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Lynda Martin

Oklahoma State University, null@okstate.edu

Bill Ryan

Oklahoma State University, null@okstate.edu

Alexis Regna

MeriStar Hotels and Resorts, Inc.

Paul Regna

MeriStar Hotels and Resorts

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Curriculum Review: A Model

Abstract

Hospitality programs in the United States are continually undergoing curriculum review to stay current and to produce graduates who will excel in the industry. This article describes the revision process used by one university.

Curriculum review: A model

by Lynda Martin, Bill Ryan,
Alexis Regna, and Paul Regna

Hospitality programs in the United States are continually undergoing curriculum review to stay current and to produce graduates who will excel in the industry. This article describes the revision process used by one university.

Many educators, students, parents, and policy-makers view education in the professional fields as essential to a competitive economy and an international presence.¹ Hospitality is a professional field that increasingly requires four years of post-secondary education to gain career entry into the management ranks. Hospitality programs by nature of the discipline must integrate content, theory, and practice.

“A major trend impacting higher education is the development of more practical educational programs... shifts in the labor market have required persons entering the workforce to have higher educational attainment.

“As educators are well aware,

self-evaluation and curricula review are vital components of quality maintenance. Frequent self-examination helps to insure that the hospitality program is keeping pace with the rapid changes in society. Any program that does not keep up-to-date will more than likely face extinction in the extreme competition for resources that is likely in the 21st century.”²

Continued support and involvement from the hospitality industry indicates that higher education hospitality programs graduates are the graduates of choice. Hospitality students are attracted to the programs that provide them the best career opportunities, and recruiters are attracted to the programs that provide them the best graduates. With fierce competition for qualified people in the hospitality industry reaching crisis proportions, complacency is not tolerated in the marketplace. It is important that hospitality program

graduates are equipped to face the challenges of the future.³

Review is essential

Curriculum review is an essential part of quality improvement and self-evaluation. Many hospitality programs around the country are critically evaluating their curricula and systematically aligning them with the industry to meet the changing needs of the hospitality industry and to maximize precious resources.⁴ Some programs develop their curriculum by surveying other programs. Others survey alumni and/or industry professionals. Many contact recruiters to solicit their input. Table 1 outlines several studies that have researched and identified core curricular components needed for successful hospitality programs.

One approach used to identify core curricular components needed for a successful program is that of a ground-up curriculum review. Oklahoma State University's School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration has been in existence since 1937. In 1998, the faculty decided to undergo a ground-up curriculum review. By doing a zero-based review, ownership and redundancy of courses could be eliminated and a fresh approach to the needs of stakeholders could take place. As shown in Table 2 this process takes approximately two years to implement into the university system.

The ground-up curriculum review at OSU was coordinated

collaboratively by a hotel and restaurant administration faculty member, a faculty member external to Oklahoma State, an industry professional, and a hospitality student. By having these four perspectives, objectivity was maintained and a variety of stakeholders were represented. Hospitality courses in the undergraduate program were the primary focus of the zero-based curriculum review; six phases were included in the process. The credit-hour requirement and types of general education courses were not changed. Some minor modifications were made to the list of courses used to satisfy the requirements of specific general education areas, which are mandated by the state regents for higher education.

Syllabi are analyzed

A content analysis was conducted on the syllabi currently in use for every HRAD course during phase one, with course objectives as well as course outlines/content carefully reviewed. Key descriptors/competencies that appeared on the syllabi were listed under each course currently listed in the university catalog. Faculty were asked to verify and add or subtract any descriptors/competencies listed under courses they taught, for example: "Introduction to Hospitality Management": ethics, lodging overview, food service industry overview, basic marketing concepts.

All the key descriptors/competencies were then combined and

Table 1
Knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs)
needed in a hospitality curriculum

Enz, Renaghan & Geller⁶ (Graduate)	Powers & Riegel⁶	Gilmore & Hsu⁷	LeBruto & Murray⁸	Brownell & Jameson⁹	Ashley, Bach, Chesser, Ellis, Ford, LeBruto, Milman, Pizam, Quain
Communication	Organizational behavior	Personnel management	Basic management principles	Communication	People skills
"Big picture"/strategic orientation	Accounting and cost control	Quantity foods	Human resources management	Leadership	Creative thinking
Leadership	Management skills	Computer competency	Food and beverage and labor cost control	Group processes skills	Financial skills
Ability to identify problems	Human relations	English			Communication-oral/written
Organizing and writing skills	Technology competency				Service orientation
Managerial styles	Service skills				TQM
	Adaptability to change				Problem identification
	Develop conceptual skills				Listening
	Marketing				Customer feedback skills
					Computer skills

Table 2
Timeline for zero-based curriculum revision

Year One

Phase One

(January–August, Year One)

Syllabi evaluation

Analysis of current course content

Phase Two

(September–July, Year One)

Industry input

Phase Three

(August–December, Year One)

Student input

Input from school and university assessment

Year Two

Phase Four

(January–July, Year Two)

Compilation of data / Overview matrix

Faculty evaluation and input on data and new curriculum

requirements (includes a retreat dedicated to the revision process)

Phase Five

(February–July, Year Two)

Benchmarking data collection and analysis

ACPHA competency analysis

Development and discussion of new curriculum options

Phase Six

(August–December, Year Two)

Development of new degree plan and course sequence

Course descriptions and objectives developed

Year Three

January

Revised curriculum submitted to college and university academic affairs committees for review and approval

March

Revised curriculum approved by the university and submitted to state regents for higher education

April

State regents for higher education approve new curriculum

August

Revised curriculum implemented

listed alphabetically. Every course that included a particular competency was listed under that competency, for example, Ethics: "Introduction to Hospitality," "Purchasing." Faculty were then asked to review this list and evaluate its accuracy relative to the courses they taught. By doing this, it was ensured that all elements of all courses currently taught were listed. Faculty could see everything the program addressed in its curriculum in an overview.

An individual who had been asked to join the Oklahoma State University Hotel and Restaurant Administration faculty, but who would not arrive on campus for several months, conducted this analysis. Selecting this individual to conduct the analysis reduced bias that might have occurred because existing faculty had a favorite course or because a particular course had always been arranged in a particular manner with the same content.

Executives surveyed

In phase two, industry executives were surveyed. An academician and a hospitality industry executive compiled a comprehensive list of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that could be incorporated into any four-year hospitality program. This list was incorporated into a survey which was sent to both lodging and food service executives for their input. Their input was compiled and placed on the overview that was started in Phase One. This format would again allow faculty to review

what was currently being taught in the school at OSU against what industry executives believed needed to be taught on a nationwide basis.

Student input sought

Phase three involved soliciting input from students. Again, a survey instrument was designed and students were asked to give their input into the specific topics they believed should be part of their four-year undergraduate degree in hotel and restaurant administration. The student responses were compiled and added to the same overview matrix. At this point it was possible for faculty to view what was currently being taught at OSU, what industry executives deemed important, and what competencies students thought were important. In this way, faculty could clearly identify the congruence or lack of congruence among these three areas of input.

Faculty then reviewed the comprehensive list of all competencies in phase four. They were also asked to think about each competency and its importance as part of a hospitality education curriculum at a land-grant university. In addition, they were asked to rank the importance of each competency relative to student success after graduation. The mean faculty responses were determined and reported back to the faculty. This exercise required faculty to objectively review all KSAs/competencies/descriptors and determine their importance as a part of high

quality and comprehensive student preparation.

Programs benchmarked

Phase five involved benchmarking. Faculty were asked to select five to six hospitality education programs that they believed would be comparable benchmarks. The catalogs from those programs were then analyzed to determine the hospitality competencies taught; this information was then added to the overview matrix with the information gathered in phases one through five.

Phase six involved the incorporation of ACPHA (Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration) standards into the process, since faculty believed it beneficial to evaluate and review the curriculum relative to those standards which cover 13 major areas, including marketing, lodging, food service, ethics, capstone, communications and technology, human resources management, history, facilities management, hospitality law, quantitative methods, economics and financial management, and internships.

Each standard area was listed on large poster board and placed around a room. Faculty gathered to determine collectively what competencies listed on the overview matrix fell under which standard. Once the initial sorting was accomplished, each standard area was evaluated individually and the competencies in that area were grouped into course content areas.

At this point group discussion took place regarding each standard area and the preliminary course outlines that were organized under each area. Once faculty were comfortable with the organization of the courses, i.e., sequencing and lower division or upper division, the facilitator constructed a model plan of study including course numbers, titles, course descriptions, and learning objectives for each course.

Faculty have role

Faculty individually evaluated these "rough courses" and individual faculty input was solicited by the facilitator and added to the model curriculum. A final assessment was conducted to determine whether any of the key competencies had been left out of the new curriculum. In addition, faculty met as a group to review whether any aspect of modification or realignment had been left out of the new curriculum.

Following this review, the new plan of study and course revision, additions, and deletions were sent to the university administration and Board of Regents for approval. The new plan of study was implemented in the 2000-01 academic year and all course modifications were effective in January 2001.

The organization of the original curriculum was changed from two separate tracks, a hotel administration track or a restaurant management track, to one, a program of study that includes a set of hotel and restaurant administration core courses (55 credit hours)

and professional electives in hospitality (20 credit hours). These courses are in addition to general education courses required by the state regents for higher education to be included in the plan of study for every undergraduate degree offered by OSU. General education concentrations include English composition, history and political science, analytical thought, social sciences, laboratory and natural sciences, humanities, and an international dimension. A total of 125 credit hours are required for the bachelor of science degree in hotel and restaurant administration.

The new hotel and restaurant administration core contains courses that are required for every student and designed to provide a well-rounded education in all aspects of the hospitality industry, not just in hotels or in restaurants. The professional electives section of the plan of study consists of a variety of courses in hotel and restaurant administration, business, and other colleges. Students work with their advisors to select an area of emphasis and take courses to strengthen their understanding of that segment of the hospitality industry. The selection of areas by students is based on the career paths that they would like to pursue, such as hotel administration, restaurant management, purchasing and distribution, conference and meeting planning, hospitality education, club management, facility planning/management, international hospitality operations, and tourism. This major

change in the curriculum provides students with more autonomy and diversity in course selection.

Requirements expanded

A formal internship was required in both the old and the new curriculum, however, the faculty determined that 400 hours of documented work experience must be completed in addition to the internship by students during the time they are pursuing their bachelor of science degrees. This work experience is documented by the advisor and does not count toward credit hours or earn a grade. From industry input, faculty determined that students needed more hands-on experience while taking courses to better prepare them to face the challenges of their professional careers.

The revised hotel and restaurant administration curriculum includes two courses, "Introduction to Hotels, Restaurants, and Tourism Around the World" and "International Travel and Tourism," that provide students with an international perspective. These courses address the growing need for hospitality students to understand globalization. A great deal of effort went into eliminating the duplication of learning objectives among various courses through the grouping of key learning objectives that were identified in the first several steps of the curriculum revision process.

When objectives were grouped they were divided into core (concepts that are critical for profes-

sional success in the hospitality industry) and professional electives (concepts that are essential for understanding a segment of the hospitality industry). Once the objectives were so grouped, individual courses were built around the objectives.

One of the most critical aspects of this process was that faculty agreed not to change key designated learning objectives as they teach courses in the revised curriculum. This helps assure that the curriculum continues to be balanced and reduces duplication.

Most courses modified

Because of industry and student input, two courses in the existing hotel and restaurant administration curriculum were deleted. Six new courses which address important competencies that were not being adequately addressed, human resources, marketing, finance and industry contact and interaction for students, were created as core requirements. Fifteen courses were created as professional electives, addressing concentrations such as quick service, catering and events management, manufacturing, distribution and purchasing, and hospitality training and education. All remaining courses were modified.

Adding courses can cause a strain on faculty and other resources so it was determined that the school would offer the core courses every semester and the professional elective courses on a rotating basis each semester. A schedule of when professional elec-

tives would be offered was under development to assist with academic advising and faculty preparation for courses they will be assigned to teach.

The key to the success of this zero-based curriculum revision process was two factors, thoroughness and collaboration. This process succeeded because faculty participated along the way and because each stakeholder was carefully involved. A process had now been established for future curriculum assessment and revision. The duty of hospitality educator to teach implies a responsibility to revise. It is important for hospitality education programs to evaluate themselves and to make sure their curriculum meets the needs of the hospitality industry by preparing graduates to be successful in their careers. The process of curriculum review is institution specific since each has a personal mission and specific goals unique to the institution. Hopefully this process will serve as a model for those undertaking this process.

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Lynda Martin is assistant professor, **Bill Ryan** is assistant professor and associate director in the School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration, Oklahoma State University; **Alexis Regna** is field activity coordinator and **Paul Regna** is senior vice-president of Sales, Resort Division, MeriStar Hotels and Resorts, Inc.