

2009

SWOT Analysis



11/2/2009

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| SWOT Analysis Matrix..... | 2 |
| Strengths | 2 |
| Weaknesses | 4 |
| Opportunities | 7 |
| Threats..... | 10 |
| | |
| Developing a Competitive Advantage..... | 11 |

SWOT Analysis

SWOT Matrix

The table below summarizes the SWOT analysis for the College of Business & Economics. Each element of the SWOT Matrix is detailed in the following sections. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are grouped together around general themes that capture a broad range of ideas within one conceptual container. These ideas are found in the bulleted list below the heading and text that describe the grouping.

| Strengths | Opportunities |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Atmosphere▪ Culture▪ Western Brand▪ Quality Education▪ Curriculum & Research▪ Administration▪ Student Experience▪ Organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Students▪ Graduate Enrollment▪ Degrees/Programs▪ Self Sustaining Programs▪ Certificate Programs▪ Collaboration▪ Development▪ Marketing/Branding▪ Advising/Career Services |
| Weaknesses | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Career Services▪ Academic Advising▪ Programs/Curriculum▪ CBE Marketing▪ Student Experience▪ Infrastructure▪ Limited Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Resource Constraints▪ Competition▪ Socioeconomics▪ Political |

Strengths

Atmosphere

Atmosphere is a compilation of strengths that comprises the physical and emotional feel of the College. The atmosphere provides the College with key ways to differentiate itself in a crowded market. The liberal arts tradition and residential college feel are areas that faculty feel differentiate the College. Small class sizes are considered by faculty to be a key to a quality education. Section sizes at the 400 level are routinely under 40 with many under 30. This intimate climate provides students with the opportunity to develop close relationships with professors and results in a better student experience. The beautiful location is consistently included in the top three reasons students give for choosing Western and can be a key asset in recruiting students into CBE.

- Liberal arts tradition, residential college
- Small class sizes

- Beautiful location and campus

Culture

Culture captures the intangible attitude of the College and serves as the source of much of the goodwill attributed to the College by students, alumni, faculty and staff. There is a strain of innovation that runs through the College that if supported and fed resources could develop new programs, concepts and ideas that can help to differentiate the College in the future.

- Collegial, friendly, open, supportive, collaborative
- Innovative: virtual mentors, executive speakers, Econ 101

Western Reputation

Western Washington University is well known throughout the Northwest region and provides an opportunity for the College to associate itself more with the University in the future. Promotion of the achievements of Western, the CBE, departments, faculty and successful alumni is a way to leverage and extend the Western reputation to CBE.

- Great value education: Best school for cost
- Great atmosphere and distinctive culture
- National rankings

Quality Education

The quality of the education at Western and within the College has been well documented by outside entities such as the AACSB and media organizations such as U.S. News and World Reports. This quality is possible due to excellent faculty and students and the outcome is higher than average salaries for CBE graduates. This quality is recently beginning to be recognized at the graduate level as well. The MBA Program was ranked #72 in the World and #1 in Washington State by the Aspen Institute in emphasis on social, ethical, and environmental issues. The MBA Program ranking provides a halo effect for the entire College of Business & Economics and raises provides the opportunity to raise the profile of business education at Western as a whole.

- Quality faculty
- AACSB Accreditation
- Quality students without sense of entitlement
- Higher average salaries
- MBA Program International Ranking by Aspen Institute

Curriculum/Research

Curriculum and research are at the heart of the College's activities and both lend areas of strength. A broad based curriculum serves the need of many business students well. Strong niche programs such as the Manufacturing and Supply Chain Management (MSCM), Accounting and Financial Economics programs allow CBE to claim leadership in selected areas. The confluence of classes and research surrounding issues of corporate social responsibility (CSR) provides the resources for broader offerings to meet needs in this area. Many faculty members (~20%) are creating courses or doing research in the

areas of nonprofits, environmental business and sustainability. This interest is among the largest concentrations of interest in the College. Another concentration of interest is in the area of financial literacy. The above average research productivity is certainly a strength and can be used to communicate credibility to prospective students, current students, alumni, supporters and the community. The strong research productivity also enhances student learning by helping faculty stay current in their fields and provides new findings for faculty to bring in to the classroom. Given that research is such a large part of the accreditation process, the above average research productivity helps the College maintain its accreditation in an era where it is increasingly important.

- Broad based curriculum with areas of distinction
- MSCM, Accounting and Financial Economics
- Confluence of CSR curriculum/research as well as financial literacy
- Above average research productivity

Administration

The administration of the College has placed CBE in a position of strong resources with which to take advantage of identified opportunities. In the current economic climate this also means the College is in a better position relative to many colleges to weather the budget reductions. In conjunction with the Western Foundation, the College has a major gifts officer dedicated to CBE activities and with an office in Parks Hall, providing excellent communication between the Foundation and the College.

- Excellent financial management
- Dedicated major gifts professional

Student Experience

The student experience is generally positive, though with room for improvement. The positive feelings of students towards the College are mainly due to the strength of the professor-student relationships and the idea that they can be treated as people, not numbers. In addition, programs that bring students together with business executives, such as the Strategy and Ethics/Social Responsibility speaker series, Leadership Lunches, and active student clubs enhance the student experience.

- High faculty-student interaction with close relationships between faculty and students
- CBE Career Fair
- Student/executive interaction

Organization

The College of Business and Economics is a relatively lean and flat organization compared to the larger University which gives it the ability to act entrepreneurially and with speed to take advantage of opportunities or to minimize the impact of threats. The lean bureaucratic system allows the administration to implement decisions quickly if the situation warrants.

- Flat organizational structure allows quick decision making
- Lean bureaucratic system prevents bogging down of decisions

Weaknesses

Career Services

CBE has made great strides in providing students with excellent internship opportunities, career advising and limited placement yet the level of achievement is still not where the College wishes it to be. Faculty members recognize this fact as do the students. There is a very real need to provide a College-wide standard for internships that an employer can use to develop and communicate internships to students. To date the individual efforts of departments have sufficed but closer relationships with employers in the future will necessitate a simplified process for internships, job openings, recruiting efforts etc. Like internships and placement issues, career advising is a weakness within CBE. Students need assistance preparing professional resumes, cover letters, learning how to network, interviewing skills and in developing a career development plan.

- Advising/Placement
- Centralized Internships

Academic Advising

Students have highlighted the need for more, earlier and higher quality academic advising. Students have reported frustration and dissatisfaction with the advising process and have discontinued seeing their advisors as a result. The source of the problem seems to be inconsistent and incomplete advice or faculty attitudes that turn students off. Students readily admit that many faculty are excellent advisors but contend that many others lack knowledge are disinterested or in some cases condescending during advising sessions. Also, students cited a lack of knowledge of the pre-major process and its benefits. Frustration is not limited solely to faculty advisors but applies to advising by department administrators as well. Staff members themselves echo these frustrations, admitting that there are so many students who need assistance that they cannot spend the time they wish with each student. Advising consumes an inordinate amount of faculty and staff time and yet does not meet the expectations of students.

- Pre-major advising
- Major advising

Programs/Curriculum

While generally the College has strong programs, some areas are considered weaknesses by some. The MBA Program was often cited as a weakness in discussions with faculty. Whether this is objectively true or not, the perception of weakness is important to recognize. Students generally highlighted the lack of theory-to-practice experiences in and out of classes. Students understand and value practical experience and wish to have more experiential learning opportunities, preferably integrated into classroom activities but also including internships, service learning projects, etc. Faculty have highlighted the lack of professional preparation of students; both in communication, written and verbal, and presentation.

The resource constraints imposed by the 2009-2011 budget have made course access more difficult than previously for students. Access to foundation, core and elective courses within the College could

become a weakness due to limited funding for adjunct lecturers which the College uses to offer niche electives and/or keep the class sizes of foundation and core classes manageable.

- MBA Program
- Not enough theory-to-practice
- Professional preparation of graduates
- Professional communication skills of graduates
- Not enough foundation, core and elective sections

CBE Marketing

CBE marketing and communication efforts have been relatively nonexistent in the past. As a result the College has no defined methods of communication with external or internal stakeholders. As noted elsewhere in the report a lack of knowledge of the needs of students, alumni, employers and the competition exacerbates these problems. A specific area of weakness often noted by students, staff, faculty and outsiders is the website. A lack of visuals, alumni pages, evidence of successful alumni, promotion of faculty research and teaching achievements and navigation best practices are a few of the deficiencies noted.

- CBE brand image
- External marketing to prospective majors, alumni, employers, business community, society
- Internal marketing to faculty, staff and students
- Website
- Market research; students, alumni, employers, competition, etc.

Student Experience

The student experience, while generally positive, suffers from large class sizes at the foundation and core levels. Some classes are in excess of 80 students which prevents a quality educational experience. The Bellingham location can be a negative for student experience given the distance from the center of business in the Seattle area, which precludes many students from doing internships with world-class companies during the academic year and makes collaboration between these firms and faculty difficult. Students have negative perceptions of the teaching ability and professional experience of faculty, service by administrative staff and advisors, access to classes and the number of electives. Regardless of the factual accuracy of these beliefs it is important to take these issues of perception seriously and seek to address the factual and perceptual causes of such opinions.

- Large class sizes; foundation & Core
- Location; few connections to business
- Negative student perceptions of faculty; professional experience/teaching ability
- Negative student perceptions of administrative service levels
- Poor access to classes
- Too few electives; undergraduate and graduate

Infrastructure

CBE infrastructure is in need of upgrading and integration to provide for single-point data entry for alumni and prospective student contact info. The existing information systems result in information silos and fragmented communication.

- Technology; proliferation of databases, lack of integration
- Inadequate office/computer lab space (This may be ameliorated with the Ground Floor remodel)

Limited Resources

The nearly 15% reduction in State Funding since 2002 and relatively small endowment put the College in a challenging position with respect to dealing with the other resource issues of faculty compensation, availability of qualified faculty, staffing needs etc. It is symptomatic of the larger problem that while the College has added faculty in every department and in some cases the number of students in each department has doubled, no new staff members have been added to these departments as they have grown. Graduate programs have not received the support necessary to reach their potential, in the form of financial resources or providing an adequate number of graduate level electives. Finally, the limited resources affect the College's ability to offer innovative niche programs, as well as service courses and minors accessible to all WWU students

The 2009-2011 budget cut, the most severe in recent memory, cost the College three faculty lines, leaving some disciplines at risk of becoming short-staffed relative to the number of majors.

- Small endowment
- Faculty compensation ~ 15% below market
- Poor support for Graduate Programs
- Not enough full-time faculty
- Research support
- Administration understaffed
- Loss of faculty lines

Opportunities

Students

The composition of the undergraduate student market presents an opportunity for the College to gain a greater share of the highest quality students at Western. With two-thirds of students undecided as to a major the College can attract more high quality students by communicating to these undecided majors how a business major benefits them. The changing demographics will lead to an increasing pool of diverse students from demographic segments that historically have not had high percentages attending college. This means more first-generation students will be in the student body. Such students typically choose majors such as business that have practical application. We therefore have an opportunity to attract the best of this group to the College, increasing its diversity while simultaneously maintaining and perhaps increasing the quality of the overall student body, through targeted initiatives.

- 2/3rd of incoming freshmen undecided about a major

- Increasing pool of diverse students

Graduate Enrollment

Graduate student enrollments (MBA & MPACC) have been up to 50 percent under capacity in the past. While graduate enrollments have grown in the past two years they still represent the main opportunity to add Student Credit Hours (SCH) without increasing classroom resources, thus increasing revenue without increasing costs. Increasing graduate student enrollments opens up the opportunity for additional faculty lines. The MPAcc program is currently at 50 % under capacity while the MBA Program is 15% under capacity (2009-2010). This condition is changing the closer we get to ideal enrollment capacity as some required courses require two sections of 25 students each rather than one section of 40 to 50.

- Graduate student enrollments are under capacity
- Opportunities for increased resources if Graduate enrollments reach target levels
- Negative impact on resources as second sections need to be added for required courses
- The Everett MBA Program is currently 50% under capacity with large room to grow in both enrollment and resources created

Self Sustaining Programs

The College has numerous opportunities to shift existing programs to self-sustaining programs or create new revenue generating degree programs or certificates. An example would include shifting some or all of the College's graduate programs to self-sustaining basis.

Certificate Programs would be incremental additional revenue for the College that while small could provide a solid basis for ongoing funding of important initiatives just as the summer programs have done for so long. Some examples of certificate programs are below.

- Project Management Certificate
- Certificate in Integrated Marketing Communications
- Search Engine Optimization Workshop

Degrees/Programs

There are multiple opportunities to develop cutting edge niche programs that meet needs in the marketplace. Numerous opportunities exist for departments to collaborate with other departments inside and outside of the College or to include classes from other disciplines. Collaborative and joint degree programs between CBE and various other colleges are opportunities to use existing resources to serve more students by filling excess seats in classrooms in multiple programs at one time. Programs which make their classes available to students from partner programs can leverage underutilized resources more fully allowing the joint programs to collectively serve more students than either could do independently. Filling the excess capacity through the collaborative efforts of is an excellent method to increase tuition revenue in a negative budget environment. Two areas show good possibilities:

- There is an unusual amount of interest in socially responsible issues in and around Western that make the CBE a logical location for programs/degrees focusing on aspects of corporate social responsibility. Bellingham and Western are known across the region as areas where social responsibility is important and those interested in these areas of study are attracted to Western for these reasons. President Shepard has on numerous occasions pointed to the need for a degree that investigates the nexus of business and the environment. This political and leadership support for a degree focusing on sustainability, environmental business or social entrepreneurship is an important opportunity for the College to seize while the iron is hot.
 - The College has expertise in sustainable business practices and environmental economics. This expertise can be utilized in a relatively low-cost way through a new major covering business management, environmental economics, and environmental studies. Such a major is in the planning stages currently.
 - The College has some expertise in social entrepreneurship that, when combined with expertise from the community could be the base for a minor or certificate program in entrepreneurship with a specialization in social venturing.
- The College has a group of faculty with expertise in nonprofit and public sector organizations, including the areas of accounting, finance, management, and marketing. This expertise can be combined with master's level programs in the College of Fine and Performing Arts to form an attractive package for students interested in arts administration; it also provides an opportunity for a more focused specialization within the College in nonprofit management.
- The increasing interest in environmental issues and management gives an opportunity to implement a long-discussed joint or dual master's degree program offered by the College and Huxley College. Many of the faculty who form the core resources for the undergraduate degree described above also would contribute to course offerings in this program.
- The University has an opportunity, in which the College would share, to offer Professional Science Master's programs—MS degrees in the sciences that substitute courses in business and economics for thesis or project credit. The College is in discussions currently with the deans of the Graduate School, College of Sciences and Technology, and Huxley College regarding such programs.
- There is high demand from industry for trained professionals in supply chain management with experience. The highly regarded Manufacturing and Supply Chain program at in CBE could be expanded to the Graduate Level through a Master's in Manufacturing & Supply Chain Management or a specialization within the MBA Program. Possibilities also exist for a master's program in Financial Economics and a bachelor's program in Management Information Systems.

Opportunities exist for graduate programs away from the Bellingham campus. WWU's increased presence in Everett creates an opportunity for the MBA program in a region potentially underserved by higher education in general and graduate business education in particular. The College just began a Weekend MBA Program @ Everett in January 2010. Also in Everett is an opportunity for a Professional Science Master's degree offered with Huxley College. Also, opportunities exist to expand the College's offerings in the area of financial literacy.

- Joint degree programs
- Cross-campus collaborative programs
- Demand for socially responsible curriculum
- Presidential support for Environmental Business degree
- Various joint master's programs
- Professional Science Master's programs
- Specialized master's and bachelor's programs

Collaboration

Collaboration covers the broad areas of alumni, corporate and public/private partnerships to create benefits for both the College and its partners. These partnerships can take a variety of forms including but not limited to research opportunities, placement assistance, internships, advisory board participation, guest speakers, virtual mentors, or financial support. Of special interest are the number of University-wide initiatives in which the College is participating, all of which offer possibilities to strengthen the College's competitive position and bring it further resources. Areas in which such initiatives are developing include sustainability, ethics, leadership, and international studies, as well as the University's future presence on the Bellingham waterfront.

- Public/Private partnerships; HEC Board support for research centers
- CBE/Alumni partnerships; gifts, internships, participation, support
- College participation in University initiatives

Development

The College is maturing in terms of the age of its alumni. Many of the early CBE graduates are entering their peak earning years. Relationships have been built with many of these alumni, but opportunities to further cement these relationships and develop further relationships abound. As the University prepares to begin the silent phase of a capital campaign, CBE is well positioned to attain development goals such as endowments for teaching and research fellowships as well as supplemental funds at the College, program, and departmental levels.

Marketing/Branding

College and University resources are available for an expanded College effort to brand and market itself to several constituencies. The Alumni Association has helped sponsor electronic newsletters, an effort in which the College was a leader. The College has undertaken a branding process, which it has suspended temporarily due to a similar effort at the University level. Once the University's branding initiative is complete the College will complete its process as well. Coincident with the University effort, resources may be released for use by colleges. Dedicated time (.5 FTE) in the College and some financial resources are available for marketing efforts, and resources through the University also are available.

Advising/Career Services

With the remodeling of the ground floor of Parks Hall comes an opportunity for more targeted academic and career advising, as well as placement activities, for the College. An advising/outreach center with three connected offices and common space was included in the design and construction, as well as

three teamwork rooms that can double as interview rooms. This creates the infrastructure for a presence for advising and career services on the south end of campus, and CBE majors and pre-majors would be primary users of the services. Currently staff are not available to fully service this area, but the opportunity exists for a strategic investment. MBA students have voted their willingness to pay a fee to support such services. This fee has been advanced for University approval and could prove a model to provide dedicated career services for business students within CBE.

Threats

Resource Constraints

Resource constraints are obvious and omnipresent within CBE. The 2009-2011 budget has caused substantive cuts across all budgets within the University, with more coming in the second year of the biennium. The current budget cut has affected the College in a variety of ways. Further cuts likely would continue to erode one of the pillars of the College's competitive advantage; they also likely would stifle strategic efforts to address the opportunities enumerated above. Looking farther ahead, the 2011-13 budget picture is not bright, so long-term planning must take the possibility of even more cuts into account.

- Operating budget cuts in the 2009-2011 biennium
- Further cuts likely in 2010-11 year and 2011-13 biennium

Competition

Competition is an obvious threat to the College. This is especially the case in areas of degree offerings where if other Universities develop degree offerings first, such as in the areas of social responsibility, technology product management or hospital management, or do a better job of delivering the degree then opportunities will be lost. If a Snohomish County campus is operated by a university other than WWU (for example, the University of Washington), it could siphon off resources from the rest of the Higher Education system, including Western. Of course the competition for the best quality students is always an issue which an additional branch campus could complicate. The competition for faculty is always fierce and is likely to continue in the face of an ever widening pay gap. The competition for philanthropic support is keen as well with more and more good and noble causes vying for the attention of supporters.

- Superior brands of other Universities (UW)
- Superior distinctive degree offerings of other Universities
- Superior degree offering of other colleges within Western
- Snohomish County Campus; resources and students
- For faculty; attracting quality faculty
- For philanthropic support; < 5% of alums giving is to WWU
- For students: other Business Schools, other colleges within WWU

Socioeconomics

The coming demographic changes may lead to a change in the composition of students and the possible reduction in academic credentials of incoming students to CBE. Cost of living is an area that has not been an issue in prior eras. However, housing in particular has become difficult to afford. Median housing prices are difficult for new tenure-track professors and staff.

- Demographic changes could lead to reduced quality of incoming students
- Cost of living in Bellingham

Political

Political considerations are a constant threat in a changing environment yet there is little control the College has over these threats. Legislative actions which reduce funding or otherwise constrain the ability of the College to achieve its mission. The changing requirements of accreditation could be cause for concern in the future as well.

- Legislative action
- AACSB Requirements

Developing a Competitive Advantage: An Analysis of the SWOT Matrix

To develop a competitive advantage the preceding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats must be analyzed with the purpose of matching strengths with opportunities, minimizing weaknesses or converting them into strengths and minimizing threats and converting them into opportunities. Absent this effort, a SWOT analysis is only a list of unconnected ideas. Below is one statement of the College's competitive advantage.

The baseline competitive advantage of the College of Business and Economics is its commitment to providing each student with a unique and valuable experience that is based on a high degree of faculty-student interaction, a commitment to teaching, a high-quality education, personal attention and treating students as if they are people not just numbers. As one faculty member articulated, "It's not just about providing a high-quality education, which we do, but a lifetime commitment to our students' success". In these ways the College provides a very different experience than other business schools in the Pacific Northwest.