Business Program Curriculum with Industry-Recognized Certifications: An Empirical Study of Exam Results and Program Curriculum

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Abstract : Pursuing a business degree is fraught with perplexing questions regarding the rising tuition cost and the immediate value of earning a degree. Any decision to pursue an undergraduate business degree is perceived to have value if it facilitates post-graduate job placement. Business programs have decreased value in the absence of innovation in business programs that close the skills gap between recent graduates and employment opportunities. Industry-based certifications are seemingly becoming a requirement differentiator among job applicants. Texas Wesleyan University offers a Computer Information System (CIS) program with an innovative curriculum that integrates industry-recognized certification training into its traditional curriculum with core subjects and electives. This paper explores a culture of innovation in the CIS business program curriculum that creates sustainable stakeholder value for students, employers, the community, and the university. A quantitative research methodology surveying over one-hundred students in the CIS program will be used to examine factors influencing the success or failure of students taking certification exams. Researchers will analyze control variables to identify specific correlations between practice exams, teaching pedagogy, study time, age, work experience, etc. This study compared various exam preparation techniques to corresponding exam results across several industry certification exams. The findings will aid in understanding control variables with correlations that positively and negatively impact exam results. Such discovery may provide useful insight into pedagogical impact indicators that positively contribute to certification exam success and curriculum enhancement.