

Georgia Southern University

Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

Association of Marketing Theory and Practice
Proceedings 2021

Association of Marketing Theory and Practice
Proceedings

2021

Re-envisioning a Masters of Science in Marketing Degree

Danny Weathers

Clemson University, pweath2@clemson.edu

Scott D. Swain

Clemson University, sdswain@clemson.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/amtp-proceedings_2021



Part of the [Marketing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Weathers, Danny and Swain, Scott D., "Re-envisioning a Masters of Science in Marketing Degree" (2021). *Association of Marketing Theory and Practice Proceedings 2021*. 35.
https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/amtp-proceedings_2021/35

This conference proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the Association of Marketing Theory and Practice Proceedings at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Association of Marketing Theory and Practice Proceedings 2021 by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

Re-envisioning a Masters of Science in Marketing Degree

Danny Weathers

Clemson University

Scott D. Swain

Clemson University

ABSTRACT

In response to changing market demands for marketing graduates, our university's Department of Marketing began a major revision to its MS Marketing program. With input from faculty, administrators, students, industry contacts, and MS directors at peer institutions, the department developed a vision for the program that emphasizes "real-world" experiences and career support. This paper presents the research and decision-making that led to a new vision for the program, as well as the process that will be used to implement this vision.

FACULTY INPUT

To generate buy-in, we asked department faculty to submit ideas for revising the program based on perceived department strengths, interests, and resources, as well as potential synergies with other college and university departments or programs. Faculty feedback fell into three general categories:

- The program should have a specific focus that was tied to larger university initiatives, such as analytics, digital marketing, healthcare marketing, or sports marketing.
- The program should be general in nature, without a specific focus.
- The department should not support a stand-alone program but should instead focus on offering courses to support existing, successful graduate programs in the college (e.g., MBA).

Each of these faculty suggestions offers advantages and disadvantages.

STUDENT (AND POTENTIAL STUDENT) INPUT

In addition to auditing program assets and identifying faculty interests, we sought to triangulate with the perspectives of currently enrolled MS Marketing students (N=13). Several themes emerged from their feedback:

- In the students' view, the program's objectives were not well defined, and the curriculum was not appropriately integrated.
- Expectations created prior to enrolling in the program were not being met (Coaldrake 2001).
- The curriculum and content were not sufficiently different from that of an undergraduate marketing degree.
- Students felt that the program was not adequately preparing them for their desired career paths (Arambewela, Polonsky, and Kidd 2004).

We also gleaned insight from individuals who had either applied to or expressed interest in the MS Marketing program. Over the past decade, as tracked through the Graduate School's online system, 538 individuals who had expressed in interest in the MS Marketing program also indicated interest in other university graduate programs. A substantial number (132) expressed interest in non-business graduate programs, suggesting that many students interested in the MS Marketing program may come from areas other than marketing. Consistent with this inference, of the 44 MS Marketing prospects who emailed the program director over the past 12 months, 67% of those who revealed their majors were not marketing majors (20 of 30). Further, 70% of these were non-business majors (14 of 20). Thus, there appears to be demand for an MS Marketing degree among individuals with non-marketing backgrounds.

EMPLOYER INPUT

Following the advice of Ellen and Pilling (2002), we next sought industry (employer) input, both through interviewing informants and analyzing a large corpus of marketing job postings (Rosenstreich, Priday, and Bedggood 2014). Several areas of insight emerged from these efforts:

- Business graduate degrees (including MBA degrees) lack inherent value. Instead, real-world experiences are desired.
- Employers are not familiar with MS Marketing degrees.
- An MS Marketing degree could offer value for (a) people needing general marketing training or (b) people wanting to take a "deep dive" into the marketing aspects of a particular industry.
- A graduate marketing degree should equip students with a sound understanding of marketing strategy and how various areas of marketing (e.g., sales, advertising, analytics, international) support the strategy.

COMPETING PROGRAMS

Among graduate business programs at the 131 Carnegie R1 institutions, only 36 (27%) of these institutions offer MS Marketing degrees, while 122 (93%) offer MBA degrees, and 97 (74%), 83 (63%), 74 (56%), and 65 (50%) offer graduate degrees in Accounting, Finance, Business Analytics, and Management/Information Systems, respectively. The MS Marketing programs require between 30 and 46 credit hours and are designed to be completed anywhere between 10 and 24 months. Programs accept full-time students, part-time students, or both, and programs offer courses in-person, online, or both. We identified both specialized programs, with a focus on

areas such as analytics or healthcare, and general programs, with some allowing students to select from various specialization tracks.

PROGRAM VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION

This insight led to a vision for the program that emphasizes real-world, data-driven experiences and is career-focused (Swain and Hanna 2008). The program should make meaningful contributions to economic and social well-being, particularly at the state and regional levels. This vision will be accomplished through a partnership with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which will foster engagement between students and industry, thus providing experiential, real-world opportunities. The curriculum will be designed to facilitate this partnership by equipping students with the skills they need to work in cross-functional teams (Hibbard, Swain, and Hanna 2016) and to satisfy the needs of SBDC clients. Further, the curriculum will provide more flexibility than in the past by allowing students to take electives that support their career interests.

The program will place more emphasis on career development outside of the classroom (Hopkins, Raymond, and Carlson 2011). Specifically, we will work closely with our university's career placement center. We will also provide networking opportunities through working with industry partners to develop a speaker series and a mentoring program.

While we expect these changes to support the back-end of the program (i.e., career placement), they will also benefit the front-end. That is, more clearly defining the program and its benefits will make it easier to identify and recruit prospective students and develop appropriate expectations. The ultimate goal of the program revision is to better serve students. To the extent that the planned changes are successful, they will also benefit the department. Specifically, the department may receive increased tuition revenues, which can be used to support various department initiatives, and the SBDC partnership may provide research opportunities for faculty and serve to promote the image of the department, college, and university with external stakeholders.

REFERENCES

Arambewela, R., M. Polonsky, and J. Kidd (2004), "The Orientation of Australian Coursework-focused Marketing Masters Degree," in *ANZMAC: Marketing Accountabilities and Responsibilities, Conference Proceedings*, 1-7.

Coaldrake, P. (2001), "Responding to Changing Student Expectations," *Higher Education Management*, 13 (No. 2), 75-92.

Ellen, P. S., and B. K. Pilling (2002), "Using Employer Input to Assess Graduate Marketing Education Effectiveness: A Working Example of Curriculum Development," *Marketing Education Review*, 12 (No. 1), 31-40.

Hibbard, J. D., S. D. Swain, and R. C. Hanna (2016), "Impact of Cross-Functional Team Projects on Student Performance in Functional Courses," *Marketing Management Association Fall Educator's Conference Proceedings*, eds. Lisa Lindgren and Brent Smith, Providence, RI: Marketing Management Association, 120-121.

Hopkins, C. D., M. A. Raymond, and L. Carlson (2011), "Educating Students to Give Them a Sustainable Competitive Advantage," *Journal of Marketing Education*, 33 (No. 3), 337-347.

Rosenstreich, D., G. Priday, and R. Bedggood (2014), "What Attributes do Employers Seek in Marketing Graduates?" *ANZMAC Proceedings*, 712-719.

Swain, S. D., and R. C. Hanna (2008), "Emulating Research Firms in the Classroom: Research Practicum Days," Excellence in Marketing Education and Innovative Teaching Track, special session "Creating Value in Marketing Courses," in *Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science Annual Conference*, eds. Steven P. Brown and Peter A. Dacin, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada: Academy of Marketing Science, 341.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Danny Weathers is a Professor of Marketing in the Wilbur O. and Ann Powers College of Business at Clemson University. He earned a PhD in Marketing and an MS in Statistics from the University of South Carolina and a BS in Mathematical Sciences from Clemson University. Prior to joining the faculty at Clemson, Danny served as a faculty member at Louisiana State University. He is currently the MS Marketing Director at Clemson, and he teaches courses in Marketing Research and Marketing Metrics. Over his career, Danny has taught a variety of undergraduate, master's, and PhD courses. His research has appeared in outlets including the *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Retailing*, *Journal of Business Research*, and *Journal of Advertising*.

Scott D. Swain is a Professor of Marketing in the Wilbur O. and Ann Powers College of Business at Clemson University. He earned an MBA and Ph.D. in Marketing from the University of South Carolina, a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Clemson University, and a B.S. in Physics from Francis Marion University. Prior to joining Clemson, Scott served on the faculties of Boston University (Questrom School of Business) and Northeastern University (D'Amore-McKim School of Business). He has taught a variety of courses at the undergraduate, master's, and PhD levels and frequently assists companies and non-profits with issues such as branding, intellectual property litigation, pricing, customer insight, and design. His peer-reviewed research appears in outlets such as the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, and *Journal of Retailing*.