the transition from traditional professor to a virtual professor?
7. 7. Would you like a copy of the results of this study?
 Yes No

Thank you very much for participating in this survey. Please return the questionnaire to Dr. Christine Uber Grosse.

APPENDIX B

LIST OF RESPONDENTS

I appreciate the kind assistance of the following faculty and administrators who took the time to respond to this study.

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