

**INTEGRATING THE CORE:
A NEW MANAGEMENT CURRICULUM TO EMPOWER OUR STUDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

This paper follows Kennesaw State's University's (KSU) faculty journey in developing a new integrated core curriculum for their Management majors that will empower the students and meet the needs of today's employers. Curriculums must change to stay current. Depending on the amount of change, this can be a huge undertaking for a department ensconced in an existing curriculum paradigm, and can be met with resistance. In this paper we look for answers to: 1) Why is the change necessary? 2) What are we changing to? We will follow up with some thoughts about 3) how will we make these changes?

Our paper begins by defining the conceptual foundations for the Management core curriculum, followed by a look into the curriculum change process, and concludes with our eight-stage method used in developing the core curriculum model. We define four key thematic objectives that are integral to each of the core courses. The paper concludes with descriptions of our courses—Managing Organizations, Managing People, Managing Projects, Managing Your Company, and Managing Globally, and the associated integrated course sequencing. The four new courses all require field application, are integrative in nature, were developed collaboratively, and the sequence proceeds conceptually from macro to micro and back to macro in orientation. All four will meet both the requirements of face-to-face and on-line delivery.

INTRODUCTION

Curriculums must change to stay current. Depending on the amount of change, this can be a huge undertaking for a department and can be met with resistance. The process can be made easier however by working with faculty from the start to ensure that everyone involved understands the answer to three questions: 1) Why is

the change necessary? 2) What are we changing to? and 3) How will we make these changes? In this paper, we reflect on the factors underlying a change in the core curriculum for management majors in the Coles College of Business at Kennesaw State University. These factors include institutional requirements, academic considerations, and practical considerations of future employers of our students.

In Fall 2009, as a faculty, we reviewed our core curriculum in Management and recognized the need to revise it based on the requirements of our various constituents. An initial task force was appointed to research current and future trends within the management field and identify “best practices” across other peer and aspirant universities (Desman, Moodie, Roebuck & Siha, 2011). In addition, the task force conducted focus groups with undergraduate students, board members of the business school, and executives in the local community. Understanding what future employers expected of our students was a critical step in establishing the direction of the proposed curriculum. Overall the business school was perceived as doing a satisfactory job in preparing students with the necessary *hard skill* sets, but the *soft skills* were found to be wanting. The focus group wanted a fundamental understanding of hard skills versus mastery.

From the analysis of the information gathered, it became clear that our students needed specific skill sets that our existing curriculum was not providing in a cohesive way. A consistent theme that emerged was the need for a *systems perspective* versus traditional disciplinary approaches. In looking at other management departments across the U.S., it became clear that a focus on topics such as *project management*, *teaming*, *decision-making*, and *problem solving* was missing from our current core curriculum. Furthermore, *communications skills* and *professionalism* seemed to be lacking across all departments across the university. Indeed this younger generation has been described as “tech savvy”, “less formal”, and “entitled” (SHRM, 2004). These traits could counter the need to be formal and professional in business settings. Growing up with fundamentally different experiences, role models, technology, and events from those generations before them, it seems likely that this younger generation of students has different expectations and preferences in terms of school (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010).

Business respondents emphasized that “Teaching students the importance of professional behavior and how to be a critical thinker” was a way for to increase the employability of our students. Another driver for the curriculum change was the need to attract more students to become management majors. While the number of management majors was still the second highest in the university, it was believed that a fresh and inte-

grated curriculum would assist in attracting and recruiting more students to become management majors. After identifying this and other factors in phase one, it was clear “Why the change was necessary”, and this was communicated to the faculty.

In fall 2010, a second curriculum task force was selected to evaluate the findings of the first task force and to develop some recommendations for how to modify the Management core curriculum. The second task force included several members of the first task force to allow for some consistency and knowledge transfer, as well as some faculty that were not part of the original group to allow for some new ideas and perspectives regarding the next question, “What are we changing to?”

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT CORE CURRICULUM

This work conceptually flows directly from the research conducted by the first curriculum task force conducted by Desman, Moodie, Roebuck, & Siha, and published in the article, “*What does the management major need to know?*” (2011). The blank slate available to this core curriculum redesign committee challenged its members to create a totally new educational experience for management majors. To accomplish this, the committee would harvest the best practices in instructional design.

Cognitive, Affective, & Psychomotor Domains

When investigating alternative frameworks for the design of materials, experiences, and learning environments for undergraduate courses, Bloom’s taxonomy (1956) dominates. This taxonomy of educational objectives includes three domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

The *cognitive domain* focuses on skills dealing with how we think utilizing knowledge, comprehension, and critical thinking on a topic or an issue. Within this domain, a continuum of basic to more complex categories is developed. The categories range from basic knowledge recall to comprehensive applications, analysis, synthesis, and finally evaluation judgments. Most undergraduate business education emphasizes skills in this domain, but often at the lower levels.

Affective domain centers on emotional awareness and personal growth. Affective learning categories include receiving, responding, evaluating, organizing, and internalizing values and beliefs. Recent attention on the importance of emotional intelligence in explaining managerial effectiveness is well within the affective domain.

Psychomotor domain objectives deal with the development of overt motor skills, movement, and coordination capabilities. Its seven categories revolve around application and demonstration of physical motor skills tied to task requirements. While this may be the least applicable to managerial job performance, mastery of communication presentation skills could qualify in this domain.

Hard and Soft Skill Sets and Thematic Objectives

Bloom's (1956) work is also consistent with several of the findings reported in the first task force's report. These included the need to communicate clear learning goals for hard and soft skill development, the power of student performance feedback, and skill mastery in problem solving. Existing courses encouraged learning facts and recall, with higher order thinking skill development under-represented.

Building a new core curriculum around basic *thematic objectives* that would build from course to course would also draw from other pedagogical approaches and advances in management education. Problem-based learning approaches and management skill development models provide two rich pedagogical bases for guiding curriculum development.

Problem-based learning is built on a student centered pedagogy platform that challenges small student groups to resolve complex real world dilemmas. Faculty function as facilitators providing support, process modeling, and a learning outcome focus. Students use various problem-solving tools to construct original solutions to managerial problems. It simultaneously expands student's communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and self-directed learning experiences (Amador, Miles & Peters, 2006; Major & Palmer, 2001).

Management skill development models will also guide construction of the new management core curriculum. Self-assessments identify, develop, and evaluate essential managerial skill levels, us-

ing personal and organizationally rich learning cases, simulations, and exercises. Building and leveraging personal, interpersonal, group, and organizational skill sets enhance the student's effectiveness in managerial roles. (Whetten & Cameron, 2011; Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, McGrath & St. Clair, 2010).

Moving beyond the cognitive learning perspectives, the managerial skills approaches emphasizes practical behavioral competencies. Students then demonstrate and practice these skill sets using common managerial task scenarios and real world case studies. Student confidence and competence enhances through practice. These activities target self-management, communication, problem solving, motivation, performance management, power and influence, team building, and change management skills (Baldwin, Bommer & Rubin, 2008).

Systems and the Context Model

One of the key factors driving the development of our new curriculum was the contention that our Management students needed an integrative systems perspective versus a traditional disciplinary approach to the field. Those who can see the big picture and facilitate making complex systems work would seem to have a competitive edge (Desman et al., 2011).

The system is always imbedded in a larger system. (Churchman, 1968)

Ushered in by World War II, the "Marketing Concept" in the early 1950's, and Kenneth Boulding's article "General Systems Theory — The Skeleton of Science," (1956), contemporary perspectives on systems reflect the realization that organizations are not *closed systems*, but are *open systems*. In fact, they are *systems of systems, within systems*. To fully comprehend organizations, one cannot limit one's concerns to elements and the dynamics of those elements; rather, one must also consider the relationships among elements, sub-systems, and super-systems along with their dynamic properties. Once one departs from the one dimensional simplicity of a machine or social system model of organization, the clarity and directionality of cause-effect relationships becomes considerably more diffuse. Although the open systems perspective provides a more realistic vantage point than alternative views, the observer is often overwhelmed by a far-more complex vista.

(Desman & Brawley, 2011). To quote organization theorist Charles Perrow, “*Everything is connected to everything else.*” (1973).

A clear perspective on the total organization as a system requires one to also understand the subsystems that comprise it. Understanding organizations as systems, and planning for them, is much like solving simultaneous mathematical equations, but with one exception. Because organizations, and the contexts in which they operate, are dynamic, the “numbers” keep changing. What one needs is a means by which one can freeze the system and analyze the elements without losing track of system relationships and process interaction. Such a methodology would permit viewing organizations from multiple perspectives, with sufficient accuracy to preserve realism, yet simple enough to facilitate comprehension. (Desman & Brawley, 2011)

For this we took our lead from the context model (shown in Figure 1, is adapted from Desman & Brawley (2011). The context model recognizes the relationships between the external environments and the internal organization. The early research suggests that organizations operate not in a single environment, but in an environment of environments. Furthermore, each of these environments appears to be hierarchically related to the others. The organization itself must be added to the list because it too constitutes an environment and within it exist still other environments. The elements flow from the *macro* elements in the external environments, Natural/Institutional/Market, to the *macro* organizational design elements, Plans/Configurations/Processes/ and Assets, to the *micro* elements, Objects/People/Events. It is important to remember at the macro level, the only thing that management can manipulate and control are the plans, configurations, processes, and assets. At the micro level, we can only move the people, objects, or events. Management can take place at the macro level of the organization-environmental interface (Strategic Management), it can coordinate the internal operating organization (Operating System Management), or it can function within internal subsystems of the organization (Functional Management). Our management majors need to understand all three.

The external environments determine *reality*, and provide opportunities and threats to the organization. The internal organizational

resources, plans/configurations/processes/assets along with the objects/people/events determine what is both *feasible* (strengths and weaknesses) and what is *desirable* (support and oppose) to the organization. It is from this conceptual perspective of systems and the context in which the organization operates that our core curriculum was developed.

THE CURRICULUM CHANGE PROCESS

Following the initial research done by first curriculum task force, the actual activity of initiating change in our Management core was designed as a two phased process: the initial design of the new major and associated courses, and the implementation phase.

New Major/Course Design Process

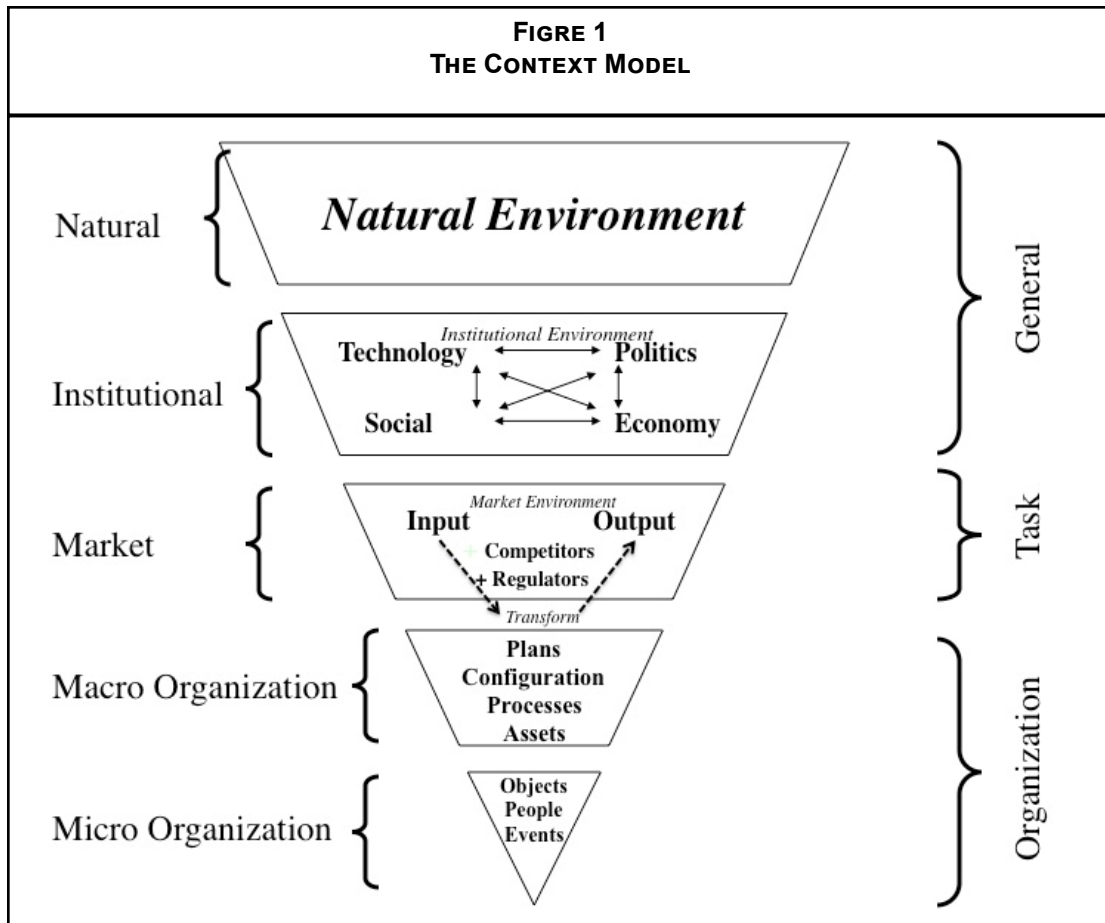
The design process itself was a six-stage process:

1. Task Force’s Charter, Purpose, and Selection (the Department Chair’s Charge).
2. Build a Broad Conceptual Framework and Integrative Themes for Management Core (the Major Field Requirements).
3. Select Course Champions (Coordinators for each core course).
4. Create Course Domains and Syllabi.
5. Collect Presentation Feedback from Departmental Faculty.
6. Submit Proposals to Curriculum Review Committees (at the Department, College, and University levels) for Approval.

New Major/Course Implementation Process

The implementation process is a four-stage process:

1. Specification of Faculty Commitments, Integration of Support (non-tenure track) faculty, and Compensation Options.
2. Integration of Rubrics, Assurance of Learning (AOL) assessments, and Quality Matters requirements for final content and on-line certification.
3. Rollout Sequence and Scheduling;



- a. Review initial offerings,
 - b. Revisions integrated across four courses,
 - c. Add online versions of each course,
 - d. Expand faculty ranks teaching the core courses (e.g., use of support faculty),
 - e. Monitor AOL and collect accreditation required data,
 - f. Phase out of old core courses.
4. Discussion;
- a. Collect assessments, revisions and reviews of the new core courses,
 - b. Review of core curriculum themes across the course offerings.

The focus of this paper is solely on the *design process* phase of the new Management core curriculum.

Developing the Core Curriculum Model

The development of the Management Core Curriculum model was an 8-stage process:

1. defining skills needed to empower our students in the classroom and in the workforce;
2. institutional requirements;
3. identifying the gap between existing skills taught versus skills needed;
4. themes to guide development - thematic objectives;
5. relationship to context model (macro-micro-macro);
6. course descriptions;
7. relationships among courses;
8. collaboration across courses.

(1) Defining the Skills Needed to Empower Our Students in the Classroom and in the Workforce

In looking at the data gathering completed by first task force, perhaps the most promising approach to assessing demanded and forecasting skill needs is to revisit the CEO perceptions on the shifting world of work and the external demands placed on business systems (Desman et al., 2011). Based on that research, the new core needed to incorporate the following hard and soft skills is shown in Table 1.

Hard Skills	Soft Skills
An understanding of Systems and the external Context in which it operates	Business Communication
An emphasis on research/analysis/report writing	Teaming
Basic planning, organizing, implementation and control skills	Business Etiquette
Understanding the role and methods of administration	Negotiation
Organization analysis and change (macro)	Ethics
Program and project management methods	Decision Making and Problem Solving
Managing across national borders	Group Processes and Teaming
Organization effectiveness assessment/evaluation and remediation	Leadership
Computer Literacy and Business Software	Professionalism

(2) Institutional Requirements

In order to understand the opportunities and constraints on our charge to redesign the Management Core curriculum, it would help to understand a little bit about our institution.

Kennesaw State University (KSU) is the third largest of the 36 public institutions in the University System of Georgia. As of 2010-11, Kennesaw State University had 23,452 total enrollment, 21,135 FTE students, 1,985 graduate enrollment, 11,335 upper division students, and 5,681 new students.

The Michael J. Coles College of Business is accredited by AACSB and SACS. For FY 2010-11, Coles enrolled more than 4766 students, representing over 4043 declared undergraduate majors, 682 declared master’s students, and 41 declared doctoral students. For FY 2010-11, 318 students graduated from our MBA programs, 69 graduated from our M.ACC. program, and 823 from our undergraduate business program; 30% of total degrees conferred by KSU are from the Coles College of Business. Declared majors in our *BBA Management* degree program, Fall 2010, numbered 1245; Management degrees conferred were 296. (KSU Fact Book, 2010-11, p.93, 117,130, 134)

In addition to the skills outlined in Table 1, due to the size of our program and limitations on adding resources, we had the following set of institutional parameters:

1. The Management Major, including major field requirements and electives, could include eight or nine, three credit hour semester courses. If we selected nine courses then the additional hours would have to be taken from general business electives — this could limit the ability of students to pursue co-ops and internships.
2. The core could include four to five, three credit semester hour courses.
3. As part of our institutional accreditation in 2006-07, KSU launched a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) with a focus on global learning for engaged citizenship and we needed a plan to fulfill this global initiative within our major.
4. A prerequisite to all Management Field Requirements would be the completion of the BBA required core, MGT 3100, Management and Behavioral Sciences.
5. Additional departmental specifications.

6. The requirement that the new courses be deliverable in both face-to-face and online formats.
7. The online courses had to meet QM (Quality Matters) standards for online teaching.
8. That we had to teach the courses in traditional, individual faculty scheduling blocks, thus eliminating team teaching as a viable option.
9. Courses need to be teachable in sections of 40-50 students per class.

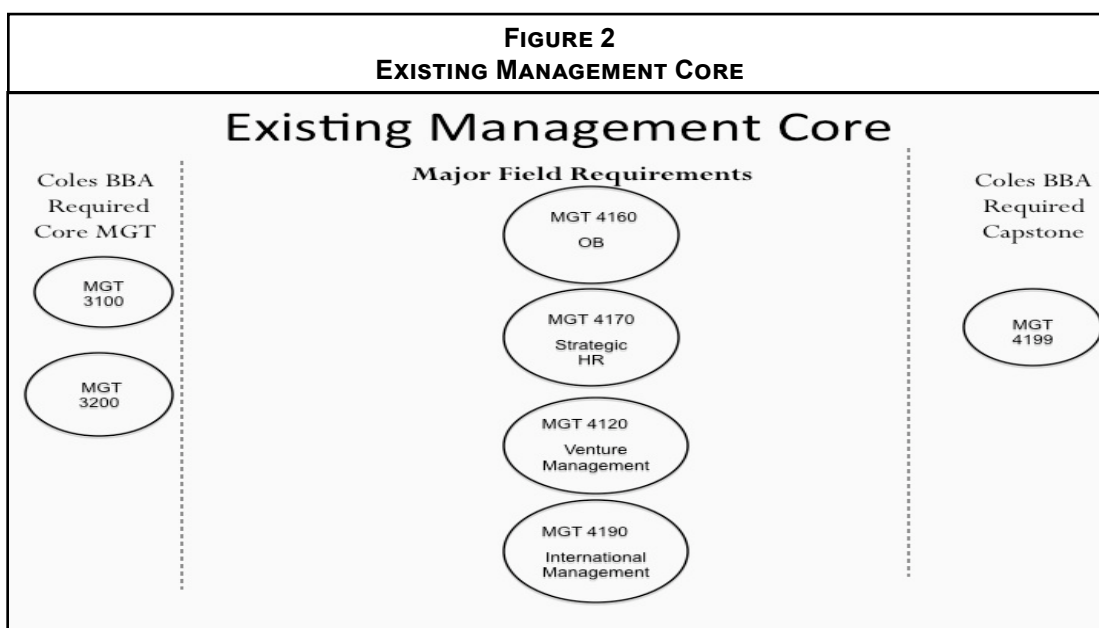
(3) Identifying the Gap between Existing Skills Taught in the Management Major Core versus the Needed Skills

The existing Management Core within the BBA is composed of the following courses shown in Table 2, in the configuration shown in Figure 2. Although each of the current major field requirements have MGT 3100 (Management & Behavioral Science) as a prerequisite, in the existing Core there is no relationship among the required courses, and no order to how they are taken, nor collaboration in developing experiences for our students. KSU selected the four required courses as discrete autonomous, independent elements, each giving an introduction to our existing management concentrations in Entrepreneurship, Human Resource Management,

and International Management. The Operations area is also a track in the Management area, and the MGT 3200 in the BBA core introduces it. In designing the existing core, no thought was given to collaborative effort across courses, or to integration. The courses do not build on each other and therefore, the students' experience with the core was one of learning material in an unrelated vacuum, with limited adaptability to alternative situations. Continuous learning and growth as a manager was not perceived as a goal in the core, rather discipline specific knowledge to pass the course was the goal.

The existing courses, shown in Table 2, encouraged discrete experiences, learning facts and recall, with higher order thinking skill development under-represented and no progressive learning expectations existed within the core.

TABLE 2	
EXISTING UNDERGRADUATE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT COURSES IN THE CORE	
Business (BBA) Core	
MGT 3100:	Management & Behavioral Science
MGT 3200:	Operations Management
MGT 4199:	Strategic Management
Management Major Core Field Requirements	
MGT 4120:	Venture Management
MGT 4160:	Organizational Behavior
MGT 4170:	Human Resource Management
MGT 4190:	International Management



(4) Themes to Guide Development— Thematic Objectives

Following from Bloom's taxonomy, all four new courses plus the Managing Globally requirement meet the four overriding themes of our program involving content, skill and attitudes: content (cognitive domain-knowledge-good critical thinkers), meaningful application (psychomotor domain-skill-good team players), presentation style (psychomotor domain- skill-good communicators), and understanding and embodying how managers think and behave (affective domain- attitude).

In designing the new core, the task force decided that given that these would be integrated courses, all four core courses would reinforce these thematic learning objectives:

1. Students obtain a solid understanding of systems, and the context in which a successful organization operates.
2. *Students learn how managers think and gain an understanding of the key factors impacting managers' decision-making and problem solving.*
3. *Students engage in group processes and deal with the organizational design issues associated with creating and leading high performance teams.*
4. Students demonstrate professionalism in both their actions and communications.

(6) Relationship to Context Model (Macro-Micro-Macro)

In developing the core, we went back to the context model. We felt our Management majors needed a clear general foundation in Management and Behavioral Science before entering the major, therefore all courses require MGT 3100 as a prerequisite for admission.

From there, we wanted our students to get a strong orientation of the organization as a system, with its interaction with the external environments and the *macro* organizational elements of planning, configurations (design and structure), processes, and assets. Along with this, we wanted our students to have a clear understanding of how managers at different levels think and behave, make ethical decisions, handle lifecycles, and source valid and reliable information. Out

of this discussion we developed MGT 4001, *Managing Organizations*, as the introductory course to the major.

MGT 4002, *Managing People*, and MGT 4003, *Managing Projects*, build on the knowledge in MGT 4001 and focus on the *micro* organizational elements of objects, people and events in planning, system design, processes and allocation of assets.

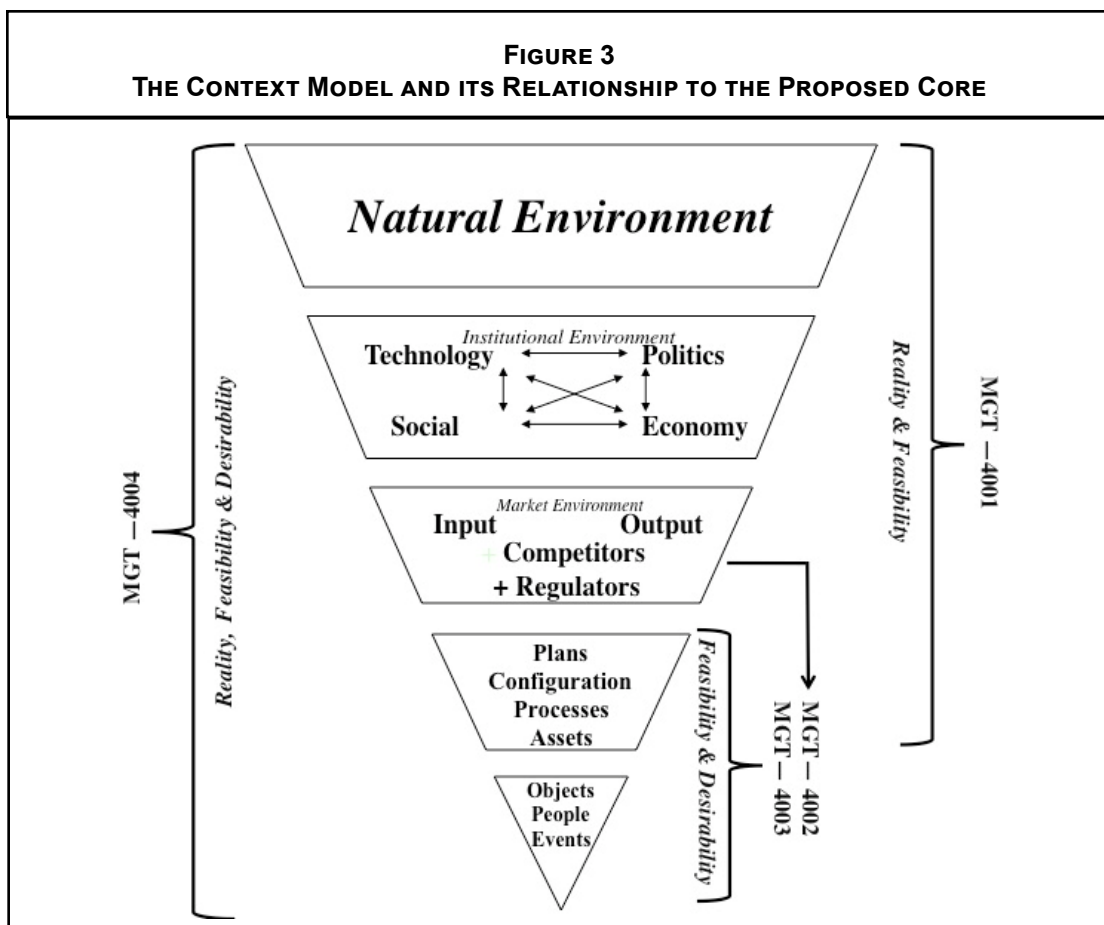
MGT 4004, *Managing Your Company*, is the final capstone course in the Management major's required core. In this course, students will put to work everything they have learned in their core courses, both BBA and Management, to run their own simulated company. Here students establish their knowledge of reality (external environment-opportunities/threats), feasibility (internal organizational resources-strengths/weaknesses), and desirability (goals, values, culture-support/oppose); their ability to evaluate alternatives, plan for the future, and implement and control a plan of action.

Our recommendations to the faculty were to:

1. Change the current four course major field requirement (12 credit hours), to a five course, sequenced and integrated major field requirement (15 credit hours). This includes MGT4001, MGT4002, MGT4003 and MGT 4004; and, a three credit hours Managing Globally Major Field Requirement
2. Change the major field elective requirement from twelve credit hours (unrestricted MGT) to nine credit hours unrestricted MGT
3. Leave the general business electives requirement at nine credit hours to give the BBA Management student the maximum opportunity to participate in internships and co-ops.

Figure 3 shows how the four new courses fit into the context model.

Table 4 (on page 56) highlights the course descriptions of the five new courses that make up the Management Major Field Requirements for our BBA students.



(7) Relationships Among Courses

Figure 4 shows the key courses and their relationships in the new Management Core.

Table 3 details the key required Management courses in the BBA for the Management Major. Sequencing is established by the prerequisites to each course.

MGT 4004: Managing Your Company
MGT 4XXX Managing Globally
MGT 4XXX Management Electives (9 hours)

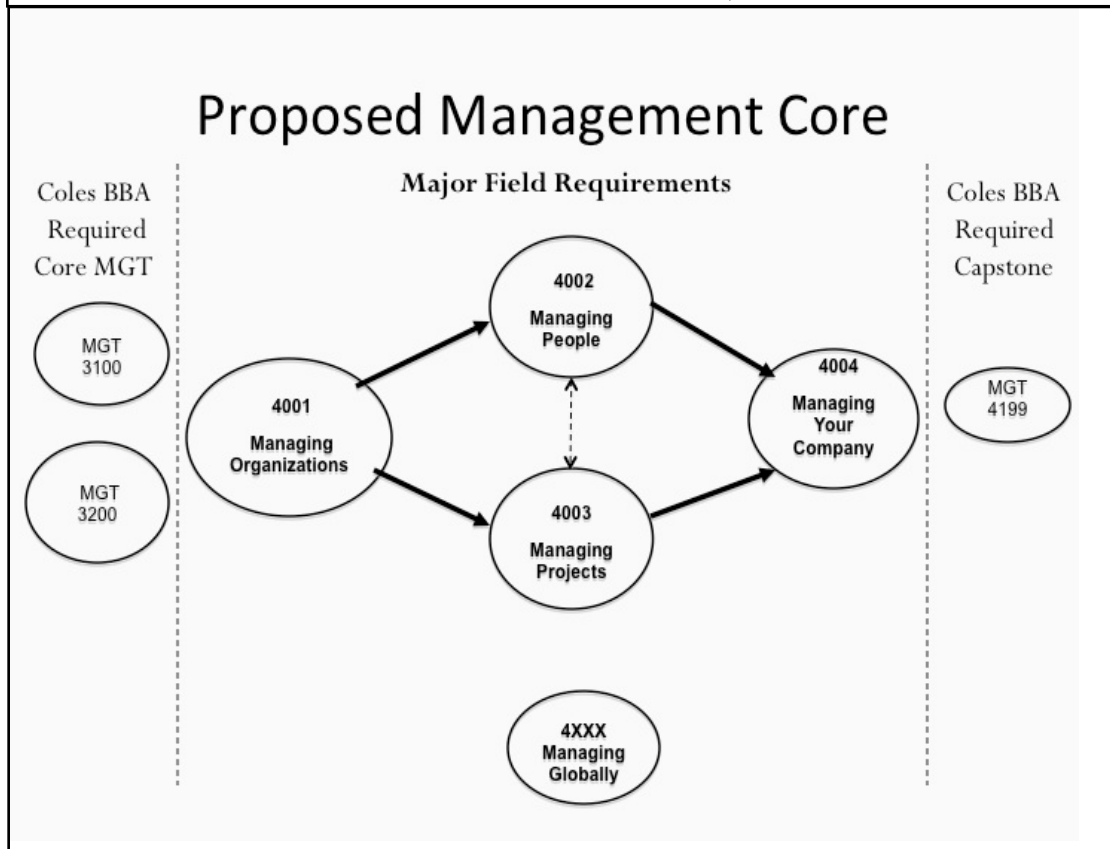
TABLE 3 PROPOSED UNDERGRADUATE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT COURSES
Management Courses in the Business Core
MGT 3100: Management & Behavioral Science
MGT 3200: Operations Management
MGT 4199: Strategic Management
Management’s Major Field Requirements
MGT 4001: Managing Organizations
MGT 4002: Managing People
MGT 4003: Managing Projects

CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the work of the Management & Entrepreneurship first curriculum task force findings and committee discussions, the second curriculum task force proposed a fifteen credit hour sequence of required courses (four courses, 12 credit hours, sequenced core plus a three credit hour Managing Globally requirement). Four of these courses are new, sequenced, integrated course requirements. All four require field application, and are integrative, going from Macro to Micro and back to Macro conceptually. All four are sequenced and will be developed collaboratively to meet both the requirements of face-to-face and on-line delivery. Sequencing of the courses and prior knowledge is critical to meet the learning objectives of the individual courses and the ma-

TABLE 4
PROPOSED MGT MAJOR FIELD REQUIREMENTS-DESCRIPTION OF COURSES
Management Major Field Requirements (15 credit hours)
<p>MGT 4001: Managing Organizations</p> <p><i>3 hrs. Prerequisite: Business Majors: Sophomore GPA requirement and MGT 3100; Non-business Majors: MGT 3100 and permission of the Coles College of Business.</i></p> <p>Where, what, and how do managers manage? Managing Organizations introduces students to the “world of a manager” and provides a framework for management majors. Starting with the big picture, students learn about the various external factors that impact organizations, structure, and culture. Internal factors including leadership, teaming, problem solving and managing communications are also addressed.</p>
<p>MGT 4002: Managing People</p> <p><i>3 hrs. Prerequisite: Business Majors: Sophomore GPA requirement and MGT 4001; Non-business Majors: MGT 4001 and permission of the Coles College of Business.</i></p> <p>People are an organization’s most valuable assets. Managing People provides students with an understanding and capability to manage these assets (self and others) to support the goals of the organization. It covers the human resource practices and people management skills used to attract, motivate, develop, and retain employees. Students also develop self-management skills and personal career growth strategies to enhance their professionalism and employability.</p>
<p>MGT 4003: Managing Projects</p> <p><i>3hrs. Prerequisite: Business Majors: Sophomore GPA Requirement and MGT 4001; Non-business Majors; Non-business majors require permission of the Coles College of Business</i></p> <p>In Managing Projects students complete organizational projects on time and on budget. This course introduces students to project management (PM) from both a process and project tool standpoint. Students focus on understanding project definition and scope, resource allocation, task dependencies and risk management. Students use PM software in the context of managing a team project.</p>
<p>MGT 4004: Managing Your Company</p> <p><i>3hrs. Prerequisite: Business Majors: Sophomore GPA requirement. Students must have completed the required core upper-division business courses including ECON 3300, FIN 3100, MKTG 3100, MGT 3200, 4002 and MGT 4003; Non-business Majors: Permission of the Coles College of Business.</i></p> <p>In Managing Your Company students develop a long-term vision and competitive strategy for a company. Students balance short-term objectives with long-term strategic goals. They recognize interactions among the internal factors (resources and processes) and external environments, and the impact of both on performance. Students also demonstrate their ability to make decisions, and to analyze, justify and professionally communicate the results of those decisions.</p>
<p>Managing Globally:</p> <p><i>3 hrs.</i></p> <p>The ability to manage in the global context is a requirement of all managers today. Management majors are required to take one of the following MGT international elective courses from the list below to fulfill the Managing Globally requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MGT 4125 - International Entrepreneurship • MGT 4174 - International Human Resource Management • MGT 4190 - International Management • MGT 4476 - Contemporary Global Business Practices • MGT 4800 - International Supply Chain Management

FIGURE 4
PROPOSED MANAGEMENT CORE: AN INTEGRATED, SEQUENTIAL MODEL



major as the knowledge builds across the course sequence with unifying experiences carried across the core emphasizing different aspects of the field case/examples.

All four new courses plus the Managing Globally requirement meet the four primary learning objectives of our program: content (cognitive domain-knowledge-good critical thinkers), meaningful application (psychomotor domain-skill-good team players), presentation style (psychomotor domain-skill-good communicators), and understanding how managers think and behave (affective domain-attitude).

This proposal was presented to the Management & Entrepreneurship faculty during a meeting in spring 2011. The task force received unanimous faculty support by all full-time faculty to move forward with the design, curriculum review, acceptance, and launch of the new core courses in fall 2012.

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