

## DESIGNING A FOUR YEAR MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING DEGREE CURRICULUM

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**Abstract:** For the last several years, business professionals have criticized business schools for not offering curricula relevant to industry needs. This dissatisfaction from business professionals and declining enrollments have persuaded several educators and administrators to call for and/or to undertake steps to make their business curricula more customer-oriented.

Our research addresses the issues of redesigning a four year management and marketing degree curriculum offered at the School of Business & Economics at Fayetteville State University. We undertook this project within the framework of Total Quality Management (TQM) to design a customer-focused curriculum utilizing the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) developed by Dr. Thomas Saaty of the University of Pittsburgh. We identified three stake-holders of immediate relevance namely business professionals, faculty, and students. These three stake-holders constitute the second level of the hierarchy. Their preferences will be combined according to the weights provided by the Business Advisory Council and faculty members of the School of Business & Economics.

The mission statement of the School of Business & Economics identifies five key characteristics of our graduates: creative, professional, visionary, able to work in diverse environments, and able to manage one's own career. Based on literature reviews, we have identified approximately 200 major skills that contribute to these attributes. The three stake-holder groups will be requested to evaluate the extent to which each skill contributes to developing each attribute on a five point scale of 1 = none, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high, and 5 = essential. Although raters will evaluate 200 separate skills, major categories consist of (1) interpersonal skills, (2) communication skills, (3) management & human performance, (4) business strategy, (5) productivity improvement, (6) worldwide business issues, (7) information technology, (8) financial management skills, (9) general management skills, (10) customer & market skills (11) total quality management, (12) business ethics, (13) American issues, and (14) personal management.

Examples of the 200 skills that operationalize the categories are specific skills like 1. instruct others in basic managerial or production tasks, 2. work successfully as a team member, 3. adhere to business standards of dress, attendance, and punctuality, 4. seek productive relationships among a business community, and 5. initiate the discovery of opportunities.

Our study will demonstrate how AHP can be utilized to design curricula incorporating stakeholder preferences in multi-criteria decision making. While our school will benefit from the findings of this project, other schools that are similar to our school could also benefit from our findings. Business schools that are significantly different from our school could benefit from the methodology used here and could replicate this study for their stake-holders.