



**BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Date of Meeting: April 12, 2023

Location: LRC-438

MEETING ORGANIZER: L. Reza Wrathall

ATTENDEES:

Industry and Workforce Partners (“Guests”):

Aaron Dean, Skin Resource MD, aaron@skinresource.com

David Vazquez, Deloitte & Touch LLP, davivazquez@deloitte.com

Fauzia Burke, FSB Associates, fauzia@fauziaburke.com

Felicia Mudd, Dr. Bronner’s Family Soapmakers, felicia@drbronner.com

Jim Miller, Global Trading Partners, jim@globaltradingpartners.com

Jorge Salgado, 6S Machining Enterprises, jsalgado@6smachiningenterprises.com

Palomar College (Administration, Faculty & Staff):

Justin Smiley, Dean, AMBA Division, jsmiley@palomar.edu

Mary Cassoni, Department Chair & Faculty Member, Business Administration,
mcassoni@palomar.edu

Michael Gilkey, Faculty Member, Business Administration, mgilkey@palomar.edu

Joel Glassman, Faculty Member, Business Administration, jglassman@palomar.edu

Lakshmi Paranthaman, Faculty Member, Business Administration,
lparanthaman@palomar.edu

Leah Hoover, Faculty Member, Business Administration, lhoover@palomar.edu

L. Reza Wrathall, Faculty Member, Business Administration, lwrathall@palomar.edu

Brian Roppe, Faculty Member, Business Administration, broppe@palomar.edu

Chris Condron, Part-Time Faculty Member, Business Administration,
ccondron@palomar.edu

Meei-chun Gau, Assistant, Business Administration and Graphics, mgau@palomar.edu

Student Participants (Palomar College business students unless otherwise noted):

Giovanny Cruz

Caleb De Jesus

Alex Espinoza

Nakeia George

Jesse Hawkins

Salvador Hernandez

Tyson Kelly

Pawiy Linton

Alba Luna (Nursing student)

Amadeo Montuna

Dorothy Nguyen
Brisa Ropis (Dental Tech student)
Sandra Salvador

RECORDER: Meei-chun Gau

Meeting called to order by Reza at 3:03 p.m. in LRC-438

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND INTRODUCTIONS

Reza started by expressing the meeting's purpose (*i.e.*, soliciting the input from industry partners, educators, and workforce partners with which to evaluate and improve the currency of Business Administration Department programs and courses in the development of relevant Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities).

Reza then briefly introduced the Guests with aid of each Guest's LinkedIn bio and/or online business footprint, as well as faculty member attendees with aid of the Business Administration Department's website.

Reza shared the theme of this year's meeting: "The Importance and Development of Soft Skills." In the context of soft skills development, as the Guests were preparing for the Networking Rounds (discussed below), Reza reminded the Guests to reflect on certain questions posed to the Guests in pre-meeting instructions and read-ahead materials, chiefly:

1. What academic and practical (hands on) skills do entry level employees need more of?
2. What is one thing you wish new graduates and/or faculty would understand?
3. If you were a "professor for a semester," what would be the top 3 things you would teach your students to prepare for work in business?
4. What qualifications are most difficult to find in entry-level candidates? How do you assess these skills/knowledge/abilities/attitudes? Can you recommend any steps that we or our students can take to help them improve in these areas prior to applying for jobs?
5. Are there any trends in the job market that you believe will become more important in the next 5, 10, or 20 years?
6. How might we connect what students are learning in the classroom with what you experience in the workplace?
7. How might we gauge how well prepared our students are for transfer and ultimately job placement?
8. Are there specific technologies we should be teaching in the classroom apart from Excel?

NETWORKING ROUNDS

The conference room was set up with eight square tables (six of which ended up being used), with four chairs per table (two pair facing each other). Each table was staged with a table number, and writing materials (pens and notepads).

Each one of the six Guests and their respective full-time faculty sponsor sat on one side of a table, while a pairs of student participants rotated among the tables at intervals of approximately 8-10 minutes to engage with the Guests.

Faculty sponsors at each table largely demurred to the discussion that ensued between their Guest and rotating student participants, thereby allowing the Guests to explore and evaluate the challenges, opportunities, pathways, and soft skills of the student participants.

After completing four 10-minute networking rounds, there was a 15-minute refreshment break to promote the Guests' further reflection of the above-listed questions and sidebar discussion relating to the same.

Upon reconvening, all participants re-engaged for two more networking rounds.

GROUP DEBRIEF AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After completing all six networking rounds, Reza asked each Guest to provide his or her thoughts and recommendations.

- Felicia Mudd addressed the importance of setting realistic expectations and attitudes for entry-level positions. Entry level is the usual start of a successful career, but many candidates today have unrealistic expectations regarding the benefits and privileges that should come with such positions.
- Aaron Dean emphasized the importance of in-person communication and professional etiquette. He has dismissed candidates who lack the social awareness to disengage from their mobile devices during the course of an interview.
- Fauzia Burke affirmed that students should be able to look someone in the eye and carry on a real conversation. She praised the student participants as confident and willing to communicate, but expressed that these students were volunteers who necessarily self-selected for this meeting. She recommended exploring ways to encourage wider swaths of students to engage in like manner.
- David Vazquez stated that in his experience during the last couple of years, new hires have come into the office with trepidation towards communicating in person due to the lingering effects of learning and socializing exclusively online during the COVID pandemic. He also recommended encouraging communication in person by promoting more events that bring students and professionals together.
- Jim Miller recommended the importance and development of soft skills apart from communication skills, to include the following:
 - listening skills;

- understanding your audience, to include understanding a company's culture & the interests and mindset of interviewers with whom candidates may meet;
- problem solving skills;
- organizational skills;
- time management skills; and
- engaging with passion and eagerness to learn and improve.

Note: See also **Exhibit A**, post-meeting notes from Jim Miller.

Reza asked other Guests to expand upon soft skills apart from communication skills.

- Aaron Dean re-emphasized the importance of the ability to learn.
- Felicia Mudd emphasized the importance of collaboration and leveraging diversity, perhaps through team-based projects.
- Fauzia Burke emphasized the importance of being able to adapt and having a flexible mindset, as technology only further accelerates the rate at which business opportunities and threats develop. She suggested that students learn to adapt to:
 - Projects in which the parameters change;
 - Assignments that take on certain twists; and
 - Teams and team roles that change without prior notice.
- Jorge Salgado recommended using problem solving toolsets.
- Jim Miller shared that an Organizational Management course he took was forced him and teammates to role play and, most importantly, make decisions. Teams in this course learned from the failures of poor decisions and eventually succeeded towards a productive outcome at the end of semester.
- David Vazquez agreed that risk aversion is a real challenge and too many new hires shy away from making decision because of the fear failure. He addressed the importance of developing a growth mindset with which to build risk tolerance. He also shared that CSUSM had a capstone project class in which students work together on a case study, which helped build confidence in technical writing and presentation skills.

Reza thanked all Guests and student for their participation. He asked Guests to forward further input and comments to him directly.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

Encl:

Exhibit A - Post-Meeting Notes from (Guest) Jim Miller, received April 24, 2023 (3 pages)

EXHIBIT A

Post-Meeting Notes from Jim Miller, received April 24, 2023

Hoping the following general thoughts are helpful.

By way of brief background, my business world is considerably more in depth and diverse outside of my trade and purchase order finance company. We operate a few other small, local businesses that employ anywhere between 10 to 25 people each at the moment. I'm a big fan of international business (i.e. Global Trading Partners, Inc. works very closely with companies importing and exporting, principally from Asia) but also companies on a more local, community level investing in smaller, community-oriented businesses. We have a 101-year old auto mechanical shop in Del Mar, a 58-year old bar in Encinitas, an Alzheimer's facility in Vista as well as a few real estate businesses that rely heavily on independent property management companies (both large and small). They assist us with managing a diverse 9-state real estate portfolio.

Prior to these companies I've owned all or a significant part of a multitude of other companies with employee counts of 50, 60 and 80+ over the course of the past 20 years.

My point being....Our various companies, present and past, represent a solid cross-section of the general workforce - field operators and skilled tradesmen to back office support requiring accounting, operations and supply chain skills. We have entry-level employees and other career employees who've been employed for north of 10 and 20 years. All of the businesses are diverse but require similar, common traits from the individuals we hire, whether from 4-year, 2-year college or high school graduates.

Here are my thoughts:

- **Communication skills.** Hands down the biggest issue of concern. This generation has grown up communicating through text and social media on their phones. We see a huge gap in their ability to have meaningful conversations in person. Everything from eye contact, being engaged in dialog, being articulate verbally, displaying curiosity and asking questions.
- **Communication follow-up.** Body language reveals a lot to an interviewer.
- **Problem solving and conflict resolution are challenging areas** – again, a result of lack of in-person interactions. There is a significant need for training and development in this area, including role playing.
- **Practical and hands-on skills.** Digital and technology skills – Excel, Word, Power Point, CRM/Sales Force and basic knowledge of systems used universally (Teams, communication software, etc.).

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Post-Meeting Notes from Jim Miller, received April 24, 2023

- **Interpersonal skills.** The ability to communicate within a business appropriately and the ability to listen (“Listen to Learn, not Listen to Talk”)
- **Personal Financial Literacy.** A more than general understanding as to how to manage personal finances is critical at this juncture for all graduating students – regardless of age. Life is expensive (more so here in San Diego) and the need to establish personal budgets that are realistic is vitally important.
- **IQ vs EQ.** IQ is incredibly valuable but EQ is a must. It’s necessary that they are able to read their audience and be willing and able to collaborate with others (peers and those above them). Essentially – professional maturity.
- **General work/life experiences** are proving to be a big gap for entry-level candidates. They don’t typically have enough experience under their belt yet. We look for additional experiences that can highlight their skills in the way of judgment, leadership, ability to influence and an indication that they can work well with others (i.e. community involvement, clubs, sports in HS/college, etc.)
- **Ideas on connecting students.** Consistently bringing in business professionals from all sectors to speak to students and provide them with real-world situations and exposure. They need to focus on the value they can bring to businesses. It’s not just about the professional touting their company, background or knowledge; but equally important, driving the point across that opportunities are truly endless right now and each student has the ability to conquer this first step (getting in the door) and succeeding on their own merits. Graduating from college is not the endgame, but simply a very small step towards a considerably longer career - 2 or 4 years in college as compared to a 20, 30 or 40 year career.
- It’s quite simple. Businesses needs students and Students need businesses. Students need not be intimidated by the fact that they’re new to the game of working or entering a career they may know little about. Every one of us has been there.
- **Accountability coaching.** Are they curious and do they ask good questions? Role playing exercises are important as are mock interviews. Practice will build confidence. Coaching is needed.
- **Passion.** You can’t teach passion. Students entering the work force need to be cognizant that although an employer may be hiring simply to fill a seat, they want to know that the new hire has the willingness, interest, ability and passion to personally succeed. Success is not mutually exclusive. The company succeeds if the hire succeeds. In small business this is paramount.
- **Processors vs. Thinkers.** It’s important for the student to understand the difference and where they fit in. Companies hire both but I’m a big fan of hiring thinkers and those who can effectively articulate a problem, identify opportunities and show eagerness to solve problems or rectify situations – at all levels.

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- **Entrepreneurs who want to own their own business.** Intermediate and Managerial accounting courses are critical. You don't have to be an accountant but you do need to understand how accounting works and equally important, how to analyze statements and margins and articulate results to others (banks, investors, etc.)
- **Be honest with yourself.** You don't know what you don't know so I encourage students to be open minded about all opportunities, industries and work environments.
- **Create an endgame.** The students need to have a vision of what they'll be doing in a few years and have a sense of understanding as to how to get there. A day-to-day plan just doesn't work.
- **Attitude.** Keep your personal challenges at home. Work should be a positive environment. Attitudes permeate a small business and dramatically affect its culture. I view work as a respite from all other issues that occur during everyday life.
- **Due Diligence.** Review the background of the person you're meeting with and understand the company's culture, needs, and products. In other words, be prepared. I also impress upon job seekers that they should put themselves in the shoes or chair of the interviewer and work to understand that person's perspective.
- **Opportunities.** Trade Skills are desperately needed. Job skills that can't be outsourced overseas are in high demand (maintenance, facilities, HVAC, plumbing, collision body men, painters, carpenters, window installers, mechanical.....)
- **College teaches us how to learn.** The real world and the companies we all work in teach us what to learn in order to succeed. The students need to clearly understand that their preparedness, willingness to learn, positive attitude and eagerness to enter this new phase or second phase of life will set them apart from the majority of all job candidates.