

INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS: PRODUCT VARIATION IN DECLINING HIGHER ED MARKET

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ABSTRACT

Although demand for higher education continues to grow at a slow pace in the United States, that growth is expected to be disproportionate across both the nation and degree programs. Projections for high schools in almost half of the United States, and overall trends in business colleges (Greenbaum 2006) suggest that there will be a decrease in enrollment. One major challenge for colleges of business at state funded universities will be to develop programs that will allow maintenance of enrollment and/or credit hour production in this mature and perhaps declining market. Interdisciplinary and/or intercollegiate degree programs may provide one solution. These programs offer options for students to customize their degrees, affording them greater opportunities to differentiate themselves. From the college perspective, these programs can enhance student recruitment, student retention, better utilization of resources, and most importantly credit hour production. There is broad recognition that businesses value interdisciplinary problem-solving skills. However, business schools have placed almost no emphasis on promoting it (Adams et al. 2006). Interdisciplinary programs

provide an avenue to escape from the traditional silo approach to teaching found in most business schools and produce graduates with the broad range of skills sought by businesses today. In this paper, the authors review the current state of enrollment trends in colleges of business and identify successful interdisciplinary programs in other areas of higher education. Finally, they propose opportunities for interdisciplinary programs for colleges of business and outline an approach for assessing the attractive-ness of these programs to students.

REFERENCES

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- Greenbaum, Stuart. 2006. B-school critics miss the mark. *BizEd* (July/August): 56-57.