

# INTEGRATING TWO COURSE DELIVERY PLATFORMS FOR A BUSINESS SIMULATION

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## ABSTRACT

*Creating a course through an online modality that is summative of the academic experience in a given program would allow each student the opportunity to demonstrate what he or she has mastered in that program. In other courses, concepts are either introduced or reinforced through assignments, tests and discussion posts. In some courses students could demonstrate mastery of program learning outcomes. By creating a single course that is designed to be summative of the program learning experience, all MBA students can demonstrate whether they have mastered the program learning objectives. We will detail the process for creating a simulation base course. We will give attention to the integration of the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) used by Ashford University with the business simulation software managed by Tri Corporation. Focus on the Collaboration efforts between Ashford University team members and members of Tri Corporation will be provided. Several factors were of considerable importance to the creation of a capstone simulation course. In particular adaptation of the simulation to a six week format will be discussed. A focus on credit hour analysis will be provided. Details about course piloting and the training of qualified faculty to instruct the course will be addressed.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Forbes School of Business and Technology Master of Business Administration (MBA) program delivered in the online modality at Ashford University offered multiple capstone courses that were part of several specializations. With the program having several specializations and each specialization having a capstone course, the program lacked a singular capstone that would allow for every student to be assessed according to the same set of measures. In 2017 the Forbes School of Business and Technology, under the advisement of faculty decided to pursue creating a singular capstone course for all MBA students. Faculty decided that the course needed to be summative of the MBA experience. Program leadership further decided that the course should contain a business simulation that would assess students in multiple content areas. Included in the content requirements for a simulation were the disciplines of management, leadership, finance, marketing, sales, research and development. Henriksen and Borgensen (2016) argue, "...games offer a unique opportunity to practice and hone good leadership skills (p. 388). We argue that the right simulation will allow students to demonstrate mastery of several skills.

Multiple questions needed to be answered in order to properly select a vendor to contract with. The first question was, "What simulation exist that could meet the needs of the Forbes School of Business and Technology MBA degree program concerns? Those concerns were twofold. The first concern was "Does the simulation have the type of content that would meet the program learning outcomes?" The second concern focused on "Could the simulation be integrated with the Canvas Learning Management System course platform in a manner that would be supportive of students at the individual level?"

## SIMULATION SELECTION

It was important that MBA team members choose a simulation that would be summative of the students' program experience. A simulation had to found that contained elements of management, accounting, finance, marketing, product development, product pricing and product sales. The simulation also had to have the feel of the real business world. After viewing multiple simulations, the one that seemed to fit the needs of the Forbes School of Business & Technology MBA Program was one developed by TRI Corporation of Beaverton, Oregon.

## VENDOR INTERACTION

A significant question focused on "In what way and how often the vendor would be available to MBA team members, faculty and students?" TRI Corporation was founded in 1991 by Dr. Thomas Conine and Dr. David Sims (Bloomberg, 2018). Of great importance in determining the type of support available from TRI Corporation was the interaction provided by Conine and other key members of the organization. Meetings with vendor members were conducted through the use Adobe Connect video conferencing, ZOOM video conferencing, Skype and through teleconferences. These technologies allowed for multiple stakeholders

to all interact simultaneously for the purpose of determining client needs and communicating the vendor's capability to customize their product to program needs.

## **DEVELOPING SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**

In order to effectively determine system requirements for the Canvas LMS, the MBA team had to determine if faculty would still have direct access to assignments if the Canvas learning management system was directly integrated with the TRI Corporation System. Students would need to navigate both systems in order to successfully participate in the course. An important requirement would be the ability of faculty and students to either file help tickets or to call TRI Corporation at any time if a technological problem arose. Faculty and students would also need to be able to call TRI Corporation at any time if either one needed further clarification about any part of the simulation.

## **SYSTEM TRAINING**

Another important question was, "How would current faculty perform using the hybrid system that utilizes the Canvas LMS course platform and the TRI Corporation Platform?"

Training the faculty to properly instruct content developed by an outside vendor and also to navigate the vendor's simulation was critical to the success of the course. The simulation offered several components that faculty would need to become familiar with so that they could properly utilize the TRI Corporation platform.

## **CLASS SIZE**

The final question was, "What should the class size be in order to create the best facilitation environment?" Because the course content would be different and the delivery of course content would be different, there could be a steep learning curve for faculty in an accelerated six week format in the capstone course in year one.

## **CONCLUSION**

With the processes utilized by the Ashford University Forbes School of Business and Technology team, the capstone course was successfully designed to include content selected by Ashford Faculty and also content from the TRI Corporation simulation. Faculty were able to deliver the content and students were able to effectively meet the course learning outcomes.

## **REFERENCES**

Bloomberg (2018). Company overview of TRI Corporation. Retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=130201884>.

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