

Abstract

As management scholars we know our discipline is inherently multi-disciplinary and yet we often find ourselves teaching alone in our respective silos. In this session, we will discuss the value of collaboration between management faculty and colleagues from the traditional liberal arts in developing new, innovative courses. We will share our experience team-teaching interdisciplinary undergraduate courses, while providing you an opportunity to discuss and brainstorm a new interdisciplinary course appropriate for your institution. This session will address the obstacles to developing new interdisciplinary courses as discussed in the Management Education literature and discuss strategies for overcoming these obstacles.

Key words: Interdisciplinary, Experiential Learning, Entrepreneurship, International

INTEGRATING THE LIBERAL ARTS IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: DEMYSTIFYING INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM-TEACHING

Introduction

The Association to Advance College Schools of Business (AACSB) has identified the new vision for business education as one that contributes to global prosperity and addresses societal and environmental challenges through collaborations with other disciplines (AACSB, n.d.). While this may be a contemporary goal for business schools, the longstanding role of a liberal arts education is to cultivate humanity and global citizenship (see Nussbaum, 2007). The purpose of this roundtable discussion is to foster dialogue regarding interdisciplinary collaborations between the liberal arts and business programs. In this pursuit, I will provide an example of a recent course, which sought to develop innovative student learning experiences through the collaboration of faculty in strategic management and human geography disciplines. The intended outcome of this roundtable discussion is for participants to think of how their research or teaching area of expertise could lend itself to collaborative opportunities with faculty outside of the business program at their respective institutions. The target audience for this discussion would be any faculty open to exploring these connections with faculty from the traditional liberal arts disciplines. We will also discuss sources of potential institutional support or obstacles.

Theoretical Foundations and Teaching Implications

Nussbaum (2007) identifies three goals of a liberal arts education: to develop students' ability to think critically, to "transcend local loyalties" and view world problems as global citizens, and to imagine, sympathetically, the difficulties of another. As management educators we understand that businesses' societal value is to solve problems and create opportunities for economic growth and prosperity but we are also increasingly called upon to move beyond wealth

creation to address the well-being of a broader, less proximal group of stakeholders around the world. We are tasked with generating business leaders who are “responsible, inclusive, and humanistic” (AACSB, n.d.). A liberal arts education complements these management education goals by equipping future business leaders with the necessary skillset and mindset to act as responsible global citizens.

The management education literature has long discussed the value of interdisciplinary teaching for our students and some studies have directly explored the usefulness of integrating the liberal arts in business education. For example, Harrison & Akinc (2000) successfully implemented a freshman seminar which discussed leadership lessons gleaned from the study of art and literature, thus broadening students’ sources and models of leadership. Another study explored the efficacy of using poetry and the visual arts to increase business students’ awareness and recognition of emotions, components of emotional intelligence, thus blending liberal arts competencies with career development skills, namely interpersonal and social skills (Morris, Urbanski, & Fuller, 2005). Berdrow & Evers (2011) rightly state that our mission as educators is to “prepare students as lifelong learners” to ensure a smooth transition to the workforce (p. 2). The authors go on to explain that “knowing” is not enough and that we need to provide students with the opportunities to apply their knowledge to solving real problems within complex environments, thus creating a learner-centered learning environment (Berdrow & Evers, 2011). Interdisciplinary collaborations between management and liberal arts faculty can create an opportunity broaden student knowledge and equip students with relevant application tools.

Although the benefits of interdisciplinary teaching seem evident, this type of pedagogy is not without its own challenges. Statler and Guillet de Monthoux (2015) discuss institutional constraints impeding cross-disciplinary collaborations among faculty, such as conflicts between

this teaching method and traditional academic careers, internal competition between schools and universities, and administrative system limitations (e.g., scheduling, evaluations, logistics). In addition, some research suggests that interdisciplinary teaching requires a significantly greater time commitment for the constituents involved, which can be particularly risky for junior faculty who may need more time to progress an early research agenda and a greater need for positive student evaluations (Ducoffe, Tromley, & Tucker, 2006). However, Ducoffe and colleagues (2006) found that team-taught, interdisciplinary courses were positively valued by students and this positive association increased the more the faculty integrated their disciplines. Therefore, despite these valid concerns and obstacles, it is worth continuing to explore opportunities to create innovative, integrative educational opportunities for our students.

My roundtable discussion session seeks to build upon this prior research and continue the discussion of the value of collaboration with the colleagues from the traditional liberal arts, while addressing and brainstorming solutions to the obstacles highlighted above. I will provide an example of an interdisciplinary, team-taught course which I co-designed with my colleague, an environmental studies scholar. We created an Ecotourism in the Caribbean study abroad course that integrated my knowledge of strategy and business model innovation with her knowledge of human geography theory and methods. We co-created and co-evaluated assignments, co-lead the course, and the students responded very positively to the experience. The management students were provided an opportunity to learn and then apply interesting qualitative methods appropriate for studying human-environment interactions, which they used in the field to collect data and develop a new ecotourism business model. The liberal arts majors also benefited from this interaction as they learned key managerial skills and competencies that allowed them to apply theoretical concepts to a real-world setting and present their results. I acquired unexpected

personal and professional benefits during this experience that I hope to share with my fellow management educators to inspire future interdisciplinary collaborations.

Session Description:

I have created an outline below for how I would organize a 60-minute roundtable discussion on demystifying interdisciplinary team-teaching.

- I. Introductions and General Overview of the Roundtable Format (10 minutes)
 - a. Discussion the background and motivation for this session
 - i. I will share my background and faculty experience at both a R1 university and liberal arts college
 - ii. As the participants introduce themselves, I will ask what they hope to achieve from session. Any burning questions, excitement, concerns?
- II. Origin of our Ecotourism in the Caribbean course (10 minutes)
 - a. How to approach a colleague and finding an area of mutual interest
 - b. Drafting the proposal
 - c. Addressing concerns (some myths) about the intensity of the work involved
 - d. Role of experience and mentoring
 - e. Execution of the course
 - f. Key learnings
- III. Considering Collaboration Opportunities:
 - a. Review the process of developing cross-discipline courses: (2 minutes)
 - i. Ideas, Introductions, Iterations
 - ii. Institutional support of cross-disciplinary course planning
 - b. Ask participants to brainstorm new course ideas on their own (15 minutes)

- i. Then they will share their ideas with a partner.
 - ii. Invite them to then share with the larger group for additional feedback
- IV. Anticipating obstacles: (20 minutes)
 - a. Ask participants what obstacles they anticipate encountering as they develop their course.
 - b. Brainstorm solutions as a group
- V. Conclusion and moving forward: (3 minutes)
 - a. Would they like to continue this conversation? Would they find it useful to have a discussion board dedicated to the topic? Preferences for communication?

Conference track: Innovate and Collaborate

My conference submission fits well with this year's theme, Innovate and Collaborate. I am proposing an interactive roundtable discussion session that addresses the process of creating an interdisciplinary course with your liberal arts colleagues. I developed a new study abroad course, Ecotourism in the Caribbean, with my environmental studies colleague, who specializes in human geography. I will discuss how the students (and faculty) both benefited from this collaborative instructional effort. Our enrolled students represented many different majors and the students benefited from the diversity of interests and backgrounds in the classroom. The management students were provided an opportunity to learn and then apply interesting qualitative methods appropriate for studying human-environment interactions, which they used in the field to collect data and develop a new ecotourism business model. The liberal arts majors also benefited from this interaction as they learned key managerial skills and competencies that allowed them to apply theoretical concepts to a real-world setting. The students engaged with

local ecotourism operators in the host countries we visited. As a result of this classroom collaboration, my colleague and I are now working on a new research project together.

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