Teaching & Research

Huntsman Education — Not Just for Business

By Dr. Vijay Kannan, Associate Dean for Academics

Recent changes to the core set of courses required of all Huntsman majors, including the addition of four new courses, are designed to prepare students for meaningful careers in commerce and public service.

Foundations of Business is an interdisciplinary course that introduces students to the broader context of business and decision making. Drawing on readings from Kant, Dostoevsky, Shakespeare, Ibsen, and others, the course will explore the roles and responsibilities of business in a global society, the nature of ethical leadership, and the realities of decision making in an ambiguous and fluid environment. One of the first classes students will take in the Huntsman School, Foundations is designed to set expectations for students and help them refine their sense of purpose in pursuing a business education.

A new course in Leadership will focus on how students can demonstrate integrity, authenticity, and a commitment to the well-being of others. The course reflects the ideals of principle-centered leadership and the need to develop leaders that can both motivate others and serve as role models. Students will be challenged to shape their identities as leaders, and define the values that will guide them in leadership and decision making roles.

Advances in technology make it possible for organizations to acquire significantly more data than in the past. However, the ability to effectively leverage this data to inform decision making depends on having appropriate quantitative reasoning skills and the ability to meaningfully parse and organize data. Big Data Analytics introduces students to business intelligence and to the technologies available to identify patterns and trends in large datasets that can be used for predictive purposes. The course is based on the principle of evidence-based decision making and has an applied focus that will give students the confidence to use business intelligence tools.
The goal of **Systems Strategy and Problem Solving** is to apply foundational knowledge from courses in finance, marketing, and operations in a decision making context. While several of our courses focus on ‘knowing’, Systems Strategy emphasizes ‘doing’, giving students frameworks that can be used to analyze complex, cross-functional problems, and opportunities to apply them to real world situations. Helping students develop applied problem solving skills will not only add to their preparation for the workplace but give them experience working with ambiguous, unstructured problems.

While our required set of courses has historically provided students with a rich knowledge base, the new courses are intended to ensure that our students also possess critical thinking skills and the ability to view the world from multiple perspectives. Moreover, they reinforce the School’s commitment to its pillars of analytical rigor, entrepreneurial vision, ethical leadership, and global vision.

**Work-Linked Couples are Happier at Home and More Productive at Work**

Dual career couples with the same occupations or work places may have a happier family life and less job and family tension as a result of the work-related support they can offer one another. According to **Merideth Thompson**, study author and associate professor in the Management Department at the Huntsman School, the beneficial impact is twice that for work-linked couples compared to non-work-linked couples.

“No only does this benefit employees’ personal lives, but they also become more productive at work,” Thompson said. “This research suggests that both families and employers stand to gain a significant benefit from work-related spousal support, especially in work-linked couples.”

Because of the shared aspects these couples have of one another’s workplaces or occupations, their work/home boundaries are blurred, which allows work-related information to be more freely shared but which also may make balancing work and family more challenging, Ferguson said.

“A spouse is in a unique position to provide support to a partner in that spouses have greater understanding of one another’s needs and thus are better able to provide support in ways that successfully address those specific needs and reduce the likelihood that a partner’s work stress will influence family life,” Thompson said.

This study was published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*. 
Retire Now!

Huntsman Economics professors Aspen and Devon Gorry recently completed a study that found retirement improves both health and life satisfaction.

“The most surprising findings from our study were the positive long-run effects both in subjective well-being, or happiness, and in the objective health measures,” Aspen Gorry said. “For subjective well-being, most studies find that happiness returns to a baseline level so that life events only have temporary effects. Our findings for retirement contrast with that typical result.”

The study notes that it can take up to four years for any health benefits to become apparent. “For the objective health measures, past studies have not found effects of retirement on such measures,” Gorry explained, “so we think that looking at longer term patterns has helped us uncover significant effects since health typically changes slowly over time.”

The study was published by the National Bureau of Economic Research and examined results from the respected Health and Retirement Survey (HRS) conducted by the University of Michigan, a longitudinal study of approximately 20,000 Americans age 50 conducted every two years.