A History of the School of Business

The North Carolina Central University School of Business is the second largest business school among those in the state’s eleven HBCUs. Also, it is one of only four offering the Master of Business Administration degree. In addition to offering the MBA, the School offers a comprehensive undergraduate program, including four undergraduate majors and five areas of concentration (Computer Information Systems, Finance, General Business, Management, and Marketing). The School supports the university’s strong liberal arts tradition and commitment to academic excellence in a diverse educational and cultural environment, encouraging intellectual curiosity and enhancing the academic and professional skills of its students, faculty, and staff.

The History

The first class graduated in 1911 with three students. The curriculum consisted of courses in bookkeeping, commercial arithmetic, commercial law, business correspondence, shorthand, typewriting, English grammar, and letterpress copying.

By 1920, there were two programs of study: Commercial and Phonographic Studies. In 1925, the Business area offered a program in general business with four areas of specialization: Shorthand and Typewriting, Accounting, Teacher Training, and Secretarial Work. At the end of academic year 1927/1928, the first Bachelor of Science in Commerce (BSC) degrees were awarded. The emphasis was on preparing students for employment.

In 1928, C. T. Willis, a member of the faculty since 1923, was named the first department chairman. Between 1928 and 1935, employment readiness was the focus, as students were given courses in marketing, office practice, chain store management, retailing, retail store management, corporate finance, and organization and management.

In academic year 1947/1948, the general statistics course was changed to business statistics, and economics was shifted from social science to the business department. Over the next five years only industrial management was added to the curriculum. During academic year 1952/1953, the faculty increased from seven to fourteen members.

Following the death of Chairman Willis in 1954, Dr. Lincoln Harrison became the second department chairman. He added a course in federal and state income tax, and continued as chairman until academic year 1958/1959. Dr. Harding Young was appointed the third chairman. He redeveloped the department’s mathematics component and under his leadership, studies in mathematics of finance, statistics, consumer economics and taxation were added.

In 1962, Dr. James Tucker was named chairman. Consumer economics was changed to personal finance, and electronic data processing was added. In 1965, Dr. Mary F. Suggs became chairwoman. Under her leadership, the department formed a business advisory council which provided a necessary link between the department and the business world. Dr. Suggs also led efforts resulting in the Executive-in-Residence and Educational Transplant programs.

In 1968, Dr. Stewart B. Fulbright became the chairman. Under his leadership, calculus and quantitative methods were required for business majors.

By 1972, the department became the fifth school at the university, with Dr. Fulbright becoming its first Dean. There were four undergraduate departments: Accounting, Economics, Business Education and Business Administration; and two graduate programs: the Master of Science in Commerce and the Master of Science in Business Education.

During academic year 1975/1976, Dr. Ivory Lyons was named Dean. Shortly thereafter, he became ill and was replaced by an interim committee that served until July, 1977. Dr. Tyronza Richmond was then appointed Dean, and accreditation became the goal for the School of Business. The Common Body of Knowledge (CBK) courses were rearranged and the general education curriculum was adjusted to align with the proper behavioral science and mathematics requirements.

Dean Richmond reorganized the School of Business in 1984, and established the professional model of two Associate Deans and one Assistant to the Dean. Priority was given to adding faculty with terminal degrees, increasing the library budget and holdings, reducing teaching loads, promoting scholarly research, and enhancing the computer technology infrastructure. The model used lead faculty instead of department chairs.

Also under Dean Richmond’s leadership, the faculty performance process was upgraded and faculty members were recognized for teaching and research. The School’s admissions policy was changed to better prepare it for the AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business—International, now known as AACSB—International) accreditation standards. Students were admitted directly if their total SAT scores were 900 or greater; or for those entering from the College of Arts and Sciences, if they had a 2.5 grade point average and a “C” or better grade in six sophomore required CBK courses. These changes reduced the headcount enrollment in Economics and Business Education significantly, such that the School phased out those programs and reallocated resources to more productive programs, including Computer Information Systems.
In July 1987, Dean Richmond was succeeded by Dr. Sundar Fleming who previously had been a member of the faculty and Chairman of the Business Administration Department. Dean Fleming served the longest tenure to date—twelve years. During his tenure, the School of Business applied for and received admission to the Management Education Alliance, a consortium of African American and Hispanic business schools and other selected business schools such as Harvard, Michigan and the University of Virginia. The objectives of the Alliance are to develop the faculty, improve the pedagogy, and develop the technology of its member institutions. Dr. Fleming was also responsible for the Entrepreneurial Training Institute, which provided training for the United Durham Industrial Park affiliates, who are still some of our key partners.

Dean Fleming focused on adding personal computers in four School of Business laboratories and gaining access to the Internet through campus-wide fiber optics and a centralized university network. He also paved the way for more recent renovations by starting the future plan for the C. T. Willis Building. In addition, the first multi-media classrooms were proposed at that time.

The initial accreditation, with the Association for Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) in 1994, was achieved under the leadership of Dean Fleming. He put in place the School’s first student learning assessment process and student exit examination, as well as an enhanced faculty performance process, which received commendation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) during its last visit in January, 1999.

In 1999, when Dr. H. James Williams became Dean, the primary goal was accreditation with the AACSB-International. To this end, Dean Williams developed a comprehensive strategic plan, which was revised and fine-tuned over four retreats during a five-year period. All faculty and staff participated along with constituents or stakeholders for the School of Business. These included members from the Board of Visitors (the School’s advisory board), alumni, business partners, and top administrators of the University, the University of North Carolina General Administration, and friends. These retreats were conducted by outside consultants, including Ernst and Young, and the Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC). Ernst and Young provided significant financial support for these retreats. The processes continued, and within a year, the School was reaffirmed by the ACBSP under Dean Williams’ leadership.

In 2000, the Bachelor of Science degree in Hospitality and Tourism Administration program under the leadership of Dr. Beverly A. Bryant was transferred to the School of Business from the Department of Human Sciences. The program began in 1998 with two faculty members, twelve students, and a Hospitality Board of Advisors. The program also certified its first four graduates in 2000 and the North Carolina Central University Chapter of the National Society of Minorities was chartered.

Dean Williams was responsible for a major faculty reassessment of the CBK curriculum resulting in greater emphasis on professional development. This revision became effective during the academic year 2004/2005. To support the professional development component, Dean Williams implemented Professional Development Forums. The first series, in spring 2003, was sponsored by Menasha Corporation; the spring 2005 series was sponsored by Family Fare. The forums present real-world business and management executives’ perspectives on their industries, businesses and organizations, and their key success factors for aspiring business and management professionals.

Dean Williams developed a research fund to provide summer support for faculty. Proposals for this support are reviewed by the School’s Intellectual Contributions Committee.

Also, during Dean Williams’ tenure, the admissions policy was changed to allow freshmen direct admission to the School of Business. The direct admissions policy increased the headcount enrollment to 1,200 by academic year 2003/2004. The full-time faculty count was twenty-eight and part-time adjuncts were increased, as needed, to accommodate the growth.

Dean Williams also led the School through the $5.5 million renovation of the School of Business building. Safety, accessibility, and built-in technology were some of the major considerations. All classrooms in the building were prepared for built-in multi-media.

In fall 2004, Dean Williams was succeeded by Dr. Benjamin Newhouse, who recruited new faculty to accommodate the continuing enrollment increase. By fall 2005, there were nine new full-time faculty hires in Accounting, Computer Information Systems, Decision Sciences, Economics, Finance, Marketing, and Hospitality and Tourism Administration.

In his first nine months, Dean Newhouse and the staff refurbished faculty and staff offices; upgraded the computer laboratories with new hardware, software and accommodations; increased PCs in the open computer laboratory; and equipped the remaining classrooms with built-in multi-media systems.

Dean Newhouse restructured the disciplines to focus on giving Business students the preparation demanded in the marketplace.

In December 2005, Dr. Bijoy Sahoo was appointed Interim Dean of the School of Business. Dean Sahoo originally joined the university in fall 2004 as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Strategic Planning and Continuous Improvement with a joint appointment in the School of Business as Professor of Finance. Dean Sahoo was later appointed as permanent dean during 2007. Under his leadership the School was reaccredited by the ACBSP and, in addition, received the all-important
accreditation by the AACSB-International. In 2008, the Bachelor of Science degree in Hospitality and Tourism Administration was accredited by ACPHA.

The Business School’s continuing mission is to promote intellectual, professional, and personal excellence through the highest quality instruction, research, and service in the School of Business.

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