MOVING TO A LEARNER-CENTERED
PRACTICE IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Five years ago a Canadian Community College School of Business program undertook the task of redesigning its curriculum using feedback from focus groups with local leaders from a wide variety of businesses. The feedback indicated a perceived need to create a better way of teaching the college learner. The college began to look for a more effective way to address the needs of the college learner, and learner-centered theory became a starting point in the process. One approach, learner-centered reform, has become a part of a larger process involving curriculum, institutional, and pedagogical reform in undergraduate education (Barr & Tagg, 1995; O’Banion, 1999; Parekh, 2007). A learner-centered curriculum takes time, collective energy of all involved, and resources (Hubball, Gold, Mighty, & Britnell, 2007).

This redesign took place over an 18-month period with faculty from each of the programs along with a facilitator for the process. The approach of “What do learners need to be able to do when they graduate?” was at the forefront of the planning process. It was critical that the outcomes that were created have meaning and be relevant to the learner in a professional and individual context (Hubball & Burt, 2004). The work of this thesis is to map the curriculum looking for any gaps or areas of concern prior to conducting online surveys with faculty and learners. The questions addressed in this study are: (1) Was this curriculum change learner-centered? (2) Did the faculty feel the curriculum was effective? (3) Did the curriculum change serve the needs of the learners? These questions are addressed through a curriculum mapping exercise and two online surveys, one for faculty and one for learners. The results of the surveys were supportive of learner-centered theory occurring in this college.
The results did show some differences among the three School of Business programs. It is these results that are discussed in this thesis.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family. Without the continual support of my husband Jake I would not have undertaken this journey of higher-learning. It is a continual act to balance work, family life, and higher education but I would not have attained the balance without him. Jake has faced many challenges himself, both professionally and personally, and has come through it with great strength. That strength has also helped me get to this point in my career. I would also like to thank my son Dixon for always reminding me of the wonder of learning new things and constantly challenging me to grow with him. He gives me strength and such tremendous happiness. I love sharing in his world.

I would also like to thank my parents for showing me the value of hard work. My father passed away a few years ago but without him teaching myself and my sisters that no reward comes without hard work and that everyone is always continually learning I would not have gained the respect I have for learning. My mother showed me the importance of understanding and patience, which is something I use in my teaching today and in my home. It is the mixture of how my parents contributed to my development that has led me to this point today.

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I acknowledge my colleagues and all they have done to inspire me in the process. These people make teaching and learning fun. We work well as a team and I am fortunate to work with people who care about our learners. In adult learning we speak of the need to respect where the learner has come from, and in this group of faculty and management we all come from various backgrounds that enrich our daily teaching and learning so much.

The learners must be acknowledged as well. I admire all these students who come back to school after a career or life change just striving to make better.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Four years ago a Canadian Community College School of Business program undertook the task of redesigning its curriculum. The school determined a need for this undertaking through focus groups with local business leaders from a wide variety of businesses. There was a perceived need to create a better way of teaching the college learner. This was also at a time when research was emerging on the benefits of a learner-centered curriculum in college students (e.g., O’Banion, 1999). The college was looking for a more effective way to address the needs of the college learner and the research on learner-centered theory became a starting point in the process. Learner-centered reform has become a part of a larger process involving curriculum, institutional, and pedagogical reform in undergraduate education (e.g., Barr & Tagg, 1995; O’Banion, 1999; Parekh, 2007). The college faculty went into the process understanding that a significant level of commitment and time was needed for the redesign. A learner-centered curriculum takes time, collective energy of all involved, and resources to fully implement (Hubball, Gold, Mighty, & Britnell, 2007).

Prior to this commitment for curriculum change, most programs ran their own course path. Under this new plan, the three programs in the redesign would share a common first year with the exception of a few core courses in the area of specialization for each of the three diplomas. The three diploma programs were Accounting, Business Sales and Marketing, and Business Administration.
The redesign took place over an 18-month period with faculty from each of the programs along with a facilitator for the process. The approach of “What does the learner need to be able to do when they graduate” was at the forefront of the planning process. These outcomes were guided by many group discussions and through the results from the focus groups with industry representatives. The outcomes that were to be created must have meaning and be relevant to the learner in a professional and individual context (Hubball & Burt, 2004). The group met for 2 hours each week on creating desired outcomes for the learner. The faculty members involved in the curriculum shift were very committed to the process. This commitment needed to be established as many hours were put into what would make a better learner. Many variations of the learning outcome stem “The learner will be able to ________” were used. After all the outcomes had been established and any replication of the outcomes had been removed, the process moved to the next stage. This next step was to group the outcomes into similar content areas. Teams were then assigned to each content grouping. The members in each team were not necessarily the experts in each of these given areas. It was thought that this diversity would provide a thorough look at what the outcomes were and how they might be placed within a course. When the outcomes had been reviewed for how they should be adjusted for learning based upon Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), outcomes were ready to be moved to a course outline document. At the college, these documents are an in-depth look at how the course will be taught, what teaching and learning strategies will be used, and what learning outcomes will be achieved. The outlines were created so that any teacher could teach any course. There was enough detail on a course document with all
learning outcomes listed and suggested teaching and learning strategies for instruction. The courses were then analyzed for how they would be ordered within each of the three diploma programs. The curriculum has since been taught for the past 3 years with adjustments being made each year. Some courses have merged together some of the overlapping content, and gaps in the curriculum were established. The gaps were addressed but in smaller work groups than those in place for the original curriculum redesign process.

The literature points to learner-centered teaching and learning strategies. The outcomes of the curriculum were to be achieved through learner-centered teaching. Hubball and Gold (2007) define a learner-centered teaching curriculum as curriculum that maintains a coherent program of study that is responsive to the needs and circumstances of the pedagogical context and is carefully designed to develop students’ knowledge, abilities, and skills through multiple integrated and progressively challenging course learning experiences. These teaching and learning strategies would not be new to some of the faculty as learner-centered teaching was similar to the way a certain number of them were already teaching. For the other part of the faculty, it could represent a challenge to achieve the transition to learner-centered instruction from teacher-centered instruction.

The process has gone full-circle. I believe it is now time to review if this journey into creating a more learner-centered curriculum has done what it was intended to do. Did the process address the needs of students and faculty members by creating a learner-centered curriculum?
Rationale

The curriculum process was completed and implemented for a total of 6 semesters. Each course was taught a minimum of three times. Hubball et al. (2007) state it is important to reflect on the longer term impact of a program. What does the student remember and value most? Did the learning outcomes, if at all, make a difference? How did the program contribute to the learner’s development? Can a link be made from the learning outcomes to the activities used to enforce that outcome? Were there unintended outcomes from the program? All of these are important parts of the process that was undertaken at the college.

A large amount of college staff resources were put into the curriculum changes along with the time involved in the industry focus groups. There was an 18-month process in the curriculum redesign, and it will now be 3 full years that the curriculum has been implemented. It is time to measure if the intended curriculum has done what is expected of it. Ultimately, I am interested in whether or not this curriculum was perceived as learner-centered and if it met the needs of the learner as it was intended to do. The curriculum was intended to make the individual more employer-ready in the workplace based upon the focus groups conducted. In addition the college needs to know results for the time invested, the staff needs to know this information for the time invested and the hopes of making a better program, and the future learners of these programs need to know for an enhanced educational experience. It is also important for the college to learn about the effectiveness of this revision so, if it is of benefit, it could be used for other program redesigns in hopes of more effectively meeting the needs of the learner. The instructors want to know if the
revision was effective in meeting the needs of the learner and, if not, some mechanism of change will again have to be implemented.

The curriculum change was made to ensure the college was doing the most it could in meeting the needs of its students. Research pointed to a learner-centered approach for the college learner. The pedagogy supports a learner-centered curriculum for the college learner. Malcolm Knowles (1973) argues in favour of learner-centered curriculum in his theory of andragogy. He sees adults as being more self-directed learners who are experienced and that experience provides a rich resource for future learning. Knowles states the adult learners’ readiness to learn is based upon what they need to know and that these learners are more problem-centered in their learning than subject-centered. College learners come from a diverse background of pedagogies so a learner-centered approach focuses on higher-order abilities (Bresciani, 2006). The outcomes must have meaning and be relevant to the learner in a professional and individual context (Hubball & Burt, 2004) and in having meaning in that the motivation to learn is internal (Knowles, 1984). By meeting the needs of the college learner the college hopes to make students desired members of the workforce in their chosen field. Thought was also given to the fact that if the needs of the student were truly being met perhaps this School of Business could increase enrollment in the future.

The college undertook the curriculum redesign process with the following core values for its learners: Integrity, Ethics, Interpersonal Skills, Leadership, Critical Thinking Skills, Self Directed, and Professional Competencies. All seven of these
characteristics evolved through discussion with industry and through research on learner-centered curriculum.

**Research Questions**

The questions addressed in this study are: (1) Was this curriculum change learner-centered, (2) Did the faculty feel the curriculum was effective, and (3) Did the curriculum change serve the needs of the learners?

**Thesis Layout**

In Chapter 2 I elaborate on how the group proceeded in revising the curriculum. I focus on curriculum renewal based on the theory behind the curriculum redesign process. It is important to understand the various theories of instruction in order to view learner-centered theory as the choice for the college learner.

Chapter 3 explores the methods undertaken in this study. It details a three-part process: a curriculum mapping exercise that establishes the original design requirements, a faculty survey that builds a foundation for the learner surveys, and lastly, the student surveys.

Chapter 4 examines the data from the course outline review, and the faculty and learner surveys. The data are organized in groupings to make use of the data in the discussion of Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 discusses the outline review and its findings and what implications that may have had on faculty and learner responses. Then the discussion investigates how the faculty described the curriculum redesign and whether they stated it to be a success. The final part of the results discussed is learner surveys. How did the learners perceive the curriculum change and do their responses mimic those of the
faculty? In closing we look at how the results spoke of the curriculum to make an inference on whether or not the curriculum change was successful and what other impacts the curriculum might have had.
CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF LEARNER-CENTERED THEORY

We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment.

Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference.

John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 1916

This quote from John Dewey captures the spirit of learner-centered practice. Dewey believed that, to design good models of curriculum, we must take ourselves to a new level, a level that pushes the boundaries of teacher-centered models of practice. Learner-centered practice challenges the teacher to meet learners where they are at, and what their past experiences have provided them as a foundation. John Dewey (1916, 1938) is at the forefront of adult education theory. Dewey viewed learning as a lifelong process and that, through our experiences, we collect evidence and either confirm or deny hypotheses. Dewey also believed humans make sense of their environments through reflection. In an educational model like Dewey’s, the teacher becomes a sort of guide-on-the-side rather than an expert in a given field. In this model the learner is always at the center of the learning. A second theorist in this field is Eduard Lindeman (1926). Lindeman was the first to actually write a book specifically on this subject and titled it, *The Meaning of Adult Education*. Lindeman saw the purpose of adult education as something to foster the democratic process— it has a social purpose and should be done as an act of free will. Discussion is a medium for adult education in Lindeman’s eyes. Another theorist, Malcolm Knowles, who is probably the most well-known theorist in the field of adult education, has used the
term andragogy in his work. Knowles defines andragogy as the “art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1980, p. 30).

Learner-centered models of curriculum appear to be based in constructivist models of curriculum (Bruner, 1973). McCombs and Whisler (1997) define learner-centered instruction as,

The perspective that couples a focus on individual learners—their heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs—with a focus on learning—the best available knowledge about learning and how it occurs and about teaching practices that are most effective in promoting the highest levels of motivation, learning and achievement for all learners. (p. 9)

Prindle, Kennedy, and Rudolph (2000) make the analogy of the learner-centered model to gardening (p. 4). They feel the role of the instructor is much like that of a “gardener” who constructs a fertile environment for learning to grow.

Stefanou and Salisbury-Glennon (2002) have found that a learner-centered model of curriculum encompasses three concepts: (a) integrated courses, (b) active student learning, and (c) collaborative learning (p. 81). Magolda (1999) argues there are three key assumptions in a learner-centered model of curriculum. These assumptions are:

- Knowledge is socially constructed rather than the objective truth; the role of authority is to share expertise and mutually make meaning with learners rather than give them the truth; and that learners are capable of thinking, evaluating evidence and using existing knowledge to decide what to believe. (Magolda, 1999, p. 2)

Hill (1985) proposed a broader view that a learner-centered model of curriculum will provide opportunities for students to think critically, solve complex problems, and become life-long learners. Essentially Magolda, Stefanou, and Salisbury-Glennon along with Hill and Bruner, all maintain a view of the learner-centered model much like that of Dewey.
William Bosch et al. (2008) created an operational definition of a Learner-Centered College. The definition describes a learning community in which faculty, students, and administration accept the responsibility of contributing to a culture of meaningful learning. They believe that meaningful learning must encompass “both disciplinary breadth and depth to ensure that the learning process allows students to become critical thinkers and life-long learners who can use their knowledge in real life applications” (Bosch et al., 2008, p. 90). “This community of learning will best accomplish this through the faculty’s and students’ skills of inquiry, reflection, problem-solving and creativity along with the personal attributes of these individuals such as their values, ethics, and personal beliefs” (Bosch et al., 2008, p. 90).

The ideas Bosch et al. (2008) speak of are echoed by Prindle, Kennedy, and Rudolph (2000) in their exploration of a learner-centered model of curriculum at Lethbridge Community College. They describe the model as providing “flexible responses to learner needs to achieve academic goals” (p. 5). In learner-centered environments, Ramsey and Fitzgibbon (2005) argue, “content emerges spontaneously, and often serendipitously from the process. There is no way to anticipate the learning opportunities that may emerge” (p. 341). Ramsey and Fitzgibbon also view curriculum design in the learner-centered approach as the “creation of a ‘container’ for the setting of boundaries within which students are given the freedom to self-organize their learning” (p. 354).
Why use a Learner-Centered Approach?

Research shows that students achieve higher academic standards and are more likely to reach their full academic potential with learner-centered instruction when compared to teacher-centered instruction (American Psychological Association’s Board of Educational Affairs Work Group, 1997; McCombs & Whisler, 1997). Learner-centered instruction has also been shown to help students establish deeper connections in their learning while increasing student motivation when compared to teacher-centered instruction (Weinberger & McCombs, 2003). The community college learner has been targeted as one of many beneficiaries of learner-centered instruction. The community college learner has diverse learning needs (Hansen, 1998), and the challenge for educators is to “make adaptation for inclusion the rule rather than the exception” (Mino, 2004, p. 159).

Learner-centered theory of instruction works well for adult learners because it encourages the learner to “link prior knowledge with new information by providing multiple ways of presenting information [whether it be] auditory ways, visual ways, or kinesthetic ways” (Lambert & McCombs, 2000, p. 467). Learner-centered instruction also allows learners to take part in the process of their own learning through peer/teacher interaction while allowing time for reflection and self-study. It enforces mutual respect between the learner and instructor. The instructor becomes a facilitator who provides the learning environment and is aware of when the instructor is needed to step in and provide opportunities for reflection, guidance, and direction.
**Benefits of a Learner-Centered Model for the Adult Learner**

Cross (2002) provides an analogy of a basketball player for emphasizing her beliefs in the strengths of a learner-centered approach. She believes that one cannot transfer his or her talents in lecturing; therefore one cannot lecture another in how to score baskets. The only way for a future player to develop and improve his or her skills is “to get in there and practice his or her winning moves for themselves” (p. 8), her point being that we cannot lecture students in how to do everything in the curriculum. The learner must be allowed to experience scenarios with different variables being thrown his or her way (Only then will learners be able to make their knowledge their own and relevant to themselves). The benefit of this constructivist model is apparent in what learners will be able to do and what they will know after they have undertaken the process.

Another benefit of a learner-centered model of curriculum is that it requires learners to assume responsibility for their own learning (Cross, 2002, p. 20). Stefanou and Salisbury-Glennon (2002) state that learner-centered models of curriculum “affect college students’ motivation and use of cognitive learning strategies” (p. 95). Knowing that internal processes such as motivation are at work, one is led to believe this model of curriculum provides a deeper level of understanding. Surface learning is not a characteristic of a learning-centered curriculum. Students will go beyond completing assignments in their understanding, and it is this ability to make sense of their world that helps learners to “think like a professional” (Thompson, Licklider, & Jungst, 2003, p. 1).
College Learners

In this study we wanted to identify who the college learner is. This learner is typically 18 to 24 years of age (PEPS Study, 2003). There is a debate over this learner on whether the learner falls under the theory of andragogy or pedagogy. Is the college learner self-directed or teacher-directed? Kerka (2002) states the data are inconclusive, but one key point that emerges from Kerka’s research on the subject is that teaching adults is different than teaching children, and that adults learn in various ways that differ from how children learn. We also know that, during their college years, learners show gains in their ability to think critically (King, 2000, p. 16).

Knowing this concept, one must ask what learning model would best suit all these different individuals with all these different approaches to learning. The learner-centered model leaves room for the differences.

Prior to exploring this comparison it is important to provide background on what defines the adult learner. If one is to understand the concept of learner-centered practice in adult education, one must make sense of where the adult learner is coming from. These areas of research are some of the findings that led this college to revise its curriculum. There was indication from industry through focus groups performed at the college that there was a need to adjust the curriculum and to make that curriculum effective for an adult learner. Literature on the theory of adult education focuses on a select group of individuals. O’Banion (1997) holds the belief that adult learners are moving towards becoming self-directed learners, that their prior experiences are relevant to future understanding and that learning cannot be acquired passively.
Meeting the Needs of the Adult Learner using a Learner-Centered Approach

What are the needs of the adult learner? There has been a wide range of research that recommends a need to improve education for the adult learner through shifting the focus from a teaching approach to a learning approach (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1995; Guskin, 1994; Hansen & Stephens, 2000; O’Banion, 1997). In keeping with this shift in focus from teaching to learning, a key point emerges. The research would support a need for a shift from teacher-directed activities to a learner-based activity in response to how adults learn. Malcolm Knowles (1984) believes teaching adults is different. He believes adults are more problem-based in their learning, whereas a younger learner would be more subject-based. He believes adult learners draw more from their past experiences in understanding their learning. King (2000) states that, during their college years, learners show gains in their ability to think critically. Curriculum models that use a learner-centered approach leave room for the differences of adult learners.

Terry O’Banion is cited in many works on learner-centered colleges. In O’Banion’s own work on what a learner-centered institution should look like he discusses how it is imperative that colleges strive to meet the needs of their learners. O’Banion goes to great lengths to explain how the current teacher-centered models fail the needs of the college learner. He states the system fails the needs of the college learner by being “time-bound” based in current credit hours. A learner-centered model is not limited to “one hour meetings held on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday” (O’Banion, 1999, p. 3). The second way O’Banion (1999) claims the current system fails the needs of the learner is that it is “place-bound” (p. 3). Learning will take place
primarily in a classroom on campus. The ‘need’ of the student is not likely being met or being held in the learner’s best interest in this approach. Learning becomes more complete if one is able to apply it in many different contexts. This flexibility is what meets the needs of the college learner. Lastly, O’Banion (1999a) refers to the teacher or facilitator. How is one individual to meet the needs of all these different learners with different learning styles? O’Banion questions how one individual can ensure students learn everything they need to know for when they exit college upon graduation (p. 3). Colleges know that retention is crucial for first year students. If the process does not meet their needs, then they may not return for a second year. Various learners with various learning styles can have their needs addressed within a learner-centered model of curriculum much more so than in the traditional confines of a teacher-centered curriculum model.

O’Banion (1999a) believes the role of the facilitator must be created in response to the needs of the learners. To further his point on the role of the facilitator, O’Banion refers to a report by the Ohio Technology in Education Steering Committee. This report defines the needs of the college learner in relation to the facilitator. The facilitator appeases the needs of the learner by being a mentor and by being the individual who helps to bridge the gaps in learning by becoming what O’Banion (1999a) refers to as an “architect of connection by observing the needs of the individual learners and joining them to information, experiences, resources, experts, and teams” (p. 9). O’Banion is not the only one to recognize how the learner-centered model serves the needs of the college learner through the facilitator and interactions with others. Bosworth and Hamilton (1994) refer to this interaction in their work on collaborative learning in learner-centered practice. They wrote, Collaborative learning may well be the most significant pedagogical shift of the century for teaching and learning in higher education. It has the potential to transform learners’ and instructors’ views of learning, knowing, and understanding as it acquaints students with the skills needed to cooperate, negotiate, and formulate productive responses to the changing demands of this increasingly complex world. (Bosworth & Hamilton, 1994, p. 2)

Learner-centered is a concept that refers to the learning environment rather than the learner. It operates at a macro-level, as all function is around the environment
learners encounter. Learner-centered theory operates at a micro-level, as all function revolves around the learner’s experience. O’Banion (1999a, 1999b) proposed that the ideal adult-learner environment should be student-centered; this environment must become a genuine center of learning, and this environment should be a healthy learning environment. O’Banion (1999a, 1999b) proposed that institutions of higher learning achieve the learner-centered environment by instituting the following policies:

1. Continually revise their mission statement to ensure it is always in the interest of the institution’s learners,
2. Involve all stakeholders as to avoid discontinuity in the teaching model and to eliminate silos that can form in any institution,
3. Select the proper faculty and staff and have programs in place to ensure these programs succeed,
4. Take time to train faculty and staff and have proper training budgets, training timelines, and programs in place to ensure this training happens,
5. Hold conversations about learning and what the learning in this institution should look like,
6. Identify and agree on learning outcomes because doing so gives the institution the ability to meet the outcomes in a variety of different means (this condition gives rise to Prior Learning Assessment; PLA or PLAR),
7. Assess and document the achievement of outcomes that are important to demonstrating what the learner knows,
8. Redefine staff and faculty roles as determined by the needs of the learners,
9. Provide different and more options for all the various learning styles and different individual experiences of each learner,

10. Create collaborative opportunities for both staff and the learners if a progressive educational movement is to be made,

11. Orient learners to new options and possibilities that set them up for success while introducing them to the fact they are now becoming responsible for their own learning,

12. Apply and increase the access of information technology to learners and facilitators,

13. Reallocate resources to ensure the institution is functioning in a manner that truly supports the learner-centered vision, and

14. Create a climate for learning through leadership by creating an institutional culture of learner-centered practice.

Further to this set of conditions, Huba and Freed’s (2000) work suggests we must look beyond the classroom for the true needs of the learner. On that same thought, Warren (2003) poses the question, “What competencies or intended outcomes are necessary for a successful life that instructors are responsible for in this classroom” (p. 725). The two options, in the classroom and out of the classroom, essentially have the same implications; they are what the true needs of the college learner are. The learner needs to be provided with the necessary skills in the classroom to take outside of the classroom. Although it is quite a broad and reflective question, Huba and Freed (2000) feel we must constantly remind ourselves of the
responsibility to the learner and assist faculty in guiding the learner-centered curriculum process within the community college.

Creating a Learner-Centered Curriculum

A model of curriculum needs to have a well implemented instructional plan. Therefore, the question one needs to answer if the learner-centered model is to meet the needs of the learner is, “Can we do it?” Knowing how you will execute the curriculum is a large part of the needs assessment piece. Cross (2002) approaches this question with a question, “What do we know about learning and how do we produce learning?” (p. 5). There are thought to be six items at work in producing learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987): (1) activity, (2) cooperation, (3) diversity, (4) expectations, (5) interaction, and (6) responsibility. Let’s look at a learner-centered task and see if it encompasses these six items.

Based on Chickering and Gamson’s (1987) work, an example of the six items in a learning activity may exist around a project-based activity. In the task there is cooperation and the group needs to work together to accomplish the task. There will be a broad background of experience in what each learner brings to the group. There will be responsibility and expectations placed upon the group as there will be a time-frame around how long they have to complete the task and the group members must interact with each other to solve the task. The learner-centered task for our example is based in a project that a group of students must work on together to produce an expected result. The group is responsible for completing the task successfully within a predetermined time frame decided upon by group consensus. There are also expectations as the group must complete the task by a set time and there is interaction
as it is the only way the group will evolve to solve the task. Lastly there is responsibility because there is an expected outcome. The execution of this task may not fit O’Banion’s (1999b) time and place constraints in a traditional teacher-centered model but it would be executable in a learner-centered model. Some have gone so far as to say the interaction within the group may serve as the facilitator in this equation (Tompkins, Perry, & Lippincott, 1998, p. 102), but upon further review and moving deeper into their task this group would most likely need the assistance of the facilitator to help make the connections for deeper understanding. Therefore, the role of the facilitator becomes important in executing a learner-centered model. Ramsey and Fitzgibbons (2005) feel that, “Teachers must be grounded well enough in a topic area that they can go with the flow- respond with the content when, where, and on what topic it is needed” (p. 341).

There are factors at work when seeking to execute a learner-centered model of curriculum, factors like professional development issues for faculty because not everyone knows how to facilitate learner-centered practice and all that it encompasses. An instructor never knows when the opportunity for learning comes along so staff must be trained to recognize these opportunities. King (2000) sees the role of faculty in a learner-centered model as being able to “provide structures and languages that enhance and challenge students’ capacities to frame issues, to test hypotheses and arguments against evidence, and to address disputed claims” (p. 8). If students are to be successful in this model the staff implementing the curriculum need to know how to execute it effectively. To fulfill the needs of the college learner this model of curriculum must be thorough in its execution. The ideal learner-centered
environment would be embraced by everyone within the college doors. McPhail (2004) envisions everyone from the custodian to the college president as playing a role in this model (p. 31). The process should be enriched by the learning that occurs with the support of a group or a set of colleagues. While this may be a utopian concept to have everyone involved, it will ultimately depend on whether or not a learner-centered curriculum was delivered. This is the question I am exploring.

McPhail (2004) also believes one cannot have a successful learner-centered model if one cannot measure what one does with the curriculum (p. 30). In revisiting the staff-development piece, the staff must be aware of learning outcomes assessment. The assessment in learner-centered practice should continually go back to “What does the learner know?” and “What can the learner do?” (McPhail, 2004, p. 31). In a teacher-centered model, assessment is used to monitor learning but, in a learner-centered model of curriculum, measurement will promote and diagnose learning (Huba & Freed, 2000). Assessment of learner-centered models is done directly through papers, projects, performances, and portfolios (Huba & Freed, 2000).

**Mapping the Curriculum**

This thesis focuses on learner-centered theory that prompted a curriculum redesign for a community college business program. The theory was the motivation behind the redesign. The redesign process was based on the League for Innovation’s learning outcomes work in community colleges (Miles & Wilson, 2004). Many outcomes were established in the curriculum, but now that 3 years have passed in the redesign process, the outcomes need to be assessed. Does the curriculum do what it was intended to do or are there gaps? This is the first question to be explored in this
thesis. If there are gaps, they need to be noted in the second part of the thesis. The second part is to explore how effective the curriculum was from the perspective of the facilitator, and the third question is to determine if the curriculum change served the needs of the learner. Both facilitators and learners took part in a survey. Should any gaps occur in the outcomes the survey must take note of them. One cannot ask how effective a curriculum was at meeting an outcome if the outcome was missed in the curriculum.

**How Curriculum is Mapped**

Courses are developed to build up the learner’s readiness to meet a logical order of learning objectives (Nilson, 2007). It is for this reason that curriculum should be mapped to ensure the learning outcomes are in a proper order with all necessary content covered. Learning outcomes must be successfully scaffolded (Bloom, 1956; Vygotsky, 1978) to ensure prerequisites are met for later learning outcomes. Without proper scaffolding, the learner will be unsuccessful in fully grasping the learning outcomes. Without scaffolding, the curriculum loses breadth and depth.

A learning outcome is what learners must be able to do by a certain time in a course. The instructor must provide appropriate assignments and activities for the learner to gain the necessary knowledge, skills, and practice to meet those learning outcomes (Nilson, 2007). The outcomes must be measurable; thus the concept of what the learner must do is imperative in the assessment of outcomes. The measurement of outcomes can be viewed as a problem in a learning outcome that uses verbs that reflect an internal state. Nilson’s (2007) example of this type of learning outcome is an outcome that may state things like ‘to know’, or to ‘understand’, or to
‘appreciate’. Learners must demonstrate their use of such verbs to verify they in fact do understand. It is critical to have the learner demonstrate the desired outcomes in any educational task. Understanding the outcome leads the facilitators to specify how they would like the learner to learn the material. This direction allows the learner to study both correctly and efficiently. Teaching and learning strategies start to come into play as facilitators create the understanding necessary to demonstrate the learning outcomes.

There also must be consideration put into the content area the learner must replicate. Curriculum must be developed using subject expertise with recent research documents utilized as a point of reference. The curriculum outcomes must be approved and aligned with that of the governing power for the college (in this case it is through Ontario Colleges).

The mapping process that this curriculum has encountered was rigorous. Outcomes were mind-mapped and then placed in similar content areas. Out of the content areas came courses through a scaffolding process. The scaffolding process ensured first semester courses through fourth semester content followed Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy. An outcomes map was created to display reasoning for the faculty. The outcomes map was also contrasted with college requirements for these programs to ensure no gaps existed. The mapping process was thorough but, over the past 3 years, slight modifications have been made to course outlines and another mapping of outcomes is necessary to ensure there are no large gaps in the curriculum. The mapping process that occurred in the spring of 2009 involved a mapping of all the course outlines for how they comply with the original objectives.
Bloom’s (1956) theory positions itself as the learner “must be able to perform one or more thinking tasks before they can learn to perform another” (Nilson, 2007, p. 67). Bloom believed there were six levels in his framework. The levels in order of first to sixth are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. In level one, the learner will have knowledge-based learning outcomes utilizing a skill set such as recall, repeat, memorize, and list. In a level two, outcome expectations are on comprehension with terms such as explain, interpret, or paraphrase. In level three, there is an application component where the learning outcomes express the need to apply or model an outcome. In level four, the outcomes focus on analysis and use terms like compare, contrast, classify, categorize, derive, or model. In level five, the outcome is to reflect synthesis and uses terms like create, invent, predict, construct, design, imagine, improve, produce, or propose. Lastly, in level six, the focus in the outcome is on evaluation. Evaluation can be demonstrated in action words such as judge, select, decide, critique, justify, verify, debate, assess, recommend, and argue.

The mapping process revisits the outcomes and the scaffolding that accompanies them. It is a visual representation of the scaffolded outcomes (Nilson, 2007). The resulting map illustrates the learning process created for the learner.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

There are three research components to this study. The first component of the research process is a complete assessment of the curriculum in the three business programs: Business Administration, Accounting, and Business Sales and Marketing. All course outlines were audited for the original outcomes established in the curriculum redesign process. A mapping process similar to Wolf’s Handbook for Curriculum Assessment (Wolf, Hill, & Evers, 2006) was completed. In addition, an outcome database was created for the three programs to establish if there were anomalies that must be addressed. The literature speaks to the need for assessment of any new curriculum as a completion of the curriculum development cycle. The entire process was undertaken to make a difference for the learners; to connect better with their own personal experiences and what they bring to the learning environment and to use this process to better prepare them for the workplace. There is a fair amount of literature on learner-centered theory but there is not really much research on the implementation process of such a curriculum and the results of the process. Should any inconsistencies have been noted in the outcome assessment they have been recorded for future review by this School of Business faculty team. Any inconsistencies have also been recorded for the development of the survey questions in the second part of the research process. There was a need to establish if there were gaps in the curriculum before proceeding to survey questions.

The second component of the research process involved surveying the faculty. There were 16 faculty who had been involved in the redesign process and executing a new curriculum (and for some a new way of teaching it). Only 13 were surveyed as
three have retired in the past two years. The redesign process began four years ago and the curriculum has been in place for three years. Faculty committed a significant amount of time to the process and a survey was performed to solicit their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the process. Faculty had not really discussed the redesign in any depth to this point. Did the faculty feel the redesign was a success? The definition of success was based upon two factors: Did the curriculum develop the intended outcomes and did it generate a sense of excitement for learning in the learners? I was also interested in finding out how the faculty defined learner-centered teaching. Their definitions allowed for a way to understand the teaching and learning that had been taking place. If the definitions of the faculty were not seen as learner-centered in nature I would have altered the survey questions for the learners. A survey design was utilized with hopes of getting honest responses with depth. An interview might have failed to elicit such personal content in the fear of being identified or singled out.

The third component of the research process involved the learners. The learners were all students graduating from their two-year program. This criterion gave a potential sample size of approximately 120 who could potentially graduate. There actually ended up being 99 graduates to receive their diplomas for this graduating year. A survey was given to the learners on how they perceived their learning during their program. The learners were asked various questions (see Appendix E) on the intended outcomes and if they felt they had been prepared. A focus was also on how they attempted to describe the teaching they encountered. This focus was an effort to
understand if the students were describing what a learner-centered environment would look like.

**Population and Sample**

Participants were grouped into two categories. The first were the learners themselves, the students. All graduates of these programs exited their two year diploma in the spring of 2009 and were asked to participate. These learners varied in age from immediate entry upon completion of high school to very mature students returning to school to obtain a new career. The median age of this learner upon graduation was approximately 24 years of age. It was the hope of the researcher to receive a good response rate. There was no way to identify the graduate. The learner was only identified as to what program he or she was exiting. The maximum number of surveys that was completed for the first group was 28 of 99 actual graduates. It should be noted that only 85 valid email addresses were available for the 99 graduates. This deficiency eliminated 14 possible respondents.

The second group of participants was the faculty. The researcher invited all current faculty who were involved in the curriculum redesign and implementation process to be involved in the study. This process involved a confidential survey and no individual facilitator was identified in the interpretation of data. The maximum number of faculty who could have responded to the survey was 13. There were 17 faculty involved originally but three have since retired and one was the researcher. The three faculty who have retired were teaching predominantly in the accounting diploma. The faculty have varying years of teaching experience within the college ranging from five years of teaching experience within a community college up to 37
years within the college system. The qualifications of the faculty vary as some have diplomas and designations while others have Bachelor’s degrees, and others have Master’s degrees and two have their Doctorate. Two other faculty members who teach part-time were involved in the process. Of the 15 faculty provided with the survey, 11 responded.

**Method**

The curriculum mapping utilized a Microsoft Excel format spreadsheet (Appendix A) to analyze the learning outcomes. The spreadsheet separated the learning outcomes for every course. The outcomes were cross-referenced with each other for duplication, the total number of outcomes was also looked at, and outcomes were assessed for any gaps in the curriculum from the original outcomes. The faculty surveys and student surveys (see Appendices D & E) were implemented using the web-based program *SurveyMonkey (2008)*. The program was used to administer the surveys for both the faculty and the students. Individuals were invited to participate in the survey via an email that contained the web-link to the survey. The email also included the terms of their consent to participate.

Internet-based surveys reduce cost and time. They also provide a quick response, easy follow-up, and the ability to survey a large population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). For the populations I surveyed all have access to the internet. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) have stated web-based surveys have little downside when the survey population is “internet savvy, such as teachers, principals, and college faculty, and the nature of the topic is professional, not personal.”
**Curriculum Mapping**

For the first part of the research the curriculum outlines were reviewed in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet format (Appendix A). The spreadsheet was formatted into columns. The first column listed the course code for that outcome. The second column listed the outcome. The third column listed if the outcome was duplicated in another course and where it was duplicated. The fourth through tenth columns categorized where the outcome existed based on the original curriculum mapping process: leadership, professional competencies, self-directedness, ethics, integrity, interpersonal skills, or critical thinking skills (see appendix A for sample). The 11th column looked for Bloom’s (1956) placement of the outcome on his framework to verify whether or not it was appropriate for the course level. The final column qualified if it was a second year course to enable one to look at the taxonomy. Was the proper content covered in each course prerequisite to establish academic success through Bloom’s model? The answer to this question needed to be determined.

**Faculty Survey**

The second part of the research involved a faculty survey (Appendix B). The survey was administered to the faculty first to ensure no gaps existed in the student survey (to follow the faculty survey as the final step in the research). It was also administered to faculty first to see if there were questions or concerns that needed to be added to the students’ surveys. Once the initial faculty surveys were reviewed for any necessary additions or deletions that needed to be administered to the student surveys the students received their surveys. The survey was administered through an online, internet-based questionnaire *SurveyMonkey* (2008). The literature states that
there are many benefits to this method of data collection as opposed to a traditional paper and pencil mail-in response survey. Some advantages are reduced data-collection time, easier data entry, reduced costs, flexibility in format, and the ability to quickly gather extra information from respondents if needed (Granello & Wheaton, 2004).

**Student Survey**

The student survey (Appendix C) was also administered online using SurveyMonkey (2008). The students received an email stating their consent to participate and a web-link took them to the online survey. SurveyMonkey (2008) was used to collect and assisted in analyzing the data. The survey categorized the learner in their respective program, Accounting (ACT), Business Administration (BA), or Business Sales and Marketing (BSM).
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Faculty as Drivers of the Curriculum

In looking at the faculty results (Appendix B), there were surveys sent out to 15 potential candidates. Of the surveys, 11 of 15 faculty responded. Four of the 11 respondents taught exclusively in the Business Administration program, one taught exclusively in the Sales and Marketing program, two taught exclusively in the Accounting program, and four taught in all three programs. Two faculty in the group of 15 were part-time faculty.

Four of the respondents answered they would like to attain a higher level of education, four others were unsure if they would seek a higher level of education, and three said they would not seek a further level of education. Of the responses of yes for attaining further education the faculty cited professional development, staying current in their field, and to strengthen their skills to better assist learners. Of the responses of unsure the faculty cited reasons such as already holding numerous graduate degrees but perhaps wanting more non-formal accreditations and personal growth. For the responses of no for further levels of education the faculty stated they were not enthused by research, they were close to retirement, or they just finished completing their Master’s and did not have any interest in pursuing a Doctorate.

How Faculty Describe the Essential Features of Learner-Centered Practice

The faculty described learner-centered practice in various ways with three common themes emerging. The first theme was more about focusing on the student as the complete focus with one faculty likening a student to a ‘customer’. The second theme was about the learning environment and how it was up to the facilitator to use
the learning environment to best meet each individual student’s learning needs where he or she was. These faculty believed the learning environment should guide the learner in a variety of methods of instruction to ensure individual learning needs are met. As one faculty defined it,

Engagement in a classroom environment that is flexible in its setup and delivery of curriculum. Instructor's role is to facilitate the desire to learn on the part of the student. Teaching practices provide a variety of learning experiences (lecture, simulation, student projects, and field trips) that are delivered in a variety of formats (lecture, visual, kinesthetic). I know it sounds textbooks but it is my teaching and learning philosophy.

The third theme that emerged was the learner’s prior experiences are important to the process and must be valued. One faculty defined essential features of learner-centered practice “to teach the learner where they’re at and to honour their work and life experience they bring to the classroom.”

**How Well Has the Curriculum Assisted Your Learners in Believing They Can Work More Effectively in Teams?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Member</th>
<th>Extremely Effective</th>
<th>Very Effective</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Not Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey Survey, October 2009*

Two of the 11 faculty stated it was extremely effective. Six of the 11 stated it was very effective. Three of 11 stated it was satisfactory. None of the faculty believed it to not be effective at all.

The faculty who felt it was extremely effective for helping them work more effectively in teams cited the practical assignments based upon real-life experience that relied on teamwork. A faculty member also stated he or she assigned the roles to
be assumed in groups half the time and the other half the learners would have to establish them. This faculty member felt these experiences helped build effective skills for working in teams.

The faculty who felt the curriculum was very effective in helping students work more effectively in teams cited varying reasons. Some stated they knew it to be true because of responses they received on student surveys and most stated the amount of group work done and community-based projects that involved group work. They stated that group work and effective teamwork were woven throughout the curriculum. To add to that learners’ were also instructed in teamwork and how the various roles could be assigned to assist in a team’s success. One faculty member stated,

We teach students the foundations of good teamwork before assessing their effectiveness in team situations. We discuss the different strengths that individuals can bring to a team task, stressing that everyone has skills to bring to the table. Most courses contain elements of teamwork, enabling learners to gain new skills and confidence over the course of his or her program.

Some faculty stated the learners’ effectiveness for working in teams was satisfactory. The comments they made about this question was there was a large amount of teamwork in action but to truly be assisting the learners and helping them grow a better method of evaluation had to be considered. One faculty member said a feedback evaluation method for groups should be similar to the one-to-one evaluation and videotaped feedback used with the Business Sales and Marketing students in his or her role plays. He or she believed this assessment technique would add to the learning these projects inspired.
Do learners believe they could lead a team more effectively as a result of the curriculum?

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Member</th>
<th>Yes, Extremely Effective</th>
<th>Very Effective</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Not Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SurveyMonkey Survey, October 2009

One faculty member of the 11 stated the curriculum helped the learner become extremely effective at leading a team. Four of the 11 faculty stated the curriculum was very effective for helping the learner become more effective at leading a team. Five of the 11 faculty stated the curriculum was satisfactory in helping the learner become more effective at leading teams. One faculty member of the 11 felt the curriculum was not effective at helping the learner become more effective at leading teams.

The faculty were asked to justify and provide examples of why they answered as they did. The faculty member who stated the curriculum was extremely effective at helping the learner lead teams related this view to his or her own feedback from students who believed their teamwork skills had improved.

The faculty who stated it was very effective cited how the curriculum built on teamwork skills over the four semesters and that the learners were instructed on the principles of good leadership. These faculty also stated their students had done teamwork and group evaluations, and their feedback indicated they had grown in their teamwork and leadership skills.
The faculty members who stated it was satisfactory cited the learners not consistently stepping up into the role of leader. They felt the curriculum had gaps in not ensuring all learners participated as team leaders. Suggestions were provided for a program team to align the leadership curriculum throughout all courses and not just individual courses.

One faculty stated the curriculum was not effective because learners didn’t actually get to really lead a team in the college environment and these learners didn’t see the value of teamwork in the workplace.

**Are learners more confident about future workplace responsibilities as a result of the curriculum?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Confident</th>
<th>Very Confident</th>
<th>Somewhat Confident</th>
<th>Not confident at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Member</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey Survey, October 2009*

From the faculty surveys one of the 11 responded the learners were not at all confident in taking on future responsibilities in the workplace. The faculty member stated these learners did not have an experience base other than simple customer service jobs so they did not know what was required in the workplace. Four of the 11 responded they were somewhat confident in students taking on future responsibilities. The four of 11 faculty felt students were somewhat confident more by default and that being thrown into group work made them more prepared. Five of 11 faculty stated the learners were very confident in taking on future responsibilities. These five stated the curriculum focused on real world responsibilities and that comments from employers who had hired graduates spoke to this aspect. The remaining one of the 11 faculty
members stated students were extremely confident in taking on future responsibilities in the workplace as a result of their curriculum because “the curriculum provides experiences, practical projects and assignments that reflect the work force.”

**Morality as a result of curriculum?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Member</th>
<th>Yes, a great success</th>
<th>Very good for morality</th>
<th>Satisfactory for morality</th>
<th>No morality from curriculum</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey Survey, October 2009*

One of 11 faculty did not respond to this question but made this comment with respect to whether or not the curriculum provided a sense of morals for knowing right from wrong in the workplace:

I really wish I knew - I often feel that we are not effective in imbuing learners with what we consider to be an ethical approach to life and work. It often feels as though I'm ‘preaching to the converted’ and that those who could benefit from reflection upon, and changes to, his or her own ethical beliefs and behaviours are not getting that ‘learning’ in any substantive way. It makes me sad, but I don't know what to do about it.

One other faculty member responded that the curriculum had not helped provide the learner with a sense of morals in the workplace. This person based his response on the little understanding the learner had of the workplace beyond minor customer service jobs held while at school. Three of the 11 faculty felt the curriculum was satisfactory in providing morals. These three stated ethics and ramifications in the workplace were discussed but faculty were not sure it was the clear emphasis in the curriculum. Two of the 11 faculty responded there was a very good understanding of morals in the workplace in the curriculum. These two expressed it as a result of the curriculum
and that it was a learning outcome of ‘real-world projects.’ Four of the 11 faculty responded the learners obtained an extremely good understanding of morals in the workplace through the curriculum. The four faculty expressed ethics was woven throughout the curriculum and exercises were designed to teach it.

**Professional competencies obtained through the curriculum?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Member</th>
<th>Extreme Understanding of Professional Competencies</th>
<th>Very Good Professional Competencies</th>
<th>Satisfactory Professional Competencies</th>
<th>No, not a success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey Survey, October 2009*

Faculty members were asked if the curriculum had provided their learners with a sense they had obtained the necessary professional competencies to be successful in their field. Two of 11 faculty responded the curriculum was satisfactory in doing so. One of these faculty stated they only taught introductory courses so they felt they could not comment on professional competencies but would comment on what they saw in the learner. The other stated even more ‘real-life’ projects would help improve this area of learning. Six of the 11 faculty responded the curriculum was very good at assisting professional competencies. Faculty stated projects, evaluations, and employer feedback spoke to their assessment of very good. One stated,

Over my years at XXXXX, I have consistently seen our grads get progressively-responsible jobs (which, to me, says that they are deemed competent by employers). I have also received much feedback from employers attesting to the value added to the organization by our grads. Yay for them (and us)!
Three of the 11 faculty stated the learner had an extreme understanding of the professional competencies necessary to be successful in his or her chosen field. The faculty believed real-life projects and focus groups helped in creating a meaningful curriculum.

**Problem-solving skills improved as a result of the curriculum?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Member</th>
<th>Extremely Improved</th>
<th>Very Improved</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>No improved Problem-solving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey Survey, October 2009*

When asked if the faculty felt the curriculum had helped in improving the learners’ problem-solving skills for their future employment, one faculty member of the 11 stated it was satisfactory at doing so because the learners sometimes still struggled with critical thinking issues. Seven of the 11 faculty felt learners were very improved in their problem-solving skills as a result of the curriculum. Faculty stated real-life projects and case studies assisted in the curriculum at strengthening these skills. One faculty stated about the curriculum, “Our courses challenge them in a number of ways: time management, content acquisition, skill development, development of work habits, some conflict-resolution experience and getting them to ask "why?" and "why not?" Three of 11 faculty felt the learners were extremely improved in their problem-solving skills as a result of the curriculum. The faculty cited reflection and journaling as tools in the curriculum that assisted problem-solving skills with one faculty member saying, “because much of the curriculum is based on
practical assignments, projects, and role-plays, problem-solving skills become a natural outcome.”

**Did the learners perceive curriculum as learner-centered?**

**Table 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Member</th>
<th>Yes, perceived as learner-centered</th>
<th>Satisfactory Learner-centered</th>
<th>Some ways learner-centered</th>
<th>Not perceived as learner-centered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Member</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total %</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>36.4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.1%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey Survey, October 2009*

Faculty members were asked to respond to whether or not they felt the learner would perceive the curriculum as a learner-centered approach. One faculty member stated it would not be perceived as learner-centered as “many classes are still using PowerPoint with lectures that are non-experiential.” Four of the 11 faculty claimed learners felt it was learner-centered in some ways but not in others. These faculty cited larger classes and budget cuts as a deterrent to a learner-centered approach.

Other faculty in this group believed some faculty did not fully understand learner-centered teaching, which would not allow the change to be as successful. Another comment from faculty was,

I don’t think the students know what learner-centered is. But I believe they have noticed that some of their instruction is different from others. They know that some instructors choose to use methods that engage them, while others are more traditional in their approach to teaching.

One of the 11 faculty perceived the level of learner-centeredness perceived by the learners was satisfactory with reasoning for this view as learners would not know how to differentiate learning styles. Five of the 11 faculty stated the curriculum was perceived as learner-centered by the learners. The faculty related this success to open
lines of communication with learners about their needs. One faculty indicated, “As adult learners, students understand that the curriculum is set up to see them succeed whether or not they identify that with learner-centered remains to be seen.”

**Did faculty perceive the curriculum redesign as a success?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Member</th>
<th>Yes, a great success</th>
<th>Satisfactory Success</th>
<th>Somewhat of a success</th>
<th>No, not a success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey Survey, October 2009*

One faculty member of the 11 felt the curriculum redesign was not a success. This person felt not all faculty were trained enough to understand curriculum planning, outcomes, and the appropriate instructional methods necessary to achieve outcomes. Three of 11 faculty felt the redesign was a success in some ways and not in others. The faculty expressed concern for how to keep the curriculum supported. The ways the curriculum had not succeeded was based upon lack of communication amongst the faculty team. One member claimed,

There has not been, nor is there now, a consistent follow-through. We had a wonderful vision; then the process, and the "team sense" (including the shirts) fell apart. Currently, there is no formal process and when we do attempt to re-launch it, our organizational structure is not supporting it effectively. Scheduling, for example, makes it impossible for all faculty to attend work/planning sessions together. We need a common block of planning time, in EVERYONE'S timetable, that is INVIOLATE! We also need to identify a vision, outcomes, time frame and a leadership role for the process. All of the foregoing need to be supported consistently by the College, specifically in terms of time allocation. Faculty, on the other hand, must ALL agree to participate without worrying all the time about how this involvement is reflected on the SWF (Standard Workload Form, which is the allotment of work hours to certain tasks, teaching hours, assessment hours, curriculum development, student meeting time, etc.) If we truly want successful, viable programs, we have to get off our collective asses and make them happen, and that means re-forming the sense of "wow - we're gonna DO this!" that we had a
few years ago. If not, I see the process remaining piecemeal as it currently is, with declining enrolments and decreasing course/program offerings as the future.

It was not the curriculum change that this faculty member did not support. This faculty member was upset at time invested but felt management did not do enough to support the change. This faculty member believed complete success in the change depended upon the process being on-going. Four of 11 faculty felt the curriculum redesign was satisfactory. Like the group noted above they felt the curriculum was not as successful as it could have been because group members became isolated after the initial redesign and started working in silo again. This lack of communication hurt the curriculum. Three of 11 faculty felt the redesign was a great success. These members felt the faculty worked well as a team in the redesign process and felt the way the course outlines were now structured fell in line with their understanding of curriculum design.

**Faculty teaching changes to facilitate the curriculum shift?**

Four of 11 faculty felt they did not really change to facilitate the curriculum shift. They believed they had already been teaching in a learner-centered mode and that they were already strong facilitators. The remaining seven of the 11 faculty stated they became more attentive to the individual needs of their learners and strove for faster response times and more feedback. Most of these seven mentioned pushing themselves out of their comfort-zones to make class instruction varied and to communicate content in different ways. Faculty expressed looking for new ways to assess learning rather than traditional testing while also looking for more professional development opportunities on learner-centered instruction. Lastly, faculty spoke of
the extra time and resources teaching this way required. They mentioned having to pull on community resources, college resources, such as administrative staff support, and each other to support teaching in a learner-centered approach.

**Are faculty now better prepared to provide learner-centered instruction?**

Eight of 11 faculty stated they were now better able to provide learner-centered instruction because they had made a conscious effort and were committed to life-long learning. Faculty also mentioned how important the support of their colleagues was in the process and how pulling resources from the internal and external learning environments contributed to their instructional methods. One faculty stated,

> I am (better able to provide instruction), but not because of changes to the curriculum. You cannot just wave a magic wand, and say we are ‘learner-centered’. I am a better facilitator of learning, due to a commitment to personal and professional development. I teach better, because I have more tools in my toolbox.

Two of 11 faculty members were indifferent to whether or not they were better prepared to provide learner-centered instruction. These faculty felt they had always taught this way so did not see the concept as anything new. One of the 11 faculty members responded no, in not being better able to provide learner-centered instruction. As with the indifferent response this person had already been teaching this way. To quote the faculty member,

> From the first days of my teaching career, I have always searched to identify, and then meet the needs of my learners. I started teaching in a time when the paradigm saw the teacher's role as that of expert information-provider and the student as the "empty vessel." This content-based vision was never part of my teaching and I went through significant disagreement with colleagues of the time. What has changed over the years is my understanding of, and a vocabulary to express what my philosophy of learning has always been: "meet the learners where they're at, find out where they want to go, help them get
there!" I DO have more tools to accomplish this now than I did many years ago, but that has come as an evolution over time, not as the result of the specific curriculum re-design process of the School of Business.

Is learner-centered instruction perceived by the faculty as the most effective for the college learner?

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Member</th>
<th>Yes, it's the best</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>No it is not</th>
<th>Failed to respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SurveyMonkey Survey, October 2009

Nine of 11 faculty indicated learner-centered instruction was the best mode of instruction for the college learner because it put the learners’ needs first. One faculty stated, “I believe that it’s the most effective for any learner. If, as a teacher, you do not understand where your students are coming from, what they bring to the table, what they need from you and how your skills and experience can help them achieve their goals, then, in my opinion, you’re not a teacher, you’re an information-dispensing unit.” One of the 11 faculty members was unsure if learner-centered was the most effective because this person believed it was a very individual process that depended on the learner. This same faculty member also believed learner-centered instruction to be the most fulfilling for both student and facilitator. One of the 11 faculty members had no response for this question.

Final thoughts from faculty

Six faculty added final thoughts. While they felt learner-centered instruction should continue, they needed continuous support from management and faculty teams to make it work. A few also mentioned that more time for one-on-one facilitation
must be provided in the professors’ workload to ensure the needs of the learner are truly being met.

Learner Results

Who are these learners?

In looking at the Learner results (Appendix C) there were surveys sent out to all 99 potential candidates (there were 99 graduates from this second year group) of the 99 surveys sent out, only 85 were valid emails so the sample population is 85. Twenty-eight of 85 candidates responded for a response rate of 33%. Nine of the 28 respondents were graduates of the Accounting diploma (32%), eight of the 28 respondents were graduates of the Business Administration diploma (29%), and 11 of the 28 were graduates of the Business Sales and Marketing program (39%). The gender of the respondents was equal in 14 females and 14 males. Age of the respondents was 12 of the 28 in the age 18 to 21 category (43%), 12 of the 28 in the age 22 to 30 category (43%), and 4 of 28 in the 31 to 60 category (14%).

Table 10
Student Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Total of Student responses</th>
<th>Percent of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey Survey, November 2009*

Ten of the learners were direct entries to college from high school (36%), six had switched or transferred from a different college or university program (21%),
seven were retraining for a new profession (25%), and five entered within five years of leaving high school (18%).

**Main reason for seeking their diploma**

When the learners were asked what their main reason(s) was for seeking their diploma the Accounting diploma respondents answered their reason had to do with being good in the subject and liking it, “Math is what I did best in high school, and accounting was one of my highest marks.” The other two Accounting respondents chose it to supply their family with a better lifestyle. Six of eight Business Administration students chose that diploma option because it would provide them with a broader choice of work options and opportunities for work: “I wanted to complete my business education and have skills that made me more employable.” The remaining two stated they wanted a better understanding of business as their principal reason for choosing the diploma. Of the 11 Business Sales and Marketing graduates, eight stated they chose that diploma because of the numerous career options it afforded them as the skills in the diploma are used in many careers; “To gain skills in sales & marketing, as they are important skills used multiple job types.” Two responded they wanted to learn more about marketing, and one could not define why he or she selected this diploma.

**Teaching working in teams in curriculum**

The learners were asked about teamwork in their future workplace and if they had obtained necessary teamwork skills for the workplace from their coursework. Twenty-five of 28 said yes. Seven of the Accounting graduates said yes, seven of the Business Administration graduates said yes, and all 11 Business Sales and Marketing
graduates responded yes. One Accounting graduate was unsure if her coursework had helped with teamwork. Lastly, one Accounting and one Business Administration graduate thought the coursework had helped somewhat.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(89.3%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(3.6%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(7.1%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(0%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009*

When asked what learning experiences helped them learn about teamwork for the workplace the Accounting students responded certain courses helped such as the Teamwork and Leadership class and their Professional Development course. They also responded activities like working in lots of groups and team presentations in many of their classes helped in building these skills. The Business Administration students stated class projects like the Alliance Excellence Achievement Program project, group projects in class, working with local businesses on projects, and extracurricular activities like SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise) were what helped prepare them for teamwork skills in the workplace. The Business Sales and Marketing students had a lot of different factors that contributed to their teamwork learning. They cited activities like working on role-play activities, working as a group on their Open House Sales show booth, their course in Teamwork and Leadership, their course in Group Dynamics, their Negotiations class, and group projects working with community groups and businesses, and group projects that had tight timelines.
that made the students feel workplace pressure. One learner’s description was as follows,

Nearly every project or assignment was group based... forcing students to put aside differences to co-operate and compromise to reach a common goal... I felt scheduling weekly times for the group to work together was effective in large tasks such as Open House Trade Show Booth, High School Presentations, Negotiation Simulation, and Sponsorship Assignments. I developed a real comfort level in the group atmosphere and created study groups to assist with Sales Related Role Plays simply for Practice instead of working independently.

**Teaching Leading Teams in Curriculum**

When learners were asked if they thought their course work had taught them how to better lead a team 21 of the 28 respondents replied yes (75%). The breakdown of the 21 was seven of the Business Administration (88%), five of the Accounting (56%), and nine of the Business Sales and Marketing (82%). There were three responses of somewhat with two coming from Accounting students (22%) and one coming from Business Sales and Marketing (9%). Two were unsure if it had helped with one coming from Business Administration (13%) and one coming from Business Sales and Marketing (9%). Lastly, there were two responses (both from Accounting graduates) of no that the curriculum had not assisted them in becoming a better leader (22%).

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009*
The learners were then asked to quantify activities and learning examples that helped them in leading teams. The Business Administration students again related this to projects done with local businesses, their Teamwork and Leadership course and its activities, and outside school affiliated projects (SIFE). A Business Administration student stated, “activities within the teamwork and leadership class.” The Accounting students likened it to management simulation exercises in class, group projects, and extra-curricular opportunities provided out of class (Student Government). One Accounting student stated, “Not all teams were self assigned, thus some work partners were at times less than helpful. This caused me to have to lead the team to complete the assignments before the due date.” The Business Sales and Marketing students said group projects they completed for community businesses and non-for-profit groups were tasks that strengthened their ability to lead teams. One Sales and Marketing student stated, “An entire class dedicated to ‘Teamwork & Leadership’ practicing working in different roles of the team, including ‘leader’.”

A response of somewhat was made when believing they were ready to take on a leadership role was from one Business Sales and Marketing student and two Accounting students. A Business Sales and Marketing student stated the following. A lot of the group assignments we did involved choosing a leader or sharing roles which helped to develop leadership skills. There were also assignments where we would be sent to do projects in the community, so we had to find out our strengths and put them to use to further the project.

One Accounting student stated, “I was the team leader on some of the group work that we had to complete. I feel that I was effective in delegating the work, but I could use work on motivating some of the less enthusiastic group members.”
Curriculum provided Confidence in Abilities to take on responsibilities in the Workplace

Twenty-four of the 28 respondents responded yes that their curriculum helped them feel confidence to take on responsibilities in the workplace. All eight Business Administration graduates responded yes (100%), all 11 of the Business Sales and Marketing graduates said yes (100%), and five of the Accounting graduates said yes (56%). The remaining four Accounting graduates responses were as follows; one had no response, one said somewhat, one said unsure, and the other said no.

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(85.7%) (3.6%) (3.6%) (3.6%)

*One Accounting graduate chose not to respond to this question

Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009

When asked for examples of moments their curriculum helped in providing confidence in their abilities, the Business Administration graduates stated the pressure in projects, leading their groups in assignments, presentations, and class discussions. One Business Administration learner stated, “Doing any of my group projects and realizing that people were counting on me to get my part of the project done.” The Business Sales and Marketing graduates cited their sales role-plays as a very large factor, their presentations, their community projects, internship, continual feedback, and the large amount of time practicing skills. One Business Sales and Marketing graduate said,
The faculty provided the much needed feedback that I had been lacking in the workplace. With every presentation and written assignment I would receive a thorough description of the positives and areas that needed work ... this feedback developed my confidence to keep pushing forward and to try harder. In the beginning it was simplified by the evaluation rubrics provided as a measuring tool, in most classes the rubrics disappeared after a while, I was confident in my abilities to complete the task or assignment to a high standard with all of the constructive comments from previous work.

The Accounting graduates who viewed the curriculum in assisting their confidence cited experiences that involved training simulations on the computer such as Profile, Simply Accounting, and management simulations.

*Did the program provide morals for the workplace?*

Twenty-three of the 28 respondents (82%) said their courses helped provide them a greater understanding of morals in the workplace. The program breakdown of yes was seven Business Administration graduates (88%), nine Business Sales and Marketing graduates (82%), and seven Accounting graduates (78%). There were two responses of ‘somewhat’ with one response coming from a Business Administration graduate (13%) and one coming from an Accounting graduate (11%). There were three responses of ‘unsure’ with two coming from Business Sales and Marketing graduates (18%), and one response from Accounting (11%). There were no responses of ‘no’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009*
When asked to provide examples of the activities they did to help learn about morals in the workplace the Business Administration graduates cited their Human Resources courses with emphasis on the ethical content, their Teamwork and Leadership course and its section on ethics, and their project work. A Business Administration student also mentioned the role of prior learning,

All project assignments (group work) as well as the actual course content. I say that yes the course actually taught us a sense of morals; however, I came into this course with a firm sense of what my morals already were. This may be due to being a mature student, I am unsure.

The yes responses from the Business Sales and Marketing students were a bit different. These students used examples like listening to their instructors on what personal work experiences they had, and what not to do in the workplace, their Ethics course, being taught how to present themselves and why they needed to act a certain way, and being told the value of not telling a lie and always taking the time to think before acting. The Accounting graduates cited having to do a paper on morals, ethical debates, and the Ethics course. One mature student stated, “I don't believe that my sense of morals in the workplace has changed from my education. I did learn the ethics that are expected of employees in the accounting field in the workplace.” The responses of somewhat came from a Business Administration graduate and an Accounting graduate. The Accounting graduate claimed,

Dealing with money (financial) side being ethical is a huge deal. Some morals assignments have been completed in Financial classes however these haven’t really taught right from wrong, it all comes down to just knowing what is right and wrong in your heart and your head.

There was one response of unsure from an Accounting graduate and two responses of unsure from Business Sales and Marketing graduates. One of the Business Sales and
Marketing students stated the following, “I feel that I already had developed a strong sense of my professional morals prior to the programs at XXXXX.”

**Has the program provided necessary professional competencies?**

Twenty of the 28 said yes their program has provided them with the necessary professional competencies (71%). Five of the Business Administration graduates said yes (63%), 10 of the Business Sales and Marketing graduates said yes (91%), and five of the Accounting graduates said yes (56%). There was one response of somewhat from a Business Administration graduate (13%), one no response from a Business Administration graduate (13%), four responses of unsure with one Business Administration (13%), one Business Sales and Marketing (9%), and two from Accounting (22%). There were two no responses from Accounting (22%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(71.4%)</td>
<td>(14.2%)</td>
<td>(3.6%)</td>
<td>(10.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009*

The responses of yes from the Business Administration graduates attributed their program providing professional competencies via their business project classes, economics, business management, and outside college activities. The students also detailed the process of learning as helping them gain professional competencies.

Economics, Business Management, Business Challenge ...actually in some way all of my courses and activities played a role in teaching me professional competencies. This includes what some of my classmates referred to as the "Bird" courses, e.g. Business Unraveled. This course helped to teach me to
think bigger, to think outside the box and expand my ideas. I believe that these "bird" classes actually helped to make me learn the "harder" content easier.

The responses of yes by the Sales and Marketing graduates cited their role plays, presentations, business projects in the community, guest speakers, and soft-skills taught and practiced throughout the course. They cited the learning as real-life learning when they did projects for actual businesses in the community. One Sales and Marketing graduate stated,

I feel the program not only taught professional competencies, the program tested them. The Presentation Classes, Sales Role Play Class and the Guest Speakers were real life practice for expected business practices ... Participating in these, developed skills, and made the tasks easier and less stressful to complete ... with the outcome being confidence to succeed. My favorite activity was the "exit" interview ... a safe setting that tested everything we had been taught over the two years with regards to personal selling, professional qualifications, and confidence to stand out among other qualified individuals.

The Accounting graduates stated the repetition on content throughout different courses helped in their learning, their computer simulations, and courses like Simply Accounting and Profile. In the response of unsure, one Accounting student commented, “I feel I have learned a lot in the accounting field, but I am unsure if this will be reality in the real world workplace. I hope the college has set me up and look forward to pursuing my dream.” The Sales and Marketing response of unsure had the comment of not being sure they were going to go into this field. In the response of no, only one Accounting graduate felt he or she had not acquired the necessary skills.

Program curriculum improved problem-solving skills

Twenty-three of the 28 graduates (82%) said yes their curriculum improved their problem-solving skills. Seven Business Administration (88%), 10 Sales and Marketing (91%), and six Accounting (67%) graduates were confident their programs
helped improve problem-solving skills. There were four responses of somewhat. One response of somewhat was from a Business Administration graduate (13%), one was from a Business Sales and Marketing graduate (9%), and two were from Accounting graduates (22%). There was one response of unsure from an Accounting diploma (11%).

Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(82.2%)</td>
<td>(3.6%)</td>
<td>(14.2%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009

When asked to qualify examples of how their curriculum helped improve problem-solving skills, the Business Administration students stated there was help in groups to go through logical ways to solve problems, courses like Business Unraveled helped them look at problem-solving in a new way, and school projects involving local businesses also contributed. These students also credited the learning resource centre for help in their success. The Business Sales and Marketing students wrote of the importance of their role plays. They felt the sales role plays forced them to think on their feet and solve problems as they had to come up with solutions to numerous scenarios instantaneously. These students also credited group work but the role plays were mentioned in over half of the Sales and Marketing student responses. The Accounting graduates cited case study simulations, group work, and the act of balancing things such as school, work, and family. For the response of ‘unsure’ on how their curriculum helped their problem-solving skills, the Accounting graduate
stated he or she worked on lots of various problem scenarios but was unsure yet if they would benefit his or her professional life. The ones who responded ‘somewhat’ already felt they were good problem solvers so they were just utilizing skills they already had.

**Was their learning experience enjoyable?**

When asked if they enjoyed their learning experience 26 of the 28 respondents said yes (93%). The breakdown by diploma was seven of the eight Business Administration graduates (88%), all 11 Business Sales and Marketing graduates (100%), and eight of nine Accounting graduates (89%). There was one response of somewhat from an Accounting graduate (11%). There was one response of unsure from a Business Administration graduate (13%).

**Table 17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(92.8%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(3.6%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(3.6%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(0%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** SurveyMonkey, November 2009

**How would you describe the learning experience?**

When asked to describe their learning experience the Business Administration graduates stated things like “hands-on,” “collaborative,” “small classes that allowed for deeper learning with more one on one time with the instructor,” and that it was a “positive environment.” The Business Sales and Marketing graduates said similar things and included that the classroom was “comfortable and helped them learn” (the sales students have a special space and lab devoted for their learning), they stated it
was “real-time learning,” and they had fun and were able to relate to their classmates and their instructors. One Sales and Marketing student said of her experience:

I would describe the learning environment in certain classes to be learner focused. It was not based on information the faculty felt would be important for us to know or just to cram in the provincial guidelines in the course outlines and descriptions. The learning was focused on what the student needed to develop ... I found if I was doing well in a certain area such as business writing I was challenged to become even better and not to just settle with a result... similarly if I was struggling in a certain area such as presenting ... I was guided with tools to develop that skill more ... so at the end of the day the more open and willing to learn I was, the more I would learn. The more effort I put into a task, the greater the feedback.

The Accounting graduates had mixed reviews of their learning experiences. Some of the learners called the learning activities ”juvenile,” some teaching was described as “vague and chaotic” while other teaching instances were “well organized and well explained.” The Accounting graduates also stated the “technology” in the classrooms was great, the resources provided for assistance in learning and writing outside of the classroom was great, and they were able to form close relationships with faculty. One Accounting graduate stated:

It was quite relaxed and not as challenging as I thought it would be. Most of my first year was review and I found the accounting program to be very focused on one thing and one sided. I didn't see much of a program where it made you make important decisions like a controller, CFO or CEO would make. I wanted to be put in those situations to make executive decisions and see what the outcome would be. That's where ethics and the business world would have been a major factor and then see how the finance side would play out. I found the course showed basics and entry level education where we would be qualified to be bookkeepers or something entry like that. Not leaders. I also found it was very structured (There was an 8-5 type work day).
Examples of how prior learning was respected and utilized in this learning environment

The Business Administration graduates provided a few thoughts on prior learning and most of this feedback came from learners who had come to college because they had been laid off or ran their own business only to have it fail. Their responses were, “Working in a factory that closed down allowed me to bring a sense of how the real world works creating a foundation and understanding for my new skills,” and “Being a previous business owner, coming into the entrepreneur class gave me the knowledge I was previously lacking, and now I am confident when making important decisions about business.”

The Business Sales and Marketing graduates who answered this question spoke of how the curriculum used their previous learning experiences to build upon examples in class. They stated their work and life experiences were brought into discussions about things like customer service. Another learner stated her leadership experience in the Canadian Forces prior to coming to college was utilized in leadership scenarios. One learner stated:

This was done mostly in group discussions ... since we were being taught general and specific business knowledge it was relevant to draw on personal and professional experience related to a topic or enhance a topic for others in the class. Group Discussions were an excellent format for questions and previous experience to be discussed to clarify topics and show how all business skills and situations are transferable.

Not all Business Sales and Marketing learners responded to this question (similar to the Business Administration response rate in this question). The reason for some non-responses might have been from not fully understanding what the question was asking.
The Accounting graduates also had a lesser response rate to this question perhaps because they did not fully understand the question. One graduate felt the curriculum did not respect students’ prior learning. One Accounting graduate stated the following, “I had a couple of course exemptions when I transferred colleges. Also, the teachers try to relate to us, and use our experiences as examples.”

*Did strategies of prior learning assist in strengthening your learning and understanding?*

Twenty-two of the 28 responded that the use of prior learning helped strengthen their understanding in college. Eighty-seven and a half percent (seven of eight) of the Business Administration graduates responded yes, 82% (9 of 11) of the Business Sales and Marketing graduates responded yes, and 67% (six of nine) of the Accounting graduates responded yes. There were two responses of ‘somewhat’ both from Business Sales and Marketing graduates (18%). There were two responses of ‘unsure’ from Accounting graduates (22%), and one blank response from an Accounting graduate (11%).

### Table 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*One Accounting graduate chose not to respond

Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009
**What aspects of your learning did you enjoy the most?**

The Business Administration graduates stated they enjoyed learning “soft skills,” “presentations and group work that was tailored to our interests,” “camaraderie with instructors and fellow students,” and learning current business trends. One Business Administration graduate indicated,

I believe that for the majority of students this is completely true. I myself have an unusual background where this statement cannot really be answered. I came off a long time of disability and was learning it all fresh. This said, the professors did interact with those in the classroom by bringing up situations that everyone may have been in and encouraged sharing from the students.

The Business Sales and Marketing graduates stated real-life experiences in all their community projects, learning from the real-life experience of their teachers and how those scenarios apply to their learning, group work, and the hands-on applications of their curriculum. One graduate stated,

Real-life situations during the Presentations, Role Plays and Community Projects ... all of these represent areas that developed me the most into a successful individual ... I can relate to real-life situations and have a portfolio full of samples that represent the work done through these modules. At times they were the most challenge but in the end it was the most rewarding.

The Accounting graduates cited items like the small classrooms, feeling like they were on the same level as their faculty (no negative hierarchy perceived), teamwork, and computer simulations where there were unpredictable outcomes. One Accounting graduate stated, “Teamwork, the class is always there for help and support as well as the faculty. Class Size, the class sizes were high school style making it a fun and enjoyable learning environment.”
Learning activity frequency: Think, pair, share technique

*It should be noted that ‘Think, Pair, Share’ is a technique used in our classrooms.

The idea is to give the learners a question to reflect and gather their thoughts on. Then the learners are asked to pair up to discuss their thoughts and perhaps form new thoughts and new insight into the question. The learners are then asked to share their ideas with the remainder of the group to discuss amongst the larger group and perhaps form even deeper insight into the original question posed.

Table 19: Think, Pair, Share technique frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>‘Always’</th>
<th>‘Good Amount’</th>
<th>‘Occasionally’</th>
<th>‘Never’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(35.7%) (32.1%) (28.6%) (3.6%)

Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009

Ten of the 28 learners (36%) said this technique was always used; 63% (five of eight) of the Business Administration learners stated always, 36% of the Business Sales and Marketing learners stated always (4 of 11), and 11% of the Accounting learners stated always (one of nine). Nine of the 28 learners (32%) responded this technique was used a good amount of the time. Three of eight (38%) of the Business Administration learners, 27% (3 of 11) of Business Sales and Marketing graduates, and 33% (three of nine) of the Accounting graduates stated ‘think, pair, share’ was used a good amount of the time. Eight of 28 learners (29%) responded this technique was used occasionally. Thirty-six percent of the Business Sales and Marketing learners (4 of 11) and 44% of the Accounting learners (four of nine) responded the
technique was used occasionally. One response of never for the ‘think, pair, share’
technique was recorded and that came from an Accounting graduate. The response
rate of never was 1 of 28 learners so it was 4% or 11% of the Accounting learners
(one of nine).

**Learning activity frequency: Choice of assessment methods**

Table 20: Choice of assessment method frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>‘Always’</th>
<th>‘Good Amount’</th>
<th>‘Occasionally’</th>
<th>‘Never’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.6%)</td>
<td>(43.9%)</td>
<td>(25%)</td>
<td>(28.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009*

Only one of 28 respondents (4%) stated he or she could always be provided
with a choice of assessment of the work. This lone respondent was a Business
Administration graduate, and this individual was 13% of the Business Administration
learners surveyed (one of eight).

Twelve of the 28 (43%) stated the opportunity to choose their method of
evaluation was available a good amount of the time; 63% were Business
Administration graduates (five of eight), 55% were Business Sales and Marketing
graduates (6 of 11), and 11% from an Accounting graduate (one of nine). Seven of
the 28 (25%) stated the opportunity to choose their method of evaluation was
provided occasionally. Twelve and a half percent of the Business Administration
graduates (one of eight) stated the opportunity was occasionally provided; 27% of the
Business Sales and Marketing graduates (3 of 11) stated the opportunity was
occasionally provided; 33% of the Accounting graduates (three of nine) stated the opportunity was occasionally provided. Eight of the 28 (29%) stated they were never provided the opportunity to choose their method of evaluation. Thirteen percent of the Business Administration graduates (one of eight) stated the opportunity to choose was never provided, while eighteen percent of the Business Sales and Marketing graduates (2 of 11) stated the opportunity was never presented to them. Just over 55 percent (56%) of the Accounting graduates (five of nine) stated the opportunity was never presented to them. This strong response of no option being provided to the Accounting graduates may simply be because their curriculum is much more paper assignment based, which does not allow for many different methods of evaluation.

Frequency of group work

Table 21: Frequency of group work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>‘Always’</th>
<th>‘Good Amount’</th>
<th>‘Occasionally’</th>
<th>‘Never’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(28.6%)</td>
<td>(64.3%)</td>
<td>(7.1%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009

Eight of the 28 (29%) stated they always worked in groups: 25% of the Business Administration (two of eight), 45% of the Business Sales and Marketing (5 of 11), and 11% of the Accounting graduates (one of nine).

Eighteen of the 28 (64%) stated they worked in groups the majority of the time. Seventy-five percent of the Business Administration (six of eight), 55% of the Business Sales and Marketing (6 of 11), and 67% of the Accounting graduates (six of nine) reported working in groups a majority of the time. Two of 28 (7%) responded
“working in groups occasionally.” These two respondents were both Accounting graduates, which is 22% of that diploma (two of nine). None of the graduates reported never working in a group as part of a classroom strategy.

**Choice of group members**

Table 22: Choice of group member frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>‘Always’</th>
<th>‘Good Amount’</th>
<th>‘Occasionally’</th>
<th>‘Never’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10.7%)</td>
<td>(64.3%)</td>
<td>(25%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009*

Three of 28 (11%) responded they were always able to have some say over with whom they worked. Two of eight Business Administration graduates (25%) and 1 of 11 Business Sales and Marketing (9%) graduates stated they were always able to have some say over with whom they worked. Eighteen of the 28 (64%) responded they were able to have some say over with whom they worked a good amount of the time. Seventy-five percent of the Business Administration graduates (six of eight), 45% of the Business Sales and Marketing graduates (5 of 11), and 78% of the Accounting graduates (seven of nine) stated they were able to have some control over with whom they worked.

Seven of 28 (25%) were occasionally able to have some say over with whom they worked in groups. Just over 45% of the Business Sales and Marketing graduates (5 of 11) and 22% of the Accounting graduates (two of nine) responded they were occasionally able to have some say over with whom they were to work. There was no
response of never being allowed to have some say over with whom they were going to work.

**Time provided for reflection**

Table 23: Time provided for reflection?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>‘Always’</th>
<th>‘Good Amount’</th>
<th>‘Occasionally’</th>
<th>‘Never’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(21.4%)</td>
<td>(21.4%)</td>
<td>(21.4%)</td>
<td>(35.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009*

Six of the 28 (21%) said they always took time for reflection: 25% of the Business Administration (two of eight) and 36% of the Business Sales and Marketing graduates (4 of 11).

Six of the 28 (21%) said they took time for reflection a good amount of the time. Fifty percent of the Business Administration (four of eight) and 18% of the Sales and Marketing graduates (2 of 11) responded they took time for reflection a good amount of the time. Six of the 28 (21%) said they took time occasionally to reflect on their learning: 13% of the Business Administration graduates (one of eight), 18% of the Business Sales and Marketing graduates (2 of 11), and 33% of the Accounting graduates (three of nine). Ten of 28 (36%) said they never took time for reflection in their learning. Twelve and a half percent of Business Administration (one of eight), 27% of the Business Sales and Marketing graduates (3 of 11), and 67% of the Accounting graduates (six of nine) stated they never took time to reflect upon their learning.
Did learning experiences utilize prior knowledge to aid in motivation?

Table 24: Prior knowledge utilized to assist in motivation to learn?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>‘Always’</th>
<th>‘Good Amount’</th>
<th>‘Occasionally’</th>
<th>‘Never’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(35.7%)</td>
<td>(32.1%)</td>
<td>(28.6%)</td>
<td>(3.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SurveyMonkey, November 2009

Ten of 28 (36%) said they always were encouraged to use prior knowledge in their learning. Fifty percent of the Business Administration graduates (four of eight), 36% of the Business Sales and Marketing graduates (4 of 11), and 22% of the Accounting graduates (two of nine) were always encouraged to use prior learning in their learning. Nine of 28 (32%) said they were encouraged to use prior knowledge a good amount of the time. Twenty-five percent of the Business Administration graduates (two of eight), 36% of the Business Sales and Marketing graduates (4 of 11), and 33% of the Accounting graduates (three of nine) said they were encouraged to use prior experiences in their learning a good amount of the time. Eight of the 28 (29%) said they were encouraged to use prior knowledge to help motivate their learning occasionally. Twenty-five percent of the Business Administration graduates (two of eight), 27% of the Business Sales and Marketing graduates (3 of 11), and 33% of the Accounting graduates (three of nine) used prior experiences to enhance and motivate their learning occasionally. Only one of the 28 graduates (4%) responded ehe or she never used prior experiences in their learning. This one graduate was a graduate of the Accounting program so one of nine (11%) graduates in
that program never used prior experiences to help enhance and motivate his or her learning.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Learner-centered curriculum reform has been introduced to various institutions and is not new to the college environment (Huba & Freed, 2000). However, while many have suggested improving higher education to shift from a teaching focus to that of a learning focus (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1995; McPhail 2004; O’Banion 2007), what the current research sought to explore was how faculty and learners would react to a learner-centered curriculum change in a Community College School of Business, and the extent to which that change was learner-centered.

Hill (1985) indicates that a learner-centered curriculum must provide opportunities for the learner to think critically and solve complex problems to become a lifelong learner. Both faculty members and learners in this study talked of project opportunities that helped them to think faster on their feet and solve complex problems that would support Hill’s definition. Faculty referenced real-life projects, journaling and reflection, role-plays, practical assignments, and case studies as evidence for Hill’s need of opportunities for critical thinking and lifelong learning. The learners cited examples of role-plays that illustrated real-life learning scenarios that helped them think on their feet.

Stefanou and Salisbury-Glennon (2002) argue that there are three necessary assumptions for a curriculum to be learner-centered. First, they believe there should be integrated courses. The responses of faculty and learners mentioned blended learning that had carried throughout project courses and intertwined with the learners’
other communications, leadership, and core business classes. The learners commented on how a marketing project in one class could be marked as a presentation in another course, or the writing used in one could be used in a new manner in another class. Large parts of the curriculum, especially in the Sales and Marketing courses, overlapped between courses but were used to mark different learning outcomes in each class.

Second, Stefanou and Salisbury-Glennon (2002) state there must be active student learning. All learners referenced projects, role-plays, or the value of taking their own experience with the guidance and experience of the faculty to help make sense of their learning. Sales and Marketing graduates made note of how faculty provided immediate feedback on their role-plays, and how they themselves became active in the feedback process by watching and critiquing themselves on their videotaped role-plays. Third, Stefanou and Salisbury-Glennon state there must be collaborative learning. The learners repeatedly indicated the value of their group work and collaborating with both one another and outside groups during their courses. Examples that learners provided were working with real businesses in the community on projects and groups to which they belonged within the college such as SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise).

Faculty played a large role in learner-centered curriculum. In that faculty members facilitated the learning, they needed to be knowledgeable of the learners’ prior experiences. Similarly, Magolda (1999) states that the role of faculty members in a learner-centered curriculum is to share knowledge and let the learners make their own meaning of the material. Most faculty in the survey referred to the learners’
needs and how they tried to encourage the learners to make their own meaning of the information in their programs, while setting some boundaries to work within. Learner comments mentioned class discussions that faculty guided to expand their understanding and make their own meaning of a topic. These boundaries are what Ramsey and Fitzgibbons (2005) speak of as necessary in learner-centered curriculum. Ramsey and Fitzgibbons believe this freedom to make meaning within a wide boundary provides room to reflect upon learning experiences to help make personal meaning. As O’Banion (1999a) claims, the teacher becomes an “Architect of connection” within these boundaries of the course to observe the needs of individual learners, and then to put them in touch with the necessary connections and resources for their interests. In the surveys, faculty repeatedly referenced the need to recognize the individual learner and serve his or her needs as best they could. Faculty expressed that the learner was like a customer, and they must engage the learner by using each learner’s individual experiences as a motivational tool.

It is important that the faculty take ownership of the curriculum as that ownership is critical to good learning (McDaniel et al., 2000). In the current study, it appears most faculty referenced the curriculum as their own. The faculty spent a great deal of time working to create a new learner-centered curriculum as a team and then spent three years implementing it. The actions of the faculty in the study also exemplified the ownership they felt over the curriculum. Not only did the faculty write about the curriculum as if it were their own; when the course outline review took place at the beginning of the study, faculty were eager to know the results. Upon hearing results that indicated some original course documents had been modified and
that course outcomes had grown substantially in some courses, they wanted to work as a group to correct the outlines. Faculty worked rigorously comparing old outcomes against new outcomes, rectifying elements of performance to be reflected as such and not as outcomes, and mapping against course guidelines.

The learners also played a large role in learner-centered curriculum. It was their prior experiences that enriched the learning environment and acted both as motivation and understanding for learning. The prior experiences of college learners have such a wide variance that the learning environment must accommodate many differences (Hubball & Burt, 2004). The many teaching and learning strategies that a learner-centered curriculum encompasses allows for these differences. In the present research, learners reacted to the different teaching and learning strategies in a positive manner. The learners were aware that different techniques were used to facilitate learning; the learners referenced projects, role-plays, group work, and choice of evaluation strategies. The skills they learned became transferable to the workplace and, through building upon prior experiences, were relevant to the learner.

The learning environment is another factor important to learner-centered curriculum. The curriculum change at this college came about by declining enrollment and the fact that the curriculum was not meeting the standards that employers were looking for when hiring a graduate. The focus groups with industry alluded to the fact that certain soft-skills and professional competencies were not being met. To achieve these soft-skills and more notably the professional competencies, the learning environment had to play a more prominent role. The learning environment had to embrace current technology while allowing learners to
work in collaboration with others. The environment had to promote real-life collaborative projects that enriched the learners’ curriculum with hands-on approaches. These environments would simulate real life while working to build both professional and soft-skills.

Meaningful learning culture is not just created inside a classroom. While the classrooms must allow for comfortable discussion environments with the ability to access many methods of instruction (e.g., media, flipchart paper, changeable classroom environments), it is not only a comfortable classroom environment that must exist; the learning environment outside of the classroom (e.g., the community projects, role-plays, and simulations) must have depth but be within the learner’s skill-set. The teaching and learning strategies that are utilized in learner-centered curriculum demands that facilitators be aware of all the ways they can use these environments. Whereas some surveyed faculty spoke of how they had already used the instructional environment in a learner-centered manner, other faculty mentioned the challenges of trying new strategies. The challenges to which they referred were primarily about the time involved to properly execute a learner-centered curriculum. While some faculty had already been teaching in a learner-centered manner for some time, for the ones who had not been, the curriculum change meant they had to push themselves out of their comfort level. On top of embracing new forms of evaluation, while giving reflection and feedback for learners, the faculty spoke of a need for support. Teaching workload forms did not change the workload formula for a new way of teaching. There were allowances for a new course in the guidelines, but the guidelines did not embrace the time challenge teaching in this manner posed for the
faculty. Faculty always had to be aware of each individual learner’s needs and how to potentially facilitate each student. This challenge is noteworthy in that it is important to have a collaborative environment for faculty and professional development opportunities for them to explore new ways to master facilitation in these environments with a diverse range of strategies for teaching and learning.

**Themes**

Throughout the research, several themes emerged, of which four occurred most frequently: faculty adjusting to the change in curriculum; success in the role-play and community-based learning; the challenges the curriculum faced through economic strain, teaching time allotments on workload forms, and the physical space constraints of the college; and the curriculum outline review.

The faculty members in this Community College School of Business come from many different educational and workplace backgrounds. Their experiences have likely helped in developing their teaching styles. Educational research (Ball, 1990; Lang et al., 1999; Spillane, 2002) states that curriculum change is not easily accepted by teachers. What would make this group different? The majority of faculty appeared to believe in the learner-centered curriculum change. This belief could have something to do with the fact that the majority of faculty were recently from or at one time worked in the business field. In business change is common to survive economic pressure. There is an expectation of adapt to change or possibly be faced with the loss of a job. Could this relationship to the industry being taught have some effect on the way the curriculum is received by faculty? Wubbels and Poppleton (1999) found that enthusiasm for curriculum change along with identifying with the change is likely to
contribute to the success of the curriculum. The faculty in the study cited buying into the change and identifying it as their own due to the process and time invested. Perhaps the belief in their time invested, along with the professional field of their jobs held prior to teaching, assisted the faculty in committing to the learner-centered curriculum change.

A second theme appearing in the research existed in the use of role-play and community-based projects as teaching and learning strategies. In role-playing, the method of assessment becomes quite personal in nature, which tends to make the process more meaningful. Empathy is involved in the role-play process, and it is this empathy that Jones (1995) believes involves both hemispheres of the brain. By activating an empathetic process, Ekman (2003) indicates that communication skills increase. The learners referred to the role-plays repeatedly and spoke of how these role-plays simulated what the work-place expected of them. The learners became familiar with being empathetic in the role-play to achieve a successful outcome.

Community-based projects were mentioned as a continuance to the teaching and learning strategy thread. These projects appeared to have a similar outcome as the role-plays. The projects consisted of a real-world problem that must be worked on and then reported to a person outside of the classroom environment. The fact that the learner had an external reporting system created a similar dynamic as the role-play. Empathy must exist within the project component to some extent as there was a pressure to perform to outside expectations. The teaching environment held similarities with Dewey’s constructivist view of the educational environment. Both these teaching strategies focus on building real-world work experiences. These forms
of instruction answer the challenges brought forth in the focus groups by the local business community members. The two teaching and learning strategies were a strong factor in the positive responses received from learners in reference to learner-centered curriculum.

Project-based learning encourages and enhances thinking skills, problem-solving, collaborative work, critical thinking, and communication skills (Moylan, 2008). These criteria were mentioned as necessary components that must be in place for business graduates. While project-based learning is a teaching and learning strategy in learner-centered curriculum, the research in this study gives the threaded evidence for effectiveness, as has been suggested by Moylan (2008).

A third recurring theme in the research was the challenges and strain under which the curriculum was placed due to economic and workload restraints. O’Banion (1997) in his work on learner-centered institutions speaks of the need for physical learning environments that foster development. The college in this study, as are most academic institutions, was under vast economic challenges. In O’Banion’s model, there would be dedicated classroom spaces, access to many methods of instructional technology within the classroom, round tables with large open space work areas, and smaller dedicated spaces adjacent to the classrooms. In the current research, the only program of the three to have a dedicated space was Sales and Marketing. Indeed, the responses of the Sales and Marketing students mentioned the value of this dedicated space. The learners spoke of the space as their own, such that the increased comfort level provided by the dedicated space might have added to the students’ positive comments about the curriculum. The space also provided the Sales and Marketing
graduates with access to technology in smartboards, flipcharts, work spaces, video capability to record their role-plays for feedback, and computers and phone lines required for the curriculum. The other two groups did not have the same dedicated space as the Sales and Marketing group. The two other groups did, however, have access to some of the technology mentioned above, although technology was noted by some faculty in the surveys as a teaching challenge.

Workload was mentioned by faculty as a challenge in the curriculum redesign. The redesign took a large time commitment from faculty members. There was a common meeting time allotted in the Standard Workload Form (SWF), but it was not enough time for planning that went on outside of the common hours. Faculty committed to the process, but they commented in the surveys they had felt pressure to complete the curriculum revision along with continuing to teach their workload. There was also the consideration of the common scheduled time for faculty to work as a team on curriculum. Common time could not continue due to scheduling challenges created by the physical space of the college. There were not enough classrooms available with the adequate technology to schedule a common time for faculty to meet as a team. Both common meeting times and classroom environments need to support one another in learner-centered instruction.

The last theme that was recurrent throughout the research process was the curriculum review. In the beginning of the research process, the course outlines of all three programs were reviewed. The course outlines were contrasted against the original outline documents created from the curriculum redesign. Some of the course outlines had outcomes added to them since the original redesign. While there were
some course outlines that remained untouched, others grew in the number of outcomes they had. The original redesign had sought to have documents that had 10 to 12 outcomes on them per course. These 10 to 12 outcomes were mapped against Ministry outcomes for course standards to ensure all general requirements were met. In some instances, there were single course outlines with over 60 outcomes. When these particular outlines were examined further, most of what were said to be outcomes were actually elements of performance, not outcomes. The courses where the most notable amount of additions to the outlines existed were in the Accounting program. In the research, the Accounting program had fewer examples of learner-centered teaching and learning strategies than the other two programs. In Accounting, by the nature of the subject, some teaching and learning strategies have to be more teacher-based. There also could be an influence from the elements of performance. If there were more novice instructors or part-time staff adding to the outlines’ outcomes, these instructors might have lost the connection to the original intent of the curriculum redesign. If elements of performance became confused with outlines, there could be a confused teaching and learning strategy in place, which might result in the learners not connecting with what was being taught.

**Recommendations for Practice**

The comments on the surveys created two common themes of recommendations for practice. The first theme occurs from a lack of resources to support a learner-centered curriculum. The second theme occurs due to the gap in resources for part-time faculty members. The research showed evidence that faculty favoured a learner-centered approach to the curriculum with the college learner, but
there was also evidence of frustration from a lack of resources for the learning environment. Faculty reported gaps in consistency and follow-through on curriculum and indicated they would have liked more time and resources allocated to curriculum development. Whereas the beginning of the process allowed time for the faculty to work and discuss curriculum as a team, in the later part of the process, teaching schedules did not allow for the group to meet. The demands of the classroom also took the faculty’s focus away from curriculum design. While the current economic realities of the college and post-secondary education may not allow management to allocate all faculty to the process, there needs to be the support of management throughout the process. This support might include (among others): having management present at all meetings, having management allocate a few specific faculty to be curriculum advisors and ensure they are given some dedicated time for the management of the curriculum process, and having management advocate for dedicated spaces like the Sales and Marketing environment that would allow for more control of the learning and scheduling environment.

Another area of concern involved part-time faculty. These individuals add to the rich learning and practical approach of the college, as they are usually working professionals in their field. However, they usually have not taught within an educational environment and may not be aware of how learning outcomes are best demonstrated. There is a large challenge to provide consistency in the teaching environment and communication amongst all the various faculty members when some staff is part-time. Part-time faculty need support, but time and resources are not readily available for them. A recommendation here is to institute a better method of
support, perhaps an in-program mentor from one of the full-time faculty. The full-time faculty would need to be allotted time to offer support, but I believe this mentorship could benefit all parties within the college.

**Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

The limitations in this study arise with the survey method chosen and the response rates. The data for this study were collected in an online survey using SurveyMonkey.com. The survey was comprised of both closed (using a Likert-type scale) and open-ended questions. The quantitative questions existed to show a trend between faculty and learner responses in hopes of seeing similarities. Most quantitative questions were aligned with a qualitative question to gather more insight into the issue. The qualitative questions helped in understanding how the learners and faculty perceived the curriculum change.

For faculty members, the survey method was chosen because it might ease anyone’s reluctance to respond. I have a relationship with the faculty so a face-to-face interview might not have elicited the best responses as an insider. With a small sample size, there is always the fear that subjects can be identified, and this bias might not have been overcome with any other method I would have chosen.

The small sample size was also limiting to the data. While most faculty responded, in a smaller sample size, even one set of results could modify the perception of the data. The smaller group might have limited results as faculty members’ responses might be socially desirable, or faculty simply might have chosen not to respond at all for fear of being identified.
Future research could explore a different research method such as a focus group. The focus group would reduce the possibility of identifying an individual faculty member. Faculty might be able to pinpoint trends in the curriculum as a group that might not have been as easily uncovered in a survey. A focus group could also promote greater faculty participation.

While the electronic survey method could potentially reach a greater number and broader representation of learners than face-to-face interviews, it could be questioned for reliability as it used emails for making contact. Of the 99 graduates, only 85 were still at a valid email address. This lack of valid email addresses lowered the sample size by eliminating 14 potential respondents. Next there is the question of the learners who did not complete the survey even though they had a valid email address. The non-responses could have come from the respondents simply choosing not to respond, or the survey might have ended up in an email SPAM file. The learners who responded might only be the ones who believed in the process, although it is rather doubtful that all the other 57 non-respondents were against learner-centered curriculum change. Thus both the lack of respondents in the learner samples and the electronic survey method are limitations for learners.

Research in future studies might consider an in-person survey to ensure the survey arrives to the participant. Another route to be considered could be focus groups among the three different programs within the School of Business to see if trends emerge that could be applied to all three programs or specifically to one program.
Final Thoughts

The curriculum redesign brought faculty more onto the same page with how curriculum should be created. It has helped this group of faculty feel more at ease in sharing ideas and beliefs on teaching and learning. This result alone has been beneficial to the School of Business. The redesign has also made faculty aware of what outcomes really are and the difference of an element of performance versus an outcome. When the research process started and the course outlines were mapped against the original outlines from the beginning of the process three years prior, some trends emerged in certain course outlines. The outlines had been revised or changed in silo by what appears to be newer faculty or part-time faculty who had not participated in the curriculum review. The changed outlines had gone from 10 to 12 outcomes to over 60 outcomes a course. When the 60 outcomes were explored further, it was noted they were not all actually outcomes, but elements of performance. Upon discovering the modified course documents, these course outlines were immediately revised.

This process of curriculum change could possibly benefit other programs throughout the college. If another school or program were to restructure its curriculum to a more learner-centered focus, the current research and its resultant understandings could serve as a model to study the attitudes of faculty towards the process.

The process of curriculum redesign is never a quick-fix but can provide new and exciting opportunities in the classroom for both faculty and learners. The objectives that must be met for a learner-centered environment to be successful
include having faculty support (time, educational resources, and institutional resources), learners of diverse backgrounds, and the support of the institution to ensure all necessary resources are provided. With these supports in place, curriculum change at the college level can be successful.
REFERENCES


Brown, K. L. (2003). From teacher-centered to learner-centered curriculum:
    Improving learning in diverse classrooms. *Education, 124*(1), 49-54.


# APPENDIX A: OUTLINES SPREADSHEET

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<td>ACCT1000</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
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<td>Discuss career opportunities for accounting graduates</td>
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<td>Discuss who uses financial statements and the types of decisions that may be made based on these statements</td>
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<td>Identify the 4 items included in any financial statement</td>
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<td>Define the accounting equation</td>
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<td>Discuss how the accounting equation relates to the concept of double entry accounting</td>
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<td>Post transactions using T-accounts</td>
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<td>Define net worth</td>
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<td>Discuss the relevance of net worth from an accounting perspective</td>
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<td>Discuss interest expenses vs debt repayment</td>
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<td>Calculate Interest and the impact it has on your net worth</td>
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<td>Define an asset</td>
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<td>Identify the ways that assets can be bought and sold</td>
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<td>Prepare the entries to purchase and sell assets</td>
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<td>Define the matching principles</td>
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<td>Discuss the relevance of the matching principle to accounting</td>
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<td>Define accruals and prepaid expenses</td>
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<td>Discuss how accruals and prepaid expenses are related to the matching principle</td>
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<td>Identify how you record the items on a credit card into the accounting system</td>
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<td>Define materiality</td>
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<td>Explain why materiality is important in accounting</td>
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1. Default Section

This page is a COMBINED INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM for an online survey being conducted in September 2009 by Kim Grimes, Masters of Education Student at Queen's University. The title of the survey is The Effectiveness of Learner-Centered Practice in a Community College School of Business Program.

The information on this page is provided to enable faculty to decide if they wish to volunteer to complete this online survey. There is no way of identifying those who complete the survey, and thus it is not necessary to sign a Consent Form. Submission of the online survey constitutes your consent to participate. Participants are encouraged to print and retain a copy of this Letter of Information.

TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS:
• This Information and Consent Form describes the research in which I invite you to participate.
• This study seeks to extend our understanding of how the learner-centered curriculum shift has been perceived by the College School of Business faculty. We know that there will be considerable diversity in the responses, the details of your personal contributions will be particularly helpful.
• Publications and conference presentations may be developed after the data have been analyzed. While quotations from the data may be used in publications or presentations, your anonymity is assured.
• Participation is entirely voluntary.
• There is no way to identify you as an individual unless you identify yourself in one of your responses. You are asked NOT to identify yourself and you are asked NOT to name any individual, course or department in your responses. If any identifying words are entered accidentally, they will be deleted from the data prior to analysis. The Survey Monkey software ensures that your email address is not linked to the responses you provide.
• There are no foreseeable risks to participation.
• You are not required to answer any question that you find objectionable or uncomfortable for any reason. You may withdraw at any time without penalty by closing the browser.
• There is no remuneration for participation.
• Participation is estimated to require about 20 minutes of your time. There are 26 questions.
• Submitting your responses indicates your consent to participate in this research.
• Data are being collected using an online survey based on the Survey Monkey platform. According to the type of question, data will be analyzed qualitatively using thematic approaches or quantitatively according to the choices specified in the question. Access to the raw data will be restricted to the investigator.
• Questions about the study may be referred to me at any time before or after your participation.
• For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, contact the thesis supervisor, Dr. Denise Stockley at 613-533-6428 or the Education Research Ethics Board at erb@queensu.ca or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, 613-533-6081 (Chair. greb@queensu.ca).

Sincerely,
Kim Grimes kgrimes@loyalists.on.ca 613-569-1913 ext. 2221
Master of Education Student
Queen's University

1. The program you primarily teach in:

- Accounting
- Business Administration
- Business Sales and Marketing
- or all three programs named above

2. Do you seek to attain further levels of education for yourself?

- Yes
- No
- Not yet decided
3. Please elaborate on why or why you would not choose to further your education?

4. Please describe what you believe the essential features of learner-centered practice are to you?

5. How well do you believe the curriculum has assisted your learners in believing they could work effectively in teams in the workplace?
   - Not effective at all
   - Satisfactory
   - Very effective
   - Extremely effective

6. Please provide an example(s) of why you answered question #5 as you did?

7. Do you believe the curriculum has enabled these learners to believe they could lead teams more effectively in the workplace?
   - Not effective at all
   - Satisfactory
   - Very effectively
   - Extremely effectively

8. Please provide an example(s) of why you answered question #7 as you did?

9. Do you believe the curriculum has enabled these learners to feel confident in taking on future responsibilities in the workplace?
   - No, they are not confident in this at all
   - Somewhat confident in taking on future responsibilities
   - Very confident to take on future responsibilities
   - Extremely confident to take on future responsibilities
10. Please provide an example(s) of why you answered question #9 as you did?

11. Do you believe the curriculum has provided these learners with a sense of morals for knowing right from wrong in the workplace?
   - No, not at all
   - Satisfactory
   - A very good understanding of morals in the workplace
   - An extremely good understanding of morals in the workplace

12. Please provide an example(s) of why you answered question #11 as you did?

13. Do you believe the curriculum has provided these learners with a sense of the necessary professional competencies to succeed in their chosen field (i.e., Business Administration or Accounting or Business Sales and Marketing)?
   - No, not at all
   - Satisfactory
   - Very good understanding of the professional competencies
   - Extreme understanding of the professional competencies

14. Please provide an example(s) of why you answered question #13 this way?

15. Do you believe the curriculum has provided these learners with the sense they have improved their problem solving skills which will help them in their place of employment?
   - No, not at all
   - Satisfactory
   - Very improved to help
   - Extremely improved to help

16. Please provide an example(s) of why you have answered question #15 in this way?
17. As a whole do you believe this curriculum was perceived as a learner-centered approach from the standpoint of the learners?
   - No, not at all
   - A success in some ways but not in others
   - Satisfactory success
   - Yes, it was perceived as a success from the standpoint of the learners

18. Please elaborate on why you answered as you did in question #17?

19. As a whole do you believe the curriculum redesign process was a success from the standpoint of the faculty?
   - No, not at all
   - In some ways it was a success but in others it was not
   - It was satisfactory
   - It was a great success

20. Please elaborate as to why you answered question #19 as you did?

21. Please elaborate on how your teaching has changed to facilitate this curriculum shift?

22. Do you believe you are now better able to provide learner-centered instruction in the classroom?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Indifferent

23. Please elaborate on why you answered question #22 as you did?
24. Do you believe learner-centered instruction is the most effective mode of instruction for the college learner?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Not sure

25. Please elaborate on why you answered as you did in question #24?

26. Is there any additional comments that you would like to add that I have not asked?

This is the end of this survey. There is no way of identifying those who complete the survey, and thus it is not necessary to sign a Consent Form. Submission of the online survey constitutes your consent to participate.
APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONS-STUDENTS

Graduate Survey

1. Default Section

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TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS:
• This Information and Consent Form describes the research in which I invite you to participate.
• This study seeks to extend our understanding of how the learner-centered curriculum shift has been perceived by the College School of Business graduates. We know that there will be considerable diversity in the responses; the details of your personal contributions will be particularly helpful.
• Publications and conference presentations may be developed after the data have been analyzed. While quotations from the data may be used in publications or presentations, your anonymity is assured.
• Participation is entirely voluntary.
• There is no way to identify you as an individual unless you identify yourself in one of your responses. You are asked NOT to identify yourself and you are asked NOT to name any individual, course or department in your responses. If any identifying words are entered accidentally, they will be deleted from the data prior to analysis. The SurveyMonkey software ensures that your email address is not linked to the responses you provide.
• There are no unforeseen risks to participation.
• You are not required to answer any question that you find objectionable or uncomfortable for any reason. You may withdraw at any time without penalty by closing the browser.
• There is no remuneration for participation.
• Participation is estimated to require about 20 minutes of your time. There are 24 questions.
• Submitting your responses indicates your consent to participate in this research.
• Data are being collected using an online survey based on the SurveyMonkey platform. According to the type of question, data will be analyzed qualitatively using thematic approaches or quantitatively according to the choices specified in the question. Access to the raw data will be restricted to the investigator.
• Questions about the study may be referred to me at any time before or after your participation.
• For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, contact the ethics supervisor, Dr. Denise Stockley at 613-533-6428 or the Education Research Ethics Board at erel@queensu.ca or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, 613-533-6081 (Chair.gre@queensu.ca).

Sincerely,
Kim Grimes kgrimes@loyalists.on.ca 613-668-1913 ext. 2221
Master of Education Student
Queen's University

1. The program you graduated from:
   - Accounting
   - Business Administration
   - Business Sales and Marketing
   - Double diploma in Business Administration and Business Sales and Marketing
   - Double diploma in Business Administration and Accounting
   - Double diploma in Business Sales and Marketing and Accounting
   - Diploma in all three
Graduate Survey

2. Your gender is
   ☐ Male
   ☐ Female

3. Your age falls in which category?
   ☐ 18 - 21
   ☐ 22 - 30
   ☐ 31 - 60
   ☐ 61 +

4. Upon entering this program you (please check which best describes you from the options provided):
   ☐ Were a direct entry from High School
   ☐ Switched from a different college or university program
   ☐ Are retraining for a new occupation
   ☐ Entered within five years of leaving high school

5. What was your reason(s) for seeking this diploma?
   

6. Has your program assisted you in believing you could work effectively in teams in the workplace?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
   ☐ Unsure
   ☐ Somewhat

7. Please provide examples of learning experiences from college that taught you to work in teams (i.e., the activities you did)?
Graduate Survey

8. Has your program left you believing you could lead teams more effectively in the workplace?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Unsure
   - Somewhat

9. Please provide examples of learning experiences from college that taught you to lead in teams (i.e., the activities you did)?

10. Has your program assisted you in believing you are confident to take on future responsibilities in the workplace?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Unsure
    - Somewhat

11. Please provide examples of learning experiences from college that taught you to be confident in taking on responsibilities in the workplace (i.e., the activities you did)?

12. Has your program provided you with a sense of morals for knowing right from wrong in the workplace?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Unsure
    - Somewhat

13. Please provide examples of learning experiences from college that taught you a sense of morals in the workplace (i.e., the activities you did)?
Graduate Survey

14. Has your program provided you with a sense you have the necessary professional competencies to succeed in your chosen field (i.e., Business Administration or Accounting or Business Sales and Marketing)?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Unsure
   - Somewhat

15. Please provide examples of learning experiences from college that taught you professional competencies necessary to succeed in your chosen field (i.e., the activities you did)?

16. Has your program provided you with a sense you have improved your problem solving skills?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Unsure
   - Somewhat

17. Please provide examples of learning experiences from college that assisted you in your problem solving skills (i.e., the activities you did)?

18. Did you enjoy the majority of your learning over the course of your diploma??
   - Yes
   - No
   - Unsure
   - Somewhat

19. How would you describe the learning environment you encountered at college? Please provide examples.
20. Please provide examples of how your prior experiences were respected and brought into your learning to assist you in your understanding?

21. Do you believe the teaching strategies used in your diploma drew from prior learning experiences (work background, school background, interests) as strategies to assist and strengthen your learning?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Somewhat

22. Please elaborate on what aspects of your learning you enjoyed the most?
APPENDIX D: LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title: EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNER-CENTERED PRACTICE IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS PROGRAM

I am writing to request your participation in research aimed at studying the teaching and learning effectiveness in your diploma program. The programs being researched are the two year diplomas for Business Sales and Marketing, Accounting, and the Business Administration programs. The goal of my research is to build on curriculum knowledge already in place and hopefully learn some facts that may help in future curriculum design at the college. I am a professor in the School of Business, Loyalist College. This research has been cleared by the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board, and also by Loyalist College.

In this part of the research, I wish to document your perceptions of how your curriculum has prepared you for exiting college. To do this, I am asking you to complete the attached survey questions. The survey is to be conducted upon completion of the fourth semester. The survey will be administered in Survey Monkey. None of the data will contain your name. Your program will be identified using general terms only. Data will be secured in a locked office and confidentiality is absolutely guaranteed.

We do not foresee risks in your participation in this research. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study without reasons at any point, and you may request removal of all or part of your data.

This research may result in publications of various types, including journal articles, professional publications, newsletters, books, and instructional materials for schools. Your name will not be attached to any form of the data that you provide. A pseudonym will replace your name on all data that you provide to protect your identity. If the data are made available to other researchers for secondary analysis, your identity will never be disclosed.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Kim Grimes by telephone 613-969-1913 ext. 2221. For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, 613-533-6210, or the Chair of the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, 613-533-6081, email chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

Sincerely,

Kim Grimes
Masters of Education Candidate
Queen’s University
APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM

EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNER-CENTERED PRACTICE IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS PROGRAM

I, (participants name), have read the Letter of Information and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I will be participating in the study name, Effectiveness of Learner-Centered Practice in a Community College School of Business Program. I have been informed of my involvement in a web-based survey on my learning (or teaching for the faculty) at college. I understand the purpose is to better understand how the curriculum was perceived over the course of the diploma program.

I am aware that I can contact Kim Grimes or the Loyalist Ethics Board or the General Research Board from Queen’s University with any question, concern or complaint that I have.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at anytime. I have been assured that all my information pertaining to my identity will remain hidden.

Name: __________________________
Date: __________________________
Signature: ______________________