

Quality in Practice: Kenneth W. Monfort College of Businessⁱ

As a college within the University of Northern Colorado (UNC), the Kenneth W. Monfort College of Business (MCB) began in 1968 and quickly grew in step with the explosive growth of business school enrollments nationwide. Located on the university's 236-acre Greeley campus, MCB's 34 full-time faculty, 13 part-time adjunct faculty, and eight administrative staff graduate approximately 300 students a year, drawn from 32 states, primarily Colorado.

In 1984, the College took dramatic steps to make program quality its top priority. At the time, UNC's business program was generally regarded as average and largely overshadowed by a number of key competitors within a fifty-mile radius. With its competitors and most U.S. business programs opting for a growth strategy of degree program assortment and further proliferation of graduate programs, UNC's business administrators and faculty chose an opposite approach. A vision was cast for becoming Colorado's best undergraduate business program—a goal it was agreed would not be possible without making undergraduate business education the College's exclusive mission:

MCB's Mission

Our mission is to deliver excellent undergraduate business programs and related learning opportunities that prepare students for successful careers and responsible leadership in business.

MCB's Vision

Our vision is to build a reputation of excellence in Colorado and beyond for preparing future business leaders and professionals.

Within two years, a revolutionary plan commenced for eliminating all graduate programs, including a Ph.D. degree program and Colorado's largest MBA program. Additional changes were made at the undergraduate level, with the elimination of all but one degree program—the Bachelor of Science in business administration. Future business students would declare business as a major and choose from six emphasis areas: accounting, computer information systems, finance, management, marketing, or general business.

The College adopted two long-term strategies to guide its actions: a positioning strategy of high-quality and low-cost (i.e., exceptional value), and a program delivery framework of *high-touch*, *wide-tech*, and *professional depth*.

- *High-Touch*. Smaller class sizes are designed to facilitate faculty-student interaction in the classroom. No “mass sections” are permitted to ensure this interaction occurs across the entire curriculum. Smaller class sizes also allow for experiential, hands-on learning techniques to be employed and are designed to increase active learning levels within the student population. Each professor maintains student office hours to increase student access.
- *Wide-Tech*. MCB has invested millions of dollars in its technology infrastructure to support a curriculum that exposes students to a wide array of existing and emerging business technologies, enabling graduates to make a seamless transition into the workplace. The curriculum integrates technology within course content, and MCB prides itself on incorporating the most current versions of industry-standard technologies.
- *Professional depth*. MCB values professional business experience as a selection trait for its instructors. The College also utilizes an innovative executive professor program to strengthen classroom currency and ties with the employment community for graduates. Many of these professors are regionally- or nationally-known executives teaching in-residence, while others are brought to campus as visiting lecturers. The College also has developed partnerships with the business community to provide students with additional opportunities to gain real-world experiences through course components (e.g., business plans, advertising campaigns, market research, and portfolio management).

MCB’s value-based approach revolves around three sets of values – instructional, scholarship, and service. Each MCB value statement is held within an overall framework focused on the pursuit of excellence, and a philosophy of continuous improvement guides employee behavior. MCB’s commitment to an overall organizational focus on continuous performance improvement and the significant progress made toward development and deployment of this systematic approach, has been driven externally and internally. As a parent organization, UNC requires a regular cycle of program review and evaluation, and MCB’s commitment to AACSB accreditation maintenance (which also requires continuous improvement) are both strong external drivers. Internally, drivers include the commitment of

MCB leadership to performance improvement and a strategic planning system, including Key Performance Indicator (KPI) goal sets, the Educational Testing Service and Educational Benchmarking, Inc. survey feedback which measure achievement, satisfaction, and quality in areas ranging from recruitment, to curriculum, technology, financial resources, program reputation, and faculty and student performance, and the integration of a Malcolm Baldrige-based assessment system. Also included in this framework is the development of a student-centered process, the availability of emerging and existing technologies, the encouragement and support from university leadership, and a series of program accomplishments that have been contagious in creating expectations for continued performance improvement. Although basic processes were already in place during the last five years, MCB has formalized a set of mission-driven key success measures and a budgeting system to facilitate systematic improvement. MCB is proud of its broad set of relationships with key partners and the community and views them as critical to providing a quality education. Within the university, MCB works closely with UNC's admissions, college transition center, and career services offices to ensure that from the time students are enrolled until the time they graduate, they receive the support and guidance they need to be successful.

By most measures of success, MCB is fulfilling its mission of providing a top-quality education that prepares students for successful careers and leadership roles in business, and providing that education at an affordable price. In the results of national standardized tests and the ability of its students to attain jobs in their chosen career fields, MCB ranks among the nation's top undergraduate business programs. The College remains as one of just five undergraduate-only programs nationally to hold AACSB accreditations in business and accounting. MCB ranks in the top 10 percent on 10 of 16 student satisfaction factors measured on the 2004 Business Exit Survey by Educational Benchmarking, Inc. (EBI)—a performance comparison of 171 business schools nationwide. In 2003 and 2004, MCB scored in the top 1 percent for overall student satisfaction. Also, in 2003/04 MCB student scored in the top 10 percent on the major Field Achievement Test, a standardized exam administered by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, NJ. The ETS exam is given to graduating seniors to measure their knowledge in core business areas. In 2003, nearly 25,000 students in 359 business schools nationwide took the exam. The 2005 numbers went up to 110,000 in 513 programs. As of 2005/06 academic year MCB seniors are scoring in the top 5% . Progress into the top 5

percent (the highest scoring band possible) reflects a sustained upward trend MCB has experienced over a 12 year span. EBI measures continued to be strong through 2005/2006. MCB received a Baldrige award in 2004.

Key Issues for Discussion

1. How does the mission and vision defined by MCB drive its organizational processes?
Why is this important for any business?
2. How important is its continuous improvement philosophy in achieving its mission and vision?
3. Visit the Baldrige website (www.baldrige.nist.gov) and find and read MCB's application summary. Identify several "best practices" that MCB employs that might be useful to your own school for improving quality.

ⁱ Source: Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award 2004 Award Winner Profile, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Department of Commerce, and Kenneth W. Montfort College of Business Baldrige Award Application Summary. A good summary of Monfort's quality journey and approaches can also be found in Valerie Funk, "Narrow Focus Provides Widespread Benefits," *Quality Progress*, August 2005, 40-47. Information courtesy of Montfort College of Business.