30 Years of Excellence!

2025 Annual Fall Educators Conference Proceedings

Editors

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Marketing Management Association Fall 2025 Educators Conference Proceedings

30th Annual Marketing Management Association Fall Educators Conference
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Marketing Management Association is proud to present the 30th MMA Fall Educators Conference! We were excited to bring together colleagues from around the world for a collegial and inspiring conference focused on marketing education. The papers, panel sessions, and special sessions submitted to this year's conference covered a wide range of cutting-edge topics that are critically important to the future of marketing education.

This year's theme, "30 Years of Excellence!" was inspired by the conference's long-standing tradition of fostering meaningful dialogue, practical innovation, and supportive collaboration among those who shape the future of marketing education. The Marketing Management Association has a long history of bringing educators and scholars together to discuss the ever-evolving landscape of marketing education and to share best practices, making our community uniquely qualified to address the current and future challenges and opportunities in marketing education.

We are very thankful to all the scholars who submitted papers, volunteered for special sessions and panels, reviewed papers, and volunteered to be session chairs. The conference cannot run without these volunteers. Special thanks to **Beth Houran**, Publications Editor, for assembling all the material into these conference proceedings.

We are proud to have had the Doctoral Student Consortium, sponsored by **The Original Videobook for Principles of Marketing**, back for a third year in a row at the conference. Thank you to our consortium co-chairs, **Hannah Walters** and **Brian Rutherford**, for all their efforts in putting together an outstanding program. We are also grateful to the many excellent consortium faculty colleagues who presented during the consortium. To all the doctoral students who attended this year's consortium, we welcome you to the Marketing Management Association! We are sure you had an excellent experience and look forward to seeing you at future MMA conferences.

It was great to offer three pre-conference workshops, sponsored by **Hubro Simulations**. Thank you to **Brooke Reavey** for leading the pre-conference workshop on ***Incorporating Text Analytics and AI Tools in Teaching and Research***, **Jeremy Kagan** for leading the pre-conference workshop on ***Incorporating Artificial Intelligence in Marketing Education,*** and **Diane Santurri** for leading the pre-conference workshop on ***Exploring Inclusive Strategies and Emerging Technology Using UDL***.

Two teaching competitions were held this year, with finalists selected before the conference. Thank you to **Interpretive Simulations** for sponsoring the Teaching Innovation competition, to **Adrienne Wallace** for leading the competition, and to the dedicated panel of judges. We also thank **Marketplace Simulations,** which sponsored this year's Master Teacher Award Competition. Thank you to **Mark Wolters**, the Master Teacher Award competition coordinator, for leading that competition's judges who selected a great slate of finalists. To all our sponsors, your continued support is invaluable to the Marketing Management Association, and we look forward to a long relationship to come. All judges and finalists are listed later in these Proceedings and in the Conference Program.

The Best Refereed Paper Award, sponsored by **StratX Simulations**, went to **Jane Machin**, Willamette University, for her paper entitled ***"The Class is the Crowd: Exploring the Potential of Crowdsourcing in Large Classes."*** The winning paper was selected prior to the conference after two rounds of blind peer review.

Finally, special thanks go to our exhibitors **Hubro Simulations, Interpretive Simulations, Marketplace Simulations, KNIME, Novela Simulations, StratX Simulations, The Original Videobook for Principles of Marketing, Cengage, Knowledge Matters, Pearson Learning, and Stukent Simulations**. You offered us great ideas, tools, and training to improve our effectiveness in the classroom, and we are proud to promote you in these proceedings, on the conference website, and in the Conference Program. Without you, we could not put on this conference, and we welcome you to join us again next year!

The 2026 MMA Fall Educators Conference will be held September 23-25, 2026, at the Drury Plaza Hotel in New Orleans, LA! The 2026 MMA Spring Conference will be held virtually March 19-20, 2026.

Many thanks to everyone involved with the conference! We hope you enjoyed lots of stimulating conversation, learned a few new ideas to take back to the classroom, and met some fellow scholars who share your passion for improving the lives of our students!!!

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Cecilia Ruvalcaba, University of the Pacific, and Jennifer Zarzosa, Wingate University

Coordinator:
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Rebecca Dingus, Ohio University
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Marketplace Simulations MMA 2025 Master Teacher Award Competition

Finalists:
Stefanie Boyer, Bryant University
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The Class is the Crowd: Exploring the Potential of Crowdsourcing in Large Classes
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SUPPORTING FACULTY FACING THE CHALLENGES OF FATIGUE AND BURNOUT

Henry Roehrich, Park University
Julie Grabanski, University of North Dakota

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study aims to determine what professional development opportunities and support in higher education are available for marketing faculty. The goal is to understand faculty perceptions of their needs to meet teaching, scholarship, and service responsibilities while facing conditions conducive to fatigue and burnout. Data analysis resulted in three themes (a) vitality with resilience, (b) time management, and (c) collegiality. The results are the basis for proposing additional professional development and support as needed to meet faculty needs in overcoming the challenges of fatigue and burnout.

INTRODUCTION

A faculty position in higher education can allow instrumental practitioners to utilize their expertise to create knowledgeable individuals who thrive in society. An educator's goal can be to provide learning experiences in the classroom that can create morally upstanding individuals who make positive contributions in their chosen fields. The challenging and dynamic work environment and related job pressures in higher education can be associated with strenuous mental and physical demands (Minnotte & Yucel, 2018). Burnout, a state of declining engagement of physical or mental energy, comprises fatigue. It can result from the levels of psychological and physical demands made upon faculty (Taylor & Frechette, 2022).

Faculty in higher education face many challenges in meeting their teaching, scholarship, and service responsibilities with available resources. The imbalance between workload demands and resources has been determined through research to have the most significant influence on fatigue and burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2009). With all the pressures resulting from the workload, it is imperative to experience a positive mindset and energy level that drives effort and engagement. Faculty members need to experience vitality (Ryan & Deci, 2008). A support system for faculty to counter the challenges that cause fatigue and burnout is essential and must be available.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Organizational Climate

To be an effective marketing faculty member in higher education, it takes dedication and commitment to provide a quality learning experience for students and meet scholarship and service responsibilities (Daumiller & Dresel, 2020). Many faculty members have redesigned their course methods and learned new ways of effective teaching while meeting scholarship and service responsibilities in the post-Covid-19 period (Bajwa, Tudor, Varela, & Leonard, 2024). Faculty members must align their areas of responsibility, connect with colleagues, engage with students, and assess their performance effectively (Vos & Page, 2020; Grabanski, 2014). The organizational climate in higher education has become more taxing. Organizational climate factors are instrumental to faculty engagement and overcoming the challenges of faculty fatigue and burnout, thus enabling faculty to meet performance requirements in all three areas.

According to Taylor and Frechette (2022), workload is the most significant factor contributing to faculty fatigue and burnout. Faculty retirement, reduction in available resources, and the increased demand to support student needs all impact faculty workload. Faculty workload includes curriculum, engagement, and assessment that meets the student's and society's needs (Bearman et al., 2016). See Figure 1 for the organizational climate factors relevant to institutions in higher education.

Figure 1: Model of Organization Climate Factors (Vos & Page, 2020; Grabanski, 2014)

Factors can impose workload-related exhaustion on faculty in higher education. However, work engagement can produce a positive and fulfilling state of mind (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). Researchers have considered burnout to consist of three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization/cynicism, and a perceived reduction in efficacy (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Emotional exhaustion is considered the central component of burnout and manifests as feelings of physical fatigue and the depletion of emotional resources (Maslach et al., 2001).

Workload

Faculty must continue evaluating the effectiveness of their traditional teaching methods while balancing service and research responsibilities (Sandhu et al., 2019). It is imperative that faculty attempt to adopt the best-suited teaching strategies and techniques while taking into consideration the time and effort required for successful implementation (Bajwa et al., 2024). Therefore, to provide a quality student learning experience, a faculty member should put forth the effort and time to create the core learning outcomes, course development, assessment, and feedback strategies (Bajwa et al., 2024).

Uninterrupted training and implementation time is necessary to meet workplace deadlines for teaching, research, and service. Faculty need to manage their time to succeed in higher education and may require the administration's support if overwhelmed with the process (Daumiller et al., 2023; Meeks et al., 2023; Sabagh et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2022). According to Thirunavukkarasu and Suryakumar (2021), there can be enthusiastic depletion, physical exhaustion, and psychological exhaustion when struggling to meet workload responsibilities with limited time. Faculty may form negative attitudes toward the job while reducing job satisfaction when highly exhausted (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). To overcome negative attitudes and low productivity, Teaching and Learning Centers (TLCs) can be effective in the organizational climate. The TLC is a research and professional development center that supports faculty development. It offers an array of support to help faculty measure, improve, and reflect on teaching practices, scholarship, and services to the institution (Fabbri et al., 2023).

Encompassing Positive Approaches

When addressing fatigue and burnout, a positive approach to faculty workload can encourage engagement, inspiration, and motivation (Bauer et al., 2014). According to Yan et al. (2019), work engagement can positively affect job satisfaction when highly engaged faculty utilize various job resources and achieve work goals. A positive approach in the institution can inspire faculty through the organizational climate, thus supporting resilience-building (Garipağaoğlu, 2025). To encourage a positive approach, organizational and faculty resilience can make a difference when situational challenges leading to fatigue and burnout occur. Resilience is coping with difficult situations involving mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adaptation to internal and external demands (Reiniatie et al., 2025).

Faculty can struggle when addressing a challenging workload and experience the feeling of being underappreciated and inadequately supported (Baldwin et al., 2005; Mathews, 2014). An approach to countering negative feelings of being underappreciated and lacking support encompasses vitality to achieve positive performance. Vitality is an affective state that drives effort and engagement in a faculty member (DeFelippo & Dee, 2022). Vital faculty contribute to campus governance and their discipline while providing new ideas through collegiality in the organizational climate (Clark & Corcoran, 1985; Schuster, 1985).

With budget and enrollment challenges in higher education, administrations are asking for more productivity from faculty while trying to retain faculty through programming. However, faculty need to address burnout and fatigue. The unique demands of faculty create time pressures for meeting deadlines, as they spend most of their day in isolation. Fatigue and burnout can become a factor when having little or no time to socialize with colleagues and develop new ideas. When challenges exist without clearly identified solutions, job crafting allows faculty to own their work by adjusting to cope and thrive in stressful events with a positive attitude (Garipağaoğlu, 2025; Lee et al., 2021). Job crafting is defined as self-initiated by faculty removing themselves from isolation while seeking resources by asking administration or colleagues for advice (Ding et al., 2025). Job crafting can be utilized when there is a need for resources and support to use technology to meet workload demands influenced by organizational climate factors. The organizational climate factors that impact each other and workload include 1) Role ambiguity including job insecurity, 2) Professional development activities, 3) Available environmental supports, and 4) Impact of the external environment. Combining all these factors should be harmonious, and there should be a positive faculty interaction for desired productivity and job satisfaction (Vos & Page, 2020; Grabanski, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study aims to understand the professional development opportunities and faculty support systems for educators. To achieve this, we examined faculty needs to overcome fatigue and burnout while meeting their responsibilities. The qualitative methodology, Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR), was used to analyze domains starting with concrete themes. The domain is a consensual theme emerging from the responses to open-ended interview questions. The next step in CQR is the creation of more abstract themes after a process of cross-analysis, which is generally called axial coding in Grounded Theory (Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess & Ladany, 2005). The twelve participants in the study are successful, experienced faculty working in higher education. The gender of the participants in the study is 41% female and 59% male. The professionals' years in their respective fields range from 7 to 39 years, with an average of 23 years.

The survey interview format included demographic information and open-ended questions regarding faculty members' backgrounds, challenges, adaptations, and support for their academic roles and responsibilities. The resulting data was analyzed, leading to the identification of common themes. These themes revealed implications for faculty addressing the conditions contributing to fatigue and burnout. Random numbers were assigned to participants to protect their identities and to convey information essential to the research results.

RESULTS

Through data analysis, a comprehensive view of the participants' experience resulted in three themes. The three themes are (a) vitality with resilience, (b) time management, and (c) collegiality. Participants described the need to align and fulfill their areas of responsibility, connect with colleagues, and interact to assess students' performance effectively while meeting deadlines within the organizational climate.

Vitality with Resilience

According to DeFelippo and Dee (2022), mid-career faculty may struggle to maintain their vitality while being susceptible to burnout and extensive workload demands. Vitality and resilience in the faculty role were common concerns among each of the twelve participants in the study. Vitality enhances productivity and leads to higher job satisfaction, while resilience is the ability to thrive when faced with challenges or crises (DeFelippo & Dee, 2022; Garipağaoğlu, 2025). Participant #1 stated that juggling the workload of teaching, scholarship, and service is challenging. Participant #2 believed that the most significant energy and focus is in the classroom. The participant stated that teaching in the classroom has to be compelling and entertaining to grab the student's attention. Adjunct faculty require vitality and resilience as they burn the candle at both ends. According to Participant #9, faculty teach for multiple institutions and seek opportunities in scholarship and service. Vitality and resilience are necessary for faculty since the participant reinforced that there is insufficient time or energy to engage with everyone.

Along with vitality, resilience is critical to survival, as Participant #11 stated in the interview. The responsibilities, workload, and the nature of the tenure and promotion process can lead to fatigue and burnout. There is so much to do in the role of the faculty member concerning student engagement, and outside the realm of being a faculty member, the pressure can be overwhelming. Participant #4 brought up how fatigue and burnout can arise from changes in students' learning formats, the digital education environments, administration restructuring, and academic program adjustments.

Overall, eight out of twelve participants in the study believe that Teaching and Learning Centers (TLC's) provide support for faculty relating to vitality and resilience. The TLCs help faculty members develop, assess, and refine their skills to meet their responsibilities in teaching, scholarship, and service (Frantz et al., 2017). Participant #1 said that the professional seminars offered by the TLC can build teamwork and collaboration with limited resources. The participant continued stating that TLC seminars and workshops are instrumental in confronting activities that contribute to fatigue and burnout, but finding the time to attend requires perseverance. Along with the support offered by the TLC, participants described how informal and formal mentoring is essential. Three participants said mentoring at the beginning of their career was important to meeting their workload responsibilities and imperative to meeting the challenges in higher education.

Time Management

The twelve participants in the study stated that the responsibilities of teaching, service, and conducting research can impact productivity and the ability to meet deadlines. Support for faculty in the area of time management strategies was listed as a priority by all the participants in the study. Participant #3 stated that adjunct and full-time faculty need support in managing time throughout the academic year, especially at the beginning of the academic year, when extensive preparation is required. Furthermore, Participant #3 emphasized that teaching faculty members how to manage time and the expectations for scholarship and service need to be included in the program. Providing time management programs at a time when faculty are available is a concern brought up by ten of the twelve participants in the study.

Faculty can only improve student learning within the boundaries of given constraints on time and effort (Bajwa et al., 2024). Participants in the study appreciate time management strategies offered at faculty workshops during the academic year. Participant #10 believes that flexibility should be a key focus in time management strategies at faculty workshops, which can effectively reduce stress. The participant went on to state that the workshops should also include guidance on using the outlook calendar for scheduling workload and provide information on accessing time management resources outside of the university.

Collegiality

Collegiality is the third theme communicated by the twelve participants in the study. The participants referred to the condition known as job crafting, when discussing coping with stressful events and seeking advice from administration and colleagues. When there are challenges without clearly identified solutions to use, job crafting allows faculty to own their work by adjusting to cope and thrive in stressful events with a positive attitude (Ding et al., 2025; Garipağaoğlu, 2025; Lee et al., 2021). Participant #1 asserted that finding time to address fatigue and burnout is challenging. The participant also stated that social time with colleagues is needed, but limited opportunities exist during the academic year. Administrative work takes time, and supervisors need to assist when needed. Participant #6 stated that informal mentoring by faculty and administration can reduce fatigue and burnout since confusion and frustration can result from differences in policies and the frequency of changes.

DISCUSSION

The study's authors fostered a complex insight into personal and professional support for faculty when addressing fatigue and burnout encountered in a changing organizational climate. The analysis of twelve in-depth faculty interviews enhanced validity and reliability, providing insight into the support needed for addressing fatigue and burnout. The literature review results and faculty interviews align effectively with (Vos & Page, 2020; Grabanski, 2014), in which faculty need to achieve their areas of responsibility, connect with colleagues, and engage with and assess students' performance effectively. The three themes from the data analysis that parallel these areas are 1) Vitality and Resilience, 2) Collegiality, and 3) Time Management.

Being an effective faculty member requires dedication, time commitment, perseverance, and flexibility. While faculty work to meet teaching, scholarship, and service responsibilities, there are issues with having the ability to accomplish everything. The participants in this study were concerned about balancing competing activities in their workload while still being able to address fatigue and burnout. Even though most participants in the survey have flexibility when managing their schedules, they desire the positive energy and resilience to meet day-to-day responsibilities while enjoying collegial relationships and meeting deadlines. The participants conveyed, in agreement with Thirunavukkarasu and Suryakumar (2021), that without vitality and resilience, the result could hurt faculty performance, collegial interaction, and meeting deadlines.

Participants stated that available support and professional development opportunities that promote a positive approach to faculty responsibilities must be available when faculty can attend. The Teaching and Learning Centers offer workshops and webinars that help faculty with instructional development activities, intangible services, artifacts, and material supports (Fabbri et al., 2023). The participants in the study and the literature unequivocally confirmed the importance of TLCs in providing support services and the positive impact on faculty success. Through flexibility in time management and perseverance in attending training programs offered by TLCs, faculty can engage in a supportive community of peers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Work engagement measures "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). The study aimed to understand the support that faculty deemed important to address faculty fatigue and burnout. There are concerns in higher education for enrollment numbers and tightening budget issues, therefore administration is demanding more productivity while trying to retain faculty and students. However, faculty have needs in the area of professional development and support to address burnout and fatigue in order to meet their workload. With the unique workload demands of faculty while having a schedule that requires working in isolation part of the time, there is limited time to socialize and develop new ideas. In addition, faculty have also expressed a need in requiring support for using the tools available provided in teaching, scholarship, and service.

With this understanding, higher education institutions can assess the effectiveness of the professional development and support programs designed to assist faculty in meeting their responsibilities without submitting to fatigue and burnout. Faculty members express the need for having more control and flexibility in order to meet deadlines while adjusting to the challenging demands of their workload. The following recommendations are derived from the analysis of the data collected from the participant interviews and the literature review are as follows:

1. Provide professional development programs focusing on a proactive vitality and resilience-building approach.
2. Offer job crafting strategies to cope and thrive positively when encountering stressful experiences.
3. Provide time management strategies with mentors during the academic year.
4. Informal mentoring strategies that include senior faculty in the development of research strategies.
5. Informal support strategies utilizing Teaching and Learning Center staff and Department Chairs during the academic year.
6. Programs regarding mental health should be available for faculty throughout the academic year.

The findings in this study suggest that there is a positive, proactive approach to offering support to faculty to prevent fatigue and burnout. An optimistic approach using support systems can be part of an effective strategy for addressing workload and meeting deadlines. In addition, effective communication through formal and informal mentoring is necessary to implement the techniques needed to address issues before they develop into factors contributing to faculty fatigue and burnout.

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TRAINING TOMORROW'S TEAM PLAYERS: AI-INFUSED TEAMWORK FOR MARKETING STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping collaboration and marketing education by integrating team-based pedagogy with advanced technologies, such as ChatGPT. This paper examines how educators can equip students for an AI-driven workforce by cultivating teamwork, accountability, and adaptability. It highlights the importance of understanding both the benefits and challenges of AI-enhanced teams in the workplace. A key takeaway is what a student can do in their team projects to advance their skills in marketing and AI. Practical strategies are offered to help educators, employers, and students prepare for future marketing roles where collaboration and AI work hand in hand.

INTRODUCTION

It is the first day of class, and teams have formed for a semester-long client-facing project. The groups gather and introduce themselves, but often, the group is unsure of the steps to take next. As a faculty member, it is vital to consider the central purpose of encouraging student teamwork: to prepare students for collaborative, real-world environments increasingly shaped by AI.

Key questions include:
Why is it important for educators to teach students to form groups or teams in the context of AI.
What is the role of AI in teamwork?
In what specific ways is AI reshaping how teams interact and perform collaborative tasks?

Which faculty has been trained on how to teach AI skills related to teamwork skills and how does this affect student team outcomes?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before AI, Tuckman (1965) and Katzenback & Smith (1992) described theories on social and task-oriented dynamics that evolve as teams build relationships, manage conflict, clarify roles, and achieve performance. Successful business teams include Motorola for the cell phone, Ford for the Taurus, 3M, and General Electric (Katzenback & Smith, 1992).

More current literature refers to the ACET (Adaptive Cultivation of Effective Teams) Framework, which is a toolkit for instructors who want to perceive team effectiveness as a method of interaction among team composition, team member behavior, and culture, and how teams adapt to interventions across dimensions (Lindsay et al., 2023).

LLMs are Large Language Models trained on diverse datasets that learn autonomously and generate intelligent responses to prompts. While Guta et al. (2024) highlight LLMs productivity gains of LLMs in marketing education, Lindsay et al. (2023) caution that tools must match student readiness and team culture. These works suggest AI's impact depends on how teams are structured and supported—especially in the post-COVID era (Park & Koo, 2022).

COVID widened performance gaps in teams, causing stress, isolation, and low motivation. Peer monitoring declined (Schlaegel et al., 2023). Teamwork suffered as trust fell and reliance on each other decreased. Uncertainty about reciprocating effort undermined employees' voluntary teaming and knowledge sharing (Bitan et al., 2024). Teams also struggled with too many video calls, which reduced bonding and psychological safety. Employees disengaged quietly rather than openly, and meeting fatigue set in, with fewer spontaneous interactions (Steiner et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

The research is collected from three viewpoints: educator, employer, and student. The concepts focus on examples of teaching with AI, collaborative constructivism, where students co-create knowledge rather than just repeating facts, LLM integration, and addressing gaps in current research. Caution about hallucinations or erroneous results is included in the discussions.

This essay is organized into three core sections: 1) how faculty can use AI to develop effective student teams, 2) how AI is transforming teamwork in the workplace and 3) how students can leverage AI to build and enhance teamwork skills. Key takeaways from this structure will guide readers in understanding the perspectives of educators, employers and students on AI-enhanced teamwork.

Teams for the Educator

Marketing focuses on understanding the potential buyer's needs, to present the product as a solution that differs from what they have purchased before. That is foundational for the educator. For this example, in the classroom, the buyer is the student, who may not be enthusiastic about group participation if their previous team's experience was poor.

Early methods to improve teams include a mix of skill-based selection and self-selection. Real-time diagnostics, combined with mid-semester checks on roles and communication, can help marketing faculty utilize analytics in Learning Management Systems (LMS), like Moodle, Blackboard, or D2L. Faculty support is needed beyond team formation.

Teachers must explain the rationale behind group work and its benefits in terms of team collaboration. This author wrote to students in April 2025: "It matters more today, as we become more connected to technology, that we know how to be human. That means learning how to live in teams becomes more challenging. Students need to practice working with others as part of being world citizens. Moreover, in business, employees will NEED to work in teams to accomplish BIG goals. That is why we work in teams. 1) to be more human, 2) to deal with more challenges, 3) to be world citizens, 4) to accomplish BIG goals, and 5) to use the talents given" (McCabe, 2025).

Faculty need to ask more questions, such as: How can AI, especially LLM tools like ChatGPT, streamline course preparation and grading, stimulate student creativity, and reshape collaborative projects? The answers are being developed, and more questions are being raised. There are some positive and negative responses to using this scaling approach.

The positives are that with AI, routine data gathering, synthesis, and preliminary drafting can be done quickly at any time of day or night, allowing class time to be more focused on higher-order judgment and creativity. Secondary research can be rapidly executed, and bias can be identified and addressed early in the process. Lastly, there can be more opportunities to avoid early team conflicts or free-riding students.

Using AI, teachers can outline opportunities (e.g., AI-assisted peer feedback dashboards and automated idea generation prompts for teams). However, teachers should be cautioned against over-automation, misplaced confidence, and risks of misalignment, such as ghost citations or hallucinations.

Adaptive interventions could be triggered automatically with a drop in collaboration messages or a variance in peer ratings, so faculty could be alerted as the course unfolds. The faculty could accept, revise, or ignore the notification. ACET, mentioned earlier, could help close the loop by reflecting on lessons learned in individual memos that students can edit and then submit.

Educators in marketing classes may assume that students already know how to work in teams, but they may be mistaken, potentially harming students and compromising the quality of their teaching. A pre-course survey to determine overall and AI readiness can help provide better faculty instruction.

Now that ChatGPT has entered the global environment, having a human touch in the online classroom is more vital than ever. One method is to provide both live-in-person and simulated coaching to stimulate and leverage the early research stages, thereby tracking contribution equity. This coaching can lead to more effective reflections from students who are aware of their contributions as part of the team (Rogers, Allen, & Busby, 2024). Instructors can embed a generative AI coach bot into semester-long team projects to spark brainstorming, track contribution equity, and scaffold reflection.

Besides using AI to form the teams and assign roles to each member, faculty can monitor progress through the project. They can assess skill development and provide more timely feedback. AI can maintain a natural grouping 'clustering' role with the ideas presented at team meetings. Everyone's skills, whether in person or online, can be self-reported. One advantage of an online classroom is that professors can have a record of the comments made by students. Students cannot hide if they are required to comment for graded points in the class discussion.

A study on team learning identified three areas for to enhancing team performance: progress monitoring (AI-generated dashboards to visualize project status), skill development (prompt engineering workshops to foster critical thinking and AI output refinement), and feedback (AI-drafted feedback reviewed and humanized by instructors) (Rogers, Allen & Busby, 2024). AI can streamline all three.

Here is an example of each:

1. Dashboards can be as simple as a visualized graph of sales over time, or as complex as several indicators of two-dimensional progress toward a team's completed goal, including budget and quality.
2. The department, instructor, or peers can present prompt engineering workshops. ChatGPT itself can also be used to provide examples of well-developed prompts. For example, "I am a member of Team Alpha. What are five Chat GPT prompts as examples for our team to measure our progress toward a final marketing presentation for (ABC company)?" Students should provide as much detail as possible when submitting their request for examples.
3. AI can analyze an image, video, or document to provide drafted feedback and suggest gaps in the content for the team before students submit their work.

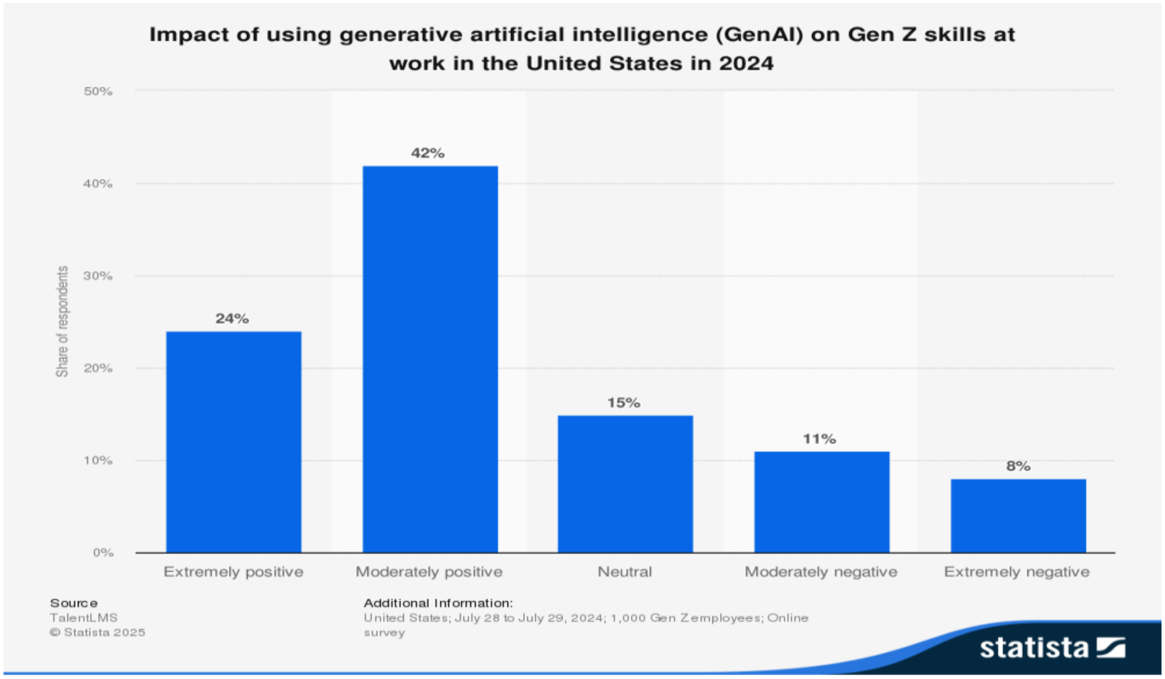
Teams for the Employer

College graduates leave the formal education system with a degree and transition to the workforce with different levels of team participation. COVID-19 created solo work environments, disrupting society and diverting cognitive and emotional resources from teamwork.

Post-COVID, employers had to re-build teams with workers possessing adaptable skillsets-including the ability to work with AI in teams. As highlighted by a Microsoft executive (April 2025), those unable to collaborate effectively may face layoffs, underscoring that future employability requires strong teamwork and AI integration. Addressing teamwork and AI is crucial for workforce readiness and justifies this research. Microsoft will lay off hundreds or even thousands of workers who cannot work well in teams (Microsoft, 2025).

Data suggests that AI skills are highly valued in the workplace. The impact of using Gen AI on Gen Z skills at work in the United States in 2024 was overwhelmingly positive. The measured skills included teamwork, among other skills, in the content of the questionnaire. In a study of 1,000 Gen Z employees conducted in July 2024, 81% rated GenAI favorably or neutrally, while only 8% reported that it had a negative impact on their work skills. Figure 1 visually describes this impact of GenAI on Gen Z skills at work in the US in 2024 (Statista and TalentLMS, 2025).

Figure 1. Impact of using generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) on Gen Z skills at work in the United States in 2024 (Statista, TalentLMS, 2025)



The following is a two-step summary of best practices for practicing teamwork in marketing in the AI workplace.

1) Employers must create team-building activities, clear goals and roles using AI, and open communication channels, and
2) They will also need to develop opportunities for creative AI solutions and training while recognizing team achievements and reinforcing the value of teamwork within the marketing organization. The key takeaway is that integrating AI thoughtfully into workplace teams enables clear structure, continuous learning, and accountability, which bolster team performance.

Synthetic teamwork may be part of the future of AI as agentic solutions appear across the digital world. Each knowledge worker could have several "team members" who have been preprogrammed to act and think in a specific role. These can be agents trained on tasks to complete both repetitive and creative projects. These agents are already replacing many of today's automated processes. Creating agents and agent teams is a highly sought-after skill.

Teams for the Student

Early in the process, team skill development occurs from the student's perspective, considering how they have worked in teams in the past, which can influence their contributions to learning (Lindsay et al., 2023).

The first step for students is to develop a clear understanding of the importance of teamwork, especially with AI integration. Even students with previous negative experiences can benefit from reframing teamwork as a process that enhances learning and prepares them for AI-driven workplaces.

Students should develop a research mindset by identifying their top skills and contributions for the team, then hold each other accountable from the beginning. This process can start in the first week once students recognize its value.

A second method for students is to brainstorm a list of possible tasks using Chat GPT or other LLMs to help leverage insights by asking the right questions, uncovering new information, and collecting data from relevant sources. Students can also utilize AI tools, such as LLMs, to refine the task lists further and share them with other members once the roles are assigned. Without assigned roles, everyone is doing the same thing, which can become an issue of trusting the process rather than designing it. It can be messy but effective if regular checkpoints and quality measures are in place. Automating the process to help a struggling student make a greater contribution to the team is another value of AI.

The three most influential factors in team effectiveness are team composition, team member behavior, and team culture (Lindsay et al., 2023). Students may not be aware of this initially, but they are responsible for overseeing team culture and interventions within their teams. In the future, they will undoubtedly create their own AI team members and additional teams from autonomous brains representing people. Agentic (i.e., agency or multi-step) data processing is already here in significant numbers.

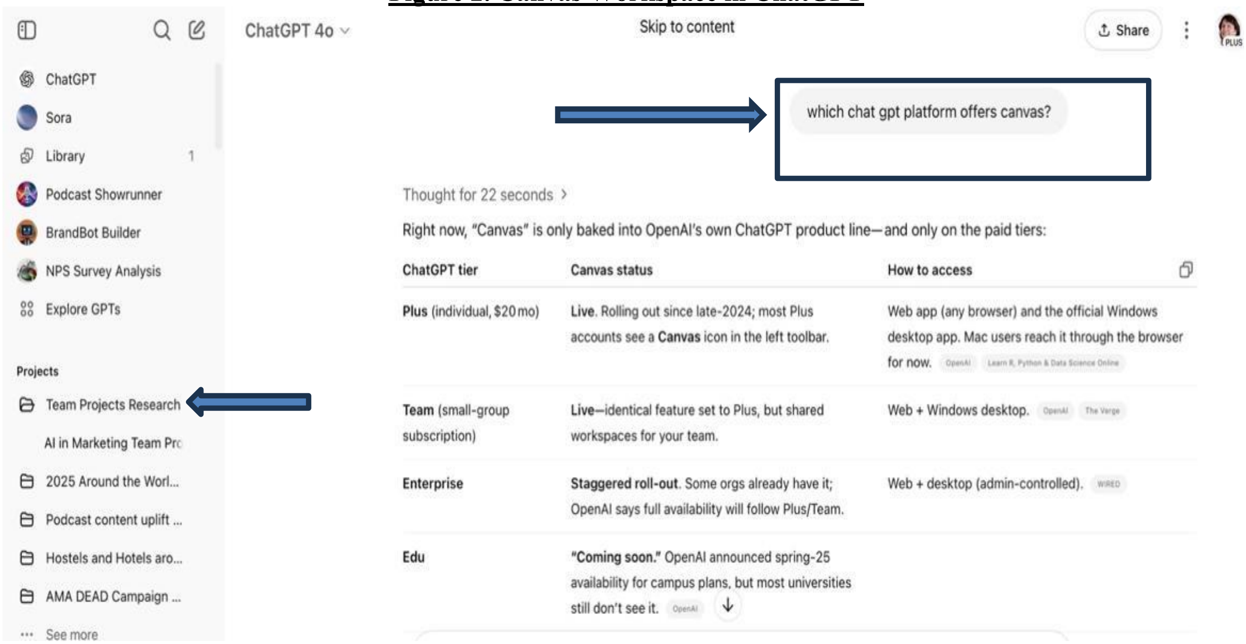
Another method students can use is rotating leadership to reduce free-riding or social loafing (Brooks et al., 2003). They can also fire a team member with permission from their professor, as outlined in the syllabus, provided they follow clear instructions. Early advising on team composition encourages students to get support when needed.

Furthermore, students can explore using both familiar and new skills and assign tasks to one another. Then, they can hold each other accountable after that assignment. Some marketing students want to create videos, while others generate slide decks. Still, others will thrive in the spreadsheet environment with a detailed orientation. It is essential to ensure that teams have a diverse range of student talents and that all are willing to be adaptable if a need is not met.

LLMs such as ChatGPT can assist in research areas such as estimating demand for a new product at different price points and quality tiers, developing a profile of the latest product, and developing customer segment profiles for student team members who want to focus on marketing research in their client-facing projects (Guha et al., 2024). Another student-focused study, reporting on the outcomes of a team-based marketing project, found that students' expectations of learning and the quality of their project affect the satisfaction with teamwork in a class and the cohesiveness of the project, aligning with the subject matter (Bravo et al., 2019). Adapting AI technology means revising expectations throughout the course, not just at the beginning. How to do this is up to the educator. They can create a simple dashboard poll and chart, which can be visible or hidden from students. Instructors can also solicit students' feedback informally. Ultimately, key takeaways for students are that thoughtful use of AI can personalize learning, enhance project quality and improve satisfaction with teamwork.

Students can use brainstorming tools like setting up a Canvas editor in ChatGPT or other LLMs to help them get started and save project work. In Figure 2 example, the left-hand column represents the Canvas editor list of projects, which is available in the paid version (May 2025). Canvas is a side panel editor for longer pieces of text, or projects that will need to be saved. It is an editor so that you can make edits, add sections or iterate together. To trigger it, a user can ask the following: “Create a 3-page syllabus in Canvas format.” or “Write a detailed marketing plan with headings and subheadings.” If ChatGPT decides it’s a good fit, it will open the Canvas view automatically. You can’t manually turn on Canvas from settings. The prompt is: "Which ChatGPT platform offers Canvas?" (OpenAI, 2025) The response shows a chart of Plus, Team, Enterprise and Edu tiers and where it’s available in Spring 2025 in the paid tiers. Figure 2 is an example of a Chat GPT version 4o Canvas on the left side of the screen for workspaces that student groups can use to organize their project work. Note the section halfway down the left column with the arrow labeled 'Projects,' where a team member can store multiple prompts and responses for later review. This author used the Canvas feature extensively for project research, such as this essay. The

Figure 2. Canvas Workspace in ChatGPT



RESULTS

The following (Figure 3) summarizes the key methods for faculty, employers, and students regarding AI-infused teamwork for successful marketing graduates who are tomorrow's workforce.

Figure 3. Summary of Methods to Improve Teams for Faculty, Employers, and Students

Role	Method Improvement Options
Faculty	Present Solution to Existing Problem
	Explain Rationale of Selection Method
	Review Analytics
	Use ACET Framework
	Provide Scaling Options
	Provide Coaching in Real Person or AI simulator
	Increase Psychological Safety
Employer	Re-staff teams with Adaptable Skill Sets
	Create Team Building Activities, Goals, Roles
	Create Opportunities
	Encourage Training
	Consider Synthetic Teamwork
Student	Set Positive Expectations
	Build Research Skills of Members
	Brainstorming using ChatGPT
	Organizing Projects in Canvas Editor Workspaces

Use AI to Improve Skills List and Role Titles Rotate Leadership Automatically

Figure 3 provides a summary of the methods that faculty, employers, and students can use to build more effective teams, particularly those adopting AI. The key implications of these results are that there are several methods that could improve marketing student outcomes with teamwork that uses AI tools. Further empirical studies in this area could be A/B tested with teams who do and who don't use AI tools to compare grades and quality of the projects.

CONCLUSIONS

Working in teams is a mixed blessing. It is a challenge for the workforce and educators because of these factors: 1) unmet expectations, 2) marketing professors lack skills and direction in building for the workforce that demands this skill, and 3) leftover COVID-19 bad habits. Through clear examples of infusing new methods of developing team agility and results with AI tools, frequent interactions, and leeway to make minor errors along the way, teamwork in marketing education can lead students to better employment options.

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THE IMPACT OF WORKING WHILE GOING TO COLLEGE

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

College students today face significant challenges and obstacles to obtaining their degree with many of these happening outside of the classroom. This includes many students needing to work while attending school to cover their living expenses and schooling costs so they can avoid going into significant debt earning their degree. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 39.6% of full-time college students work while in school, which is almost half (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). This is an important issue with students deciding whether to work during school, how many hours they need to work, and how they anticipate it may impact other aspects of their lives. While working part-time can help develop skills such as financial independence, time management, and leadership skills, working part-time can also result in stress, worse academic achievement, and possible mental health issues. The impact of working varies according to hours, type of job, and how students manage school and work, but all play an important role when deciding whether to work while in school. Finding a balance between work, academic performance, well-being, family, social time, and other life aspects is extremely important for students when deciding whether to work while in school. According to pickle jar theory, individuals can have more balance in their lives by filling their "jar of time" more strategically. This includes putting in "big rocks" first, followed by "pebbles" to fill those gaps, then "grains of sand" to take up the other spaces, and lastly "water" to fill the rest of the gaps. Based on pickle jar theory, individuals should fill their time with items of more importance first and continue to fill their calendar with less important or urgent items as room allows in their availability. This ensures the more important and valuable tasks get completed at a good quality level. If time allows, other less valuable tasks can get completed too. We have seen large segments of individuals comprising a time-poor society. These are individuals who feel like there is not enough time in the day to complete what they need to do each day. As a result, we have seen more services created to complete those tasks and free up more time for those individuals (so it opens more room in their "pickle jar" for other items).

A one-way ANOVA was utilized to test if there was a significant difference between number of hours worked while attending college on GPA. The results found no significant difference in GPAs ($F (1, 124) = 2.47, p = .12$) for students working high numbers of hours ($m = 3.44, SD = .39$) than students working low hours ($m = 3.54, SD = .35$). Next, a one-way ANOVA was utilized to test if there was a significant difference between number of hours worked while attending college on positive well-being. The results found no significant difference in positive well-being ($F (1, 124) = 1.33, p = 25$) for students working high numbers of hours ($m = 3.54, SD = 1.15$) than students working low hours ($m = 3.74, SD = .77$). Another one-way ANOVA was utilized to test if there was a significant difference between number of hours worked while attending college on negative well-being. The results found no significant difference in negative well-being ($F (1, 124) = 1.25, p = .27$) for students working high numbers of hours ($m = 2.40, SD = 1.13$) than students working low hours ($m = 2.19, SD = .98$). Next, a one-way ANOVA was utilized to test if there was a significant difference between number of hours worked while attending college on work-family conflict. The results found students working a high number of hours ($m = 3.30, SD = 1.21$) had significantly higher levels of work-family conflict ($F (1, 124) = 16.84, p < .01$) than students working lower numbers of hours ($m = 2.46, SD = 1.07$).

While many studies examine the independent effects of working on GPA, mental health, and balancing different domains in life, few examine how all three variables intersect during the undergraduate student experience. In line with research undertaken by Antoniadou et al. (2024) as well as Calderwood and Gabriel (2017), findings showed there was no difference in academic performance between students working more or less hours while going to school. Our research found no significant difference in mental well-being by work intensity groups. This was quite surprising and seemingly contradictory to past research including Višnjić et al. (2024) who found long working hours could create added stress and emotional strain. With the number of hours worked significantly impacting work-family conflict, our findings are supported by Summer et al. (2023), which suggested that although students excel academically, the personal toll of balancing school and work tends to arise in their family and social lives. Our findings

are beneficial for higher education institutions who encourage students to work so they can gain valuable experiences with employers as it will not negatively impact their GPA or well-being. They should caution students on the possible negative consequences involving losing connections with family members due to a lack of time availability when working and pursing their college degree.

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SOCIAL MEDIA USER ONLINE SHOPPING JOURNEY: THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION SHARED AND CUSTOMER INTERACTION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA ON PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

With over 3.4 billion global users, social media platforms like Facebook play an increasingly central role in consumers' lives and shopping behaviours (Statista, 2020). Consumers now rely on social media not only for entertainment but also to seek product information, read reviews, and make purchase decisions. These platforms offer rich opportunities for businesses to influence consumer decisions through digital touchpoints and peer interactions (Hamilton et al., 2021; Verhoef et al., 2017). Despite growing interest in online consumer behaviour, there is a lack of comprehensive research examining how social media impacts all five stages of the customer decision journey—need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase. This study addresses three key gaps in existing literature. First, few studies evaluate how information shared on Facebook affects each element of the five-stage journey. Second, limited work explores the relationships between these stages in a unified model. Third, little research examines how online reviews, information credibility, and consumer trust jointly influence decision-making and perceived value in social commerce environments (Naeem, 2021; Xhema, 2019).

This research employed a quantitative approach using survey data collected from 251 Malaysian postgraduate students at a public university. All respondents were Facebook users with online shopping experience. Drawing from Laudon and Traver's (2021) five-stage customer decision process, the study used structural equation modeling (AMOS) to test relationships among key constructs. Measurement items were adapted from validated scales in prior literature (Akar et al., 2015; Flanagin & Metzger, 2003; Liang et al., 2011). Reliability and validity were confirmed, and model fit indices met recommended standards (CFI = 0.944; RMSEA = 0.050). The results showed significant relationships between all main variables. Both need recognition ($\beta = 0.475$) and online reviews ($\beta = 0.411$) significantly influenced information search, which then strongly affected evaluation ($\beta = 0.788$). Credibility of information ($\beta = 0.264$) and trust ($\beta = 0.513$) played vital roles in shaping purchase intention. Intention to buy significantly influenced actual purchase ($\beta = 0.769$), which, in turn, had a strong effect on perceived value ($\beta = 0.935$). The model explained 92% of the variance in purchase intention and 59% in purchase behaviour, highlighting the interconnectedness of consumer decision stages in the social media context.

These findings have notable theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study extends existing models by offering a comprehensive framework that captures the entire customer journey through Facebook, incorporating trust, credibility, and perceived value as key influencing factors. It contributes to consumer behaviour literature by mapping how social media content influences decision-making across all journey stages (Tueanrat et al., 2021). From a managerial perspective, the results underline the importance of generating credible, trustworthy, and engaging content. Marketers should prioritize strategies that encourage positive online reviews and foster trust in brand communications. Doing so can help move customers efficiently from awareness to purchase and ultimately to satisfaction and loyalty. Businesses are encouraged to manage social media touchpoints proactively and design experiences that simplify information search, build confidence, and reinforce post-purchase value.

In conclusion, this study presents a holistic understanding of how Facebook influences each phase of the consumer shopping journey, from initial awareness to post-purchase reflection. It reveals the critical role of social influence—particularly reviews, credibility, and trust—in guiding decisions and shaping perceived value. By identifying the impact of each element on subsequent stages, this research equips marketers and retailers with a strategic framework for enhancing engagement and satisfaction in the evolving digital shopping landscape.

This study is limited by its sample, which includes only postgraduate students from a single university in Malaysia, potentially affecting generalizability. Additionally, it focuses solely on Facebook, and results may vary across other social media platforms. Future research could explore diverse populations and platforms for broader insights.

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THROUGH THE MORAL LENS: JUDGING FRAUD POTENTIAL FROM ETHICAL CUES IN THE WORKPLACE

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This research explores how individuals' moral orientation influences their perceptions of others' likelihood to commit fraud in workplace scenarios. Drawing on behavioral ethics and fraud theory, the study integrates the Fraud Triangle (opportunity, pressure, rationalization) with moral judgment frameworks to examine how ethical cues are interpreted through an observer's moral lens.

Using a sample of 41 certified management accountants, participants evaluated vignettes depicting an employee with varying contextual factors of opportunity, pressure, and rationalization. Regression results ($R^2 = .182$, $p = .044$) revealed that judgments in low-pressure contexts significantly predicted participants' own morality, with lower moral orientation associated with higher attribution of fraudulent intent. These findings highlight that ethical perceptions are not solely scenario-driven but shaped by underlying individual moral cognition.

The implications are twofold. Theoretically, the research underscores that moral orientation colors ethical judgments, bridging gaps between fraud theory and moral psychology. Practically, it suggests that organizations should consider individual differences in ethical sensitivity when designing training and evaluation programs.

Future research (Study 2) will extend this framework to sales ethics by testing how moral reasoning influences judgments of ethically ambiguous sales behaviors. This extension will integrate sales-specific pressures, rationalizations, and personality factors (e.g., Dark Triad traits) to provide actionable insights for hiring, training, and managing ethical gray zones in sales organizations.

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TEACHING WITH INTELLIGENCE: STUDENT MOTIVATIONS, CONFIDENCE, AND CRITICAL USE OF AI IN MARKETING EDUCATION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming higher education, but a gap persists between frequent student use and confident, ethical engagement. This study investigates how undergraduate marketing students interact with AI tools, focusing on psychological predictors, usage patterns, and emotional responses. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 169 students through surveys and thematic analysis of open-ended responses.

Quantitative findings show that 77% of students use AI weekly or more, yet only 42% report high confidence. Ordinal regression revealed that self-efficacy strongly predicts both AI confidence and frequency of use, while innovativeness influences usage behavior. These results highlight self-efficacy as a critical enabler of meaningful AI engagement. Qualitative analysis revealed themes of AI as a 'nonjudgmental tutor' that aids brainstorming, clarifies concepts, and refines writing, while also eliciting mixed emotions, relief, empowerment, dependence, and ethical uncertainty.

Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory, Human-AI Symbiosis, and Flow Theory, this research frames AI as a co-creative learning partner that can either enhance or undermine student learning depending on how it is scaffolded. The findings underscore the need for intentional pedagogical strategies that build both technical proficiency and ethical awareness. Recommended interventions include scaffolded prompt engineering, reflective assignments, and clear ethical guidelines.

The study contributes to theory by integrating psychological and emotional dimensions into AI adoption research, and to practice by providing actionable strategies for marketing educators. By fostering confidence, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning, instructors can move students from passive AI users to strategic learners prepared for AI-integrated careers.

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THE ROLE OF CLIENT-BASED PROJECTS IN LAUNCHING CAREERS FOR WOMEN GRADUATES

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

As digital transformation reshapes marketing and companies shift to a skills-based workforce, preparing graduates for evolving careers becomes increasingly complex. Women now make up the majority in college enrollment and the college-educated workforce, yet face persistent barriers like male-dominated leadership and gender bias. The authors argue that while skills such as discipline support academic success, they may not translate well in workplaces that reward confidence over competence. Client-based projects (CBPs), when embedded in college curriculum, offer experiential learning that helps students, especially women, develop teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills while building confidence. As a result, the authors purport, CBPs have the potential to help women secure jobs, navigate onboarding, and advance in their careers. Thus, CBPs in college could help repair the broken rung that women face after college in their early careers. This qualitative study explores how CBPs influence women's professional trajectories and highlights the potential of this form of experiential learning to address gender disparities, foster equity, and prepare women for leadership.

Integrating course-embedded CBPs is a classroom strategy that improves career readiness for all students while specifically equipping women for the workplace. By engaging with real clients, students apply their academic knowledge to genuine business challenges while gaining valuable experience in collaboration and communication with peers, faculty, and external professionals (Oyedele et al., 2023; Beachum & Krallman, 2024). These projects can significantly boost students' professional readiness and self-efficacy (Beaupre et al., 2024). Most marketing students who participated in CBPs reported improvements in their communication, teamwork, and self-awareness skills (Beaupre et al., 2024), which the authors argue are crucial for preparing female students to thrive in their careers.

The authors explored the experiences of women who participated in CBPs in college courses and graduated from college in the past one to five years. This research utilized phenomenological qualitative techniques, focusing on the importance of direct experiences (Tuohy et al., 2013). Participant inclusion criteria included (a) identifying as female, (b) 18+ years old, (c) having graduated with a bachelor's degree within the last one to five years, (d) currently employed in a professional field, and (e) participated in at least one significant CBP in college. Participants were identified using convenience and snowball sampling.

This study employed semi-structured interviews to gather comprehensive and detailed insights into the impacts of CBPs on their career trajectories. Questions examined memorable classes or projects, the nature and impact of CBPs, and how these experiences influenced participants' job search, onboarding, and early career success. Interviewees reflected on the long-term effects of CBPs on their careers, provided advice to faculty and students regarding CBPs in the curriculum, and shared additional insights they felt were important.

Thematic analysis was conducted through a triangulation combination of manual and machine learning techniques, followed by human interpretation to identify, refine, and validate recurring patterns. Throughout the interview and analysis process, several potential themes surfaced related to the impact of CBPs on self-confidence and success in job interviewing, the onboarding process, and early career development. Four overarching themes were generated, including: Confidence and Professional Identity Development, Career Readiness and Preparation, Teamwork and Collaboration, and Lifelong Learning and Growth Mindset.

This study shows that female students participating in CBPs as students will, as young professionals, exhibit increased self-efficacy and have greater success in job interviews, onboarding, and early career development. Women

continue to face structural barriers and biases in the workplace, including early career experiences exacerbating the broken rung, a phenomenon where men receive their first promotion at a higher rate than women (Krivkovich et al., 2024). CBPs offer a powerful solution, providing real-world experiences that enhance students' career readiness competencies. Specifically, CBPs impact women's early careers by increasing professional identity development, improving career readiness and preparation, fostering teamwork and collaboration skills, while also fostering lifelong learning and growth mindsets.

This paper provides a phenomenological analysis of CBP impacts on women's early career development; however, it has limitations. First, the chosen methodology is limited by the experiences of the four institutions' alumni. The respondents opted into the qualitative study and perhaps were more likely to have had a positive CBP experience. A quantitative study may provide a more statistical representation of CBP's career impact. Focusing on the broken rung, the study only examined those who graduated in five years or less; thus, a longitudinal study might prove beneficial to assess the longer-term impact of CBPs on students' careers.

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THE CLASS IS THE CROWD: EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF CROWDSOURCING IN LARGE CLASSES

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Teaching practices such as collaborative and project-based learning are seen as too unwieldy to implement in large classes, and are sacrificed in favor of more manageable, but less successful, pedagogy. In this research, I propose that the large number of students in a mass class represents a crowd, and outside of academia, crowds are valued as intelligent forces that can achieve positive societal change and business growth. This paper presents a novel project that embraces, rather than struggles against, the vast quantity of students in a mass class. Moving between individual and collaborative phases, the so-called Crowd Project captures the wisdom of the crowd, while holding students accountable for their personal contribution. A quasi-experimental design finds that students in the Crowd Project were more engaged, performed better on course and module learning objectives, had higher grades, and developed more creative solutions, compared to students in the modified Group Project.

In large classes the workload to implement and grade projects quickly becomes unfeasible (Cuseo 2007). One common solution is to refashion an individual assignment into a group project (Tomcho and Foels 2012). When a group project is implemented out of convenience, rather than pedagogical best practice, however, learning effectiveness is debatable. The task structure may not lend itself to group work (Meyers 1997) while the large team sizes required in mass classes reduce group performance (Tomcho and Fuels 2012). Other issues with group projects (e.g. member conflicts, social loafing, and inconsistent skill development) all increase with group size (McCorkle et al 1999; Tomcho and Fuels 2012). Poor product quality – or huge variances in quality between groups – is often the result (Batra et al 1997). In short, introducing group projects to better cope with the workload in a mass class is an ineffective solution. Moreover, it misses an opportunity: rather than resisting the large number of students in a mass class, why not embrace them? Mass classes are, effectively, crowds. And in industry crowds are not evils to be endured because of resource limitations. They are valued as remarkably intelligent forces that can achieve positive societal change and business growth (Suroweiecki 2005). Drawing on industry crowdsourcing best practice, then this teaching innovation proposes replacing the group project with the crowd project in mass classes.

Crowdsourcing refers to any practice which involves distributing a project across a vast collection of users with different skills and abilities. While not restricted to web-based activities, improvements in technology have undeniably accelerated the use of crowdsourcing in recent years. Today, many of the world's most valuable brands have adopted crowdsourcing practices (Roth 2015) in the areas of product development, market research and marketing communications (Gatautis & Vitkauskaite 2013). Ben & Jerry's, Dunkin' Donuts and McDonald's are just a few of the many food and beverage companies using the crowd to invent new flavors for example. LEGO encourages consumers to modify product designs while Doritos has generated several successful Super Bowl commercials using the crowd. Crowdsourcing is not simply a buzzword in industry. It is a strategic model, proven to deliver solutions that are superior in quality and quantity to those that traditional forms of business can provide (Brabham 2011). Over 90% of Fortune 500 companies use crowdsourcing to cut costs, increase brand loyalty, and deliver new product ideas (Garvey, 2018).

Academics are quick to study crowdsourcing but far slower to adopt it in the classroom. Typical uses include crowdsourcing content and crowdsourcing grading (Llorente & Morant, 2015; Prpic et al., 2015). However, neither of these applications operationalizes crowdsourcing the way it is typically used in industry. That is, the crowd is not being used to generate and evaluate creative solutions to ambiguous problems. Drawing on industry crowdsourcing best practice, as well as proven pedagogical techniques such as collaborative learning and project-based learning, this research seeks to design, implement, and test a "crowd project"—a novel problem-solving process that embraces, rather than struggles against, the vast quantity of students in a mass class. Moving between individual and collaborative phases, the Crowd Project seeks to capture the wisdom within the whole class, while holding students accountable for their personal contribution.

Students in an undergraduate creativity class were randomly divided into two sections. As much as possible in a quasi-experimental design, everything was kept the same between the two conditions except for the group or crowd project manipulation. Students heard the same lecture, did the same reading, completed the same scaffolded individual assignments, and posted a reflection based on the same directions. The only controlled difference between the conditions was access to the insights uncovered each week from the individual assignment. Depending on their assigned condition, students shared results with either their team members (Group) or all students in their section (Crowd) on a digital collaboration board. Results indicate that the Crowd Project, which capitalizes on the wisdom of the class crowd while maintaining individual accountability, increased student engagement and performance. Students in the Crowd Project scored higher on both the collaborative and individual portions of the project. While all students saw increases in self-rated competence on each learning objective, students in the Crowd Project demonstrated a significantly higher increase on many, particular in the domain of ideation. Crowd Project participants' confidence in their creative problem-solving abilities increased significantly compared to their peers in the Group Project. Students in the Crowd Project generated a greater quantity of ideas in total, and more ideas per student, compared to those in the Group Project, while the prototypes produced by the Crowd Project participants were uniformly rated higher compared to those in the Group Project.

The findings in this research support the burgeoning literature that suggests crowdsourcing can be an effective tool in industry to generate new product and service ideas. Students in the Crowd Project generated more new ideas on average compared to students in the Group Project. Perhaps more importantly, these ideas were rated as being more novel, desirable, feasible, and viable, all critical criteria for new product development success. Poor quality or hackneyed solutions, when presented to the crowd for assessment, were quickly voted down and not pursued further. The research also advances our understanding of how crowdsourcing can be used in academia. Current uses are limited to sharing information within and between students and educators (Llorente & Morant, 2015; Prpic et al., 2015). This research demonstrates the effective use of crowdsourcing to generate innovative solutions to wicked problems, such as student mental health. Given the persistent growth in higher education class sizes, this research also identifies a potential route to implement project-based learning without overwhelming instructors. Thanks to the novel alternation between individual and collaborative phases, the project overcame many of the criticisms associated with traditional group projects, such as social loafing, inconsistent skill development, varying product quality, and the "divide and conquer" mentality (McCorkle et al., 1999; Meyers, 1997; Tomcho & Foels, 2012). The project shifted learning from the instructor to the student, which may account for the performance gains. Future research should focus on understanding how exactly crowdsourcing improves individual performance.

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HIGHER EDUCATION FACULTY EXPERIENCES UTILIZING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN TEACHING: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI) can potentially revolutionize various industries and sectors, including higher education. In teaching, AI can reshape higher education by introducing innovative tools and methods that enhance the learning experience for students while providing valuable support for educators. This study investigates the experiences of higher education faculty who have utilized AI in their teaching. Two key research questions guided the investigation: (1) What are the experiences of higher education faculty while using AI in teaching? and (2) What opportunities and challenges exist while higher education faculty use AI in teaching? This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted during the summer and fall of 2023. The research employed semi-structured interviews for data collection and thematic analysis for coding. Five overarching themes emerged from the data: Adaptation and Training, Assessment and Feedback, Pedagogical Innovation, Productivity and Efficiency, and Student Engagement and Experience. Integrating AI in higher education hinges on faculty adaptation, training, and a nuanced understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with AI implementation. While AI offers efficiency and innovation, it should be viewed as a complementary tool that enhances faculty expertise rather than a replacement. The implications outlined in the paper extend to universities, teaching and learning centers, faculty members, and students, emphasizing the need for a thoughtful and collaborative approach to leverage AI's potential in higher education.

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TEACHING MARKETING ANALYTICS WITH A MULTI-COMPONENT KPI FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

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POSITION PAPER

Marketing analytics courses often use structured corporate datasets, but many graduates work in small firms with limited, inconsistent data (Ramaley & Lesh, 2020). The author supervised student projects with Godwin's Outdoor, a rural retailer that tracks only basic metrics like social media engagement, foot traffic, and sales. Students trained only on big data may struggle in such settings. Research supports using real data constraints to build applied skills (Johnson & Brown, 2023). Though limited, Godwin's data allowed strategic analysis when framed properly. This collaboration showed that even partial metrics can enhance both instruction and business outcomes (Smith & Wright, 2021).

This paper proposes the Small-Business Marketing Performance Index (SBMPI), a single measure derived from four data points commonly available to small retailers. The SBMPI is calculated as:

Equation 1

$$\text{SBMPI} = w_1(\text{EF}) + w_2(\text{CR}) + w_3(\text{RPR}) + w_4(\text{BR}),\ w_1 + w_2 + w_3 + w_4 = 1.$$

Note. S(BMPI) represents the Small-Business Marketing Performance Index, where EF = Engagement Factor, CR = Conversion Rate, RPR = Repeat Purchase Rate, BR = Basket Ratio, and the assigned weights (w1_11, w2_22, w3_33, w4_44) sum to 1.

Here, EF (Engagement Factor) is the ratio of social media interactions (likes, comments) to potential reach, CR (Conversion Rate) reflects paying customers versus visitors, RPR (Repeat Purchase Rate) captures the share of buyers who return in a future month, and BR (Basket Ratio) compares the average transaction size to a baseline, such as $40 from a prior period. For instance, Godwin's Outdoor data can be anonymized and presented with weights of 0.25, 0.25, 0.30, and 0.20:

Table 1
Sample SBMPI Calculation for Godwin's Outdoor (Anonymized Data)

Month	EF	CR	RPR	BR	SBMPI
Jan	0.3	0.32	0.2	1.05	0.42
Feb	0.24	0.28	0.18	1	0.35
Mar	0.4	0.3	0.3	1.2	0.5
Apr	0.35	0.31	0.22	1.1	0.43
May	0.38	0.34	0.25	1.15	0.46

Note. EF = Engagement Factor, CR = Conversion Rate, RPR = Repeat Purchase Rate, BR = Basket Ratio. Multiplying each factor by its assigned weight produces the SBMPI score (range: ~0.35 to 0.50).

Students analyze how shifts in EF, CR, RPR, or BR affect the SBMPI from month to month. A slip in EF might indicate declining online engagement, while a bump in RPR implies successful loyalty-building tactics. This hands-on approach shows that even limited data can offer meaningful guidance once it is consolidated into a unified metric (Anderson, 2022).

Some commentators note that excluding cost or profit considerations may overlook a firm's financial viability. Davis and Carter (2022), for instance, argue that without expense-related metrics, students are less likely to see how marketing activities translate to actual profit margins. However, small retailers like Godwin's Outdoor often lack robust accounting systems. Others advocate for incorporating brand sentiment or Net Promoter Score if reputation is central to the business model. These points underscore the SBMPI's adaptability: instructors or students can tailor weights and components based on the data available. Moreover, the incomplete or approximate nature of visitor counts and repeat-customer tracking can spark discussions on missing values and the importance of disclaimers, encouraging learners to grapple with realistic data issues rather than relying on sanitized corporate datasets (Ramaley & Lesh, 2020).

By integrating social engagement, conversion efficiency, repeat patronage, and basket size into one measure, the SBMPI addresses a core challenge of small-business analytics: how to turn fragmentary logs into actionable insights. Students who calculate and interpret this index gain tangible analytical skills and learn to propose interventions for underperforming areas (Johnson & Brown, 2023). As local firms gradually track more data—perhaps partial expense records or brand sentiment—educators can refine the SBMPI to include profitability or perception metrics. In an environment where many graduates will assist or join smaller enterprises, these experiences derived from Godwin's Outdoor in rural North Carolina illustrate that even modest data can support strategic decision-making when handled with a structured, integrative approach (Smith & Wright, 2021).

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SMART SELLING: UNDERSTANDING WHERE AI ADDS VALUE IN THE SALES PROCESS AND WHERE HUMANS STILL MATTER

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POSITION PAPER

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the sales landscape, offering automation, personalization, and data-driven insights. Yet, there is limited clarity on where AI enhances performance and where human judgment remains essential. This research examines AI's optimal fit across the sales cycle, prospecting, the sales call, and follow-up, providing a framework for integrating technology without eroding the interpersonal value of selling.

In prospecting, AI demonstrates strong value through lead scoring, CRM analytics, and automated outreach, accelerating efficiency. However, during critical sales call stages, such as rapport building and objection handling, human qualities, empathy, trustworthiness, and adaptive questioning, remain decisive. Even in closing, while AI can predict timing, successful negotiations depend on human decision-making. For follow-up, AI automates communications, but long-term relationship-building relies on authentic human engagement. These distinctions reveal a hybrid model where AI supports but does not replace core salesperson competencies.

The study employs a two-phase design. Phase 1 is an experimental study with undergraduate sales students comparing traditional versus AI-enhanced training using role-play simulations, CRM tools, and feedback dashboards. Performance will be measured through SPIN questioning accuracy, objection handling, and confidence ratings. Phase 2 involves a field study with sales professionals across industries, utilizing surveys and interviews to capture perceived AI value, sales KPIs, and ethical boundaries. This mixed-method approach ensures both pedagogical and practical relevance.

The anticipated contributions are threefold. Theoretically, the study refines sales process models by specifying where AI-human collaboration is most effective. Practically, findings will guide managers and educators in designing training programs and ethical frameworks that leverage AI's strengths while preserving the human elements crucial for trust and long-term success. This work positions AI not as a replacement for salespeople, but as a strategic partner that, when used appropriately, elevates both performance and customer relationships.

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FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL SETBACKS, IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AND A GROWTH MINDSET ORIENTATION

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POSITION PAPER

First-generation college students (FGS), defined as those whose parents have not earned a four-year college degree, often face distinct challenges in navigating higher education. Without familial examples of college life, these students may experience initial struggles in academic settings and a sense of cultural disconnection (Smith & McLellan, 2024). Research shows that FGS report lower levels of campus belonging and higher levels of psychological distress compared to their continuing-generation peers (Stebleton, Soria, & Huesman, 2014). When they encounter negative emotional setbacks, FGS may be vulnerable to experiencing impostor syndrome (Holden et al., 2021). Yet, this experience can also serve as a catalyst by activating a growth mindset that supports academic performance.

A growth mindset is the belief that intellectual and personal abilities are not immutable, but can be cultivated through effort, learning, and persistence (Dweck, 2006; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). This orientation stands in contrast to a fixed mindset, which assumes that intelligence and talent are innate and unchangeable. Students who adopt a growth mindset are more likely to embrace challenges, persist in the face of setbacks, and view effort as a critical component of success (Dweck, 2006). They also tend to interpret constructive criticism as an opportunity for learning, rather than as personal judgment. Importantly, individuals with a growth mindset are more likely to see others' success as inspiring rather than threatening. In the context of impostor syndrome, growth mindset offers a counter-narrative. By cultivating a growth mindset orientation, FGS may become less likely to attribute their success to luck and more inclined to view challenges as opportunities for improvement and achievement (Yeager et al., 2019).

Understanding the interplay among generation status, impostor syndrome, and growth mindset is essential in academic contexts, especially when students encounter emotional setbacks. This research proposes that the experience of negative emotional setbacks differentially affect first-generation (FG) and non-first-generation (non-FG) students by triggering a psychological response such as impostor syndrome and growth mindset, which in turn influence academic performance. Specifically, we propose mediation models in which impostor syndrome and growth mindset mediate the relationship between student generational status and academic performance.

To test these relationships, we conducted a 2 (Emotional Valence: Negative vs. Positive) × 2 (Student Generational Status: First-Generation vs. Non-First-Generation) between-subjects experimental design. The sample consisted of 207 undergraduate students enrolled at a university in the southern part of the United States. Of these, 43% identified as first-generation students and 57% as non-first-generation.

Results revealed that under conditions of negative emotional induction, first-generation students reported significantly higher levels of impostor syndrome compared to their non-first-generation peers. This elevated sense of impostorism subsequently led to decreased endorsement of a growth mindset, which in turn reduced academic performance. However, first-generation students also exhibited a stronger growth mindset than their non-first-generation counterparts, which subsequently enhanced their academic performance.

This research demonstrates how emotional setbacks can activate impostor phenomena in FGS; yet, a growth mindset orientation can counter impostor thoughts and ultimately promote academic achievement. Interventions that encourage students to adopt a growth mindset may help reframe impostor thoughts and promote more adaptive responses to academic adversity. In doing so, institutions can better support the academic and emotional well-being of first-generation students.

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DELIVERY OF ONLINE VERSUS ON-GROUND FACE TO FACE IN MARKETING/MANAGEMENT COURSES WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

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POSITION PAPER

Introduction of the Problem: *Research Question:* What are your experiences in delivering online versus on-ground face to face content in Marketing/Management courses in 2025 and beyond? This study examined the differences in online and in-person delivery modes for marketing management courses and posits some recommendations for future practice. In-person and remote online courses for marketing management undergraduates differ in terms of interaction, flexibility, and learning resources. In-person courses offer direct interaction with instructors and peers, a structured environment, and access to campus resources. Remote online courses provide flexibility, convenience, and access to a wider range of learning materials, but may lack the social and networking benefits of in-person learning.

Literature Review: Stern (2004) investigated the similarities and differences for one course, *Foundations of American Education*, when offered in traditional face-to-face and online formats. The data analysis used both qualitative and quantitative measures. Several conclusions were reached: (a) for the course to be effective, the time that must be allotted for online teaching will remain an issue that instructors may struggle with as the workload is significantly higher; (b) for students, a familiarity with their own learning styles and the desire and motivation to shoulder responsibility for online learning will be major factors in their success; (c) while the instructor can, and should, design and monitor the course to ensure that all students are kept on track and participating, student time management and organizational skills will remain of paramount importance; and (d) students with more proficient reading and writing skills will perform better in online classes. Guevara-Otero, et al. (2024) found that the impact of face-to-face and online flipped learning (OFL) on the academic performance in students of single-degree (SD) and double-degree (DD), compared to that achieved in the traditional methodology. A descriptive, quasi-experimental, cross-sectional, quantitative study was carried out with a sample of 223 university marketing and communication students. The study was conducted in three phases: before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Results align with previous studies, which find that flipped learning (FL) face-to-face yields higher performance than traditional methodology. Like other studies, the highest scores in asynchronous activities were found for DD students. However, this study reveals that those adopting FL, both online and face-to-face, demonstrated superior academic performance compared to SD students using the traditional method in practical assessments. Furthermore, although modality did not influence the ratings of FL methodology; DD students who experienced this methodology online or face-to-face reported more positively on their attitudes, perceptions, interactions, academic results, and perceived satisfaction than SD students. University business education institutions can enhance student performance and satisfaction by expanding DDs offerings and integrating active learning methods. Shotwell & Apigian (2015) found that in measuring student performance as defined by quality points, various assignment points, and time spent on assignments, was not significantly different between on-ground and online students. However, use of resources and tools to complete homework and learn new topics differed. As a whole, students predominantly utilized homework as the first tool to learn new topics and complete homework, suggesting a paradigm shift in the way instructors should cater to student's learning habits. Alstete, J.W. and Beutell, N.J. (2021) found that there is a relationship between simulation performance and final course grades but was not significantly different for on-ground and distance learning cohorts.

Findings and Recommendations *In-Person Courses for Marketing Management Undergraduates:* Interaction: Face-to-face interaction with instructors and peers allows for immediate clarification of questions and real-time discussions. Structure: Fixed schedules and classroom environments provide a structured learning experience. Resources: Access to campus libraries, learning centers, and networking opportunities with faculty and peers. Social Development: In-person interaction fosters social skills and network opportunities. Flexibility: Less flexible than online courses, requiring attendance at specific times and locations. *Remote Online Courses:* Interaction: Interaction with instructors and peers may be limited to online platforms and may require more self-discipline for active engagement. Flexibility: Offer more flexibility in terms of time and location, allowing students to learn at their own pace and schedule. Resources: Access to online learning materials, virtual classrooms, and online discussion forums. Cost: May be more cost-effective than in-person courses, as they often eliminate travel and campus-related expenses. Self-Paced Learning: Students are responsible for managing their time and staying motivated to master course material. Limited Social Interaction: The absence of face-to-face interaction can limit social development and networking opportunities. In-person marketing management courses offer advantages like direct interaction with instructors and peers, fostering stronger learning communities and potential for more personalized attention. Online courses provide flexibility, self-paced learning, and cost-effectiveness, especially appealing to students with other obligations. Stronger Learning Communities: The face-to-face format allows for more informal discussions, networking opportunities, and a sense of community among students. Direct Interaction with Instructors: Students can ask questions immediately, receive immediate feedback, and develop a stronger rapport with the instructor. Potential for More Personalized Attention: Instructors can tailor their teaching to the specific needs of the class and individual students. Enhanced Engagement: The dynamic environment of a classroom can be more engaging than online learning, leading to better retention and understanding of concepts. In-Person Networking Opportunities: Students can build connections with peers and potential employers during in-person classes and events. *Online Courses for Marketing Management Undergraduates:* Greater Flexibility: Online courses can be taken at any time and from anywhere, making them a great fit for students with demanding schedules. Self-Paced Learning: Students can learn at their own pace, revisit materials as needed, and focus on areas where they need more help. Cost-Effectiveness: Online courses often have lower tuition fees and reduced travel costs compared to in-person programs. Wider Access: Online courses can be accessed by students regardless of their physical location, making education more inclusive. Improved Time Management Skills: Online learning often requires students to develop strong time management skills to keep up with coursework. Development of Technology Skills: Students gain valuable tech skills by using online learning platforms and tools. Challenges & Alternative Perspectives: Several conclusions were reached which may be subject to debate: (a) for the course to be effective, the time that must be allotted for online teaching will remain an issue that instructors may struggle with as the workload is significantly higher; (b) for students, a familiarity with their own learning styles and the desire and motivation to shoulder responsibility for online learning will be major factors in their success; (c) while the instructor can, and should, design and monitor the course to ensure that all students are kept on track and participating, student time management and organizational skills will remain of paramount importance; and (d) students with more proficient reading and writing skills will perform better in online classes.

Suggested Recommendations for Future Research: Suggestions for further research include focusing on whether or not certain types of courses are more appropriate for online instruction and developing a repertoire of instructional strategies to accommodate a range of learning styles. Shotwell & Apigian suggested “as a whole, students predominantly utilized homework as the first tool to learn new topics and complete homework, suggesting a paradigm shift in the way instructors should cater to student's learning habits.”

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TEACHING MARKETING STUDENTS TO FAIL BETTER

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POSITION PAPER

Failure is an inevitable part of success. Leaders of innovative companies such as Pixar, Google, Tesla, and Amazon credit their phenomenal growth to a failure-tolerant organizational culture. This is not to say all failure is equal; preventable failures stemming from disengaged employees need to be avoided (Edmondson, 2011). In this session I argue that learning to fail well is as important a 21st century business skill as creativity and critical problem solving. To produce resilient graduates able to cope with failure experiences, marketing academics need to teach students failure competencies— how to accept, manage, endure, prevent, recover, and even facilitate failure.

Failure proliferates all areas of the marketing mix. Product flops include Amazon's Fire smartphone and Dash buttons. Google's failed products include Wave, Orkut and Google+, which could have been Slack, Facebook or WhatsApp respectively. Disappointing sales led Burger King to drop the reduced calorie Satisfries from its menus less than a year after their introduction, while ruined clothes persuaded Unilever to pull Persil Power laundry detergent after just nine months on store shelves. Famous pricing failures include J.C. Penney's disastrous experiment with "fair and square" prices that eliminated all store coupons, together with the consumers who loved using them to find a bargain. One million subscribers revolted when Netflix increased monthly fees 60%, while Uber's price-surge policy has long been a source of consumer ire. Place failures occur when distribution issues lead to global shortages, in categories as varied as cookies, computers and COVID tests. The list of marketing promotion failures includes every communication vehicle possible, from packaging to television commercials to social media posts. Tropicana, for example, lost a spectacular $30 million in sales in just two months after a redesigned carton confused consumers while a Pepsi commercial featuring Kendall Jenner giving a can of the soda to a policeman, ostensibly solving systemic racism, tops many worst-ad lists worldwide.

As these examples illustrate, failure is an undesired, but inevitable aspect of modern marketing practices. To help graduates thrive in today's competitive marketplace, then, we have a responsibility to teach them how to successfully navigate marketing failures. Unfortunately, active instruction of failure competencies appears relatively scarce in contemporary marketing curricula. Recent reviews of marketing curricula reveal a conspicuous absence of skills or content related to failure (e.g. Crittenden & Peterson, 2019; Edmondson & Matthews, 2021; Herrington & Lollar, 2020; Spiller et al., 2020). Our own analysis of the top one hundred business schools in America (as ranked by Princeton Review, U.S. News and Reports and Bloomberg) revealed similar results, with only 16% of top business schools actively offering deliberate failure instruction. In this session, I identify and describe seven strategies I use to help students improve their failure capacity. The steps follow the acronym FAILURE – Fearing Failure, Admitting Failure, Intelligent Failure, Learning Failure, Understanding Failure, Reframing Failure, and finally Embracing Failure. For each letter a hands-on exercise is introduced to help students develop critical failure competencies. The session will include brief practice of each exercise and a discussion of the pros and cons. Future research should seek to formally test the change in failure competency before and after taking the failure course.

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ENHANCING STUDENT LEARNING WITH AI FEEDBACK: A CLASSROOM CASE STUDY USING TIMELYGRADER.AI

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POSITION PAPER

Grading student writing and providing high-quality formative feedback are among the most time-consuming responsibilities for instructors. While detailed feedback is critical for learning, large course loads and time constraints often limit instructors' ability to deliver consistent, timely, and individualized guidance. Recent advancements in generative artificial intelligence (AI) have given rise to new tools capable of assisting with this task. However, questions remain about the appropriate role of AI in instruction, how students perceive AI-generated feedback, and how faculty can integrate these tools in pedagogically sound ways.

This position paper presents a classroom case study of TimelyGrader.ai, an AI feedback tool piloted in a Spring 2025 social media marketing course. Students drafted blog posts and submitted their drafts for feedback via TimelyGrader.ai. The tool generated comments across six rubric-based criteria, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. The instructor reviewed and edited all feedback before it was returned to students, and students were required to revise their drafts accordingly. An anonymous student survey was also administered to assess the perceived clarity, usefulness, and impact of the AI-generated feedback.

Survey results showed that most students found the feedback specific, actionable, and aligned with the grading rubric. Students appreciated the structure and depth of the comments, and many reported feeling more confident in their revisions. However, some students noted that feedback could feel impersonal or insufficiently nuanced—mirroring concerns raised in the literature about AI's limitations with subjective or creative tasks. Importantly, the tool was framed as a feedback aid rather than a grading replacement, and faculty oversight was maintained throughout the process.

Although results were promising, the use of AI feedback tools invites several challenges. Critics have raised concerns regarding the generic nature of AI responses, potential biases, and the erosion of human connection in instruction. Others have emphasized the need for transparency, instructor training, and student trust. To address these challenges, this case study adopted a human-in-the-loop model, where AI supported—but did not supplant—instructor judgment. Student-facing transparency and careful integration were critical components of the approach.

This classroom-based pilot contributes to a growing discussion about how AI can support formative assessment in marketing education. Future research may explore how AI-generated feedback affects student learning outcomes, how it compares with instructor-generated feedback over time, and how students of varying backgrounds respond to these tools. Ethical and pedagogical considerations—such as bias, data privacy, and maintaining instructional agency—should also be studied further.

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FROM CLASSROOM TO CAREER: HELPING STUDENTS LEVERAGE THEIR MARKETING CREDENTIALS TO AVOID UNDEREMPLOYMENT

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POSITION PAPER

Marketing graduates continue to face one of the highest rates of underemployment among all degree holders, with 57% working in roles that do not require a four-year degree one year after graduation. While the causes of underemployment are multifaceted, contributing factors include students' failure to (a) fully recognize the value and applicability of their marketing credentials and (b) intentionally leverage those credentials in pursuit of college-level employment. According to the Talent Disrupted report (2024), "college-level employment" refers to occupations that require a bachelor's degree or make full use of the graduate's academic training—roles marketing graduates are too often missing out on.

Building on a previously presented framework that encouraged students to "value the marketing degree," this paper explores how faculty can intentionally structure assignments that promote career alignment and credential leverage. Using the buyer's journey model—awareness, consideration, decision—as a pedagogical metaphor, the authors describe three assignments implemented across different marketing courses, each mapped to a distinct stage of the journey.

In the Awareness stage, students in a Marketing Principles course completed a reflection tied to an online simulation. Students were required to identify a job posting and explicitly articulate how the skills gained through the marketing planning process and simulation aligned with the requirements of the job. This exercise helped students understand that marketing is a professional discipline with transferable skills that employers seek.

For the Consideration stage, students in a Strategic Selling course conducted a sales role play using ChatGPT's voice tool. In the exercise, students were instructed to "sell" themselves and their marketing credentials to a potential employer, positioning themselves as the best candidate for a marketing role. This assignment helped students practice articulating their competencies and better understand how to present themselves in real-world hiring situations.

In the Decision stage, students in the Marketing Strategy capstone course completed a comprehensive survey assessing the extent to which they had leveraged their marketing education. Survey items covered areas such as skill proficiency, preparedness for specific marketing roles, completion of experiential learning opportunities, and alignment of job search activities with marketing credentials. The survey served both as a reflective exercise for students and a diagnostic tool for faculty to evaluate program impact and identify areas for improvement.

While this buyer's journey framework offers a structured way to help students build awareness of and confidence in their credentials, the authors acknowledge potential limitations. Students may progress through the journey nonlinearly or fail to connect the assignments to long-term career goals. Faculty must be intentional in framing these activities and reinforcing their purpose. Further research is needed to examine how such assignments influence actual job-seeking behaviors and employment outcomes, particularly in diverse student populations and job markets.

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LEVEL UP YOUR LINKEDIN: A SELF-ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR MARKETING AND BUSINESS STUDENTS

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POSITION PAPER

Business students who postpone their LinkedIn engagement until after graduation miss crucial professional opportunities, despite the platform’s significance in modern recruitment, where 70% of hiring professionals use it as their primary tool for talent acquisition (LinkedIn, 2025). With over 1 billion global users, LinkedIn connects 84% of U.S. users to professional networks essential for career advancement (LinkedIn, 2024). However, based on the author’s experience, while most marketing students have a LinkedIn account, few have optimized their profiles and actively engage with professionals in their career field or area of focus.

LinkedIn is more than just a digital resume; it serves as a comprehensive career development ecosystem where students can build professional networks, showcase their skills, and engage in industry conversations. McCorkle and McCorkle (2012) documented that integrating LinkedIn into business curricula enhances student learning and fosters practical career skills.

A handout titled "Level Up Your LinkedIn Checklist" has been developed and refined over six semesters in a capstone marketing strategy course to guide students through a comprehensive LinkedIn optimization and social activities project. The checklist compiles best practices from academic and professional sources, providing detailed instructions along with definitions, examples, and web links. Feedback from students and project outcomes each semester has facilitated continuous improvements to the checklist's clarity, relevance, and utility.

While the checklist served as a valuable instructional tool, the lack of a structured assessment component limited students' ability to evaluate their current proficiency and identify specific areas for improvement. This issue reflects broader trends in business education, where LinkedIn instruction often emphasizes profile creation while overlooking strategic foundations or providing developmental benchmarks suitable for different academic stages.

The authors adapted the instructional checklist into the “Level Up Your LinkedIn Self-Assessment” to address these limitations. This self-scoring, comprehensive framework assesses student proficiency across seven dimensions: Pre-Profile Preparation, Profile Optimization, Portfolio Elements, Strategic Connection Building, Content Marketing and Social Engagement, Personal Brand Consistency, and Learning and Career Tools. The assessment establishes five progressive proficiency levels for each dimension, ranging from beginner to expert.

This transformation involved reordering checklist content into logical categories, developing graduated proficiency levels based on observed student implementation patterns, adding explanatory notes to clarify terminology, and establishing appropriate benchmarks for stages ranging from high school to early career.

Beyond student self-evaluation, the dimensions, questions, and progressive answers of the assessment provide professors with a structured framework for developing LinkedIn course projects and assignments. Faculty can select specific dimensions that align with course objectives, use proficiency levels as pre-made rubric elements, and modify expectations based on students' academic stages. This modular structure allows for comprehensive and targeted LinkedIn integration throughout the business curriculum.

Implementing this framework presents several challenges. LinkedIn's features frequently change, necessitating ongoing updates to stay relevant. Industry-specific norms for LinkedIn usage may require tailored versions for various business sectors. The quality of implementation varies significantly based on faculty familiarity with LinkedIn, which may necessitate additional training resources.

A notable limitation is that the assessment evolved from classroom implementation but has not been formally validated against employment outcomes or employer evaluations. This indicates a critical need for research to confirm the framework's real-world relevance and impact.

Future research should concentrate on validating the assessment by correlating it with employment outcomes, including interview rates and job offers. Furthermore, comparative studies of implementation approaches could help identify optimal delivery methods for various institutional contexts. Developing discipline-specific adaptations could enhance relevance across different business specialties, while examining technology-enabled assessment delivery may improve scalability.

This position paper presents a practical approach to developing LinkedIn literacy. It transforms proven classroom instruction into a structured assessment framework, providing evaluative criteria and guidance for curriculum development. This framework empowers educators to effectively prepare students to utilize this essential professional platform for career success.

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ADVANCING NEUROMARKETING CURRICULUM

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POSITION PAPER

"Neuromarketing, also known as consumer neuroscience, is an interdisciplinary field that applies insights and methods from neuroscience, psychology, and economics to understand and influence consumer behavior" (Gupta, Kapoor, & Verma, 2025, p. 1). Neuromarketing can be applied to a wide range of marketing topics, including digital marketing, packaging and product design, pricing, advertising design, consumer behavior, and marketing research. As such, it is increasingly present in peer-reviewed marketing research (e.g., Gupta, Kapoor, & Verma, 2025, p. 1) and in practice (15 Powerful Examples of Neuromarketing in Action, 2025). Additionally, several companies provide accessible, affordable, quality neuromarketing tools for research methods such as eye-tracking and facial expression analysis. Together, these advances create several opportunities for incorporating neuromarketing into marketing curriculum.

Neuromarketing is an opportunity for experiential learning to captivate students' imaginations, spark greater appreciation and interest in marketing, and teach transferable skills in analytical problem solving. It can also become a skill or competency that differentiates students in their careers. With these factors motivating the purpose for including neuromarketing in a program's curriculum, the challenge becomes knowing how to do so. Several factors make this possible.

First, web-based applications allow students to experience and even carry out eye-tracking research with only a webcam (e.g., imotions.com and realeye.io). Some web-based applications also incorporate facial expression analysis to detect emotion expressions. These tools represent only a subset of neuromarketing research tools (Harrell, 2019), but they provide sufficient power to introduce neuromarketing topics, provide experiential learning, and challenge students to make marketing recommendations based on data and research.

Second, several reliable resources provide access to learning materials that can be used in teaching neuromarketing. In addition to the growing number of research articles published in peer-reviewed journals, resources are available through organizations such as the Neuromarketing Science & Business Association (https://www.nmsba.com/), articles such as Harrell's 2019 HBR article that are more practitioner oriented, and teaching and learning materials provided by companies that market neuromarketing technology for educational use.

Third, neuromarketing can be added as a topic in existing courses or added to curriculum as a new course. In a Principles of Marketing course, this topic pairs very well with covering marketing research. It creates an experiential learning opportunity where students can integrate multiple facets of research while examining consumer behavior and other topics likely presented elsewhere in the course. Neuromarketing can be included in a Digital Marketing course as a way for students to evaluate recommended tactics and to teach research-based design principles. In a Marketing Research course, students can learn how biometric measures for techniques like eye-tracking and facial expression analysis can be combined with other methodologies. It can also be effectively incorporated in a Consumer Behavior course to enhance students' understanding and application of various theories.

While not a complete coverage of opportunities to add neuromarketing in a program's curriculum, this hopefully provides motivation for marketing educators to consider how they may add or expand the coverage of neuromarketing in their program.

Challenges to incorporating neuromarketing in a program's curriculum include potential financial constraints, possibly doubts about its value relative to other topics, and the lack of a champion to initiate this as something new. While technology is available and relatively easy to learn, there are costs involved. One approach to addressing the cost can be treating a student license for technology as a required course material, like a textbook. Another approach can be to build a case for donor funds or other department or college funds to be used to purchase technology access for students. This option introduces the concept of trade-offs, wherein an argument for spending money on neuromarketing rather than other areas may be needed. For this, it may be valuable to consider the comments earlier in this manuscript. Finally, if this is a new initiative, one looking to be the champion for this cause may benefit by contacting a colleague from another institution for guidance. Good colleagues to contact would be those who present neuromarketing topics at conferences, and this group of scholars is growing. It is now common to see neuromarketing sessions at major marketing academic conferences.

Looking forward, it is reasonable to anticipate a growth in the number of educational materials in this area as well as a proliferation in technology to support it and a reduction in the cost of such technology. One piece of evidence for this is international conferences dedicated to consumer neuroscience and neuromarketing continue attracting practitioners, researchers, and solution providers.

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DIVERSIFYING AI TOOL USE IN UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS CLASSROOMS

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POSITION PAPER

As businesses change rapidly, artificial intelligence (AI) has become increasingly important for both professional development and the academic preparation of students pursuing careers in business. AI is now a central component of modern business practice, shaping strategic planning, content creation, and decision-making processes.

As AI continues to evolve, it is reshaping job requirements and redefining the essential skills needed across industries. The rapid advancement of AI technologies has brought significant changes to many sectors, including business (Jumaev, 2024). Since June 2023, there has been strong and consistent demand for professionals with generative AI skills, especially in business and media communication roles (Lachmann, et al., 2024). The Future of Marketing Institute's State of Marketing AI Report emphasizes that AI literacy is now a survival skill and a critical requirement for career advancement in business-related fields (2025). Hiring managers now report that they prefer candidates with AI expertise over more experienced applicants who lack AI skills (2024). These changes have prompted educators and industry leaders to reconsider how students should be prepared for a workforce shaped by fast-moving technological advancements (Grewal, et al., 2025).

Beyond just preparing students for their careers, AI skills also help students learn better. As AI becomes more integrated into higher education, business instructors are increasingly encouraging students to explore a variety of tools, not just the most popular ones. Research across disciplines shows that effective AI education requires more than basic tool familiarity. Students need to develop critical thinking skills about when and how to use different AI platforms (Kasneci, et al., 2023). Kasneci et al. emphasize the importance of fostering AI literacy skills, noting that responsible use of large language models in education depends on understanding both their capabilities and limitations. Rudolph et al. support this by showing that AI tools vary significantly in performance (Rudolph, et al., 2023). They should not be treated as interchangeable. Tlili et al. stress the need for structured, comparative learning approaches to help students meaningfully evaluate AI tools in different educational scenarios (Tlili, et al., 2023).

We analyzed this issue through a class assignment completed by 102 students across two semesters in an undergraduate B2B Marketing course. The assignment required students to explore and apply AI tools to a B2B marketing-related task, following a structured format. While two sample scenarios were provided to guide their approach, students were encouraged to choose any B2B marketing scenario relevant to their interests. Each student was asked to use one primary AI tool and at least two additional tools to develop a comprehensive solution. We provided a list of suggested AI platforms, but students were encouraged to explore beyond the list to deepen their understanding of available tools and select those most appropriate for their chosen scenario. The list included major GPT models like ChatGPT, Claude AI, Gemini, and Perplexity, alongside a few business-specific tools such as Jasper.ai and Hootsuite. The goal was to help students discover and understand how different AI platforms can be used for various business needs.

The results revealed gaps in students' ability to explore and apply a range of AI tools. Although the assignment encouraged the use of any general-purpose AI platform, 81 percent of students relied only on ChatGPT. Students probably chose it because ChatGPT was the most familiar option. Few students explored other tools such as Claude, Gemini, or Perplexity. Also, 65 percent of students used or closely followed the example scenarios we provided instead of creating their own. In terms of specialized AI tools, about 61 percent of students selected both tools from the list we provided and did not explore any others based on their project. This showed students didn't know about many other specialized AI tools available for different business functions.

To address these issues, we suggest three changes to be integrated into assignment design. First, assignments should be designed to help students complete their work using at least two general-purpose AI platforms, such as ChatGPT and Gemini. Students should then compare the outputs to understand differences in content quality. Second, instead of relying solely on provided examples, students should be encouraged, through requirements or extra credit, to develop original B2B scenarios. This fosters creativity and critical thinking while helping them identify AI tools that align more closely with their specific context. Third, instructors should assign research-based tasks that require students to identify, evaluate, and apply AI tools relevant to their selected scenario. Presenting these findings in class promotes peer learning and helps students understand which tools are most effective for specific business tasks and contexts.

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NAVIGATING THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE: A CROSS-FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON SALES ORGANIZATIONS

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POSITION PAPER

"Politics are a fact of organizational life" (McAllister et al., 2015), and they are often more acutely perceived by individuals competing for scarce resources within groups pursuing heterogeneous goals (Pfeffer, 1981). In today's ever-evolving business landscape- where salespeople must work cross-functionally to meet customer needs (Storbacka et al., 2009)- it is increasingly important to understand how politics create conflict within organizations.

Kacmar and Baron (1999) define organizational politics as "actions by individuals that are directed toward the goal of furthering their own self-interest without regard for the well-being of others or their organization." An individual acting in their own self-interest leads to peer-to-peer influence, using both strategic and political influence tactics. These influence strategies lead to interdepartmental conflict, which in turn leads to an increase in turn over intention and a decrease in customer cooperation.

In the sales literature, politically skilled salespeople have been shown to perform better, build stronger customer relationships, and gain greater access to internal resources (Good & Schwepker, 2022). These individuals excel at aligning internal stakeholders and navigating complex organizational dynamics to advocate for customer needs. However, research has yet to fully explore how political variables affect cross-functional collaboration.

To help salespeople navigate internal politics and deliver on customer expectations, sales managers should exercise discretion in ways that promote transparency, psychological safety, and collaboration. Additionally, salespeople themselves can contribute by fostering open dialogue in team meetings and encouraging upward feedback to strengthen cross-functional relationships.

Despite its advantages, organizational politics presents challenges. Critics may argue that emphasizing internal influence risks manipulation, favoritism, or a shift away from customer-centered behavior. Some note that political behaviors vary across organizational cultures, what proves effective in one context may falter in another. These are all valid concerns. However, when politics is reframed not as negative but as a natural piece of an organization- it becomes a powerful force for understanding how to collaborate rather than compete.
Future research should explore:

- How political skill interacts with different organizational structures (e.g., centralized vs. decentralized).
- Whether specific sales roles (e.g., key account managers vs. inside sales reps) experience politics differently.
- Best practices for measuring and teaching political skill in sales environments.
- How political skill relates to psychological safety, organizational culture, and leadership support.

By addressing these questions, researchers and practitioners can better prepare sales professionals to thrive in roles where internal collaboration is just as critical as external persuasion.

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THE SEASONED SCHOLAR'S DILEMMA: MAINTAINING VITALITY AS A LATE-CAREER MARKETING EDUCATOR

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POSITION PAPER

Marketing education is rapidly evolving, driven by innovation from artificial intelligence, the introduction of new digital platforms, easier access to analytics, and shifting pedagogical expectations. In the face of this dynamic environment, tenured faculty members, particularly those in late-career stages, face a growing dilemma: how to remain current, engaged, and impactful. While extensive resources and mentoring are directed toward early-career academics, significantly less institutional attention is usually given to the ongoing development of seasoned scholars. This imbalance risks professional stagnation for late-career marketing educators and a missed opportunity to leverage their human capital.

The faculty development literature suggests that academic careers progress through identifiable stages (e.g., Baldwin, 1979; Baldwin & Blackburn, 1981; O'Meara, Terosky, & Neumann, 2008). In late-career stages, faculty may struggle with maintaining relevance, adopting new technologies, or having a sense of purpose as they transition from productivity-focused to legacy-focused roles. Moreover, lifelong learning models, such as O'Meara et al.'s (2008) framework of faculty growth, emphasize the interdependent roles of agency, professional identity, and learning in shaping continued engagement. In marketing education, these dimensions are tested as senior faculty confront demands to incorporate the latest digital tools, emerging technical skills, and learning-focused teaching methods.

Compounding these pressures are age-related assumptions about senior faculty. Older educators may be perceived as having lower digital self-efficacy or greater resistance to change. Yet, they have also been described as the "village elders" (Wilson, Hendrix, Knox, & London, 2024). They offer deep institutional knowledge, mentorship potential, and a desire to leave a legacy. The notion that someone who is late in their career is not interested in learning and professional growth was called into question in a study outside academe by Greller (2006), who found personal investment in professional development was associated with one's motivation but not with age.

To address this dilemma, marketing educators and administrators should reframe late-career faculty development as essential to academic vitality. A conceptual framework is proposed with three influential factors in a senior marketing educator's potential to flourish:

1. Professional Agency – The perception of autonomy and purpose in selecting meaningful roles and projects (e.g., mentoring, new teaching modalities).
2. Learning Opportunities – Access to targeted professional development, including micro-credentialing, reverse mentoring, and exposure to current marketing technologies.
3. Professional Identity Renewal – Culturally and structurally supported avenues for late-career faculty to redefine their academic roles in ways that align with their values and emerging institutional needs.

By supporting these priorities, institutions can empower late-career faculty to enhance their academic vitality through initiatives targeted to their career stage (Baldwin & Blackburn, 1981; Kalivoda, Sorrell, & Simpson, 1994).

Skeptics may argue that investing in late-career faculty has diminishing returns. However, this view fails to account for the institutional cost of disengaged senior faculty, which includes cultural inertia, missed mentorship opportunities, and misalignment between faculty expertise and student expectations. Late-career faculty must combat these misconceptions about their career stage and advocate for development opportunities fitting for them (Wilson et al., 2024).

This position paper aims to inspire inquiry into the late stages of academic careers within the marketing discipline. Future research might include exploring:

- How marketing faculty manage professional identity in the face of technological disruption.
- The effectiveness of specific interventions (e.g., reverse mentoring, sabbaticals, digital immersion) in fostering late-career vitality.
- Institutional roles in shaping career trajectories post-tenure.

Understanding and supporting the growth of seasoned marketing scholars is a strategic imperative for institutions that desire their faculty to be responsive, relevant, and vibrant.

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TEACHING ATTENTION: RECLAIMING FOCUS IN THE MARKETING CLASSROOM

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POSITION PAPER

Sustaining attention is essential in today's marketing classroom, yet about one-third of students report feeling disengaged during class (Dugan et al., 2019). Courses like Principles of Marketing often enroll non-majors focused on meeting degree requirements rather than on interest in the topic, making engagement more challenging (Sclarow et al., 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted foundational K–12 learning, and now educators must also navigate digital distractions that fragment attention and undermine focus (Dontre, 2020). In lectures, attention dips after five minutes and again between 10 and 18 minutes, suggesting periodic lapses (Bradbury, 2016). Additionally, student attention tends to be surface level, but engagement requires deeper involvement. While some researchers question how "attention" is defined, one thing is clear: both attention and engagement are vital for learning success. Furthermore, the ability to focus is a critical skill for the classroom and for professional success.

Over three semesters, students in jumbo marketing courses at a large state university were surveyed at midterm. Twelve hundred seventy-one students were asked to provide open ended feedback. Response rates ranged from 50% to 69%, averaging 61%, mirroring class attendance.

Evaluations were conducted using pencil and paper. Two key questions were:

1. What is one thing you have done to make your experience in the class positive?
2. What is one thing you have done that has been detrimental to your success in the class?

Analysis revealed that maintaining engagement and focus was a challenge. Thirteen percent identified lack of engagement as the most detrimental factor to success, while 21% cited active engagement as the most positive action. These findings highlight both the difficulty students face in staying engaged and their recognition of the importance of engaging in class content.

Mindfulness is defined as focusing attention on the present moment with openness and without judgment. Mindfulness improves concentration, reduces stress, and supports emotional regulation (Lutz et al., 2008).

Instructors often face the challenge of not having enough time to cover all required material. This becomes more pronounced as class sizes grow due to increased accountability and reduced resources. The key challenge becomes identifying mindfulness exercises that are quick and scalable.

The following mindfulness exercises were identified as suitable for college classrooms and each take less than 90 seconds:

1. Silent Sixty: Begin class with 60 seconds of silence. Students sit quietly and focus on their breath to create a focused state.
2. Sound Awareness: Ring a bell or chime. Students raise their hands when they can no longer hear the sound, followed by silence. This sharpens auditory attention.
3. Mindful Check-In: Ask students to rate their focus using a show of hands or digital poll. This builds self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

The next step is to test the three exercises and determine which is most effective.

Some professors may view mindfulness as unrelated to marketing content or a distraction wasting limited class time. Students might feel uncomfortable with introspective activities, especially in large classrooms. These concerns can be addressed through clear communication of evidence-based benefits, low-pressure, and optional participation.

Instructors face growing class sizes and increasingly distracted students. Brief mindfulness exercises could offer a simple, time-effective way to help students stay present. Integrating these practices could foster a more focused and engaged learning environment. Students can also take these tools into future workplaces to support sustained attention and focus.

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FAMILY HEAD PERSONALITY AND HOUSEHOLD CATEGORY SPENDING

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POSITION PAPER

Consumer personality is found to be intricately linked to almost anything else in individual consumer behavior (Baumgartner 2002; Kassarjian 1971). Until recently, however, there has been little research on whether, and how, consumer personality, particularly that of the family head, might be associated with household spending patterns in consumption categories.

Recently published research (Ebert et al. 2021; Friedman et al. 2013; Gladstone, Matz, and Lemaire 2019) used large datasets to explore linkages between the Big Five personality traits and spending in particular consumption categories. For example, personality traits of consumers using public healthcare programs (e.g., Medicare) were found to be associated with beneficiaries' use of many expensive health care services (Friedman et al. 2013). Combining a large dataset of digital transaction records with client survey data from a bank over 2,000 account holders in the UK, researchers explored whether spending records could be used to infer personality traits via machine learning algorithms (Gladstone et al. 2019). Moving beyond personality and spending patterns at the individual level, further research (Ebert et al. 2021) was conducted on the linkages between personality dimensions and spending behaviors across geographical regions in the UK using a large dataset of spending records.

This research used the national surveys of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) to explore how family head personality relates to spending patterns across major household consumption categories. PSID, funded primarily by the US federal government, has surveyed a nationally representative sample of U.S. families since 1968. We used data from two surveys of the PSID: the Wellbeing and Daily Life survey administered in 2016 and the Main Study survey administered in 2017. Personality dimensions measured by the established Big Five model, along with other relevant variables, were analyzed for potential linkages to proportion of spending in major consumption categories such as food, housing, healthcare, clothing, travel, and entertainment, to reveal possible relationships.

Category consumption was expressed as its proportion in total consumption expenditure. The means of the ten category expenditures were then compared by gender, age, urbanization, income, and total consumption that are conceptually distinct from personality. Linear regression models were used to estimate the effects of personality dimensions on category spending with demographic variables. Major findings: 1) All four categories of household consumption, including the two discretionary categories (i.e., trip, recreation), were subject to the influence of factors external to the personality of the family head: gender, age, income, consumption level, and urbanization; and 2) Certain dimensions of personality of the family head were found to be associated with the two discretionary consumption categories (i.e., trip, recreation) and at least one necessity category (i.e., food) even after controlling for the effects of gender, age, income, consumption level, and urbanization. Specifically, 1) openness was found to elevate the proportion of trip and vacation expenditure whereas neuroticism was found to depress the proportion of trip and vacation expenditure; 2) openness was found to elevate the proportion of other recreation expenditure whereas agreeableness was found to depress the proportion of trip and vacation expenditure; and 3) openness was found to elevate the proportion of food expenditure.

The finding that openness elevated the proportion of trip and vacation expenditure appears to be consistent with previous research that suggested the positive linkage between openness and spending on flights (Gladstone et al. 2019). No exploration was made into subcategory items such as eating out or mortgage payments in this research. Donations to charity or savings were not included as household consumption categories in this research. Future research may explore subcategories of household consumption to for effects of personality.

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USING WEEKLY QUIZZES AND STUDENT NOTES TO PROVIDE INCENTIVE FOR ADVANCE READING: A PILOT STUDY

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POSITION PAPER

A growing number of marketing educators are using elements of a flipped classroom approach, requiring students to review materials in advance of in-person class (Garner & Shank, 2024). Unfortunately, many students do not examine those assigned materials prior to class (Hoeft, 2012; Starcher & Proffitt, 2011; Young, 2016), impacting potential learning outcomes. To provide incentive for advance reading, the author has administered weekly quizzes for years, allowing students to make notes and use them on quizzes. For this pilot study, student note-taking participation was tracked and compared to a range of course outcomes. Students reacted positively both to the weekly quizzes and the note-using option, but no strong correlations were found between note usage and course performance in these early findings.

There is no single definition of the flipped classroom, but these techniques are common: students are expected to review class materials (readings, videos, notes) in advance, class time is used for active learning and homework, and students take increased ownership of self-paced learning (Garner & Shank, 2024). However, many students are not doing the necessary preparation (Hoeft, 2012; Starcher & Proffitt, 2011; Young, 2016). Potential explanations include lack of effective study habits (Starcher & Proffitt, 2011), the amount of reading, and time conflicts from work and social life (Hoeft, 2012). To encourage preparation, past studies have proposed reasonably priced textbooks with short chapters and graphics (Starcher & Proffitt, 2011), graded journals about the readings (Hoeft, 2012), and regular quizzes on the assigned chapters (Glodowski & Thompson, 2018; Young, 2016).

To encourage advance reading, the author over the past six years has used beginning-of-week quizzes in two undergraduate marketing courses at a small university in the Midwestern U.S. Quizzes are comprised of five multiple choice questions and are designed to be simple if assigned readings were completed. Students have the option to make notes and use them on quizzes; at the end of class, notes are submitted to instructor and are later returned to students on final examination day. Notes may be hand-written or computer printed and must fit on one side of an 8.5” x 11” page. Qualitative reactions to both the weekly quizzes and note policy have been positive on course evaluations, but participation and outcomes were not previously measured until this pilot study in the spring 2025 semester.

Principles of Marketing is a required course for Business majors. Of the 31 students, 61% were in their second year and 32% in their third. Only 6% were Marketing majors, with most of the rest in another Business major. On weekly quizzes, 55% of students used notes at least once; those participants used notes an average of four times out of thirteen quizzes. They were somewhat more likely to use notes than those in the second course (55% vs. 31%). No strong positive correlations were found between use of notes and any measured course outcomes, including weekly quiz scores, final examination scores, or overall course grades.

Business to Business Marketing is an upper-level course required for Marketing majors in their third or fourth year. Of the 29 students, 34% were Marketing majors, 41% were Marketing minors, and 24% were taking the course as an elective. On weekly quizzes, 31% of students used notes at least once; those participants used notes on an average of two quizzes. Again, no strong positive correlations were found between use of notes and course outcomes.

Other methods exist for using required quizzes and allowing notes. Glodowski and Thompson (2018) recommend quizzes accompanied by required guided notes, which consist of incomplete outlines of lecture material or copies of slides with incomplete information, while Young (2016) used quizzes and connected notes, requiring students to connect chapter concepts and their consumer experiences. Additional options for reading incentivization might include beginning-of-week small group work or written essays requiring chapter knowledge.

This was a pilot study covering two courses in one semester, with no conclusions drawn. In the future, note usage and course performance will be tracked every semester in all courses, and the use of guided or connected notes will be considered. Students will be surveyed about whether they read in advance, and their reasons for completing or avoiding this work. The objective is not for students to achieve course outcomes simply from reading the textbook, but to help them prepare in advance to learn during the week through active learning in a flipped classroom approach.

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CRAFTING GOOD BEER: AN EXPLORATION OF ISSUES IN BLACK BREWING

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POSITION PAPER

Minority-owned small businesses encounter distinct and multifaceted obstacles that hinder their ability to establish and scale successful enterprises. These challenges are often shaped by the intersecting influences of race, ethnicity, and gender, which can significantly impact performance outcomes (Harrison & Thomas, 2024). Such obstacles frequently constrain marketing effectiveness, supply chain access, and broader strategic decisions, particularly in industries where social capital, cultural affinity, and resource access are central to success (Bahl, Gupta and Elzinga, 2021 and Thompson and Bahl, 2018). To advance theoretical understanding in marketing and business strategy, it is essential to examine the phenomena experienced by minority entrepreneurs within these constrained environments.

The U.S. craft beer industry offers a compelling context for such investigation. Black-owned breweries represent less than 1% of all craft breweries (National Black Brewers Association, n.d.), a stark disparity within an otherwise growing and culturally resonant segment of the beverage industry. This underrepresentation raises critical questions about the structural, cultural, and market-based barriers that disproportionately affect minority entrepreneurs. Characteristics of the craft beer industry—such as its historically white, male-dominated culture, emphasis on community-based branding, and complex distribution systems—may unintentionally reinforce exclusion and restrict access to key success factors for underrepresented groups.

Although the craft beer industry experienced substantial growth in the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, more recent indicators suggest a plateauing of growth. Industry organizations such as the Brewers Association (BA) and the National Black Brewers Association (NB2A) have taken steps to improve minority participation, yet a substantial gap remains. The persistence of this gap necessitates a deeper exploration of the lived experiences and systemic obstacles encountered by Black and other minority craft brewers. In particular, the industry's reliance on regulated distribution networks, state-level legal frameworks, and relationship-driven marketing channels may create disproportionately high entry barriers for minority-owned firms.

This research aims to explore the structural and cultural dynamics that shape success and failure for minority-owned craft breweries. Through exploratory interviews with industry participants, the study will identify emergent themes and inform the development of grounded research questions. These insights are intended to lay the foundation for future empirical work and theoretical contributions in marketing strategy and supply chain theory, particularly as they relate to resource mobilization, distribution access, and cultural positioning.

Based on initial qualitative interviews with Black craft brewers, several recurring themes emerged that highlight both the challenges and strengths shaping their entrepreneurial journeys. Key barriers include limited access to capital, with many entrepreneurs relying heavily on self-funding; difficulties navigating complex distribution systems and local regulatory constraints; and marketing challenges rooted in historical erasure, cultural stereotypes, and biased industry perceptions. Participants also described the tension of balancing authentic expressions of Black identity with the need to appeal to broader, mainstream audiences. Despite these obstacles, the interviews revealed notable strengths, including a strong commitment to community-building, mutual support, and cultural preservation. Entrepreneurs expressed deep passion for their craft, often embedding personal narratives and cultural heritage into their branding strategies. Shared consumer concerns across interviews further underscored the importance of increasing awareness and exposure, addressing feelings of exclusion or discomfort, ensuring affordability and access, and fostering authentic representation within the craft beer space. These insights underscore the complexity of market participation for minority brewers and the potential for culturally driven innovation to reshape industry narratives.

The importance of this inquiry lies not only in addressing an evident industry disparity but also in challenging assumptions that low minority representation reflects low interest. Skepticism regarding the strategic value of studying minority-owned craft breweries may arise from beliefs that such participation is a matter of preference rather than structural exclusion. Moreover, recent sociopolitical shifts in the U.S. have led to increasing scrutiny of diversity initiatives, potentially deterring efforts to investigate these dynamics through an equity-informed lens.

Nevertheless, understanding the unique challenges and adaptive strategies of minority entrepreneurs is critical to enriching the theoretical landscape of marketing. Potential contributions include insights into the formation and leveraging of alternative resource networks, differentiated branding strategies rooted in cultural authenticity, and cooperative competition ("co-opetition") models used to mitigate structural disadvantage (Mathias, Huyghe, Frid, and Galloway, 2018). As such, the proposed research holds the potential to illuminate underexplored aspects of entrepreneurial behavior, market access, and cultural branding—thereby offering meaningful extensions to existing theory and practice.

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BRIDGING THE THEORY-PRACTICE GAP IN MARKETING EDUCATION: A CASE FOR KOLB-BASED EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN STUDENT-RUN BUSINESSES

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POSITION PAPER

A persistent challenge in marketing education is the disconnect between classroom theory and the practical skills employers demand (Mehmet et al., 2025). Students often master concepts through textbooks and lectures but struggle to apply those principles in dynamic, real-world contexts (Schaller, 2020). This theory-practice gap leaves graduates underprepared for marketing roles that require agility, creativity, data literacy, and collaborative execution. Simulations and case studies help, but they lack the complexity, risk, and decision-making responsibility found in actual business environments. The problem is especially acute for students without access to internships or professional networks.

Today's marketing landscape is increasingly shaped by digital transformation, AI integration, and evolving consumer behavior—all requiring marketers to combine technical proficiency with soft skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, and teamwork. Research by Štimac & Bilandžić-Tanasić (2023) and Mehmet et al. (2025) highlights the growing demand for applied learning models that reflect the skills gap between higher education and workforce expectations. At teaching-focused institutions and those serving first-generation or low-income students, there is an added equity imperative: to provide affordable, accessible ways for students to build marketable experience. Experiential learning within student-run businesses offers a promising model to address these combined challenges.

To bridge the theory-practice gap, marketing educators could adopt experiential learning frameworks grounded in Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle and apply them within business environments. At the University of Saint Mary, we designed our MKT 301: Business Learning Lab to center around Spiro's Cup, a fully operational, student-run coffee shop. Over eight weeks, students engage in iterative learning through real tasks—product development, pricing strategy, UX audits, promotional campaigns, and service training design. Each assignment is intentionally mapped to Kolb's stages: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation (Kolb, 1984). The result is a deeply immersive and academically rigorous model that produces portfolio-ready work and measurable business outcomes. Faculty act as facilitators, guiding students through real-world ambiguity while reinforcing theoretical foundations.

While the model proved effective, implementation was not without obstacles. Students entered with varied skill levels, necessitating pre-assessment and differentiated support tools like a "Marketing Toolkit." Group dynamics required careful scaffolding through role-setting and blended evaluations. Equipment and resource constraints were mitigated by leveraging existing campus resources and early planning. Critics of experiential education may argue it lacks standardization, but our approach demonstrates that structured, theory-driven application yields both rigor and relevance. Others may advocate for digital simulations as scalable alternatives; however, they often lack the emotional and social complexity of real-world problem solving.

Kolb-based experiential learning embedded in student-run businesses represents a scalable, equitable, and transformative approach to marketing education. It not only bridges the theory-practice gap but cultivates career-ready graduates equipped with both confidence and competence. This model offers broad potential for replication across business disciplines. Future exploration should assess scalability across different institutional types and resource levels. Future research should evaluate long-term impacts on student career trajectories and the role of AI-enhanced tools in experiential settings. For institutions lacking a campus-run business, adaptations could include partnerships with local nonprofits, pop-up ventures, or cross-course collaborative projects. Ultimately, the goal is not only to close the theory-practice gap but also to democratize access to meaningful, applied learning for all students.

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INTEGRATING MARKETING RESEARCH AND NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT: AN ACTIVITY FOR MARKETING PRINCIPLES CLASSES

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POSITION PAPER

New product development is underutilized in the marketing curriculum (Lantos et al., 2009). This teaching innovation provides students a hands-on experience to further develop their new product development and marketing research skills. Students act as marketing consultants for an organization by working in small teams of 3-5 students for the duration of the class. The instructor acts as the CEO and each of the student teams compete to provide the CEO and organization a new product solution that allows the firm to expand their marketshare in the category.

Leading up to the class session, the instructor visits a retailer such as Ollie's, Bargain Hunt, or a similar one which carries discontinued or unpopular products that are sold at a reduced price since the manufacturer is trying to reduce remaining inventory. This is done with the goal of finding a new product "flop" that could be used as an example in the class. Most of the recent ones that have been the most successful have been brand extensions by candy companies into new product areas. One example of this was Jelly Belly extending their products to sparkling water (https://www.instagram.com/jellybellysparklingwater/).

At the start of class after students have created their small groups, they are given the directive by the instructor (the CEO of Jelly Belly) that they need to come up with a new product that helps them grow marketshare because the candy industry have become very competitive with so many competitors in the United States and new global entrants as well as trends (such as the health consciousness and exercising) negatively impacting the industry. Therefore, student teams need to create a new product. This includes modifying current products or creating something in a completely new category. Students are reminded to avoid brand dilution and that they need to clearly describe the new product using the 4 P's of marketing as well as create a visual. Student teams share their ideas after a few minutes of them working together. The instructor provides feedback on each one helping reinforce their knowledge of the 4 P's from earlier content.

Next the student teams need to come up with market feedback. Either quantitative or qualitative. They need to provide justification for what they choose and provide a detailed breakdown of questions they will ask participants in the research so they could help make a better prototype of the product in the future. After the teams have some time to work on this, the instructor talks through the different types of quantitative and qualitative choices different teams focus on making sure to hit on scaled survey questions, open-ended questions, observational research, depth-interviews, focus groups, and projective techniques. This allows the students to give examples of each and the instructor to correct them if there are issues with their questions generated from potential customers or their understanding of the different quantitative and qualitative methods. This serves as a helpful review of marketing research content previously covered.

At this point the instructor (acting as the CEO) needs to pick an idea to move forward with a prototype. Here they choose none of the student recommendations and instead go with the product idea they found at the retailer that is discontinued and/or not successful. In this case for Jelly Belly, sparkling water. The instructor should buy several of them for the class to try and then ask them to provide recommended changes to the prototype (taste, packaging, price point, name, size, etc.). Student teams work together and share ideas with the class. Since the product is not usually good, the students come up with several ideas to improve.

Next, the students are tasked with selecting a test market, justifying why those chose it, and then implementing a plan to launch and measure success in that area. This allows the student teams and instructor to discuss as a class what a test market is and provide examples of other brands using test markets successfully. It also reinforces the importance of collecting data with marketing metrics and key performance indicators to determine whether a product is successful and should move onto a nationwide launch.

The main challenge throughout this activity is that it is driven using the Socratic method where students can take the conversation and product idea in any direction. The instructor needs to properly guide the discussion to get to the key concepts and ensure students can understand them, explain them, and come up for solutions using them throughout the process.

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GAMIFY. ENGAGE. RETAIN: A NEW ERA IN MARKETING EDUCATION

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POSITION PAPER

In today's evolving job market, college graduates are increasingly expected to possess critical thinking and data analysis skills. However, higher education continues to rely on outdated methods of content delivery, particularly in online courses, that fail to nurture these vital competencies. Additionally, the traditional model of reading textbooks and taking multiple-choice quizzes not only lacks depth but also fails to capture students' attention and motivation. This paper argues for the integration of gamification and interactive materials into coursework to foster deeper learning, increase student retention, and better prepare graduates for real-world challenges.

Brief Context of Situation: The landscape of higher education has shifted dramatically, particularly in the wake of widespread adoption of online learning modalities. Students now seek more flexible, accessible, and personalized learning environments. However, this shift has not been matched with equally innovative instructional design. Too often, online courses replicate static classroom models, offering passive learning experiences that are not engaging and that are ill-suited for developing higher-order thinking skills.

Data supports the urgency of reform. According to Gray, only 56% of surveyed employers felt recent graduates were proficient in critical thinking skills. Meanwhile, research on learner engagement shows a clear correlation between active participation and improved learning outcomes. Aupperlee asserts that learning is significantly more effective when students are actively engaged.

Recommended Course of Action: Gamifying the Learning Experience: To address the disconnect between student needs and traditional course delivery, institutions should adopt gamification elements into their online curricula. Gamification involves applying game design principles such as challenges, rewards, competition, and storytelling to non-game contexts like education. Leaderboards, badges, and level-based progression systems can further incentivize continuous engagement. These elements can transform routine assignments into dynamic learning experiences that are motivating, immersive, and, most importantly, educationally rigorous.

Interactive reading materials should also be utilized to increase engagement and motivation. Assignments should simulate real-world problems, prompting students to apply concepts and demonstrate mastery through problem-solving rather than rote memorization.

At Sinclair Community College, I collaborated with instructional designers to develop a Foundations of Marketing course that incorporated gamification elements and interactive reading modules. The course was also narrative-driven. We used AI tools to create and voice the characters in the storyline, which further enhanced the immersive learning experience. The course launched in Fall 2024 and was well received. We collected student feedback from both the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 semesters, which strongly supported the course's effectiveness. In Fall 2024, we offered four sections (one in-person, three online), but demand grew quickly, and the course expanded to six sections in Spring 2025 (one in-person, five online), all of which filled to capacity.

Gamified learning environments have been shown to improve not only motivation and course completion rates but also cognitive engagement and retention of information. A meta-analysis by Hamari et al. (2014) found that gamification positively affects learning outcomes, particularly when paired with meaningful content and feedback mechanisms.

Challenges and Alternative Perspectives: Despite its promise, implementing gamification in higher education is not without obstacles. Designing interactive and gamified content requires significant time, creativity, and technological proficiency on the part of instructors, resources that are often limited. Additionally, grading more complex, application-based assignments typically demands more instructor time than automated quizzes.

Some educators may also resist the incorporation of game elements, fearing it undermines academic rigor, or shifts focus away from learning objectives. However, when implemented thoughtfully, gamification aligns closely with learning theories that emphasize active, contextualized learning over passive consumption of information.

Future Directions for Exploration: To ensure the sustainability and scalability of gamified learning, future research should explore platforms and tools that streamline course design and grading. Additionally, institutions must provide faculty with training and support to develop and implement gamified content effectively.

There is also a pressing need for traditional textbook publishers to rethink their role in the modern learning ecosystem. If publishers fail to evolve, they risk being replaced by more agile, student-centered educational technology providers.

Conclusion: To equip students with critical thinking and data analysis skills, higher education must move beyond passive content delivery. Gamification offers a compelling, evidence-based solution for enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes, particularly in online settings. While implementation comes with challenges, the potential benefits far outweigh the costs. By embracing innovation in instructional design, institutions can meet the evolving needs of students and the labor market, ensuring that graduates are not only knowledgeable but also capable of solving complex, real-world problems.

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WHAT TO DO WHEN AI KNOWS MORE THAN YOU? ADDRESSING CHALLENGES IN MARKETING EDUCATION

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POSITION PAPER

The ability of AI to sort, summarize, and retrieve information is unparalleled. Its educational applications are obvious as AI tools become faster and more powerful daily. There are AI services specifically designed for taking notes and summarizing presentations using built-in features or standalone applications. Students can turn readings into podcasts through AI apps. Generative AI quickly and easily produces new text, images, and videos. AI agents can now complete tasks autonomously. AI apps are becoming so good, or in any case good enough, that AI will surely revolutionize student learning methods and perhaps even replace them. Therefore, this paper considers how past technological innovations may help us address challenges of AI in marketing education.

During the industrial revolution labor requiring physical strength lost much of its value. New machines could do work in minutes or hours that used to take men days or weeks to complete. While displacement took time, farming and manufacturing irrevocably changed forever. The United States economy moved from primarily agrarian work to manufacturing and services. Later came the knowledge economy, leaving even fewer manufacturing workers. In the same way that automation largely replaced physical labor, AI could greatly replace intellectual labor by doing much of the thinking and analysis for us. Perhaps the only limit may be what humans program AI to do.

Teachers can understandably become lost alongside this seemingly omniscient AI technology. Each student with access to a laptop, cell phone, or smartwatch has more knowledge right at their fingertips than any single person could ever learn or remember. This being the case, students can lose the ability or motivation to learn and retain information. Consider how few people memorize phone numbers like they did before cell phones stored them. This entire category of information, like many others, was offloaded from human memory into electronic memory. As a result of storing information on devices rather than internally, the goal became quickly and effectively finding accurate and relevant information. However, AI search engines attempt to do this for us too.

If AI can provide immediate answers, then instructors must provide students with opportunities to figure things out themselves without AI. With so much information accessible, it is necessary to intentionally focus on developing problem-solving abilities and critical thinking skills. For example, prompt engineering requires critical thinking and clear communication to be successful. It is also important to remember the value teachers provide does not depend on having every answer. It has been joked that instructors do not have to know everything, just more than students. In the historical context, universities were places where students and teachers learned from each other. This is still true today of course, and using AI may be an area teachers learn as much from students as they teach them.

Teaching other students how to use AI tools is valuable as well, although this requires teachers to first become proficient and then remain current themselves. AI has likely already surpassed many students and even teachers in writing ability. This is self-evident if sudden increases in writing levels of a class is an indicator of improper AI use. However, most marketers do not have to be great writers just as they do not have to be graphic designers. Rather, they need to be competent at using writing and photo editing programs. With linear editing, video can be almost as easy to edit as photos. Similarly, few marketers needed to know HTML coding after visual editors. The net result is to help students who lack certain skills bring their work up to par, but for those who excel in their writing or visual design or other areas AI could devalue their skills.

Some argue AI is not nearly as advanced as claimed. Yet today, the biggest impediment to AI adoption might be human resistance to change. Videoconferencing technology stands as a clear example of this. While available for decades beforehand, many schools and workplaces did not use virtual meetings until Covid-19 and social distancing mandates necessitated its use. Then there was no longer an excuse not to use video-conferencing apps. Certainly, questions remain about the role of AI in marketing education. Some may sort itself out as AI technology continues to advance, but it will take all involved, including teachers, students, and industry, as necessary and appropriate in order to adequately address challenges by the vast, and growing, treasury of knowledge which AI has access to.

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BRAVE IDEAS, SAFE SPACES: DESIGNING A MARKETING CLASSROOM WHERE CREATIVITY THRIVES

Jennifer Riley Simone, Indiana University

POSITION PAPER

In the modern marketing workplace, bold, original thinking is no longer optional, it's essential. Yet many undergraduate marketing students arrive in the classroom reluctant to share their ideas, fearing judgment or failure. Despite creativity being named the second most important workplace skill in the World Economic Forum's 2023 Future of Jobs Report, students raised in analytically focused academic environments often struggle with the ambiguity, vulnerability and social risk required to create something new. If we want students to be brave with their ideas, we must first give them a safe space in which to try. This position paper outlines an intentional, semester-long course design that fosters both individual creative growth and collaborative innovation within a psychologically safe environment.

Creativity & Communication is a required class for marketing majors at Indiana University's Kelley School of Business. While it focuses on integrated marketing communications (IMC), one of the course's five learning outcomes challenges students to "feel more comfortable including creative elements in design, strategy, and team projects." However, I quickly observed that many students, especially those who did not self-identify as creative, found this expectation intimidating. When I first began teaching the curriculum, I assumed that seniors nearing graduation would already be socially connected and open to collaboration. In practice, many were disengaged, uncomfortable or skeptical about creativity's relevance to business. In response, I embarked on a major redesign of the course experience.

As Ron Carucci writes in Harvard Business Review, organizations that foster creative work "ensure the emotional safety needed for creative people to risk sharing their most divergent ideas without fear of judgment." I applied this thinking to the classroom and asked: what would it look like to build psychological safety into the course from day one?

The solution became a semester-long progression of scaffolded creative exercises. On Day 1, students meet outside the classroom for a hands-on team-building activity. They invent a fictional family and build them a Lego home, focusing on story and play rather than correctness. This early exercise sets the tone for low-stakes, imaginative collaboration.

Throughout the course, students rotate through seven different teams, broadening interpersonal connections and reducing social risk. Early Photoshop assignments invite students to modify basic designs in creative ways, and exemplary work is shared anonymously to reinforce that risk-taking is valued.

Mid-semester, the focus deepens. Students reflect on their unique "lens"—their personal background, values, and experiences that shape creative problem-solving. They share insights with classmates and participate in an art-thinking exercise at the IU Art Museum. A follow-up discussion explores the role of AI in creativity, prompting students to consider their own relationship with technology and originality.

Later, students are introduced to improv. They learn the rules, complete warmups, and then perform short skits in rotating teams. This "structured play" fosters collaboration, spontaneity, and shared vulnerability. Reflections describe the experience as "energizing," "scary but fun," and "bonding."

The semester concludes with an IMC project. Students pitch fictional business ideas (past examples include a Monster's Inc dating app and an alien donut shop), then vote on the top concepts and form teams to build integrated campaigns. The final strategies are presented in class where creative elements such as songs, costumes, props and skits are often used to engage the audience. The resulting atmosphere is creative, energized, and often electric.

Not all students embrace this model immediately. Some are skeptical of creativity's role in business, while others feel unsure of how to participate. To support them, I normalize failure, provide multiple participation formats and foster a classroom culture that celebrates experimentation. In-class peer feedback helps reinforce pride in creative work.

Student reflections and course evaluations provide strong evidence that this structure works. Over five years, I've consistently received high evaluation scores for creating an environment where students feel comfortable expressing their views. Those who once resisted creative work often finish the semester with pride in their projects and a newfound sense of confidence.

Future research could strengthen these insights through formal study. Pre- and post-course surveys of creative self-efficacy or comparative analysis with other instructional formats could help quantify the benefits of this approach.

Ultimately, brave ideas don't just appear - they flourish in classrooms that are thoughtfully designed to nurture them. When students feel safe enough to try something new, creativity becomes a skill they can develop, rather than a trait they either have or don't. A classroom where creativity thrives is built on trust, intentionality, and the courage to experiment.

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THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE BUSINESS CHAMPIONSHIPS AND APEX 360™ SCORE: INTRODUCING A MERIT-BASED SYSTEM FOR STUDENT AND EMPLOYER SUCCESS

Lane Wakefield, Baylor University

POSITION PAPER

The recruitment process for college graduates seeking entry-level business positions heavily prioritizes networking, often overshadowing critical predictors of job success. Students spend years developing job-specific skills through their academic curriculum, yet face several types of related and unrelated barriers, including requiring networking skills to secure interviews. This reliance introduces inefficiencies and biases that can lead to missing the best candidates for entry-level positions.

The traditional job-seeking process at universities centers on career fairs and connections between alumni, professors, and students, creating four significant limitations. First, networking skills, often unrelated to job performance, are required for employability (Fryczyńska and Ciecierski, 2020). Second, geographic and economic disparities are prevalent. Career fairs favor companies near universities with larger recruiting budgets, sidelining students at non-target schools and employers headquartered outside of the region and/or with limited recruiting budgets. Students working jobs while studying are further disadvantaged due to time constraints to attend career fairs. Third, career fairs and networking between alumni and professors adopt a broad, unfocused approach, attracting diverse candidates rather than those best suited for specific roles. Fourth, college admissions and scholarships rely heavily on high school SAT or ACT scores, which determine the school a student attends and, subsequently, the recruiters targeting those institutions. Each of these limitations impact the ability for candidates and recruiters to reach their potential.

In contrast, fields like college athletics have changed to adopt a meritocratic model, where top performers, such as quarterbacks invited to the Manning Passing Academy, are evaluated based on skills, expanding their networks as a result. Business recruitment lags, prioritizing connections over capabilities.

The National Collegiate Business Championships (NCBC), led by Baylor's Center for Sales Strategy in Sports and Entertainment in the Marketing department of the Hankamer School of Business, is an NCAA-like series connecting college students nationwide to top jobs through real-world challenges. NCBC events test skills recruiters cannot see in a resume or interview, hosted online as well as in prestigious venues including Bridgestone Arena (Nashville), State Farm Arena (Atlanta), BMO Field (Toronto) and the Foster Campus for Business and Innovation (Waco, TX).

The NCBC engages over 100 colleges and universities in the United States and 14 in Canada across multiple departments. Students from schools of all sizes routinely outperform peers at flagship schools, proving NCBC's ability to mimic athletic competitions by offering a merit-based playing field.

Values-focused challenges prioritize integrity, reward students and make a strong impact. The challenges are often updated and new challenges are tested. These include Presentation Pro, Quantum Quiz, Viral, Man v Machine, Inbox Inferno, Resume Rumble, Speed Sell and Voices of Valor.

In the future, students can opt-in to take assessments and provide their resume to determine their Apex 360™ Score. This score will allow students and employers to know much more about an applicant, including the following:

Category	Weight	Subfactor	Description
Core Competence	40%	Hard Skills	Business-specific knowledge & simulations
		Cognitive Ability (g)	Problem-solving, reasoning, IQ-style tasks
		Communication Mastery	Verbal & written clarity
		Experience	Relevant work history, projects, achievements
Character & Purpose	40%	Character Strength	Grit, conscientiousness, integrity
		Purpose & Ethics	Values, ethical decision-making, faith alignment
		Coachability & Growth	Receptiveness to feedback, improvement over time
Readiness & Resilience	20%	Social Intelligence	Teamwork, emotional intelligence
		Mental Resilience	Focus, stress management
		Physical Readiness	Health inputs, energy, discipline
		Financial Literacy	Practical decision-making, budgeting confidence

Scaling the NCBC across business majors presents logistical and technical hurdles, including web application development, and collaboration between schools. A user-friendly web app is critical to engage stakeholders—students, professors, recruiters, and partners. Each group requires tailored experience with personalized logins and pathways to achieve their goals (e.g., students showcasing skills, recruiters identifying talent).

To validate and refine the championships and the Apex 360 score, future research should employ quantitative methods to compare the talent of candidates identified through the NCBC versus traditional recruitment. Further investigation could also include the broader impact of the conventional recruitment model on college graduates' career outcomes.

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BUILDING STUDENT PORTFOLIOS FOR CAREER SUCCESS

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

Professional development during the college careers of students is imperative in today's competitive workforce. Having students understand what skills and experiences are required by scanning the marketplace with job descriptions and talking with industry professionals can help them prepare to achieve those experiences during their time in college so they are viewed as highly qualified job candidates when they enter the workforce (Titlebaum & Blair, 2024).

Personal branding is an important component of students creating a portfolio of their work and communicating to others their skills and experience. Students getting opportunities to develop their personal brands throughout their college curriculum can be valuable for their future careers (Allison & Blair, 2021). Confidence in their personal brand, can allow students to reach self-actualization with the person they want to become in their career and the contribution they want to make in society (Allison et al., 2020). We are seeing more individuals spending a significant amount of time online (Blair, 2019; Correia, 2016). Having a personal brand and presence online to showcase your skills provides students and working professionals a competitive edge in today's marketplace (Blair et al., 2024; Fore et al., 2021). With corporations tapping more into the gig economy and contract work (Blair, 2016), professionals need to show their value to earn coveted salary positions or demand higher wages in a competitive workforce.

Experiential learning opportunities continue to show employers value in the workforce. On-campus experiences, like marketing research centers, provide universities a valuable tool to connect with their local business community but also provide a valuable applied learning experience for students to include in their professional portfolios (Rich & Bartholomew, 2010). Case studies allow students to apply concepts and solve marketing problems (Cheung & Simpson, 2023). Assignments that provide repetition, applied learning, and communication skills are perceived positively by students (Blair, 2021b), but employers also value these experiences since they are more confident students possess these skills to be successful with their organization. With the increasing importance of digital tools and artificial intelligence technology in business, getting students exposure and experience with these can prepare them for future marketing careers (Blair, 2021a; Blair & Allison, 2024). Instructors can offer classroom experiences using digital and traditional media to target specific populations and reach desired goals like what is done in the field (Blair & Robles, 2025). Capstone courses offer a prime opportunity for students to utilize these tools to solve more complex programs and showcase the skills they have developed over their course of their program through case studies, marketing plans, simulations, and other experiential learning opportunities (Bartholomew et al., 2021). Professional development is needed for students in marketing and across disciplines at the university. Taking the lead on preparing soft skills, networking, and personal branding of students can add value to our programs and ensure more success when they enter the workforce.

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CREATING INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS: THE ROLE OF CONNECTION AND CONTEXT IN BUILDING INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

The educational landscape has undoubtedly become more diverse, and with that, the need to accommodate a variety of learners and learning styles has also increased. It is therefore imperative that instructors create inclusive classrooms to facilitate the diversity of learners that comprise their student audience. Fostering student connections through the use of curricular design, as well as providing an array of learning contexts to facilitate various learning styles, reflect just a few of the possible interventions that can be utilized to achieve these goals.

Although diverse learners can be categorized into a few different subgroups, instructors may encounter a recurrence of the same specific typologies based on the overall student profile at their institutions. Students who span generational differences, as well as international students, are two specific subgroups of diverse learners that have been prevalent at my institution. Our classrooms often comprise a mix of high school graduates transitioning into the new experience of college life and adult learners who have delayed undertaking their college education until a later phase of life. Many international students, some of whom attend college as student athletes, are also included in that student mix. Regardless of the specific type of diverse learners, fostering student connections through ethnorelativism and shared experiences – past and current – often helps with improving the learning atmosphere within the classroom and making it accessible to a variety of learners.

Similarly, the use of specific curricular modalities such as a guest speaker model, faculty cross-pollination, and reflective assignments also helps to support an inclusive learning environment. Inviting professional guest speakers to the classroom allows students to hear discipline-specific insights from a variety of real-world professionals. This exposure to local professionals also facilitates mentoring and career-building opportunities. Guest lectures from faculty colleagues who are trained in different disciplines also expose students to different instructional styles, and the benefits gained are likely to extend well beyond the subject matter knowledge. Reflective assignments can serve not only to reinforce the information students learn but also to provide insight for instructors about the value of various learning modalities. Additionally, completing reflective assignments about their experience with both internal and external speakers also allows students the opportunity to be thoughtful about their preferred learning modalities.

Though we have only more recently become attuned to the necessity of accommodating diverse learners, it is likely that facilitating an inclusive learning environment for diverse learners will continue to be a central consideration for instructors. To the extent that these can be harnessed effectively, the combined effect of an improved learning environment, as well as modalities that better facilitate learning transfer, will no doubt result in a more inclusive experience for diverse learners.

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THE ACADEMIC JUGGLE: 5 FRAMEWORKS AND 4 STRATEGIES TO BALANCE THE BIG 3 (TEACHING, RESEARCH, AND SERVICE)

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

Business faculty, particularly those at teaching- and even-balanced institutions or in roles of high service expectations, are increasingly burdened with heavy course loads. These demands are intensified by the shift to hybrid and online teaching, large class size assignments, and evolving institutional pressures for scholarship and service engagement. Related to role theory–specifically role conflict, role overload, and role ambiguity–these notions highlight the strain faculty members experience with overlapping or conflicting expectations of teaching, research, and service (Biddle, 1986). Despite the high stakes for faculty well-being, student learning, and academic output, time management remains an under-addressed challenge in higher education.

This extended abstract synthesizes recent research and applied strategies on faculty time management, highlights the theoretical frameworks that serve as their drivers, and presents a roadmap for educators to better manage their roles' competing interests.

Faculty experience fragmentation in their responsibilities given the diverse demands within their role–educator, researcher, advisor, committee member, mentor, as examples–often without coordinated support or clear prioritization mechanisms. Marketing faculty, in particular, may experience additional time burdens due to student project supervision, industry engagement, service learning, and experiential learning initiatives, given the nature of the discipline. The result is an ever-present sense of "time poverty."

Recent literature highlights several theoretical and applied frameworks relevant to faculty time management:

- Covey's Time Management Matrix
  - An effective method at organizing priorities, the matrix identifies four quadrants to organize tasks as important/not important and urgent/not urgent (Covey, 1989). Without support from the institution, faculty have difficulty getting beyond the Quadrant I (urgent and important) responsibilities.
- Getting Things Done (GTD)
  - The key components of this principle outline a five-step method in which individuals can manage their own productivity by moving items on the mind to actionable items: Collect, Process, Organize, Review, Do (Allen, 2001).
- Self-Determination Theory
  - From Deci and Ryan (1985), this theory offers a motivational lens for faculty based upon autonomy (control over one's own work), competence (feel effective and capable), and relatedness (experience meaningful connections).
- The Pareto Principle
  - Otherwise known as the 80/20 rule, this principle suggests that 80 percent of outcomes or effects stem from 20 percent of inputs or causes (Koch, 1998). Applying this, faculty can become more efficient when focusing efforts on activities that yield the greatest impact.
- Slow Productivity
  - This philosophy emphasizes quality over quantity by reducing work volume and extending timelines. Rather than constant need for availability, looming publication expectations, and never-ending service obligations, s*low productivity* encourages faculty to focus on fewer higher-impact practices over time (Newport, 2023).

These models provide theoretical and operational guidance for improving time management not only for efficiency, but also for personal and professional sustainability.

A review of faculty development literature reveals four recurring domains of action:

1. Prioritization and Planning
2. Teaching Efficiency
3. Boundary Setting
4. Institutional Alignment

Marketing educators often engage in time-intensive andragogical efforts, such as client-based projects, experiential learning, and industry collaboration. These high-impact practices, while beneficial to student learning, significantly increase the time commitments required of faculty. Without intentional prioritization and institutional support, these approaches can detract from other responsibilities and overall well-being. As a result, time management should be viewed not simply as a personal skill, but as an academic imperative driven by institutional culture and leadership.

This work contributes to a theory-informed and practice-oriented synthesis of time management strategies for business faculty. By integrating insights from psychology, productivity, and education literature, this abstract invites business educators to adopt intentional practices for approaching their teaching responsibilities.

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STRATEGIES FOR HANDLING ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

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Ursula Y. Sullivan, Northern Illinois University
Gail Zank, Texas State University

PANEL POSITION PAPER

In this panel session, faculty and administrators with varying years of experience will share their perspectives on handling academic misconduct and dishonesty. Institutions typically have their "Honor Pledge", "Code of Conduct" commitments or similarly labeled affirmations that students will not engage in any cheating or plagiarism. Nevertheless, we know that academic dishonesty happens so the prudent advice is to know ways in which these actions can be managed.

Stephanie E. Kontrim-Baumann, Missouri Baptist University

I will be addressing how we are starting to look at this from a holistic approach, which goes beyond punitive measures, focusing instead on cultivating a culture of integrity. Faculty training, student support initiatives and a community-wide commitment to ethical learning are just a few requirements to ensure consistent and fair procedures. This approach involves aligning educational, behavioral, and institutional elements, so universities can deter misconduct while also reinforcing values that support long-term student success.

Kristen Maceli, Pittsburg State University

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are rapidly transforming higher education, presenting both opportunities and challenges for faculty, staff, and students. With this comes increasing potential issues for dealing with academic misconduct at university, college and instructor levels. There is currently a lack of policies in many institutions to guide students and faculty, which exacerbates a situation that is tenuous at best. Students and faculty are somewhat left guessing how to handle situations. All of this comes at a time that institutions may be seeing declining enrollments and budgets. What student may see as "rights," faculty may see has academic freedom to handle situations in their classrooms accordingly. It is a trying time in higher education.

I will be discussing some issues I have found using turnitin.com and free AI detectors, such as the necessary word counts to ensure accuracy and the word limits for free access. Students are often more aware of these boundaries than faculty. And it is a moving bar. I will also be discussing the challenges we faced as a faculty senate ad hoc AI committee, where we did not perceive the use of AI in the classroom the same way. Some of us did not allow any AI use in our classrooms while others highly encouraged it.

Ursula Sullivan, Northern Illinois University

In a recent occurrence during a mass lecture class, I learned of a chat group that had originally been developed so students could study together for my class. However, a handful of students started to share much more information than was allowed for the class, putting themselves and other students in a precarious situation. I'll discuss how this was handled in the mass course, provide some ways of managing the technology available to students and the eventual outcome of the academic council hearings with this particular breach of student integrity.

Gail Zank, Texas State University

Preventing academic dishonesty starts with clear expectations, well-designed assignments, and a strong culture of integrity. Faculty can reduce misconduct by educating students and providing access to academic support. When a violation occurs, and a case is referred to an Honor Code Council or Academic Integrity Office, faculty should submit thorough documentation. This includes the student's work, assignment instructions, relevant evidence (e.g., plagiarism reports or exam logs), a timeline of events, the course syllabus with academic integrity policies, and a summary of the incident and any communication with the student. Following institutional policies and providing clear, organized information ensures due process and supports fair, consistent decision-making.

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ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF AI IN MARKETING EDUCATION

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Gemini are rapidly transforming marketing education, creating both unprecedented opportunities and complex ethical challenges. As Acar (2024) notes, educators must move beyond the question of whether to use GenAI toward the more urgent challenge of when and how to do so responsibly. This panel position paper takes a distinctive approach by bringing together perspectives from three diverse institutions, public, private, and liberal arts, offering a comparative lens on policy, pedagogy, and ethics. It presents insights from faculty at a large public research university in the Midwest (Author 1), a private Christian, Catholic, Benedictine university in North Dakota (Author 2), and a private Catholic, Lasallian liberal arts college in California (Author 3). Together, these perspectives reveal how institutional culture, policy structure, and pedagogical goals shape responsible AI integration in marketing curricula while addressing the dual responsibility of preparing students for an AI-infused workplace and grappling with how AI reshapes pedagogy itself.

Institutional approaches vary significantly across the three settings. Author 1's institution requires AI guidelines in all syllabi. Author 2's institution amended its academic honor code to address AI use, treating improper use of AI like using someone else's work, while encouraging teaching moments. Author 3's institution adopted model syllabus language noting AI tool use isn't a violation if permitted but representing AI-generated work as one's own constitutes dishonesty. Their School of Business developed a policy encouraging thoughtful integration while emphasizing digital literacy and environmental considerations. A critical tension emerges between consistency and flexibility—broader policies allow adaptation but can lead to inequitable treatment across instructors and course sections.

Faculty are fundamentally reimagining course design across marketing courses. Author 1 uses AI in Consumer Behavior for consumer insights—students create AI-assisted focus group transcripts, analyze sentiment outputs, and evaluate ethical soundness of AI-generated segments. Sales courses feature mock calls with AI customers and AI analysis of video role-plays for tone and persuasion techniques. Author 2 balances AI adoption with foundational learning. Marketing courses evolved from storyboarding commercials to filming their own, using AI for brainstorming and editing but not concept development. Marketing Research courses purposely conduct paper surveys with manual collection and collation to ensure students understand basic principles before adopting AI tools. Author 3 incorporates AI topics while focusing on pedagogical implications. She assigns simulations difficult to complete solely with AI, increasing their weights. Students use AI for early research but must verify content. Planned innovations include paired assignments comparing AI-assisted and unaided case analysis similar to Harvard's methodology (Weinstein et al., 2025) and requiring original work before AI assistance.

The ethical implications each author addresses reflect both their institutional contexts and the specific marketing disciplines they teach. Author 1 addresses bias through case discussions on algorithmic stereotyping, privacy ethics via General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) discussions, transparency through debates on consumer disclosure of AI interactions, and cultural sensitivity evaluating AI-generated campaigns. Sales considerations include whether AI undermines B2B trust and ethical concerns around AI replacing human roles. Author 2 incorporates ethical and religious frameworks, applying golden rule principles that marketers shouldn't do things they consider inappropriate. Students must understand AI reasoning to judge results effectively, using case studies to encourage critical thinking about professional implications. Author 3 stresses AI-generated content isn't inherently authoritative and must be verified. She warns uncritical reliance weakens critical thinking, emphasizing that students' knowledge and judgment—skills AI cannot replace—make them valuable in the marketplace.

Assessment methods are being fundamentally reconsidered across institutions. Author 1 has redesigned traditional writing assignments to include AI as a co-creator, where students draft marketing plans with AI then critique the AI's assumptions, biases, and ethical blind spots. Prompt engineering exercises require students to craft and refine AI prompts for marketing insights, sales scripts, and consumer segmentation. "Human vs. AI" comparison assignments require students to complete tasks themselves first, then compare their work to AI-generated outputs for depth, creativity, and ethical considerations. Authenticity-focused evaluations incorporate reflection components where students discuss how they used AI, limitations encountered, and ethical concerns identified. Oral presentations and in-class role plays evaluate critical thinking and ethical reasoning skills less susceptible to AI generation. Author 2 has experimented with requiring students to prepare recorded video presentations for online courses, though notes improper use of AI is still possible if students use scripts which aren't checked separately by AI detection tools. Additionally, certain assignments such as discussion boards can present challenges as some do not offer AI detection. Best practices include revising written assignment questions to incorporate personal experiences to make them more individual and less susceptible to AI use. Author 3 faces challenges with learning objectives such as "communicate effectively in written and oral forms," noting that achieving these objectives becomes difficult when students use AI for written communication since it is unclear whether students are developing the intended skills. Similarly, in recommending strategies, designing surveys, or analyzing data, if AI is used immediately, it removes not only the joy of learning but also opportunities for honing critical thinking skills and gaining subject matter expertise. She plans to address these issues by clearly stating AI usage policies in course syllabi to foster transparency and ethical awareness, with assignments emphasizing thoughtful prompts and domain knowledge to help students evaluate AI critically. Also, a major concern is that students using paid versus free AI versions risk creating unequal academic advantages.

Looking toward the future, Author 2 observes AI adoption following typical technology patterns with first movers, early adopters, and laggards, potentially representing marketing's biggest change since cell phones or internet proliferation. While employers may view AI as possibly replacing student interns and entry-level positions, AI can provide new graduates tools to accomplish more than ever before. Internship or experiential learning requirements remain crucial for career preparation. The integration of AI in marketing education remains formative, with curricula needing to evolve to emphasize foundational AI literacy, human oversight, and alignment with pedagogical goals. AI should augment rather than displace subject-matter expertise and human judgment. Revised learning outcomes must reflect both technical proficiency and ethical discernment, incorporating frameworks like Acar's PAIR (Problem, AI, Interaction, Reflection) model for scaffolding responsible AI use while maintaining educational integrity. Critical implementation needs include clearer guidance around citation practices, privacy concerns, and equitable access, particularly as premium AI tools create potential disparities. Without thoughtful implementation, institutions risk amplifying inequities or leaving students underprepared by reducing opportunities for developing essential critical thinking, writing, and analytical skills. While this panel focuses on practical implementation experiences, broader theoretical frameworks for responsible AI integration and systematic research agendas warrant separate investigation to advance the field's understanding of these complex issues.

The panel concludes that marketing education must prepare students for an AI-infused workplace while grappling with how AI reshapes pedagogy itself. This dual responsibility requires moving beyond whether to use AI toward the more urgent challenge of when and how to do so responsibly. Success depends on inclusive, intentional design that leverages AI as support—never substitute—for ethical reasoning, communication skills, and human creativity that distinguish marketing professionals in an increasingly automated landscape. The collective goal should be not only responsible integration but also inclusive and intentional design of AI-supported marketing education that maintains the development of its uniquely human elements that AI cannot replicate.

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TEACHING MARKETING TO NON-MARKETING MAJORS

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

The majority of students enrolled in an introductory marketing course are not marketing majors. This thought haunted me after teaching Marketing Principles for over a decade where my focus was more on teaching the foundations to our newly declared marketing students than to the finance or management major for whom this would be their only immersive marketing course. Students entering an introduction to marketing course, especially those from non-marketing disciplines, often feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of terminology, models, and concepts they must learn. This panel position paper describes a "Don't Drop the Ball!" classroom exercise, which uses a physical demonstration to help students differentiate between essential frameworks and the smaller details they will encounter. By visually illustrating the relative importance of foundational concepts, this exercise empowers students to focus on core ideas without feeling paralyzed by memorization. It also sets an inclusive, supportive tone that can ease anxiety and build confidence from day one.

At the start of class, the instructor selects a student volunteer to stand at the front of the room. The student is handed a large bowling ball. This bowling ball represents the marketing mix, also known as the 4 Ps: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. These are the essential strategic levers of any marketing effort, and they are heavy—just like the bowling ball. They require careful handling and constant attention. The marketing mix is central to the course and the student volunteer is encouraged to not "drop the ball" this semester. Next, the student receives several softballs each symbolizing large concepts, models, and theories such as competitive advantage, relationship management, SWOT analysis, AIDA model, STP framework, and more. Students should work to understand and apply these critical concepts to be successful. As a reminder, these "softballs" are important, but not as foundational as the bowling ball. As these additional concepts are introduced and retained, the student volunteer should be reminded to not "drop the ball." Finally, the instructor begins pouring numerous golf balls onto the pile. These golf balls represent the numerous vocabulary terms covered in a typical introductory course. As the student tries to hold everything, inevitably some additional golf balls tumble to the floor, maybe even a softball or two. The class watches as the student struggles to keep the bowling ball secure while managing the less critical elements. The point is not that the golf balls are unimportant, but that students should not be consumed by the fear of dropping them. Memorizing every piece of terminology perfectly is less important than grasping the core frameworks and learning how to apply them thoughtfully. To reinforce this exercise throughout the semester, when key models and frameworks are covered, clearly reference these "softball" concepts to students within the larger illustration.

For non-marketing majors, this demonstration is particularly helpful. Many of these students do not plan to pursue marketing careers, yet they will encounter marketing concepts in other various careers in management, operations, entrepreneurship, and more. The "Don't Drop the Ball!" exercise reassures them that success in this course, and in understanding marketing broadly, does not depend on becoming fluent in every term. Instead, it requires:

1. Grasping the bowling ball (the marketing mix): understanding the core decisions every organization must make to bring value to the market through the four Ps.
2. Attending to the softballs (key models and frameworks): learning strategic tools that guide decision-making.
3. Accepting imperfection with the golf balls (terminology): recognizing that some vocabulary will slip away and can always be looked up later.

Starting the course with "Don't Drop the Ball!" does more than illustrate the content hierarchy. First, it also establishes a growth mindset where learning marketing is not about memorizing trivia but about developing a structured way of thinking. Marketing should be viewed as accessible and learnable rather than intimidating. Second, this exercise adds transparency to the topics that will be covered. This shows students the importance of understanding rather than perfection. Lastly, the moment when the golf balls start inevitably hitting the floor, the mood lightens and first day jitters are relieved through this shared experience.

"Don't Drop the Ball!" offers an experiential metaphor that sticks with students far beyond the first day of class.

For non-marketing majors especially, it reframes the course as an opportunity to build confidence in tackling unfamiliar ideas. By visually distinguishing foundational concepts from supporting details, instructors can help learners focus their time and energy where it matters most, developing an integrated understanding of marketing and its role in organizational success.

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DIGITAL MARKETING CREDENTIALS IN BUSINESS EDUCATION: BOOSTING WORKFORCE RELEVANCE

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has reshaped marketing practice and marketing education. Modern graduates need both foundational marketing knowledge and technical skills, often verified by industry certifications and micro-credentials. These credentials validate skills, improve employability, and motivate students through hands on learning experiences that foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Yet, their impact is limited by inconsistent integration and faculty engagement. This paper argues that digital marketing certifications and badges should be strategically integrated into marketing curricula, informed by educational theory and workplace needs, to maximize their value and impact.

This position paper is grounded in three intersecting theoretical frameworks:

- **Constructivist Learning Theory:** Certifications and badges foster learning through real world, applied experiences, aligning with constructivist pedagogy.
- **Self-Determination Theory:** Examines intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation. While certifications and badges serve as extrinsic motivators, their careful design can foster autonomy, competence, and relatedness, supporting intrinsic motivation over time. Gamification is one of the techniques that can enhance intrinsic motivation (Jones, Blanton, & Williams, 2022). Certifications and badges that involve gamification can engage students and encourage learning (Kapp, 2012).
- **Signaling Theory:** Certifications and badges act as signals to employers, communicating verified competencies to employers and stakeholders. Researchers showed that job application relevance influences students' intentions to adopt badges (Steenkemp, Fisher, & Nisbit, 2024). Badging also play an important role in hiring and performance evaluation in the workplace (Kahle-Piasecki, Bereza, & Cumberland, 2024).

UNC Digital Learning Lab (2022) reports a sharp rise in the adoption of digital badges and stackable credentials, driven by corporate reskilling demands and student expectations. Employers increasingly recognize alternative credentials as valid skill indicators (Cumberland et al., 2023). Despite these advantages, Delello et al. (2018) warn that overuse of gamification may undermine intrinsic motivation, turning learning into a purely transactional pursuit.

Universities incorporate certifications, such as Google Analytics into their marketing and social media courses. Student's complete certifications as formative assessments, integrated within project-based learning modules. Post-certification reflections encourage critical evaluation of tool applicability and ethical considerations. Certificates are showcased in students' digital portfolios, supporting career readiness. Challenges include faculty unfamiliarity with certifications, budget limitations for paid credentials, and occasional student resistance to extrinsic motivators. Faculty professional development initiatives and limited-use institutional licenses address these concerns.

Faculty engagement is critical to the effective integration of alternative credentials. Faculty should pursue relevant certifications themselves, both to enhance instructional credibility and to model lifelong learning. Barriers such as workload, funding, and perceived relevance must be addressed through professional development incentives, train-the-trainer models, and recognition of alternative credentialing as scholarly engagement. To avoid redundancy and credential fatigue, certifications should be mapped intentionally across curriculum as seen in Figure 1:

Figure 1. Digital Marketing Certifications Chart by Category, Examples, Course Alignment, and Type

Category	Example Certifications	Course Alignment	Type of Certification
Content	HubSpot Content Marketing (8 hours) SEMrush Content Marketing (1hour)	Writing, Communications, Social Media	Domain-Specific Blended
Commerce	Google Analytics 4 (G4 -5 hours) SEMrush SEO (1 hour) SEMrush Marketing Analytics (2 hours) Google Ads (Search-3.5 hours, Display-3 hours, Video-4 hours, Shopping-1 hour)	Digital Analytics, Consumer Insights Digital Marketing Digital Marketing Advertising, Digital Marketing	Platform-Specific Blended Blended Platform-Specific
Strategy	Hootsuite Social Marketing (4 hours) HubSpot Digital Marketing (5.5 hours) HubSpot Social Media (I- 5 hours; II- 3 hours) SEMrush Social Media Marketing (1 hour) Stukent Social Media Simternship (paid) Stukent Digital Marketing Simternship (paid)	Digital Strategy, Marketing Capstone Digital Marketing Social Media Marketing Social Media Marketing Social Media Marketing Digital Marketing	Domain-Specific Domain-Specific Domain-Specific Blended Domain-Specific Domain-Specific
Combination	Wix Website & Marketing Tools	Integrated Marketing, Client-Projects	Blended

Faculty members should select certifications based on their subject area, time availability, and desired level of expertise. Some are domain-specific (e.g., HubSpot Social Media) while some are platform-specific (e.g., Google Ads). Combination certifications work well for capstone or project-based courses. Certifications and badging should form progressive learning pathways. Undergraduate programs can focus on foundational credentials and gamification for engagement, while graduate and executive programs emphasize advanced or leadership-focused certifications, including those addressing AI applications or data privacy regulations. Stackable credentials support lifelong learning and career advancement. However, challenges remain: 1. Equity Issues: Paid credentials can disadvantage under-resourced students, so institutions must seek funding solutions, including institutional licensing and grants. 2. Credential Inflation: Too many credentials can reduce their value. 3. Gamification: Badging should promote real learning, not just superficial engagement.

This paper proposed a 5-Step Model (Integrated Credentialing Framework) that provides guidance to marketing educators and institutions: **1. Curriculum Mapping:** Align certifications with course objectives and student outcomes. 2. **Faculty Development:** Incentivize and train faculty to adopt certifications. 3. **Equity Strategy:** Secure funding for student access. 4. **Student Showcasing:** Help students present credentials in portfolios. 5. **Continuous Review:** Regularly evaluate certification relevance and recognition. It is also suggested that organizations such as AACSB and AMA should take following initiatives: 1. Recognize alternative credential integration in program standards. 2. Establish guidelines to ensure the quality and relevance of embedded credentials. 3. Support industry-academic partnerships for co-branded certifications. In addition, future trends and research directions are recommended: 1. AI-Driven Certifications: Anticipate rapid growth in AI-focused digital marketing credentials. 2. Blockchain-Based Credentialing: Enhances security and verification of digital badges. 3. Employer Co-Creation: Development of co-branded certifications with industry leaders. 4. Motivation Studies: Explore how certifications influence learner motivation over time.

Digital marketing certifications and badges, when strategically embedded in marketing curricula, enhance student employability, foster lifelong learning, and strengthen connections between academia and industry. However, to unlock their full potential, institutions must move beyond siloed application toward intentional, equitable, and pedagogically sound integration. Addressing these issues requires policy development, faculty training, and ongoing research. A scholar-practitioner approach—grounded in learning theory, informed by industry needs, and responsive to ethical considerations—offers a sustainable path forward for modern marketing education.

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TEACHING MARKETING TO NON-MARKETING MAJORS

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

Teaching marketing to non-marketing majors is one of the most rewarding opportunities a marketing professor can experience. The opportunity allows the professor to share the dramatic impact the field of marketing has on everyone's daily lives through the products they purchase, the places they go, the beliefs they have and so much more. While non-marketing majors may think they don't know about marketing or care for it, often the students will find they very much participate and reward the efforts of the marketer on a regular basis.

As a professor who engages in teaching marketing to non-marketing students, this author approaches the course with a "confirm or convert" mindset. The efforts should confirm to those students who are interested in marketing that they have chosen the correct field of study, and it should aim to convert those non-marketing majors to a favorable conviction of the marketing discipline in a way they can see the impact of marketing on the field of their choice. If a student should completely convert from one major to the marketing major, this is a bonus!

Four practical initiatives professors can take when teaching marketing to non-marketing students include using real-world examples and case studies, using project-based learning, ensuring cross-disciplinary connections to the subject of marketing, and highlighting free digital marketing tools that exist. In using real-world examples and case studies, it offers students a unique perspective on actual marketing challenges and results. This author has benefited from more than 20 years of professional marketing experience and utilizing such instances is a regular point of appreciation students note in the course review. Case studies should utilize a subject or company the students are interested in to allow them to understand through their experience with the subject or company how marketing was utilized. As well, it allows them to critically and practically think through the case study.

Making cross-discipline connections for the students allows the student to assess and understand the impact of marketing on their specific major. For example, this author often asks for the accounting students in the course and specifically reviews lines in the balance sheet and income statement of where marketing efforts make a direct impact. Students will realize if marketing fails in its promotional efforts, the result is found in the top line of the income statement. Directly guiding students to how marketing impacts their respective fields offers them a greater appreciation for the validity and importance of the discipline. Finally, this author often highlights digital marketing tools such as AnswerthePublic, Ahrefs, and Similarweb, among many others, to show students the wealth of tools available to them and translate the art and science of how using such tools reduces risks, increases marketing efforts and provides them with an awareness and skillset they can immediately use and showcase to others.

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CASE IN POINT: RETHINKING HOW WE TEACH MARKETING IN THE CLASSROOM

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

Case-based learning plays a vital role in marketing education, highlighting how teaching by cases can work in concert to enrich student engagement and learning outcomes. By uniting marketing educators, researchers, and case writers, the session will explore how case-based methods bridge theory and real-world practice—enhancing both classroom impact and scholarly contribution.

Designed especially for faculty who are experienced in teaching marketing theory in the classroom but may have limited exposure to case-based teaching, this panel presentation will demystify the process of teaching with cases. It will guide participants in leveraging their research insights to create compelling, marketing-specific case studies that promote critical thinking, strategic analysis, and application. As marketing faculty are increasingly expected to deliver meaningful student learning experiences, this panel presentation provides tools and practical techniques to help integrate case-based learning into their teaching portfolio. Participants will leave equipped to craft unique, context-rich marketing cases rooted in real business challenges and aligned with course objectives.

Case-based method teaching creates rich, real-world scenarios that encapsulate the complexities of organizational challenges, providing educators with dynamic tools to engage students in problem-solving (Nilson, 2010). These narratives immerse learners, fostering critical thinking and analytical skills. Case-based teaching provides interactions between students, peers and faculty. In turn, case-based teaching enables students to learn more effectively (Swan, 2001). To this end, case-method teaching provides several touchpoints of interaction. Teaching with cases transforms classrooms into interactive environments where students debate perspectives, explore alternatives, and practice leadership competencies. The Socratic method often employed in case teaching nurtures active participation, encouraging students to connect theory with practice. case-method teaching exposes students to real business dilemmas and decisions (Nohria, 2021). Students, in addition, recall concepts better and understand how to apply theory in practice. This learning bridges the gap between academic concepts and real-world applications, preparing students to address multifaceted business challenges effectively. Research informs and enhances both case writing and teaching by grounding them in rigorous, evidence-based insights. Scholars draw on their findings to craft cases that reflect emerging trends, innovative practices, and theoretical advancements. Conversely, the process of case teaching can inspire new research questions, as the protagonists' dilemmas (practitioners' experiences) often highlight gaps in existing knowledge. These activities cultivate a virtuous cycle that strengthens marketing education. Cases are a great addition to keep the course updated and focused on industry trends. The case method involves students in a highly personalized learning experience (Paget, 1988).

Case teaching also ensures the curriculum remains relevant and forward-thinking. Working with cases enables students to dissect complex situations, break them down into manageable components, and analyze the interplay between variables. These analytical skills are essential in any professional setting, as students learn to evaluate both quantitative data and qualitative factors. This integration not only equips future managers with the skills needed to navigate complex environments but also advances the discipline of management by promoting continuous learning and improvement.

This interactive panel will explore the evolving role of case-based learning in marketing education, highlighting its impact on student engagement, critical thinking, and real-world application. The session will offer actionable insights into how to effectively teach a case in the classroom, including strategies for structuring discussions, encouraging student participation, and fostering deeper analysis.

Panelists will also address key **in-class teaching challenges**, such as managing varied levels of student preparedness, integrating diverse perspectives, and navigating the influence of **AI tools** on student learning and originality. Additionally, the session will explore methods to **measure learning outcomes** in case-based teaching -- ranging from formative assessments and reflective writing to peer evaluations and digital analytics.

Designed for both new and experienced instructors, this session will serve as a forum for sharing best practices, pedagogical innovations, and practical tips to enhance the case teaching experience in marketing and related disciplines. This 50-minute panel aims to create a dynamic forum for sharing insights, perspectives, and practical strategies on how case teaching can enhance pedagogy and support impactful knowledge dissemination. We invite marketing educators at all stages of their careers to reimagine case-based learning not only as a teaching tool, but as a scholarly endeavor that enhances both classroom effectiveness and professional impact.

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ADDRESSING UNDEREMPLOYMENT OF MARKETING GRADUATES

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

Despite increasing attention to skills-based education, many marketing graduates continue to face underemployment—working in positions that neither require nor fully utilize a bachelor's degree. This panel session explores how course-embedded activities can serve as high-impact interventions that help students leverage their academic credentials into college-level employment opportunities, offering two complementary approaches designed to close the gap between classroom learning and career readiness.

The first panelist shares how the buyer's journey model—awareness, consideration, and decision—was used to structure progressive assignments across three marketing courses to help students recognize and activate the value of their marketing degree. In the awareness stage, students reflected on a marketing simulation by connecting the skills they used in the exercise to those required in a real job posting, prompting them to view course activities as career preparation. In the consideration stage, students used ChatGPT's voice feature to complete a self-promotional sales role-play, positioning themselves and their degree as the best fit for a marketing job. This exercise challenged students to articulate the relevance of their training in a persuasive and personalized way. Finally, in the decision stage, students completed a survey evaluating how they had leveraged their academic experiences and marketing credentials in job searches and applications. This progression not only helped students build confidence and clarity but also repositioned the degree as a tangible asset that must be actively communicated and deployed to avoid underemployment.

The second panelist emphasizes course-embedded client-based projects (CBPs) as an essential strategy to bridge the gap between academic coursework and career readiness. Well-run CBPs can serve as career-relevant experience on student resumés. By fostering industry-academia collaboration, CBPs immerse students in real-world problem-solving experiences that develop critical career competencies, such as communication, leadership, and critical thinking. When multiple CBPs are combined with internships on students' resumés, it can provide up to a year or two of career experience before graduation, giving them a leg up in the interviewing process. This experiential classroom approach positions students as active, self-directed learners and transforms faculty into facilitators and coaches. Thus, students gain problem-solving confidence and increased self-efficacy, while faculty-student relationships are repositioned to a greater and sometimes ongoing career coaching role. Empirical evidence demonstrates that CBPs significantly enhance students' self-perceived career readiness, offering a scalable and inclusive model to prepare all students for meaningful employment after graduation.

Together, these panelists advocate for a pedagogical shift toward experiential, reflective, and career-relevant learning that positions faculty as facilitators and students as self-directed learners. Course-embedded simulations, reflections, role plays, surveys, and client projects offer solutions that cultivate confidence, build self-efficacy, and improve faculty-student mentoring relationships. As a collective strategy, they represent a promising pathway for reducing underemployment among marketing graduates.

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PASSPORT TO PREPAREDNESS: INTEGRATING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE TO CULTIVATE CONFIDENT, INFORMED, AND CULTURALLY READY TRAVELERS

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

Study abroad experiences have gained popularity because of their ability to foster global awareness and intercultural competence. In fact, study abroad advisors have observed that returning study abroad participants often demonstrate stronger global engagement, cultural sensitivity, self-confidence, independence, and a more mature perspective on themselves and the world (Haddis 2005). However, these outcomes do not only depend on the immersive experience but also the level of preparedness of the students before going abroad. Faculty leaders play an instrumental role in shaping the students during this early stage to ensure they are emotionally, academically and culturally equipped to navigate new environments with curiosity, humility and resilience. This paper proposes a practical yet research-informed approach to pre-departure preparation that integrates the use of intercultural learning frameworks used to design experiences that cultivate deeper intercultural awareness, coupled with real-world teaching practices drawn from a recent faculty-led study abroad program to Spain and Morocco.

Grounded in literature on intercultural learning and global education, this approach emphasizes three core dimensions of readiness, namely academic expectations, cultural adaptation, and logistical competence. Rather than treating preparation as a simple travel checklist, the approach focuses on cognitive, emotional, and behavioral readiness. Students are guided through structured reflections, peer connection, community building, and cultural self-introspection, allowing them to explore their beliefs, biases and attitudes. Cressy (2021) suggests that when educators incorporate guided reflection, it can significantly support students' intercultural development. Through this process they evolve into thoughtful active learners as opposed to passive tourists. Dewey (2007) called for learning environments that immerse students in direct experiences, enabling them to actively construct understanding rather than passively absorb information.

The faculty-led program described in this paper applied this approach through layered, high-impact strategies. Preparation began with multiple interactive sessions that combined logistics with team building and reflection exercises. Icebreakers like the "country-name picnic game" created early rapport, while a journal-decorating activity encouraged students to externalize their expectations and identity in a creative format. Students also completed a pre-departure reflective essay that captured their first impressions about Spain and Morocco before conducting any research on both countries. This facilitated the discovery of preconceived biases/stereotypes held by students and allowed for meaningful post-trip comparisons to assess shifts in their thinking.

Cultural humility was introduced through the completion of an ethnocentrism awareness survey, participation in a food-tasting experiential activity to examine students' unconscious judgements, and vibrant discussions on ways to avoid labelling unfamiliar customs as strange or abnormal. These activities led to the development of a shared motto "It's not weird, it's just different". This motto became a powerful norm that students upheld throughout the trip.

To strengthen cultural and academic readiness, students completed group assignments that explored Hofstede's cultural dimensions, read country-specific guides, and researched the social norms, etiquette, and taboos of both countries. Students also attended language instruction sessions to learn conversational Spanish, French, and Moroccan Arabic. These activities combined, equipped students with the basic tools for respectful interaction and communication.

Logistical preparation was streamlined using a mobile travel app provided by our trusted tour company. The app housed the itinerary (updated in real time), all travel documents, emergency contacts, dietary restrictions, and heath data. This reduced paper clutter and improved organization. Students had access to information about all daily activities at their fingertips. Accountability and safety were reinforced through requiring students to develop and sign roommate agreements, and a buddy system which comprised of at least three students, one of whom was required to have an international cellphone data plan. We also created a WhatsApp group for all communication which served as a reservoir for important information. Mandatory university and faculty led pre-departure meetings further clarified expectations and introduced students to institutional study abroad policies. Additionally, the rules of conduct were clearly outlined in the syllabus and emphasized consistently.

One of the most effective elements was the inclusion of a face-to-face presentation by students who participated in the study abroad trip the previous year. They shared not only photos and videos of the highlights of their trip but also their personal pre and post trip impressions and experiences as well as useful tips for smart packing and lessons learned. The current students also had the opportunity of asking questions. This peer mentorship helped manage expectations, reduce anxiety, and create continuity within the program.

The approach outlined in this paper blends research with lived practice, positioning the faculty leader not just as a trip coordinator but as a cultural coach and community builder. By integrating emotional support, reflection, logistics, and intercultural theory into pre-departure planning, educators can create environments that promote curiosity, empathy, and adaptability.

Ultimately, this approach prepares students to not only travel, but also to observe, reflect, and engage meaningfully with the world around them. It is a replicable, flexible approach for cultivating confident, informed, and culturally ready travelers.

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MAPPING YOUR MARKETING FUTURE: A CAREER EXPLORATION EXERCISE FOR INTRO TO MARKETING STUDENTS

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SPECIAL SESSION PAPER

During this session, a practical activity will be shared to help students map out future career options in the field of marketing. Specifically, Mapping Your Marketing Future is an interactive exercise powered by generative AI to help Introduction to Marketing students explore real-world career paths, assess their personal fit with various marketing roles, and begin shaping their professional materials (e.g., resumes, cover letters, and interview responses) in a manner customized to specific roles. The exercise leverages generative AI to make career research more accessible, engaging, and personalized, even for students with limited prior knowledge of the marketing profession.

This activity guides students through three key phases:

1. Exploring Career Options: Students prompt ChatGPT to generate a list of entry-level marketing roles, complete with job descriptions, typical employers, and relevant skills/tools.
2. Assessing Personal Fit: Students reflect on their strengths, interests, and values—then use AI to compare different roles to see which align best with their personalities and professional goals.
3. Aligning Their Story: Students ask ChatGPT for guidance on tailoring resumes, drafting cover letters, and preparing for interviews related to their chosen path.

The exercise concludes with an optional assignment where students submit a written reflection, a draft resume section, a mini cover letter paragraph, and their top takeaways from using AI for career exploration specific to marketing.

This activity addresses a common challenge in introductory courses: students often enjoy marketing content but struggle to visualize where it can take them professionally. By introducing career exploration early, students can better connect classroom learning to real-world possibilities, boosting motivation and increasing retention in the major. Additionally, they will be able to converse in a more meaningful way with both marketing professionals and recruiters, as well as jumpstart their internship/job search. By incorporating AI as a career research tool, students gain practical experience with technologies that are rapidly shaping the marketing field. This approach increases access to tailored career advice and models how marketers use AI for brainstorming, research, and decision-making.

The exercise is plug-and-play, requiring minimal prep and no AI expertise. We will provide a ready-to-use slide deck and student handout containing structured prompts, learning goals, and clear deliverables. Faculty can facilitate it as an in-class workshop, homework assignment, or discussion-based activity. This exercise aligns with learning outcomes related to career readiness, digital literacy, and self-awareness, making it a high-impact practice for early-stage students. It also encourages students to think critically about the diversity of roles within marketing (e.g., analytics, creative, brand, content, digital), which helps reduce narrow or outdated perceptions of the field.

In short, Mapping Your Marketing Future is an engaging, tech-forward exercise that equips students with career confidence, practical tools, and a stronger sense of purpose as they continue in the major. Evidence of this project's impact identifies it as an ideal fit for instructors wanting to inspire early enthusiasm for marketing while reinforcing the relevance of their course content to real-world outcomes.

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LOOKING AHEAD: THE FUTURE OF ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION AND THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE DEAN/CHAIR IN A DIGITAL WORLD

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SPECIAL SESSION EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The digital transformation of higher education is no longer a future possibility—it's a present-day imperative. This special session panel will explore how the roles of business school deans and department chairs are rapidly evolving in response to technological change, digital pedagogy, hybrid work, AI integration, and shifting stakeholder expectations. Attendees will gain strategic insights into how academic leaders can effectively lead through disruption, leverage digital tools for administration and pedagogy, and prepare their institutions for long-term agility and innovation.

Session Questions/Topics:

- What new digital competencies should deans and chairs develop in the next five years?
- How can we best manage curriculum assessment in digital/hybrid environment?
- What role should academic leaders play in guiding digital integration within their units?
- How do we maintain academic community and culture in increasingly hybrid and virtual settings?
    - Engaging students, alumni, and employers in virtual spaces
    - Running effective online advisory board meetings and town halls

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PERSPECTIVES ON GETTING PUBLISHED FROM MARKETING DISCIPLINE JOURNAL EDITORS

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SPECIAL SESSION EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Faculty face several challenges with the current higher education environment as well as with looming changes including the demographic cliff, new technology, and increased competition (Blair et al., 2024a). Academic journals are facing challenges as well with the peer-review process, which includes finings researchers willing to review articles, fitting reviews into researcher's busy schedules, and offering proper reviewer (Petrescu & Krishen, 2022). During recent years, there has been an increased importance of ensuring high-quality data is collected and the benefits of using marketing analytics for researchers and business professionals to make more informed decisions (Petrescu & Krishen, 2020). Despite these challenges, there are still many opportunities to produce quality marketing research and continue to see journals in our field make a significant impact. This includes faculty to utilizing a transdisciplinary approach with research projects by incorporating theories, literature, analyses, and perspectives from a variety of disciplines (Blair et al, 2024b). We have seen areas like business analytics utilize an interdisciplinary approach (Krishen & Petrescu, 2017).

Within the marketing discipline there are a variety of opportunities to publish and further our knowledge of consumers, strategy, and emerging trends in the field. Digital and social media marketing research opportunities are fruitful in understanding how marketers can best engage with consumers (Krishen et al., 2021). This includes focusing on issues related to artificial intelligence, augmented reality marketing, business-to-business marketing, digital content management, electronic word of mouth, ethical issues, and mobile marketing and advertising (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Sales has seen a significant interest within Colleges of Business starting programs and research growing within this area. Understanding how to best train, mentor, lead, and coach sales professionals to reach desired key performance outcomes for themselves, their teams, and the organization is valuable (Bradford et al., 2017; Inyang et al., 2018). Further understanding the job demands, resources needed, and what leads to burnout with sales professionals could help provide further insights to ensuring successful sales professionals and organizations reaching their goals (Ambrose et al., 2021; Matthews & Rutherford, 2022). Additionally, examining the role of ethics in sales provides opportunities for future research (Serviere-Munoz & Mallin, 2013; Munoz & Mallin, 2018).

Even with the current challenges in higher education and publishing, there are still vast opportunities for marketing researchers to collaborate with others in their field and external disciplines to produce high-quality and impactful work in marketing. Researchers have several emerging, promising, and impactful areas to continue their exploration into understanding the marketing phenomenon occurring in the marketplace today.

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THE SCIENCE OF WELL-BEING: PURSUING HAPPINESS

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SPECIAL SESSION EXTENDED ABSTRACT

You never know the true impact you have on those around you. You never know how much your kindness, mentoring, and even time spent turned someone's life around. Using positive psychology research from myriad experts, this special session details positive subjective experiences, positive individual traits, and positive attributes to improve qualities of life and possibly prevent the pathologies that arise when life is barren and meaningless. In 2025, with ever-present changes in our world, we need a few reminders to seek the good.

Hope, wisdom, creativity, future mindedness, courage, spirituality, responsibility, and perseverance are often explained as transformations. Many articles discuss such issues as what enables happiness, the effects of autonomy and self-regulation, how optimism and hope affect health, what constitutes wisdom, and how talent and creativity come to fruition.

In a recent talk, Dr. Kotz was told to remember the 5 B's: "Be Brief Brother. Be Brief." So, Dr. Henderson and I will do just that. We have also learned that what we see and what we do not observe can affect our perspectives. Hard work and knowledge are very important, but attitude makes the difference in living a fulfilling life.

Well-being is subjective. Methodological and theoretical advances have been notable in this period of time, with the increasing use of longitudinal and experimental designs allowing for a greater understanding of the predictors and outcomes that relate to SWB, along with the processes that underlie these associations. Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Tay, L. (2018).

Buettner, D., Nelson, T., & Veenhoven, R. (2020) make it clear that at the community and societal levels, cultures differ not only in their levels of well-being but also to some extent in the types of subjective well-being they most value. Furthermore, there are both universal and unique predictors of subjective well-being in various societies. National accounts of subjective well-being to help inform policy decisions at the community and societal levels are now being considered and adopted. There are also unknowns in the science and needed future research.

In research conducted by Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2002), the very happy people were highly social, and had stronger romantic and other social relationships than less happy groups. They were more extraverted, more agreeable, and less neurotic, and scored lower on several psychopathology scales.

Compared with the less happy groups, the happiest respondents did not exercise significantly more, participate in religious activities significantly more, or experience more objectively defined good events. No variable was sufficient for happiness, but good social relations were necessary.

Members of the happiest group experienced positive, but not ecstatic, feelings most of the time, and they reported occasional negative moods. This suggests that very happy people do have a functioning emotion system that can react appropriately to life events.

Also, many things are within our control and some are outside of our scope of changing. An underlying principle behind much of the research in positive psychology is that individuals have considerable leeway to increase their levels of happiness.

In an influential article that is frequently cited in support of such claims, Lyubomirsky et al. put forward a model (subsequently popularized under the name of the "happiness pie") in which approximately 50% of individual differences in happiness are due to genetic factors and 10% to life circumstances, leaving 40% available to be changed

via volitional activities. Brown, N. J. L., & Rohrer, J. M. (2020).

A stance, moreover, that gives the best in life equal footing with the worst, is as concerned with flourishing as with surviving, that is as interested in building as in repairing, should find a comfortable home in most any discipline.

Buettner advocates that agreement was slightly higher on policy strategies than on individual ways to greater happiness. Policy strategies deemed the most effective and feasible are: (1) investing in happiness research, (2) support of vulnerable people and (3) improving the social climate, in particular by promoting voluntary work and supporting non-profits.

Individual strategies deemed most effective are: (a) investing in social networks, (b) doing meaningful things and (c) caring for one's health.

Finally, "How do people think about happiness?" Is it something best enjoyed as an investment over time, or is it something fleeting that should be savored? When people view happiness as an investment, they may endorse delaying happiness – the belief that working hard and sacrificing opportunities for happiness now will contribute to greater future happiness. When people view happiness as fleeting, they may endorse living in the moment - the belief that one should seize proximal opportunities to experience happiness now, rather than later.

In this special session, we will share current research from experts and provide our own take on how to improve well-being, laugh in partnership, and also discuss ways to pursue the elusive yet possible concept of happiness. "We learn more when lighting candles than when cursing the darkness." Seligman (2000).

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REIMAGINING VIRTUAL SALES EDUCATION: STUDY TOOLS THAT THINK WITH YOU

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TEACHING COMPETITION PAPER

In many marketing and sales classrooms, students struggle to retain, apply, and understand content from lectures, slides, videos, and readings, especially in virtual or hybrid environments. While in-person formats offer organic engagement, virtual settings require additional strategies to maintain student attention and deepen learning. This teaching innovation reimagines how students engage with course content by transitioning course content into a personalized, AI-powered learning experience using Google's NotebookLM.

By uploading course materials into NotebookLM, students gain an on-demand "study buddy" that creates podcasts, mind maps, summaries, and quizzes tailored to their uploaded resources. This enables active learning, repetition, and deeper understanding through self-directed learning, while appealing to learners with different learning preferences. Students use it to prepare for class discussion, exams, role plays, objection handling, and storytelling exercises by querying course-specific content in natural language. The technology offers faculty a flexible, scalable way to personalize teaching and enhance student performance inside and outside the classroom.

This tool has improved student preparation, confidence, and satisfaction. While students see it as a learning coach that is always available, faculty see it as a way to help students get more out of the learning experience. Early data from an ongoing study shows increased learning enjoyment and confidence among users compared to a control group.

NotebookLM is intuitive and accessible, requiring no technical expertise. Faculty can implement it easily by uploading content and sharing prompt templates in order to control the learning environment. Students can upload content to get more flexibility and access to more advanced functionality in the tool. It adapts across marketing courses and modalities, offering transformative benefits for virtual, hybrid, or traditional classrooms. At the time, students and faculty can access this tool at no cost.

During the session, the authors will demonstrate NotebookLM, share use cases for instant and easy adoption, and offer insights to a study that tests the learning outcomes of students based on their use of NotebookLM functionality.

This innovation bridges the gap between instruction and application while empowering students to take charge of their learning through AI-enhanced support in the form of a learning coach, making it an impactful solution for today's sales and marketing educators.

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SYNTHETIC CONSUMERS: TEACHING AI-GENERATED AUDIENCE RESPONSES IN MARKETING RESEARCH

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TEACHING COMPETITION PAPER

This teaching innovation introduces AI-generated "synthetic consumers" into an undergraduate marketing research course to improve student learning and streamline research activities. Traditional survey assignments often require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and student completion of CITI training, consuming nearly six weeks of a 15-week semester. These administrative hurdles leave limited time for hands-on data analysis and reduce opportunities for iterative learning.

By leveraging generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, students create "silicon samples," AI-generated responses conditioned on publicly available datasets. This approach allows students to design and test surveys without engaging human subjects, enabling a focus on data analysis, ethical research practices, and practical application. Inspired by Argyle et al. (2023), who demonstrated that large language models can replicate human-like responses in political science research, this module applies similar techniques to consumer behavior research.

The four-week module includes:

1. **Ethics & Dataset Exploration:** Students complete CITI training, review IRB processes, and select open-ended consumer datasets (e.g., Kaggle).
2. **Survey Design & Prompt Engineering:** Students design surveys to complement the dataset and learn to condition ChatGPT for generating synthetic responses.
3. **Data Generation & Analysis:** AI-generated responses are analyzed using qualitative coding and descriptive statistics, emphasizing both insights and model limitations.
4. **Presentation & Reflection:** Groups present findings, discuss ethical implications, and reflect on AI applications in marketing research.

This teaching approach benefits both students and practitioners. Students develop transferable skills in survey design, prompt engineering, and qualitative analysis in an AI-driven research environment. Practitioners in market research, consumer insights, and nonprofit organizations could apply synthetic consumers to reduce costs and test hypotheses before investing in traditional research.

By embedding AI into the marketing research curriculum, the course equips students with relevant, future-ready skills while overcoming time and administrative constraints. The integration of AI into research pedagogy highlights a scalable, ethical, and cost-effective pathway for marketing educators seeking to innovate in the classroom.

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GROWING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: AN INTERNATIONAL BAZAAR PROJECT

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TEACHING COMPETITION PAPER

Experiential learning is important to enhance critical thinking skills. The interplay between theoretical knowledge ("thinking") and practical application ("doing") through the process of active experimentation, concrete experience, reflective observation, and abstract conceptualization helps build higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Kolb, 2009). In an international marketing course, the ideal experiential learning practice is to have students engage directly with an international marketplace by visiting another country through a study abroad experience. Although study abroad programs are a highly valuable learning experience, this is not within reach for many programs or students. Therefore, the aim of this work is to create an experiential learning project for an international marketing course which enhances international marketing competency without leaving the country, specifically through an International Bazaar project.

The International Bazaar project consists of research and planning to import an international product to sell to a local target market. This project takes students through the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984), enhancing international marketing as well as business and entrepreneurial skills. The multi-layered structure of this assignment allows students to engage with international marketing concepts in an experiential learning manner (Kolb, 1984). Survey responses highlight the project as the "most helpful for understanding international marketing." Additionally, student reflections highlight the value of the project not only due to its experiential aspect, enhancing entrepreneurial and international marketing skills, but also the engagement with other cultures. Overall, the International Bazaar project created a unique learning environment which brought the concepts of international marketing to life without leaving the country.

This project can be implemented in any international marketing classroom. Although the initial semester required funding, the structure of the project leads to the groups not only recuperating their costs but also gaining profit, which allows the project to continue and be self-sustaining. Start-up funding is the biggest challenge, but as an experiential innovation that benefits students, the benefits outweigh the cost in terms of receiving support from the school or university.

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TRANSFORMING SALES EDUCATION THROUGH AI, APPLIED LEARNING, AND SCALABLE PRACTICE

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TEACHING COMPETITION PAPER

This Master Teacher presentation showcases over two decades of pedagogical innovation centered around active, scalable, and learner focused teaching strategies in marketing and sales education. Central to this approach is the integration of experiential learning, competition, storytelling, AI coaching and technology to enhance learning.

A key innovation is RNMKRS, a free AI-powered sales training and competition program that has been used by over 400 faculty members across 150+ universities in more than 20 countries. The tool offers personalized role play scenarios and adaptive feedback, addressing the systemic challenges of limited in-class role play time and faculty resources to review and provide enough valuable feedback to turn applied learning into reinforced behaviors that drive revenue and results. Students typically complete 30–40 sessions to achieve proficiency, supported by real-time performance analytics that are shared with both faculty and students. These experiences are often cited by graduates as some of the most memorable elements of their education because they continue to apply the lessons long into their careers.

Other innovations include the Northeast Intercollegiate Sales Competition (NISC), which annually engages over 400 students and employers, as well as generative AI instruction and tools like custom GPTs for student development. Use of improv in the classroom since 2009 promotes student adaptability and motivation. The AI Sales Networking Night and STARR-based Speed Sell modules further support skill development through storytelling and reinforcement.

Outcomes include consistently high student evaluations, increased confidence in real-world communication, and strong career placement with expedited career growth. Faculty adoption of these strategies has scaled through peer coaching, monthly update sessions, and a global educator network. Bryant's Sales Institute and the newly established 5,000 square foot Hauck Sales Performance Lab provide infrastructure to support and expand these efforts.

The combination of active learning, technology tools, and scalable delivery with customized feedback has created a paradigm shift in the way we train students in the classroom and has created an entire category of AI role play, where there are now over 400 competitors in the space. I am very proud that my research in self-directed learning has been applied in RNMKRS to build student resilience, skill, confidence and adaptability for successful careers and that the business world recognizes the innovation by attempting to replicate it. I am also proud that this category started in academia, rather than in the business world, and that hundreds of faculty have trusted us with over 60,000 of their students to complete over 1,000,000 role plays with feedback since 2019.

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