

The Influence of Experts via ADVISE: Using an Advisory Board to Guide Students in Marketing Management

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Purpose of the Study: To present a strategy for developing and maintaining an advisory board of executives to guide the content and activities of a capstone Marketing Management course; to assess the effectiveness of a course-level advisory board as compared to a traditional textbook approach.

Method Design and Sample: Six sections of senior-level marketing students participated in the study. Paired sample t-tests were used to compare the advisory board approach with a traditional textbook classroom.

Results: The advisory board approach was evaluated significantly more favorably than the traditional textbook approach across all four categories: pedagogical affect, value of the course content, impact of the course on the student, and willingness to recommend.

Value to Marketing Educators: This study can be used as a guide for marketing faculty seeking a meaningful way to connect students and executives. Advisory board members help guide the topics to be covered, readings assigned, weekly projects, a semester-long group project, and other mentoring/teaching activities. A six-step process for designing and implementing a course-level advisory board is presented: Acquire, Develop, Vision, Incubate, Scale, Embed.

Keywords: advisory board, experts, value, marketing management, innovation

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With every passing semester, the challenges that face our marketing students increase. The business environment is complicated, intense, and fluid. The boundaries within which firms compete reach around the globe via a myriad of new structures, increased expectations, changing channels of distribution, fickle consumers, and technological innovations that are dizzying in pace. As marketing faculty, the pressure to prepare students for this world requires innovative tools and new technologies to transfer relevant and timely knowledge in the most effective manner.

A course-level advisory board is an innovative option to enhance the learning environment in a meaningful way. The use of an advisory board to guide a capstone Marketing Management course is presented, using the ADVISE framework: **A**cquire, **D**evelop, **V**ision, **I**ncubate, **S**cale, **E**mbed. A comparison of student perceptions of the advisory board is discussed, identifying key benefits compared to traditional textbook approaches. This research is based on four themes: (1) given the competitiveness and dynamism of today's business world, many institutions are seeking unique experiences to prepare students for the careers they will be pursuing; (2) advisory boards have been an effective tool in a diverse set of corporate and nonprofit settings; (3) advisory boards have been utilized to great effect in academia at the university, college, and departmental level – but not yet at the course level; and (4)

understanding the student's value equation can provide insight into the role that these advisory boards can play.

THEME 1: SEEKING UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

1986. Ben Stein captures the stereotype of the classroom experience, droning monotonously “anyone, anyone?” in the pop culture classic Ferris Bueller's Day Off. Stein's character resonated with many who had experienced high school and college classroom environments deplete of engaging touchpoints. Today, thanks to the efforts of innovative faculty as well as publications such as the *Journal for Advancement of Marketing Education*, a plethora of interesting and engaging strategies can be found as universities seek to connect with the millennial student. The extant research has chronicled an impressive collection of endeavors to enhance the learning, assessment, and classroom experiences of university students.

Today's business world is a dynamic one, relying on employees to be flexible, innovative, creative, and forward-thinking. As Ferrell et al. (2015) note, marketing is an applied discipline, and is highly influenced by a shifting set of factors: changes in the economy, competitive behavior, technology, demographics, legal changes and more. Concurrently, college-age students have brought their multi-tasking, technology-infused, digital dependent selves into the classroom, seeking connections with their comfort

zones of short sound bites, insights from youtubers, and entertainment-style offerings. Bringing these worlds together, faculty have searched for opportunities to enhance the educational experience, preparing this diversely-talented student base for the workforce. While a plethora of teaching innovations exist, five strategies in particular warrant review: assignments grounded in creativity, technology-infused environments, new learning mechanisms, tighter integration with the real-world, and diverse study abroad experiences.

Assignments grounded in creativity. Both academicians and practitioners have studied the value of creative environments. Settings that foster a culture of creativity are likely to have happy, motivated individuals who are more loyal and more productive. As Coleman (2016) notes, the most successful environments are those that engender creative thinking, giving everyone the opportunity to generate unique ideas, challenge the norms, and have a voice. Accordingly, production of creative capital has proved useful as a classroom endeavor given the high demand for innovative, creative thinkers in the marketplace (Feinberg 2012; McCorkle et al. 2007; Coy 2000).

Technology-infused environments. The widespread adoption of technology has resulted in a race to embed its best features in both school and work environments. McGovern, Luna-Nevarez, and Baruca (2017) have illustrated the benefits of utilizing technology that students are so clearly immersed in, enhancing the learning style of these connected consumers and broadening the learning experience. Research has explored a breadth of contexts within which the benefits of technology have been examined, including the use of mobile devices in medical schools (Boruff and Storie 2014), smartphone integration into high school classrooms (Karch 2014), and using apps in science classrooms that help students access and make sense of content in new ways (Castek and Beach 2013). Technology has been brought into the classroom in diverse ways as illustrated through the utilization of Twitter (Rinaldo et al. 2013; Clarke and Nelson 2012), LinkedIn (McCorkle & McCorkle 2012), blogs (Muncy 2014), and other social media mechanisms (Nemetz et al. 2012). This digital immersion helps prepare students to effectively navigate their socially connected digital workplaces (Duverger and Steffes 2012). Technology has even been used to crowdsource the grading process for marketing projects in the classroom (Avery 2014; Duverger and Steffes 2012).

New learning mechanisms. In addition, teaching innovations have focused on the medium for introducing content including the use of parables (Graeff 2008), videos (Cummins et al. 2016; McGovern and Baruca 2013; Steffes and Duverger 2012), expert-to-matrix designs (Fontenot et al 2012), role-playing scenarios (Seung 2016; Lastner et al. 2016), guided vs. self-directed instruction (Schroefler & Higgins 2015), active learning strategies (Inks and Avila 2008), clickers (Hedgcock & Rouwenhorst 2014), and even delivering lectures with great enthusiasm (Arndt & Wang 2014).

Tighter integration with the real world. Research has found that students who are exposed to the workplace through internships and interactions with executives reap the benefits of improved classroom discussions, increased attendance, higher salaries, and earlier placement among other positive outcomes (Mullen & Larsen 2016; Weible & McClure 2011). Marketing departments seek out ways to expose students to the external environment as much as possible - utilizing internships, study abroad programs, and corporate partnerships. Hoyle & Goffnett (2013) have developed strategies for increasing the presence and effectiveness of marketing internships and innovative options for job shadowing experiences (Mullen & Larsen 2016).

Diverse study abroad experiences. Study abroad opportunities for marketing majors have become even more diverse in nature, geographic location, and experience (Wright & Larsen 2012; Payan et al. 2012; Wright & Clarke 2010). Nielson & Border (2016) develop a compelling argument for the importance of implementing creative ways to get students into the real world, practicing techniques in more realistic settings. A recent special issue of JAME, organized by Peltier & Dixon (2016), provides resources and encouragement to pursue these initiatives. While the classroom stereotype depicted by Ben Stein thirty years ago may not have been 100% accurate in terms of describing all classroom environments, it is accurate to say that much progress has been made since that time.

THEME 2: ADVISORY BOARDS AS EFFECTIVE TOOLS

Advisory boards have been an effective tool in diverse settings. Occasionally confused with the concept of a board of directors, advisory boards are different in several key ways including that they possess no authority over the entity. Their input, while valued, is strictly of an advisory capacity and board members have no legal standing. As Morkel & Posner (2002) note, the rationale for advisory boards arises from the benefits to all parties. Companies can gain access to individuals with expertise and credibility. These individuals can invest their time in a way that is unencumbered by compliance, legal obligations, or regulations specific to boards of directors. Advisors can be chosen for their particular expertise, building core competencies in a variety of areas. These competence-expanding roles can move fluidly with strategic problems as they arise, serving as effective tools for infusing comprehensive insight for a particular issue (Davis and Monroe 2014). Digital advisory boards, for example, have become popular as companies seek ways to compete in the challenging world of online commerce. GE, Target, and American Express are three of the fifty Fortune 500 companies that have convened digital advisory boards (Lublin 2015).

Morkel & Posner (2002) have identified strong mentoring components of boards: asking questions, providing encouragement, adopting a coaching approach. Others boards seek to provide valuable

contacts along the supply chain, making connections on behalf of the company. Marquee boards, comprised of high profile members, provide credibility and value, as long as members are actually participating and not listed in name only. Think-tank boards are forward-facing, with participants who may come together to complete a specific task. Regardless of whether the board is mentoring, connection-building, marquee, or think-tank in focus, firms benefit when board members bring additional resources to the firm including their experiences, competencies, and pluralistic perspectives (Minichilli et al. 2012, Hillman & Dalziel 2003; Forbes & Milliken 1999). While it seems evident that an advisory board plays a key role in setting objectives and developing new strategies, what may be less obvious is the usefulness of the board in providing referrals to people and other resources as challenges arise, offering reality checks on the liaison's plans, and acting as a sounding board for the fears and doubts of the company (Spence 2008). With all of the benefits to be reaped through effective incorporation of advisory boards in the business world, it is not surprising that they have also become increasingly popular in the academic domain.

THEME 3: ADVISORY BOARDS IN ACADEMIA

Advisory boards have been utilized to great effect in academia, albeit primarily at the university, college, and department levels (Rose & Stiefer 2013). Indeed, colleges and universities have utilized advisory boards for guidance, support, social capital, and financial investments in academic units (Nagai & Nehls 2014). As university personnel seek to deepen their relationships with external communities, advisory boards serve as an opportunity to institutionalize relationships. Interestingly, advisory boards are not always termed as such; rather, they operate under a variety of names: board, council, committee, advisors, associates (Genheimer & Shehab 2009).

While the extant literature does not provide examples of the use of advisory boards at the course level, there are many examples of Business and Engineering programs that have capitalized effectively on the use of advisory boards to guide college-level decisions (Genheimer and Shehab 2009; Olson 2008). When Presidents, deans, and department chairs create boards, they are often used as vehicles for soliciting strategic or programmatic advice, cultivating political influence, supporting fundraising (Olson 2008) and providing access to a broad community of interest (Appel 2007). Advisory boards can also be used to recruit new advocates to the university. When non-alumni participate in advisory boards, they often develop emotional connections and pride in serving the institution, similar to alumni (Nagai & Nehls 2014). When these individuals feel their level of engagement with the institution is meaningful, they are motivated to continue as volunteers. Dimma (2000) notes that advisory boards can and usually do add important value. The advisory board at the center of this research project operates at the course level which is a new

phenomenon. As such, the concept of value as it relates to this board requires further exploration.

THEME 4: EXPLORING VALUE

The business environment is saturated with discussions of value. As faculty members, we preach the importance of firms providing value to consumers, the relevance of value propositions, and the increasingly important role that value plays in the decision-making process (Burdett et al. 2013). Students, parents, donors, employers alike navigate choices in the same manner, seeking value from the educational experience. In exploring this value phenomenon, the literature on what is of value to the educational process points towards two main domains: the value of the material that the student is exposed to and value-added outcomes that arise from being in the course. Given the important role that value plays in today's business world, these both warrant exploration. This initial look allows us to gain a benchmark for understanding some initial value perceptions.

Adding value has been a keystone benefit of advisory boards across settings. Extensive literature on the role of boards of directors and advisory boards shows an evolution from mainly single governance to broader issues such as value creation (Huse 2007). The value creation potential arises from board members as organizational resources that provide advice, knowledge, and skills. Often, these resources are difficult to imitate and are non-transferable outside of the firm, contributing to the competitive advantage of the firm (Bankewitz 2016; Zhang 2010). When placed in the context of the classroom, advisory boards have the potential to provide students with a uniquely tailored experience that is grounded in the domains the executives tackle every day.

An interesting value-added outcome revolves around the issue of solution parity which recognizes that students desire a right answer or approach to a problem (Lilly & Stanley 2016). But the reality of the workplace is that multiple solutions may exist and various solutions can be navigated effectively (Park & Holloway 2003). Professionals often differ from each other in their responses to situations; exposure to these variations can effectively illustrate to students that there are multiple right answers, multiple paths to success (Lilly & Stanley 2016). It is one thing to read in a textbook that multiple paths can prevail, but to experience this first-hand allows for that learning to be processed more fully.

The value of an advisory board may arise from the declining opinions that some researchers claim students have of many textbooks. Holmes et al. (2016) completed an insightful study on the attitudes of marketing students with respect to traditional classroom resources. Their findings suggest that students do not find textbooks to be useful resources, are not actively reading their textbooks, and do not believe that reading a textbook is necessary for success. Barriers to reading the textbook include the cost and length of the book, disinterest in the subject matter, a belief that there are

better ways to study, repetitiveness with powerpoint slides, among others. The marketing professor is responsible for making certain that the critical information is presented by means other than textbook readings, placing significant responsibility upon the educator to provide students with a meaningful way to learn the information rather than relying on the text to inform the student (Holmes et al. 2016; Vafeas 2013). Using an advisory board allows the professor to select, organize, and disseminate information in a value-added way that connects with students. While creating a comprehensive perspective of value is not the focal

point of this research, the importance of value in the business and academic settings necessitates an exploratory look into the concept.

ADVISE: AN ADVISORY BOARD FOR MARKETING MANAGEMENT

Before reviewing the empirical and narrative findings of the impact of the advisory board, a description of the course-level advisory board is provided, focusing on six important components as outlined in Table 1.

**TABLE 1
THE ADVISE APPROACH TO DEVELOPING
AND MAINTAINING AN EFFECTIVE ADVISORY BOARD**

A	Acquire	Identify and recruit members with diverse experience, talents, responsibilities
D	Develop	Develop solid relationships with members to maintain a culture of contributing
V	Vision	Clearly articulate the vision of various phases that members can participate in
I	Incubate	Phase 1: incubating; entry-level involvement with minimal investment of time
S	Scale	Phase 2: scaling up; increasing the involvement and investments of members
E	Embed	Phase 3: embedding; immersion of members in almost every aspect of course

Acquire. Although the board has grown in scope over the years, the initial advisory board was developed as a means of simply providing a general framework for the Marketing Management (MM) course along with suggested readings within the modules covered. Currently, board members are selected to reflect both nonprofit and for-profit entities. Given the focus of our marketing curriculum, many members are drawn from the retailing environment, firms within the supply chain, and agencies specializing in the shopper-store intersection. Careful consideration is given to ensure the board spans across a variety of job responsibilities and topical coverage. In addition, while many upper-management and mid-level management experts in the field were recruited, it is also important to have individuals who have just entered the workforce as they bring a different perspective to the board. Potential board members are initially contacted by email with a request to serve on the board. In the initial email, it is made clear that board members can be involved as much or as little as they want, with three different scenarios described as potential levels of contribution with each level building on the previous one (this will be discussed further in Table 2). Once the list for the year is established, board members are sent a basic questionnaire that confirms their job title, background, areas of expertise, and their favorite current business book. This information is compiled and distributed to students during the first week of the semester as a way of getting to know the executives that will impact their course.

Develop. It has been clear over the years that maintaining communication with board members is important. Because this board is geographically dispersed, board members do not convene as one group; hence, it is important that the faculty member consistently communicate with each board member

individually. Several points of contact have been institutionalized including the pre-course survey, communication leading up to specific modules during the semester, and end-of-semester feedback. To begin, a survey is distributed to advisory board members in August asking them to evaluate potential topics to be covered in the course based on a review of syllabi collected from Marketing Management offerings. Board members are also asked to identify topics that are relevant for marketing majors but which are not currently being offered in other MM courses. Members identify and prioritize topical coverage and suggest domains that could serve as week-long special topics to keep students abreast of critical issues that the industry faces. In recent semesters, those special topics have included sustainable offerings, understanding the millennial consumer, and competing in an Amazon world. At all times, the input of the board is weighed in light of the curriculum goals and considerations of the department. In the first year that the 16-member board was given the pre-course survey, over 700 responses to the survey were received. Unbeknownst to the professor, board members had forwarded the survey to colleagues asking for their input. Responses literally flooded in within the week – from the far corners of the United States, from 6 different countries, with respondents representing over 600 firms. While this was not an initial part of the board design, this gathering of information is now an annual event that sets the parameters for the fall and spring semester. What an opportunity to gather input globally and to witness how people are willing to help others.

Vision. Because the board members are participating in a volunteer capacity, it is natural to expect their attention may wander or wane. Establishing the vision for the semester at the very beginning serves to anchor their contribution and

delineating that vision each semester is important. Some semesters, participation may be minimal because of work constraints; other semesters, the same individual may be the most active member. This flexibility in involvement has allowed the board to remain predominantly intact with very few changes in membership.

Incubate. Scale. Embed. During the semester, board members participate at one of three levels: incubating, scaling up, and fully embedded. Table 2

provides an overview of activities embodied within each. By having members at various stages, a balance can be struck to ensure that sufficient guidance is given for the course and that the number of members in the embedded stage remains at a manageable amount. The latter stage represents the biggest time investment for both the advisory board members and the professor as that is the phase that requires the most interaction with members on the part of the professor.

TABLE 2: OVERVIEW OF BOARD PARTICIPATION IN COURSE

PHASE 1: INCUBATING	PHASE 2: SCALING UP	PHASE 3: EMBEDDED
<i>typically board members begin their involvement at this stage</i>	<i>as members become more comfortable, they become involved in more ways</i>	<i>touchpoints increase until board members are fully embedded</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pre-course survey • article recommendations 	Phase 1 activities plus... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ideas for projects • article recommendations on regular basis • guest speaker in the course 	Phase 1 & 2 activities plus... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • weekly article recommendations • collaborate on semester projects • design mini or full modules • assess performance on projects mentor students

Once the structure of the course is set in terms of the timing of the modules, the professor sends reminders to advisory board members so they can participate in the modules that best fit their areas of expertise. In terms of readings that are recommended, reading suggestions are due from advisory board members the week before each module starts. This ensures that the latest material is being given to students while also allowing the faculty member time to select which articles to assign. It is not uncommon to have so many recommendations that only a quarter of the readings can be assigned. Advisory board members also participate in a variety of other ways: video presence in the classroom, designing some of the weekly projects given to students, reviewing resumes, providing advice for interviewing, connecting students with internships and job shadowing experiences, serving as guest speakers for particular topics, providing video clips of their own marketing experiences (i.e., a shopper marketing expert would video tape a shelf in the store, pointing out the things done well or in need of improvement). Finally, each term a semester-long group project is undertaken that is designed with the input of an advisory board member. Students work on a project for the member's company, collect data, create deliverables, and make presentations to executives from the firm at the end of the semester.

At the end of the semester, advisory board members are given feedback in terms of the readings/topics/projects that the students found the

most interesting as well as those that they found most helpful for their understanding of marketing content, performance in internships, preparation for the workplace, and job interviews. This feedback was used as part of the input for discerning the avenues to explore in this research project, focusing ultimately on the assessment of the advisory board approach in terms of pedagogical affect, value of content, and value of the impact.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The participants in the study were senior-level students enrolled in an undergraduate Marketing Management course at a southeastern university, described further in Table 3. All students were either majoring or minoring in marketing. The study was conducted over a three-semester period, with two sections of MM students participating in the study each semester. All sections were taught by the same faculty member and utilized comparable material and the same format of an advisory board. The concept of the advisory board was shared with the students prior to the first week of class and fully discussed on the first day of class. For each of the six sections participating in the study, the course was a sixteen week course and students completed the survey during the fifteenth week, after they had been fully immersed into the advisory board experience.

Table 3: Overview of Respondents

Course sections	Fall 2015	Section 1	28
		Section 2	27
	Spring 2016	Section 1	29
		Section 2	28
	Fall 2016	Section 1	28
		Section 2	28
Gender	Male		73
	Female		95
Major in marketing only			40
Major in marketing; minor in other area			58
2+ majors/minors; all in business			37
2+ majors/minors, at least one outside of business			22
Major in another business area with a marketing minor			11

Because the faculty member incorporating this advisory board approach does not teach a course with a textbook, it was not possible to compare the two structures directly holding the professor as a constant. Hence, students in the advisory board course were asked to reflect on other senior-level marketing courses that they were currently enrolled in and then to select ones that utilize a textbook and that they were receiving a comparable grade in. After this frame of reference was established, students replied to the survey questions two times: once when thinking about the MM course which utilizes an advisory board format and again when thinking about their selected comparable senior-level marketing course.

Measures

Following the research of Clarke & Nelson (2012) and Davis et al. (2000), an *overall pedagogical affect* measure was developed based on Mitchell & Olsen's (1981) global attitudinal framework. Using a semantic differential scale with the high end denoting a positive response, these characteristics include bad experience versus good experience, unsatisfactory versus satisfactory, useless versus useful, and ineffective versus effective. In addition to these original four items, a statement was added assessing whether or not the advisory board adds value. *Willingness to recommend* was measured using the same response format.

Perceived value of the course content is measured with a three-item scale, including the relevance of the content, usefulness of the content, and the timeliness of the content. A seven-point likert format is utilized ranging from poor to excellent. The *value-added impact* perspective includes seven items measured on the same 7-point likert scale: preparation for the real world,

knowledge gained, skills developed, effort willing to expend, ability to apply the material, desire to learn more about the subject, and your understanding of the subject.

Findings

To begin, all statements were reviewed to check for the quality of responses. Five respondents skipped one question and these respondents were then dropped, bringing the data set to a sample size of 163. No significant differences were found between male and female responses. Because there were slight variations in the membership of the board across years, it was important to explore section-based differences. There were no significant differences in responses to any of the items measured based on section of the course or academic year of the course.

Students evaluated the advisory board approach very favorably in terms of providing a good experience that was satisfactory, useful, effective, and value added. Average responses to these five aspects ranged from 9.60 to 9.72 on a scale of 1 to 10. Students then evaluated a comparable course taught via a traditional textbook approach. These assessments ranged from 4.44 to 4.98 on a scale of 1 to 10. A paired t-test of the advisory board approach and the traditional textbook approach revealed statistically significant differences across all five pedagogical affect aspects as shown in Table 4. In terms of a willingness to recommend, students indicated a willingness to recommend the advisory board course (9.72) but not a willingness to recommend the traditional approach (4.44). A paired sample t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between these recommendation answers, also shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4
PEDAGOGICAL AFFECT & WILLINGNESS TO RECOMMEND
COMPARISON OF ADVISORY BOARD AND TRADITIONAL APPROACH (n = 163)

ITEM	MEAN	(STDDEV)	T-VAL	SIG
	ADVISORY	TRADITIONAL		
<i>10 point semantic differential</i>				
Bad experience - Good experience	9.69 (.78)	4.63 (2.69)	22.32	.000
Unsatisfactory - Satisfactory	9.60 (.89)	4.67 (2.86)	20.28	.000
Useless - Useful	9.73 (.81)	4.98 (2.73)	20.91	.000
Ineffective - Effective	9.66 (.82)	4.73 (2.76)	20.83	.000
Does not add value - Adds value	9.72 (.69)	4.68 (2.61)	23.39	.000
Would not recommend - Would recommend	9.72 (.76)	4.44 (2.79)	22.36	.000

An exploratory approach was taken with respect to the value component given that the extant literature did not provide any empirical information about the use or value of advisory boards at the course level. The perceived value of the course content focused on three items, all using the seven-point scale of 1 (poor) and 7

(excellent). Relevance of the content (6.82), usefulness of the content (6.33), and timeliness of the content (6.54) were all higher with respect to the use of an advisory board as compared to the traditional textbook approach. Table 5 provides the results of the paired sample t-test for these three items.

TABLE 5
PERCEIVED VALUE: COURSE CONTENT
COMPARISON OF ADVISORY BOARD AND TRADITIONAL COURSES (n = 163)

ITEM	MEAN	(STDDEV)	T-VAL	SIG
	ADVISORY	TRADITIONAL		
<i>1 = poor and 7 = excellent</i>				
Relevance of the content	6.82 (.47)	4.32 (1.39)	21.21	.000
Usefulness of the content	6.33 (.84)	3.56 (1.76)	17.05	.000
Timeliness of the content	6.54 (.80)	3.45 (1.67)	18.83	.000

Students were asked to evaluate the impact the course structure had on them. Assessing seven items, the advisory board evaluations yielded the highest rankings for preparation for the real world (6.81), ability to apply

the material (6.73), and knowledge gained (6.69). Paired sample t-tests of the seven items revealed that the advisory board was evaluated significantly higher than the traditional approach in all cases, as summarized in Table 6.

TABLE 6
PERCEIVED VALUE: COURSE IMPACT
COMPARISON OF ADVISORY BOARD AND TRADITIONAL COURSES (n = 163)

ITEM	MEAN	(STDDEV)	T-VAL	SIG
	ADVISORY	TRADITIONAL		
<i>1 = poor and 7 = excellent</i>				
Preparation for the real world	6.81 (.45)	3.51 (1.50)	25.84	.000
Knowledge you gain	6.69 (.53)	4.32 (1.55)	17.51	.000
Skills you develop	6.44 (.79)	3.80 (1.48)	19.41	.000
Motivation to read the course material	6.38 (.83)	2.85 (1.62)	23.59	.000
Ability to apply the material	6.73 (.57)	3.83 (1.53)	21.38	.000
Desire to learn more about the subject	6.64 (.72)	3.39 (1.65)	22.20	.000
Your understanding of the subject	6.58 (.76)	4.44 (1.58)	14.29	.000

Student respondents were also asked to elaborate on what they gained through the use of an advisory board approach. The open-ended, verbatim responses were analyzed by a three-member team which included a faculty member, a doctoral student, and an undergraduate student. Initial coding resulted in 10 themes which were then used to guide the second round of coding. Table 7 summarizes the final set of seven themes that emerged, the percentage of responses that were coded with that theme, and sample verbatim responses to illustrate each theme.

TABLE 7
PERCEPTIONS OF ADVISORY BOARD APPROACH: OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

THEME	%	WHAT IT MEANS	SAMPLE STUDENT COMMENTS
Confidence	32%	students feel confident in the skills and content because it is coming from a diverse set of experienced executives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory board members come from all different companies, yet often sent articles on similar subjects – this really made me pay attention as it must be important. • I definitely pay more attention to the readings because I know each time I am getting something of value because of the board. • The advisory board brought unique perspectives and topics that we would not have gotten otherwise. • The people on the board are in the business world and they know what is important for us to be learning about, keeping our eye on. It is great to have people with so much experience picking what they believe is necessary for us to know.
Relevance	30%	course content selected by advisory board members is relevant and current	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I love the current trends and sense of focus we get from executives working in the marketing industry. • The content is relevant to today's marketing world. We are able to see and learn from real examples that are happening now which stick with us longer. This makes things easier to learn and apply and has made the course very enjoyable. • This course was very relevant and I loved how updated everything was. It was definitely better than reading a textbook written several years ago.
Preparation	26%	preparing students for job interviews and post-graduate performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has given me direct knowledge of the marketing world and that really helped me in interview situations. • I recently had a few interviews and was able to directly use the content from our class. I felt so prepared using such great information that we received from the board. • I have been able to reference the material covered in class outside of the classroom far more than with any other course. I have been able to hold conversations at my internship with ease because I was in the know about different trends revealed to me through this class. I feel very prepared for my future career.
Engaging	18%	course content selected by advisory board members is interesting and engaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I love this approach. It makes the class more interesting and more motivating to pay attention. I never missed class. • I find myself talking about readings outside of class to my friends because the articles are so interesting.
Reciprocity of work	15%	students feel motivated to work hard because the advisory board members are investing their time and energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advisory board kept me on my toes. I didn't know what we would be covering but I knew it would be real life things that will and do matter in my career future. It meant that I wanted to stay on top of my game and keep up with what was going on in the class. • Knowing the board chose the articles incentivized me to pay attention. I wanted to show them it was worth their time to believe in us.
Sources	14%	exposure to a range of diverse sources engenders an appreciation for information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This structure made me aware of various resources I can use once I graduate and I am working. • I will seek out these kinds of articles from now on after seeing the benefits from being knowledgeable about so many topics in the business world.
Difficulty	14%	preparing for tests in this environment may be more difficult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I realized I am so used to textbook study guides, glossaries, and other resources. While it was hard preparing for these tests, I feel much more prepared now to be on my own. • It was definitely harder to study for this material because you had to create your own way of bringing the information together – there wasn't a book to do that for you.

*percentages exceed 100% as some responses encompass more than one theme

DISCUSSION

A promising opportunity for learning lies at the intersection of the competitive and global nature of today's business world, the applied nature of marketing roles, and the needs of digitally-dependent college students. As marketing professors seek to find ways to offer unique experiences and enhanced learning strategies, advisory boards serve as viable and effective alternatives. Through this research project, the rationale for the advisory board was introduced focusing on the need for unique offerings, the use of advisory boards in other settings, and the potential value of the board as applied at the course level. A six-step approach to designing, implementing, and nurturing the board is captured through the *ADVISE* framework: acquire, develop, vision, incubate, scale, embed. The positive benefits of the advisory board structure can be seen through the paired sample t-tests of the pedagogical affect, value of the course content, value in terms of course impact, and willingness to recommend. The seven themes that emerged from the student narratives add meaning to the perceptions of the advisory board experience.

Change is always hard and can be time-consuming, an intimidating combination when faced with the triad of faculty obligations encompassing teaching, research, and service responsibilities. Faculty should be encouraged by the student perceptions of the pedagogical affect of the investment in an advisory board. In fact, when students were asked to reflect on the experience of the advisory board as compared to a traditional approach, the difference in means was strikingly large. This exploratory look implies that students are open to innovation in the classroom and receptive to new ideas. This large gap between advisory and traditional also existed with respect to the relevance, timeliness, and usefulness assessments. Further, while all seven aspects of the perceived value of the course impact fell in favor of this new approach, these four emerged at the top: preparation for the real world, ability to apply the material, knowledge gained, and desire to learn more about the subject. When reflecting on the desire to best create lifelong enthusiasm for learning, this teaching innovation appears to be worth the effort to pursue.

The narratives provided by the students lend insight into the benefits they feel were gained through this approach. The top three themes that emerged were gaining confidence in their skills and knowledge, learning information that is relevant and timely across executives working in a diverse set of jobs, and feeling better prepared for interviews and other career situations. For senior-level students to feel this optimism and self-esteem at the end of their final semester, forging relationships with executives that they can use in building networks, is an empowering scenario. The remaining themes that emerged are equally as compelling: the course is seen as interesting and engaging, students are motivated to work hard, they gain an appreciation for a variety of sources of information they can use in the future. Even the theme

of "difficulty" has positive implications in that, while it may be more difficult in the short-term to navigate the course, it serves as a strong bridge to their workplace future when they will not have the luxury of textbooks, test banks, and other comparable resources.

As Fontenot et al. (2012) state, emerging teaching approaches can be unsettling to students because people feel comfortable with the traditional lecture courses and passive learning that they are used to (Jones & Jones, 1998). Students may fear that change will negatively impact grades (Badrinarayanan & Madhavara, 2008) and may resist the comfort that some feel with textbooks (McNeish et al. 2012). Hence, faculty members should focus on easing these fears by stressing the employer mandate for flexible, creative, and fluid preparation (Fontenot et al., 2012). Faculty can also share the findings of this research, illustrating to students the enthusiasm with which six sections of Marketing Management students evaluated the impact of the advisory board approach in their course.

Designing and implementing an advisory board may seem intimidating. Faculty should know they have much to gain by doing so. As Cherry & Wiles (2010) note, business faculty are charged with a professional development responsibility, continually enhancing their knowledge of content and teaching skills. Several innovative ways to increase faculty-business interactions have emerged, including faculty internships (Lohman et al 2016). The use of an advisory board serves to keep the faculty member current on industry trends and marketing applications. While cultivating and maintaining these relationships is time-consuming, the constant interaction with the external world makes for a more informed and relevant faculty member. Aistrich et al (2006) describe the perceived gap between educators and practitioners; the relationships formed through an advisory board will benefit both parties in terms of increasing knowledge and equalizing perceptions.

The process by which the Marketing Management advisory board was implemented is described herein. In addition, advice can be utilized from the advisory board literature in general. For example, Torres (2014) identifies eight steps to creating an effective advisory board:

- *Have a purpose*, whether a current challenge, looming opportunity, or knowledge gap
- *Recruit doubters*, people with whom you have honest, strong relationships
- *Leverage the network* through friends or referrals
- *Write it down* so advisors have a clear idea of roles, responsibilities, and confidential issues
- *Time is money* but advisors often participate out of a desire to help rather than payment
- *Keep it intimate* with relevant and contributing members
- *Maximize value* for members by being organized and respectful of their time

Advisory boards at the course level yield a multitude of benefits across a variety of relevant domains: offering meaningful opportunities to engage today's

college-age student, creating advocates for the department through volunteers who gain knowledge about institutional offerings, enhancing the applied knowledge base of faculty members through constant interplay with the external environment, and more. Bringing the real-world into the classroom can be a challenge; advisory boards offer a unique path to connect students with executives in ways that impact content, value, confidence, and preparation for all.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings presented above must be considered in light of the study's limitations. Ideally, the empirical tests would compare sections of courses where key attributes are held constant such as content, professor, class size, class composition, and other considerations. Because that type of control group was not possible given the professor only teaches an advisory board-managed course, the comparison-perception questions were used as a proxy. However, faculty members considering adoption of this approach could capture the direct comparison of the two versions as they form the board and implement, allowing for a robust comparison of the two approaches. Similarly, designing the study

to include respondents from multiple universities would provide additional insight as research moves from the exploratory stages addressed in this article.

Future research should focus on exploring the impact on learning outcomes beyond the soft measures and perceptual comparisons used in this study. In addition, the work of Holmes et al. (2016) provides a meaningful framework for assessing the relevance of the textbook to students. Utilizing their measures, adjusting them to the setting of readings provided by an advisory board, would allow for comparison between these two course frameworks. Future research should also focus on factors which impact the effectiveness of boards. Following Minichilli et al. (2012), research should explore specific board processes such as effort norms, cognitive conflicts, and the use of knowledge and skills. The opportunities to be gained through a course-level advisory board are promising. In an era where the business world is fluid, ever-changing, and dynamic, this format may prove to be a useful tool for building confidence, promoting a creative environment, and fostering an enthusiasm for learning.

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