

101

SB

...plunges freshmen into teamwork and competition. For decades, business schools have compartmentalized instruction in the various core components—management, accounting, finance and marketing—while rarely linking one to the other. | MEG BARONE

Administrators and faculty of Quinnipiac University's School of Business have recognized the value of integrating those core components to augment students' knowledge and understanding of business practices.

All incoming freshmen are required to take SB 101, The Business Environment, an introduction to the undergraduate business program, said Brian Jones, a professor of marketing and advertising. The course teaches basic concepts of the aforementioned disciplines and how they interrelate.

This approach focuses students' attention on the big picture rather than on individual facets of it, said Kathleen Simone, an accounting professor. "The model we've developed here is pretty unique and the feedback we're getting from students, and even from other universities, is that it works," Simone added.

Jones said business schools have been criticized for building their curricula

around individual disciplines. "The analogy I use is taking a clock apart to see how it works and never putting it back together, and business has been taught this way since the late 19th century. You've had accounting departments where they teach accounting, but they don't talk about marketing, and marketing departments where they teach marketing but the students never look at a financial statement," he said.

SB 101 explains how marketing connects with accounting, how accounting connects with finance, and how finance connects with management, he said. "A person running a business has to do all of these things together. You can't run a company saying, 'I'm a marketer. I'm only going to do the marketing.' You have to understand those financial statements," he said.

The impetus for the course and more integration in the school's curriculum was to prepare students for the real business world, where they will work in cross-

functional teams. "The more information you have, the better decisions you can make," Simone said.

Another motivation was to help students choose a major and a career path. "That class exposed me to the different areas of business, and after getting a taste of each subject, I decided I wanted to major in accounting," said sophomore Steven Genova, from Milford, Conn.

Jessica Sares, a sophomore accounting major from Raynham, Mass., said the course did not influence her choice of major, but the fundamentals she learned provided a great background for all the courses business majors have to take. "I felt so prepared going into my accounting class as a result," Sares said.

The course was developed by a team of faculty members, one from each of the four core departments. The team meets weekly to develop lesson plans. All the materials are common from one instructor to another. Students get the same tests, lecture notes and reading assignments.



Assistant professor of management Rowena Ortiz-Walters leads an SB 101 intensive team building workshop for this fall's incoming freshmen in September.

Each discipline is equally represented, and each faculty member teaches all the course material, including that from disciplines outside their own area of expertise. “We live what we expect the students to do,” said Jones, referring to reaching beyond their specialties and working collaboratively.

Students are expected to do almost everything in the course as part of a team to which they are assigned early in the semester. They participate in an intensive team-building workshop and compete against other teams in the class for sales and profits in a computer-based simulation in which they manufacture and sell bicycles for a fictitious company, Mike’s Bikes.

Sares said the class gives students insight into the world they will enter upon graduating. “You’re thrown into a situation where you don’t know anyone. In high school you can work in teams, but you’ve known these people for four years, maybe even 12, but you walk into SB 101 and find out that three of these people are going to be your partners and everyone else is your competitor,” Sares said.

“It was tough making decisions, but we worked through it,” said sophomore Leeza Scoble, a marketing major from Hamden. “With people of different opinions, you have to take everything into consideration,” she said, adding that she thinks the course will give Quinnipiac students a competitive edge when job hunting.

“Students are immersed in business decision-making right from the start of their academic experience, which assists with setting a foundation upon which to build their skills in areas such as strategic

and critical thinking,” said Dean Mark A. Thompson.

After taking the course, students understand how to apply basic business concepts because they have used them each week to run their simulated company. “It’s not just about book learning, it’s about practical experience—as much as can be achieved in a classroom setting,” Jones said.

In addition to the practical experience and team-building, the course helps students develop interpersonal, communication and leadership skills, the top qualities recruiters seek in prospective employees.

“It’s realistic, the students love it, it’s an absolute high to teach and it’s fun learning things from your colleagues down the hall,” said Jones, who admits his involvement in SB 101 has changed the way he teaches his marketing courses. “There’s way more accounting and finance in my marketing courses today than there was four years ago. You can’t teach marketing and completely ignore the impact of a marketing decision on the income statement,” he said.

