

**EXTREME MAKEOVER: B-SCHOOL EDITION
REDESIGNING AN MBA PROGRAM**

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ABSTRACT

Westminster College was its market leader in offering a flexible evening MBA program for working professionals. Westminster's high price point was congruent with this differentiated product. This marketing strategy remained unchanged until the college experienced a two-year enrollment decline that resulted from changing market conditions. The most important challenge stemmed from the entry of several competitors into the market, a few offering a flexible (not lock step) programs that competed directly with that of Westminster. The Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business (GSB) at Westminster College faced a choice of whether to reinvent a program or harvest a declining product offering. A first step was taken during the 2002-2003 academic year, when the GSB extended the MBA product by offering an MBATM (Technology Management) degree providing management education for professionals with technical undergraduate degrees.

While the launch of the MBATM at Westminster's GSB was a small-scale success, administrators and MBA faculty of the GSB determined that it was time to take on the greater challenge of fundamentally redesigning the MBA product offerings. The redesign process involved the participation of a number of key stakeholders. Several working sessions with an advisory board consisting of local and nationally-recognized business professionals convened for a needs assessment workshop to identify characteristics sought when hiring and promoting

MBA graduates. Current students and recent graduates took part in several focus groups. An environmental assessment was conducted. Armed with this information, the MBA faculty began the redesign process during a two-day offsite retreat. The faculty continued working throughout the year to develop an outcomes-based education model.

The resulting products (MBA, MBATM, and graduate certificates) maintained the feature that originally differentiated the program, flexibility. All classes are offered in a 7-week format enhanced by online participation through WebCT. All classes were reengineered, eliminating redundancies in topics and integrating disciplines. While the GSB kept its high price point, it began to offer a one price bundled program option.

After one semester of the new program, enrollment is up. Awareness of the new program in the community is appears to be growing due to the GSB's primary and most effective marketing tool—word of mouth promotion. And while current students have expressed some frustration with the seven-week model, the MBA faculty continues to closely monitor student opinions and tweak the program to meet student needs while maintaining integrity of outcomes. Overall, faculty, students, and the public are considering this extreme makeover a huge success.