Chapter 25

People, Processes, and Philosophies:
Designing a CBE Program Within a Traditional University

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ABSTRACT

Viewed as an innovation by many, CBE programs require traditional institutions to examine current practices with a view towards adaptation and change. Through the lenses of people, processes, and philosophies, this chapter presents general considerations of how the design of a CBE program on a traditional campus impacts the areas of senior leader decision making, administrative structure, curriculum design, functional units, technology, and accreditation. Each section within this chapter includes specific details of how a small, private, traditional university approached these areas during the development of a fully technology-enabled undergraduate CBE program.

INTRODUCTION

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (UMHB) is a traditional, residential, Christian university primarily serving 18–22-year-olds leaving home for a coming-of-age experience. During the 15-16 academic year, over 3000 undergraduate students and 600 graduate students attended the university. Undergraduate offerings include Christian studies, humanities, sciences, nursing, education, visual and performing arts and business. Graduate offerings include master's degrees and a few programs at the doctoral level. Currently, only one program is offered fully online, a master's of science in education. All programs adhere to traditional fall, spring and summer terms and students are charged tuition by the credit hour.

However, in the fall of 2014, UMHB began a journey to establish a fully online, personal-paced, competency-based bachelor degree. The first degree being offered is a bachelor of applied studies in organizational leadership. The first cohort of students begins in August of 2016, pending accreditor approval. Features of the new program include the following:

- Unlimited access in 6-month flat rate subscription terms with monthly starts.
- Self-paced and fully online.
- Competency-based curriculum designed by academically qualified UMHB faculty.
- All assessments must be mastered, each requires a mastery level of 80%, re-attempts are allowed.
- Students interact with completion coaches and faculty subject matter experts as a support network.

Referred to as the UMHB MyWay program, the project represents a significant departure for the university in terms of both internal processes and markets served. Born from a belief that competency-based education may be the disruption that higher education has been looking for to address accessibility, affordability, and flexibility, the campus community set out to design the program within the traditional system so that in the future, the potential benefits realized by developing the CBE model, and from the model itself, might take shape in various existing campus programs, as appropriate. The program's intentional placement within a traditional campus is disruptive and challenging at times, but the hope is that it will encourage new thinking about business as usual.

Recognizing that CBE is not particularly suited for all types of students, campus leaders and faculty researched the types of students other universities serve through non-traditional modes of delivery in an effort to determine who this program might serve and if a viable market existed. Motivated, self-directed, adult learners with some college credit, who likely work full-time and have family obligations became the persona for the ideal type of student for the program.

As the development of the MyWay program began, the challenges of designing it within a traditional campus emerged. Implications existed for the people involved, the current processes, and the philosophies that drove the decisions people made. New ideas go nowhere without identifying the key people who should be included in the process. To lay a strong foundation for success, the right people should have opportunities to flourish and thrive within this new space. Process considerations should be aimed at facilitating the work to be done in a streamlined way instead of creating workarounds of established processes. At traditional universities, processes are geared toward credit-hour-based activities. Knowing current processes, identifying breakdowns, and rebuilding them to serve a new model, that may not be so dependent upon the credit hour, are all important. At first glance, philosophies may not seem all that important, but time and again, "philosophy" drives the decisions made. In fact, philosophy may be the most important of the Ps.

The remainder of this chapter explores how these three 'Ps' played critical roles in designing UMHB's MyWay program. Questions related to each one of the Ps should infiltrate almost every function within a university. In this chapter, considerations about people, processes, and philosophies, organized by areas impacted during the development of the CBE program, are shared and answered through the lens of UMHB's MyWay project. These areas include: senior leader decision-making, administrative structure, curriculum design, faculty and staff, functional units, technology, and accreditation.

BACKGROUND

To ensure that the development of a CBE program is successful within a traditional university setting, the magnitude of change required must be recognized, acknowledged, and systematically addressed. In a *Change Magazine* article by Johnstone and Soares (2014), the development of this type of program was described as requiring "deep exploration and often significant re-design of administrative, financial,

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