Date: September 3, 2004

To: Michael S. Ameigh, Assistant Provost

From: Sarfraz A. Mian, John Huonker, Ding Zhang
Department of Marketing and Management

Re: Summary Report: Faculty Enhancement Grant (2004) for
“Decision-Making Curriculum for Business Students”

As recipients of a Faculty Enhancement Grant (2004) for our curriculum innovation project “Decision-Making Curriculum for Business Students” we wish to report the accomplishment of the following tasks as outlined in the approved grant proposal: (a) a vision for the decision-making courses for our business students (b) literature review and necessary information collection (c) follow up of relevant professional conferences (d) researchers meetings and exchange of views with professional colleagues to assess current and potential student needs (e) a set of course outlines in decision making.

As a result, we have already made a formal proposal for curriculum changes to the department that includes a core course in decision making for undergraduate business administration major (045). A new course in Decision Models and Analysis is being offered this fall by one of the authors of this project (Ding Zhang) in which other two authors (Sarfraz Mian and John Huonker) are also participating as guest lecturers. Additionally, preparation of a conference paper on the subject of decision-making curriculum for business students is underway.

The first step involved in developing a vision for the curriculum was a thorough literature review of the body of knowledge in decision making that focused on (a) normative rational decision models (b) quantitative decision analysis techniques and the use of decision aids, and (c) the incorporation of softer aspects such as psychological, social and political considerations into the rational models.

To learn about the best practices in decision making curriculum and keep abreast with the state-of-the-art in decision making literature and computer software aids, two researchers (John Huonker and Sarfraz Mian) attended the annual Academy of Management conference (August 2004) where they focused on the conference’s Management Education Division’s activities to accomplish their objectives. Encouraged by these discussions with professional counterparts from around the world we decided to pursue a paper on decision making curriculum for presentation in the next year’s meeting of the Academy. (copy of the conceptual part of draft paper in available upon request)
We intended to adopt a software package as decision aid for our ongoing research and later instructional use in teaching the proposed courses. After a thorough review of the available off-the-shelf software decision aid packages, it was decided to adopt the Analytical Hierarchy (AHP) based Expert Choice, which was purchased out of the grant money. One of the researchers (Sarfraz Mian) is scheduled to participate in the AHP/Expert Choice software training that will be offered in October 2004.

To assess our own students’ needs, the researchers held several meetings among themselves and with other college faculty and are continuing their involvement in classroom co-teaching exercises this fall as mentioned above. It is hoped that as a result of these continuing interactions with our students in the classroom and local and national faculty we will be able to successfully incorporate a decision making curriculum that fits the needs of our students as envisaged in this project.

One of the tangible outcomes of this research is the following set of courses (details available upon request):

**Managerial Decision Making**
This overview course will introduce a real-life decision making framework suitable for managerial decisions. More specifically, the course will highlight concepts and methods for making organizational decisions in both business and government, identifying criteria and alternatives, setting priorities, allocating resources, strategic planning, resolving conflict, and making group decisions. Applications using computer software programs will provide students with the necessary training in synthesizing business data with other social and political considerations in arriving at robust organizational decisions.

**Decision Models and Analysis**
This course is an introduction of principles and methods of decision analysis, with an emphasis on the application of quantitative models to complex decision-making problems with conflicting objectives, uncertainty, and risk, and involving non-cooperative and competing decision makers. The goal of this course is to provide students with the tools, techniques, and skills needed to represent complex real-world management problems using models that provide insight and understanding.

Keeping with the Oswego Business School’s continuing efforts to adopt cutting edge curriculum in line with the AACSB requirements and following a due process of approvals from the School/College curriculum committees, these courses will be incorporated in the undergraduate and graduate business curricula.

In the end, we would like to gratefully acknowledge this valuable grant, which enabled us to promote this much needed curriculum development initiative that (after implementation) will considerably enrich our business administration/general management programs, preparing more competitive managers.

Copy to:  
Paula Bobrowski, Chair Marketing & Management  
Lanny A. Karns, Dean of the School of Business