

The Development of an Integrated Experiential Model for Student Transformation

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ABSTRACT: *This paper presents a model for student transformation: spiritually, intellectually, and professionally. The implementation of this model has been supported by a paradigm shift in business faculty and staff who have embraced the challenge of developing servant leaders through an integrated process of curricular, co-curricular, and experiential learning and transformational teaching. The authors share the evolution in thinking that generated this model and the related approach to teaching and learning, along with some concrete examples of its implementation and lessons learned along the way. They also discuss anticipated next steps to further integrate the model into teaching and learning efforts and to assess its effectiveness in achieving intended learning and growth outcomes.*

INTRODUCTION

The business faculty at a small western New York Christian college for several years has been wrestling with how to increase the effectiveness and lasting impact of its students' learning experiences. Over the course of the past decade, the faculty has been engaged in an ongoing dialogue that has challenged its paradigms about the purposes of a Christian business education, faculty roles as Christian business educators, and the means of engaging students in the learning process. This paper describes the evolution of thinking in these areas and some of the scholarship that inspired it, discusses some of the resulting educational implications, introduces an integrated student transformation model that has brought cohesiveness to these efforts, and concludes by considering some of the challenges and opportunities that remain.

THE CHALLENGE: STUDENT TRANSFORMATION

Inspired by the work of Webb (1997) and Howard

(1997), the faculty began about a decade ago to discuss its purpose and approach to business education. Webb (1997) argued that God calls everyone to leadership (influence).¹ He further asserted that "without an underlying motivation to influence others so as to make a difference in the world, the integration of faith and learning is just a sterile academic exercise" (p. 1). This challenged the faculty to consider its role in teaching and fostering leadership in its students in a much more intentional manner. However, Page (1996) cautioned that "we should not be factories producing leaders but rather organizations developing leadership potential in our students" (p. 82) – an admonition that began to reshape faculty understanding of what it meant to be a business educator, a move away from simply imparting knowledge to actively developing leaders.

A second article that significantly shaped faculty thinking and dialogue about business education advocated a transformational (vs. transactional) teaching/learning/leadership model as a means of enhancing both student learning and leadership development (Howard, 1997). Howard contrasts transformational vs. transactional teaching/learning summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Transactional vs. Transformational Teaching/Learning

Transactional Teaching/Learning	Transformational Teaching/Learning
Teacher and student have separate, but related, purposes	Teacher and student aspire to a common [higher] purpose
Courses viewed as a series of exchanges; student focus on grades	Courses viewed as shared opportunities for learning/growth
Course syllabus as a contract	Course syllabus as a roadmap or guide
Motivations for learning: getting a grade, meeting a requirement	Motivations for learning: a desire to learn or become
Success = grade earned, requirement met	Success = changed attitude, transformed mind, enriched worldview, improved ability
Instructional focus on content	Instructional focus on process and outcome

Adapted from Howard (1997, 4-5)

Howard asserted that transformational teaching “not only improves the teaching but leads to a natural integration of a Christian’s faith into the education process” (p. 2) and that the resulting “Christian teaching should facilitate change and activity that moves people toward God” (p. 8). He concluded that transformational teachers are people of vision, who know how to engage their students, are committed to values, and seek growth in themselves and others (p. 7). It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that a transformational faculty will collectively share these qualities and that a realistic (and perhaps assessable) outcome of their interaction with students might be the demonstration of these qualities in their students, because in the end “education is not just inputs and outputs but is a process of *becoming*” (p. 12, emphasis added). More specifically, its chief aim is “helping people become what God wants them to be” (p. 14). The implications of this understanding are enormous and powerful.

Another significant contribution to the thinking and dialogue of faculty, and the design of the college’s business program, was Hersey and Blanchard’s (1969) life cycle theory of leadership,² which hypothesized that leadership styles should reflect the maturity level of the followers. The faculty believed that this theory had important implications for their growing interest in facilitating spiritual, intellectual, and professional transformation in students – helping them to achieve their God-given leadership potential. Specifically, the life-cycle theory contends that as the maturity level of the follower (ability to act independently and assume responsibility and the desire to achieve success)

increases, leadership style should move from high task-low relationship, to high task-high relationship, to high relationship-low task, to low task-low relationship. It seemed appropriate that because the maturity level of students tends to grow across their (typically) four-year educational experience, the program should be designed to embrace this developmental process, while endeavoring to graduate fully mature, responsible, capable servant leaders.

As the faculty discussed, prayed about, and wrestled with these theories of leadership, teaching, learning, and development, it became increasingly clear that their traditional educational philosophies, models, and approaches were inadequate to accomplish the mission and emerging vision of the department or to meet the evolving needs of students. The shifting learning preferences for incoming students, accompanied by rapid advances in classroom technology, exerted significant pressure for new pedagogical approaches. As Fawcett (2003) noted, “business education has seen a trend toward a more interactive style of pedagogy as students seem to prefer getting their ‘hands dirty’ while studying business” (p. 1). At the same time, the mission statements of the college and the business division were revised to expand the mandate beyond simply providing an education, to transforming students so that they can transform society – a small change in words with powerful and, at times, overwhelming implications. The faculty was also increasingly dissatisfied with the effectiveness of its efforts to integrate faith with teaching; despite significant efforts, it too often seemed that business education and the consideration of related faith implications

were, at best, parallel discussions.

As the faculty struggled with these tensions and searched for new solutions, it became clear that three overarching (and probably unstated) educational assumptions needed to change. First, student-learning needed to expand beyond the classroom in a much more pervasive manner. A traditional medical training motto is *See One, Do One, Teach One*, advocating that learning happens best when students have opportunities to observe, practice, and then instruct/mentor others. As Johnson (2003) noted, there is biblical precedent for such a learning model: “For Ezra had set his heart to *study* the law of the Lord and to *practice* it, and to *teach* His statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10, NAS, emphasis added). This approach resonated with the faculty as an opportunity to meet the challenges they were facing. As a result, they implemented a number of initiatives to complement classroom learning: strengthening the internship program, initiating a Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) team, implementing an annual departmental essay contest, incorporating service-learning projects within courses, utilizing more guest speakers, etc. The faculty also recognized a need to much more explicitly articulate its mission, goals, and learning model to its students and ensure that all learning opportunities supported these priorities, with the intent of increasing focus and intentionality. Finally, it became increasingly clear that for any of this to really work, responsibility for facilitating effective student-learning and transformation must be a shared, collaborative effort among the faculty, staff, and administration.

Although not fully understood at the time, the faculty was really struggling with how to come to consensus on their desire to see greater transformation in students and how to build a model for comprehensive biblical integration. Holder (2006) noted the need for comprehensive biblical integration within academic programs (as opposed to course-by-course integration), arguing for a “coordinated progression of biblical integration to facilitate the learning relationship among the courses” (p. 44). The model presented in Figure 1 attempts to do this, but also recognizes the opportunity for integration outside the formal classroom. As such, it advances the type of integration suggested by Chewning (2001) and Holder, where a systematic coordination of integration efforts, styles, and methods has challenged students to incorporate “Christian character development, utilized Scripture as a practical source of business principles, encouraged the inclusion of biblical truth into marketplace practices, and fostered the spiritual growth and development” (Holder, p. 47). The effort to construct and implement such a comprehensive integration

model also addresses one of the gaps in the field of faith/business integration noted by Smith (2005) – the lack of integration meta-theory (How does integration happen? What are the models of integration? What are the intended outcomes?).

THE RESPONSE – THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTEGRATED STUDENT-TRANSFORMATION MODEL

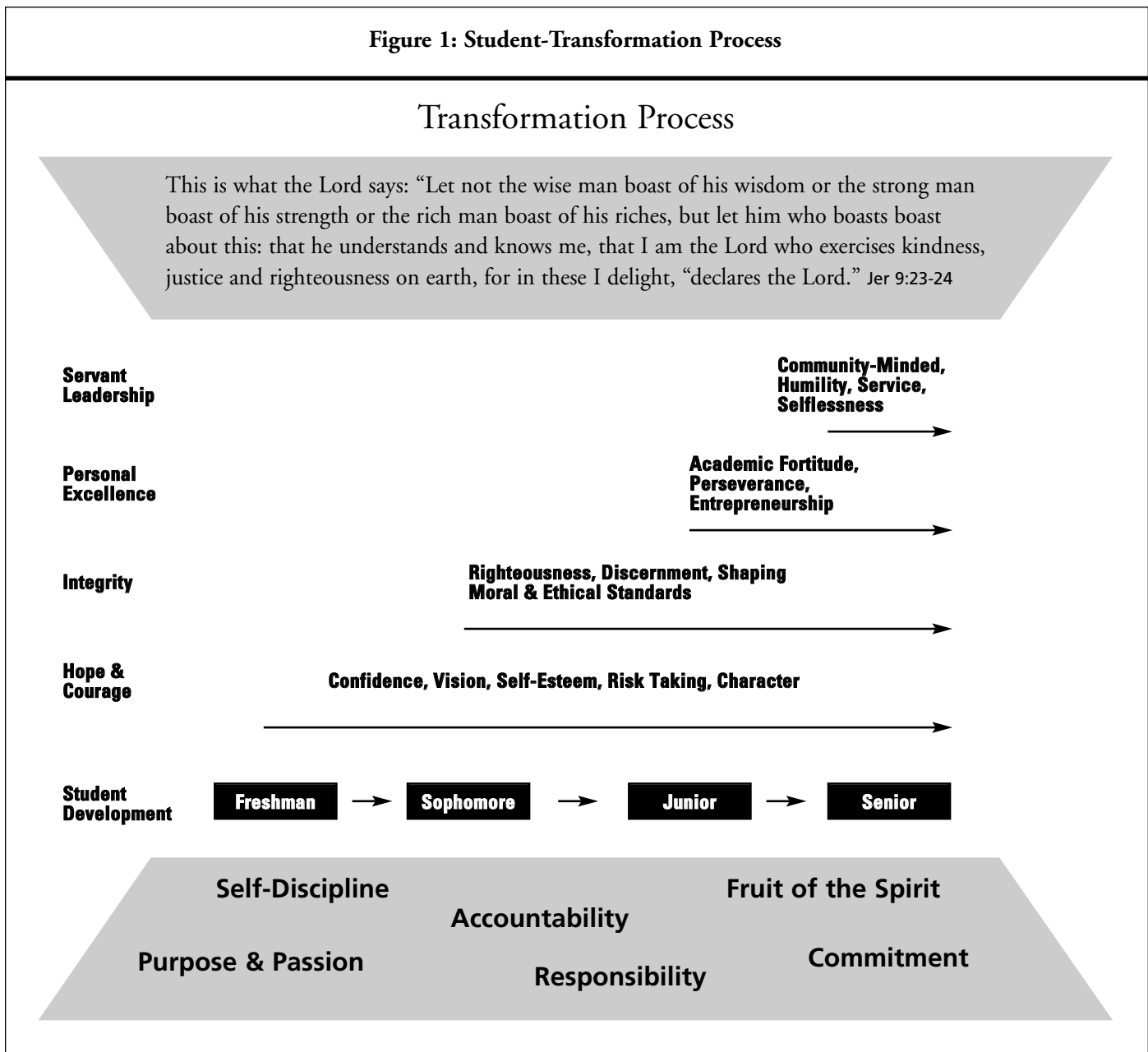
Based on these early lessons, the faculty began an extensive effort to articulate a four-year integrated model of student transformation that included both professional/educational outcomes and personal/character/faith outcomes. These outcomes were intended to accomplish intentional, coordinated, integrated learning opportunities through both curricular and co-curricular experiences. The model is referred to as a “transformation process” because it serves as a unifying anchor for Undergraduate Business Program faculty and staff to provide opportunities for students to move through the building blocks toward being transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:2).

In Alfred North Whitehead’s *The Aims of Education* (1929), he described the “rhythm of education” as follows: “The principle is merely this — that different subjects and modes of study should be undertaken by pupils at fitting times when they have reached the proper stage of mental development” (p. 15). This thought may be dated but is nonetheless relevant to today and has had a significant influence on how the model is communicated and implemented. He advocated that we should be patient and move students through only those subjects and difficulty levels when they have successfully passed through the previous phase. While faculty cannot be perfectly flexible with the timing of a student’s education, they can be cognizant of the phases students need to pass through before greater things can be expected from them. The model presented here is intentionally designed so that each year provides a foundation for the next, synchronizing the curriculum requirements with the stages of spiritual and character development, resulting in an overall process that can equip students to be Christ-like leaders.

Model Overview

The shared hope of the business faculty and staff is that students (1) place their faith in Christ and have the conviction to follow his leading, (2) change their lifestyles to conform to biblical teachings as they grow in the faith, (3) develop an understanding of their unique God-given gifts, and (4) begin to serve others using those valuable tal-

Figure 1: Student-Transformation Process



ents. How to operationalize those stages into concrete, measurable goals was the challenge. As a result of fervent prayer, the faculty was inspired to design the model shown in Figure 1. Drawing from experience in industry, the time-to-market process was used as a template. (See Appendix I)

The model is multi-dimensional and is encapsulated by character attributes the faculty believes are essential to graduating students and by scripture. The character attributes are foundational attributes the faculty believes are necessary in order for students to model Christ-like behavior: fruit of the spirit, self-discipline, purpose and passion, accountability, responsibility, and commitment. The scripture from Jeremiah 9:23-24 captures the faculty’s greatest

desire, that students will graduate “boasting” about the transformation God has made in their lives and that they will be well equipped to fulfill all the good purposes he has for them. The intention of the four themes is to provide a framework for students to develop these character attributes in unique ways each year. Freshman classes emphasize hope and courage; sophomore classes emphasize integrity; junior classes emphasize personal excellence; senior classes emphasize servant leadership. One of the four themes is emphasized for *all* business students each year. In this way, each student who studies business at the college for four consecutive years is exposed to each theme multiple times and in multiple settings.

IMPLEMENTATION

How Integration is Accomplished

This section highlights the implementation of the model. This school year, 2006-07, completes the fourth year of integrating the model into the business program. It is the faculty's intent, through pedagogy, advisement, and experiential opportunities, to provide students with occasions and circumstances to reflect on their life choices and become convicted of their personal beliefs through the grace of God. In other words, we seek to provide the environment and opportunities to lead students toward God's plan for their lives. As they become strengthened in their personal beliefs, the intent is to provide avenues for them to experience and reflect on what they believe in business and personal settings.

At the beginning of each year, the business department hosts a kick-off picnic. Before the picnic, the faculty is introduced and the model is reviewed with the business students. Each year one of the four core themes is highlighted, while also emphasizing the appropriate theme for each level of course. For example, during the year in which *hope and courage* is the theme, all business students are asked to complete assignments and participate in activities which encourage them to develop confidence, take risks, and build self-confidence, establishing hope and courage in themselves and the power of the risen Christ to transform their lives into His likeness. At the same time, students in 100-level business courses are being further challenged to develop hope and courage through exposure to varied academic topics and campus life experiences connected to these courses. The ultimate learning goal for these first-year students is that they will possess the resolve to move forward as they face the unknown and demonstrate the willingness to attempt something new or different even though it might be difficult.

The sophomore year is the time when, having tested and stretched themselves in the previous year, students should be building their inner level of integrity, demonstrating through their actions evidence of what they profess to believe, regardless of the consequences. The learning goal for second-year students is that, based on a supernatural discernment given by God to decide right from wrong, they will learn what it means to be in the world but not of the world (Romans 12:1-2). This is a difficult lesson for students living in a culture pervaded by relativism. In business courses students are presented with numerous case studies on ethical issues. It is, of course, important that they become able to discern ethical business practices from unethical business practices. The challenge for students

seems to be recognizing the integration of biblical and business principles as a holistic view; that integrity is the same answer in personal situations as well as business situations. Students in 200-level courses consider these implications of integrity, as well as the departmental theme for the year.

The junior year focuses on personal excellence, building and testing a personal mission for the future. The faculty recognizes that not all students are "A" students, but that each has been given a special purpose by God. It is the privilege of faculty to help students discover what this is and pursue it with fortitude and perseverance by doing their best in all endeavors. In 300-level courses, in addition to challenging students with the departmental theme for the year, students are encouraged to be excellent at whatever they are called to do, for the glory of God. The learning goal for juniors is that they will be aware that the gifts and talents they possess come from God and that they will be accountable to him for how they are used. The focus is on having the students pursue academic fortitude by selecting a career choice, persevering through upper-level courses and experiential learning opportunities, and developing an understanding of entrepreneurship from a personal level, not just a business perspective. In addition, they must be proactive, responsible, and reliable people, who will follow through on assignments and tasks.

The senior year is the faculty's final year of discipleship, bringing all four years together so that the student leaves not only with a degree but also with a mind and a heart for selfless dedication to service – servant leadership. The desire is that each student will leave with the capacity to lead where Christ has placed him/her, patiently waiting for God to increase his or her influence. The learning goal is that students will demonstrate the character qualities of humility and selflessness as they focus on service to their communities, that they will be able to function interdependently and collaboratively, and that they will be able to work effectively with others to accomplish tasks, in both group and one-on-one situations, assuming leadership and follower-ship roles. This is the focus of 400-level courses and specifically the two capstone business courses: Leadership Challenge and Strategic Management.

Following the example in Ezra 7:10, the four-year transformation process allows for students to "See One, Do One, Teach One." Freshmen can see the possibilities ahead of them – see by becoming familiar with multiple avenues of learning and the diversity of the campus population and see by testing the limits of their personal preconceptions and knowledge: hope and courage. The sophomore and junior years are those in which students are challenged to

do, to be hands-on with their learning through class projects, division-sponsored activities, and intercampus activities. These are the classes in which *doing* is encouraged over passive learning (*seeing* only): where integrity and personal excellence are stressed. In the senior year, having *seen* the world and their capabilities and having practiced their passions by *doing*, they are now ready to truly integrate all they have learned by *teaching* others: servant leadership.

Assumptions and Keys to Success

The implementation of the transformation model was guided by several operating assumptions. The response from the entire faculty and staff at the college has been overwhelmingly positive primarily because at the beginning this model was embraced by everyone and periodically throughout each year there are opportunities for reassessment and sharing of implementation practices by everyone. The key assumptions and keys to success from the faculty viewpoint are summarized in Table 2.

This model is still viable without the overt reliance on

Christianity and scripture. The character attributes and the themes are very relevant to a secular environment and should resonate with students and professors regardless of faith or lack of faith. Essentially the model can be adopted in a secular environment by simply eliminating the reference to scripture and, instead, focusing on desired character attributes.

Implementation Progress

The faculty has made significant progress implementing this model and, based on the results of student feedback on course evaluations, students are beginning to see the applications in their courses (see figure 2).

Specific implementation activities have evolved as new techniques have been tested, more powerful ways have been discovered to get the message across, and students have become more actively involved in their own transformation process. Table 3 summarizes the specific activities used to implement the transformation model during its first four years.

Table 2: Assumptions and Keys to Success

Assumptions	Keys to Success
1. Responsibility for model implementation must be shared by all faculty and staff.	1. At the conclusion of each school year, a week-long strategy session is held. One of the agenda items is the reassessment of the model and the expansion of integration within and across courses.
2. Faculty need to carefully articulate the model and its justification to the students.	2. Model linkage must be made within syllabi, course objectives, and assignments.
3. The model must be infused to the fullest extent possible into everything we do (cannot be perceived as an additional component to what we already do — it <i>is</i> what we do).	3. Adopting one of the four themes each year for all department activities keeps faculty, staff, and students focused and cognizant of the application of that theme.
4. The model relies heavily on experiential/service learning and co-curricular opportunities to complement classroom instruction.	4. Linking class assignments to activities which support and enhance the theme helps reinforce the relevance of the theme and helps faculty and students integrate it within their personal experience.
5. Faculty must embrace a more transformational approach to teaching.	5. Frequent open dialogue and best practice sharing results in positive reinforcement.
6. Transformation efforts must be assessed to the extent possible.	6. As assessment processes are developed, use the transformation model as the guiding principle. Take measurements at different points in time, combining student self-reflection and external assessment.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

This academic year completes the fourth year of implementation and will give the faculty the opportunity to review the preceding four years. The faculty is committed to continuously improving the delivery and communication of the model. There are unlimited possibilities for further integration of the model's learning goals and further releasing the process into the control of the students, enabling them to embrace for themselves the power of this opportunity for their own personal transformation. One potentially significant tool for student enablement is an e-portfolio, which can become the student's record of their progress toward each of the goals and a repository for documenting their years at the college. This system will also allow for Web-based assessment using pre-determined rubrics that measure the degree of proficiency for each learning outcome. This approach will allow assessment of learning outcomes on a student-by-student basis, as well as an evaluation by major and department. It will also facilitate shared responsibility for learning between the faculty and the student.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity and challenge for the faculty is to be living examples for the students, modeling that which we seek to foster in them. As Johnson (2003) asserted, "we teach most authentically that which we have

been learning most actively" (p. 1). It is the intent of the faculty to purposefully and diligently role model the transformation process in all of our lives, faculty and staff, so that our students can *see* what it looks like, *do* or practice those behaviors resulting from God's transforming power, and *teach* the world by being salt and light – servant leaders.

The ultimate test of the implementation of this model for student transformation is the extent to which the specific desired learning and growth outcomes are achieved. Unlike many of the more traditional student outcomes such as teamwork or communication skills, assessing hope and courage, integrity, personal excellence, or servant leadership requires new approaches. The faculty has constructed an assessment tracking table, which includes the learning goals for each theme, a defined method of assessment, intended outcomes, and evidence of realized outcomes.

The methods of assessment will include internships, experiential learning, student e-portfolio, alumni surveys, and student exit surveys. The intended outcomes will be measured using those assessment tools and the results evaluated. The current academic year will produce the first measurable outcomes from the student-transformation model. It is faculty's future intent that each business student will work with his/her faculty adviser to develop annual learning contracts that will identify means of demonstrating proficiency in key learning outcomes.

Figure 2: Student Evaluation Results

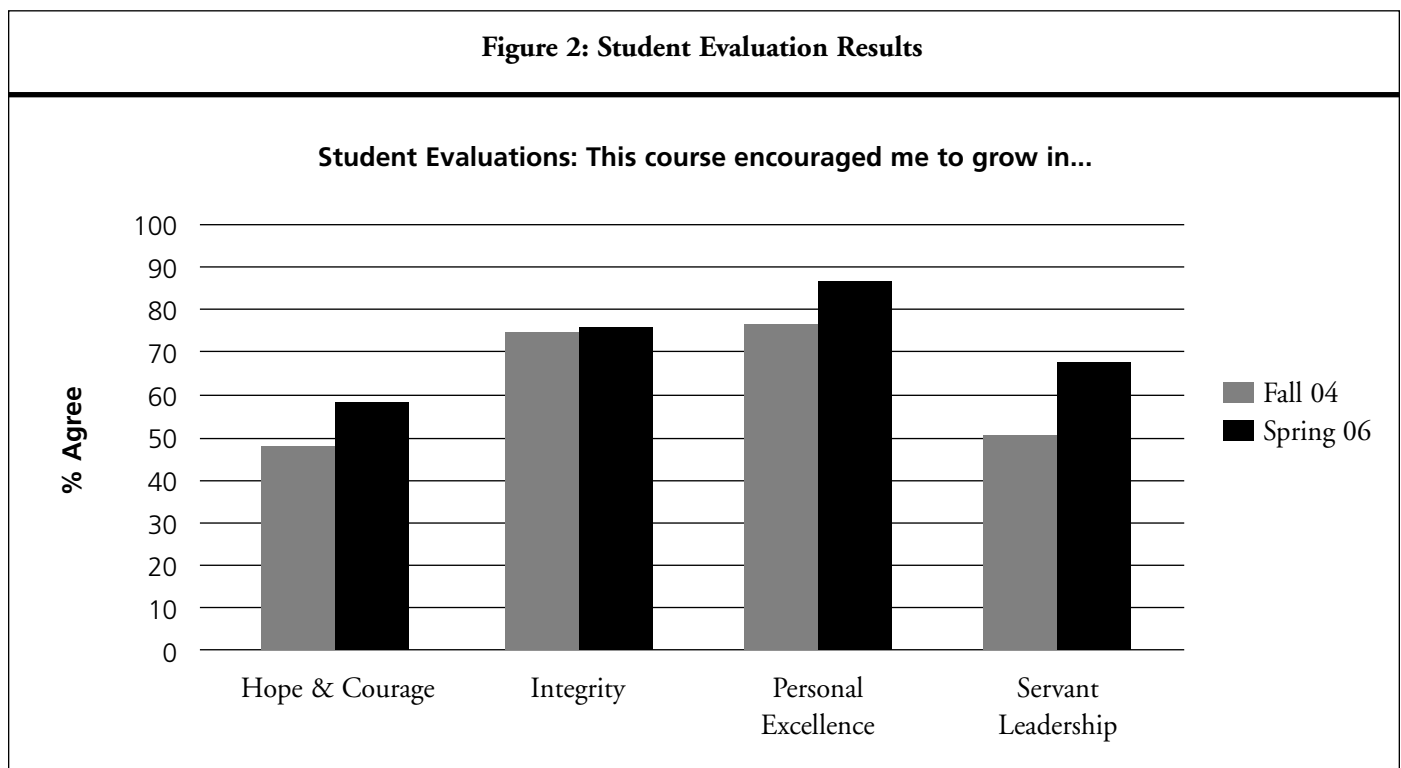


Table 3: Transformational Model Implementation Activities

Model Theme	Activity
Hope & Courage (Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off picnic at beginning of year includes games that encourage getting out of comfort zone • Essay contest on the year's theme open to all business students • Assigned book reading³ with required essay for selected courses • Faculty panel discussion • Experiential activities to encourage risk-taking • 1st annual awards banquet with senior awards in all four theme areas • Began SIFE project, Women of Hope business camp⁴ • SIFE and class projects • Guest speakers in various courses
Integrity (Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off picnic at beginning of year focuses on integrity • Assigned book reading⁵ with required essay for selected courses • Formed student-led book-review session for in-depth discussion • Essay contest on the year's theme open to all business students • Panel discussion with local business leaders and educators • Assigned academic integrity officer • Class and SIFE projects including Biz World integrity workshops in area grade schools • SIFE and class projects • Guest speakers in various courses • Annual awards banquet awarding one senior for each category.
Personal Excellence (Year 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off picnic at beginning of year focuses on personal excellence • Assigned book reading⁶ with required essay for selected courses • Essay contest on the year's theme open to all business students • Panel discussion with THE COLLEGE staff and alumni • Began student nominations for awards in personal excellence. Each week students who were nominated by other students or faculty for personal excellence were surprised in class by a "prize patrol," at which time they received a Personal Excellence T-shirt, pin, balloons, and had their picture taken. Our faculty office hallway was turned into the "Wall of Personal Excellence," where the pictures of all the winners were displayed. Mass e-mails went out to the student body announcing the winners. • At the end of the year, students surprised faculty with their own version of "prize patrol," giving personal excellence awards to each faculty. • Class and SIFE projects including financial planning workshops in area grade schools • Guest speakers in various courses • Annual awards banquet awarding one senior for each category.
Servant Leadership (Year 4, in process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off picnic at beginning of year focuses on Servant Leadership • Panel discussion with alumni, business and non-business faculty, and staff whose lives demonstrate servant leadership. • Have student nominations for those who exhibit servant leadership. Will be publicized in a more understated manner than personal excellence, and awardees will be notified. • Students in selected classes will be required to perform a service of some type. The required essay will be their reflection about that experience. • Essay contest on the year's theme open to all business students

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have presented a model for student transformation, spiritually, intellectually, and professionally. The implementation of this model has been supported by a paradigm shift in the thinking of the college business faculty members, who have embraced the challenge of developing leaders through an integrated process of curricular and co-curricular/experiential learning and transformational teaching. The evolution in faculty thinking that generated this model, the related approaches to teaching and learning, and some concrete examples of the model's implementation were presented. Anticipated steps to further integrate the model into teaching and learning efforts and to assess its effectiveness in achieving intended learning and growth outcomes were discussed. The business faculty at the college are committed to delivering an educational experience in which students "See One, Do One, Teach One": seeing in the classroom through teaching methods and observing faculty/staff behavior; doing what has been learned in and outside the classroom and working side-by-side with faculty/staff; teaching what has been learned and practiced, which is the ultimate demonstration of knowledge and of the Great Commission.

ENDNOTES

¹ Webb's 1997 research utilized the Miner Sentence Completion Scale (Miner, 1993), which measures motivation to lead, to compare business students at Messiah College to students from two nearby private, secular liberal arts colleges. This research was followed by a longitudinal study (Webb, 2001) that examined growth in motivation to lead from the freshman to senior years. Both studies were disappointing from the perspective that there was no significant difference in the motivation to lead, either across institutions or time.

² This is sometimes referred to as "situational leadership."

³ You Don't Have to be Blind to See: Find and Fulfill Your Destiny Regardless of Your Circumstances (Stovall, 1996).

⁴ Partnership with City of Rochester inner city school to bring 9th and 10th grade girls to campus over February break to teach business skills and create, make, market, and sell a product. Expanded the next year to include Jr. High boys for a Men of Standard business camp. Camps continuing every year.

⁵ Time for Truth, Living Free in a World of Lies, Hype, and Spin (Guinness, 2000).

⁶ Think Big, Unleashing Your Potential For Excellence (Carson, 1992).

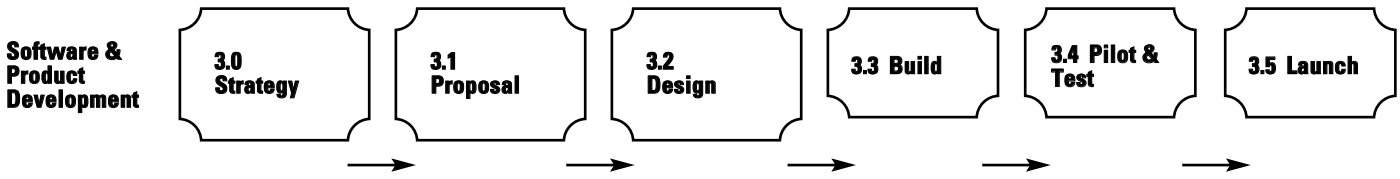
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APPENDIX I

In business, we teach our students about the delivery process of a product (time-to-market or TTM), where an idea is transformed into a capability or product which then

becomes a distinct and viable contribution to the organization's profit or process. That TTM process looks like this:



We adapted this process for our transformation model to span four years built on four primary themes: *Hope and Courage*, *Integrity*, *Personal Excellence*, and *Servant Leadership*.

The freshman year is the “strategy and proposal” time when students are exposed to varied academic topics and campus life experiences. The sophomore year is the “design” time when, having tested and stretched themselves in the

previous year, they should be finding and “building” their inner person of *Integrity*. The junior year focuses on *Personal Excellence*, “building, piloting and testing” a personal mission for the future. The senior year is the “launch year” – our final year of discipleship, bringing all four years together with a focus on *Servant Leadership*. The steps in the delivery process collapse into the four years of the undergraduate program:

