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OPERATIONALIZING THE MUMA BUSINESS REVIEW[1]

> *In today's world of publishing, the process of publishing a new journal is almost mechanical. What will be hard is keeping it from moving directly from the executive's inbox to the round file.*

Grandon Gill, the Academic Director of the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program at the newly named *Muma College of Business* (Muma COB) of the *University of South Florida* (USF), felt his morning coffee drizzling down his chin as he pondered the issue. He had just been tasked with launching two open access journals by his dean over the coming year. One of these, tentatively named the *Muma Case Review* (MCR), did not particularly trouble him. It would publish discussion cases and technical notes, a type of publication with which he was already very familiar, and for which he already had numerous submissions. The second journal, tentatively named the *Muma Business Review* (MBR), was a different matter entirely. The objective was to establish a journal that published rigorous research in a manner that would excite the business executive reader. This would be the real challenge.

In fairness, Gill thought, he had always relished the idea of creating such an outlet. Much of his own research had focused on the failure of academic research to communicate to practice. But he had envisioned such an experiment taking place several years down the road. But, as it turned out, he had become a victim of his DBA program's early success. During their first semester, Gill had required each of the program's 25 participants to write a discussion case. The Muma COB's dean, Moez Limayem, had been so impressed with these efforts that he had pressed for an immediate launch. What the dean had envisioned, however, was a practitioner-focused publication along the lines of the *Harvard Business Review* (HBR)—for which discussion cases were not a very good fit. So, suddenly, it appeared that two journals were going to be needed.

Having agreed to take on the project, Gill found himself wondering if it was even possible to present research in a manner that would be palatable to the local and national business communities. He began with the obvious premise that lengthy articles heavily emphasizing research methodology—the mainstay of academic journals—were not going to fly. But what would fill their place? Would executives be interested in concise summaries of research results? Should MBR seek out opinion pieces and essays, or would these undermine its goal to emphasize research? Would MBR be able to help authors understand the distinction between the example cases that might fit the MBR model and the discussion cases that would be better suited to the MCR? Did it make sense to choose to emulate an aspirational outlet like the HBR—with its multi-million dollar budget, supported by substantial subscription and advertising revenues—for the MBR, which would be given away for free and would likely start with little or no advertising?

The Research-Practice Gap in Business

A major motivator for the establishment of the MBR was the growing recognition that academic research in business had become essentially invisible to the world of business practice. As summarized in Exhibit 1 (excerpted from the book, *Informing Business: Research and Education on a Rugged Landscape*, Gill, 2010), many serious concerns had been raised with respect to the impact of academic business research on practice. Indeed, finance and economics were the only business-related fields where examples of academic research results being found in practice could be readily identified. Ironically, to the extent that any exchange of information was evident in the remaining fields, it was practice that seemed to be schooling the research community (Barley, Meyer & Gash, 1988).

Sources of the Gap

Much of Gill's own published research dealt with the sources of this gap, and possible solutions. Interestingly, his own conclusions differed from the general consensus that the most likely weakness of academic research stemmed from a lack practical relevance. Instead, he argued that for research to impact practice, it needed to possess three distinct qualities:

- ***Relevance:*** Selecting a problem of practical interest.
- ***Rigor*:** *Systematically* approaching a *challenging* problem with an *appropriate research design*.
- ***Resonance:*** Communicating the research findings through channels and in a manner that reduced the likelihood of attenuation and distortion prior to being internalized by the client.

In Gill's view, the failure of research to impact practice usually stemmed from failures of rigor and resonance. In much of the research he had studied, a reasonable argument could be presented that the phenomena under study remained elusive to practice. In other words, the problems being considered by researchers were both pressing and real—in other words, relevant. The underlying problem stemmed from the manner in which the research was conducted (failure of rigor) and in how the results were communicated (failure of resonance).

Gill liked to illustrate this with an example from his own area, the management of information systems (MIS). Within MIS academic research, the most commonly cited theory was referred to as the technology acceptance model, affectionately known as TAM. Literally hundreds of articles described research based upon this model and its many minor variations, an example of which is illustrated in Exhibit 2. In its essence, the model proposed that the *perceived usefulness* and (possibly) *perceived ease of use* of an information system ultimately contributed to our intention to use the system which, in turn, influenced the likelihood that the system would actually be used.

From a relevance standpoint, Gill argued that TAM stood on reasonably firm ground. Any MIS manager is aware of the problem of systems not being used as expected. This had been true through the 1960s and continued to the present. Evidence-based research findings that clarified the sources of the problem of non-acceptance and pointed towards new solutions would be of value to practice. In no way could unexpected resistance to new technologies be characterized as a problem of purely theoretical interest. It was a real problem, and one that was costly to fix.

The rigor of the research was a different matter. While most business researchers thought of rigor in terms of application of the scientific method using protocols established by past research, Gill's perspective emphasized the "challenging" and "appropriate" aspects of the definition that he used. From his perspective, he could not imagine a universe in which perceived usefulness would not increase the level of our intention to use an information system. Nor a universe where our intention to use an information system did not normally precede our actual use of the system. So, from his perspective, the questions being posed were not sufficiently challenging to be considered rigorous.

In Gill's opinion, perhaps the biggest source of the failure of academic research to impact practice stemmed from its lack of resonance. By its very nature, what made a communication resonant was largely determined by the nature of the intended recipient of the communication. Most academic research was framed for a specific group of clients: other academic researchers. Because of their position, however, these clients had little opportunity to apply the actual findings of such research. Instead, their job was to create research and what would be most resonant (and relevant) to them was the theory being developed and the research methods being described in each article. Gill felt that as a consequence, academic research publications tended to spend the vast majority of their time on the theory and methodological issues that would resonate most with their expected readers and reviewers. Since resonance needed to be tuned to the particular client, it would be too much to expect that such articles would also resonate with managers working in business settings.

The manner in which research articles were typically written was not the only obstacle to resonance, Gill felt. Where the relationships being studied were highly complex, relationships that held true in one context were unlikely to generalize to other contexts. To communicate complex relationships effectively, an interactive conversation between researcher and client needed to be established. Only through such a partnership could the potential applicability of a research finding to a new situation be determined. Static publications, such as journal articles, did not provide a good channel or such interaction.

Addressing the Gap

Gill had long advocated a number of approaches that might help reduce the research-practice gap. Among the techniques he proposed:

- *Create a group of intermediaries that could operate in both the world of practice and in the world of research.* Of particular interest to him was the development of executive doctorates of business through which executives would be trained in research methods with the expectation that they would remain in practice.
- *Encourage the development of local discussion case studies*. As artifacts most commonly used in the classroom, discussion case studies were routinely dismissed by academic researchers as being weak research—if they were considered research at all. From Gill's perspective, this dismissal missed the point. In the course of developing a case study, interactive channels were formed between the case writer and the protagonists that were the focus of the case. It was precisely through such channels that research ideas could flow in both directions. Of course, this put the emphasis on the actual development of case studies by those who intended to use them. This was far different from using only cases from a repository, such as the *Harvard Business School Press* or the *Case Centre*.
- *Create publications specifically devoted to presenting research findings in a manner intended for the practitioner client*. While he felt that many of the techniques employed in business research had considerable merit, Gill felt that they needed to be presented in a manner that would resonate with a practice audience. While some publications, such as the HBR, were doing this reasonably effectively, opportunities to publish in such outlets were extremely limited outside of a small community of researchers working at the most elite institutions. With little or no likelihood of publication, why would a researcher construct practitioner-focused articles?

In a clear case of “be careful what you wish for”, Gill had now found himself in a situation where he needed to pursue all three paths at once.

Muma College of Business

The Muma COB was the second largest college of the University of South Florida, a state university located in Tampa, Florida with affiliated campuses in Sarasota/Manatee and St. Petersburg, FL. With system-wide enrollments approaching 50,000 students, USF was one of the 10 largest public universities in the U.S.

According to the Muma COB’s 2014/2015 draft annual report, the total number of students enrolled was approximately 6500 (5500 undergraduate and 1000 graduate). It consisted of three departments—Marketing, Finance and Information Systems & Decision Sciences (IS&DS)—and the recently named Lynn Pippenger School of Accountancy. At the beginning of 2015, the college’s Management department had been absorbed into the Marketing and IS&DS departments. The college had over 100 full-time faculty, with a roughly even split between tenure earning positions and instructors. Both the Muma COB and the Lynn Pippenger School of Accountancy were accredited through *AACSB International*, the premier accrediting body for business schools.

Strategic Rebranding

On 10 October 2014, the College of Business at the University of South Florida was renamed the *Muma College of Business* in recognition of a generous $25 million donation by Pam and Les Muma, both USF alumni (Exhibit 3). This event represented the most significant of many milestones that had been achieved as part of a strategic rebranding of the college that had begun in summer 2012 with the arrival of its new dean, Dr. Moez Limayem.

Upon his arrival, Limayem visited all individual faculty members in their offices. His goal had been to identify challenges facing the college and, more importantly, ideas on how to address those challenges. Very quickly it became apparent that there was a widespread perception that the college provided good quality and excellent value in its offerings, but that it was broadly perceived as being quite “generic” in its activities.

With respect to its research focus, the faculty reached a broad consensus that the college should place a particular emphasis on two areas: creativity and analytics. This focus, they hoped, would make the college seem less generic to the outside world. They were also interdisciplinary and a good fit with the research interests of many of the existing faculty.

Research topics were not the only ways in which focus was to be manifested, however. Limayem had conducted his initial meeting with Grandon Gill, a professor in the IS&DS department, during one of his first one-on-one meetings with faculty. When asked for his analysis of the college, Gill had immediately launched into a well-practiced diatribe on the pointlessness of research without impact on practice. He had also made two concrete suggestions:

1. *The college should initiate a major case writing program.* His rationale for this—a central theme of a book that he had recently published (Gill, 2011)—was that case development provided a unique opportunity to integrate research, practice and students. As evidence, he presented the results of a case-based undergraduate capstone course that he had recently developed in conjunction with a grant from the U.S. *National Science Foundation* (NSF) in which case protagonists had sat in on locally developed case studies and the outcome had been visible and concrete impact on both groups (Gill & Ritzhaupt, 2013). Gill proposed that with a concentrated

effort, the college could become the “Harvard Business School of the Tampa Bay area”, referring to the institution well known for its case method that also happened to be Gill’s alma mater.
2. *The college should offer an executive doctorate.* His rationale for this recommendation was similarly supported by his past research (Gill & Hoppe, 2009), where he had proposed that by training senior managers to apply research techniques to business problems, they could subsequently serve as a bridge across which research ideas could flow back and forth between the academic and practice communities.

Limayem admitted to being impressed by both ideas. The executive doctorate, however, was of particular interest, since he had been seeking to establish a similar program at the university he had just left, the Sam Walton School of Business at the University of Arkansas. Gill, however, felt that the two activities were synergistic and would most effectively be pursued simultaneously.

Muma DBA Program

In May 2014, less than two years after the first conversation between Limayem and Gill, formal approval to offer the DBA degree was granted by the university. Then, shortly after the Muma COB received its name, the program enrolled its first cohort of 25 students—more than 50% higher than the expected enrollment. A summary of the student backgrounds is presented in Exhibit 4.

The Muma DBA program was modeled after an emerging set of U.S. part-time doctoral programs at AACSB-accredited institutions aimed at working executives. As described by the Executive DBA Council, these programs shared the following characteristics (http://www.executivedba.org/about/):

- Are directed at fully employed experienced professionals with more than ten years of meaningful post baccalaureate work experience, who already possess an MBA or equivalent graduate degree
- Develop scholarly practitioners by focusing on engaged scholarship research into contemporary business and management problems
- Require successful defense of a dissertation
- Are taught by research active faculty with doctoral degrees
- Are a minimum of three years in length
- Are residency based
- Have a major cohort-based, lock step component

The Muma DBA met all these criteria and, upon its launch, became the 11th such program in the U.S. (Exhibit 5). The program was designed to take three years, meeting one weekend each month for two 5 month semesters each year. Of the program’s 72 credit requirement, 52 involved course work and 20 involved the dissertation and proposal.

From the participant’s perspective, the objectives of the Muma DBA program differed from the college’s existing PhD programs in a number of ways (Exhibit 6). One important difference that was particularly relevant to the MBR was its attitude towards publication. Because the Muma COB’s PhD programs sought to place their graduates at research-focused, top-tier institutions, a central goal was to prepare students to publish in premier academic journals. To anyone in business academics, it was self-evident that authoring such publications would be the key to a successful academic career.

While Gill continually expressed hopes that the DBA program's participants would later play an active role in instruction at USF and other institutions, he was also quite strident in his opinion that the program should avoid encouraging DBA graduates to consider full-time academic positions. While he had no doubt that many of them would be fantastic teachers, he (perhaps selfishly) believed that each time a Muma DBA graduate transitioned to academia, a potential research partner in practice was lost. Thus, he felt that an emphasis on conducting research with an eye towards publishing in prestigious academic outlets was completely inconsistent with the mission of the program.

Given his objections to an emphasis on academic publication, it seemed somewhat surprising that—from its very inception—Gill had designed the program to include three publication courses (Exhibit 7). These courses were offered to the cohort during their first three semesters. They were specifically intended to help participants build their thinking and writing skills in advance of their dissertation. By requiring that students develop work "suitable for publication", the hope was that they would treat the activity as more significant than the typical mandatory course paper. Naturally, participants were not required to publish, only to produce work that seemed as if it was potentially publishable. They were also strongly encouraged to submit their work to an appropriate outlet. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the program and the multi-functional nature of its participants (recall Exhibit 4), however, it was not always clear what such outlets might be.

Discussion Case Development

Although it was not the Muma COB's top priority, while the DBA was being developed, Gill had continued his efforts to stimulate case development at the college. What was drawing considerable attention to his efforts was their success in attracting grant money. Following his 2011 NSF grant, he had received a $58,000 Department of Defense grant to develop a case based on an exercise run by the Naval Postgraduate School. In 2014, he followed this with a $300,000 NSF grant to develop a series of cybersecurity discussion cases. In 2015, he was awarded a three summer core Fulbright research grant to work with faculty members in South Africa on the development of eSkills-related case studies. Because such grants were a top priority for the university as a whole, the dean had strongly encouraged him to continue in his efforts.

As Gill's focus turned to the launch of the Muma DBA program, Dr. Matt Mullarkey—a recent USF PhD graduate with 25 years of executive work experience—had been brought in as a visiting professor to take over Gill's undergraduate MIS capstone case method course. Not only had Mullarkey proven to be highly successful in this role, he had also adapted it to an MBA core course that he was assigned to teach, and did Gill one better—requiring student groups to develop their own IT-related discussion cases using a template that he provided. The results were nothing less than astonishing—at least to Gill. By spring 2015 his students had produced 10 case studies that he and Gill both felt were publication-worthy.

In parallel with Mullarkey's activities, Gill had decided to make discussion cases the target of the first publication course of the DBA program. His rationale for this choice had been threefold:

- He would be using case discussions extensively in his other course, a special topics course focusing on the informing science transdiscipline, so the participants would have a clear view of what a discussion case looked like.
- He had already published a book on the topic and had conducted many workshops on the subject, so the course would not require extensive preparation.
- ***Most significant:*** He felt that discussion case writing was an activity that would be a good match with the observational acumen that the members of cohort would have developed over the course of their many years of work. Unlike PhD students—many of whom had limited work experience—the rush of new information that case writers typically experience during early visits

> to a site would not be as overwhelming to executives who already had a grasp of many practical business issues. Thus, it seemed like a good fit with their expected skill set.

Gill's initial intuition was largely confirmed by the enthusiasm with which the members of the cohort approached the case assignment. Their first assignment had been to write the first page of their cases. In that page, the goal was to set forth the decision that would be the focus of the case—hopefully in a manner that would motivate the reader. Prior to their May 2015 weekend meeting, Gill and Mullarkey collected these pages into a single 25 page document. They also gave Dean Limayem a copy when he dropped by for lunch. By early the following week, he and Gill were engaged in conversations regarding the feasibility of launching a Muma-branded outlet for these cases, other cases developed by Muma faculty and outside submissions.

Gill was relatively comfortable with the idea of launching an open access journal that published discussion cases. In fact, through the *Informing Science Institute*, he had already conducted two such launches. The first, *Informing Faculty* (2006), had been motivated by Gill's development of ten discussion cases related to higher education for the purpose of faculty training. He wanted to share them with other faculty, but there was no suitable outlet. Ruefully, Gill conceded that there was probably good reason for this. In fact, *Informing Faculty* managed to violate nearly every guideline given to PhD students and junior faculty about publication: 1) it featured discussion cases, which many faculty did not even consider a form or research, 2) its topical focus was education rather than being disciplinary, another no-no, 3) it was unranked and not anonymously peer-reviewed. In other words, submissions to the journal would likely be viewed as favorably as typos on the researcher's CV. Gill joked that the anticipated synergies of putting three bad ideas together did not materialize. Thus, it ended up looking more like a hobby than a journal.

The second journal, *Journal of IT Education: Discussion Cases* (JITE:DC) had been launched in 2012—largely as a consequence of the collection of case studies that Gill and his colleagues had developed as part of his first NSF grant. This journal had been considerably more successful in attracting outside submissions, but then the bar set by *Informing Faculty* had been pretty low. Nevertheless, Gill was pleased overall with the quality of the cases published by JITE:DC and by the fact that it was open access, meaning that faculty could freely use its cases without the high costs associated with other outlets, such as HBS.

What Gill knew from past experience was that the real challenge of launching a journal was attracting quality submissions. Given that he expected the DBA program to continue producing 20 acceptable cases each year, Mullarkey seemed to be at a pace that would produce 10, and Gill's existing grants and Fulbright should lead to another 10 or so, there would be no problem keeping such a journal happy for the foreseeable future—40 cases per year was substantially more than most well-established journals could publish. Such a journal would also make it easier for Gill to place non IT-related cases, which would not fit his existing journals. And, of course, it would raise the profile of the lowly case writing activity at the college.

Naturally, launching another discussion case journal was not without its drawbacks. Janis Gogan, President of the *North American Case Research Association* (NACRA) had expressed these succinctly in a recent email to Gill:

> There's a lot to talk about here – most importantly your dean's (and perhaps your) thoughts about distributing cases on your own. Let me just share with you that in the two years that NACRA's Case Research Journal has had a distribution agreement with HBS Publishing, the number of CRJ case adoptions has shot up dramatically. It took a long time to get that distribution agreement, and we got it because of the rigor of our review process. Now it is really paying off.
>
> From our experience I conclude that most institutions would be far better off encouraging their faculty to go to conferences like NACRA's and to publish their cases in those journals that do have distribution agreements with HBSP. This will bring much, much faster recognition to your institution – by virtue of HBS Publishing's global reach – than any initiative you could do on your own.
>
> That said, I really think the work you've done in your leadership of your doctoral program as well as in the Informing Science projects are just fantastic! It's only the last step that I am challenging. If you want the students who graduate from your program to become known, and if you want to build a reputation for USF as being a thought leader in STEM-related case research and teaching, you cannot have a better distribution partner than your alma mater – and NACRA can help you get that.

Gill readily conceded Gogan's point, but recognized that it came from a different perspective than his own. He was more focused on the visibility of the effort than in the visibility of the cases in the national faculty community. Through his affiliation with the *Informing Science Institute*, he also had made a personal commitment to open access publication. This was definitely not the business model of *HBS Publishing*.

The Evolution of the MBR Concept

As Gill's conversations with Limayem continued in early May, it became clear that the dean's concept for the proposed journal extended well beyond the publication of discussion cases. He envisioned a journal full of articles and case studies of the sort that appear in practice-focused outlets such as the HBR, ones that would engage the practitioner reader and build the reputation of the Muma COB both locally and nationally. Gill found himself simultaneously enthused and concerned by this perspective.

His enthusiasm stemmed from two factors. First, he very much liked the idea of a leading practice-focused research journal. Too many journals had succumbed to the temptation of publishing articles that would solely interest researchers; this included many supposed practice-focused journals, such as the Academy of Management's *Perspectives* and *MIS Quarterly Executive*. He had even observed how the temptation might manifest itself; he had been asked to join the editorial board of a new journal—*Engaged Management Review*—and, attending his first meeting, pointedly noticed that there was not a single non-academic sitting at the table. Second, such a journal would be a perfect fit for the second and third publication courses in the DBA program, which were not expected to produce discussion cases.

The notion of journal that combined discussion cases and practitioner-focused articles filled Gill with trepidation, however. The core of the problem was that discussion cases were not normally the type of publication that a practitioner would read. They were generally too long for a casual reading and, more importantly, the best of them were open ended. Who would start reading a mystery knowing in advance that the last chapter was missing? Gill also felt that combining discussion cases with other types of content would confuse authors. For more than a decade, he had been involved in training faculty to write discussion cases for classroom use. The biggest challenge was often getting them to abandon their preconceptions of the nature of a case study. This process would be vastly more complicated if the outlet combined example cases, such as those found in the HBR, with discussion cases for classroom use.

Furthermore, a collection of the latter would tend to be of far greater interest to instructors as opposed to managers.

To address this, Gill made a counter proposal to Limayem: launch two journals. The first, tentatively titled the *Muma Case Review* (MCR) would publish only discussion cases and technical notes to support those cases. Its main source would be USF DBA participants and USF faculty, but it would also encourage outside submissions, particularly if the cases were suitable for existing Muma COB courses. The second, tentatively titled the *Muma Business Review* (MBR), would publish research intended for a practitioner audience. The MBR would publish a much broader range of article types than the MCR. Off the top of his head, Gill thought these might include HBR-style articles, example cases, research summaries and opinion pieces. He recognized, however, that as an academic he was not necessarily in the best position to judge—which worried him.

Over the three weeks that followed, the MBR concept further evolved. During a conversation with Dr. Kaushal Chari, the Associate Dean of research and graduate studies, it became apparent that Limayem's ambitions for the MBR were far beyond what Gill had imagined. There was talking of sending printed issues of the journal out to all the deans at AACSB-accredited U.S. institutions, as well as to local executives. Whereas Gill had anticipated using MS-Word templates to prepare contributions, the Dean was envisioning professional layout with a desktop publishing package such as Adobe's InDesign. As opposed to one printed volume per year, now two (or more) were being considered. The Dean had also mentioned that the university's President and its Provost, both of whom had recently accompanied him on a trip to visit a program that the Muma COB was running in Peru, were also positive about the idea.

Based on this new information, Gill prepared a $50,000 budget, to be funded as a marketing expense out of the DBA budget, and brief implementation strategy for the journal. Playing a central role in this plan would be the *Informing Science Institute* (ISI), an organization where Gill was a governor that had extensive experience in open access publishing (Exhibit 8). Recently, ISI had developed its own review and publication platform that Muma could use, for a very reasonable fee, to host the MCR and MBR journals. They also had the expertise necessary to manage the mechanics of the launch (having done so for ten previous journals, including the two discussion case journals that Gill has previously initiated), as well as printing semi-annual issues. Gill also budgeted for a half-time Managing Editor/Publisher position who would be responsible for formatting accepted articles and arranging for online publication and subsequent printing. Utilizing the ISI services came with just two significant conditions: 1) the editorial review processes were expected to emphasize mentoring authors (and reviewers), 2) online access to publications needed to be free and publication fees could not be charged. Since these were both consistent with Gill's own philosophy, these did not present a problem.

What presented somewhat more of a problem was the still unanswered question of what, precisely, the MBR should be publishing if it hoped to induce executives to open its cover. In early June 2015, Gill and Limayem had facilitated a discussion with the Muma COB's Executive Advisory Council (EAC) in search of suggestions (Exhibit 9). While the EAC's membership, senior executives from local and national companies (two of whom were current DBA participants), seemed enthusiastic about the project, concrete suggestions were limited. But, having made the announcement, the college was more-or-less committed to move forward with the project.

The Immediate Challenges

The MBR project's sudden onset and unexpectedly high visibility left Gill with a number of immediate challenges. As an academic, his natural inclination was to cogitate on the matter for a suitable period—perhaps measured in years—and then to form a committee to study it until a consensus was reached. Unfortunately, that inclination needed to be suppressed. If the journal were to succeed and to launch as promised, it would be critical that DBA participants know what types of articles it would publish by the beginning of their second semester publication course (early October 2015). Otherwise, many of their efforts would likely be directed towards manuscript structures that would seem out of place in the journal. Gill suspected that he would also need to prepare detailed templates for each type of article—much as he had done for his discussion cases—since these seemed to substantially improve the quality of participant submissions (as both he and Mullarkey had discovered).

Gill had sketched out a laundry list of a dozen possible types of articles, presented in Exhibit 10. On the one hand, it was comforting to know that there were so many plausible options. On the other, he experienced considerable trepidation about the fact that he really had no idea which would appeal most broadly to the business community. For some initial feedback, he decided to engage the inaugural Muma DBA cohort in a discussion of the decision as a classroom activity in early September 2015. He reasoned that were likely to be the stakeholders most directly impacted by the MBR's design. But he wondered how effective this approach would be in identifying options that he had missed. Also, was the potential audience so diverse in its interests that no "optimal" mix would ever be identified? And, suppose that an "all of the above" buffet of article types seemed warranted. How could the MBR be organized so that managers could quickly access only those areas that were of interest?

There was also a question of how actively the MBR (and MCR) should solicit submissions from faculty and DBA participants outside the Muma COB. This would have considerable relevance to Gill within a few months, when he expected to be attending two conferences where potential authors would be in attendance. Both conferences, however, had their own outlets that could be considered competitors to the Muma journal. Would it be ethical to attempt to woo away their authors at their own events?

An ever-present challenge was that of organization. How could one establish a review board and governing board that would help the journal achieve its mission? Muma DBA submissions would be relatively easy to deal with—the faculty members in charge of each publication course would be expected to act as Associate Editors for the work of their students, and manage the submission process; that could be part of their job description. External submissions were a different matter. Recruiting editors and reviewers for these tasks—which were not particularly rewarded by the college—would be difficult. Moreover, if these individuals were all academic researchers, how could the journal possibly achieve its goal of informing practice?

Finally, there was the question of the long-term sustainability of the MBR and MCR enterprise. The obvious hope was that the two journals would contribute to the educational experience of the Muma DBA participants. But, as a marketing expenditure, they were also expected to support the program's recruiting efforts. If not, the college's Marketing and Communications activity—who would held accountable for its success in attracting applicants—could reasonably argue that the funding would be better directed to advertising the program. Gill's concern was that the impact of the journals on recruiting for the program would be hard to measure. Even if they were effective, how would that impact be measured and quantified? Establishing what data should be gathered as part of the launch seemed like a good idea if the journal was to establish a track record that could serve to clarify its worth in the coming years.

Somehow, Gill had to squeeze these decisions into a summer that already included several cyber security case visits and a six week trip to South Africa. He rolled his eyes as he thought to himself: Wasn't it nice a few years ago, back when my bosses consistently refused to let me move forward with any of the projects that I proposed?

Exhibit 1: Research Practice Gap

Does Our Research Have Impact?

That we, as academic researchers in business, wish that our research had greater impact on practice is not in dispute. A more interesting question is as follows: Does our research have *any* impact on practice?

Thomas Davenport and Laurence Prusak published a study of the flow of ideas into management (Davenport, Prusak & Wilson, 2003, p. 81). With respect to the contribution of business academics, they concluded the following:

> We believe that most business schools—and the academics that inhabit them—have not been very effective in the creation of *useful* business ideas. Sure, a lot of business ideas are explored in business school research, but for the most part, they are created elsewhere and are seldom even discussed in an accessible fashion by academics.

The authors were much more enthusiastic about the roles played by consultants, practicing managers, and journalists. Indeed, many of the academics involved in idea creation they prefer to describe as “academic refugees”, since their contributions evolved and were disseminated outside of the academic mainstream.

Warren Bennis and James O’Toole (2005, p. 1) argue that lack of relevance to managers is a serious problem and one that is growing worse because of our focus on scientific research. They state:

> During the past several decades, many leading B schools have quietly adopted an inappropriate—and ultimately self-defeating—model of academic excellence. Instead of measuring themselves in terms of the competence of their graduates, or by how well their faculties understand important drivers of business performance, they measure themselves almost solely by the rigor of their scientific research. They have adopted a model of science that uses abstract financial and economic analysis, statistical multiple regressions, and laboratory psychology. Some of the research produced is excellent, but because so little of it is grounded in actual business practices, the focus of graduate business education has become increasingly circumscribed—and less and less relevant to practitioners.

Jeffrey Pfeffer (2007), a distinguished professor at Stanford University has been a particularly vocal critic of the impact of research on management. He comments that in a recent book that reviewed major contributions to the practice of management (Mol & Birkinshaw, 2008), not one the 50 innovations they listed appeared to be the result of academic research. With his co-author Christina Fong (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002), he also points out the relatively small percentage of business books that are actually written by business academics.

Concerns about research impact are sufficiently great that *AACSB International* assembled a task force on the subject, just as it did for learning impact. The study and the subsequent rounds of revisions involved many people:

> Nearly 1,000 business deans, directors, and professors have participated in formal discussions about the report or offered comments and suggestions. (AACSB, 2008, p. 4)

Its preface begins with the words: “It is not easy to fix something when people cannot agree it is broken.” To this comment might be added: “It is not easy to tell if something is broken if the people you ask are the ones who broke it.”

One intriguing aspect of the study was its effort to identify instances of academic research that have impacted practice. These examples are summarized by discipline in Table 1.1. What is particularly interesting about the list they presented is the disparity across disciplines. In the case of finance, the evidence of impact is clear—I have observed every single item applied in practice and have even used a few myself while consulting (and finance is most definitely *not* my research area). With respect to the remaining areas, they seem to be very narrow, have their origins in practice (e.g., Hofstede’s work, which is well known, benefited heavily from his time employed at IBM), or are of questionable practical impact (e.g., did accountants really learn that the stock market reacts to announcements from academics?).

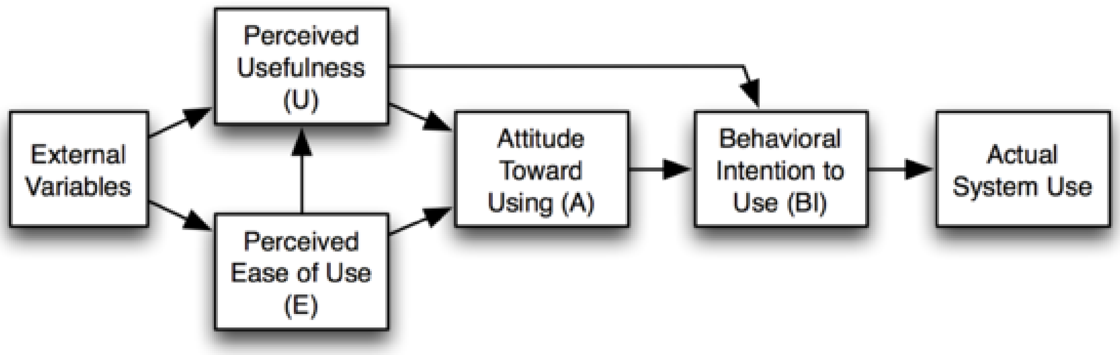
Moreover, the evidence supporting actual impact is quite weak. AACSB’s (2008) sole empirical support comes from a study that found a *small* correlation between 120 articles that practitioners felt could be relevant to them and the number of times they were cited by other researchers (Baldridge, Floyd & Markoczy, 2004). This is like saying that because we like the same flavors of ice cream as practitioners, our preference impacts theirs. In fact, to the extent that ideas do flow between academia and practice, it is probably in the direction of practice to academia. At least that was the conclusion of management researchers Barley, Meyer and Gash (1988, p. 52), who attempted to track the flow of concepts and concluded “the data suggest that symbolic and conceptual influence flowed in only one direction: from practitioners to academics.”

Table 1.1: Examples of areas where business research has impacted practice (quoted from AACSB, 2008, p. 18-19)

Area	Impactful Research Examples
Finance	Theories of portfolio selection, irrelevance of capital structure, capital asset pricing, efficient markets, option pricing, and agency theory.
Accounting	Building on efficient market theory, the foundational research of William Beaver demonstrated that the stock market reacts strongly to corporate earnings announcements. Applying agency theory, the work of Watts and Zimmerman has been influential in creating a research stream that addresses how managers choose among accounting methods.
Marketing	Keller is well known for his contributions to understanding the construction, measurement, and management of brands. Green and Rao are credited with developing conjoint analysis approaches to consumer research based on seminal work by Luce and Tukey in mathematical psychology. Today, conjoint analysis is widely used to test new product designs and assess the appeal of advertisements.
MIS	The research of Malhotra has helped companies to understand why knowledge management systems fail and Bass’s Diffusion Model has had practical applications for forecasting demand of new technologies.
Management	Hofstede has conducted the most comprehensive study of how values in the workplace are influenced by culture, and Vroom made seminal contributions to understanding employee motivation.

Source: Gill, T.G. (2010, pp. 12-15). Reprinted with permission.

Exhibit 2: Technology Acceptance Model



Source: Wikimedia images

Exhibit 3: Excerpt from Muma COB 2015 Draft Annual Report

DEAN'S MESSAGE

MOEZ LIMAYEM, DEAN

WHAT A YEAR!

There is no better way to begin a message from the dean than to say it has been an amazing year – and a truly unprecedented one. The events of the past 12 months will shape the future of our college for years to come.

On October 10 at 10 a.m., two of the university's most faithful supporters decided that they believed so much in our mission that they wanted to attach their name to our efforts. Our college was named for Pam and Les Muma, recognizing their generous gift of $25 million – the largest single donation in USF's 58-year history. It was a wonderful celebration. Hundreds of people came out to find out what big news we had been hinting about for months. Few people expected an announcement of this proportion.

I have said it many times but it bears repeating: This gift elevates USF into the top tier of business schools, one where donors so strongly believe in the mission and vision of the business school that they are willing to invest in it in a substantial and transformative way. The Mumas' generosity will help bolster faculty engagement in the business community and help students become better prepared for the workplace.

Another friend of the college was inspired by the Mumas' generosity, and, in February, we announced that we would rename the School of Accountancy to honor longtime donor Lynn Pippenger. Her $10 million naming gift, part of more than $21 million she has given to the Muma College of Business, will help us address a projected shortfall of qualified accountants in the workforce and prepare more accounting students for the field. It will help enhance the infrastructure and provide resources to help prepare students for certification exams. But not just the CPA exam. We want to prepare more students for the Certified Management Accountant, Certified Internal Auditor, and other credentials that will make them more employable.

AACSB International, the accrediting body for business schools worldwide, estimates that there are more than 16,000 schools offering business degree programs worldwide. Just 182 of them are dually accredited like USF is, with separate accreditation recognizing excellence for both the business education offered and the individual accounting programs. Additionally, AACSB records indicate that just a handful of accredited schools of accountancy are named – and none of them are named for women.

Putting these two names together –Muma and Pippenger – is the best thing to ever happen to this college! It will have a long-lasting impact on the students we serve as well as the business community at large!

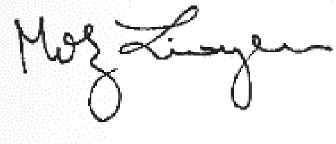
Those generous gifts, along with others, will allow us to better meet the needs of our stakeholders. This year saw the creation of two centers of excellence: the Center for Supply Chain Management & Sustainability and the Center for Analytics and Creativity. These centers examine issues central to our distinctive identity. A new graduate certificate program in compliance, risk, and anti-money laundering will provide students with the knowledge they need to find jobs in a fast-growing, lucrative field, without needing to enroll in a full-time degree program. The new Doctor of Business Administration offers CEOs and other upper-level executives the opportunity to earn a doctoral degree without interrupting their careers.

This college is nothing without its people. We became even stronger this year with several impressive new faculty members. The Muma College of Business is fortunate to be able to attract people like Richard Berman, a visiting social entrepreneurship professor in residence who has extensive experience in the healthcare industry and is an elected member of the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences (and the first National Academy member in the history of the college); Kerry Myers, a clinical professor of accounting who spent many years in forensic accounting with the FBI; and Daniel Zantedeschi, an assistant professor researching consumer data, who joined us after completing a postdoctoral fellowship at Wharton. And those are just a few of our amazing new hires!

We are also working hard to exemplify USF's core mission: student success. Our enrollment has stayed strong, and we have seen an increase in the number and quality of our graduates. We have strengthened the already successful Corporate Mentor Program thanks to a gift from alumnus Barron Collier III, a supporter of the program. Students in the Student Managed Investment Fund not only manage $400,000 of USF Foundation money (quite successfully, I might add), but also met with members of USF Town & Gown to discuss investment strategies, and they pitched their stock suggestions to senior investment leaders at globally respected firms. This year, we put resources toward enhanced training of our academic advising team, encouraging them to help students think about their long-term job goals in addition to the short-term goal of graduation. We have seen unprecedented success in one of our master's programs – the MS/MIS program accounted for half of all applications to MS programs university-wide.

We are determined to give Pam Muma, Les Muma, and Lynn Pippenger a great return on their investment.

I could fill pages talking about all of the things we are doing! Please, read through this report to learn about ongoing successes, new initiatives, and the people who make me say, "what a year!"



OUR MISSION

We emphasize creativity and analytics to promote student success, produce scholarship with impact, and engage with all stakeholders in a diverse global environment.

OUR STRATEGIC VISION

TRANSFORMING MINDS: TRANSFORMING BUSINESS

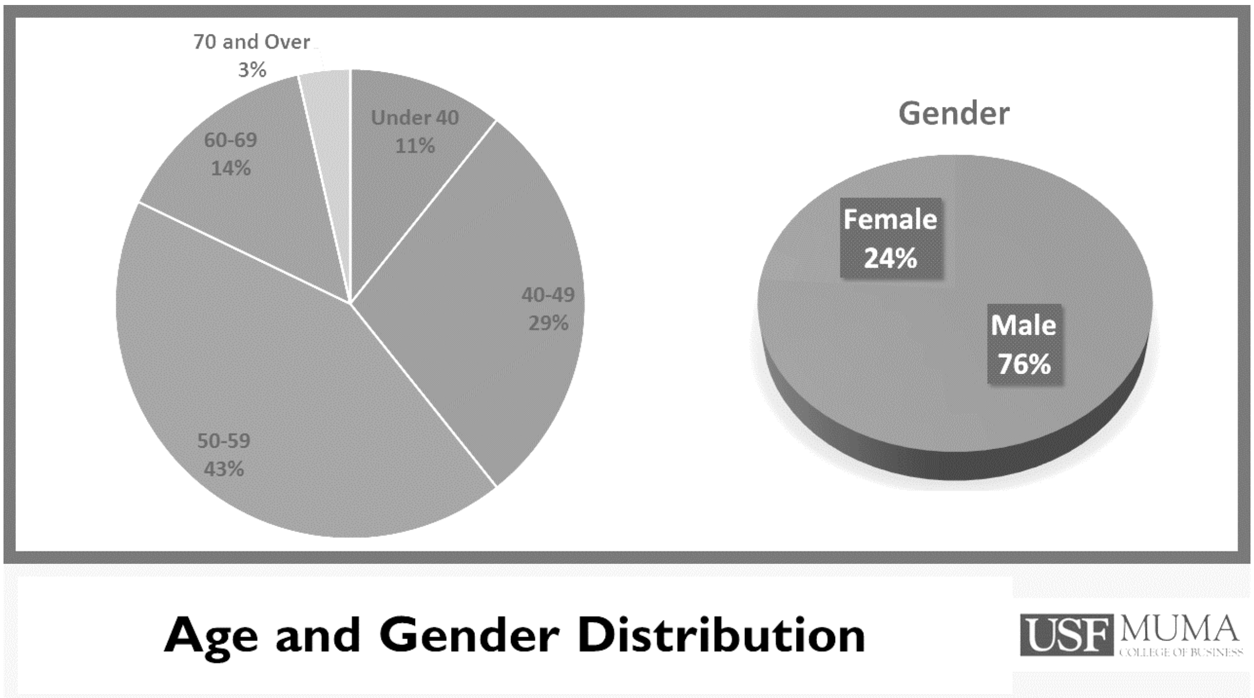
We aspire to be internationally recognized for developing business leaders and entrepreneurs who provide analytical and creative solutions in a global environment.

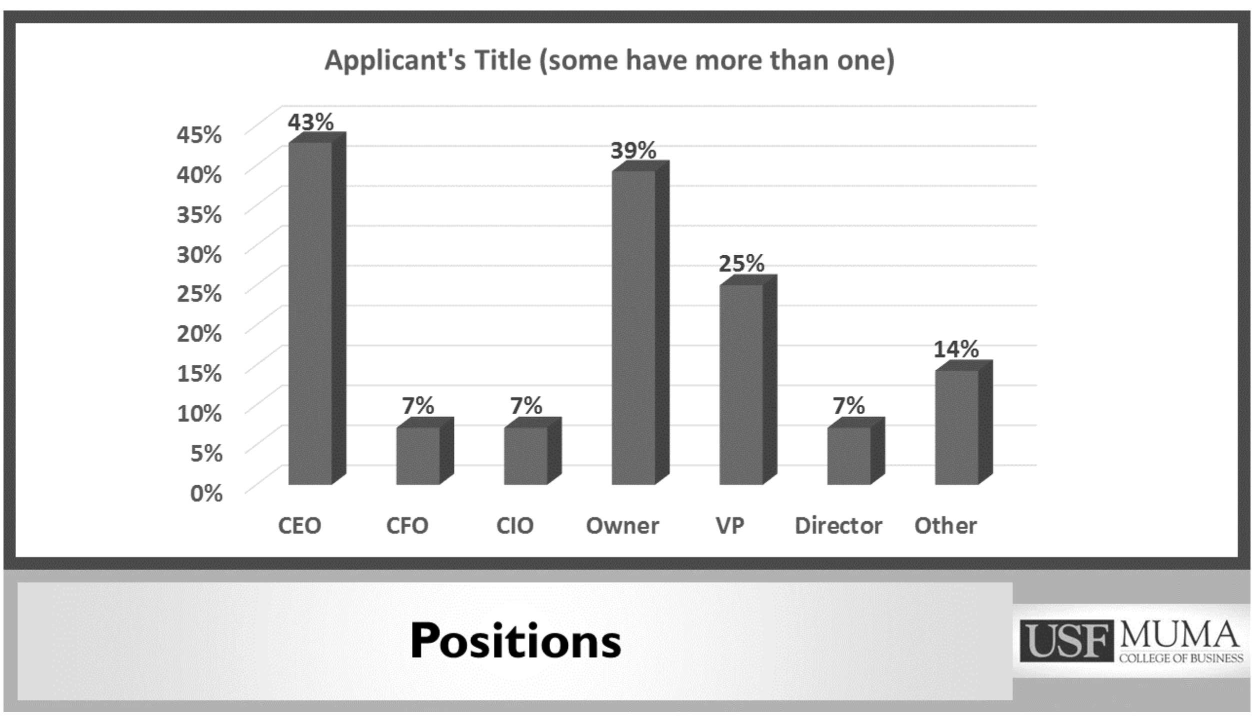
OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

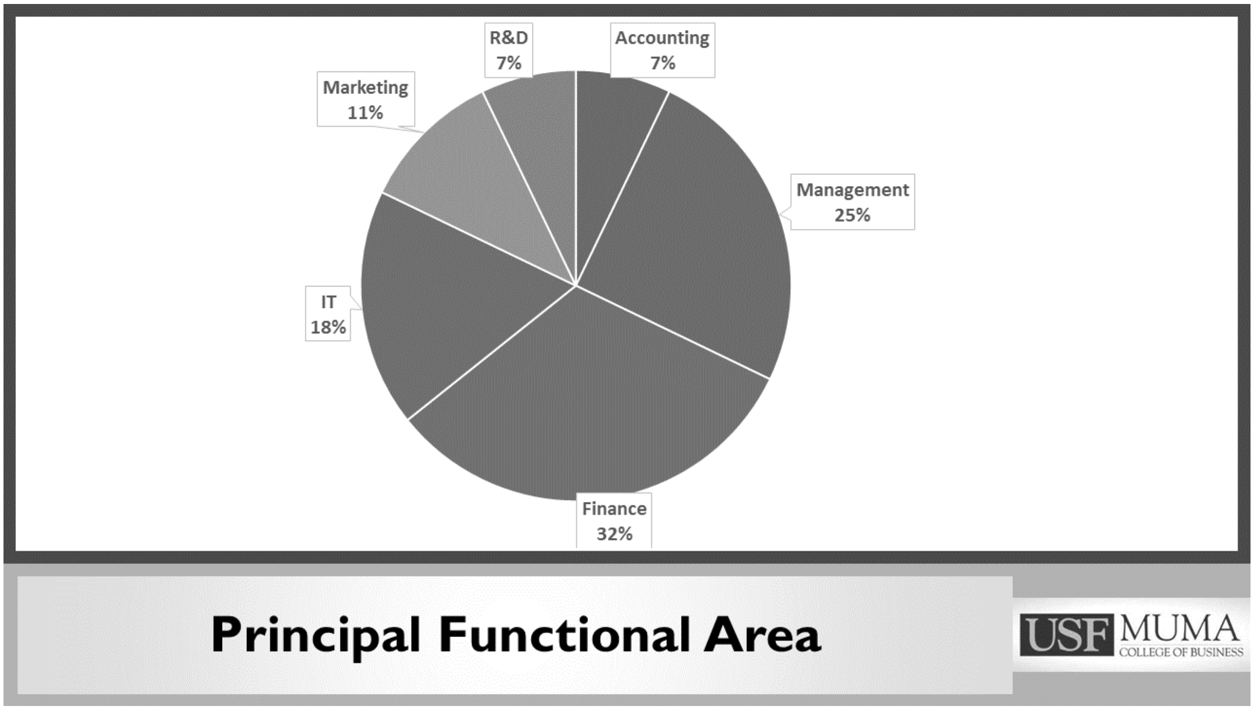
- Student Success
- Research with Impact
- Distinctive Identity: Creativity and Analytics
- People
- Business Engagement
- Global Literacy and Impact

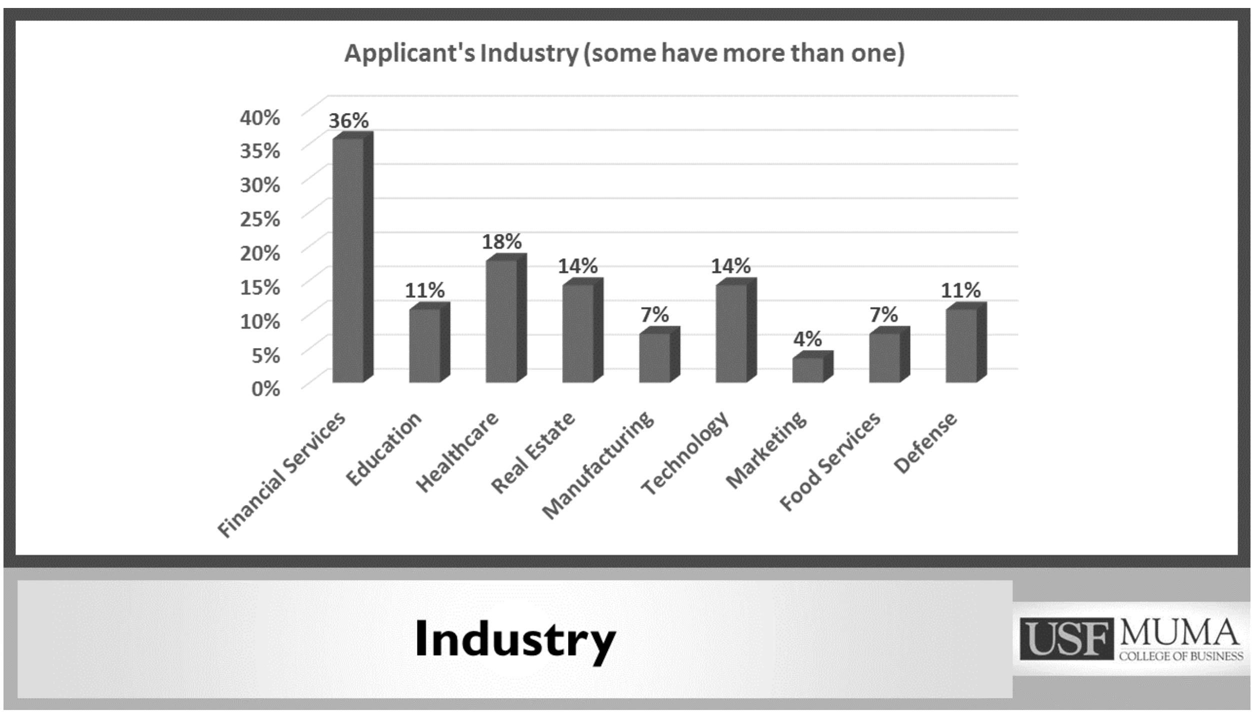
2

Exhibit 4: Muma DBA First Cohort Student Profiles









Source: Case writer slide show.

Exhibit 5: U.S. Executive Doctoral Programs at AACSB-Accredited Schools (consistent with EDBAC guidelines)

U.S. Executive Doctorates at AACSB-accredited schools		
Year	**Program**	**Total Cost**
1993	Case Western Reserve University	$150,000
2009	Georgia State University	$109,000
2009	Kennesaw State University	$96,500
2012	Oklahoma State University	$120,000
2013	Rollins College	$78,192
2014	Jacksonville University	$81,000
2014	Temple University	$126,000
2014	University of Dallas	$84,000
2014	University of Florida	$101,259
Spring 2015	University of South Florida	$90,000 [Note 1]
*Note 1:*USF program tuition includes $6,000/student budget for reimbursement of student research-related expenses		

Source: http://grandon.com/index.php?pageid=dba.php

Exhibit 6: DBA vs. PhD Objectives

Issue	DBA/Executive Doctorate	Ph.D.
Want a career as a full-time tenured academic and researcher	Unlikely to fit	Possible fit—good fit when from a top research school
Want to work while getting the degree	Good fit	Unlikely to fit
Want to develop research skills slanted towards practice	Good fit	Weak fit
Want to develop research skills slanted towards publication	Possible fit—depends on the type of publication	Good fit
Want to learn more about operating a business	Weak fit	Terrible fit
Want a high probability of successful completion in predictable time	Good fit	Weak fit
Uncomfortable with math and statistics	Possible fit—depends on program	Weak fit
Worried about the money	Weak fit	Good short term fit, Terrible long term fit (from ROI perspective)

Source: Gill (2014, p. 15)

Exhibit 7: Publication Courses

Publication Courses
9 Credits

These courses are offered during the first three semesters of the program and have a substantial distance learning and collaboration component between class meetings, with members of the cohort being required to peer review each other's work and make revisions. They represent an extension of previous courses, and require the students to create publishable documents, such as journal, conference and book chapter submissions. Depending upon the particular publication project, each course will have one of the following designations:

ACG 6915	Directed Research	3 credits
GEB 6930	Selected Topics	3 credits
FIN 7915	Directed Research	3 credits
ISM 7931	Directed Research	3 credits
MAN 6911	Directed Research	3 credits
MAR 6916	Directed Research	its

Source: USF 2014/2015 Graduate Course Catalog

Exhibit 8: Informing Science Institute

About ISI

The Informing Science Institute (ISI), founded in 1998, is a global community of academics shaping the future of informing science. Submitting or publishing papers in any of ISI's peer-reviewed online academic journals is free. With the help of sponsoring institutions, ISI now hosts the highly regarded I^{n}SITE conference in a variety of international locations twice a year. ISI electronic publications and e-books are available for free. Hard copies of ISI books and publications are available in the ISI Shop, where all proceeds enable ISI to continue sharing knowledge online free of charge.

ISI Research Topics

ISI encourages the sharing of knowledge and collaboration among the wide variety of fields, often using information technology to advance the multidisciplinary study of informing science. These areas can include Business, Communications, Communicating Meaning, Community and Society, Computer Science, Data Management, Distance Education, eCommerce, Education, eLearning, Government, Health Care, History, Information and Library Science, Journalism, Justice and Law, Mathematics, Management, Philosophical Issues, Psychology, Public Policy, Sociology, and Human Resources.

Recommended Read: A Philosophy of Informing Science

How It Works

Anyone can submit an article to an ISI journal for review, but we require that you become an ISI colleague (free) or ISI Member. By becoming an ISI member, you will not only support ISI by helping to cover administration costs, but will receive several benefits including access to ISI's Member Directory, discounts on ISI products and services, and much more.

Quick Facts

- Established in 1998
- 9 academic journals
- 2 intl. conferences/year
- 6000+ colleagues and members
- 75+ countries represented
- 600+ organizations
- 5500+ website visits per month

Source: http://www.informingscience.org/About

Exhibit 9: Executive Advisory Committee Slide

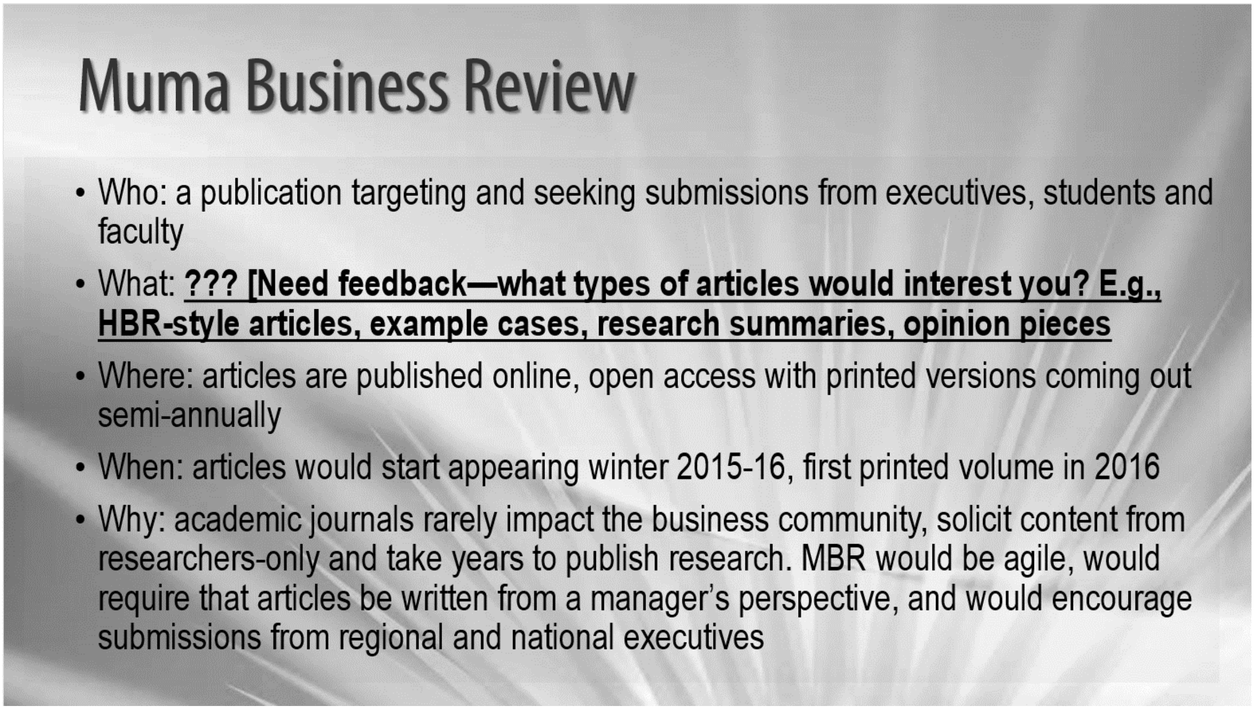


Exhibit 10: Gill's Brainstorming List of MBR Article Types

Article Type	Description
Relevant theory article	Article proposing or explaining a theory that would be relevant to managers; similar in structure to traditional academic articles but lighter on the literature review and written for clarity. HBR prints many articles of this type.
Empirical findings article	Article describing interesting empirical findings. Written in a form that is similar to chapters in business books, such as those by Dan Ariely, that emphasize intriguing or counter-intuitive research findings without a heavy emphasis on theory.
Research case studies	Case studies that emphasize a complete story (as opposed to discussion case studies, which emphasize presenting the context of a decision) and frame in terms of theory. Unlike academic research case studies, much more attention would be given to the story itself rather than to the methodology of data gathering and the literature review.
Example case studies	Case studies that present an intrinsically interesting story without extensive analysis in terms of existing or novel theories.
Novel idea papers	Articles that seek to introduce a new idea for readers to think about, without necessarily providing extensive empirical or theoretical support. Such papers would be very hard to publish in existing academic outlets, but could be useful in identifying areas for future research.
Research debates	Articles that summarize debates that exist between researchers (e.g., "Is too much goal setting a bad thing?") or between the research literature and practicing managers (e.g., "Would you rather have highly intelligent or highly conscientious employees?"). Normally, the goal of such articles would be to clarify the perspectives of both sides, rather than to select a winner.
Research question reviews	A question that appears relevant to practice is advanced and the article summarizes what findings and conclusions are available in the existing academic literature. Denise Rousseau, A well-known researcher in management had recently started seeking out this type of systematic review contribution as part of her *Center for Evidence-Based Management* (http://www.cebma.org/frequently-asked-questions/what-is-a-systematic-review/).
Opinion pieces	Position papers that argue for a particular perspective on a particular managerially-relevant issue.
Industry analyses	Articles specifically devoted to providing a concise analysis, supported by data (often publicly available), of globally, nationally or locally-relevant industries. This idea was inspired by the type of research that initially dominated the efforts of early business schools, such as Harvard.
Research summaries for practice	Short (1-3 page) summaries of the important takeaways from a recent research project. For example, DBA participants might be required to write such a summary for their dissertation work, and USF faculty might be encouraged to do the same for their recently published articles.
Interviews	Interviews and biographical sketches of important members of the business and academic communities.
Research method reviews	Accessible descriptions of a particular approach to research, emphasizing developing executive-level understanding of where the method might be applied to practice, along with its strengths and weaknesses.