



*The Prentis Building, home of the Wayne State University School of Business Administration, is named after the late philanthropist Meyer Prentis, and Anna, his wife. Meyer, former treasurer of General Motors Corporation, also founded the organization that became the United Way for Southeastern Michigan.*

## Change Request: Online M.B.A.

### 7.2 Seeking Approval of Proposed Changes

#### ***Background on the Development of the Online M.B.A. Program***

The online M.B.A. program evolved in stages over time and was initiated, supported, and monitored by faculty and faculty committees of the School of Business Administration.

The origin for the design of the online M.B.A. program began with the School's Graduate Educational Policy Committee (a standing committee of the Faculty Senate). The M.B.A. program was designed with the following principle as its basis:

There is only one M.B.A. degree. While the M.B.A. program would be offered online, it would remain the same degree with the same mission and focus of the long-established M.B.A. program and would change "in step" with the on-site M.B.A. program. The online and on-site program and courses would be delivered by the same faculty members. Students could move between on-site and online courses and complete their degrees by satisfying requirements from both delivery

modes. The WSU M.B.A. program has long been among the largest accredited part-time M.B.A. programs in the country (AACSB International, the accreditation association, has verified this). As a consequence, there are multiple sections of most courses and sections of courses are often offered at different locations during the same semester. The School was a leader at Wayne State University in developing and delivering interactive TV courses between the campus and extension sites. The core idea for the online M.B.A. was that most courses would be delivered in twin sections. These sections would be taught by the same instructor, use the same materials and assessments, and follow the same schedule. However, one section would be on-site and the other would be online. Students would be allowed to take either section to satisfy degree requirements and students would be allowed to switch between the twin sections at any time during the semester. Instructors could use technology facilities to tape lectures, discussions, or presentations during the on-site class and include these in the online class. However, each section of the twin sections would have a design, schedule, and expectations that kept the twin sections together and equivalent.

In addition, it was decided that the online M.B.A. program would be offered in stages. There are three levels for M.B.A. courses.

1. The foundation courses are for students admitted to the M.B.A. program without an undergraduate degree in business. A student may need to take from one to eight of these two-credit courses prior to entering the M.B.A. core and elective courses.
2. The core M.B.A. courses are required of all M.B.A. students. There are six core M.B.A. courses (18 semester credits).
3. Completion of the M.B.A. degree requires completion of 18 semester credits of M.B.A. elective courses.

The first courses to be brought into the twin model were the foundation courses. There was extensive training and support for faculty followed by comprehensive evaluations from faculty and students. The next level to be implemented involved bringing the core courses into the online M.B.A. model. Finally, sufficient elective courses would be introduced into the online M.B.A. model. It was anticipated that some elective courses may be single sections. All M.B.A. courses for the online program would be initially developed and taught only by full-time faculty members.

In 2004, the professional business education association (AACSB International) awarded the online M.B.A. program design an award for leadership and innovation in business education.

Answers to Section 7.2 for the WSU Online M.B.A. program:

1. What change is being proposed?
  - a. Specific change being proposed: The traditional on-site M.B.A. program will be delivered online. The curriculum requirements, student admission requirements, faculty, and content will remain the same for the online M.B.A. and the established on-site M.B.A. Students may complete the M.B.A. degree through on-site or online courses or a combination of both.
  - b. Expected outcomes of proposed change: The online M.B.A. will further support the University strategy for new online programs and increased enrollment,

support the School's strategic plans, and continue to support the core student audience for the WSU M.B.A. program (working professional who seeks a flexible schedule and high-quality M.B.A. program).

- c. Project the impact of this proposed change on the organization's current mission, the numbers and types of students to be served and the breadth of educational offerings: This change is consistent with the mission, strategy, and focus of the established M.B.A. program. This program will provide opportunities to recruit students from a wider geographic area and continue to provide support for the local students who have increased travel and work commitments that make finishing a traditional on-site program difficult.
- d. Identify policies relevant to this change.
  - i. Change in mission or structure: No change — the online M.B.A. retains the same content, faculty, and curriculums as the on-site M.B.A. Over 50% of the full-time faculty members participate in the online M.B.A. Last year, experienced part-time faculty members were able to participate. The technology support from the University and School for all courses has continued to increase over the past decade.
  - ii. Change in educational offering: No change — the degree is the same whether the courses are taken on-site or online. This is a new delivery process that is designed to offer the same high-quality degree program but also offer increased flexibility in scheduling for students.
  - iii. Change in educational sites: The courses are now delivered through technology. On-site courses also have increased technology support and components. Innovations from the online courses have influenced on-site courses. Many on-site courses now have hybrid designs which call for the classes to meet online rather than on-site for certain weeks of the semester. Innovations such as streaming video presentations for reviews and course welcome/expectations are now used for many on-site courses.

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- iv. Change in relationship with the Commission: No change.
2. What factors led the organization to undertake the proposed change?
- a. Relationship between the proposed change and ongoing planning: The online M.B.A. program has evolved from the School's experience with interactive TV delivery between sites. The online M.B.A. is consistent with the mission and strategy of the University and the School. The online M.B.A. was planned within the strategic plan framework and faculty governance framework for the School.
  - b. Needs analysis related to this proposed change: Regularly conducted student surveys indicated the increased need for technology support in order to accommodate working professional students who have increased job duties involving travel and flexible work assignments. Traditionally, the WSU on-site M.B.A. program was offered only in the evenings and on Saturdays. However, increased business pressures for our working students have increased the need for more flexibility and technology support in a program that does not reduce the quality of the degree or curriculums.
  - c. Involvement of various constituencies in developing this proposed change: All planning was done in the established elected faculty governance committees (Graduate Educational Policy Committee) and the Faculty Senate of the School. Survey data from alumni and students were used by the committees.
3. What necessary approvals have been obtained to implement the proposed change?
- a. Internal approvals: Approved by the faculty and Dean of the School.
  - b. External approvals: None required. However, the design of the online M.B.A. received an award for educational innovation and leadership from the professional business education association, AACSB International.
4. What impact might the proposed change have on challenges identified by the Commission as part of or subsequent to the last comprehensive visit?
- a. Challenges directly related to the proposed change: The business school has found that it must continuously update technology and provide relevant education for the working professional student. The online M.B.A. program directly addresses this issue and helps the School meet the continuing challenge.
  - b. How the organization has addressed the challenge(s): Development of the online M.B.A. actually helps the School meet the challenge imposed by the increasingly competitive and global business environment.
5. What are the organization's plans to implement and sustain the proposed change?
- a. Involvement of faculty and staff to accomplish the proposed change: Over 50% of the full-time faculty members have taught in the online M.B.A. program. The technology staff of the School is committed to support all online courses and continues support for the interactive TV sections.
  - b. Administrative structure necessary to support the change: The same administrative structure manages all business education programs for the School.
  - c. How the organization will make learning resources and support services available to students: The University provides many support services for technology and online courses through its Technology Resource Center (TRC). The TRC provides workshops and individual counseling for faculty developing innovations in technology and pedagogy. The School's Computer and Information Systems (C&IS) division has grown to support technology enhancements for all business courses.
  - d. Financial data that document the organization's ability to implement and sustain the proposed change:

The School's budget each year has been revised and planned to include technology enhancements and support for all business courses. The School now receives the omnibus fee collected by the University from students. These monies have supported development of the interactive TV courses, computer labs in the School, online course development, and executive technology classrooms.

- e. Timeline to implement the change: The online M.B.A. program was implemented in phases. First the foundation courses (required of students admitted to the M.B.A. program who do not have an undergraduate business degree) were developed and implemented. The next stage was to introduce the required M.B.A. courses (18 semester credits, six courses), and the final stage was to provide a sufficient number of elective courses (18 semester credits). There is a matrix schedule for the online M.B.A. courses — all courses (foundation, core and elective) needed to finish the M.B.A. degree will be offered in the fall and winter semesters of every academic year. The School's website provides extensive information for prospective and current students. Students may preview the online courses and have opportunities for counseling through e-mail, phone, fax, or one-on-one appointments. The School's website summarizes technology requirements as well as legal issues.
6. What are the organization's strategies to evaluate the proposed change?
  - a. Measures to document the achievement of expected outcomes: The M.B.A. program with twin sections (online and on-site) provide a unique opportunity for assessment and comparisons. In addition to traditional assessments (Student Evaluation of Teaching every semester, student surveys, University reviews, and AACSB International reviews), the School has conducted special assessments of the twin M.B.A. courses. The assessments include student evaluations and comparisons of student learning and achievement.
  - b. How assessment of student learning is integrated into the assessment program:

Assessment is done for all M.B.A. courses (online and on-site) and all results are reviewed by faculty committees and used for strategic planning and accreditation reviews.



## Responses for the WSU Online M.B.A. for the Best Practices and Protocols Questions

### ***1. Institutional Context and Commitment***

**1a.** The online M.B.A. program was designed and is delivered to be equivalent to the on-site M.B.A. program. The content, purpose, role, mission, standards for admission, assigned faculty, assessment, and expectations remain the same for both the online M.B.A. and the on-site M.B.A. There is only one degree, although students may choose to take the courses on-site, online, or through a combination of the two.

**1b.** Originally, only foundation courses were offered as online and on-site twins. Over time, the core M.B.A. courses and M.B.A. elective courses have been developed and implemented. When the design was finalized, a student could complete the M.B.A. degree through online or on-site courses, or a combination. The program represents an evolution rather than revolution. The online M.B.A. courses benefited from the School's pioneering development of interactive TV courses between the campus and extension sites. Lessons learned with implementation of the foundation courses were carried forward later as core and elective courses were introduced. Climbing enrollments in the online courses propelled the development of subsequent stages of the online M.B.A. program. Eventually, the online sections influenced on-site courses. Many instructors adopted ideas developed for the online courses and made them available for on-site courses (including streaming videos for reviews and streaming videos for introduction and explanation of course expectations). Some on-site courses began as a hybrid model, which called for the option of on-site courses to have online class meetings scheduled during multiple weeks of the semester. Over time, the online M.B.A. program has allowed for recruitment of students at greater

distances from the main campus and recruitment of regional students who are required by their jobs to travel extensively. The change with the online M.B.A. has been evolutionary and fits with the history of the M.B.A. program changes, but the change that the online M.B.A. program brought to faculty curriculum developments has been significant. Part of the significance has been the change in faculty attitudes, with over 50% of full-time faculty participating in the online M.B.A.

**1c.** The online M.B.A. is sustainable for two reasons. There is one M.B.A. degree and the online sections have grown and become more popular than the on-site sections. The students have assurance they can complete the degree online, on-site, or through a combination that best suits their needs and learning capabilities.

The electronic programs, including the online M.B.A., online classes, and interactive IT classes between the main campus and the extension sites are part of the School's budget. The facilities are shared and the equipment is used for regular on-site classes (hybrid models). Any instructor can request use of technology in support of his or her classes.

The University strategy and mission encourages electronically offered programs. The strategic plan to increase University enrollment to 40,000 (from 33,000) includes development and support for innovation and technologically delivered programs.

**1d.** The online M.B.A. program (and other online classes) was developed and supported through the School's technology division, Computing and Information Systems (C&IS). As enrollment in online courses grew, additional technology support was obtained. Originally, courses were supported in the two ITV rooms; two technology carts were added later; and two more carts were acquired to accommodate the full programs. Descriptions of the technology support for business school classes can be accessed on the School's website. The website includes extensive information (for present students, prospective students, and faculty) about the online M.B.A. program. The School's website for the online M.B.A. provides an overview of the program, a matrix schedule of courses, support programs for faculty, opportunities for students to preview the online courses, and information about security,

technology requirements, support contacts for students and faculty, copyright information, articles about online learning, and opportunities for help desk assistance (online, by phone and through one-on-one consultation). Technology maintenance, updates, and innovations are addressed in the annual School budget reviews. Technology investments have increased for the School of Business Administration. This trend is true for all business schools — the trend is propelled by accreditation requirements, increasing enrollment, increasing expectations of business firms, and competitive pressures among M.B.A. programs.

**1e.** The online M.B.A. was developed by a standing committee (Graduate Educational Policy Committee) of the School's elected faculty governance body (Faculty Senate). The program is reviewed by both these bodies. The bylaws of the Faculty Senate address the process for development and review of academic programs. There are also University reviews and external accreditation reviews (AACSB International). The development and support of the online M.B.A. has been addressed in the School's strategic plans. The online M.B.A. is reviewed with the on-site M.B.A. degree for all aspects.

**1f.** The policies for articulation and transfer are the same for both the online M.B.A. and the traditional (on-site) M.B.A.. The admission requirements for students are the same and students may transfer between online and on-site courses. Transfers and equivalent courses from other universities are under the same policies for both online and on-site M.B.A. courses.

**1g.** The School maintains consistent support for the online courses while allowing faculty members to customize their courses as has been done traditionally. The University and the School both provide support for design of courses and support of courses. Faculty are involved in the process for review and acquisition of new hardware or software. The process used by the School to develop the interactive ITV courses evolved to include faculty in the design, implementation, and review of all technology support for instruction.

**1h.** Information about the help desk is available on the School's website. Help can be obtained online, through the telephone, or through one-

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on-one consultation. All hardware and software for online courses are supported through both the School and the University. There is an FAQ service that can be accessed through the School's online M.B.A. web page.

**1i.** The online courses have been developed, implemented and reviewed by the School's faculty and faculty committees. Faculty are invited to vendor presentations and information is made available to faculty prior to decisions. Students pay the same tuition and fees for online or on-site M.B.A. courses. Technology requirements for students to participate in the program are clearly outlined on the online M.B.A. website. The technology requirements are fairly modest and many students use the technology available in WSU's libraries. The Extended Study Center in the Undergraduate Library is open on certain days for 24 hours. Technology requirements are reviewed annually in the School's budget process.

**1j.** The University maintains extensive programs for students with disabilities, and the School participates fully in these programs. The University legal and computing divisions provide legal, regulatory, and technology information and support for all schools and colleges.

## **2. Curriculum and Instruction**

**2a.** The program was developed by the School's standing committee (Graduate Educational Policy Committee) and the School's elected faculty governance body (Faculty Senate). The development of the online M.B.A. followed the same process as is used for development and review of all academic programs. AACSB International is the accreditation association for business learning. The School is accredited by AACSB International and all programs of the School are under AACSB review. The learning objectives, reviews, policies, processes, and guidelines for the M.B.A. program are coincident for both online and on-site M.B.A. programs. Full-time faculty of the School teach both on-site and online. All online courses and many on-site courses use the University Blackboard system. Syllabi, handouts, schedules, and other features are available to students through Blackboard.

**2b.** The same faculty who teach in the online M.B.A. teach in the on-site M.B.A., and the faculty governance committees of the School

review and evaluate all courses of these programs as well as the School's other programs (including the undergraduate programs). The administrators for the M.B.A. program and courses are the same for both online and on-site courses. The same Associate Deans and Department Chairs schedule and manage course aspects for all School courses.

**2c.** The online M.B.A. program (as well as the on-site M.B.A. program) requirements are on the School's website. The website lists requirements for entry into the M.B.A. program, technology requirements, degree requirements, course schedules, etc. Students may choose to complete the M.B.A. degree online, on-site, or by switching between online and on-site courses.

**2d.** There are no outside contractors or consortia who supply courses or curriculum for the M.B.A. program. Evaluation and support for technology, hardware, and software rest with staff of the School and University. The School uses University-provided services for Blackboard and electronic library support. All administrative services (student services, registrar) are the same for students in the M.B.A. program.

**2e.** Interaction between instructor and students and among students is provided in all M.B.A. courses. Online M.B.A. courses support interaction with chat rooms and threaded conversations. Instructors hold office hours and communicate one-on-one with students and by e-mail. The syllabi reflect office hour arrangements for both online and on-site course sections. Group projects are required in online M.B.A. classes just as they are for on-site M.B.A. classes. Instructors indicate how to communicate through phone, fax, Internet, Blackboard, and other sources. Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) is accommodated online or on-site. The student evaluation of online M.B.A. courses and enrollment trends indicate that the online courses have been judged to be as good or better than the on-site courses. The School's M.B.A. program is a part-time program designed to accommodate the working professional. With increased demands for travel from business firms, the students of the M.B.A. program appreciate the flexibility of the online M.B.A. program and the equivalence of the online courses and the on-site courses.

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### **3. Faculty Support**

**3a.** Decisions concerning workload, compensation, intellectual property and program participation are included in the School and University general policies. The policies and processes for the School have evolved since the School began interactive ITV courses and continue to be reviewed and updated.

**3b.** The support services for online School and University courses have grown as demand for online courses has developed. The University maintains an extensive support service with the Technology Resource Center (including the Office for Teaching and Learning). The School's Computing and Information Systems division provides School-specific support for the online business courses and the online M.B.A.

**3c.** The University and School both maintain support services for online course development and review. The University offers general workshops and custom workshops for School- or College-specific needs. The School also provides workshops and support. The School's support services and workshops were initiated with the interactive ITV courses and have been evolved over time to support the online courses. Faculty who are new to teaching in the online M.B.A. program have opportunities to preview existing courses and interact with faculty who have been teaching in the program over time. The School's faculty is not large — it has numbered between 50 to 60 faculty over the past decade — and it is not difficult for faculty members to interact in person or electronically.

**3d.** Workshops are provided for faculty by both the University and the School. The School's technology support staff (C&IS) participate in regular workshops, retreats, and reviews of technology opportunities.

### **4. Student Support**

**4a.** The University and School have aligned strategic plans that place high priority on innovation and delivery of online programs. Annual budget reviews of the School also support the need for updated technology.

**4b.** The admissions requirements for the online or on-site M.B.A. are identical. The online M.B.A. program has extensive information on the

School's website. Student tuition and fees are identical for online and on-site M.B.A. courses. Because of the twin section concept for the online M.B.A., all M.B.A. students have access to the same information and support.

**4c.** Students may register for any M.B.A. course on the web. Information about the M.B.A. program options is available on the School's website. Information about scholarships etc. is available to all M.B.A. students. All M.B.A. students are advised by the School's Student Services Office. Advising is available on-site, by phone and fax, or online. Students in online M.B.A. courses or on-site M.B.A. courses are advised by the same advisors in the Student Services Office. All business students have access to the same grievance process, support, advising, degree audits, and other services.

**4d.** The twin sections of the M.B.A. courses provide community for all M.B.A. students. Students may switch between the online and on-site programs. M.B.A. on-site courses are offered in the evenings and on Saturdays. This is done to accommodate the part-time student who is a working professional. Since on-site M.B.A. students generally work in the day and attend in the evening or Saturday, there is more limited participation in activities associated with traditional daytime programs. The evaluations of the online M.B.A. courses by students and the Student Evaluation of Teaching results indicate that students are pleased with the online courses.

### **5. Evaluation and Assessment**

**5a.** All courses are evaluated using the University's Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET). SET is available both on-site and online. All courses of the School are reviewed by University review and professional accreditation (AACSB International). The online M.B.A. courses were reviewed extensively through the launch phases. The twin section format made evaluations and comparisons very direct. The evaluations revealed high student satisfaction with the online M.B.A. courses. The reviews of the assessments and grades reveal that the average assessments were statistically the same for both online and on-site courses. However, the online M.B.A. course grade assessments had higher standard deviations. The faculty referred to this as more As and more Cs — the online M.B.A. courses attracted both the more capable and the more challenged. All evaluations

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of the M.B.A. courses were done for both on-site and online course sections.

**5b. and 5c.** Exams and tests in the online M.B.A. have the same options as all online courses in the School and the University. The School has hardware, software and personnel support for testing and assessments. The University also supports online testing options. If instructors wish to require an on-site final exam, students have to be told at the start of the course so that they have the option to switch sections.

**5d.** All assessments conducted for traditional and on-site M.B.A. courses are also done for the online M.B.A. All M.B.A. students are offered the opportunity to participate in the student surveys done for AACSB International review and School evaluations. Faculty bodies review all programs, degrees, and courses including those for the online M.B.A.

**5e.** The online M.B.A. program and courses are subject to the same reviews and assessments as the traditional M.B.A. program and other programs of the School and University. The online M.B.A. and other potential programs for the School are addressed in the School's strategic plans.

**5f.** The evaluation of the online M.B.A. takes place during the regular evaluation of all other academic programs. The online M.B.A. courses are compared directly with their twin sections. The same support is provided to all online courses in the School.

