

Monday, February 9, 2009

Shaping the Future: Business Futures Councils at CIBRE

Engaging industry professionals in the future of business education and research is a hallmark of the Oakland University School of Business Administration vision and key to its – and its graduates – success. That's the driving force behind the **Business Futures Council (BFC)**, which brings senior executives from various industries together to engage them in a dialog on future business trends and challenges.

Hosted by the SBA's **Center for Integrated Business Research and Education (CIBRE)** and segregated by industry, executives from manufacturing, IS leadership, health care, and global and entrepreneurial companies were invited to begin meeting in 2008 for intense discussions about critical issues such as: what should education in this field look like; what educational components can the SBA develop; what experiential activities should SBA students be encouraged to explore; and the role industry can play in education.

"The goal is to better educate and prepare future employees for success in the workplace, while proactively shaping future research projects to bridge the gap between academic theory and real-world practice," says SBA Dean Mohan Tanniru, who moderates the forums.

The first BFC, held in April 2008, focused on manufacturing trends in Michigan. In all, 14 executives participated in the initial discussion to help OU's SBA set its research and educational agenda in manufacturing and operations management fields.

BFCs in other segments are in the works including entrepreneurship, global business education, IS leadership, health care management and others. "The intense discussion highlighted issues critical to the industry and to the Michigan economy," says Tanniru, "Including how the global economy and economic woes are impacting the success or failure of manufacturing and what that means to the type of jobs available here in the coming decade."

"One of the benefits of these council discussions is the diversity of opinion that is openly expressed from industry, government and academia. The ensuing discussions yield intriguing rationales, potential solutions and the cross-organizational sharing of ideas," says Michael Glovis, manager, enterprise and process systems, T-Systems of North America, who participated in the BFC manufacturing session.

"Listening to what others have to say can have the potential to change a few minds and help academic institutions develop research and educational plans necessary to address the needs of industry and create the leadership essential for the next century," he adds.

"All this information will be used now to help the SBA craft a relevant and meaningful educational and research agenda that will support economic growth and drive the SBA's curriculum to enhance student education to our graduates succeed in the workplace," says Tanniru.

Next BFC: Experts to identify trends, needs of finance education

With a focus on turning around the Michigan economy by ramping up research efforts and expanding educational offerings to provide the area with much-needed expertise of finance professionals, OU's SBA plans to introduce a master's program in Finance. That's why the next BFC – Friday, March 20 – focuses on the defining what a master's in finance should include. Those in the finance field and others familiar with graduate finance programs across the country will join for this intense discussion to help OU's SBA set its research and educational agenda by looking at what is going on in the financial arena today, discussing the lessons of 2008 and identifying needs for the future.

SUMMARY

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Created by Linda Bowers (bowers2@oakland.edu) on Monday, February 9, 2009
Modified by Linda Bowers (bowers2@oakland.edu) on Tuesday, February 24, 2009
Article Start Date: Monday, February 9, 2009