

Building on Success: The Redesigned Bachelor of Management Program

photo used with permission



by Vivian Howard
School of
Information
Management

What is the Bachelor of Management?

Dalhousie's Bachelor of Management program is one-of-a-kind. Unlike other universities' management programs, our Bachelor of Management draws upon the unique configuration of Dalhousie's Faculty of Management which offers programs in distinct yet related domains: Business Administration, Information Management, Public Administration, and Resource and Environmental Management. Thus, this innovative multidisciplinary program encourages undergraduate students to explore management in its broadest context and to understand the complex social, economic, ecological, political and technological forces shaping 21st century leadership in the public, private and non-profit sectors.

Since its launch in 1999, the Bachelor of Management program has become a highly successful four-year undergraduate degree. With almost 500 students this year, it is the fastest growing undergraduate program at Dalhousie. Notably, the fall of 2009 will mark both the 10th anniversary of the program and the launch of the redesigned Bachelor of Management, which promises to make a successful program even more appealing to a wider range of students.

Why Change a Successful Program?

Although the "classic" Bachelor of Management program has clearly proven popular, consultations with faculty, staff and students revealed three key aspects of the degree where improvements could be made:

Choice versus Focus

The Bachelor of Management was originally designed to be a very flexible degree, in which 40% of classes are open electives. Students take most of their core courses in their first two years, leaving them free to take a wide range of electives in their third and fourth years. This freedom is not without its problems as students struggle to select meaningful elective classes and create a coherent program of study in their senior years. Too often, students feel their senior years are unfocused just at the time when they have the preparation and maturity to concentrate their studies on a particular aspect of management.

Program Identity

The sense of identity and belonging that was fostered in the first two years of core study is dissipated, as students only enrol in one core management class per term for their final two years. As a result, many graduates leave the program feeling disconnected, without a strong identity as Bachelor of Management alumni.

Program Differentiation

The Faculty of Management offers two undergraduate programs: the Bachelor of Commerce and the Bachelor of Management. The Commerce degree, of course, is well-established and very well known. Many Management students do not understand the difference between the two degrees and see themselves as "business students" like their Commerce counterparts. The Bachelor of Management program was always intended to introduce students to broad-based management principles that apply to the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors, but students often do not appreciate the multi-sectoral approach and the intellectual fit of their required courses in public administration, information management, and environmental management.

Analysis and Consultation

Several factors converged to make the time right for a redesign of the Bachelor of Management program. First, in 2005, all four Schools in the Faculty moved into one building, the Kenneth C. Rowe Management Building, fostering increased daily communication and interaction between faculty and students. Second, David Wheeler joined the Faculty as Dean in 2006, and his vision of "Management Without Borders" reinforced a values-based, holistic approach to undergraduate management education. With his encouragement and support, the Bachelor of Management office initiated a consultation process in the fall of 2007 involving students, faculty,

staff, and university administrators. From these consultations, three key program modifications were developed which directly address program focus, program identity, and program differentiation.

Seven Thematic Majors

Bachelor of Management students expressed a clear desire for more opportunity to explore various aspects of management studies in greater depth, beyond the core of required courses. Thus, six optional majors were developed:

- Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Knowledge Management
- Leadership and Organizations
- Management and Globalization
- Public Sector Management
- Sustainable Resources and the Environment

In each of these six multidisciplinary majors, students take introductory and capstone classes within the Faculty of Management and select recommended electives from a list of relevant classes offered across the university, in the faculties of Management, Arts and Social Sciences, Science, and Computer Science. These majors also strongly reinforce the multisectoral approach of the Bachelor of Management Program and increase differentiation from the Commerce Program.

The fourth term capstone classes, in particular, will foster a stronger sense of community as students will work with their classmates

to integrate knowledge gained through previous coursework and experience and build on that conceptual foundation through integrative analysis, practical application, and critical thinking, using a combination of case studies, community-based projects, and discussion.

With the launch of the College of Sustainability and the unique new undergraduate program in Environment, Sustainability and Society, the Bachelor of Management was able to add yet a seventh multidisciplinary major: the major in Sustainability.

Commitment to Writing and Research Across the Curriculum

Both faculty and students recognized that writing and research skills are critical to students' future success. Thus, the Bachelor of Management has strengthened its commitment to reinforcing writing and research skills across the curriculum. A new intensive third-year core class in professional communications skills (MGMT 3602.03) has been developed to hone students' oral and written communications skills at the time when students can best appreciate the critical importance of effective communication: prior to their entry into the job market or an internship.

Internship Option

Students clearly recognize the value of obtaining relevant work experience as part of their degree. After extensive consultations with students and

with staff in Management Career Services, a specialized support unit in the Faculty, an optional internship opportunity has been introduced as part of the Bachelor of Management redesign. This will be available to Bachelor of Management students in 2012. Students will be able to earn a full academic credit by completing an approved internship between their third and fourth year of study. These paid internships, which may be from 8 to 16 months duration, will provide valuable practical experience that students can integrate into their capstone courses.

An Exciting Future

We are very enthusiastic about the redesigned Bachelor of Management program, which will be launched in the fall of 2009. Student response has been extremely positive and many current students are already eagerly planning to undertake a major or apply for an internship. At the same time, students who want to complete the Bachelor of Management without taking advantage of these new opportunities will still be able to do so. We believe the redesign process has taken a strong and successful degree program and has made it even better, without imposing any barriers to students who prefer the flexibility of the "classic" version of the program. The success of the Bachelor of Management's redesign process is a testimony to the value of extensive consultation with a variety of stakeholders. The creativity and the insight of students, staff, faculty, and administrators have shaped the redesigned Bachelor of Management from the ground up!

"We believe the redesign process has taken a strong and successful degree program and has made it even better..."