

## **ENSURING A TRULY “INTERNATIONAL” ELEMENT IN AN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CONCENTRATION OR MAJOR**

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**Abstract:** In order to develop a truly international experience for all of our students whose degree programs include a concentration in International Business, the Department of Business Administration at Trinity University has initiated a requirement that our International Business concentrators must satisfy a defined level of proficiency in a foreign language, study abroad, and serve internships in a foreign country. This paper outlines the steps taken by the Department to develop this program and to incorporate an international element throughout the curriculum. Also discussed, are exchange relationships that are being built and internship opportunities that are being cultivated throughout the world.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Business Administration at Trinity University offers two undergraduate degree programs: a Bachelor of Science degree with concentrations in accounting, finance, management, marketing, or international business, and a Bachelor of Arts degree with no concentration. Eight courses make up a common Business Administration core for both degrees. The BS degree also requires an additional quantitative methods course, four courses in a concentration, and a total of 45 credit hours in Business Administration. The BA degree, which is designed primarily for students who are also pursuing a second major in a different discipline such as Economics, Biology, History, English, Political Science, or Modern Languages, requires three elective Business Administration courses beyond the basic core for a total of 33 credit hours in Business Administration.

Because of its emphasis on a broad-based liberal arts and science education for undergraduates, Trinity University does not offer the traditional functional area majors in Business Administration that many larger universities do. What it does instead is to offer concentrations within the Business Administration major.

Several years ago, the Department created the International Business Concentration which consisted simply of students taking three courses from the four courses that had the “international” designation: International Business Law, International Finance, International Management, and International Marketing. No other “international” element was required.

It soon became evident that the Department was not offering a truly international concentration. Students were not required to have a facility in a foreign language beyond the University’s requirement that all students, regardless of their majors, complete the first semester of the second year of college foreign language study. In addition, no academic or practical business experience in a foreign country was required for the concentration.

It became more and more apparent that the Department needed to address its need for a stronger global element throughout its curriculum, especially in its International Business concentration. At receptions held for prospective students and their parents over the past several years, the area in which the greatest interest was expressed was international business.

In all of their disciplines, faculty members were experiencing a rapidly growing emphasis on internationalization both in teaching and in research. Accrediting associations emphasized the globalization of business programs. The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, AACSB, of which Trinity University is an accredited member, in order to reflect its commitment to a global perspective, changed its name to AACSB – The International Association for Management Education. Last year, its annual conference was entitled “The Global Forum on Management Education.” There were over 1500 delegates from 71 countries in attendance.

To more fully meet the needs of the students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Department of Business Administration at Trinity University recently revised its curriculum to move more toward a true internationalization. Although emphasis was on the requirements for an International Business concentration, steps were also taken to assure that an international element was present in all functional area concentrations and in as many courses in the core requirement as well.

A detailed description and the rationale for the requirements for the International Business concentration will be presented. In addition, the Department's efforts for broader globalization within its curriculum and its efforts for student and faculty exchanges with universities in other parts of the world will be discussed.

### **INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CONCENTRATION**

Students planning to concentrate in International Business are formally advised to complete as many internationally oriented common curriculum courses as possible, using the [Trinity University Courses of Study Bulletin](#) section on International Studies' Regional Concentrations as a guide to the selection of appropriate courses. For example, a student whose primary interest is East Asia is formally encouraged to select common curriculum courses (similar to "distribution requirements" at other universities) from the East Asian Studies Concentration List.

Students planning to concentrate in International Business are required to complete three courses (9 hours) from the following: International Business Law, International Finance, International Management, and International Marketing.

Additionally, students planning to concentrate in International Business are required to complete two years (14 semester hours) of a foreign language. Students are also formally encouraged to gain similar exposure to a second foreign language. The objective in this requirement is for the student to take sufficient work in an appropriate foreign language to be adequately prepared to develop a real "proficiency" in that language.

As an additional means of gaining increased proficiency in a foreign language on a highly focused basis, students are also encouraged to take the foreign language courses developed through the Languages Across the Curriculum Interdisciplinary Program. This program is designed to expose students to professional and academic topics in Chinese, French, German, Russian, and Spanish. Currently, Trinity University offers two business-oriented courses through the program, "La Economía Mexicana," which is taught in Spanish, and "The Practice of Business in China," which is taught in Chinese (Mandarin).

Students concentrating in International Business also must satisfy an "international experiential" requirement in one of two ways. They must complete at least one semester of study abroad and complete an internship in International Business or its equivalent, or they must complete an approved international internship, or other meaningful international work experience, and complete the fourth course on the International Business Concentration list.

All international internships must satisfy the Department's internship criteria, and, in addition, the student must be engaged primarily in internationally-related work. Students concentrating in International Business are formally encouraged to assume an active role in helping identify qualified internship opportunities. If a student is a foreign national, then any internship used to satisfy these requirements must be a domestic internship, or an international internship that provides other than home country experience. Ultimately, the International Concentration faculty are responsible for judging the "adequacy" of offshore work experience.

Finally, students planning to concentrate in International Business are required to complete a three hour, internationally-oriented interdisciplinary course selected from the following courses offered by departments other than Business Administration: International Communications, The World Economy, Comparative Economic Systems, Economic Development of Mexico, Latin American Economic History, International Trade, Political Economy of the U.S., Europe and Japan, International Law, and Intercultural Communication.

### **Rationale for Structure of International Business Concentration**

It is the Department's belief that the structure of the International Concentration creates the potential for earlier and broader exposure to the study of both historical and contemporary forces that are influencing the world of international trade and commerce. Such exposure is likely to make the study of International Business more meaningful for our students and to enrich the teaching experience for our faculty as a consequence.

The likelihood that students will complete the international concentration with at least rudimentary foreign language skills is enhanced. Requiring international experience helps students develop their foreign language skills, create international contacts, and gain a greater appreciation for "things international."

Internships are a valuable means of acquiring relevant business experience. The international internship requirement provides students international exposure with a career focus and practical experience in a setting where international business is being transacted. Furthermore, these internships likely will help students to further improve their foreign language skills and to make valuable professional contacts.

### **Study Abroad Opportunities and Student Exchanges**

Trinity University has a very active Study Abroad program. Approximately 25% of all Trinity students who graduate have spent at least one semester abroad. That statistic is probably even higher for Business Administration majors, many of whom study abroad in the summer.

The Study Abroad Office at Trinity is committed to place each student in the program that is most suited to the specific needs, interest, and abilities of that individual .

There is a wide spectrum of approved programs from which students may choose. Countries where Trinity students have studied recently include Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Russia, Denmark, The Netherlands, Mexico, Costa Rica, China, Japan, Israel, and Egypt. Trinity University is affiliated with the Institute of European Studies/Institute of Asian Studies (IES/IAS), Denmark's International Studies (DIS), the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies, and the Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE).

Two exchange programs that are proving especially beneficial to students in Business Administration are those with the Instituto Tecnológico Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM) in Monterrey, Mexico, and Lingnan University in Tuen Mun, N.T., Hong Kong.

A number of Trinity Business Administration students have studied in both the long semesters and in the summer programs at ITESM and its 26 satellite campuses across Mexico. The Department of Business Administration, along with the Department of Economics, has established a faculty exchange with the main campus in Monterrey as well. Every long semester, a Trinity faculty member spends a week lecturing at ITESM; a counterpart from ITESM

does the same at Trinity. This activity continually strengthens the ties between the two universities and, in turn, enhances the opportunities for students to participate in joint research projects and to find meaningful internships.

Each summer, Lingnan University sponsors the Lee Shiu Summer Institute, a month long intensive program in which students from selected universities from around the world, including Trinity, study with students from Hong Kong and Mainland China. Emphasis is on Chinese culture, economic development in Hong Kong and China, the development of language skills and intercultural sensitivity. Three of our students were selected and attended the program in summer 1998. This summer, three more of our students are attending the Institute.

Trinity and Lingnan have agreed on a student exchange program for the long semesters. It is hoped that next year will see our first students participate in that program.

### **Internships Abroad**

A number of our students have completed an internship while studying abroad. Over the past several semesters, for example, we have had students doing internships with exporters in Mexico, manufacturers in England, financiers in France, bankers in Vietnam, and human resource managers in Singapore. For the most part, these internships were secured through the University approved programs in which the students were enrolled.

Now that all International Business concentrators are be required to complete an international internship, the faculty members in International Business will work closely with the Study Abroad coordinator to assess each potential internship and, ultimately, to approve or disapprove it for the concentration requirement.

### **Internationalizing the Business Curriculum in General**

Not only does the Department of Business Administration continue to strive to develop a strong contemporary International Business concentration, it also has moved to ensure that all of its curriculum is globalized. Included in the requirements for the Finance, Management, and Marketing concentrations are international courses. In compliance with AACSB recommendations, and in the spirit of providing our students with a contemporary business education, all of the core courses in Business Administration have an international element.

When opportunities arise for student participation in activities abroad, if feasible, the Department and the University are active in providing some degree of financial assistance to encourage such participation. Recently, 13 Trinity students attended a four-day International Business symposium at ITESM in Monterrey, Mexico. Two thousand students from throughout Mexico, the United States, and Central and South America were in attendance. In support of our students, the University paid their airfares.

Two Trinity alumni in Hong Kong pay the greater portion of our students' airfares when they travel to the Lingnan University Summer Program.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Department of Business Administration is committed to providing all of its students with an understanding of the global environment. Especially important is the on-going development of an International Business concentration that will provide students with the knowledge and experience to make them competitive in the market.

The process is a dynamic one. It is the responsibility of the faculty and the administration to stay current in order to keep the curriculum up-to-date and to look for additional ways to provide the resources necessary to support the program.